

Letter #17: Henryk Sienkiewicz¹ to Julian Horain²

Exiles, Adventurers, Artists: Letters from Polish California, 1836-1901

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Heywad or Haywad!³

April 22, 1877

First of all, I thank you a hundred times over for all of the letters. I picked up your last one today, which is Sunday. Second, I am sending you the finished



play.⁴ *Propia laus sordet*,⁵ so I'll only say that it's not as bad as I expected. There are no shortage of bitter truths [about] America; no shortage of movement and action – the men have some outlines of character – the women are only angels – but that's *Pani*⁶ Helena's⁷ fault,

not mine. Get this lucubration to her as soon as possible, or read it together, but with leniency. The words are simple – it could all have been a lot more

¹ Polish journalist and author; awarded a Nobel prize in 1905; see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/henryk-sienkiewicz>

² Julian Florian Horain, Polish journalist; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Horain.pdf>

³ A California town known variously as "Hayward's," "Haywood," "Haywards" (since 1876), and "Hayward" (since 1911); the town's name inspires word play for Sienkiewicz.

⁴ *American drama (Dramat amerykański)* described by Sienkiewicz as a "critical-satirical-sentimental" play; written for Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); the featured character, "Helena Steven," is modelled after Modjeska. Modjeska translated the play into English. This handwritten play is lost to history.

⁵ A Latin proverb: "Self-praise is base."

⁶ *Pani* is a Polish term of respect, roughly equivalent to Ma'am.

⁷ Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/helena-modrzejewska-modjeska>

subtle, but I was trying not to hinder the translation. From the American angle, this may perhaps suffice regarding California and her upper crust, since at any rate I've got little in the way of California-American dramatic literature. The acting should bring out whatever's missing, and there's a bit of scope for this. Many thanks to *Pani* Helena for the brief words she added to your letter. This is celestial nourishment for me. I kiss her hands⁸ and ask that I may be remembered.

Hugs to you. I'll write every so often.

Henryk

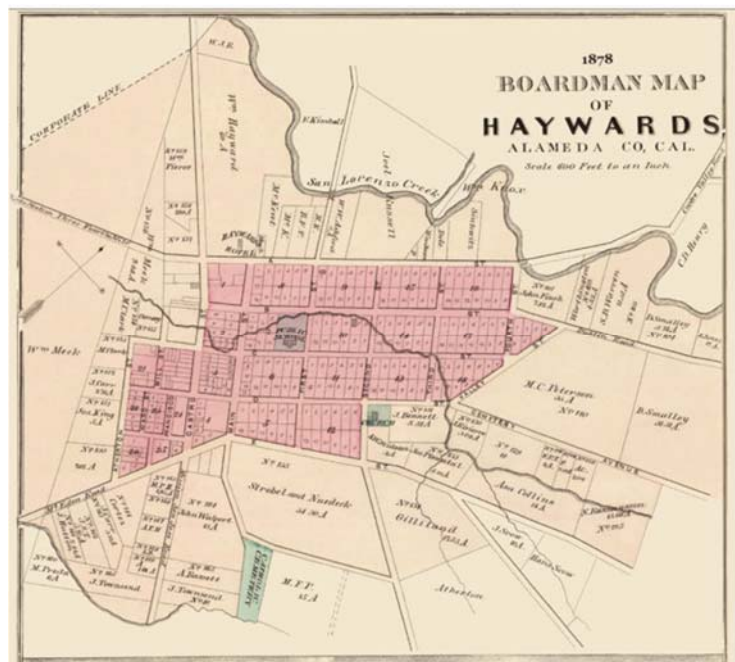
SOURCE:

Letter from Henryk Sienkiewicz to Julian Horain.

Letter number 17, in: Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Listy*. Tom 1, Cześć 2. Warszawa 1977; referenced online: <http://www.henryk-sienkiewicz.pl/index.php?d=dzial&id=listy>

NOTE: The editors of this English translation have revised and augmented some of the original footnotes by Maria Bokszczanin. Some footnotes are our own.

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⁸ Kissing a lady's hands as a way of greeting is a traditional Polish custom