

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **An Old Machine Shop**

In a little, out-of-the-way hollow three miles north of Jolon stands what some day might become one of our valley's most valuable historical landmarks — an almost intact pioneer ranch machine works. History-conscious communities in other areas have devoted years and expended thousands of dollars to reconstruct and equip similar displays when their originals had been permitted to rot away. Before many winters, this Monterey County one will be unsalvable.

The Land, a farm magazine, recently wrote an interesting description of this antique shop and all that it contains. We are happy to give the editor a vote of thanks for the opportunity to know about and to visit the place.

The Jolon shop layout, located on the John A. Hersom ranch at Argyle, comprises four buildings, two of wood and two of native stone and cement. They house a complete blacksmith shop and iron foundry.

A fifth building; now all but a complete wreck, houses the most ambitious of the shop's projects an engine-driven self-leveling harvester which was built from scratch on the spot and which for a decade before World War I accounted for a large part of the grain harvest in that area.

We suggest that King City start a movement to acquire the shop, the harvester, the wooden plow and all else of historical value, if possible, and install them in a reconstructed shop building, if the original is not available. The County Fair Grounds will make an ideal location, for this old-time collection of farm implements.

If the Hersom homestead machine shop is a monument to the self-sufficiency of our early ranchers, it is likewise testimony to the ingenuity of the man who built and operated it, Charles C. Herbert, Mr. Hersom's foster-brother.

The Land tells us that Herbert was reared in the ranch and went to San Francisco as a youth to the Lick school, studied engineering, and returned to the ranch to construct the lay-out. First project was a lathe, and a shed to house it. The machine shop led shortly to construction of a cupola for the smelting of iron — a

structure which still stands and which, with minor repairs could function today.

Herbert went on to found the Herbert Machine Works in San Jose, from which he has now retired after winning prominence in the Santa Clara Valley industrial community.

Before he moved away from the Hersom ranch the harvester was completed. The Herbert machine called for installation of a gas engine to drive the separator, which was the first in the area so operated. The machine is also believed to be mounted in such a way that it automatically leveled itself as it passed over rolling acreage.

Another innovation in the Herbert harvester is a ship's wheel mounted longitudinally beside the driver's seat with which the header was controlled—thereby eliminating a man from the crew. This harvester could be run by two men rather than the traditional five-man crew.

Partly buried and all but hidden by weeds and shifting soil is a four-share wooden plow which John Hersom recalls was drawn by 14 horses, hitched 4-4-4-2. As cleanly lined and solid as the day they were built are the Hersom barns nearby. Their six-by-six digger pine beams, some of them 18 and 24-feet long, brought in from the coast and hand-hewn, tell a story of men who built to last.

In the larger barn stand the head and trail wagons the Hersoms used to haul grain, to King City behind an eight-horse team. It was an all-day trip, Mr. Hersom recalls, with good fortune on the side of the horses, for the steep side of the Jolon grade lies on the King City side and the wagons went up it empty. The remaining trail wagon is a '93 Studebaker; the head wagon an '05. The latter brought disappointment, Mr. Hersom says, for its purchase was planned for years and no sooner was it in operation than motor trucks made their advent.

The problem in this case is how to save these fast-disappearing items of an earlier generation. A generation or two from now, when residents of Monterey County want to illustrate for their children how tools were made here around the turn of the century, and start to search for examples, the Hersom-Herbert shop will have rotted away.

The King City Rustler-Herald, which prints The Land, writes: "There are agencies with an interest in this sort of thing and there are sources of money to finance the job. We believe it would well behoove us all to call this to their attention now and get a head start on time and the elements toward creating a monument here to American free enterprise."