

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 18, 1959

### **Saving Yesterday**

We should all be very proud and loyal to the California Historical Society as well as to our own special group, the Monterey History and Art Assn., Ltd. If it were not for these societies, much of our local and state history would not be preserved and there would be fewer safe depositories for old documents, letters, photographs and the like. Nor would many of the historic homes, sites, and buildings be in existence for future generations to look upon and appreciate.

Many cities and most counties in the state have organized historical societies with large memberships and all are doing magnificent work. There is a Monterey County Historical Society with headquarters in Salinas which meets once a month generally in the Hartnell College library.

Last Friday evening the California Historical Society met in the "Mansion," a huge old home at 2090 Jackson St in San Francisco, which the society purchased a few years ago as its headquarters.

The program was an outstanding one, first of all because it gave the membership an opportunity to meet Mrs. Mae Reed Porter, who has placed on loan and display a collection of more than 80 watercolors by Alfred Jacob Miller, a first time showing as a group on the West coast. A champagne reception followed her lecture.

Because we have written so much about Lt. Alfred Sully who came to Monterey in 1849 with Col. J. D. Stevenson's regiment, played in the first plays at California's First Theater, married a young Spanish senorita and later became a high officer in the U. S. Army - because of all this we were interested in the fact that Alfred Miller had been a pupil of Sully's father, Thomas Sully, a famous painter in the early 1800s.

After painting for three years in Baltimore, Miller moved to New Orleans in 1837. There he met Sir William Drummond Stewart, whom he accompanied as artist on an expedition into the Rocky Mountains in 1837-38. Miller made over 300 on-the-spot watercolor sketches of Indian life which were to be elaborated later into large oil paintings for the walls of Sir William's castle in Perthshire, Scotland.

It is from these sketches that the present selection has been made and it is the story of their rediscovery, and an appreciation and interpretation of them that Mrs. Porter presented at the review.

To quote one of her remarks: "We removed the newspaper covering from the top of the box and, filled with curiosity, began to lift out the contents, unmounted watercolor sketches one hundred years old and as fresh in coloring as the day they were painted. As we drew out one after another we were impressed by their beauty and the story they told."

She also wrote this statement in her foreword to Bernard de Voto's "Across the Wide Missouri."

The John Muir Memorial Assn. has been organized in Martinez with four special objectives. They are (1) restoration of the Muir Manor, the home of John Muir at 4440 Alhambra Ave., Martinez, (2) the acquisition of the home by the State Division of Beaches and Parks for a historical museum and state park, (3) sponsorship of an annual memorial pilgrimage to Muir's grave, and (4) the promotion of interest in John Muir's life and work.

Much of Muir's energy was directed towards the creation of national parks to preserve wilderness and forest for all the people of the nation. What more fitting memorial than a green park to honor Muir's name in his own home community and his home state. It costs \$1 to become a member of this association. Mrs. Harriett Kelly, 1225 Ulfian Way, Martinez, is the secretary.