

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Museum Exhibits

The Monterey County Historical Society was organized in 1953, incorporated in 1956, established a museum fund in 1961 and opened the "Cottage Museum: in April 1964 in Sherwood Park, Salinas.

With the preservation of significant historic sites and buildings as one of its major goals, it is the hope of president, officers and membership that the first brochure will help stimulate assistance from those who share the same interests and objectives.

Admitted loss by the society is, and we quote "Among the many local historic buildings lost is the Hartnell Adobe. Established by William E. P. Hartnell in 1836 in the foothills of the Alisal east of Salinas, it was active for only a few years, although it's sturdy construction withstood 128 years of weathering, only to be knocked down by bulldozers in 1963. It was the first formal institution of learning in California.

In the society's first brochure appear three other pictures: A photograph of South Gabilan street taken in 1897; an "ultimate in transportation in the 19th Century." A coal burning engine and a picture of the Farmers' Union store, also taken in 1897, with two horse drawn wagons standing in front.

I must mention the bird habitats of Monterey County which are so well shown in one of the museum cases, arranged by two members of the Audubon Society: Mrs. Charles Anderson and Mrs. Lou Harris. Eggs are from the John Sherwood collection, classification by Bert Robinson of the Hartnell College teaching staff. It is very beautiful to look at and professionally arranged.

"Rancho Days" is a well done case containing guns, powder, flasks and loading tools, a quilt braided rawhide, spurs, cattle brands, horse-hair ropes and much else.

There is a handsome silver-mounted saddle (circa 1850) originally in the Ortega family of Santa Barbara. It is on loan from William Jeffery.

In the early day wearing apparel case "Buttons, Bustles and Bows" are many gifts from the Geil family, prominent in early day Salinas. There is a black lace dress which belonged to the mother of artist Lester Boronda and many other charming arrangements.

Here is a money making scheme I had not heard of before. In one of the cases is a quilt made in 1898 by ladies of the Episcopal Church. Each quilt block contains names of Salinas residents who paid 19 cents each for the privilege of having his name embroidered on it. The quilt was given to Beatrice Porter as a prize for having collected the most names. There is also a brown satin jacket from the Fenton family.

In the Sea Life exhibit is an old Spanish map of Monterey Bay from Mrs. Berta Bollinger, Pacific Grove. Other contributing to this exhibit are "Palette of Sea Shells," Soberances, and clam shell fossils, James Riley.

There is an exhibit of children's toys given by Mrs. Helen Currie and Miss Florence Baker.

Typical of early-day merchants, the "Farmer's Union" General Store was an important contributor to the commercial pulse of the young city of Salinas. In the museum brochure is this history of the "Farmer's Union": "From an 1877 newspaper, the following excerpt is taken: 'A meeting of the merchants of Salinas is to be held to see if they will close the stores on Sunday and not keep open after 6 p.m. during the week. At the present time the stores keep open every night until 10 o'clock, so that the clerks have no time to themselves'."

About 1906 the property was sold to the Elks Club for conversion to a lodge facility, which has now been vacated. Many articles from the store may be seen in the various exhibits at the "Cottage Museum."