

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 9, 1957

Charles Krug, Monterey

We attended the dedication of State Historical Landmark, 563, last Saturday on the beautiful grounds of the historic Charles Krug Winery at St. Helena, Napa County. Two other members of the Monterey History and Art Assn. were present at the event, Mrs. Wesley Heard, a member of the board of directors and the driver for the excursion, and Mrs. Mary L. Greens, former curator of the old Custom House. Although we started out from Monterey in the rain the day became sunny and warm, as did Sunday for the return trip to the Peninsula.

The threatening weather forced the committee to move the gala luncheon, attended by more than 400 members of the California Historical Society and their guests, from the gardens at the winery to the Native Sons hall in St Helena. Once again, the day became pleasantly warm and sunny and most enjoyable.

Dr. Albert Shumate was in charge of the dedication ceremony. Hon. Joseph R. Knowland, president of the Historical Society, presided and introduced representatives of the Krug and Mondavi families. Dr. Aubrey Neasham, historian of the State Division of Beaches and Parks, and Miss Ivy Loeber, president of the Napa County Historical Society, were the speakers of the day, the latter giving a complete history of the winery, the first in California.

Charles Krug was a native of Prussia born in 1825. Well educated, liberal in thought and direct in action, he became a teacher, came to America at the age of 22 and taught at a private school in Philadelphia. According to the information regarding Krug and his winery contained in an attractive booklet presented to every guest on Saturday. Krug began a journalistic career in San Francisco in 1852. He watched the Gold Rush days and the beginning of the shift from gold to agriculture in California. He left the newspaper and plunged into agriculture, taking up a government claim near Crystal Springs in San Mateo County. In 1858 he bought 20 acres of land near Sonoma, where he set out a vineyard and began a methodical and scientific study of wine-growing.

In the Napa Valley in 1860 he met and married Caroline Bale, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. E. T. Bale, holder of an

extensive Mexican grant. He thereupon sold his Sonoma vineyard, established himself upon a fine piece of land just north of the village of St. Helena and set out 20 acres of vines. In 1861 he established the first commercial winery in Napa County.

A prized possession of the huge stone winery is the original cider press with which Krug made Napa Valley's first commercial wine nearly a century ago. The setting for this, California's first winery, is one of the most beautiful imaginable. The backdrop of tree-covered hills the huge and tall oak trees, fall colorings of the grape vines and floating white clouds in the blue sky made all the visitors thankful they were alive to enjoy the beauty of Napa Valley on this historic event.

It is interesting to note that Krug married the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. E. T. Bale and to observe the connection of the family with history of Monterey.

Dr. Edward Turner Bale was an English surgeon, who landed from a vessel at Monterey at the age of 3 years, as reported in Bancroft's History of California. For five or six years he practiced medicine in Monterey serving as surgeon for the California forces by Gen Vallejo's appointment in 1840 and 1843. During this time, he married Maria Ignacio Soberanes. In 1840 he opened a liquor store in a room rented from Larkin for a drug store. In 1841 he was naturalized and received a grant of Carne Humana rancho in Napa Valley, where he went in 1843. In 1846 he built a sawmill, and in 1847 and '48 did a large business in lumber, the increased value of his land making him a rich man. He died in 1849 or 1850, leaving his widow, two sons and four daughters.

The Soberanes family was the former owner of Casa Soberanes at 336 Pacific St, now a State Historical Monument. During a visit to Monterey from their home near St Helena, Mrs. Bale became interested in the musical talents of the young Soberanes descendants who were then occupying the home in Monterey, so she presented them with a piano. Young 17-year-old Bernardo Soberanes drove a team of horses from Monterey to Napa Valley to accept the piano. After it was loaded upon the wagon and securely fastened the boy made the lonely, long drive back to Casa Soberanes where the piano was used and enjoyed for many years. That piano is now a show piece in the sala at the Stevenson House in Monterey and is owned by the Monterey History and Art Association. Someday probably it will be returned to Casa Soberanes.