

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Scenes of Wonder

If I should select a book for all ages at this time, I certainly would not overlook "Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity" selected by Roger R. Olmsted from Hutchings' California Magazine 1856 through 1861.

To say the book of 406 pages lavishly illustrated is a truthful statement of fact. Young and old alike would be fascinated just looking at the 306 wood engravings, let alone the specific comment "which would advance the project of the moment whether it be an illustrated essay on the method of coining gold at the San Francisco Mint, the trials of winter in the Sierra mines, the museum at the What Cheer House, the prospects of the honey bee In California . . . before he finds what he wants: a description of Sacramento River salmon fishing, or the Farallone Islands' egg industry."

Hutchings' California Magazine sought to instruct or divert one of the most high - spirited, receptive, optimistic, and literate audiences that fortune had ever thrown together. In 60 numbers, totaling 2,880 pages, issued between July 1856 and June 1861. James Mason Hutchings offered these readers, vivid insights into the institutions, industries, and natural history of the wonderful and curious state in which they had so recently made their homes, the introduction reports.

The best of Hutchings had been chosen by Roger R. Olmsted, with an eye to presenting the modern reader a portrait of the days when California was growing up, when "the air was fresh with the joy of new discovery, aglow with the confidence that tomorrow's wonders would bring unalloyed blessings to a deserving and fortunate populace."

Accurate, on-the-spot, illustrated coverage of such topics as mule packing to the mines, or even the scourge of poison oak and how to treat it - will please the most precise historian and pleasantly satisfy the most casual reader.

A bit of the life history of Mr. Olmsted will be appropriate here. He is the son of Mrs. F.A.L. Vossler of Pacific Grove, and the grandson of the noted San Francisco publisher and bookseller, the late A. M. Robertson. He was born on Admission Day, 1928. He also confesses that engineers and even privateers also lurk in his antecedents.

Although he received his BA and MA from the University of Nevada, the lure of The-sea led him to further study at the University of California and then to a position as curator of the San Francisco Maritime Museum from 1957-1961.

A footnote tells this: "He is an historian of intense and ardent admiration for those in the past who were guided by lofty purposes. Hence his attraction to Hutchings. Also, with regard for the lofty, he lives on Mt. Olympus in San Francisco with his wife and new baby."

"Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity" from Hutchings' California Magazine is faithfully reproduced by the publishers: Howell-North, Berkeley, Calif., 1962. The price is \$6.