

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Books On Americana

Today we will give our readers a list of several of the very good books on America which we have enjoyed reading in recent weeks. All of them are excellent for those who enjoy reading history and for those who are collectors of good designing and printing - a joy to behold from the designing and print shops of Lawton Kennedy, The Plantin Press, Barbara Holman and others.

The Book Club of California will very soon be issuing its spring, 1953 publication "The Book of Geoffrey Chaucer," an account of Chaucer's works from the 15th Century to modern times, by Charles Muscatine. The text of some 20,000 words was written especially for the club by Muscatine, professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley.

John Howell - Books, San Francisco, is announcing a rare 1852 Overland Guide describing rivers, campsites, landmarks and probable Indian reaction on the trail from Missouri through country now known as Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and on to the California gold fields.

"The Platt and Slater's "Guide to California," one of the most important and most scarce of the overland guides, (only three copies are known), was printed in Chicago in 1852 at a time when most of the existing guides were unreliable, haphazard affairs, compiled by returning '49ers. The book, according to the announcement, I was bibliographically unknown until Henry Wagner turned up a copy some years after publication of his bibliography on the West, "The Plains and the Rockies." Both the title page and the first 16 pages of the text were missing. Even the authorship was uncertain. Later a copyright register was located in the Library of Congress for the years 1851-1870. The entry was for the work of N. L. Platt and N. Slater: "The Travelers Guide Across the Plains," the Northern overland route, from the States to California.

Nathan L. Platt was a New York physician and lawyer who went to California in the first rush. Nelson Slater was a teacher and a minister from Weber County, Utah, who set out for California in 1850.

The introduction was written by Dale Morgan, facsimiles of the original map and title - pages of the

text for the 59 pages are included. It has been designed and printed by Barbara Holman. The edition is limited to 475 copies at \$15 each.

John Howell -Books has also just mailed out Catalogue 34, "English Literature." The catalogue is divided into three parts: English Books Before 1700, the 18th and 19th Centuries and Facsimiles, Scholarly Editions, Critical Works. The book was compiled by Theodore Hoffman and designed and printed by Lawton Kennedy. A collector will find this catalogue very valuable.

Another fascinating book "From New Spain By Sea to the Californias in 1519-1668" by Maurice G. Holmes PhD, brigadier general, USMC (ret). The book was published by Arthur H. Clark Co., Glendale 4, Calif. It was Issued in a limited edition, printed direct from type and the type destroyed.

Gen. Holmes writes: "The discoveries of Columbus opened a century of exploration that sent many Spanish expeditions along the coasts of the Californias, both Baja and Alta. Opening with the movement toward the Californias initiated by Cortez, Narvaiz, and Alvarado, in their invasion of the Aztec empire, the author here stresses the nautical phases of the advance."

The mystery of the author of Cabrillo's log receives much attention, with a strong case in favor of Juan Paez, who with Cabrillo served under Narvaez and later Cortez in Mexico, as "escribano publico" in Guatemala, writes the author.

The author researched manuscript courses in Museo Naval, the Bibliotheca de Palacio, and Archive General de Indias, in Spain during 1955 - 56. His service of seven years in Spanish-American areas greatly enhanced preparation for this work. His naval and marine background has provided stimulus as well as advantageous capabilities for this task, which achieved for him his doctorate in history.