

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'When a Perfect Lady Never Showed Her Ankle'

"I am trying to locate the records of the Carter Brothers, builders of railroad cars," is the type of question which often comes to a would-be historian or to the Chamber of Commerce. Richard C. Lind, the writer of the question goes on to say: "Please tell me whether the old Carter Bros.' Plant, and its records were taken over by another company, and if so what company. If these records were turned over to any historical society, please send me their address. I am especially interested in any builder's photographs, catalogues, data, and blueprints of narrow-gauge railroad cars."

And so, we are off on another hunt which may prove interesting and critical to our correspondent. Mr. Lind lives in Burlington, Ia.

Still another letter comes from Santa Barbara and the author's name is John P. Cota. He writes: "Some time ago I visited in downtown Monterey, the Casa Rodriguez Osio, built in 1840. Jacinto Rodriguez, a member of California's First Constitutional Convention, I believe was my grandmother's father. Grandma's name was Refugia Rodriguez, baptised at Sonoma Mission in the early 1800s. If there is a connection can you give me information regarding Jacinto's movements prior to coming to Monterey, his origin - Spanish or Mexican?" A big order but we replied to the best of our knowledge.

A postcard from Douglas R. Rath of Dallas, Texas, wants This information: "While in the process of writing a book concerning the history of the of the American piano, it has come to my attention that you have in your possession a very fine old square piano by Great Union. I wish to index all famous American made instruments and their location. I want the serial numbers, dates of manufacture, and octave compass of your piano as well as those in the other historic buildings in Monterey. May I hear from you in the near future."

I must hurry and have a piano man inspect the old rose wood instrument, to be able to answer that one intelligently.

Aside from these requests, which make life and work interesting, there have come to my desk a number of good Californiana books. "High-Sierra Country" by Oscar Lewis, is another in the series "American Folkways." "A Pony Expressman's Recollections" by Isaac Van Dorsey

Mossman, is another of the special limited editions of 500 copies and the third publication of the Champoeg Press. It is an important item for every collection of Pacific Northwest history, collectors of Western postal history of Joaquin Miller.

This personal narrative is a firsthand description of the pioneer pony express. Mossman established one of the first two express companies operating from Eastern Washington to Ora Fino and Salmon River Mines in Idaho. In 1863 as the gold fields of Ora Fino and Salmon River grew Mossman found need for another rider. Joaquin Miller, the famed "Poet of the West," presented himself and there began their partnership in the Miller and Mossman Express Co., located in Walla Walla, Wash.

On the amusing side is a book by Florence McGehee, "Sailors Kiss Everybody," published by The MacMillan Company of New York. Florence McGehee in private life is Mrs. Walter McGehee of Woodland, California. She was born in Oakland, took her A.B. degree at the San Francisco State College and has also attended the University of California. She plans to retire this year after time spent as supervisor, attendance, and student welfare, in Woodland City schools, to devote her time to newspaper work, travel and other writing. Her short stories have appeared in Atlantic, Story, Western Horseman and more than 8,000 of her newspaper articles have been published. "Please excuse Johnny," her first book published in 1952, is a series of true stories from her years of experience as a truant officer in California.

Her latest book, "Sailors Kiss Everybody" is a memoir of Mrs. McGehee's girlhood adventures in Oakland at the turn of the century. A time when, in the author's words, "Oakland was a kind of naive country cousin of San Francisco, Jack London and Joaquin Miller were colorful local characters pointed out on the streets, and a perfect lady never showed her ankle."