

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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County Histories Gain Interest

Within recent years there has become an increased interest in historical associations throughout California and with that interest there has developed the interest in writing and publication of historical novels and county histories. These modern county publications are entirely different from the ones published in the early 1900's, when one must guarantee to buy a book, or possibly two volumes, before a sketch of your life and picture would be a feature of the book. Maybe it was the celebration of California's Centennial years that prompted this revival of history, but regardless of the reason, the histories are valuable source material for those who care to use them.

We have just received one which appeals to us in particular. It is entitled "The Years Between" and its author is Brooks Gist of Tulare. The book contains anecdotes, essays and sketches all set in Tulare County and telling the story of the problems of the early settlers in that vast part of the San Joaquin Valley – particularly the water problem. We have known some of those problems, just as Brooks Gist has, for we were born there and our father was one of the early day farmers there before and after the 1890s – so our childhood memories are those of rabbit drives, long dry winters, cattle rustling, Chinese cooks and sweltering heat.

One critic has written that "The Years Between" will go on many shelves, and one day it will be valuable source material. That is why Mr. Gist has written it, no doubt.

Still another county history book is "Saddle Bags in Siskiyou" by J. Roy Jones. It has been published by the Siskiyou Historical Society's members and was a limited edition of which very few remain. The society reports that more than 50 libraries in the state have ordered copies.

Dr. Jones, the author, has long been interested in the history of his county. He begins his history with the gold rush and brings it down to date with many old prints and photographs.

Florence Danforth-Boyle, Butte County historian, has written a novel with historical background entitled "It was Told To Me". It is a small beautifully bound book that brings to life actual historical events of Bidwell Bar.

The advertising leaflet relates "Do You Know: Bidwell Bar is the home of the mother orange tree of California; Bidwell Bar was once the scene of a captured murderer, was once the county seat of Butte County, issued the first newspaper in the county, and is the location of the oldest suspension bridge in the state?"

Mrs. Danforth-Boyle is a life member of the American Pioneer Trails Association, assisted in founding the Native Sons and Native Daughters Pioneer Relic building in Oroville and is a member of the California Historical Society. The Title Insurance Company of Southern California has recently published "Panorama," a picture history of Southern California, as a feature for their 60th anniversary. The book was compiled and written by W.W. Robinson.

There are seven sections to this beautifully published history, which is profusely illustrated with both old and new photographs and drawings. Section 1 – Spaniards occupy California – they explore, meet Indians, establish presidios and pueblos and start a chain of missions; 2 – Ranch Days – life in pastoral California; 3 – The Yankees come to fight, to mine; to ranch and set up a land commission to work on titles; 4 – Settlers on the Land, ranches are subdivided, settlers come, towns are started, the railroad comes; 5 – The People Come – real estate boom, cities are born, seaside resorts spring up, agriculture comes into its own; 6 – The Giant Rises – Los Angeles spreads and sprawls, gets water, builds harbor, gets movies, oil and aviation and freeways; 7 – Southern California Then and Now.

It is free for the asking!