

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### 'Where Castilian Roses Bloom'

"Where Castilian Roses Bloom," the memoirs of Maria Antonia Field, has been sent to me with greetings from the author. I have read it with a great deal of interest: It is a beautiful book, privately printed for Miss Field by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco – printers whose fine work is always, sooner or later, to become coveted collectors' items.

Miss Field is presenting copies to her friends as keepsakes, for aside from being her memories of Monterey, her family and her travels, it is actually a history of the life of the residents of Monterey during the days when the Spanish influence was still felt in the old capitol.

Aurelio M. Espinosa, professor of Romantic Languages, Emeritus, Stanford University, wrote the foreword for "Where Castilian Roses Bloom."

He said in part: "The distinguished lady ... who was honored by the late King Alfonso XIII of Spain with the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic, was born and has lived all her life in California. Maria Antonia Field has had a very notable career in California ... She has been an important contributor to the reconstruction of the Spanish California Missions and to the Catholic Missionaries in all parts of the world.

"The story that Maria Antonia Field tells us in her modest memoirs is a document full of interest to all students of Californiana, particularly to all those interested in San Francisco, Monterey and vicinity,. As an authentic historical document it is of course of interest to all future historians of the state ... Her work is valuable as an authentic picture of the family life of the Spanish families of gentle background who founded our Golden State and have influenced its development."

"I claim no literary value for any of my sketches, nor am I a person of any career or importance," writes Miss Field in the preface to her memoirs. My story is simplicity itself, just truthfully and sincerely told, written primarily for indulgent friends ... Many of us deplore seeing the past vanish. ... There is indescribable loveliness in the fragrant smell of old things, old perfumed cedar and rosewood chests, even the sweet musty smell of old books, and a pathos about old letters and simple keepsakes," And that is what the book

brings back .. the years when Monterey was younger and life was calmer.

There are 14 chapters and an epilogue within the 142 pages of "Where Castilian Roses Bloom." The story begins with Miss Field's birth in La Granja, where her mother was also born, and which had been built in 1824 for her grandparents Esteban and Catalina Munras. That home is now Casa Munras.

Random notes follow the first chapter, a description of the old adobe home and the social and family life there, glimpses of the Spanish era in California, a glimpse of San Carlos Church, Monterey and of San Carlos Mission in Carmel; a tribute to her father, family life as Miss Field knew it, musings, sojournings in Europe and a pilgrimage to Saint Anne de Beaupre. The last will and testament of Esteban Munras, written on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of January 1950, is an interesting feature, for a facsimile of the holographic will written in Spanish is also reproduced.

Portraits of Miss Field's great-grandmother, Catalina Manzaneli y Ponce de Leon de Munras; her great-aunt nee Concepcion Munras (Mrs. William McKee) and Dr William McKee, painted by Leonardo Barbieri, the artist who painted the portraits of so many of the early Californians, are reproduced; as are colored facsimiles of the Munras and de Dangelada families and Field and Scott family crests.

Among the personal remarks Miss Field relates that she has in her possession many of the old business records of the Munras family in the original from the press of Agustin B. Zamorano Press, which was the first in California. Comparatively few records of the Zamorano Press, which was established in Monterey, are in existence today.

As an example of the printing of Zamorano, a full page reproduction of the cattle brand and verification of ownership of Esteban Munras, is printed, dated Monterey, June 19, 1835.

"Where Castilian Roses Bloom" is certain to become a valuable addition of collection of Californiana and of great assistance to researchers studying the history of the state.