

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Punch Bowl Story

The California Historical Society reports in September "Notes" an interesting history of the punch bowl presented to the society on Sept. 10th, during a reception in the society's new home on Jackson street in San Francisco, by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, on behalf of the U. S. Navy.

In 1908 the people of California presented to the armored cruiser "California", commissioned in 1907, an onyx punch set consisting of a bowl, a ladle, two dozen goblets, and tray-like base for the bowl. These were made in San Diego by the Ernst Co. from Lower California onyx and California gold. The citizens added to the set an onyx lamp, and the ensemble was presented May 7, 1908, as recorded on a gold band which encircles the bowl.

To give our readers some idea of the size of the bowl we repeat the description given in "Notes"; "The bowl is 15 Inches high and 9 inches deep and weighs 115 pounds. It measures about 20 inches across the rim and will hold eight gallons. The goblets are nearly four inches high, measure three inches across the mouth, and weigh 14 ounces. Around each is a gold band with the legend "U.S.S. California" and the state seal in rose gold. The same words and the state seals were on the band of the bowl, but the seals are now missing. The ladle is of 14 karat gold, 18 inches long. Its handle is ornamented with a rear admiral's flag in enamel and a state seal.

"The set was aboard the cruiser California until 1914, when she was renamed the San Diego and the state name allocated to a projected battleship. This California, the first (and only) battleship built on the Pacific coast, was four years under construction at Mare Island Navy yard, being launched in 1919. She was commissioned on Aug. 10th, 1921, and the punch set placed aboard, where it remained, until 1941, when Navy ships were stripped of non-essentials.

The California, damaged at Pearl Harbor, served in the Pacific throughout World War II, sustaining further Japanese hits at Saipan and in Lingayen Gulf. She is now in "mothballs" at Mare Island.

Admiral Nimitz discovered the punch set in storage in Washington and drew it to the attention of Mr. Joseph

R. Knowland. As mentioned in the notice of the September 10th presentation, Mr. Knowland, then state senator, was a speaker at a Native Sons of the Golden West banquet held in Woodward's Pavilion in conjunction with the launching of the cruiser, April 28, 1904.

The Kern County Historical Society, with headquarters in Bakersfield, has recently published a leaflet naming and describing the state historical landmarks in Kern County, where they are and how to find them. The historical data in this leaflet was collected and prepared by Richard C. Bailey, director, Kern County Museum.

There are 31 state historical landmarks marked in the southern county. As landmark No. 485 the Lakeview gusher No. 1 was dedicated February 3, 1952 and the marker placed by the Miocene Parlor No. 228 NDGW, Kern County Historical Society and Kern County Museum. The Lake view is known as America's most spectacular gusher which blew in near Maricopa March 14, 1910. Initial flow was 18,000 barrels a day, and later reached uncontrolled peak of 100,000 barrels per day, completely destroying the derrick. A record of nine million barrels of oil in 18 months was realized.