

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The New Year's Custom

Once upon a time there was a tiny kingdom which had been at war and had suffered badly in spite of being the victor.

One village, in particular, had lost more men, more homes and more crops than the others, and what is more, it had lost its hope.

Then one day according to legend, there came to this town a former soldier whose hearing had been destroyed during the war.

He had once been a renowned bell maker, so the loss of his hearing was very hard on him. In spite of his handicap, however, he had not lost his hope or his courage. And so, using his memory in place of ears, he set to work casting a bell. The townspeople shook their heads in doubt, for how could a deaf man make a fine bell? But they pitied the man, and when he presented the completed bell to the village everyone pretended to be pleased.

The bell was hung in the church tower for the first time on New Year's Eve. The bell maker, himself, was asked to ring the bell at midnight, and it is said that when he did, the bell peeled forth with the most glorious tones ever heard.

And lo, as the silvery notes rang out across the midnight air, the bell maker's hearing was miraculously restored.

A town which had once lacked hope smiled again and became a town of joy. And many people believe that this was the beginning of the custom so familiar to us today, that of ringing in the New Year, a symbol of confidence and hope.

Santa Barbara has named its new library for W. E. Gledhill and his wife, Andriette Gledhill.

This is an honor Mr. and Mrs. Gledhill well merit. They have worked hard and unceasingly for over 20 years to preserve Santa Barbara's history, both architecturally and otherwise. Time and money have meant little to them when historical preservation was in jeopardy.

Mr. Gledhill has had the foresight throughout the years to make sure that this preservation of beautiful Santa Barbara was accomplished through legislation, both state, county and city.

As curators of the Santa Barbara Museum and president of the Santa Barbara Historical Society until a year ago, they envisioned a building built in early Spanish architecture, to conform to Santa Barbara's past.

This was accomplished just before the Gledhills retired.

The preservation and restoration of El Pueblo Viejo, which includes a number of historic sites, in downtown Santa Barbara and the creation of a county advisory landmarks committee was the work of the Gledhills.