

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Historical Markers

The California State Chamber of Commerce held an annual statewide meeting in San Francisco from November 30 until December 1. Mr. J.R. Knowland, chairman of the State Parks' Commission and of the California Centennials Commission, spoke on the Historic Landmarks Program at the travel and recreation section meeting. He told those in attendance that the activities of the California Centennials Commission, which had been carried on during the past three years practically ceased after September 9 when in various parts of the state the admission of California to statehood was most appropriately commemorated.

The state registration of historical landmarks which has been carried out through the California State Chamber of Commerce, and the markers first placed by the Department of Highways, has now been transferred to the California State Park Commission.

Recently a ruling declared that the Department of Highways could not legally place these markers, this particular function being outside their province. They could, however, continue to erect and maintain approach signs where permanent markers have been erected, which would call the attention of motorists to the location of such historic markers.

Following this ruling, the California Centennials Commission undertook the responsibility during the three centennial years of marking these historic buildings and sites with permanent bronze plaques placed upon stone bases. The policy of the commission was to furnish the bronze markers, and the various localities or organizations furnished the bases. This was done in Monterey when on June 3, 1949, the bronze tablet was placed on the large boulder near the Father Serra landing place, in memory of Don Gaspar de Portola. The Monterey History and Art Association furnished the stone and sponsored the unveiling of the plaque furnished by the State Centennial Commission.

Under the auspices of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, Junipero Serra Parlor of Monterey, a boulder was placed in El Estero park just off Fremont street, in honor of De Anza, who reached Monterey on May 1 1774 – the first white man ever to make the journey from Sonora, Mexico, to the California coast by

land. The Monterey parlor of Native Sons sponsored the placing of a marker on the La Porte building, corner of Alvarado and Pearl streets, as the headquarters of Juan B. Alvarado, the state's second native governor who was born in Monterey February 14, 1909. He later became administrator of the Custom House. This plaque was also presented by the Commission.

Among the most outstanding of three markers were those erected in Death Valley commemorating the Death Valley 49'ers who started for the gold field via the southern desert route; marking the birthplace on the Anza Trail of the first white child born in California; the site in San Francisco where the Society of California Pioneers was organized, in 1850; the spot in Southern California at Temecula where the Temecula Treaty with the Indians was signed; the old mining communities of Fiddletown, Dutch Flat, Yankee Jim's Ophir, Forest Hill, Jamestown, Michigan Bluff, Iowa Hill, Chinese Camp, Vallecito, Copperopolis, O'Byrne's Ferry, Campo Seco, Poloma; and the site of the first adobe home in Lake County.

The largest of all the markers was placed in Portsmouth Plaza in San Francisco, which is the most prominent historic shrine in the city, telling the story of the great events occurring in the Plaza from the raising of the American flag to the oration over the body of Senator Broderick following his death in a duel with Chief Justice Terry.

At the dedication of Shasta Dam, during the Shasta and adjoining counties centennial celebration, a tablet was placed on the wall of the great dam honoring the Pioneer mothers and fathers, with the title: "If you seek their monument look about you."

The new act, Statutes of 1949, calls for the appointment of an Historical Landmarks Committee of seven members to make a census of all existing historical buildings or landmarks heretofore registered by the Department of Natural Resources or permanently marked, and to conduct a continuing survey of all important historical sites in the state. To recommend to the State Park Commission those which, in its opinion should be officially registered and also to recommend type of plaque and descriptive material to be used.

Governor Warren has announced that he will shortly name the members of the Advisory Committee which will probably include a number of former members willing to serve.

The placing of these historical markers was one of the most popular activities of the Centennials Commission and it is most fortunate that this important work is to continue. It would certainly be appropriate if Monterey should be represented upon the Historical Advisory Committee, for what city in the state has a more historic background and where is continual vigilance more needed to save a heritage?