

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Artists Mentioned in Cypress

A small item in the Monterey Cypress published on February 10, 1914 attracted my attention for the reason that it contained the names of several Monterey artists I had either known or knew their work. These men had banded together so the news item said, to assist in rejuvenating the Art Institute of San Francisco and placing it on the metropolitan footing that it should have been as far as art was concerned.

The first man mentioned in the list was Bruce Porter. Then there was Francis McComas, Armin Hansen, Charles Dickman, Charles Rollo Peters, Xavier Martinez, Gottardo Piazzoni, and others. Of the entire list Armin Hansen is the only one now living in Monterey, with a studio home on El Dorado street.

The late Francis McComas made his home in Pebble Beach for many years before his death but in his early days in Monterey, he lived for a time in the Sherman Rose House on Alvarado street, the adobe home of Miss Maria Ygnacia Bonifacio. Recently two of McComas' large paintings were presented to the City of Monterey, one hangs in the public library and the other in the council chamber of the Few Memorial building – truly valuable additions to the cultural life of the community. They were the gifts of Stuart Haldorn of Carmel.

Charles Dickman and his wife had a large combination studio and home in New Monterey which was for several years the Community Center Nursery School, before the directors of that service built the present school building at Archer and McClellan streets, known as the Child Care Center. Dickman street in New Monterey was named for this well known artist.

Arthur Mathews spent a great deal of time on the Peninsula after 1910, most in Carmel where he had a home and studio on Santa Lucia street where the Richard Loftons now live. He was noted for his very beautiful murals. Armin Hansen reports that he was a student under Mathews for two years at the Mark Hopkins Art Institute on Nob Hill in San Francisco.

Charles Rollo Peters came to Monterey in the early years and built a home and studio in the part of Monterey which is now known as Peter's Gate. His studio was the home of the late Mrs. Jane Todd and is now occupied by her daughter, Miss Judy Todd. He was

noted for his nocturnal scenes, many of which are prized possessions in Monterey homes. His son, Rollo Peters, lives within a stone's throw of the old family home.

Gottardo Piazzoni had a home-studio on his ranch far up the Carmel Valley and it was there that he passed away a few years ago. He was a fine artist, a true Bohemian and a good friend to those who were privileged to enjoy his hospitality but the rough trip to his ranch barred many from that experience.

Martinez spent most of his life in San Francisco and the bay region but the final years of life were spent in Carmel where he was a familiar personage upon the village streets.

Armin Hansen came to the Monterey Peninsula in 1913 and lived and painted first in the W.A. Parker home on Pacific street. Later he bought the property on El Dorado street and settled there in 1923, with his wife Frances. His etchings and paintings are well known among artists and laymen alike. A large oil of Carmel Mission, "Vespers," painted by Hansen, hangs over the mantel in the Custom House, a gift to the Monterey History and Art Association a number of years ago from the late Mrs. Louise de Haven.

Bruce Porter and his wife lived on the coast below the Big Sur and there he painted and wrote poetry. Later he became a noted interior decorator. Armin Hansen reports that he once assisted Porter in the decoration of the Charles Blaney home near Saratoga in the Santa Clara Valley. He passed away in his Pacific avenue home in San Francisco on November 25, 1953, at the remarkable age of 88 years.

Bruce Porter was probably best known in the world of art as the designer of the Robert Louis Stevenson monument in Portsmouth Square in his native city of San Francisco. He also designed and executed the window above the altar in St. Mary's Episcopal church in Pacific Grove – a memorial to Miss Helen Reed, a deaconess of the church, who had named it and also had suggested that the Annunciation be pictured in the altar window. Mr. Porter spent several days in the Grove at that time in order that he might embody the local colorings and atmosphere.

Porter's murals include those in the Pacific Union Club and the First Unitarian church in San Francisco. For two years he and Gelette Burgess published the literary magazine, The Lark.