

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The State Library

We have come across an informative article concerning the California State Library, compiled by Allen R. Ottley, the librarian of the California Section of the Library in Sacramento, which interested us tremendously and we hope will be of interest to many of our readers.

This library was established in 1850 largely to serve the legislative and state offices but in the past half century it has widely expanded its service. History must go back to the time of James L. Gillis, the state librarian from 1899 to 1917, for it was largely through his efforts that the library system came into flower. These libraries have branches scattered throughout the state. Behind the efforts of the county libraries, city libraries, school libraries, and institutional libraries, stands the State Library, ready to supplement their collections with its own great reservoir of books and information. Books and materials not available locally can often be borrowed through these libraries. In a few counties where county libraries have not been established the State Library serves the residents direct.

Mr. Ottley goes on to state that into this pattern fits the California section of the State Library. It was organized in 1903 and brings together in one collection all of the Library's material on California, with the exception of law books, which are in the law section, and government documents, which are in the government publication section. Material in the California section includes books, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, periodicals, pictures, and a wide variety of such miscellaneous material as early playbills and ballots.

Among the section's outstanding collections is its newspapers, ranging from a file of the Californian, which began publication at Monterey in 1846 as California's first newspaper, down to today's metropolitan daily. Back files number some 21,000 bound volumes and include such important early runs as the San Francisco Alta California, 1819-1892; Sacramento Union, 1851-to date; San Diego Union, 1871-to date; Auburn Place Herald, 1852-to date; Mariposa Gazette, 1864-to date; Los Angeles Times, 1888-to date; and many others. More than 150 newspapers received currently are being microfilmed and now number over 6000 rolls of film. These films may be borrowed by libraries equipped with suitable

reading machines. We have one of these machines in the Monterey Library a gift from the Monterey History and Art Association.

In the State Library's manuscript collection, the emphasis has been placed on the gold rush period. Diaries, account books, and letters of 1849 and the 1850s give the researcher both facts and flavor of these stirring times. Outstanding collections include the papers of John Bidwell, "prince of pioneers" and founder of Chico; William Heath Davis, pre-gold-rush hide and tallow trader; and Ephraim W. Morse, '49er and prominent San Diego merchant.

Besides an extensive collection of California periodicals and most of the printed books on California, the section also has a number of special collections of Californiana which prove of great usefulness. Among these, Mr. Ottley numbers, a collection of early directories; compilations of vital statistics, cemetery records, pioneer family history, etc., by the Daughters of the American Revolution, who place one copy in the State Library and another in the DAR National Library in Washington, D. C.; biographical cards on California State officials, authors, musicians, actors, and pioneers filled in by the biographer or his family; census records 1850 to 1880; great register of voters from the various counties-since 1866 to date.

Another feature of the State Library often used by officials and individuals, is the picture collection which comprises thousands of photographic portraits, views of California Places and subjects, and a number of early rare prints. Any of these may be photostated or photographed for patrons.

Still another valuable contribution to California historical research has been the compilation of several card indexes to considerable selected material in various newspapers, periodicals, county histories, death records, great registers, etc. These indexes now comprise over 2,500,000 cards and some of them are constantly being used, declares Sir. Ottley. For instance, there are 11,000 cards referring to fires in California. 14,000 to railroads, 13,500 to Californians named Smith, 2,700 to Californians named McDonald, 4,500 to Chinese in California.