

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Automobiles

On the afternoon of Friday, Feb. 12, which is Lincoln's Birthday, the California Historical Society will hold its fifth annual reception and open house for members and their guests. The party will be held at the headquarters of the society, 3456 McAllister St., in San Francisco, from 4 until 6 o'clock. Special exhibitions, from materials drawn from the society's collections are being arranged, and, as usual, at these affairs, refreshments will be served.

News from Santa Barbara tells us that the Santa Barbara Historical Society will shortly occupy four rooms in the Old Mission, west of its reception room, permission to do so having been obtained from the Franciscan Provincial and from the Curia in Rome. The Santa Barbara Foundation will make \$7,500 available to the society for necessary remodeling and furnishings.

Elliot A.P. Evans, a former member of the Sunset School faculty in Carmel and now chairman of the department of art at Santa Barbara College of the University of California, has prepared a questionnaire designed to uncover the amount of interest extant regarding the possibility of the formation of a Western regional group of the Society of Architectural Historians. Copies may be obtained from Dr. Evans, according to the announcement made in "Notes" from the California Historical Society.

Edwin S. Moore, general manager of the California State Automobile Association, was the speaker at a recent meeting of the California Historical Society held in the Palace Hotel. His subject was "Early Automobling Days in California."

"It took thinkers and tinkers of 1850 to 1910 to put the automobile on the road," he said. "Even as late as 1889, there was no noun for automobile in the Century Dictionary; there was only the adjective, automobile, defined as self-moving."

Moore went on to relate that when Frank and Charles Duryea, inventors of the first gasoline automobile, introduced their model in 1893, it was a standard buggy with a one-cylinder, four horse-power engine, mounted horizontally under the seat. For the next 10 years, in fact, according to the speaker, all automobiles were gas-driven "buggies" complete, even to the socket for

the whip, as horse-drawn conveyances except for the shafts. The "jostling" commenced in earnest when Henry Ford and R.E. Olds developed the idea of mass production, placing automobiles within the reach of almost all.

The speaker listed some 52 "great dates to remember" in the history of the automobile, subsequent to the year 1900 when the first Madison Square Garden automobile show took place. Other dates were the initial appearances of well-known cars: Cadillac (1903); Buick (1904); Model T Ford (1908) and the introduction of the windshield as an accessory; Dodge (1914); Chrysler (1924).

The California Historical Society Quarterly, which printed parts of Moore's talk, included in the report that it was in 1921 when the first President, Warren G. Harding, rode to his inauguration in an automobile; 1928, the installation of shatter-proof glass; 1930, the equipment of police cars with radios. In 1936 the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that 54 percent of the nation's families owned cars; in 1938 fluid drive was introduced, and in 1939, the Lincoln led the way in eliminating running-boards.

Other "firsts" for the taxpayers in California were when the assessors of Los Angeles and San Benito counties first recognized that automobiles were items of tangible personal property and should be taxed; in 1905, motor vehicles began to be registered in the state. There were then 6,428, according to Moore.