

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **A Famous Trowel**

We have been given a tiny booklet describing a now famous trowel which was used by A. P. Giannini when he laid the cornerstone in May 6, 1941, for the head office of the Bank of America in San Francisco.

This trowel is a symbol of the link of interest between cornerstones of the past and the present. Founding of the Missions which brought the first touch of civilization ... the discovery of gold which brought the sturdy pioneers ... the raising of the first American flag ... the framing of the first constitution ... these are but a few of the dramatic episodes which were historical cornerstones upon which have been built the cultural, business and civic life of the California we know today.

The handle of this trowel was made of woods from each of California's 58 counties. Most of these woods were associated with the historical events which marked California's beginnings. Others were identified with literary figures who found fame portraying the romance of California. Still others are reminders of that scenic beauty of the State which has won the admiration of the world.

Each page of the book gives some part of the vivid detail in the colorful panorama which forms the background for present-day California and is illustrated with photographs of the place, building or object from which the tiny pieces of wood came.

Monterey County is represented by Colton Hall and with this information: "Redwood from Colton Hall, known in State history as "Constitution Hall" because of the fact that it was the meeting place for the convention under which California was admitted to the Union on Sept. 9, 1850. The building was erected in 1849 by American alcalde, Walter Colton."

Arranged by counties in alphabetical order, Alameda is the first. Live oak from one of the groves which gave the city of Oakland its name is used in the trowel. The wood was from a tree which stood on the site of the Oakland City Hall. Alpine is next and wood from this county was taken from an old oak pickaroon handle, a logging tool used in early day logging operations to push wood down the river in the Carson River wood drives on its way by rail to Virginia City.

Next came Amador from which incense cedar was chosen from a building erected in 1860 by Joseph Cuneo, father of Mrs. A. P. Giannini. A pillar was preserved as a hitching post when the building was later torn down. California black walnut planted about 1850 by General John Bidwell on Rancho Arroyo Chico was selected to represent Butte County. Bidwell came to California about 1841 and purchased the vast tract of 25,000 acres in 1849.

Pine from an old wash stand used in Angels Hotel in Angles Camp, where the first jumping frog contest was held in 1865, was selected as the wood from Calaveras County. Mark Twain stopped at the hotel and told the tale to the proprietor and later wrote the now famous story "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras." Oak from the desk used by Will B. Green during his career as editor of the Colusa "Sun," founded in 1862, is Colusa County's contribution to the trowel handle. Green was the pilot of the first steam ferry across the Straits of Carquinez, and is known as the "Father of Irrigation" in the Sacramento Valley.

The vast walnut groves in Contra Costa County gave a bit of walnut wood as its contribution. Oak from the felloe of a wheel of the first stage coach, which was also the first vehicle to be operated over the Gasquet toll road between Crescent City and Grants Pass, Ore. Oak was also used to represent El Dorado when a bit of that wood was taken from the original Hangman's Tree at Placerville. Another piece of oak was picked for Fresno County from one of the old buildings at Fort Miller.

Glenn County selected pine from the original home of Dr. Hugh James Glenn, for whom the county was named in 1891. At one time, Dr. Glenn was the largest land owner and grain framer in the United States. Oak from a coupling pole of the famous "Twenty Mule Team Borax" wagon of the fleet of wagons used in 1882 to 1907 in hauling borax from Calico, Death Valley, to the railroad at Daggett was selected for San Bernardino County.

Of course Kern County choose pine from the ceiling of the old barracks at Fort Tejon, established in 1854 in Tejon Pass, now a state park. Oak from a tree marking the "lost" corner at the spot where Fresno, Monterey and King counties meet, represents Kings County. San Mateo and Lake counties each have a piece of laurel wood on the trowel handle. The San Mateo tree is said to be 570 years old and is located at Crystal Springs.

(To be Continued)