

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Rough and Ready

We climbed the Washington Ridge over the Ukiah-Tahoe Highway, out of Nevada City during our visit there last week, traveling as far as the Donner Lake Lookout to enjoy the view. On our way we paused for a moment to visit a lonely grave quite near the highway and seven or eight miles from Nevada City.

Here in 1858 an emigrant family buried a two-year-old son, Julius Alfred Apperson, who had died on May 6. For years this grave, marked by an inscribed wooden plaque nailed to an overhanging pine tree, was tended by unknown hands.

For the past few years it has been cared for by the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West. The California State Highway Commission ignored the original specifications for the road at this point sufficiently to leave the grave of this 2 year old lad undisturbed beneath its sentinel pine. Around the tiny mound of earth is a white picket fence and inside a marble slab, looking quite new, bearing the name of the child, his age and date. There was also a small bouquet of flowers left there by some kind and sentimental stranger.

At the sight of another historic marker we read that the world's first long-distance telephone line had crossed the road at that spot. It had been built by three mining companies in 1878 at a cost of \$6,000. The line was 60 miles long and extended up the ridge from French Corral through Birchville, Sweetland, North San Juan, Cherokee, North Columbia and on to Bowman Lake.

We regretfully left Nevada City after a delightful visit of three days and motored back to San Francisco, over the Golden Gate Bridge, and on to Monterey. On our way we passed through Rough and Ready. The modern motorist climbs the wooded hills through a country which grows richer in historic interest with each curving vista of the highway. The many early farm houses, tucked in among the oaks and old gnarled fruit trees, gave to the countryside that hint of old New England found nowhere in California except in the Sierra gold region. Rough and Ready is a dreamy spot of weather-beaten, shake-roofed houses, but it was a busy mining town in the days of the 50's, one of the first to be established in Nevada County.

A party of men calling themselves the Rough and Ready Company arrived in the vicinity on Sept. 9, 1849, under the leadership of Capt. Townsend, who had served under General Zachary Taylor ("Old Rough and Ready"), hero of the Mexican War. For several months the Rough and Readys were able to keep the richness of the region a secret, pre-empting all the land around, but by 1850 the incoming tide of miners could not be held back and the place became a good sized community.

A paragraph in "Historic Spots in California" tells this story: "One episode in the history of the town makes it unique. During the uncertain days of 1850, while state sovereignty was still in abeyance, E.F. Brundage conceived the idea of a separate and independent government. Issuing a high-sounding manifesto he called a mass meeting to organize the State of Rough and Ready. For a short period he had a following of about 100 persons, but the whole affair met with so much ridicule that the State of Rough and Ready soon dissolved into thin air."

During our short stay in Nevada City we counted ten automobiles parked within a block of our hosts' home. Their owners and occupants were busy setting up cameras to photograph the beauty of the fall foliage, from single trees to whole lanes, and even single leaves. They were all member of a camera club from Sacramento.

In a paper bound book, "Historical Album of California," which we bought in Nevada City, we were pleased to find two old pictures of Monterey. One bore the caption: "This was one of the last 'bloody' bull fights held in the U.S.A. It was held in Monterey, California. The Mission Inn, formerly St. Charles Hotel, is visible in the left background." The picture shows a grandstand crowded with several hundred persons. Four men in the usual bull fighter's costume are in the area with the bull.

"Monterey, California, from the Old Custom House about 1900," is a picture taken at the corner near the old wharf where the street car made the turn coming from Pacific Grove. A man with a serape and wide brimmed Mexican hat stands in the foreground.