

Peninsula Dairy Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 12, 1963

California's First Bibliographer

Alexander H. Taylor was the first bibliographer of California. He came to Monterey in 1848 and resided here until sometime in 1860. In his peculiar way Taylor was a collector of historical material, and in this, perhaps, we are most greatly indebted to him.

While in Monterey he had acquired a large collection of Spanish documents relating to the history of California from 1770 to 1846, among which were some 49 or 50 letters written by Padre Junipero Serra. There were 8,000 documents in this collection 800 dated before 1800 and 4,500 before 1840. The collection was offered by Taylor to Congress.

In his memorial dated March 30, 1854, he stated that he required no remuneration. All that he petitioned was that Congress permit the publication of them under his supervision. There were "documents and papers of public character consisting of letters from the authorities, religious, civil, military; viceroyalty and Republic of Mexico; proclamations from governors; letters and reports of priests, establishments and missions; Indians; Pious Fund; and land public and private."

Congress before and since has been supremely indifferent. The Congress of 1854 evidently believed that consistency is a jewel, according to the report published in the Quarterly of the California Historical Society. On May 17, 1854, the memorial was referred to the committee on public lands and ordered to be printed. Like the memory of that Congress, both have long slumbered in peaceful oblivion. After vainly waiting for three years, Taylor presented the collection to the archbishop of the Catholic church in California and in the diocesan residence in San Francisco they are still extant—priceless collection, I am told.

Another collection of great historical value was a gathering of about 400 specimen newspapers printed in California from 1846-1854. As many of these were short-lived, some of them would now be quite unique. With these also were several proclamations printed on the Monterey Zamarrano press between 1834 and 1844.

This collection was presented to the Mercantile Library in San Francisco, which with its entire collection, was

lost forever in the fire of 1906. The personal library of Alexander H. Taylor, a small collection, was sold by him to the University of California about 1871 or 1872.

Taylor came to California with the earliest motley and variegated band of adventurers—though never of it—at the time of the discovery of gold at Coloma. He was born in South Carolina on April 18, 1817. He came to California from Hong Kong in the brig Pacific, landing at Monterey on Sept. 8, 1848. From 1849 until 1860 he resided at Monterey, where for a few years he was clerk of the U.S. District Court. In 1860 he moved to Santa Barbara, where he lived until his death.

He married a daughter of Daniel Hill, an early and prominent American settler whose wife was Rafaela Olivera de Ortego. The Taylors were married in 1860 at Santa Barbara Mission and "La Petera," a part of Hill's ranch was his wife's portion.