

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Right Out of This World

The words "Big Sur Country" seems to bring a nostalgia to one who is at all familiar with this vast country down the coast from Carmel. There is a sense of greatness of pioneering, of the power of creation behind it all. At least that is our experience. We remember the beauty of the approach to Monterey, the steepness of the Carmel hill, the first glimpse of the coast line, the narrowness of the road, the expectancy of a passing motorist or the stage and mail man, the first sight of the redwoods or the anticipation of a picnic luncheon at the Little Sur and at last the arrival at Pfeiffer's.

We have experienced all this in the years gone by. The early breakfasts and the dinners under the climbing rose arbor which covered the porch at Pfeiffer's, were truly "out of this world" in the days before this virgin territory became a state-owned park and the name was changed from Pfeiffer's to Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. The park is composed of 760 acres, is 35 miles from Monterey, and was acquired by the State of California in 1933 at a value of \$171,260.

The attendance at this Monterey County public park, situated on one of California's most scenic highways, is over 200,000 a year. There are camping facilities provided, a lodge and a number of cabins, all administered under the direction of Newton B. Drury, chief, and Jess Chaffee, division director, whose home is in Monterey.

We recently came across an article published in the Monterey Cypress in 1889 which expresses the feeling folks have for that country and most of its people, especially its pioneers. It reads: "The grandest women and men on God's earth are found on the outer civilization, the bone, sinew and moral forces are pent up there and when brought to the surface are resplendent with genius and produce an Abraham Lincoln, a Stephen A. Douglas and a Patrick Henry, a Mrs. Browning and a Harriet Beecher Stowe. The physical is developed in consonance with the mental and our great men and women have received their inspiration beside the running brooks, the beautiful scenery of the mountains and the country life there. One who has never gone out to the country to fish, or hunt; who has never peregrinated over the hills, mountains and vale, can never understand its beauties,

can never know the toil, fatigue and the self-sacrifice of the occupants of remote vastnesses in the mountains."

A more picturesque sight was never witnessed than that of the Little and Big Sur country boarding on the ocean. "Grandeur men or women never lived than those toilers of the soil, generous, unselfish; they live hoping and hoping ever, expecting some day to realize their dreams of childhood." Wrote our journalist of 63 years ago, "Nature has provided beautiful tall redwood trees, tan bark, live oak, fir, all the elements are there that must and will be utilized in the near future. Money they do not have much of, they do not need at present, but the future will bring forth abundance of all these things."

In those days a man by the name of Sterritt had a mill run by water power up the Garrapatas creek, which he used to grind his and his neighbors' corn. In Bixby's Canyon trains of mules loaded with tan bark passed over the trails that many would think impassable. They arrived at broader trails intended for wagons where tan bark and live oak wood was hauled a distance of several miles to a chute, there to be let down into a vessel, probably at Knotley's Landing, and taken to San Francisco. It has been reported that 40,000,000 feet of redwood was a low estimate of the resources of the Little and Big Sur country in those days. At least 50,000 cords of tan bark was likewise shipped from that country—a wealth to those who could afford to toil and wait.

In 1889 it was estimated that the value of the roads built in that country by a few hard working and industrious pioneers would exceed \$15,000. These roads were built a short distance at a time, as necessity demanded, but they were built and stand as monuments erected in memory of those good people living there.

The only meat, probably for a year at a time, eaten and enjoyed by the pioneers of the Big and Little Sur country, was the deer and the fish caught in the river.

The Cypress writer had a bit of advice to the young man of 1889, which might also apply in 1952: "The hospitality shown by those people would make the denizens of our towns and citizens ashamed of their miserable parsimony; for stinginess is stranger to those people. Young men, go out into the wilds and cease longer to sow your wild oats, take up a government claim, and if you can afford to wait, wealth and happiness is in store for you.