

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 25, 1965

More About Hunt

A letter came from Dr. R.A. Kocher to my desk today in which he wrote:

"It made me very happy to read your column in this evening's Herald about my old teacher Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt. I must get his new book, "Boyhood Days of Mr. California," and write him a letter.

"I attended the San Jose High School from 1900 to 1903 and got to know Dr. Hunt and admire him as a person and teacher. I was in his class in American civil government.

"We always thought of him as another Abraham Lincoln. He was well over six feet tall, with the same rugged, gaunt features as Lincoln. I recall his lectures as being as lucid as the written word. He was like Goldsmith's character who amused the rustics ranged round, with the wondering remark 'that one small head could carry all he knew.'

"I was born in San Jose, my father having started a watchmaking and jewelry store on First street in 1868. It was in continuous business until my younger brother, Edwin, closed out about three years ago. I never regretted leaving San Jose; it always seem[ed] provincial-minded. They should have zoned it years ago against the too-commercial development that has now ruined this beautiful valley.

"I retired from medical practice over a year ago and have been trying to complete a history of nutrition for which Knopf gave me a contract some 30 years ago. I defaulted on his expectation that it could be written in two years in my spare time from practice. It proved to be a lifetime job. I shall be 82 next month but fortunately am in good health.

"Thanks for reminding me of dear old Rockwell D."

Way back in 1937 Dr. Hunt published a small book entitled "New California the Golden," which I believe is now out of print and much more costly than it was 48 years ago. At that time he was dean of the graduate school of the University of Southern California.

He already had become the author of "The Genesis of California's First Constitution," and "California, An

American Commonwealth." It was a California state series published by the California State Department of Education in Sacramento. It is one of my prized possessions and an excellent reference book.

He had long been thoroughly convinced not only of the intrinsic values to be derived from a study of local and state history but also of the high quality of this particular study as a logical approach to national and world history. The colorful and romantic character of California history bestows upon the learner an unusually rich heritage, which should exert a powerful influence for useful and loyal citizenship.

The titles of the chapters will give readers some idea of the contents of "New California the Golden" "California, the Child of Spain," "Before the Gringo Came," "Westward Movement and American Acquisition," "Building the Empire State of the Pacific," "The Struggle for Social Order," "The State and the Nation" and last, but not least, "California, the Golden."

The illustrations in this old book are numerous and informative, including a very old one of Colton Hall an adobe house near Monterey, (which I do not recognize), the old Custom House Monterey in 1845 from the Army Pictorial Service (a drawing I had not seen before) and another very old picture of Monterey Bay, from an original drawing by a distinguished French traveler who visited California in 1841.

It might be well for the State of California to republish this book for the school children of the public schools of California, for it is not outdated and contains so much valuable information.