

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Bigger and Better B. T. (Before Texas)**

We are jotting down a few facts today which were declared to be true about the State of California in 1900 according to a publication entitled "California" published in San Francisco in that year. Our informant declared that the State was the first in the Union in the production of fruits, wines, raisins oranges, lemons beans, prunes, honey, quicksilver, borax, and in the amount of wealth per capita.

California was second in 1900 in gold output, wheat yield, lumber, hops, barley, nuts; third in wool; fourth in savings deposits, and the 22<sup>nd</sup> state in population. That year, the State had a greater diversity of production from soil and mines than any other portion of the world.

Other facts told 53 years ago in "California" were that the State had the highest and lowest land in the United States in Inyo County – from the summit of Mount Whitney, 15, 864 feet, to Death Valley, 276 feet below sea level.

Santa Clara County had American's largest olive orchard – 7,000 trees, located near Los Gatos. Ten stones in the Prayer Book Cross in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco are larger than any ten in the Pyramid of Cheops, we were surprised to learn, as we read from the "Facts about California."

We also learned that in 1900 California was the only successful lemon-producing state in the Union and had the largest lemon orchard in the world, although the location was not stated. Also California then supplied the United States with raisins. The largest raisin vineyard in the world was then in Kings County. Among the other "largest" was the largest sequoia and redwood trees on earth growing in California. The largest redwood tree of which record had been made at that time was one cut on Eel River in Humboldt County. It was 427 feet long and 77 feet in circumference at the stump. The largest smelter and refinery for precious metals in the world in 1900 was at Point Costa.

Now for the longest! The longest transmission of electric power in the world 53 years ago was from Santa Ana Canyon to Los Angeles, and it would soon be surpassed by the line from the Sierra Nevadas to San Francisco, was the prediction.

Still more! In 1900 it was thought that at the rate of development California would soon lead all other states in petroleum production within five years, for then half of the flowing wells in the Union were in California. In 1900 San Francisco was the seventh port of the United States in volume of export commerce. It was excelled by New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Galveston, in the order named. San Francisco was also the second port 53 years ago in the United States in the exports and imports of treasure, for the customs receipt there increased over \$1,000,000 in 1899. It will now be a fascinating subject for study and research to record what all these items are valued at and what they mean to life in California in 1953.