

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Railroads

"Early Transportation in Southern California" a series of seven stories and pictures published in the Book Club of California and distributed to their members during 1954— contains as No. Three, a review of the "Free Harbor Contest or Citizens Versus Railroad" by Carey S. Bliss.

The story relates that Santa Monica is a thriving little town of about 1,000 inhabitants when the lithograph which is contained in the attractive folder was made. It is very rare, printed by the firm of Britton and Rey in San Francisco about 1875. A tiny train of the Los Angeles and Independent Railroad is seen puffing its way toward the first wharf which was the pride and joy of Sen. John P. Jones, the Comstock millionaire who gave the town its initial promotion in 1875, and for several years the community prospered. An 1,800- foot wharf was immediately constructed to handle the expected steamship traffic and soon ties and rails for the Los Angeles and Independent Railroad were being unloaded by ships which came from the East Coast around the Horn.

The railroad did not prove profitable and soon was in the hands of the Southern Pacific Company who very soon demolished the wharf and moved most of its activities to San Pedro. In 1920 a new wharf in Santa Monica suffered the fate of the old one and the last remainder of Santa Monica's attempt to become a seaport vanished.

In the old lithograph a few ships are seen lying offshore, but the open roadstead indicates clearly that this shallow bay could never be a safe deep-water harbor. The picture reproduction was made for Richard J. Hinton and "The Handbook of Arizona," San Francisco, 1878."

Dr. David W. Davies wrote the text for No. Four in the keepsake series of the Book Club: "The First Aviation Meet in America." With this folder comes a reproduction of the official program of the first meet held Friday, Jan. 14, 1910 at Los Angeles. There is a picture of Louis Paulhan who smashed all records for altitude, attaining a height of 4,165 feet, and one of Glenn H. Curtiss, who broke the world's record for quick rising from a standing start in 98 feet. He also set a new

record for a quick rise after starting the engine in 6-2/5 seconds.

The total attendance at the meet was nearly 500,000 and the repeated visits of many people testified to the deep interest in aerial sports. In 11 days of the meet \$141,520 was taken in in entrance fees, and \$4,000 from concessions to vendors and "Midway Plaisance."

These stirring events led the Los Angeles Times to exclaim, "Viva Aviation, May untoward circumstances never clip its wings!"

"The Orange Dummy" was chosen as the title for No. five in this fascinating series of early transportation in the southlands. Don Meadows wrote the script and also provided the only known picture of the motor car at Orange, California. The author writes that the Orange Dummy or "Peanut Roaster" was the only contraption of its kind that ever existed. It was evolved through necessity and though picturesque, was slow, noisy and smelly. It was the means of transportation between Orange and Santa Ana for almost 20 years.

"Something precious went out of life when the Pacific Electric Railroad bought up all the little lines in Southern California. In 1907 the Orange Dummy, or the Peanut Roaster, gave way to red prosaic efficiency," wrote Mr. Meadows.

Captain James Hobbs in his "Wild Life in the Fat West" describes the arrival of a steamer at Fort Yuma in 1851. He tells how the Indians were frightened by "the devil coming up the river, blowing fire and smoke out of its nose and kicking back with his feet in the water." He assures us that "she was named the Yuma, after their tribe, and this was the first steamer that ever ran in those waters."

There are many stories told and much questioning over the truth of many of the claims for the first steamer and its name which traveled the river; but most authorities seem to agree, according to C. N. Rudin who wrote the data for "Uncle Sam at Fort Yuma." No. Six in the Book Club's Keepsake series, that the side-wheeler "Uncle Sam" was the first steamer on the river. It is also said that she reached Fort Yuma for the first time on December 2, 1852.

The original of the illustration accompanying this keepsake is a steel engraving published without credit to artist or engraver in "The Ladies' Repository" for

November 1862. The picture was reproduced through the courtesy of the Southwest Museum at Los Angeles.