

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Historic Sites

Resolutions on behalf of the preservation of major historical sites have been passed by the California Historical Society's trustees since January 1st, 1965. They include the following:

"The Benicia Arsenal in Benicia is one of the oldest United States military installations in California, consisting of buildings of statewide historic importance which date back to the 1850's. The arsenal land is owned by the city of Benicia, which plans to lease to a private firm for development.

"The division of Beaches and Parks has made a thorough study of the area, deemed it of prime state historic interest and developed extensive plans for a proposed historic state park on a section of arsenal land comprising the key historic buildings. The division's proposal does not preclude the development of hundreds of acres of arsenal land for industry purposes outside the historic building complex. The trustees urged the preservation of Benicia's historic arsenal.

"Drum Barracks in Los Angeles County near Wilmington is threatened with destruction. Drum Barracks, built around 1860, was the Union Army headquarters for the Southwest, covering areas of California, Arizona and New Mexico, and is therefore of wide historic interest.

"The barracks buildings were built by Phineas Banning and housed many famous military personnel, including Gen. Winfield Scott, Gen. Phillip Sheridan, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, (a presidential candidate), General Stoneman (later to be governor of California). The building is unique in California and is included in the historical buildings survey of the American Institute of Architects.

I have just rediscovered a booklet published by the California Centennials Commission in cooperation with the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego in 1950. I was pleased and surprised when I discovered in the historic art how much had been loaned for the exhibit from Northern Californians, well known in Monterey, who contributed much to make it the interesting and historic success it enjoyed.

Listed among the contributors were: the Monterey History and Art Assn., Thomas W. Norris of Carmel, Mrs. Tobin Clark of San Mateo.

Going from the history and art association was a very old painting, "View of Chinatown, Monterey, 1880," the work of Henry Cleenewerk, an artist unknown to the association or to directors of the southern gallery. It is an oil now hanging in the association's headquarters in Casa Serrano. This picture was reproduced in the San Diego brochure.

Thomas Wayne Norris of Carmel, president of the association at the time of his death, loaned "Stage Holdup at Night," painted by Edward Borein (1873-1947). The oil is reproduced in the book. Borein, a native Californian, was known for his paintings and etchings of men, horses and cattle of the Southwest, as well as for his portrayal of missions of early California.

Mr. Norris also loaned "Threshing Machine" by William Lewis Marple (considered one of the talented landscapists of San Francisco in the 1870's); "San Francisco Fishing Fleet" by Charles Dorman Robinson (1847-1933) and an etching, "Portola's Conquistadores," by Edward Borein.

Among the watercolors in the exhibit was a watercolor painting, "The Presidio and Pueblo of Monterey, 1827" by William Smythe. In the identification marker on the painting loaned by Edith Coulter of Berkeley, is the following information: "An officer in the British Navy and an artist of two expeditions, Smythe painted a number of scenes in California. This one is the earliest work in the San Diego exhibit of California historic art, and the earliest known view of Monterey. It is also reproduced in California Pictorial."