

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 4, 1963

Books Full Of History

Two small books, packed full of history are here before me, both on California's very early days. One was written and published in 1930 and the other just a few weeks ago in Sonora in the Mother Lode country. Mrs. Margaret Hanna Lang, formerly of Monterey and now living in Sonora, is the author of "Early Days in Sonora," and George William Beattie in 1930 wrote "California's Unbuilt Missions," Spanish plans for an inland chain.

Mrs. Lang has written in a foreword: "Real history is not written in forms as history . . . After all the truth of anything . . . does not lie in someone's account of it. It lies in all the 'small parts of the time' (Josephine Tey). To refute any claim that I am an historian, I offer the explanation that I have attempted to compile from records and reports of events made at that time a chronicle of one of the most dramatic periods of American history, the Gold Rush in California."

Mrs. Lang also relates facts which prove her great interest in history, her source material and the interest of her many friends in the production of her books. "In Tuolumne County a treasury of vigorous pioneer records was opened to me, records of the first courts and juries under American rule. A private collection of rare gold rush newspapers. To fill gaps in the stories the libraries at Stockton, Modesto, Carmel, Monterey, Berkeley, Sacramento and especially Sonora, furnished books written more or less contemporaneously with the event." All of which proves that our author took time and patience to complete her task to the very best of her ability and I think that ability was well demonstrated in the finished product.

Margaret Hanna Lang left Monterey to go to the Mother Lode, in 1955. While a resident of the Monterey Peninsula she had a studio in Castro adobe headquarters, now torn down and "restored" for a parking lot, at the corner of Tyler and Pearl streets, where she designed and made and fired pottery. She also taught the art of making pottery to fascinated students. She also was a relief curator for the Division of Beaches and Parks and served in various historical monuments here.

Mrs. Lang is a graduate of Smith College, Northampton, Mass., where she majored in languages and history.

During World War II she was on the hospital staff at Fort Ord with the National Red Cross. She is a member of American Assn. of University Women, The Monterey History and Art Assn. and the Tuolumne Historical Society. Her credits in history were acquired from the University of California and credits in art, stage crafts and pottery from UC at Los Angeles and San Jose State College.

Now we must tell you that the book is autographed by the author and dedicated to "Mary L. Green, former curator of the Old Monterey Customs House, and Mayo Hayes O'Donnell, whose home is the old Mexican adobe, Casa Soberanes, Monterey." And we are very proud of the author of "Early Justice in Sonora."

The substance of "California's" Unbuilt Missions, Spanish Plans for an Inland Chain," by George William Beattie, was first embodied in a paper read before the Fortnightly Club in Redlands. There are many illustrations of the beautiful San Bernadino Asistencia which now belongs to the County of San Bernadino. Restoration was begun upon the ruins in 1828 by the county's historical society. Fr. Narciso Duran wrote in 1837: "This asistencia has lately been given to some private individual in spite of my protest in behalf of the rights of the Indians of San Gabriel."

The volume also is illustrated with views of the asistencia of Santa Ysabel, San Antonio de Pala, all in the proposed chain, together with a map of the Spanish missions in Southern California. Squares mark mission sites in the coast chain. Circles indicate proposed sites for inland missions. Telame was in the Tulare region, but its exact location is not given. In addition to the four mentioned there was to be one near Newhall to be named Cajon de Los Difuntos. Then one at Tejon and one near Tulare, where there were many Indians at that time.

Santa Ysabel Asistencia of mission San Diego appears in a sketch made in 1853 by the artist of Lt. R. S. Williamson's surveying party seeking a route for a railroad to the Pacific. The chapel stands at the foot of a mountain. It was founded Sept. 20. 1818.

In Father Mariano Payeras' report of 1815-1816, he pleads for a mission in the Tulare Valley because of the spiritual needs of the great population there of tractable natives.