

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Sloss Collection

The Louis Sloss collection of California Paintings has been placed on deposit with the California Historical Society by the San Francisco Art Assn. Reading over the list of painters and paintings we were interested in the number of canvases which had been painted by former or today's artists on the Monterey Peninsula.

The California Historical Society's Quarterly reports in the last issue the personal history of the two Sloss men, father and son. The senior Sloss who originated the collection, was a California pioneer who made a fortune in the Alaska fur trade and in mining. He became interested in the San Francisco Art Assn.

His son carried on his father's interests until his death in 1933. He did not claim in any way to be a professional, he was an amateur collector. To satisfy his interest in the past, he collected paintings by Jules Tavernier, Hill and William Keith; and for contemporary art he purchased Page, Wores, Hudson, and Charles Rollo Peters. He was alert to quality and some of his canvases are among the most refined pictures painted in California during this period.

Seven out of the 27 painters listed in the Quarterly painted and lived in Monterey some time during their life and were well known in California. Alphabetically arranged, the first Monterey artist mentioned is Ferdinand Burgdorff, who is represented in the Sloss collection by a Monterey scene in pastel on paper. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1883, studied at the Cleveland School of Art and in Paris and has been active in California since 1910. Burgdorff lives in a combination studio and home he built on Ronda Road in Pebble Beach. He is a member of the Carmel Art Assn. and often exhibits in the gallery of the Monterey History and Art Assn., and the Bohemian Club of San Francisco. Burgdorff has been most generous with his paintings, giving to hospitals, the USO, the libraries and other worthwhile projects on the Peninsula.

Next on the list is Charles Dickman whose "Cypress Point." Pebble Beach, is an oil on canvas, and "Sunset" on Carmel coast, also an oil is included in the exhibit. He lived in New Monterey in a home which later became the first Community Center. A street in New Monterey is also named in his honor.

Percy Gray, a resident of Monterey for a number of years, is fully credited with saving the Casa Bonifacio from complete destruction. He ordered it taken down, brick by brick, and rebuilt on the Monterey Mesa according to the original design by the late J. C. Anthony. Mr. and Mrs. Gray lived there for many years, later moving to Marin County where he died a number of years ago.

The house is probably best known as the Sherman Rose Adobe because of the legend of the romance of Senorita Maria Ygnacio Bonifacio and Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman (who became the Civil War general) during his stay in Monterey in 1849. Gray is represented in the Sloss collection with three pictures, all watercolors: two called "Eucalyptus," and another "The Oaks." He was a native Californian, born in San Francisco in 1869.

Christian Jorgensen was a native of Norway and with George Sterling is credited in the Quarterly with being one of the founders of the Carmel artists' colony. He came to the United States in 1870 and was the first student to enroll in the California School of Design. Jorgensen is represented with a watercolor "San Francisco Waterfront."

"Indian Village" is a Francis McComas painting in the Sloss collection. He was born in Fingal, Tasmania, in 1875. He studied in Julian Academy in Paris and then came to California and established his home in Monterey in 1895. He is famous for his paintings of cypress groves and trees. He died in Monterey in 1938 and his ashes are buried beneath a huge boulder at Cypress Point, one of the spots he made famous. Mrs. McComas lives in Monterey and is also a well-known artist.

Charles Rollo Peters has two oils in the collection, "Moonlight" and "The Corral." Peters was born in California in 1862. He studied at the California School of Design under Virgil Williams and in Paris under Boulanger and Lefebvre. He was well known for his night scenes and his paintings of the adobe buildings around Monterey. He died in San Francisco in 1928. Peters Gate in Monterey was named in his honor and his home is now the residence of Dr. and Mrs. Spencer Hoyt. His studio is occupied and owned by Miss Judy Todd, whose mother, the late Mrs. Jane Todd, once owned the entire Peters Gate area.

Julian Rix, who has three oils in the collection now in the California Historical Society home on Jackson street in San Francisco, was also a resident of Monterey at one time. He was born in Vermont. The family came to San Francisco when Julian was 4 years old. He was a self-taught painter and for some years occupied a studio in San Francisco with Jules Tavernier. He died in San Francisco in 1903.

Tavernier had his studio at one time in the Stevenson House in Monterey, where several artists lived during that period and later. "April Showers" was chosen by Sloss for his collection of California painters. He was a native of Paris, 1844, came to this country in 1871. In 1873 he was sent by Harper's Weekly on a sketching trip to the West ending in San Francisco where he became a member of the newly formed Bohemian Club. He died in Honolulu in 1889.