

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Christmas Time And Cats

"Christmas in the Gold Fields, 1849" is the California Historical Society's contribution to the 1959 Christmas books. Throughout the contents of this small book two veterans of the days of '49 recall the hardships and heartaches of a long-ago yuletide in California. Joseph J. McCloskey and Hermann J. Sharmann, in personal recollections written in 1909, recreate the warmth and humor of their two contrasting '49 Christmases.

The illustrations are taken from lithographed "letter sheets" produced by such well-known firms as Britton and Rey, Kuchel and Dresel, C. J. Pollard, in the California Historical Society's collection of such items. These outstanding illustrations and the fine printing by Lawton Kennedy distinguish this volume. The letter heads sold for a few cents and served in the Gold Rush days as the illustrated post card of that time.

Lane publishing Company, publishers of Sunset Magazine, Menlo Park, are the distributors of "Christmas in the Gold Fields." The price is \$5.00. Members of the Historical Society should order directly from the Society.

"Concerning Cats," two tales by Mark Twain, is the latest publication by The Book Club of California. This book is most interesting and entertaining as well as unusual. Anyone interested in cats would appreciate it as a Christmas gift we are quite sure.

The club has been fortunate in the past in being privileged to issue no less than three previously unpublished works by or about this most beloved of American authors. It is the opinion of the publication committee that this new book surpasses its predecessors in both originality and entertainment.

The committee for publication relates: "It is not generally known that Twain was an ailurophile or, in less fancy language, a lover of cats. Among papers, now housed and cherished at the University of California, two sketches that exemplify this love were discovered. The sketches were written for his three small daughters and composed with all the charm and skill as if intended for publication. Possibly he planned at some later date to polish and round them off, and either forgot or never found time to do so. His neglect is the club's good fortune."

In addition to writing out these stories for his children, he embellished one with two small drawings, rather reminiscent of Edward Lear's illustrations for the Nonsense Books. These are, it is believed, the only known examples of pictorial art by Mark Twain. These have been reproduced in this volume, which the Book Club of California is proud to publish, along with two unusual photographs, one of Twain himself, the other of his three daughters, Clara, Susy and Jean Clemens, taken about 1884.

"Concerning Cats," a volume of some 50 pages, contains a long and informative introduction by Frederick Anderson, assistant to the editor of the Mark Twain estate. The book is designed by the Colt Press (Jane Grabhorn) and printed in two colors by the Grabhorn Press. Handset, it is a chaining production printed on all rag paper. The edition is limited to 450 copies at a price of \$10.00 a copy.