

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 11, 1959

Songs of Wine and Gold

"The Wines of Los Angeles County" is the third in a series of four quarterly Keepsakes of California sheet music covers published by the Book Club of California for their membership.

The words and music adapted by George G. W. Morgan was published by Henry Marsh & Co., San Francisco in 1876, and priced at 50 cents per copy. The lithograph illustrating the wine industry of Kohler and Frohling and appearing on the cover of the song, is very attractive, showing a grape arbor, casks of wine, laborers in the vineyards, wine press, a horse-driven spring wagon being loaded with cases of the wine and an overseer on horseback.

Robert B. Honeyman Jr., of San Juan Capistrano is named as the owner of this presentation copy of "The Wines of Los Angeles County."

Robert Woods of Los Angeles is the author of this Southern California story which accompanies the lithograph and the words of the song itself. He writes that Charles Kohler, a musician turned wine maker, arrived in San Francisco from Germany in February 1853, not yet 23 years of age. He had studied music in his native country before leaving there to seek his fortune. Little did he realize that the grape and not the violin would pave his way to wealth and fame.

For a time Kohler did play the violin, forming the German Concert Society, but in the latter part of 1855 he and his flutist, John Frohling decided to become wine men. Frohling went to Los Angeles in May 1854 to purchase a vineyard. Today the 18-acre Kohler and Frohling property would be west of Central avenue, between Seventh and Eighth.

These two men were instrumental in founding the German colony at Anaheim, which conveniently also became a source of supply of the grapes they needed. In 1861, much to the disturbance, of some of the citizens, Frohling rented space from the city fathers for a wine cellar. The location: under City Hall!

"Pull Away Cheerily, the Gold Diggers' Song," is the title of the last of the first four early California sheet music covers.

The original copy of this song is also owned by Honeyman. It was written and sung by Harry Lee Carter, in his entertainment of "The Two Lands of Gold," and also by George Henry Russell, in Payne's popular entertainment "A Night in the Land of Gold." The music was composed by Henry Russell, whose autograph appears on the margin.

John and Mary Swingle of Berkeley wrote the history of the song and music for the Keepsake. Parts of their story include these remarks:

"In the first performance of 'The Two Lands of Gold; or Australian and Californian Directory of 1853; the stage became a digger's tent, with native birds surrounding a "conspicuous" kangaroo. Carter, sang to his own accompaniment as the dioramic views "some after oil sketches made expressly for this entertainment by Mr. Catlin, the great American traveler," shown by opening a curtain at the back of the tent.

A London newspaper of April 11, 1853, reported the entertainment:

"Part I - To New York and Across the Rocky Mountains, by the Great Salt Lake and the Colony of Mormons, to Saint Francisco, California - includes an 'Encounter with the Grisley Bear in the Sierra Nevada, or Snowy Mountains'."

"To Part II - Australia-belongs Pull Away Cheerily!," An advertisement in The Times, May 4, 1853, says of it: "Published today . . . Quaintly rhymed to a pretty tune, and sung with great spirit by Mr. Carter. . ."

The music, by Henry Russell, 1812-1900, who composed over 800 songs, including "Oh! Woodman Spare That Tree!", "The Maniac," "Mighty Niagara" and "The Gambler." He had entertained in America in the 1830s; "Half American," he called himself and said his own style of descriptive song came from listening to Henry Clay orate. While playing the organ in Rochester, Russell discovered that sacred music played quickly gave popular airs when, "quite by accident," he turned "Old Hundred" into his "Old Dan Tucker."

He traveled with Catlin beyond the Missouri, hoping while Catlin painted the Indians, to record their songs - a plan given up with the first sound of what he called "hideous noises."