

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Book Of Visitors

A few years ago the Friends of the Bancroft Library began the publication of a leaflet "Bancroftiana" which is issued to the Friends occasionally to inform them of what is going on at the library at the University of California. While searching through for a reference to another subject I ran across a reference to a "Book of Visitors." It was presented to the library by Ann Bancroft, the granddaughter of the creator and collector who gave his entire library to the University many years ago.

The article interested me and so I read on and discovered that many old Montereyans had visited Bancroft in his San Francisco home before the collection came into state ownership. Ann Bancroft came into the library one day after it became established, so the story related bringing as a present the old guest book kept by her grandfather. On the first page is the heading, "Visitors to the Bancroft Library." The first entry, dated January 24, 1876, is Juan B. Alvarado, San Pablo." It was certainly no accident that Governor Alvarado was so honored by the first place. For several years Hubert Howe Bancroft and his friends had used their wiles to overcome the governor's hatred of the "gringos" and persuaded him to contribute his valuable reminiscences to the library, the article relates. At last, in 1875, he began to dictate the five-volume "Historia de California" now one of the Bancroft treasures.

The evidence from the guest book substantiates previous conjectures that visitors to Mr. Bancroft's library of Pacific Coast history came from many parts of the world. Registered were Col. Warren, editor of California Farmer; Stephen J. Field and E.J. Molera, both of Monterey, Hal McAllister, Horatio Stebbins, J.L. Flood, Arthur McEwan, George Davidson, Mrs. Peter Donahue, and many more ladies, and even a whole normal school class; The Rev. William Ingraham Kip, first Episcopal bishop of California; M.G. Vallejo, Lachryma Montis; Jacob P. Leese, Monterey; Harold Gray Otis, Santa Barbara; Phinias Banning, Wilmington; J.E. Doolittle, Volcano; James G. Fair, Virginia City; F. McClatchy, Sacramento and Bernard Moses, Berkeley.

The entries stopped with the year 1892 and there were many pages left empty. After the guest book arrived at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, it

was decided to put the book back into active service, and after more than half a century, to use it once more as a guest book of the Bancroft Library. In the second edition of Bancroftiana, The Friends of the Library were advised that signing this book obligates the signer, just as it did Governor Alvarado, in 1876, to give their efforts to the continued growth of the collections of California."

Other reports in that issue of Bancroftiana which concerned the history of Monterey were:

"Within the past few weeks a Castro collection has begun to take shape, as well as an additional group of Larkin Manuscripts, consisting mainly of commercial correspondence. We now have likely-looking nuclei of Spear and Hartnell collections. Letters and accounts of Will A. Leidesdorff, Jacob Leese and others are being classified."

In another issue of the Bancroftiana appeared this item: "In the final days of Spanish rule in California it was an Englishmen, consular official in northern Mexico, Alexander Forbes, who wrote the first book in English relating wholly to California, and other Englishmen played their part in the development of the West's resources."