

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'American Heritage'

The American Association For State land Local History and the Society of American Historians have realized their dream of a popular historical magazine for Americans in the two recent issues of American Heritage.

For the past five years these two organizations have been quietly and intensively studying the field and the needs. In 1949 the association began on a very modest basis a handsome quarterly called American Heritage. It immediately won so much favor that the sponsors again began to look for a way to expand the magazine's service and to present it in a more permanent form.

At the same time, the Society of American Historians, Inc., raised a pilot fund of \$40,000 to explore the possibilities of a magazine of history in book form with hard covers.

Among those who subscribed to this fund were Learned Hand, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Nicholas Roosevelt, Clinton Anderson, Henry Luce, Marshall Field, Harry Scherman, Mrs. Gardiner Fiske, DeWitt Wallace.

Now the two groups have pooled their resources and talents in joint sponsorship of America's only popular magazine of history. On every page of the books the editors try to convey the look and feel of how it was then "to put you in Philadelphia on a hot July morning, as you hear that it isn't thundering in the west, but the awful cannonading at Gettysburg."

The book will be published six times a year, and will sell for \$2.95 a copy, or \$10 a year. Bruce Catton, winner of last year's Pulitzer Prize in history for his "A Stillness at Appomattox," will be the editor, aided by a distinguished staff. There is no advertising in the magazine.

In the first book, Vol. VI, No. 1, there is an article on file backward look at that great institution "The American Men's Club"—with some gently ironic comment on what has happened to it "with all this democracy about," Cleveland Amory is the author.

Lucius Beebe of Virginia City, Nevada, has a good article which he calls at "Suburb of Hell" - to wit, Panamint City in its epic years, the 1870s, when men were becoming millionaires overnight in the silver diggings.

The book is not all Western by any means there is an ample supply of excellent articles and pictures from all parts of the country. In Vol. 6, No. 2, we were interested in M. M. Marberry's work "How New York greeted King Ludwig's Girl Friend," the story of the life and loves of Lola Montez, who had also been a great favorite in California during the Gold Rush days. A handsome reproduction of a painting of Lola done by Joseph Stiller, from the King Ludwig "Gallery of Beauties" in the Schonheiten Galerie at Munich, is reproduced in color. There is also a reproduction of two Irreverent impressions of the actress highly publicized visit to New York in 1851. One, from the Old Print Shop, shows Lola about to dance from a swan-like boat onto the shores of America, which was for a long while familiar to California's First Theatre patrons in Monterey, when it was the decoration of the stage curtain.

"A Nosegay of Valentines" is a charming bit of sentimental writing, illustrated with copies of old valentines in gay color— some of which are in the possession of the Museum of the City of New York and others from the Norcross collection. We learned from the story that Miss Esther Howland of Worcester, Mass., first conceived the idea of mass production of valentines about 1850 and built up a \$100,000-a-year business.

There is a book review section in American Heritage. We were interested in the review of "The Story of the Piano" a social history of Men, Women and Pianos by Arthur Loesser, published by Simon and Schuster; another on "Of Barns and Bridges" under the title of "American Barns and Covered Bridges" by Eric Sloane. The latter had a full page of illustrations in black and white drawings. "A Long Line of Ships: Mare Island's Century of Naval Activity in California," by Arnold S. Lott, Lieut. Commander, U.S.N. United States Naval Institute, and many other books of interest to the west.

There is plenty to pour over in American Heritage: many maps, of battles, towns, explorations; accurate reproductions of little-known old prints, rare newspapers and letters; pictures of old homes and old American families.