

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Three Gold Rush Songs

There are three more California Sheet Music Covers in the present series of eight Keepsakes published for its members by the Book Club of California: "El Eco del Pacifico," "New Express Galop," and "I Don't Want to be Drowned." All of these songs were published during the Gold Rush in San Francisco by Atwell & Co.; M. Gray, and Charles F. Robbins & Co.

Oscar Lewis wrote the history of "El Eco del Pacifico", explaining that the cover reproduced has a humorous side for it is a spirited drawing of the publisher's place of business.

Another unusual feature is the composition's title, probably intended as a salute to the Spanish language section, which occupied page four of a San Francisco French newspaper, L'Echo de Pacifique, Jacques Coo was the composer, Mr. Lewis states that he has not been able to turn up so much as a line about him.

Joseph F. Atwell believed in advertising, for the company name appears four times on the building at 172 Washington St. in San Francisco. Atwell was born in Boston in 1811. He joined the California gold rush in 1849 and settled in a rented store (8 x 14 feet). There, Mr. Lewis writes, he did some highly profitable business in trading musical supplies, one source of information reports that he sold for \$16 in gold dust sets of guitar strings he had bought in New York for 50 cents.

Besides the honors due him as California's first music publisher, Atwell had a number of other distinctions. In 1851 he was elected "assistant alderman of the fourth ward" and two years later was made president of the board. In 1860 he moved to Virginia City where he served as justice of the peace. He died in Oakland in 1891 at the age of 80 years.

"The New Express Galop" was dedicated to the Lady Patrons of the Pacific Union Express Co. by the composer, George T. Evans, and published by M. Gray, 609 Clay St., San Francisco. Evans Was associated with the New California Theatre. A plain title on the cover cost 30 cents, but it the purchaser wanted the elaborate lithograph he paid 50 cents a copy. The lithograph showed the train's engine coming round a turn in the Sierra Nevada on the line of the Pacific Railroad.

Lucius Beebe of Virginia City is the author of the history of this song "New Express Galop". The Pacific Union Express was of great importance in the history of California. Ownership in 1869 was divided among such well-known names as Lloyd Tevis, Charles Crocker, Darius Ogden Mills, and Henry Bacon. Wells Fargo later paid \$5,000,000 to the owners of the Pacific Union to be permitted to absorb its contracts and other assets, but accepted Lloyd Tevis along with them as the newly enlarged carrier's president, according to the information recorded by Lucius Beebe.

The eighth composition in the Keepsake series for Book Club members is "I Don't Want to be Drowned." The cover for this song of the Gold Rush days is a lithograph of the burning of the Golden Gate and dedicated, to the survivors of the wreck. Frank Soule wrote the poetry; P. R. Nicholls composed the music and Charles F. Robbins & Co. were the printers and publishers in 1862. The lithograph was by George H. Baker – a drawing of the Golden Gate showing the flames in color coming from the ship.

The Pacific Mail Liner Golden Gate was lost by fire on the 27th of July 1862 off the Mexican coast. This 20-30-ton side-wheeler which had been a crack ship in the Pacific Mail Steamship Co's Panama service for over a decade, sailed from San Francisco on July 21st carrying some 233 passengers, a crew of 100, and nearly \$1,500,000 in treasure.

John Haskell Kemble of Pomona College, who wrote the history of the disaster for the Keepsake, reports that Soule's poem was inspired by an incident reported by a passenger, A. H. Bates. He was standing near the bow of the boat when Abbie A. Manchester, an 8-year-old child, asked him to save her since, as she put it, "I do not wish to be drowned."

The words of the poem, both amusing and tragic, are printed, below the reproduction of the lithograph.

Robert B. Honeyman of San Juan Capistrano is the owner of all three of the original lithographs of these songs.