

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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California Writers

The Second Annual Meeting of the Conference of California Historical Societies will be held in San Jose June 21, 22 and 23. The program as developed by Reginald Stuart, chairman of the program committee, promises to be outstanding. All of the meetings will be centered around the historic Old San Jose Plaza, the heart of the first pueblo in California.

The Friday luncheon will be a highlight with George Mardikian of Omar Khayyam's Restaurant fame, telling his life story in "Song of America." A few of the titles of some of the talks to be heard are: "Men of the Constitutional Convention," which should be of special interest to Monterey: "Society of the Southern Mines," "Captain Sutter's Kanakas," and "Boon of the Twenties."

The best consultants available will lead the discussions at the Saturday workshop meetings. That afternoon will be devoted to business, election of officers and the selection of a meeting place for next year. A year ago, the group met in Monterey as the guests of the Monterey History and Art Assn. assisted by the Monterey Chamber of Commerce.

The California Historical Society, with headquarters in San Francisco, has sent an attractive announcement to all their members announcing the purchase of the Whittier mansion as a permanent home for the society. The great stone house is located on the northeast corner of Jackson and Laguna streets overlooking the Golden Gate. The residence represents one of the state's few examples of Victorian elegance remaining unchanged through the years. A new era in the Society's history will begin when a gala reception and open house will inaugurate this permanent home in the fall of 1956.

In 1902 the residence was considered by a group of California architects to be one of San Francisco's seven most architecturally perfect and beautiful homes.

We have just received a copy of "The Letters of Frank Norris," with an introduction and notes by Franklin Walker. The edition has been limited to 350 copies printed by Edwin and Robert Grabhorn for the Colt Press. This collection of letters will be of great interest to all students and collectors of Californiana, for it gives a warm insight into the life and character of one of the state's greatest novelists. Norris' life was short, he died

at 32, but he lived with gusto" and into his brief life he packed a remarkably rich and varied literary career, probably best expressed in "McTeague," "The Octopus," and "The Pit," and much else of literary value.

The Bancroft Library recently assembled its great collection of Norris manuscripts at the University of California. "The letters of Frank Norris" is the first publication resulting from that collection. And through these letters one gets also a sense of the author's easy friendships with his University of California classmates, with great men of letters like William Dean Howells, and with such figures of California's cultural life as Gelett Burgess, Bruce Porter, and Ernest Peixotto, writes Oscar Lewis, chairman of the publications committee of the Book Club of California, who announce the publication.

"Bay Window Bohemia" by Oscar Lewis is a book about San Francisco in the sparkling years between 1890 and the earthquake and fire of 1906. In this fascinating book you will visit the artistic world of the gaslit city and meet the famous men and women whose creative achievements made this city "the Paris of the West." You will read fascinating stories about those famous persons who lived in San Francisco in that era: Isadora Duncan, David Warfield, David Belasco, Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, Frank Norris, Gertrude Atherton, Edwin Markham, Joaquin Miller, Robert Aitken Gelett Burgess, Will Irwin, and George Sterling.

We think this book is a notable addition not only to San Francisco but to the Californiana which describes American artistic life of the 1900s.