

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A New Novel

"The Authentic Death of Henry Jones" is the title of Charles Neider's new novel which is to be published by Harper, to appear in the book shops on August 22. The action in the novel will be of decided interest locally because the scenes are set in Monterey, at Point Lobos and down the coast. Mr. Neider reports, that the story is a tragic one modeled on the life of "Billy the Kid," the famous outlaw of New Mexico.

Mr. and Mrs. Neider have been visiting the Monterey Peninsula for the past few weeks, occupying a friend's house in Carmel. They were here for a longer stay a year ago while Mr. Neider edited for publication the diary of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson which was published by Harper as "Our Samoan Adventure." He had come upon the diary at the Robert Louis Stevenson House as he was making a walking tour of Monterey. With the authorization of the State of California, owner of the manuscript, he undertook to prepare it for publication. He found that many passages had been inked out by an unknown hand, but with the aid of the Huntington Library at San Marino, using infrared and ultraviolet photography he was able to decipher virtually all of the suppressions. These passages are among the most exciting scenes and incidents in the book.

"Our Samoan Adventure" came out in England in April of this year, published by an English company. It has been a great success there and also in Scotland, where Fanny Osborne Stevenson has been made a real personality through the reading of her entertaining diary describing her life and work with Robert Louis Stevenson.

The jacket cover of "The Authentic Death of Henry Jones" is decorated with a photograph taken by the author of one corner of the Stevenson bedroom in the old adobe on Houston street, now a State Historical Monument. The photograph shows the stained adobe wall, a bowl and pitcher on the washstand and the small wooden chair used by Stevenson during his stay in Monterey. The picture is not captioned for the obvious reason that the room had nothing whatsoever to do with the story of the death of Henry Jones.

Mr. Neider has told us that he enjoyed writing about Point Lobos and describing the scenery, the native birds, shrubs, and plants which abound there, and then continuing on down past the Big Sur with the tale. Already a motion picture company has been negotiating for the rights to film the story. The author hopes that if it is filmed, Marlon Brando will be asked to play the lead. Brando is now in Japan making a film, according to Neider, who also reports that naturally there is a love interest in the story but that he has no chosen favorite to play the feminine lead.

Neider's first novel was "The White Citadel." He is now working on the introduction for a book to come out next year, the complete short stories of Mark Twain, which he has edited, and which Doubleday is publishing. He is also the author of a humorous book. "Man Against Woman," and "Man Against Nature" of more serious nature, published by Harper; a deluxe volume "The Great West with Photos of Documents of the West" and a third novel is in preparation.

The regular monthly meeting of the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn. was held Monday afternoon in the Old Pacific Building with J. F. van Loben Seis, the president, presiding. Directors present were Mesdames W. R. Holman, F. L. Knudsen, Charles Mason, Mary Greene, Wesley Heard, M. R. Gragg, Christine Raynsford, Miss Ethel Solliday; Messrs. Fritz Wurzburg, Eldon Covell, Claude Faw, Allen Knight, Myron Oliver, Donald Craig.

The accessions committee had on display two old Spanish pistols and a very handsome colorful silk shawl of the type worn by the women of Monterey in the early days. The directors voted that the articles be accepted for display in the Old Custom House museum. Miss Ethel Solliday, city librarian, and Mrs. William Kneass, curator of the Stevenson House, showed a number of printer's "dummies" for a printing of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Old Pacific Capital." which the association plans to print and have for sale in Monterey. It is Stevenson's short essay on Monterey as he saw it during his stay here.

Great interest was manifested by the directors in Allen Knight's report of the progress of plans for the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the raising of the U. S. Flag over the Custom House on July 7, 1846. On July 7th, 1956, there will be a number of U. S. Navy vessels in the bay. The U. S. Marine band from Treasure Island and a crack drill team of Marines will add to the

program of the day. A party of Marines will land and raise the Stars and Stripes over the Custom House again.

Corum Jackson and Mrs. Helen Hoxie of the Monterey Chamber of Commerce Convention Bureau were present to present a suggestion that historic tours be arranged by visitors attending the conventions on the Monterey Peninsula, co-sponsored by the two organizations. The idea struck a responsive note among those present and a committee will be appointed to work on details for such a tour.