

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### Fans And Frames

While I was writing about the various old fans now on display in Casa Serrano, the headquarters of the Monterey History and Art Assn. at 412 Pacific St. in Monterey, I was prompted to make further research on the history of fans.

More than likely your grandmother carried a beautiful wedding fan that matched her prayerbook when she married. Perhaps you were hard put to find an excuse for not carrying it at your own wedding - but even so if you possess it today, count it valuable.

Fans, as you may know, reach back into antiquity and they may vary in size from the miniature ones which are no longer than 6 inches, to great fans of ostrich plumes. There are also big fans of wood attached to ceilings in homes, often over the dining table, especially in the Southern states. In the old days, they were activated by a slave who monotonously pulled back and forth on a rope which led into the house, over a pulley, to the beautifully fashioned fan suspended over the table.

But the wedding fan is another matter. It was used, pure and simply, for wedding - you might say, a marriage ceremony showpiece. It is quite easily recognized. Usually the sticks of the more valuable ones are of ivory or mother of pearl - both of which may be carved or perforated. The silk panels usually have a handsome scene such as you might have found on a beautiful \$2 valentine a generation ago but with this addition - a pair of chubby-cheeked cherubs coasting through the wide blue yonder. The top of the fan usually was fringed with the sheerest of hand-made lace.

Such a description very well fits the framed fan presented to the Monterey History and Art Assn. by Mrs. Winifred Wolf of Gonzales and now a treasured exhibit in Casa Serrano, open to visitors each Wednesday afternoon.

In Europe where most of these fans are made, the art of fan making was recognized as a decorative art and the craftsmen belonged to a guild or union of their own.

Wedding fans are coming back into vogue - not because marriages are on the increase - but because fans can be used for pure decoration. Fragile and beautiful as they often are, quite a number of people are framing them

today, as they are shown at the Casa Serrano, and a pair of them can make a truly attractive decoration.

If it is a good fan - 100 years old let us say not to be arbitrary, but because the materials and the workmanship seem to have cheapened considerably after the middle of the last century - then your wedding fan may be a collector's item and command from \$50 to \$100. But don't sell it, if you have one, unless you must. The history and art association would appreciate having it for future generations to see and enjoy.

In the charming small parlor in the Stevenson House on Houston street in Monterey there is on the mantle a clock in a walnut case with three brass knobs on top. The door in front has two glass panels. On the back inside a large label is pasted "Waterbury Clock Co.," and the date "Nov. 26, 1860" written in pencil. This clock had once belonged in the Gonzales family. It was acquired by the Monterey History and Art Assn. and loaned to the Stevenson House when the building was first opened as an historical landmark.

In the Serrano Adobe there is an exhibit of daguerreotype cases with old-fashioned pictures still in them. Most of them were placed there by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bentley. We have had so many visitors ask questions about how the cases were made that it prompted me to look up the history of these old-style frames.

The daguerreotype cases of black plastic material were patented in 1854. The first cases were made of paper that was molded like paper mâché. They were painted and varnished to look like leather. I find the improved, patented case was made of a composition material of shellac and sawdust. It was rolled under heat and pressed into molds. Red, green, black, brown, and tan cases were made out of this material. They went out of fashion at about the turn of the century. '