

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 14, 1955

A Gunner's Log

A recent gift to the Bancroft Library is of particular interest to Monterey because of its historic value to this community. This is Bancroft's semicentennial year; so in commemoration of that anniversary and in a personal tribute to Miss Edith M. Coulter, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth K. Bechtel of San Francisco presented the library with the remarkable, illustrated log kept by Gunner William H. Meyers aboard the "Cyane" at the time of the premature American seizure of Monterey in 1842.

Miss Coulter is a California historian of note, and she has made notable contributions to its pictorial history. In 1937 she published "An Artist in El Dorado," "The Drawings and Letters of Daniel Wadsworth Coit," illustrated with pencil sketches of the San Francisco Bay region made in 1849-1852, the originals of which are in the Bancroft Library. In 1941 she presented Capt. F. W. Beechey's "An Account of a Visit to California 1826-27," illustrated by four watercolors of California scenes made by William Smyth of Beechey's expedition. The originals of two of these paintings, delightful views of Monterey, Miss Coulter had purchased in London in 1931, and she has since given them to Bancroft.

In collaboration with Jeanne Van Nostrand in 1946 Miss Coulter edited "A Camera in the Gold Rush," which featured photographs of California and Nevada scenes by Robert H. Vance. The following year Miss Coulter joined with Eleanor A. Bancroft to produce 13 "California Towns from the Original Drawings," a selection from a collection of original pencil drawings in the Bancroft Library which they identified as being by Henry Miller and dating from 1856-57.

In 1948 Miss Coulter again collaborated with Mrs. Van Nostrand in publishing "California Pictorial, a History in Contemporary Pictures, 1785- 1858"; and in 1952 the fruitful collaboration with Mrs. Bancroft further extended the Henry Miller record in "Account of a Tour of the California Missions, 1856"; the "Journal and Drawings of Henry Miller," illustrated with another 19 drawings from the Bancroft Library collection. All of these works have notably enriched the knowledge and understanding of the early California scene.

William H. Meyers, whose illustrated log of his 1841-44 "Cyane" cruise is noted in the Bancroft collection, has

had a unique place in California history since the publication in 1939 of "Naval Sketches of the War in California," a work from the Grabhorn Press which reproduced, in color 28 sketches by Meyers then owned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Meyers in 1846-47 was a gunner on the U.S. Sloop-of-War Dale and an active participant in the War with Mexico, but he is remembered now as an artist. As President Roosevelt commented, his sketches are "exceedingly interesting and historically valuable." The place of Meyers in the history of California and the Pacific Coast is richly enhanced by the gift to Bancroft of his log aboard the Cyane.

The Monterey History and Art Assn. is announcing three dates for future events for the membership at large. On May 21, at 8 o'clock in the evening, the board of directors will present Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Old Custom House Museum, in an illustrated talk on the historical homes, buildings and. spots she recently visited on an extended motor trip through the Southeast. The Old Pacific Building will be the setting for this event.

The 186th birthday of Monterey will be observed at the annual Merienda in Memory Garden on Saturday, June 2, at 12 o'clock noon. This affair is for members of the association and their out-of-town guests only. There is seating space in the garden for 400 persons and as the association now numbers almost 500, the annual celebration is not open to non-members.

On July 7, the history and art association is sponsoring, with the Navy League, the re-enactment of the first raising of the American flag over the Old Custom House in 1846. The Navy and the Army are taking a prominent part in the celebration. Allen Knight, a member of the board of directors of the association, announces that the event will take place at 10 o'clock in the morning on July 7.

An invitation has been received from the Northern San Joaquin County Historical Society, with headquarters in Lodi, announcing the dedication of an historical marker at the site of the San Joaquin Valley College on Saturday, May 19, at 2 o'clock, at Woods school grounds, Woodbridge.