

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Save the Capital

The California Highway Commission is being severely criticized by the citizens of Sacramento who wish to preserve an historical part of the capital city, and by many of the members of clubs and historical societies throughout the state. The threat of destruction of a vast area in order to build a freeway has been brought to the immediate attention of the Conference of California Historical Societies whose directors have in turn notified their member groups throughout the state, in order to give a widespread alert of the danger of destruction to one of the most historical sections of California.

Reports from the historical society members in Sacramento indicate that the month of January will be a critical time for a decision by the state highway commission on the construction of the proposed freeway between Second and Third streets through the planned zone of historical preservation in old Sacramento. This area represents the beginnings of the American period in California history and is of significance not only to the people of Sacramento but to the entire state.

In this zone is located the building where the Big Four organized the Central Pacific Railroad, the Pony Express Station, the first newspaper in Sacramento, and many other historic buildings. The California Division of Beaches and Parks plans to expend four million dollars on this project in order to preserve, restore, and interpret this significant part of early California history.

Consideration has been given to alternate plans for routing the freeway up the west bank of the Sacramento River in Yolo County and avoid entirely the proposed historic park. It is reported that unofficially some members of the highway commission have favored the Yolo route and that a flood of letters and telegrams at this time to the highway commission, which is meeting this month, might influence the members to decide in favor of the alternate route. The engineers were stopped several years ago from building a reservoir at the Coloma gold discovery site by a concerted effort of historical and civic groups and a similar determined effort may save this project.

"The division of beaches and parks completed its survey of the West End of Sacramento and its

recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature in 1959. The division feels that the time is now for the State of California to take positive action on the preservation of that historic area where Crocker and Stanford and Judah and Hopkins gave the impetus to the economic greatness of California, which got its start through, the efforts of John Sutter and his friend, James Marshall." The above paragraph is quoted from the program of the California Division of Beaches and Parks, Page 74.

"The State of California should restore to a living community that section detailed in the report as proper for State ownership. It must be state operated, with all proceeds returned to offset maintenance and operation costs of the projects. Including the extensive restoration that is needed, it is estimated that \$4,000,000 must be appropriated. So that land costs will not be speculated beyond reason, the appropriation for acquisition should be made within the next two years. The legislature should give consideration to the return of full condemnation powers to the division of beaches and parks, else the project will forever be stymied through lengthy court action on each and every parcel." So ends the report on the survey of 1959.