

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Bristlecone Pines**

California's ancient bristlecone pines are now secure from exploitation. In April of this year the U.S. Forest Service established a restricted 27,000 acre forest area around the patriarchs in the Inyo National Forest, according to an announcement in the May issue of California Herald, the official publication of the Native Daughters of the Golden West.

The Forest Service stated that "public knowledge about the uniqueness of the trees plus an established souvenir market might lead to their destruction unless special protection was provided."

These trees are the world's oldest living things and grow at an elevation of about 11,000 feet between Westgard Pass and Wyman Canyon in the White Mountains some 30 miles east of Bishop. Their extreme age was determined by Dr. Edmund Schulman, dendrochronologist of the University of Arizona, who made a field trip last August to examine them. According to a recent announcement from Washington about 100 of the trees are more than 4,000 years old.

One gnarled patriarch is declared to be more than 4,600 years of age. If so, it was a seedling when the Pyramids were built and 200 years of age when Moses was born.

We always thought the California Sequoia was the oldest living thing, but now it appears that the bristlecone pines are claiming that honor.

In the May issue of the California Herald there is also an article written by Mary Dorney who formerly resided in Monterey, leaving here to reside in Downieville, Calif. Mrs. Dorney is a member of Naomi Parlor No. 36 of Downieville but now lives in Sacramento. Her published article "Downieville Pioneer Catholic Church" is illustrated with a photograph of the "Church of the Immaculate Conception," the history of which she tells in a fascinating manner.

Mrs. Dorney writes in part: "There was no stage or wagon road between Foster's Bar and Downieville in 1852 when Father Acker came to the mining region as a missionary, so the good padre took to the trails on muleback. The course he followed was in general the first blazed by Downie in 1849, and the town was named for the latter soon after. It was Father Deyaert who finally put the finishing touches to the church in

1851. After 100 years have passed the Church of the Immaculate Conception still graces the picturesque hillside overlooking the historic village at the forks of the North Yuba River. (Which, incidentally, has been renamed Downie River for some reason or other.)"

Another book recently published to be added to a Californians collection is "A Navy Surgeon in California." The journal of Marius Duvall is edited by Fred Blackburn Rogers and published by John Howell, San Francisco, selling for \$10.

Duvall was a surgeon on the U.S. Sloop-of-War Portsmouth which arrived at Monterey in April 1846, just in time to participate in the Mexican War. Most of his experiences took place around the Bay Area.

He was on the Portsmouth's launch which brought supplies to Fremont when he was stationed near Sutter's Fort. He also took part in the Battle of Santa Clara. Duvall makes some very interesting contemporary observations of Fremont, Sutter, Vallejo, Charles M. Weber, Dr. John Marsh, and others.