

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Stevenson's Inkstand

Back in our Centennial days of 1946 and 1949, Mr. Richard Holland of Fresno placed on loan a very beautiful antique pewter inkstand in the Stevenson House in Monterey. Recently Mr. Holland came back to Monterey and presented the inkstand to the Stevenson House State Memorial here.

This inkstand is a highly prized addition to the Stevenson House collection as it has a direct connection with Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson describes this very same inkstand in his essay "An Autumn Effect" from his book *Juvenilia*.

In the fall of 1875 Stevenson went on a walking tour of one portion of England. One night was spent in the Inn in Wendover, Buckinghamshire, which was owned by Mr. Holland's father.

The following is a description of the interior of the inn and inkstand as left us by RLS in his essay, "An Autumn Effect".

"The corner cupboard was agreeable in design; there were just the right things on the shelves, decanters and tumblers, and blue plates, and one red rose in a glass of water, the furniture was old-fashioned and stiff.

"Everything was in keeping, down to the ponderous leaden inkstand on the round table. And you may fancy how pleasant it looked all flushed and flickered over by the light of a brick companionable fire, and seen, in a strange, tilted sort of perspective, in the three compartments of the old mirror above the chimney."

The landlord mentioned in this essay was Mr. Holland's father and the children, Lizzie, and John, were Mr. Holland's brother and sister.

Mr. Holland was born in the inn and lived there until he was fifteen years old. His father kept the inn for fifty years. When his father read "Autumn" and the description of his inn he recognized the significance of the inkstand and it has remained in the family possession ever since. This inkstand is now on display in the Stevenson House and may be viewed there.