

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 31, 1958

The Overland Mail

The 1957 Centennials are history. Now the nationwide Butterfield celebrations are in the offing. In the months to follow between now and Sept, 16, Travel-World Productions will describe something of what makes history live again while filming along the trail of the Overland-Mail, the centennial of which will be celebrated from Missouri to California this fall.

At the old Redwood House just a short shadow off the Civic Center in Los Angeles, 40 men or so shoved back their steak-depleted plates, flattened hands over their western belts loosened one notch; and prepared to hear a short, gray-haired man with a Van Dyke, talk about the 1858 route of the Butterfield Overland Mail, according to a report in "The Overland Mail Centennial" issue saluting the "Butterfield Overland".

Roscoe P. Conkling was the speaker, and the listeners were the members of the Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners, an organization dedicated to the preservation of factual western Americana.

"It was a long but inspiring undertaking," Mr. Conkling began, holding up his three volumes, red-bound and gold embossed, printed by the Arthur H. Clark Company of Glendale, California. "For over ten years my wife, son and I traced old maps, tromped over fences, wore tires thin, and saw our son grow from boyhood to a young man." He patted a volume affectionately "And it's all in here . . . the story of the trail, and a man, John Butterfield, who inspired with a dream and the will to see it become a reality, linked east with west in a 2,800-mile stage line for passengers and the United States Mail."

"The terminals were St. Louis, Missouri, and San Francisco. Over 140, changing stations, nine to 20 miles apart, spanned the mountains, prairie and deserts. Thousands of horses and mules, hundreds of men and dozens of Concords and Celerity stages represented a year of preparation. If Mr. Butterfield's first stage did not reach San Francisco within 25 days, a year of work, and his fortune would have been lost. For that was the condition of his contract with the government.

Mr. Conkling concluded his talk with fire in his eyes of conquest and accomplishment as though he were

standing in the boots of John, Butterfield, our reporters tells us, and said:

"They made it: That first east-west stage rolled into San Francisco on the 10th of October, 1858, at 7:30 in the morning - just 23 days, 23 hours, and 23 1/2 minutes after the two mail pouches left Louis on the 16th of September."

The baggage allowance on the Butterfield coaches was exactly that allowed by the commercial airlines today - 40 pounds.

Tonight at 8 o'clock in the USO, the Monterey History and Art Assn. Ltd., will present a program for the pleasure of the membership at large. Miss Alice Dawson and Miss Pat Rieper will entertain with a talk, a bit of music and colored slides of their Safari from Cairo through Cape Town, South Africa, during their vacation from teaching in the Salinas schools last summer.

Refreshments will be served under the chairmanship of Mrs. Mary Greene.

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Monterey History and Art Association will be held Monday afternoon, April 7, in the Old Pacific Building, according to announcements sent to directors by the president, J. F. van Loben Sels.