

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Yosemite's Birthday**

The Exhibition Committee of the California History Commission has sent out a notice that this year Yosemite National Park celebrates its 100th year and that the first century of State and National Park services has been completed.

This is the year—particularly May through October—to pay tribute to the great natural wonder and beauty of Yosemite, to the California Department of Parks and Recreation and to the National Park Service.

Yosemite, since its discovery, has attracted artists, photographers, writers, both amateur and professional, and increasing numbers of visitors.

Eliot Evans, chairman of the history commission and director of the California Pioneer Society in San Francisco, is chairman of the committee appointed by Governor Brown to plan a program. The Pioneer Society is planning a show of paintings lithographs, etc., from 1855-1900.

It is now known with reasonable certainty that Yosemite Valley was seen by the Joseph Roddeford Walker party in 1833. Zenas Leonard, clerk of the expedition, recorded in his diary what is thought to be the first mention of Yosemite Valley by a white man. He wrote:

“Some of these precipices appeared to be more than a mile high. Some of the men thought that if we could succeed in descending one of these to the bottom, we might thus work our way into the valley below, but on making several attempts we found it utterly impossible for a man to descend, to say nothing of our horses.”

It was in 1851 that the valley can properly be said been discovered and become widely known. This was done by Maj. James D. Savage and Capt. John Boling, who, with a strong detachment of mounted volunteers and friendly Indian guides, entered the valley in March of that year to capture the resident Indians in order to put them on the Fresno Indian Reservation. One of the party was Dr. L.H. Bunnell, the first man to make the wonders on the Yosemite Valley known to the world.

In 1851 and 1852 a number of expeditions against the Indians entered the valley, the last led by Lt. Moore, finally driving the remnant of the tribe over the mountains, where it took refuge with the Monos.

The tourist history of Yosemite Valley began in 1855 when J.M. Hutchins, with three friends, formed the first tourist expedition to enter it. They spent five days exploring the region and sketching its wonders. This publicity and the etchings were what really called attention to the existence of Yosemite Valley.

Regular tourist travel to Yosemite began in 1857. The first house was built there in the autumn of 1856, the first hotel in 1859. Nearly all the initial visitors were early Californians, and most were campers. Only a few hundred came each year before completion of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific.

Yosemite Valley was made a state park June 30, 1864, and a national park surrounding the valley was established in 1890. The present Yosemite National Park was constituted in 1906, when the State of California ceded back the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees.

Today thousands come annually from all parts of the world. Besides the Merced-El Portal railroad, there are three good main motor roads which enter the valley: the Mariposa, Big Oak Flat and El Portal roads; the latter is an all year road from Merced.