

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 31, 1959

Trail Blazer Saluted

When the proposed \$5,000,000 National Cowboy Hall of Fame is built astride Oklahoma City's transcontinental highways, one of the central figures in it will be a statue memorializing William Welles Hollister for whom the town of Hollister in San Benito County was named, one of the great leaders who gave strength and stability to development of early-day California.

Along with the news of Hollister's election to receive this honor, comes word that the trustees of the venture have voted to begin construction of the shrine.

Among the trustees are California's governor, "Pat" Brown, Nelson Crow of Los Angeles, Gordon Davis of Templeton, Roger Jessup of Glendale and Harold J. Powders. Decision to proceed was made despite the fact that approximately \$1,500,000 remains to be raised. Completion of the shrine is expected by mid-1960.

In the National Cowboy Hall of Fame - so called because the man on the horse is the symbolic figure of that great era of Western migration and development - Hollister will share an honored place with other famous Californians. Previously voted into the shrine were Edward Fitzgerald Beale, Henry Miller, Henry Clay Baulton and Fred H. Bixby, all of whom at various times and in various ways were builders on the trail of Western Empire. Along with, Hollister's election this year the trustees voted 16 other persons into the Hall of Fame, including one woman, she was Sacajwea, the Shosnohe who guided the Lewis and Clark expedition from Dakota to the Pacific.

From "The Knave" and other historical sources we have learned that William Wells Hollister was 68 when he died in 1886. In his lifetime he was a transcontinental drover, stockman, town developer, rancher and civic leader. Born in 1818 in Ohio, the eighth generation of his family in America from England, Hollister started study at Kenyon College, then withdrew because of faulty vision. For 15 years he managed farms for his father, who also was a merchant, until he had a start of his own. He bought 200 head of cattle and in 1851 trailed them from Ohio to California.

The venture was so successful he returned to Ohio and with financial help from a sister, organized a party to

repeat a larger venture: With 50 herdsmen and drovers he took 9,000 sheep, 400 head of cattle and some horses west, across rivers, mountains and desert. They were 1 1/2 years on the road, hitting the coast near present Los Angeles, then going north.

With that start he settled in the then Monterey County, later San Benito, on the old San Justo grant of 60,000 acres, when the land sold from 25 cents to \$1.25 an acre. He was a stockman there from 1854 to 1869 and one of the state's largest sheep raisers. Most of the land was sold to settlers, whose payments and interest Hollister reduced when hard times hit. The result was that the town of Hollister was named for him.

In 1869 Hollister formed a partnership at Santa Barbara with Thomas and Albert Dibblee. They acquired four large ranches: Ranchos Nuestra Senora del Refugio, Las Cruces, Salsipuedes and, Las Armitas. Rancho Lompoc, part of which was sold to an immigrant company in 1874. In 1881 the partnership was dissolved. Hollister helped develop both Northern and Southern California, engaging in many civic enterprises for general betterment.