

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 2, 1962

### **'A Ranchero Feat' Reviewed**

Twenty - two years ago Carl Hoffman sent out to his friends as a Christmas greeting for 1940 a facsimile of "A Ranchero Feat," illustrating the virtues of the California horse, an excerpt from "A Tour of Duty in California," by Joseph Warren Revere, lieutenant, U. S. Navy. An original of this greeting, printed by the Grabhorn Press, was presented to us by a friend, so today we will share "A Ranchero Feat" with our readers.

Lt. Revere was a lineal descendant of Paul Revere of Revolutionary fame. He spent some time in Monterey before the gold rush and wrote of his tour of duty in California in a small book published in 1849 in New York and Boston - one of the many valuable volumes contained in the private library of the late Miss Vida Jacks, which she left in her will to the Monterey Public Library. Revere also was in command of the military district of Sonoma during his California tour of duty.

With this introduction to Joseph Warren Revere we will continue on to "A Ranchero Feat".

"The value of a horse is proportioned to his adaptation to the various operations of a cattle - farm, his courage, skill and fleetness in the pursuit of wild cattle and his familiarity with their subjugation and management. The severest test of these qualities is his behavior in attacking a bear, a feat often undertaken by a single ranchero, without other aid than his horse, his inseparable friend the riata, and the accustomed knife worn in his garter. Thus equipped he will also lasso the largest and most ferocious bear; and, drawing the brute to a tree, and taking a turn or two around him, will dispatch him with his knife, while the sagacious horse keeps the riata fastened to the saddle at its fullest tension. The bear, indeed, is immensely stronger than the horse, and if lassoed by the forepaw, could, by merely standing on his hind legs, draw up several mounted men united by their riatas but skill and intrepidity accomplish what mere force could never effect; and I have seen the fiercest and wildest mountain bull attacked and overcome by a single skillful vaquero, who carried him off as peacefully as if he were a puppy led by a string.

"On such occasions the horse exhibits the wonderful sagacity of his nature, his sense of his own importance,

as the trusty ally of his master, and a degree of excitement and pleasure at least equal to that of his rider. The intelligence of the animal then most nearly approaches human reason, and his large expanding, his reeking coat, his cautious approaches to the foe, around whom he lightly careens, like a boxer in the arena, the stiffness of his muscles when he plants and braces himself for the sudden and violent jerks of his antagonist, far more powerful than himself, and above all, the careful and jealous watchfulness of his piercing and regardful eye, form a picture of equine sagacity and attitude which would delight a Horace Vernet.

"And when the bellowing and raging bull, at length overcome in the struggle between strength and skill, falls heavily to the earth, cowed and conquered at the feet of the victor, it is surprising to see the apparent scorn with which the noble beast looks on the catastrophe, and how guiltless of the meatier passion of revenge - he seeks only to recruit his exhausted strength for the next conflict."

The one illustration in the folder is a facsimile of a plate from the original edition of 1849 as sketched by Revere, lithograph by William Endicott & Co. of New York, showing the hunter, the horse and the huge bear tied to the tree as described in the text.

Lt. Joseph Warren Revere writes of California: "I have traveled in all sorts of ways, in all sorts of countries; in the toiling diligences of France, and on the broad pack saddle of a contrabandists' mule in Spain; I have been whisked across the Pontine marshes by half wild colts, guided by shouting postillions; have been jolted half to death in Syria and Egypt on the unsteady deck of a 'desert ship,' conducted by Arabs clamorous for 'baksheesh'; traveled 'dawk' in India, with 'the last new novel' in a palankeen; and once had the pleasure to back an Elephant on the Island of Ceylon. But all these were vulgar joys compared with the rapturous pleasures of traveling in that part of the United States called California. Seated in your firm chair - like saddle your horse held well in hand;" going in full gallop, which is the traveling gait of the country, what can be more delightful, more satisfactory, surrounded as you are with such glorious accessories, breathing the fullness of life into every sense? Who cares for the artificial world across the continent, when he can thus enjoy wild and uncontrolled independence?" o