



CULTURAL HISTORY MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK

WHEN MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK OPENED OVER 80 YEARS AGO, IT WAS . . . A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED!

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Mount Diablo State Park was opened to the public on Sunday, April 26, 1931. Only a third of its present size, it consisted mainly of tracts of land on either side of the South Gate and Summit Roads. Rock City figured prominently, while the summit itself barely lay within the park.

The *Contra Costa Gazette's* report of the dedication takes us back to that distant time when the Bay Area's inhabitants, still trying to lift themselves from the Depression, eagerly welcomed California's newest addition to its recreation system.

An elaborate motorcade had been planned to wend its way from Martinez to Rock City, where the dedication was to take place, but nature intervened with a heavy rainstorm. The featured dignitary was Governor James (Sunny Jim) Rolph, whose vehicle, while passing through Pacheco, was greeted by citizens standing in driving rain. Approaching Danville, the vehicle was showered with large bucketfuls of rose petals tossed by a local nurseryman and his wife. In Danville the governor and his party were met by a raucous party of Livermore cowboys, who added, says the newspaper account, a touch of old west atmosphere. These pleasantries notwithstanding, the governor endured the inclement weather only as far as the Mount Diablo Country Club, situated at the foot of the mountain, where a banquet had been prepared. There a brief dedication of the park was improvised, with just one speech being offered. After dining, the governor hurried off to other duties.

Meanwhile, the caravan of an estimated 600 cars, four miles long, was in disarray. Rain was coming down heavily, to the accompaniment of lightning and thunder. Automobiles were experiencing difficulty in holding the road, and by sliding around on the slippery and slightly muddy highway caused some confusion. There were no reported accidents or traffic jams. Some drivers doubtless reached Rock City, where others had arrived earlier in the day, but the drenched crowd there was deprived not only of sight of Governor Rolph but also of the dedication ceremonies.

Three high school bands, unable to perform as scheduled, experienced hair-raising trips down the mountain in the afternoon, when rain slackened enough to make descent from the mountain feasible. The school buses swayed and slipped their way downward without accident, and the musicians achieved some measure of excitement from their trip.

And that's how it was on the first day of Mount Diablo State Park.

Thunderbolt mistaken for Rolph Salute

Even Diablo's thunder served its unwilling purpose in yesterday's ceremony. Governor Rolph, heading the caravan enroute, heard the rumbling and crashed of ethereal artillery. Is that my salute? he asked President Wight of Contra Costans Associated. No, said Wight, Although it will be all the salute available today. The national guardsmen stationed at Rock City waiting to salute His Excellency were chagrined when Diablo's thunder sounded out. Not even all the artillery in the state, in the opinion of Secretary George Pascoe of Martinez chamber of commerce could compete with such volume of sound.

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