

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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His Hobby is Californiana

We were delighted to find in the August issue of News and Views, the official organ of the Division of Beaches and Parks, Department of Natural Resources of the State of California, the announcement of this appointment of Dr. Robert E. Burns as a member of State Parks Commission.

Dr. Burns is the president of the 100-year-old College of the Pacific at Stockton, the first college to be chartered by the State of California. He is a product of California education and a graduate of the college which he now heads. He is primarily interested in the state's historical background as well as in its current projects.

Dr. Burns admits that his hobby is Californiana. Vivaly interested in preserving the historical spots and in conserving and developing the state's natural resources.

For three years, during the state's centennial celebrations, Dr. Burns served on the five-man California Centennial commission appointed by the governor and under the chairmanship of Joseph R. Knowland, head of the Parks commission.

Dr. Burns showed his interest in California history by activating the organization five years ago of the California History Foundation of the College of the Pacific, which is devoted to research, projects and publications relating especially to the American period of California history. He was instrumental in bringing back to the College of the Pacific—after nearly 50 years of absence—Dr. Rockwell Hunt, noted California historian, to serve as director of the foundation.

In 1945 Dr. Burns interested friends and historians throughout the state in raising funds with which to purchase the historic old Fallon House and Theater in Columbia, scene of the famous old Gold Circuit in the Mother Lode. Later, when the area became a state park and aware of the need for recreational area, Burns was instrumental in having the college deed the property to the state, which since has been accomplished the restoration of the theater to its original state, with added rooms. For the second summer the popular drama department of the college has held a successful summer workshop and playhouse program for Mother

Lode tourists and residents according to News and Views.

Dr. Burns chose to write for his master's thesis "The History of the First Fifty years of the College of the Pacific," he having been a history major there. In his own campus home he had a private book collection of more than 1,500 volumes of California history and is collecting a fine display of oil paintings of the Mother Lode by California artists. He has his own summer and vacation home at Columbia which he has restored, and which he purchased before the area became a state park. He and Mrs. Burns have furnished it with antiques of the early California period.

More than 1,500 persons attended a reception given at Sutter's Fort in Sacramento recently honoring Joseph R. Knowland, Oakland newspaper publisher and chairman of the State Parks commission, for his work from 1948 through 1950 as chairman of the State Centennials commission.

The reception was sponsored by the Sacramento area Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West. Highlighting the occasion was a talk by Gov. Earl Warren in which he said "There is no greater citizen in California; there is no more useful citizen in the state. No man devotes more of his time to the community and the state. I know this because he has been chairman of the Centennials committee for three years and chairman of the State Parks commission for all the years that I have been governor."