

Celebrating the Sesquicentennial of California

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Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I stand today with my fellow delegates in celebration of the Sesquicentennial of the State of California.

California was admitted to the Union 150 years ago as the Nation's 31st state. Since that time, California has grown dramatically. This state, once known as part of the "Wild West," has now become a vast metropolitan region of business, enterprise and entertainment.

I represent the 25th district of California, which consists of three major areas: the Antelope Valley, the northwest San Fernando Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley. Each of these areas has contributed a great deal to the heritage of our state.

The Antelope Valley was first settled in 1886 by 50 to 60 families of Swiss and German descent. Desiring to reside in California, these families were told to travel until they saw palm trees. Arriving in the Antelope Valley, they mistook the numerous Joshua trees for palm trees and settled, naming their new town Palmenthal. This name was eventually changed to that of the current city, **Palmdale**.

The Antelope Valley has often been referred to as the Aerospace Capital of the United States. U.S. Air Force Plant 42, in **Palmdale**, was the birthplace of the B-1 and B-2 Bombers, the SR-71 Blackbird, the space shuttle and the next generation space shuttle--the X-33. Also, the Boeing Co., Northrop-Grumman, and Lockheed-Martin maintain production facilities here. The Antelope Valley's largest city, Lancaster, is home to a first-class performing arts theater and a popular minor league baseball team, the Lancaster Jethawks.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the San Fernando Valley was known as the "Horse Capital of California" because many movie stars would come in from Hollywood to ride horses and enjoy the slower rural pace of life. Even today, in the smaller communities, such as Chatsworth, it is not unusual to see horses tied to the hitching post out back of the Los Toros Mexican Restaurant or the Cowboy Palace Saloon.

Since then the Valley has grown to become a major economic powerhouse in the Southern California area, home to more than 1 million people. Even the powerful

Northridge Earthquake that hit on January 17, 1994, could not keep the Valley down. Residents of the Valley pulled together to rebuild their homes and the roads. It is now poised to become a city in and of itself.

The Santa Clarita Valley, located in between the San Fernando and Antelope Valleys, has made many contributions to the history of both California and the United States. For thousands of years, the Valley served as a major migration route for Native American groups as they traveled between the coast and the interior valleys and the great eastern deserts. This is the location of the first documented discovery of gold in California; the oldest existing oil refinery in the world; the first commercial oil field in California; the third-longest railroad tunnel in the world at its completion in 1876; and it is the location of one of the last “great train robberies” in the United States.

In the 1920s, William S. Hart and Tom Mix used the Santa Clarita Valley to create the traditional Western film. The Western film industry continued growing through the decades with actors such as Gary Cooper, Roy Rogers, John Wayne and others. Our quaint little valley created the ideal background for great Westerns such as the “Lone Ranger,” “Wyatt Earp,” “Annie Oakley,” “Gunsmoke” and many more.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the 25th district has played a vital role in California's livelihood. I am honored to represent this district and to have been a life-long resident of the Golden State. From the days of the Gold Rush, to the current times of the Silicon Valley, California has always had a major impact on U.S. history and the economy. Please join me today in celebrating the Sesquicentennial of this great state.