

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Sacramento's Birthday

Sacramento, our state capital, will celebrate her 126th birthday Aug. 21.

Old Sacramento during the Gold Rush days of the mid-19th Century was a hub of activity for Northern California and the entire Pacific Coast.

State capital, inland commercial and agricultural center, gateway to the northern gold fields, terminus of river boats, stage lines, Pony Express, telegraph and transcontinental railroad, Sacramento is a reference point in time. Founded by John A. Sutter Jr. in December, 1839, it is a vital part of the heritage of the Old West.

Many buildings which saw the unfolding of history still stand today in the west end of the city near the Sacramento River. The "Big Four Buildings"—the Stanford brothers store and Huntington-Hopkins Hardware store—where construction of the Central Pacific Railroad was planned, are still located on K street, between Second and Third streets.

The B.F. Hastings Building and the Adams Express Co. building housed the office of the Pony Express. The State Supreme Court and the State Library, as well as offices of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, the first railroad of significance in the West, were also located at one time in the Hastings Building.

The Adams Express Co. building also housed the Alta Telegraph Co., California State Telegraph Co. and the Wells Fargo Express Co. The Eagle Theater on Front street was the first building constructed as a theater on the Pacific Coast. The First Theater in Monterey was originally built as a sailors' rooming house.

The California Stage Co. was located in the Orleans Hotel. The D.O. Mills Bank was the predecessor of the present Bank of California. The City Water Works Building, constructed in 1854, was Sacramento's first city hall.

During the early 20th century, many of these buildings fell into ruin. The covered sidewalks and porches and much of the decorative ironwork were torn down. The lower end of town became a "skid row," a haven for transients and migrant laborers.

But by the 1950s people began to recognize the importance of Old Sacramento. Steps were taken to urge its preservation. Studies during 1958-1964 by the State Division of Parks, aided by a \$15,000 grant from the legislature, advocated several buildings as museums as well as for park and commercial uses.

In January, 1965, the Departments of the Interior announced that Old Sacramento had been approved as a National Registered Historical Landmark District.

On Aug. 21, at the Third Annual Sacramento Birthday Celebration, the bronze plaque designating Old Sacramento as a national landmark will be presented. This will take place at 2:30 p.m. in Old Sacramento.

Following the ceremony, those in attendance will proceed to the state fairgrounds, where there will be a large barbecue open to the public. The barbecue will be staged by E. Clampus Vitus. Sutter's Fort will be the setting for a birthday dinner on Saturday evening.