

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Early California Jewelry**

In the "Hand Book of Monterey," published in 1875, there appear several classified advertisements of jewelers and silversmiths in Monterey.

Listed are the McLure Brothers on Washington street; John Hall, Abrego street; Celestino Trujillo, and P. H. Masters, both on Alvarado street. No numbers are listed; Monterey in those days did not need house numbers - everyone knew everyone else; the business buildings were few in number and of course there was no mail delivery.

Today we are particularly interested in the jewelers and designers of jewelry, for there still are in existence in Monterey and in California much of the beautiful jewelry - designed - by these early merchants. Many of the individual owners and their possessions are important enough in the history of the country to be listed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Upon request we recently received a list of the jewelry plates that were made in Monterey under the WPA projects program. Amelie Kneass, now Mrs. Alfred Elkinton of Carmel, was the director here for this project.

On the data sheets and water color renderings are listed the following objects from the Monterey area as filed in the National Gallery of American design at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.: Six plates of earrings, two plates of jet crosses and chains, one plate of watch chains, two plates of bracelets, three plates of pins, two plates of buckles, two plates of brooches, one plate of brooch and earrings; one plate, silver horse and watch fob; and two photographs of objects; oval pin, silver horse, and dove stick-pin.

Mrs. Millie Birks presented three pieces of very beautiful jewelry to the Monterey History and Art Assn, a number of years ago. They were made by her grandfather, Peter H. Masters, an early day jeweler who advertised in the "Hand Book of Monterey and Vicinity."

Masters, the father of Mrs. J. G. Lambert, wife of Captain Lambert, who for 33 years was the government custodian of the Old Custom House in Monterey, died in the Custom House in 1879. He specialized in abalone jewelry, a medium which is still popular in costume jewelry.

Mrs. Birks' three pieces are more beautiful and valuable than the abalone jewelry and much more interesting as historical items of early California and the artistic work of the old time Western designers of jewelry.

Her pieces were composed of gold quartz, taken from the California mines and pure gold from the state's abundant supply. The minute design engraved upon the framework around the beautifully polished quartz of the brooch, is the work of an artist. The earrings, of course, designed for pierced ears, are of matching quality.

The gold dove pin mentioned in the list of jewelry from the National Gallery is a piece once owned by the late Mrs. Maria Antonia Bach Thompson and we suppose now a part of her estate. A colored cut of this piece of jewelry, Monterey-designed, is pictured in color in "The Index of American Design." It was made and designed by Celestino Trujillo during the 19th Century in Monterey, has been in Mrs. Thompson's family for several generations. It was made from a \$20 gold piece, as was a gold buckle, for Maria Antonia Castro de Sanchez, the sister of Gen. Manuel Castro, a maternal relative of the late Mrs. Thompson.

Miss Maria Antonia Field has an heirloom of which she is very proud - a ring which was made for her great aunt, Ana Munras, Senorlta Munras' initials are engraved into the gold band made from a California nugget. Celestino Trujillo, was also the designer of this bit of women's jewelry. Miss Field has told us that this jeweler's shop was in the LaPorte building (formerly Alvarado adobe) at the south end of Alvarado street, according to the information given her by her parents and her maternal aunts.

A few years ago, upon the death of his wife, E. J. Bolce of New Monterey, presented to the Monterey History and Art Assn, the matching earring of the collection given by her sister, Mrs. Millie Birks. It has joined the jewelry now safely stored in the Stevenson House vault.