

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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California Glances

"Glances Into California" is a new book just received from Glen Dawson's noted Los Angeles bookstore. It is No. 29 in the "Early California Travel Series," a particularly nicely designed and printed group of small books in which Mr. Dawson has been reviving early California narratives worth bringing back.

"Glances Into California" is the narrative of Walter Colton, the builder of Colton Hall and Alcalde of Monterey during his residence here from 1846 through 1849. There is a good and full introduction by Edwin Corle.'

The book provides a brief sketch of Colton himself and suggests the nature of the text in the final chapter which is reprinted from Colton's "Deck and Port," a book which is not as widely known as his "Three Years in California."

Mr. Corle introduces Colton in the Introduction: "Walter Colton left two pieces of work which have become monuments to his name, and which will be remembered as long as the history of California survives. One is a landmark in architecture and the other is a landmark in literature. The first is Colton Hall, built in 1847-49 in Monterey; and the other is his journal published in New York in 1850 as 'Three Years in California.' In their respective fields neither is a work of art, but both present elements of steadfast New England tradition and sound American character."

Colton is described as a balanced and integrated man, whose personal problems scarcely intrude between his lines, but whose character emerges as humane, kindly and sympathetic toward the Spanish and who remains inflexibly a Vermonter at all times.

Walter Colton was born in the hamlet of Georgia, Vt, on the shores of Lake Champlain, on May 9, 1797. His mother's maiden name was Thankful Cobb. He was the third of 12 children of Deacon Walter Colton. The ancestors of both parents had come from England prior to 1850.

At an early age, Colton was sent to Hartford, Conn., to learn cabinet making — the senior Colton believing that trade was essential. Cabinet making interested him not at all but philosophy did and soon Walter was convinced that he should devote his life to the church. At the age

of 21 years, he entered Yale College, where he studied for four years, winning the Berkeleian Prize in Latin and delivered the class valedictory upon his graduation. In 1825 he was ordained a minister and in that capacity he came to Monterey as a chaplain on board the U.S. Frigate Congress.

In his 47th year the "object of his bachelor devotion was a distant relative, Cornelia B. Colton; and on June 26, 1844, they were married." A son, Walter Colton III, was born after Colton departed for California and the news had to follow him around the Horn and was months in reaching him.

Colton wrote his wife in 1847: "Monterey is growing fast: Some new building starts every day. The scenery around is unsurpassed in magnificent beauty: the thunder of the waves, as they roll and break around the bay, is echoed back by a hundred forest - feathered steeps; while Monterey lies cradled between in soft sunshine and shade."

Another bit concerning Monterey is worth repeating: "The Bay of Monterey circles up broad and deep into the coast. It is far from being landlocked, and yet the southern bend is sufficiently sheltered to afford a safe and quiet anchorage. The town is built within a circling range of forest-feathered hills, and on a plain that descends in easy slopes to the strand of the bay. A more inviting picturesque location for a city never entered a poet's dream. The buildings are reared of adobes, covered with a white layer of lime; they are seldom over one story and a half, and are ornamented with porticoes running the entire front. The streets are broad but irregular, and the hills around connect themselves with the gleaming walls of cottages which as yet exist only in your imagination."

This No. 29 of the series is issued at \$10 in a limited edition of 250 copies printed by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco. There are only 44 pages, but as one reviewer has stated, "one expects a fine press item in a limited edition to cost more than most books."

A copy of this book and also one of "Dartmouth, 1840-1845, a reminiscence by Samuel Hopkins Willey," the chaplain to the convention which met in Monterey in September 1849, to draft a constitution for California, should be in the library at Colton Hall for visitors to see and read, for these two men played a prominent part in the history of this old building.