

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Botanist's Trip

If one is a bit sentimental – or appreciative of old type and bindings – it is a pleasure to pick up and enjoy an old book.

Such was the case when we turned the pages of "The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste," edited by A.J. Downing and published by Joseph and Co. of Boston from 1849 to 1950.

The article which interested us most, because of its reference to Monterey, is entitled "A Botanical Account of California."

The editors give credit to the Journal of the Horticultural Society of London. It was written by Mr. Hartwig, a botanical collector employed by the society to explore Mexico and most of the Pacific.

His journey to California took place in 1846, and he "wandered through the valley of the Sacramento without a dream of the wonderful changes which a couple of years would make in the destiny and appearance of that country."

An editor's note expresses the hope that "some of our California adventurers, returning home, will bring pockets of seeds of beautiful California horse chestnuts and the evergreen oak, described by Mr. H., that a trial test may be made of their fitness for adorning pleasure grounds in England."

Hartwig left Mazatlan on the 11th of May and arrived at Monterey on the 7th of June, after a passage of 26 days. He wrote back to England that the verdant fields and pine-covered range of mountains at the back of the town formed a pleasing contrast to the dried-up vegetation about Mazatlan.

The predominating tree, he recorded, was the evergreen oak (*Quercus californica*), forming a tree 36 feet high with globular crown and having branches much distorted.

Hartwig went on to relate that the late Dr. Coulter (1845) collected seeds of pines "near the seashore of Monterey, that locality no doubt being Point Pinos, as it is the only habitat near Monterey where pines grow close to the beach; it is at the same time the place where I made other observations concerning the

various pines." He also noted that it took cones 18 to 24 months to ripen.

On the dry banks of ravines northeast of Monterey the English botanist saw the California horse chestnut (*pavia californica*). He described it as extremely ornamental. On one tree, by his count, were 400 open flowers and buds. He continued with a list of shrubs, paying particular homage to the ceanothus, which he found very common in the pine woods.

On June 22, 1846, Hartwig left Monterey for the mission of Santa Cruz. "Passing along the shore over the plains, which present the same vegetation as about Monterey. We arrived in the afternoon at the mission, after a gallop of seven hours," he wrote to friends in England.

Returning to Monterey on July 2, Hartwig made another excursion to the Rancho de Tularcitos. Following the narrow valley of the Carmel River, he entered a beautiful wood of alders, willow and plane trees, some of the latter attaining a height of 80 feet and a 12-foot circumference.

On Aug. 23 Hartwig boarded the bark Guipuz Coana, whose owner, Don Jose Antonio Aguirre, invited him to take a trip up to the bay of San Francisco. About moon of Aug. 28 they "anchored off Yerba Buena (San Francisco) a small town rising rapidly in importance."

During his visit in the north, they were joined by Gen. Vallejo, Hartwig related, and proceeded to Mission San Rafael. After enjoying the hospitable board of the general for three days, Hartwig left his companions and returned to Monterey to find that the rainy season had set in. "El Toro", he wrote, "which lies due east of Monterey, has already been twice covered with snow, but it soon disappeared again."