

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'Journal of a Cruise'

The "Journal of a Cruise" to California and the Sandwich Islands in the United States Sloop-of-War Cyane by William H. Meyers, gunner, U.S.N., 1841-1844, is the newest publication of the Book Club of California. John Haskell Kemble edited the work.

"The Journal of a Cruise" is the club's Christmas publication for 1955, a work of outstanding interest and importance. Together with 10 of the author's drawings of California and Hawaiian scenes reproduced in full color, and a map of the Pacific area, plus an introduction and notes by Dr. John H. Kimble, professor of history at Pomona College and a leading authority on early Pacific Coast maritime history. The edition, limited to 400 copies, has been designed and printed by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco.

Carl I. Wheat, president of the Book Club, and Oscar Lewis of the publications committee, have given this brief account of the contents of the "Journal" in a release to members of the Book Club: "This first printing of Gunner Meyers' account of his stay in California and the Hawaiian Islands in 1842-43, and his spirited drawings of scenes and events in both places, constitutes a work of extraordinary beauty and historical value. For Meyers, a keen observer and an artist of uncommon ability, was present on the West Coast and, in the Sandwich Islands during one of the most eventful periods in the history of these areas.

"A gunner on the U. S. Sloop-of-War Cyane, he, among many stirring events, took part in the premature capture of Monterey by Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones in October 1842. Because his stay in Pacific Waters lasted well over a year, he had ample opportunity to see, and to record in words and pictures, the manner of life lived in these then remote outposts. Moreover, the 26-year-old artist writer was a shrewd observer and little of interest that happened either afloat or ashore escaped his attention.

The information, highly interesting and frequently humorous text, together with the series of striking, on-the-spot drawings, combine to make this a truly notable: addition both to Californiana and Hawaiiana. Its historic value is further enhanced by Dr. Kemble's authoritative introduction and informative notes.

Mr. Wheat goes on to relate that Grabhorn has given the work a physical distinction fully commensurate with the importance of its contents. The type has been handset, printed on all-rag Ruysdael paper and bound in linen covered board sides with a crimson morocco back—truly a collector's item and a joy to own. The drawings, printed on hand-made, paper from England, are remarkably faithful to the originals. The price is \$28.50 plus tax, for members of the club.

A less expensive book recently published by the Oregon Historical Society through the Champoeg Press is also sought after by collectors since its recent publication. It is Osborne Russell's "Journal of a Trapper, or Nine Years in the Rocky Mountains" edited by Aubrey L. Haines. Although the Rocky Mountains appear in the title of the book, contents also deals with the 1849 lure of California gold which proved too strong for Russell to resist and he wandered into El Dorado County in California.

The editor, Aubrey Haines, worked from the original manuscript now in the William Robertson Coe collection of Western Americana at the Yale University Library. In passing, we might say, we have been told that Yale University possesses a greater collection of Californiana than we have in California. It is not yet too late to advise all and sundry to look carefully at all letters, publications, personal possessions, books, manuscripts, etc., before destroying. They might be of great historical value to prove a date, age or even events, customs, costumes, and other important information of an age gone by.