

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### History Goes On Auction

The collection of books of Dr. Harry Plath, noted Oakland physician and bibliophile, was sold at the Park-Bernet Galleries in New York recently. For more than 30 years Dr. Plath had been gathering together an extensive collection of volumes on the West, and if his library did not contain many of the great rarities, there were sufficient items and enough good solid material to attract a large and enthusiastic audience at the sale, reports David Magee, bookman of San Francisco who was present at the auction.

The high spots in the collection were of considerable value and importance. Two in particular wrote Magee, brought the highest prices at the sale: "The Constitution of the State of California," San Jose, 1850, and Jose Figueroa's famous "Manifesto," Monterey, 1835. Of the "Constitution" only three copies are known: the present one, and those in the Library of Congress and Pomona College. In addition there was bound with it a collection of acts (94 out of a possible 145) passed by the legislature in 1850 and printed that year in San Jose or San Francisco.

Governor Figueroa's "Manifesto" is the second book from the Spanish press in California, printed in Monterey in 1835 by Augustin Zamorano, California's first printer. This little book, crudely executed on a hand press brought from Mexico in 1833, is of great historical importance. It is the Governor's defense of his administration, particularly in regard to his attitude toward colonization plans of Hajar and Padres.

Mr. Howell writes. that the \$9000 paid for the "Constitution" is the highest price any single volume on California has ever brought at a public sale or auction. The "Manifesto" also broke records selling for \$5750, more than three and a half times the figure a similar copy fetched when it last appeared for sale in 1945. At the risk of sounding parochial, it is a pleasure to record that both these rarities will return to California They were purchased by John Howell's Book Shop on behalf of a private collector.

Dr. Plath had the wisdom during his collecting years to buy California County histories. These large usually rather clumsy volumes, with portraits of California pioneers and lithographs of ranches and homesteads,

were once considered of little or no importance, and consequently ignored by collectors. At this sale they were in demand. The rarest of them (rivalled only perhaps by Cox's "Annals of Trinity County"), is A. J. Bledsoe's "History of Del Norte County." Dr. Plath's copy, in the original wrappes, brought \$1300 and was purchased by Peter Decker, a New York dealer. A first edition copy of Monterey County brought \$325, Marin (\$160), Eldorado (\$120) and Amador (\$155), to mention only a few,

A copy of "Miners and Business Men's Directory," printed in the old pioneer town of Columbia in 1856, was purchased for \$1100.

"Brown and Dallison's Nevada, Grass Valley and Rough and Ready Directory," which is the first mountain town directory printed in California, brought \$425. Mr. Howell relates that other such regional books fetched equally high prices.