

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 12, 1967

Early Day Dances and Music

Mrs. Evelyn R. Noderer has appealed to the history committee of the Monterey History and Art Association for information on early dances and music in Monterey on which she wishes to write her thesis for a master's degree. The dates for this should include the time from 1845 through 1900.

"Dances of Early California Days." By Lucille K. Czarnowski has been a great source of such information. The book first printed in 1950 by Pacific Books of Palo Alto, has a wide coverage in the west. Not only are the dances described authentic and popular, but the list of Peninsula residents who assisted Miss Czarnowski and to whom she gives full credit, is a long and impressive one.

Miss Czarnowski has been an associate supervisor of physical education at the University of California at Berkeley, where she taught.

In the introduction the author thanks the late Louis Sanchez for the many letters of introduction to descendants of California pioneers, living mainly along the coastal area of California. Mr. Sanchez was born in Monterey, the son of Mrs. Nellie Vander Grift Sanchez who was the sister of Mrs. Robert Louis Sanchez.

Gratitude for assistance is also extended to the late Mrs. Mary L. Greene, former curator of the Old Custom House, and Mrs. Alfred Elkinton, former curator of the museum in the Pacific Building.

Miss Czarnowski writes: In Monterey and Pacific Grove I should especially thank Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Greeb, who gave generous assistance and supplied information and music on the Monterey Contradanza, the polka in jig time and a number of other dances; Mrs. Inez H. Harkless, who demonstrated for me La Cachucha, La Paloma, El Barrego, Pin Waltz, and discussed with me La Contradanza and La Varsouvianna."

The late Mrs. Maria Garcia (of First Brick House) who performed for me many Spanish dances and described for me the cascarone balls in Monterey; Mrs. Flora Noon, who danced with me La Varsouvianna, El Borrego, and told many interesting details about early days in Monterey; the late Mrs. Maria Antonia Bach Thompson who showed old treasures of the early days, among them dolls dressed in early California costumes;

the late Mrs. Emma Ambrosio, who described dances which she saw performed when a child; Mr. and Mrs. Tony Castro, who performed La Varsouvianna.

Others mentioned as giving information on social setting, dances and music of early California are Mr. Hugh Campbell and Mrs. Harry Downie of Carmel and the late Miss Maria Antonio Field of Monterey.

Several paragraphs tell of early fiestas and cascarone balls. One reference is made to a graphic account of Juan Bautista Alvarado of great celebrations he witnessed in his youth in Monterey.

Walter Colton's account of some early festivals is also mentioned, including the Fiesta of Guadalupe at Monterey. Another is the Christmas drama, Los Pastores as it was performed at midnight mass on Christmas Eve and on the following days, with actors going from house to house.