

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Ramblings**

"Ramblings in California" has recently been published by the Friends of the Bancroft Library for the pleasure of the membership of that very worthwhile organization at the University of California. It was printed and designed by the Gillick Press in Berkeley with only 500 copies issued.

The ramblings were those of Henry Cerruti, edited by Margaret Mollins and Virginia E. Thickens from the original manuscript as written by Cerruti during his association with Herbert Howe Bancroft in San Francisco and throughout California. as the latter was gathering material for his famous histories and for whom the Bancroft Library was named.

The editors give credit to Henry Cerruti for a great part of the priceless collection of Californiana and state that "few of those who come to use the material in the library realize that the first person to turn the key to the treasure house of letters and reminiscences of the early Californianos was an obscure Italian adventurer," meaning Cerruti.

It was in 1873 that Cerruti first knocked on the door of Bancroft's office in San Francisco during the time that Bancroft was "converting himself from a book dealer to historian." During the 14 years that he had been in business he had managed to collect an immense mass of material on California and the west coast and had arrived at the decision that a comprehensive history of California must be written.

He gathered together a group of interviewers, with great success, who traveled about the state and talked with the old timers and jotting down this valuable historic material. As we have been told many times and as the editors of "Ramblings in California" tell us "... these 'hijos del pais' scorned and ignored by the newcomers, were regarded as being nothing, as having done nothing, as being able to communicate nothing, and would not tell of themselves or of the past if they could." From these interviewers they did not expect a flattering picture of their life, their adventures or those of their families. Yet, as the editors write, if that gap in California's history was ever to be filled, it must be done before the men who had the knowledge had passed from the scene.

Bancroft had already decided before he met Cerruti that General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in Sonoma, was the man who could give the most sympathetic and authentic assistance to his project. At one time Vallejo had decided to write a history of California himself but the loss of a great collection of notes, original documents and valuable materials had been burned in a fire when his adobe home on the plaza in Sonoma was destroyed in 1867.

Cerruti was introduced to Bancroft by Philip A. Roach, a well-known Californian and Monterey's first mayor, a state senator and once editor of the San Francisco Examiner. Roach recommended his friend to Bancroft as a man who could converse in Italian, French, Spanish, and English, one who had been a consul general in South America, and who was widely acquainted with the foremost men of Spanish America and their affairs.

Needless to say, Bancroft decided that here was the gentleman who could best influence General Vallejo to cooperate in the undertaking of presenting a true history of California for future generations to study. Cerruti consented to try his hand to the task and left for Sonoma where he spent the next several months getting acquainted with the general, winning his good graces and finally starting the recording of his host's fascinating memories of early California.

The first statement made by General Vallejo to Cerruti relating to early history was to describe the funeral ceremonies which took place at Mission Soledad when, in 1814, Governor Arrillaga was buried. Jose Joaquin Arrillaga served as temporary governor of California from 1792 to 1794. and as governor from 1802 until his death in 1814. He is the only governor buried at Mission Soledad. The general was probably a boy of six or seven years at the time of the funeral.