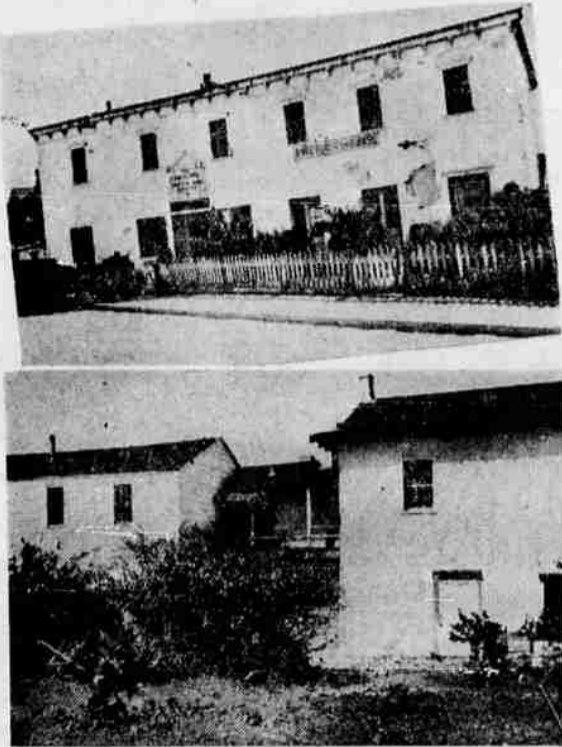
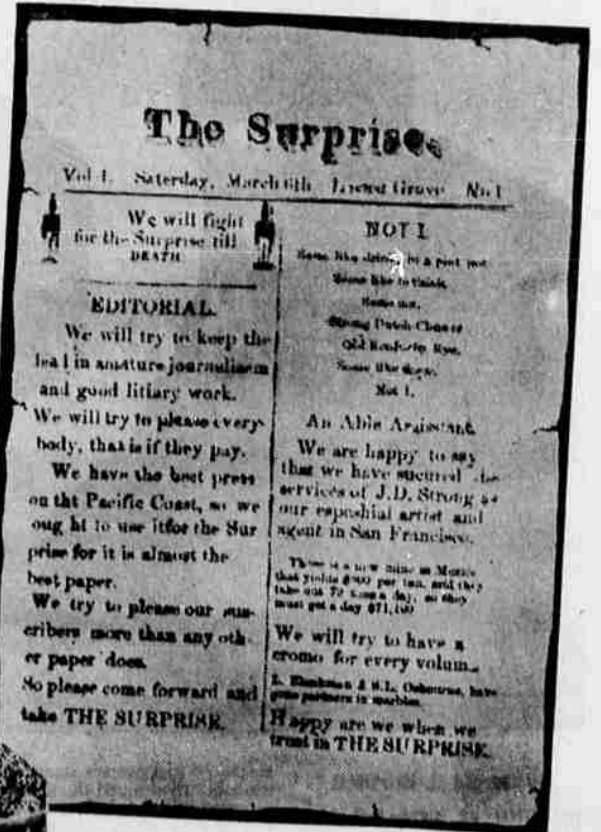


Western Woman Shaped Career of Robert Louis Stevenson



The West brought inspiration to Robert Louis Stevenson when he fell in love with Mrs. Fanny Osbourne, whom he subsequently married. Western residence influenced his writings also. Left photos show home at Monterey, California, which he occupied. Next, Stevenson and his wife. Below, granite plaque on Mount St. Helena marking spot where Stevenson and his bride took their honeymoon. Right, reproduction, courtesy John Howell's Bookshop, of only known copy of issue No. 1 of "The Surprise," edited by Stevenson's step-son, S. L. Osbourne.



Beloved Writer Reached Peak After Falling In Love With Mrs. Fanny Osbourne; Outstanding Works Composed on Coast

That Robert Louis Stevenson while at the French Riviera learned to love another man's wife, and waited until that marriage was dissolved, even following his love half way around the world to California, is one of the human and emotional highlights of the famed author's life that is little known. It is told here by one who has for many years made a study of the life and works of Stevenson, and who is himself acquainted with the family.—Editor.

By Tom Moriarty

IT'S HIGH time that an honored place among the great women of the West should be accorded Mrs. Fanny Osbourne Stevenson, wife of the illustrious R. L. S., immortal master of the essay and compounder of blood-stirring adventure tales. But for the spiritual charm, the engaging personality, of this California lady, the world of literature might never have engraved the name of Robert Louis Stevenson in its hall of fame. Certainly, if she had not crossed his path by purest coincidence, the West today could not claim him among its literary geniuses.

Many and far flung were the haunts of Robert Louis Stevenson, but to the West, and in particular

to California, goes the credit for having transformed a good writer into a great writer; a philosophic scholar into a man of dynamic genius.

A young and very sick man, Stevenson, son of a Scotch lighthouse engineer, was residing in the sunny comfort of the French Riviera, convalescing from his curse of lung disorders, when Destiny marked him out for the role he was to play in the West.

Quite casually, he was introduced to Mrs. Fanny Osbourne, a traveller from the then far away San Francisco. Immediate mutual delight in the acquaintanceship transmuted itself into a mutual memory of beauty and delicacy—a memory that both of them stored away when Mrs. Osbourne was forced to return to California and her husband.

MANY moons later, as 28-year-old Stevenson hung listlessly over myriad corrections of an essay intended for a small London literary magazine, an exciting letter came to him from the end of the globe—from California.

It was a note from Mrs. Osbourne. Circumstances had changed. New viewpoints were ripening. The doors of the house of impossible were being thrown open. Would he come to her?

Stevenson left post-haste, cutting himself off from the ties of family in Scotland; from the associations of student days in his native Edinburgh, in London, Paris, and the Riviera. Destiny and the West had beckoned to a willing adventurer.

Stevenson's log of the fateful journey to America in 1879 was duly placed behind book covers in "The Amateur Emigrant." The world has read this tale with interest, but perhaps not with the knowledge that the lean, somber man who wrote and polished the sentences was at the time carrying in his heart the vision of a lady who captivated him; who fed him of the soul stuff that inspires; a lady the very thought of whom made minutes drag as hours in his anguish to get to her side.

ALWAYS tortured on the rack of bodily aches, Stevenson soon found that his tedious travels, his worries and his longings, had reduced him to the shadow of a man. He decided to attempt a rest cure in Monterey, California, while awaiting Mrs. Osbourne's divorce action.

There, he fell in love with the snowy sand, the rusty cypress, the sea pines of lofty branch, and the cobalt inlets awash with foaming breakers. But the raw salt breezes and the sea fog played him false. He almost suffered a relapse in Monterey, despite friendly ministrations.

Today, the visitor to Monterey may see the Stevenson house intact; may walk the paths along the sea wall of the Spanish Presidio, between Monterey and Pacific Grove, that Stevenson loved; may explore the jungle-thick undergrowth of forest on the peninsula, in the depths of which Stevenson inadvertently started a raging forest fire when his naive curiosity prompted the test of the combustibility of a lacy rope of Spanish moss!

Sick as he was, R. L. S. felt the keen spur of inspiration in this dramatic Western setting, and he took copious notes of the locale and made scenarios for stories which the world came later to exalt—"Treasure Island," "The Pavilion on the Links," "Prince Otto," and others.

Did you know that you can see the very cove into which Jim Hawkins of "Treasure Island" sailed the deserted ship and flung the pirate's body into the crystal waters of the lagoon? The setting is out beyond the lighthouse of Pt. Pinos, near Pacific Grove! And the mountain peak shaped like a table rock? That bit of "Treasure Island" was catalogued mentally by R. L. S. when he first crossed San Francisco Bay in 1879. It's the top of Mt. Tamalpais, in Marin County, as seen from

the top deck of a ferry boat on the eastern side of Yerba Buena island!

BACK in San Francisco, Stevenson's efforts to write were balked by his run-down condition. And lack of funds prevented him from improving his estate. In a small boarding house on Bush Street, he passed the days in bed, too weak to rise, trying to compose his essays on California capital cities. He was waited upon, hand and foot, by the kindly wife of the Irish landlord.

To remedy this condition, Mrs. Osbourne and several friends moved him to East Oakland, then a country pasture land. Here, in a house situated near where the Montgomery-Ward building now stands on East 14th street, the great R. L. S. fought his way back to the ranks of the able-bodied.

At one time during his stay in Oakland, he thought he was about to die, and he penned an earlier version of the "Requiem" epitaph that finally came to mark his grave. This powerful, but little-known, poem was brought to public attention long after his death, by Katherine Osbourne, wife of Lloyd, the son of Mrs. Fanny Osbourne Stevenson.

With all difficulties now ironed out, Robert Louis Stevenson and his lady of dreams, were married in San Francisco in 1880. For a honeymoon, they chose to travel to the warm Napa Valley, about 50 miles north of San Francisco, to escape the sea fogs of the Bay Region, which were deadly to R. L. S.

After a tour of inspection in the neighborhood of Calistoga, the Stevensons discovered an abandoned mine property on the eastern slope of forbidding Mount St. Helena. This was above the Toll House, with its famous toll gate for stage coaches, on the mountain road that connects Calistoga and Middletown. The mine office, with its ship-type bunks, was converted into a camping cottage.

IT WAS here that R. L. S. composed his book, "Silverado Squatters," in rough form, to be finished later in Switzerland. The book recounts the interesting legends of Napa Valley and recalls the operation of the great red gash in Mount St. Helena's side, known as the Silverado gold, silver, and quicksilver mine. If you visit the cabin site today, you can see the very trees and the cinnabar platform as described by Stevenson.

That fall, home and family called the Stevensons to Scotland. There, growing fame throughout the years brought the easements of life to R. L. S., his bride, and the step-son. There, his creation, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," elevated him overnight into the category of great writers.

The next Stevenson pilgrimage to America came in 1887. This trip, R. L. S. was a man of fame, a personality. After a stay in upper New York state, where he went for the cold mountain air, as a possible cure for his lung trouble and to complete "The Master of Ballantrae," the Stevenson family headed west again.

IN OAKLAND, Stevenson sought out Dr. Merritt, the owner of a trim, tall-masted yacht that he had admired in the Alameda Estuary. The leasing papers were duly made out and the *Casco* was fitted and tested for duty on the lonely Pacific.

A fine photo, showing the *Casco* being run in a

test off the shores of Sausalito, Calif., is now in possession of Oscar Sutro, well-known western bibliophile. R. L. S., a ghostly wisp in white shirting and black slouch hat, stands at the bow in the rigging.

In 1888, the man of super literary gifts sailed out the Golden Gate with his faithful lady of the West. The West had inspired him and now the West lost him, for R. L. S. found his last resting place in Samoa in 1894. At Vailima, on the island's mountain peak, he lies where he longed to be, "under the wide and starry sky" and "home is the sailor, home from the sea, and the hunter home from the hill."

MYSTERY SHIPS

The Boussole and Astrolabe

Two French Frigates
Lost With 233 Men

SOME uncharted spot in Polynesia's isles holds the secret of the lost ships of la Perouse.

Two of the finest frigates of France were sent on a voyage of discovery to the South Pacific . . . the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe*, fully equipped and manned. They carried the "Sieur de la Perouse," a body of scientists, cadets from wealthy families, a total of 223 men. The year was 1785.

Louis XVI himself gave la Perouse a document setting forth the purpose of the expedition; to chart the seas from Kamtchatka to New Zealand, from the Malay Straits to America.

Two years of dangerous cruising, and the frigates anchored in Botany Bay—now New South



Wales. La Perouse sent dispatches to France, "I shall make a run to the Friendly Islands, and perform everything that had been enjoined me." It was his last message. Ships and crew were never seen again.

YEARS later, Captain Dillon, scouting the islands in the *Research*, heard rumors of two ships wrecked at Vanikoro. He sailed to the place, and found relics cast up by the surf, sword hilts, clothing, bits of figure head. Natives said that the crew of a ship had been drowned or eaten by sharks. There were sharks in the lagoons, but sixty skulls hung in the spirit-house at Whano. Nothing, however, was conclusive evidence. Bodies of the victims had disappeared, the ships themselves had vanished.

One of the crew was reported to have escaped from Vanikoro in a canoe. He was never traced. Not one of the more than 200 men were found; no wrecks were identified as the ships of la Perouse.

What their fate was—why no messages were ever received—is a tale which may some day unfold.

There are several battered wrecks of vessels embedded in coral in the surf that sprays Vanikoro. A litter of brass swivels, cannon-balls, anchors—can be seen today at a depth of 15 or 20 feet. Are these relics of the French frigates?

If the bleached skulls in the native spirit-house could speak, another South Sea mystery might be solved.



BUD: Well, who's the first contestant up to the microphone this week?

Sound: (Silence).

Bud: Come, come—where are the amateurs?

Amateur: We're on strike.

Bud: Strike? What in the world are you after?

Amateur: We demand longer hours.

Bud: Gosh, I can't make an hour any longer than 60 minutes.

Amateur: We'll arbitrate for shorter answers, then.

Bud: Shorter answers? We can't do anything about that. This question-asking preliminary is impromptu—it's extemporaneous . . .

Amateur: I know, but at least we ought to get paid for rehearsals.

Bud: Sh-h-h—we make up this patter as we go along.

Amateur: All right, let's spread it out and make some more up as we come back.

Bud: Have you really got a union?

Amateur: Certainly! A person has to serve his apprenticeship before he can become a journeyman amateur.

Bud: It doesn't sound right.

Amateur: There have been too many crashing these beginners' programs without any experience at all.

Bud: But that's sort of the idea, isn't it? Besides, if you walk out on us we've got a lot of amateur hours already electrically transcribed.

Amateur: How could you tell who wins the contest?

Bud: Oh, the applause, the votes, and even the prize awarding is right on the records.

Amateur: Canned stuff, eh?

Bud: Well, not exactly. You see we have staff amateurs right on the payroll.

Amateur: Anyway, I won't do my stuff.

Bud: What was it to be if you did it?

Amateur: I'm a Swiss bell-ringer.

Bud: Very well then, I'll do your act for you.

Listen—

Sound: (BONG! EONG!)