

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 19, 1967

A Unique Birthday Gift

I wonder if many of our townspeople have every taken an afternoon off from every day life to visit our historic buildings in Monterey, for instance the Stevenson House on Houston street?'

Maybe a review of the many beautiful and historic exhibits the adobe house contains might encourage folks to make a pilgrimage there very soon. So today's diary will tell about some of the interesting items on display there, most of which are on loan from the Monterey History and Art Association.

One of the most interesting exhibits is the one in a case there with a picture of a young woman beautifully gowned and very beautiful to look at. When she was just a tiny child Robert Louis Stevenson presented her with his birthday. And why do you suppose he parted with such a day? The unofficial document follows.

"Dear Mr. Ide,

"Herewith please find the document, which I trust will prove sufficient in law. It seems to me very attractive in its eclecticism: Scots, English, and Roman law phrases are all indifferently introduced, and a quotation from the works of Haynes Bayly can hardly fail to attract the indulgence of the bench. Yours very truly, Robert Louis Stevenson."

"I Robert Louis Stevenson, advocate of the Scots Bar, author of the Master of the Ballantrae and moral emblems, struck civil engineer, sole owner and patentee of the place and plantation known as Vailima, in the island of Upolu, Samoa, British Subject, being in sound mind, and pretty well, thank you in body:

"In consideration that Miss Annie H. Ide, in the town of Saint Johnsbury, in the County of Caledonia, in the State of Vermont, United States of America, was born out of all reason, upon Christmas Day, and is therefore out of all justice denied the consolation and profit of a proper birthday;

"And considering that I, the said Robert Louis Stevenson, have attained an age when, we never mention it, and that I have now no further use for a birthday of any description;

"Have transferred, and do hereby transfer, to said Annie H. Ide, all and whole rights and privileges in the

thirteenth Day of November, formerly my birthday now, hereby, and henceforth, the birthday of the said Annie H. Ide, to have and to hold, exercise, and enjoy the same in the customary manner, by the sporting of fine raiment, eating of rich meats, and receipt of gifts, compliments, and copies of verse, according to the manner of our ancestors;

And I direct the said Annie H. Ide the name of Louisa—at least in private; and I charge her to use my said birthday with moderation and humanity, et bona filia familiae, the said birthday not being so young as it once was, and having carried me in a very satisfactory manner since I can remember;

"And in case the said Annie H. Ide shall neglect or contravene either of the above conditions, I hereby revoke the donation and transfer the rights in said birthday to the President of the United States for the time being;

"In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand and seal this nineteenth day of June in the year of Grace, eighteen hundred and ninety-one.

"Seal Robert Louis Stevenson Witness, Lloyd Osborne Witness, Harold Watts."