

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Pfeiffer Family

A story on the old time settlers, their families and land in the Big Sur country, would not be complete without a mention of the Pfeiffer folk. John Pfeiffer, who later bought the Snow, Finnegan, Woold and Bradford brothers' places and latter sold most of this holding today know as the Pfeiffer of Big Sur Redwood Park, to the California State Park Commission for \$100,000, was one of the most prominent of the Big Sur settlers.

After leaving the Big Sur State Park we come to Sycamore Canyon. At its end on the seacoast lived a very hospitable and widely know family, Michael Pfeiffer and his large family of boys and girls.

Dr. Roberts remembers this incident: "The oldest young lady in this family, Miss Mary Ellen Pfeiffer, came to grief one day when she, by accident, swallowed a dose of carbolic acid for cough syrup. This paralyzed her vocal cords and for several years she was unable to speak a single work. Later on, regaining her voice and health, she married Alvin Dana and had several children." After her death Dana married the younger sister, Miss Kate, and in 1942, the year Dr. Roberts wrote this story of the Big Sur region, the Dana family still lived in the original ranch home by the sea in Sycamore Canyon.

Next to Dana ranch on top of the ridge going south one would meet the well-known Post family. William Post was one of the very old settlers and lived at the end of the coast road. Post had two sons, Joe and Frank, and three daughters.

From the Posts the traveler went on south by trail, and the first family net was the Castros, the next was Gaines at Gaines Canyon and following was the Tarris family at Tarris Canyon. Then there was the Partingtons at Partington Town Canyon and Landing. From there the family shipped many thousands of cords of tan-oak bark, railroad ties, trench posts and stove wood. Their home once let light through the windowpanes of clear mica, six to eight inches square, that had been mined just over the hill by the Pick ranch. Bert Stevenson lived and worked with the Partingtons besides having a ranch of his own.

From Partingtons Town the visitor would go on by trail to McWay ranch and next to the Waters ranch and on to Uncle Billy Anderson's ranch where most of the

neighbors' supplies came ashore form coast boats over Mr. Anderson's cable landing, stretching from shore to an island in the ocean. Our next host would be Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Slate of the Slate's Hot Springs fame. Mr. Slate was a genius with tools, according to Dr. Murphy every piece of furniture in his home and the house and many of the outbuildings was made by him. On leaving Slate's the Phil Dolan ranch came next. Dolan was a cattle rancher living on the north side of Big creek and on the south side of Big creek came the Gamboa ranch, the farthest down the coast Dr. Roberts ever had patients. Dr. Roberts later purchased Slate Springs and some of the family live there today.

The coast road was always a nightmare to travel and the man who could steer a mustang over it faster than five miles and hour was an expert, Dr. Roberts remarks. The road was always narrow, up and down, in and out around any obstacle that got in its way. The road went to the bottom of every gulch, the level of the sea, and to the top of every hill or mountain for 100 to 2,000 feet above the sea. The trail was no better, if not worse, than anything.

In the year 1893, Dr. Roberts, on a three-day trip, vaccinated 156 school children. In 1924 when Dr. Roberts wrote this description of the coast country, he doubted there were more than 36 left. He walked from San Simeon to the Post ranch when he planned and dreamed of the coast scenic highway with the unlimited idea of giving his beloved Peninsula a third outlet to the State of California on a through highway, instead of two dead end roads it possessed.

It was on July 27, 1937, that Governor Merriam cut the ribbon that opened the road to the public. And it was on that day that a pageant was given in honor of the author, Dr. Roberts, attended by the governor, the highway commission, fish and game commission, state foresters and state park commission.