

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Early Sheet Music**

The Book Club of California has recently issued the first of the series of 12 Keepsakes for 1959. The Keepsakes are published quarterly with four in a packet. This series is "California Sheet Music Covers," with the following titles: "The California Pioneers," "The Exposition Fair," "The Wines of Los Angeles County," and "Pull Away Cheerily!"

"The California Pioneers" is a song respectfully inscribed to Mrs. J. Emerson Sweetser with words and music by Dr. M. A. Richter and published and sold by Atwell & Co. in San Francisco. A note at the bottom of a lithograph relates that "The California Pioneers" was the first piece of music published in California. The original copy is owned by Robert B. Honeyman Jr., San Juan Capistrano.

Helen S. Giffen, executive director of society of California Pioneers, wrote the text for the No. 1 Keepsake. She relates:

"While California is relatively a young state in its culture, the predilection for music has always been apparent. Much of this was brought along with the 49ers to establish a trend far removed from the soft cadence of the Spanish songs of the Mexican period. Our early pioneer music was, lusty and ribald, sweet and innocuous, as the case might be, depending whether it was warbled in a mining-camp saloon, or the salon of some plutocrat fresh from the gold mines."

The early publishers sheet music in California laid great emphasis upon the cover art of their publications, with the names of the lithographers prominently displayed. These are collectors' items today.

The composer, Dr. M. A. Richter, is listed in the 1852 San Francisco directory as residing at 102 Pine St. Mrs. J. Sweetser, to whom the musical effort was dedicated, is lost in obscurity. The name of the lithographer, Quirot and Co., came upon the scene in San Francisco in 1851.

No. 2 in the Keepsake series is "The Exhibition Fair," a musical production to aid in the advancement of the mechanical arts and sciences, and in the annual Mechanics' and Manufacturers Fairs. These fairs were a leading feature in San Francisco's early educational, cultural and social life and played a part in the city's history for more than 40 years.

John C. Stump, librarian, Mechanics' Institute, San Francisco writes:

"The first such fair was held on Sept. 7, 1857, on Montgomery street between Post and Sutter streets. James Lick donated the free use of a block of land he owned, where the pavilion was built at a cost of \$7,000 including \$300 that the Institute had on hand.

"The flag-bedecked pavilion housed 941 articles offering, for those who came to see, a display of natural products, inventions and productions of art. Awards were, made in metals, a diploma and certificates of merit. Bands played, crowds attended for the opening address and for the 19 days thereafter.

"In closing, a ball was given to celebrate the fair's success. This fair netted the Institute \$2,784 besides paying for the pavilion building."