

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 4, 1961

The Silverado Squatters

Malcolm W. Steel of Carmel is the second of the readers of the Dairy to contribute additional information to our recent stories on Robert Louis Stevenson, The Silverado Squatter, Mt. St., Helena and the state owned park on the side of the mountain where a monument is dedicated to the memory of Stevenson.

Mr. Steel wrote: "It gave me much pleasure to read your story a few days ago concerning Robert Louis Stevenson and Mt. St. Helena due to the fact that I, with others, have climbed it on several occasions.

"On my first trip in 1920, we traveled by steamer from San Francisco to Vallejo thence by electric train to Calistoga and from there, on foot, to Molly Patton's Inn at the old toll gate.

"Molly provided excellent meals for the many mountain climbers who made her establishment the starting point for the ascent on the following morning. In addition, she had the history of the entire area at her fingertips.

"I believe it was Molly who told us that it was the intention of James Lick of San Francisco to construct the Lick Observatory, now standing on Mt. Hamilton, on Mt. St. Helena. Mr. Lick, it seems, was more or less crippled at the time and had to be carried up the trail on a sort of litter. As the story went, the litter bearers were suddenly confronted by a large rattle snake and dropped their burden in confusion.

"Apparently the snake did no harm to anyone in the party, however, Mr. Lick is said to have held the occurrence against Mt. St. Helena and made his decision to erect the observatory on Mt. Hamilton. How true the story is or not, that is the way it was told to us.

"As our trip was made on one of those cold, clear days in February the view was all you say it is for, we could see Mt. Shasta on the north, the San Francisco streets, Santa Cruz, Farallon Islands and the Sierra Nevada from Shasta to somewhere south of Yosemite. I believe we could have seen Monterey had the Santa Cruz mountains not been in the way."

Did you know that Mt. Hamilton was named after the late Rev. Laurentine Hamilton of Oakland?

One of the large main rooms downstairs in the Stevenson House on Houston street, has just been

rearranged to accommodate most of the Stevenson furniture which was presented to the House several years ago by his step-daughter, the late Mrs. Isobel Field, and Mrs. Ethel Osbourne, the widow of his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, who now resides in Saratoga.

On the south wall, Mrs. Anne Issler, the curator, has hung a large and handsome watercolor painting, painted by Hugo Fisher in 1887, of the Manoa Valley as seen from King Kalakaua Avenue in Honolulu. Hugo Fisher was the son of Harrison Fisher, the well-known illustrator and originator of the "American Girl" of magazine cover fame. He (Harrison) worked for a number of years on various San Francisco newspapers and eastern magazines before his death in 1934.

This large painting measuring 50 by 34 inches and encased in a handsome gold frame was the gift several years ago of Miss Dorothy Peacock of Carmel, a member of the Monterey History and Art Association. The picture is especially appropriate to hang with Stevenson mementos because Stevenson must have frequently enjoyed this view while a guest on the Island.