

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 25, 1962

First Theater's History

Carmel Martin, always a faithful and interested friend, has written an informative letter to the Diary giving additional facts connected with California's First Theater in Monterey.

"My father, John Martin, and Jack Swan were very friendly. During the latter part of Jack Swan's life, he was a frequent visitor at our home near Carmel Mission.

"Jack Swan borrowed some money from my father and gave him a mortgage on the Old Theater to secure payment of the loan. Jack Swan could not pay the mortgage so deeded the Old Theater to my father to liquidate the loan. After my father died, the Old Theater was distributed to my mother, Elizabeth Martin, my sister, and my four brothers and myself.

"Some time prior to 1900, W. R. Hearst, Sr., through the medium of his San Francisco publication, initiated a program to save the landmarks of California. The Old Theater was selected by Mr. Hearst to be saved. A sale was negotiated between Mr. Hearst and the Martins. Subsequently, Mr. Hearst made a "gift of the Old Theater to the State of California.

"Mr. Hearst also conveyed a lot to the State of California which I believe was the location where Father Serra and Portola landed in 1770. now marked with a huge cross and a bronze tablet, and giving full credit to these two historical persons, one a priest and the other an explorer, who claimed California for Spain."

Laura Bride Powers writes in her book "Old Monterey": "It is chiefly due to Carmel Martin and Harry Greene that the romantic old theater was saved from disintegration.

The Casa Serrano, headquarters of the Monterey History and Art Assn., at 412 Pacific St. in Monterey is to be open each Wednesday from 1 until 4 o'clock in the afternoon to receive visitors. Members of the association will be hostesses. Last Wednesday Mrs. Josephine Fussell and Mrs. Wilma Ostrander were the gracious hostesses and assisted about 30 visitors in learning the history of the old adobe and conducted a tour of each of the rooms. Garden flowers decorated the rooms. The bouquets were supplied by the hostesses, as will be the custom of the future.

Today, Miss Edna Browning and Miss Marian Eley, presided as hostesses at Casa Serrano.

Mrs. William Oberhaltzer, chairman of the garden planting committee, may be seen in her working costume each day at Casa Serrano designing, supervising and planting the memorial garden at the south side of the adobe building. For the present, work is confined to the construction of the adobe walls to follow the contour of the lot and build up planting areas and spaces for a small patio. A couple of olive trees will be featured within the garden.

The Monterey History and Art Assn. has been receiving some very valuable gifts in recent weeks, all historical items from Peninsula residents, which are on display and which are acknowledged with much appreciation by the association.

Mr. E. G. Ryder of Pacific Grove last week gave a very old and beautiful platter to the History and Art Association. Accompanying the gift was a typewritten history of the china platter obtained from the Hamilton family Bible and copied by Mrs. Ryder.

"This 300-year-old platter originally belonged to Gallatin Hamilton of Glasgow, Scotland," and was later given as a wedding gift to his son, William. William, son of Gallatin Hamilton was born at Glasgow, Scotland, March 7, A.D. 1647. He emigrated to America and landed at Cape Cod, Mass., A.D. 1668. He later moved to North Kingston, R.I., where he met and married Mercy Benny, from England.

"Gallatin Hamilton, learning of the coming marriage of his son William, sent him a sea-chest of various household articles and among them was this platter."

Many of the articles have been handed down through succeeding generations and the last of the Hamiltons to share in these treasures was Gallatin Hamilton - my father - (Signed) Mrs. E. G. Ryder (nee Gertrude Hamilton.)

A gift of recent date now comfortably installed in the delightful children's room in the Stevenson's House as a loan exhibit from the Monterey History and Art Assn. is an antique American Empire mahogany child's cradle, made about 1905 and the cradle's quilt, given by Mrs. Benjamin Keith and her daughter, Alice Lee Keith. The cradle was first owned by Edwin S. Keith, Boston, N.Y., great-grandfather of Miss Alice Keith, and then by her father Benjamin Keith - the husband of Edith Lee Keith.

The quilt was knitted by Mary O'Neil Keith, aunt of the late Benjamin Keith of Monterey.