

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Shame on You, Nevada!**

I have been enjoying the weekly copies of the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise ever since Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg reactivated it more than a year ago. Our readers no doubt know that the Enterprise was Nevada's first newspaper, first published in 1858, and noted, among several reasons, as the paper upon which Mark Twain worked for a number of years.

In the Jan. 2 issue we were particularly interested in a letter in the Editor's Mail Bag, written by H.L. Ellis of Whittier, Calif., in which he criticizes Nevada and praises California for the State's foresight in preserving its historic sites and buildings. We are offering parts of the letter to our readers today:

"It seems to me that the 'one sound state,' as you seem to delight in calling Nevada, is unsound when it comes to doing anything to preserve its last relics as indicated in your article about the Gold Hill firehouse.

"I don't see why the boys of Carson City refuse to realize the great tourist value of things like the Virginia and Truckee R.R., the Gold Hill fire station and many, many other historical locations and buildings in Nevada that attract people because these things are intact. Most people don't care much about a monument marking a spot – they want to see the actual building where these important events took place.

"We may pay more taxes in California, but the people of California and the entire nation benefit because real efforts have been made to preserve those places in the Golden State that portray her early days."

The editors of the Enterprise write on: "Our hotels, motels, casinos, restaurants and fishing and hunting resorts have their life blood and bring in tourists from out of the state. The entire structure and economy of Nevada is predicated on outside money and visitors with the inclination to spend it."

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, somewhat richer in historical resources but not overwhelmingly so, than Nevada or California, has spent millions of dollars in recent years preserving and advertising its historic antiquities and is currently spending several millions more every year for the same purpose. Of course the state makes money on its investment for the tourists pay the bills and there is a handsome profit each year.

A few shrewd folk in Virginia City have caught onto the fact that the shabby souvenirs of yesterday left on the Comstock are far greater assets than can be measured in dollars and cents. People from Ohio and Oregon have supermarkets, drive-ins, paved sidewalks and cocktail lounges at home and will pay handsomely to encounter their antecedent artifacts and institutions; the old adobes and the historic sites, the landing place of Father Junipero Serra and Don Gaspar de Portola, the old Presidio and the Mission churches, the old and valuable manuscripts, books, furniture and other items in Colton Hall, Custom House, California's First Theater and the Stevenson House.