

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Monterey Artists: 1914**

A small article in the Monterey Cypress February 10, 1914 attracted my attention for the reason that it contained the names of several Monterey artists I had either known or knew their work. These men had banded together so the news item said, to assist in rejuvenating the Art Institute of San Francisco and placing it on the metropolitan footing that it should have been as far as art was concerned.

The first man mentioned in the list was Bruce Porter. Then there was Francis McComas, Armin Hansen, Charles Dickman, Charles Rollo Peters, Xavier Martinez, Gottardo Piazzoni, and others. All of these men are now gone.

The late Francis McComas made his home in Pebble Beach for many years before his death but in his early days in Monterey, he lived for a time in the Sherman Rose House on Alvarado street, the adobe home of Miss Ygnacia Bonifacio. A few years ago two of McComas' large paintings were presented to the City of Monterey, one hangs in the Public Library and the other in the Council Chamber of the Few Memorial building – truly valuable additions to the cultural life of the community. They were gifts of Stuart Haldorn of Carmel.

Charles Dickman and his wife had a large combination studio and home in New Monterey. Dickman street in New Monterey is named for this well known artist.

Arthur Mathews spent a great deal of time on the Peninsula after 1910, mostly in Carmel where he had a home and a studio on Santa Lucia street. He was noted for his very beautiful murals. Armin Hansen once told me that he had been a student under Mathews for two years at the Mark Hopkins Art Institute in San Francisco.

Charles Rollo Peters came to Monterey in the early years and built a home and studio in the part of Monterey which is now known as Peter's Gate. His studio was the home of the late Mrs. Jane Todd and is now occupied by her daughter, Miss Judy Todd. He was noted for his nocturnal scenes, many of which are prized possessions in Monterey homes. His son, Rollo Peters lives within a stone's throw of the old family home.

Gottardo Piazzoni had a home-studio on his ranch far up the Carmel Valley and it was there that he passed

away a few years ago. He was a fine artist, a true Bohemian and a good friend to those who were privileged to enjoy his hospitality but the rough trip to his ranch barred many from that experience. Martinez spent most of his time in San Francisco and the bay area but the final years of life were spent in Carmel where he was a familiar sight on the streets.

Armin Hansen in 1913 and lived and painted first in the W.A. Parker home on Pacific street. Later he bought the property on El Dorado street and settled there in 1923, with his wife Frances. His etchings and paintings are well known among artists and laymen alike. A large oil of Carmel Mission, "Vespers," painted by Hansen, is now hanging in the Monterey Library on loan from the Monterey History and Art Association and there is one in the chapel over the altar in the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. The Monterey History and Art Association also has a large one on loan from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stanton, and a large collection of his etchings a gift in his memory from Mrs. Hansen.

Bruce Porter and his wife lived on the coast below the Big Sur and there he painted and wrote poetry. Later he became a noted decorator. Armin Hansen once told me that he assisted Porter in the decoration of the Charles Blaney home near Saratoga in the Santa Clara Valley. He passed away in his Pacific avenue home in San Francisco on November 25, 1953, at the remarkable age of 88 years.

Bruce Porter was probably best known in the world of art as the designer of the Robert Louis Stevenson monument in Portsmouth Square in his native city of San Francisco. He also designed and executed the window above the altar in St. Mary's Episcopal church in Pacific Grove – a memorial to Miss Helen Reed, a deaconess of the church, who had named it and had suggested that the Annunciation be pictured in the altar window. Mr. Porter spent several days in the Grove at that time in order that he might embody the local colorings and atmosphere.

Porter's murals include those in the Pacific Union Club and the First Unitarian church in San Francisco. For two years he and Gelette Burgess published the literary magazine "The Lark".