

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 4, 1956

Forty-Eight Signatures

One of the most valuable possessions of the Santa Barbara Historical Society is an original "document bearing the signatures of the 48 members of the Constitutional Convention which met in Monterey on Sept 1, 1849 to form the California Constitution.

Interestingly enough, the society's document carries this heading in French:

"Signatures du membres de la Convention de la Haute California, reunir a Monterey le 1 Septembre de 1849, pour former la Constitution politique de l'Etat."

Research at the Bancroft Library brought out the fact that apparently there are only three known sets of the signatures of the members of the 1849 Constitutional Convention - the Santa Barbara one, one in Sacramento, and the third in the hands of a private collector. The Santa Barbara Society still has the research before them necessary to find out how their signatures, one of California's most valuable collections of names, came into being - and how the introductory passage happens to be in the French language.

Much interest attaches to the background and personalities of the 48 men whose names appear upon this document. We, who attended the California Historical Conference in San Jose recently, heard a most interesting paper prepared and read by Woodrow J. Hanson of the Department of Social Studies at Napa College, which gave a history of the men who prepared the constitution which was ratified here in Monterey in 1849.

For those of our readers who might be interested in the events and background to the Constitutional Convention we recommend the reading of Dr. William H. Ellison's centennial paper appearing in the Pacific Historical Review, August 1949 - taken from a larger study of California politics and government later published in the Chronicles of California. The paper is full of color and interesting detail on the work of the younger amateur politicians who gathered in Monterey to form our basic state government.

It is interesting also to note that there were only five men who were over 50 years of age, there were a dozen of 30 years or under, 14 from 31 to 35, eight were 36 to 40 years of age, and nine were from 41 to 49.

We hope that someday another original copy of the signatures of the men who drafted this historic constitution for the State of California will become available for Colton Hall where the first Constitutional Convention was held. There would be no more fitting last resting place for such an historic document than the place where it was born.

We concur most heartily with a resolution passed last week by the State Park Commission condemning plans for the construction of a bridge across one of the most beautiful spots in the Lake Tahoe area - Emerald Bay.

For a number of years, certain commercial and resort interests have been trying to get a bridge which would make an eyesore out of one of the world's beauty spots. The proposed bridge would, not only ruin Emerald Bay, but with its access roads would be destructive to D. L. Bliss State Park, another magnificent spot of the area.