

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Before Abalone Was Known As A Delicacy

Eighty years ago, the abalone did not enjoy the reputation as a course for delicious dinner as it does today, according to the writing of Charles Nordhoff in 1882. The Chinese appreciated its rare taste and its tender meat when properly prepared and cooked, for this unusual shellfish lived in Far Eastern waters and was used by the natives for food.

Writing in 1882, Nordhoff declared, "The meat of the abalone spell which is as much tougher than that of a Long Island quahog as that is tougher than an old boot, is a delicacy among the Chinese, I do know how to cook it - probably it is used to make one of the 3,500,099 soups from which a red-buttoned Mandarin takes his choice when he orders his dinner."

At the time Nordhoff wrote, two companies of Orientals were collecting abalone on the lower California coast. He stated, "The Chinese cleave the shells from the rocks at low tide and carry them to the place where they are prepared. There the meat is cut from the shell and boiled; after boiling it is salted and dried; and when it is thus cured it is packed in bales, sent to San Diego, thence to San Francisco and from there Chinese merchant ships transport it to their own country."

Nordhoff was born in Prussia, educated in Cincinnati. He was a printer by trade, and in 1847 was a sailor-boy on the U.S.S. Columbus, and for a time commander's clerk on the Warren. He left the sea in 1853, to become a prominent newspaper man and author of a dozen books of acknowledged merit. He revisited California several times in 1871 and later years. Among his works are "California for Health, Pleasure and Residence," and "Northern California, Oregon and the Sandwich Islands." In 1885 he became an editorial writer on the New York Herald according to Bancroft's History of California.

The San Fernando Valley Historical Society is fighting to preserve three of California's historic spots. Collections are being taken to preserve Leonis adobe, and members are being urged to write letters to keep property near the San Fernando Mission from being used as a mortuary. Another letter campaign is in the offing to preserve Tujunga City Hall, In danger of being torn down.

"The Warner's Ranch - Butterfield Station Puzzle" by William Lawton Wright, is just off the press in a limited edition of 300 copies. Hobby-historian William Lawton Wright has assembled information to show the true Butterfield Station of the two disputed places on the Southern Overland Road. While serving as a director of the San Diego Historical Society, Wright became interested in the ruts and ruined stations of the Butterfield Trail, and for nearly 30 years has specialized in the Carrizo Corridor in eastern San Diego County, one of the least changed segments of the Butterfield Trace.

I thought as I browsed through a review of "Folk-songs for Little Cowboys," a Riverside Wonderland recording, that it would be enjoyed and greatly appreciated Christmas gift for both boys and girls and even grownups. It is a Bill Grauer Production, 235 W 48th St, New York 36, priced at \$1 98. It consists of traditional music from farther west. These cowboy songs were "specially selected for children."

On the disc, Merrick Jarrett vocalized, in easy going manner, most of the 13 selections. Other popular folk singers supply the rest of the program while two square dance tunes complete the introduction to a portion of our musical heritage The harmonious adaptations, however, only partially resemble the words and performances of songs that were popular during the days of cow-camps and cattle-trails.