

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 7, 1954

'Emigrant's Guide'

Lansford W. Hasting's "Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California," written and published in 1845 and probably the most famous of all overland guides, brought \$1850 at the Hersholt Sale in New York a few weeks ago. This report came back to California from David Magee, the well known rare book dealer who attended the auction.

The "Emigrants' Guide" and its author are of special interest to Monterey due to the fact that Hasting was one of the delegates to the constitutional convention held in Colton Hall in 1849, representing the Sacramento district, and was leader of the Emigrant Party that bears his name.

Bancroft writes of Hasting in his History of California. "... He was born in Ohio in 1819. Became a lawyer and a filibuster, but he found that the time was not yet ripe for a successful movement; so he returned to the East in 1844 by sea and across Mexico, to publish a worthless book called 'The Emigrant's Guide,' to attack the settlers and prospective revolutionists by lectures and other methods."

We ponder over the review given by Bancroft of Hasting's book and wonder what he would think did he know what this "worthless book" – just one volume – brought in money at a collector's sale in 1954.

Hasting returned to California later with another party through the pass which later proved fatal to the members of the Donner Party, missing the Bear Flag episode. He became interested with John Bidwell in laying out the new town of Suttersville which was reported at the time to be a Mormon settlement. He was a school trustee in San Francisco, where he practiced law in 1847. Hasting married Charlotte Catherine Toler, the sister of William P. Toler, who came to Monterey with Commodore Hones; also on the Savannah in 1845, and returned as a lieutenant on the St. Mary in 1849. A picture of Toler hangs in the Old Custom House Museum and a photograph of Hasting is under glass on one of the delegate's tables in Colton Hall.

Mr. Magee also reported the sale of the Anderson "Journal" in manuscript for \$12,000 to the Huntington Library with Dawson's Book Shop of Los Angeles acting for the Library. We quote these figures just to impress

upon our readers the value of some old books, documents and manuscripts. They may seem worthless to the non-collector but under expert advice they may be worth a fortune to the owner.

The second highest price brought in the sale in New York – all from one man's collection – was Zenas Leonard's "Narrative," which brought \$4,600. It was acquired by Dawson's Book Shop. Magee wrote to Joseph Henry Jackson of the sale, stating in gleeful words: "At the risk of sounding chauvinistic, if that is not too strong a word, I spiritually waved a flag with a bear on it as I watched these two most highly prized items purchased for the west."

Another western treasure George Keller's "A Trip Across the Plains and Life in California, 1851" – one of the rarest of overland narratives – was sold for \$2,600.

The entire New York sale of the Hersholt collections of Western Americana, comprising 1233 items, sold in five sessions, brought \$126,996.