

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Two Sixpenny Pieces

The Drake Plate and all that it means to history is always an interesting subject. In the April issue of Bancroftiana, a publication of the Friends of Bancroft Library, University of California, there appears an article concerning the recent acquisition of two Elizabethan sixpence similar to the coin Sir Francis Drake is believed to have placed in the brass plaque known as the Drake Plate.

The first of the coins, dated 1572, was given to the Library in January of this year by Beram Saklatvala of India, a London agent of India's Steel company. Ed O'Leary, a representative of Kaiser Engineers in Europe and a friend of Saklatvala, presented the sixpence to the director of Bancroft. In exchange, O'Leary took a photo of the Drake Plate, and a book describing when and where it was found, to the donor in London, as a gift of the library.

The second coin, bearing the date 1561, was the gift of Bernard S. Rosen of Oakland, through his son Daniel, a history student at the University at Berkeley. The Rosen coin is in somewhat better condition than the one sent from London, as the latter has a small hole in it, such as might have been made for the purpose of suspending the coin from a watch fob.

Since the year following, its discovery in Marin County in 1936, the Drake Plate has been in the Library of the University of California. The hole for the sixpence is in the lower right-hand corner of the Plate, but the original sixpence itself has never been recovered.

Francis Fletcher, chaplain to the Drake expedition which came to California in 1579, mentions the sixpence in his notes, published in 1628 in the volume titled "The World Encompassed." Fletcher, describing Drake's "plate of brasse, fast nailed to a great and firme post," gives the details of the inscription on the Plate. His message ends, "Together with her highnesse picture and armes, in a piece of sixpence currant English monie, shewing ifselfe by a hole made of purpose through the plate; underneath was likewise engruen the name of our Generall, etc."

The placing of a cross on conquered or discovered lands was a custom usually associated with the Spanish Catholics. Drake, a Protestant, acted in the same spirit when he accepted California from the Indians in the name of his queen, according to the chaplain, but with reference to her "as the motherland nurse of the Church of Christ." An English cross, small but visible, rises from the top of

Elizabeth's crown as she is pictured on the face of the sixpence.

Both coins will be placed on exhibit with the Drake Plate, in the Bancroft Library.

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Beaches and Parks, has just issued an interesting statement of attendance at all state parks and historical monuments in California. The figures for Monterey are satisfying. Asilomar Beach State Park had 152,068 visitors in 1956, 29,068 over 1955; Carmel River Beach State Park was used by 66,275 persons in 1956, a gain of 34,275 over the previous year; all units of historical monuments in the City of Monterey were visited by a total of 184,946 persons. Other parks mentioned were Big Sur, John Little State Park, Point Lobos, which gained 7,202 over 1955; and Zmudowski Beach State Park, with a gain of 2,000 visitors.

The Monterey History and Art Assn. membership at large will gather at the Monterey USO at 8 o'clock Monday evening, April 22, to be entertained with a showing of colored slides of interiors and exteriors of Monterey's Historic Monuments, including many of the exhibits, and a group of the historic old adobe homes. Claude Faw of Carmel was the photographer, and he will preside over the showing. Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Old Custom House will be the commentator. Refreshments will be served.

A group of 40 persons under the sponsorship of the College of the Pacific at Stockton, touring the missions of California from Sonoma to San Diego by Greyhound bus, stopped overnight in Monterey last Sunday. While here the group visited Mission Carmel, the Custom House and Casa Soberanes. Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Stuart, of the College of the Pacific Library, accompanied the group on the Mission Tour.

California's oldest state-supported institution of higher learning, San Jose State College, will observe its centennial next month with special ceremonies. The college was founded in San Francisco in 1857 as Minn's Evening Normal School. In 1862 it became a state institution. Its present campus at San Jose was established in 1871. The Centennial celebration and festival will open on Founders' Day, May 2, with a President's Convocation.