

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 2, 1957

Early Western Printing

The Book Club of California has delighted its membership with the publication of "Early Printing in California," a work of outstanding interest and importance by Herbert Fahey, and printed by the Grabhorn Press in an edition of 400 copies.

Herbert Fahey, well-known typographer and bookbinder of San Francisco, has long been a student of early California printing. For many years he has been perfecting his book on the subject, and through the Book Club his dream has been realized. In September, 1949, Mr. Fahey published a tiny book, three by two and one-half inches, titled "Early Printing in California," for the San Francisco Club of Printing House Craftsmen who were hosts to the 30th annual convention of the International Assn. of Printing House Craftsmen, Inc. We are fortunate to be the owner of one of these miniature books and many are the time that we have referred to the contents when writing of early printing in Monterey.

"Early Printing in California" encompasses the whole field of typography in the state from 1833 to 1850. Not only has Mr. Fahey explored thoroughly the output of the Zamorano Press of Monterey – the first in California – but also the products of other presses, including those of the early newspapers.

Carl I. Wheat, president of the Book Club of California, writes: "Here we have the story of the founding of culture in the West, the struggles of a few long-visioned men to bring the written word to a land whose only contact with the outside world – until the Gold Rush brought its teeming immigrants – was with Mexico and with an occasional visit of a trading vessel to its shores. It is the story of courage and endurance and makes absorbing reading."

For the historian and student of the period a bibliography of imprints is included in the book. This is by far the most complete to be published to date. It contains a third more material than can be found in any other check-list.

A self portrait of Agustin V. Zamorano is the opening illustration in the book. Zamorano was a Monterey resident and the printer of the "Californian," California's first newspaper, published by Rev. Walter Colton and

Robert Semple. There are nine chapters listing early California newspapers, beginning with historical accounts pre-Zamorano printing, the establishment of the Zamorano press, products of the Mexican press, and The Californian, all historical events happening in Monterey – a period covering approximately 25 years in the history of the state. Four other chapters give the dates and the history of other newspapers published in various parts of California. There is also a list of newspapers, a list of presses and a bibliography of imprints, as well as an index.

In the preface written by Fahey we came across this interesting bit of information: "The early California printers worked with hand presses. They handset the type and handfolded their newspapers. Vividly I recall as a youth in the Santa Clara Valley town of Gilroy, setting the type by hand and 'putting the paper to bed' on Friday nights. A few hours before press time we used to sprinkle the newsprint with water to make it more receptive to the inked impressions of the type forms on the Washington hand press. We locked the type pages in the chase two at a time with long tapered, wooden quoins, and a shooting stick and mallet.

"Then came the pleasure of reading the items that I had set during the week – a pleasure not in the slightest diminished by previous reading of copy and proofs, followed by correction of the proofs."