

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 9, 1953

Case of the Missing Oak Tree

Here's a story of how three counties lost a big oak tree. Those counties were Monterey, Fresno and Kings. The tree that they misplaced was a white oak which marks the spot where the three counties come together in the coast range.

This tree was marked in 1878 by O.D. Davis, Fresno County surveyor, and Seth Smith of Tulare County. An "F" for Fresno, was carved on the north side of the oak and a "T" was placed on the south side for that part of Tulare County which is now Kings. The "M" for Monterey was added later.

However, the site of the tri-county oak was lost during the 1900's, and a search by Fresno County failed to find it.

In 1929 a party of Kings County surveyors set out to locate the tree. The survey party was headed by Roy May, county surveyor at that time.

The starting point was a monument on the Kings River near Reedley. The men proceeded southwest along the original line between Fresno and what is now Kings. Following field notes of the 1878 survey, they traveled across the north part of Kings County to the west side, through the Kettleman and Kreyenhagen hills, across Avenal Creek and to the summit of the Coast Range.

After reaching the ridge, May told S.C. Dougherty, a member of the party, to go a number of feet in a given direction and set a stake. Dougherty went as directed, but called back that he could not set a stake there.

"Why not?" asked May.

"Because there is a big oak tree in the way," shouted Dougherty.

"Well that is what I have been looking for," shouted May in return. The tree which was described as a 30-inch oak in 1878, had grown to almost 4 feet in diameter. However, when slabs were cut from the tree the original blazes bearing the perfect letters "M", "F" and "T" were uncovered. These letters, in reverse, were found on the slabs.

May and a nurseryman named John Heidorn, cemented glass covers over the blazes in the tree so that the letters could be viewed with further cutting. The slabs,

cut away from the oak, were placed in the Kings County Museum, where they may be seen today.

We discovered this interesting piece of history in a story in the 60th anniversary edition of the Hanford Sentinel, whose publisher is Earl Fenston, a brother of Mrs. James Finley of Carmel.

The original lock for the front door of the Stevenson House has been returned! Mrs. Edward J. Frasier of Eugene, Oregon, has cherished the lock with its white porcelain knobs these years since it was given to her by her uncle, Douglas Frasier, an early day resident of Monterey and a personal friend of Stevenson.

The lock has been replaced on the door where it may be seen by all visitors to the Stevenson House on Houston Street.

A year or so ago the original lock to California's First Theater was returned by a friend of Monterey who had taken it to Phoenix, Arizona, a number of years ago. Now it would be a great joy if the original lock to the Old Custom House would be returned to its rightful home.