

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Life In Old Monterey

We have read in Bancroftiana, published occasionally by the Friends of the Bancroft Library, University of California, an interesting list of books and documents pertaining to early California and the Southwest which have been presented to the Bancroft Library through a group of friends after they had been collected by two bookdealers. Warren Howell of San Francisco and Jake Zeitlin of Los Angeles.

Most significant among the newly acquired documents are three journals of Capt. Rivera y Moncada, member of the first expedition to Upper California in 1769 and governor of the colony from 1774 to 1776. The first of these journals, dating from July 10 to August 30, 1774, was written in Rivera's own hand; the others, covering a period from Jan. 1 to Oct. 28, '75 were corrected and signed by him.

With a detail of local color not hitherto known, these journals give a day-to-day account of life and circumstances at Monterey, the capital, and at various missions, then in their infancy; the relations of soldiers and priests with the Indians; and the exploration of the newly discovered land. They also reveal for the first time the existence of eight previously unknown letters of Father Junipero Serra, head of the missionaries, copied into the journal by the governor. These letters are an exciting addition to our knowledge of this famous priest and may have a bearing on the canonization proceedings now in progress, according to editors of Bancroftiana.

The publication reveals further information of the contents of the new gifts to the University Library of Californiana. "The founding of Los Angeles, now the largest city in the American West, has always excited the imagination, yet the details of its birth are clouded in a maze of obscurity and lack of documentary sources. It is therefore most gratifying to find a sheaf of papers in this new collection dealing with the preparations for the founding and settlement not only of Los Angeles but also of Santa Barbara. Here are the instructions to the officer in charge. Information about the number of families and soldiers who were to make up the colonizing party, the distribution of troops in California and the horses and supplies required."

Another gift deals with the missions of the Arizona-Sonora border and the great missionary priest, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, who in 25 years of service, 1687-1711, founded new missions, built churches, taught Indians the white man's religion and customs, and opened new trails.

Bancroft's representatives at New York book auctions have over the years purchased many notable items for its collections. At the recent Parke-Bernet auction of the Plath library, Bancroft acquired, among other things, a complete file of "The California Youth's Companion," published in San Francisco from Dec 3, 1864, to May 13, 1865.

In the opinion of Dr Henry W. Plath and Harold Holmes, noted bookmen of Oakland, this exceedingly scarce California newspaper was one of the finest items offered at the sale.

An extensive collection of the personal papers of the distinguished career of James Duyal Phelan (1861-1930), has been presented to the Bancroft Library by Prof. Benjamin H. Lehman.