

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 14, 1956

Mexico

Mr. and Mrs. Guy Curtis of Monterey are traveling leisurely in Mexico, having left Monterey late in October and expecting to remain south of the border at least six months. From letters, we conclude that they are making the most of every day of their stay.

Mrs. Curtis writes: "Guy and I are sitting in the stone-paved patio, basking in the sun. All around the portals are beautiful potted plants and unusual vines and climbing roses. It is another one of those gloriously lazy days and it is difficult not to just sit and bask.

"Our return to sea level at Tehuantepec has been postponed several times but tomorrow is supposed to be the day when we start to retrace our steps. We are headed for Mitla which is 30 miles south of Oaxaca. Our address until after Christmas will be Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico, in care of F. R. Frissell."

The letter was postmarked from: Ave. Vicente Guerrero 38, San Cristobal Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. The letterhead was centered with a line drawing of a jaguar, the name of the Inn of Na-Bolom, "At the Sign of the Jaguar." The address also stated that the Inn was a "Center of Scientific Studies."

Mrs. Curtis continued:

"After Christmas we again retrace our steps to Tehuantepec and go from there, on the West Coast, to Coatzacoalcos on the East Coast. Thousands, of '49ers made their way from New Orleans, by boat, to the Isthmus, rode up the Coatzacoalcos river on a Mississippi sidewheeler called the Allegheny Belle, and thence across the uplands to the Pacific via coaches, Indian bearers and horseback. All of which will tend to make the trip more interesting. From there we will go north to Vera Cruz and then to Mexico City. We truly are enjoying ourselves."

Mrs. Lewis Pierce, of the Monterey Peninsula Country Club has presented the Bancroft Library with a portfolio of pictures which are the work of one of the most noted photographers in the United States in the period after the Gold Rush, Carleton Emmons Watkins, who in 1868 won the first prize at the Paris International Exposition awarded the United States by the Committee on - Photographic Landscapes.

The 53 photographs cover the very earliest lumbering activities on the Mendocino Coast, in which J. B. Ford, the grandfather of Mrs. Pierce, was an outstanding pioneer. Watkins' photographs which measure approximately 16x20 inches in size, are magnificent specimens of the photographer's art. This portfolio, which is in almost mint condition, pictures the sites where the first lumber mills were erected, the rocky seacoast, Indian villages, and other early views of historic value. The picture of the Little River before the mill was constructed there is of particular interest, because the cycle of this spot is now complete, from primitive forest through mill and mill pond, thriving lumbering community with wharf and shipping point to the creation of the excellent and widely known Van Damme State Park, which preserves this as a forested area. Little evidence of this historic chain of events now remains except through the medium of photography.

J. B. Ford, in partnership with Meiggs and Williams, built the first mill at Mendocino City in 1852 to furnish lumber for San Francisco, which was then expanding very rapidly, and thereby became the founder of the Mendocino County's lumber industry, which has thrived for more than a hundred years.