

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 2, 1968

Lives of William Hartnell

"To my children, may they gain impetus from the Past to Pioneer the Future," is the dedication with which Mrs. Susana Bryant Dakin opened her book "The Lives of William Hartnell," published by the Stanford University Press.

The late Mrs. Dakin had been a frequent visitor to Monterey from her home in Southern California. Before beginning her latest book and while she was still assembling data on the biography of the Englishman who died in California in 1854, Mrs. Dakin came to Monterey to interview his descendants here and to absorb the atmosphere and history of the city, which had been his home.

During her visit at that time the late Mrs. Mary Greene, the curator of the Old Custom House, took Mrs. Dakin to Salinas where they visited the remains of the old Hartnell home and college, the first in California, in the Alisal district, and called upon Benito Soberanes, who passed away at an advanced age, to have him recount the old days in Monterey and Salinas as he remembered them.

On the jacket cover of "The Lives of William Hartnell," Mrs. Dakin gives credit to the letters and journals now in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, which were collected by General Mariano Vallejo, the cousin of Dona Teresa de la Guerra Hartnell, for a great part of the information which made the book possible. General Vallejo had been a pupil of Hartnell and considered him the most informed man of his acquaintance. He had collected the material as a source for a history of California. The history was never written, but the documents were saved.

The opening pages of the book are illustrated with a drawing of the City of Monterey and the Presidio as it looked in 1842. There are reproductions of the portraits of William Hartnell and Dona Teresa Hartnell, painted, by Leonardo Barbieri in 1853.

There are reproductions of watercolor sketches of Monterey and the Presidio in 1827 and the Bay of Monterey in the same year; Monterey at the time of the arrival of the United States Squadron, and the Hartnell home and college in the Alisal.

In the foreword Mrs. Dakin wrote: "Among the many descendants of Dona Teresa and Don Guillermo Hartnell are remarkable people. Just as de la Guerra abound in the vicinity of Santa Barbara, so do Hartnell descendants in Monterey and Salinas. They have rigorous blood and a variety of talents. Of the several whom I have met, Miss Ana Zabala remains most vividly in my mind.

Her rare charm and spirit survive the years and with sparkling reminiscence she brought Dona Teresa alive before me. Grandfather Hartnell died long before her day, but with her grandmother she spent many happy childhood hours. Miss Zabala made her home in Monterey with the family of William G. Hudson for many years.

"The Gregory brothers and their sister, Susan, parents, including the Barbieri portraits." Miss Gregory will be lovingly remembered in Monterey where she made her home on Johnson street, taught in the high school and wrote, until her untimely death a number of years ago.

The detailed account of Hartnell's life as an adventurer, trader, schoolmaster, rancher, peacemaker, diplomat, and politician, is fascinating reading. The description of his marriage to Dona Teresa de la Guerra Hartnell at the home of her distinguished father in Santa Barbara, the establishment of their adobe home in Monterey where the Monterey hospital now stands, of their life there and later at the Hartnell ranch in the Alisal where Don Guillermo, as he was affectionately called, hoped to establish a permanent college; of his political career and his years as "visitador de misiones" an appointment he received from Governor Alvarado.

He arrived in Monterey in 1822 at the beginning of California's period under Mexican administration. He was baptized a Catholic in the Mission of San Carlos on October 13th, 1824.

W. E. P. Hartnell's passing was recorded in a brief note in the San Francisco Alta California, according to Mrs. Dakin, as follows: "W. E. P. Hartnell, an old resident of California, and ex-state translator, died at Monterey on the 2nd of February 1854." He was buried in the Catholic cemetery at Monterey. According to his will he wished his funeral to be conducted in as plain and modest a manner as possible and without any unnecessary pomp.

To Mr. Hartnell, Mrs. Dakin gives credit for having inspired the first historical society. The aim of the

society was "to preserve the records of their father's achievements." Only one meeting was held for the original purpose "at which" Juan Bautista Alvarado reports, "unfortunately politics forced history to take a back seat."

Mrs. Dakin is also the author of "A Scotch Paisano," the life of Hugo Reid in California, 1832-1852, derived from his correspondence. It is his old adobe home on the Santa Anita Ranch that the County of Los Angeles is now restoring.