

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 18, 1963

Admission Day

This month, Sept. 9, California was admitted to the Union 117 years ago, but it was not until Oct. 18 that Californians knew about this great event.

Intelligence of the admission reached San Francisco on the October date when the steamer Oregon entered the harbor flying all her bunting and signaling the good news. Business was suspended, courts were adjourned, and the whole population, frenzied with delight, congregated on Portsmouth Square, to congratulate each other. Newspapers containing the intelligence from Washington sold for \$5 each, according to Bancroft's report.

"The shipping in the harbor were gaily dressed in flags, guns boomed from the heights, bonfires blazed at night, processions were formed, bands played, and the people in every way expressed their joy."

Bancroft wrote in his history: "Mounting his box behind six fiery mustangs lashed at high speed, the driver of Crandall's stage cried the glad news all the way to San Jose: California is admitted."

On the 29th there was a formal celebration of the event, when a new star was added to the Flag which floated from the mast in the center of the plaza, and every species of amusement and parade was made to attest the satisfaction of the citizens of the first American state on the Pacific Coast.

A flag had been made in New York and forwarded by the Cherokee to be given to Capt. Patterson of the Oregon on this side and another was made on board the Oregon, on which was inscribed, "California is a State." The Pioneer Society in San Francisco now is in possession of these flags presented by Captains Phelps and Cox.

Bancroft describes the procession at the celebration in San Francisco on Oct. 29 which celebrated the admission of California on Sept. 9, as "considering the youth of city, quite a remarkable parade.

"It was divided into seven parts, in charge of four marshals, each wearing crimson scarves, with gold trimmings. . . The several societies and associations had their marshals in variously colored scarves, all mounted on caparisoned horses. After the grand marshals were

four buglers, then the three marshals, mounted by native Californians bearing a banner with 31 stars on a blue-satin ground, with the inscription in gold letters, "California, E. Pluribus Unum."

Next came the California Pioneers with a banner on which was represented a New Englander in the act of stepping ashore and facing a native Californian with lasso and serape. In the center the state seal and the inscription, "Far West, Eureka, 1846. California Pioneers, Organized August 1850."

Then came the Army officers and soldiers, the Navy and Marines, the veterans of the Mexican War, the consuls and representatives of foreign governments. Then came the Chinese in native costumes under their own marshal. In the triumphal car which followed were 30 boys in white trousers and white shirts, representing the 30 states. In the center of the group was a young girl robed in white, with gold and silver gauze floating about her, and supporting a breast plate upon which was inscribed "California the Union, it must and shall be preserved."

Municipal officers, the fire department, and a company of watermen with a boat on wheels, were followed by the benevolent and secret societies.

At the plaza, the ceremonies consisted of prayers, music and oration by Judge Bennett and an original ode by Mrs. Wills of Louisiana.

Jacks of San Francisco manufactured a medal which was designed to commemorate the admission of the state. It was 2 1/2 inches in diameter, weighing over 2 ounces. On the upper edge was engraved, 'California, admitted September 9, 1850, on the lower edge, "City of San Francisco, October 29, 1850."