

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Pioneer Teacher

Memories of the days when she taught school in a mountainside schoolhouse built of driftwood from ships dashed to pieces on the rocks south of Point Sur, were kept in a diary by the teacher, Miss Maude Flint many years ago.

I have chosen today to share these memories with the readers of today. Miss Flint died in 1952 in Palo Alto at the age of 82.

Fresh from Stanford, with an M.A. degree in Greek, she rode into the Santa Lucia mountains on horseback, lived in a log cabin and ministered to the ills as well as the ignorance of her pupils. They called her "Medico," and she once performed a surgical operation on a boy with a pocket knife.

Miss Flint reports: "My trip (from the Jolon Valley in which the San Antonio Mission is located) was over an old Indian trail, with a deep canyon on one side and high mountains on the other. We rode surefooted mountain-trained horses, and pack mules carried my baggage and the groceries, etc., brought over from the other side by these two settlers.

"I had a trunk all packed but just in time received a letter from my clerk saying: 'For God's sake don't bring a trunk. Pack everything in sacks or bags.' So I did. As we reached the end of the trail over the mountains, the most glorious view met my sight. It was 9 o'clock at night and a great expanse of the Pacific opened up before me with a full moon shining down in glory.

"I lived in a log cabin with a family named Lopez. The father, a fine old Castilian gentleman, I have learned since, may have been one of the soldiers who came over with a big expedition. If he could have spoken English or I could have spoken Spanish, I would have found out all about his life because he liked to talk ... It was like living in the Middle Ages...

"If Stanford had only known about the old Indian artifacts that my children and I used to delve in, they might have been able to secure the relics instead of Berkeley. That happened later when I was in the Philippines."

One of the settlers in the Santa Lucia Mountains where Miss Flint taught was a Mr. Harlan. She had three of Harlan's children as pupils.

"Those children, one little boy only five, climbed that steep mountain every day in all kinds of weather. They were barefooted most of the time, and their feet received harsh treatment on the rocks. That dear little fellow used to call me, 'My Miss Flint.'

"One time I had to perform a surgical operation on his great toe to remove a large sliver. I sterilized the foot with diluted carbolic acid and went to work with a pocket knife. His sister held him. The patient recovered in short order. The nearest doctor was 60 miles away in King City. I was called 'Medico' there in Lucia..."

Red clay provided the paint for the "little red schoolhouse" built of driftwood laboriously carried up the mountains on pack mules. There was a spring at the edge of the redwood grove, the last grove of redwoods to the south.

The postmistress at Lucia, according to Miss Flint, kept her mail in a small table drawer, where "any chance traveler might take it or leave it." Many mananas often passed before anything was done about the outgoing mail.

The next year the young teacher moved to Jolon to teach in the Nacimiento district across the river. There she lived in one of two old adobes. It was in the repair of the roof of one of these that some of the red tile were taken from the roof of San Antonio Mission. Others now cover the Southern Pacific Station at Burlingame.

On fiesta days, Miss Flint recalled, everyone repaired to the mission for services.

Miss Flint was graduated from Stanford in 1897, and received her master of arts in Greek a week later. She was the first teacher at Big Sur. In 1901 she went to the Philippines as a teacher. Her brother, E. Royal Flint, who died in September 1951, was the author of "Stanford Forever."