

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **A Pick-and-Shovel Account**

The Quarterly New-Letter of the California Book Club announces a fall publication of "A Trip to the Gold Mines of California, 1848", which will be another contribution to Western history. The author was our own John A. Swan, builder of California's First Theater, a hitherto unpublished manuscript which he wrote after a journey to the Mother Lode country.

Swan was an English sailor who settled in Monterey several years before John Marshall's momentous discovery in the tailrace of Sutter's Mill at Coloma. "Swan's viewpoint is decidedly that of the pick-and-shovel miner," the Book Club reviewer reports, "and he presents a vivid and down-to-earth picture of the camaraderie in the diggings during the few months when the mines were the almost exclusive possession of California residents."

As Hubert Howe Bancroft has pointed out, life in the mines in 1848 was an entirely different thing from what it was during 1849, after the news of gold had brought thousands of Argonauts swarming to the Sierra foothills. Swan's account, while brief, captures much of the wonderous excitement which gripped the first miners, we are told. The book will also serve to introduce to a wider audience one of the California's least known but most colorful writers.

Swan wrote an article describing his journey from Mazatlan, Mexico, to Monterey, which appeared in the Pioneer, a publication printed in San Jose, on March 30, 1878. In his later years he prepared a number of sketches of pioneer life in California. Many of these were published in newspapers of the day, and there they have lain forgotten for three-quarters of a century. Bancroft paid tribute to the merit of Swan's work, and—perhaps "A Trip to the Gold Mines" will serve to bring him much more to the notice of those who would capture the spirit of Old California. The book will be printed by Taylor and Taylor and will be ready in early fall.

Another publication of early spring was Jessie Benton Fremont's "A Year of American Travel" published by Platin Press at \$12.50 a copy plus California sales tax. A limited number of copies of this book are still available.

Mrs. Fremont made a visit to California in 1849-50 and of this visit she wrote: "There are some years of our lives that compare with the others as our October days do with those of the rest of the year." This statement may also apply to books, and the edition of Mrs. Fremont's "A Year of American Travel" is such a book, our Book Club editor believes.

This handsome volume is a highly desirable addition to collections of Western Americana. Its unusual engravings by the California artist, Ernst Freed, combine modern art symbolism, with an ancient engraving technique, the 15<sup>th</sup> Century "manière criblee" of "dotted print." The excellent introduction by Patrice Manahan, editor of "Westways," has received many compliments for its careful research and appreciation of Mrs. Fremont.

"Malaspina in California," by Donald C. Cutter, is an account of the Spanish exploration and scientific investigations in California by Alejandro Malaspina in September, 1791. It is of interest in Monterey for the reason that the Monterey History and Art Assn., Ltd., is sponsoring a showing of historical items from Spain concerning Malaspina and his explorations to be arranged in Casa Serrano from June 27<sup>th</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup>. The book is featured by nineteen of the first illustrations made in California, most of them signed by Jose Cardero, the unofficial artist of the expedition. Four color reproductions of birds are notable among the illustration. This volume is bound in full decorated cloth and paper is early American Text.

These three books have been published by John Howell Books, and designed and printed by Lawton Kennedy. They are notable contributions to both Western Americana and to the world of printing and design.