

The old gray rock watches over the green-clad valley

By WILFRID DELLQUEST

(Second in a series of sketches of landmarks and people of northeastern Los Angeles.)

Gaunt, gray and massive, the Eagle Rock is so familiar to residents and passing motorists that they no longer give it more than a fleeting glance. It towers to the west above Eagle Rock valley and, on the east overlooks the crossing of the Arroyo.

The Rock is Born

In spite of its sedentary habits, the Rock has been through some thrilling moments. There was the time when it was born, millions of years ago at the bottom of the sea. There were no humans around when the Rock was born. Man is a latecomer, a two-legged interloper with an incredible nose and ugly ears who has been fumbling around the planet for the last few minutes of the geological clock, obsessed with the notion that he is lord and master of the universe. For three billion years the earth got along very well without him.

My geological friend tells me that the Rock is a conglomerate, which means that it was put together by countless small rocks and pebbles and cemented into a monster rock by mineral deposits and pressure beneath the water. Then it was pushed up high above the surface by a tremendous

uplifting of the earth during the Miocene period when the mountains, valleys and rivers were reshaped.

The Fishes Were There

Now, what was the ocean doing slopping around Eagle Rock? That is a good question, and the answer is that at one time the vast Western Ocean extended inland until it lapped at the feet of the Sierras. I'm not arguing the point. Remains of sea fishes and other marine life are plentiful all over the San Rafael hills. Nobody was around to keep records at the exciting time when Eagle Rock first pushed its bald top above the waters. Only the fishes were there. They had their schools, but never learned to read or write.

The Rock Has a Face-Lifting

It is only recently, historically speaking, that the Rock sprouted a flying-eagle. The Indians never saw an eagle on the Rock. If they had, they would have mentioned it, as they were bird-minded people. Spanish explorers saw nothing but a big, fat rounded rock without anything to distinguish it. They called it Piedra Gorda, which means fat rock.

Obviously, constant eroding or wearing away of the surface broke off a portion of the western face of the Rock, forming a projecting ledge near the top,

like an eyebrow, that was shaped like an eagle with outspread wings. The effect was more startling when the light and shadows were exactly right. At other times, the Rock resembles a human skull in profile and was often called Skull Rock.

At last the Rock was very proud. It had become Eagle Rock. Passing Americanos stopped and pointed. There on the western face of the massive stone cliff was their favorite national bird, its wings poised in flight over the valley.

Artesian Springs

Eagle Rock Valley was definitely Indian country. An old Indian trail ran east and west parallel to Colorado Boulevard. In its latter days, the Rock looked down into the countryside where occasional wisps and columns of dust marked the progress of traveling Indians, Spaniards and Mexicans on their way east to cross the Arroyo and west towards the Verdugo hills. The travelers stopped at Eagle Rock to quench their thirst from the numerous artesian springs that bubbled out of the earth in the shadows of the hills.

Sometimes days would pass in the lovely valley shimmering beneath the sun in all-pervading solitude with no sound to break the peace except the singing of the birds.

How the Devil was Trapped

When Americanos came into the valley, the quietude was shattered by a wild cacophony of shouting, shooting, cursing, drinking, praying, singing and general hoop-de-la that signalizes the advent of true civilization.

The Gabrielino Indians had a legend to explain the deviltry of the Americans. When the Indian was confronted by something he did not understand, he invented a legend to explain it, and let it go at that.

The Americans scoffed when the Indians told them that the devil lived in a house in the valley. Finally, a party of Americans went with the Indians to the devil's house, and the devil came out with a bunch of keys in his hand. The Americans were frightened and angry at seeing the devil ahead of time. They set a bear trap for the devil and caught him. They didn't know what to do with him, so they sent him to Washington to let the Government worry about him. When Washington received the devil, they didn't know what to do about him, either, so they turned him loose and he has been active in the affairs of the white men ever since. The Americans who refused to believe in the devil all died, which served them right.

The Rock of the Flying Eagle

still contemplates the placid valley, which is not placid any more. Dust from Indian ponies no longer rises above the Colorado trail. There is instead an overpowering stench that rises to the very clouds and makes the eagle twitch his beak and wonder.

Neon lights glow beneath the smog. A great noise, like the groaning of a thousand devils with the bellyache, beats over the roadways. Once in awhile, the early morning sky flashes into a brilliant light as blinding as the sun and the earth shakes as Americans make big medicine and send up smoke signals shaped like giant mushrooms. That is when the old Rock trembles and wishes that it were back at the bottom of the Miocene ocean in the clean, clear water among the fishes who never learned to read or write.

History And Mystery Of Bird Rock Reveal Tales Of Redmen, Early Settlers And Bandits

**Wrath of Gods Invoked on Eagle Which Stole Indian Baby,
According to Legend; Dashed to Death Against
Stone Promontory.**

By VIRGINIA KAY

As the shadows of afternoon began to fall the great bird figure on Eagle Rock stands out in as vivid outline as it did a hundred years or so ago, when refugees from pirates of the Pacific came into the port of San Pedro, disembarked and traveled through the plaza of the City of the Angels and on out Verdugo road to shelter in the mountains. As they journeyed on the rough, dusty road their gaze fell on the huge rock towering on the hillside and as they looked they saw an outline of an eagle with spread wings imprinted on the rock's surface. Some of the travelers, weary with their burdens, stopped to rest and hid their treasure chests in the vast cave at the foot of the rock, others went on their way, but all wondered how the figure of a bird came imprinted on the stone surface. They wondered and went on their way calling the rock, Eagle Rock.

Little did they know that the body of a real eagle had made the imprint years, even centuries before. At least so says the Indian legend of Eagle Rock.

Story Told of Eagle

It was in the days when the Indians ruled over the western land. A tribe from the valley of the Cahuenga was camping near a huge rock on a hillside. One morning when the braves joined in the hunt, the squaws, and children, gathered in the cool of the trees to rest. Mothers were busy grinding corn and weaving, children were playing and the papooses were put in the coolest spot for a morning's nap.

Circling above the tree tops was a huge eagle and as the Indian women became more absorbed in their work the closer the great bird drew until with one swoop he dashed down under the trees and flew up again with a crying papoose in his great talons.

Invoke Wrath of Gods

Consternation reigned among the women and children, they were greatly confused and the baby's mother terror stricken. In their excitement they called upon the Unseen, invoking his care of the baby and his wrath upon the giant bird.

It was then that the gods of their fathers heeded their cries for the great eagle, flying at terrific speed dashed against the nearby rock and

was imbedded with spread wings in its surface, while the papoose fell unharmed to the foot of the massive rock, which still bears the imprint of the eagle's body and is still called Eagle Rock.

Then Spaniards Came

Then the Spaniards came, and with sword and blunderbuss drove the aborigines into the "tall and uncut." Later came the white man, and Eagle Rock now hangs on the edge of a rancho owned by a man called Campbell-Johnson, near golf links called Annandale, after a little spot high in the highlands of Scotland.

Some years ago adventurous youths clambered down the face of the rocks on ropes, and after dangling, between heaven and earth and kicking like spiders, swung into the caves of Eagle Rock and started to investigate the yawning caverns.

The first thing they found was a skeleton, and the remains of a stout oaken chest, a couple of brass handles and a lock plate with ancient initials "H. M. K." carved in its surface.

The caves were once the cache of a gang of as desperate bandits as ever terrorized California. From the crown of the rock the highwaymen could see miles and miles in every direction. At the present time Pasadena, Los Angeles, Glendale, Altadena, Santa Ana, Catalina Island, Venice and Ocean Park and the sea can be seen almost at a glance from the top of Eagle Rock.

Battles Fought on Rock

When hard pressed, as they occasionally were by gangs of brave troopers, the bandits would "dig out" for the Big Tujunga pass, and live in retirement until the soldiers got tired. Other times they would defend the rock against the representatives of the law. It must have been an easy task. On three sides the rock is absolutely inaccessible, a glance over the edge would reveal a terrible chasm with ant-like figures of men at the bottom, and the sides of the rock would not afford foothold for a fly.

The fourth side is approachable through a break in the hills. One man with a good gun could hold it against an army. Prisoners, when taken for ransom by the bandits, were lowered into these caves. They could easily escape, by jumping out into the atmosphere 200 feet above the hard, hard ground. Few did so.