

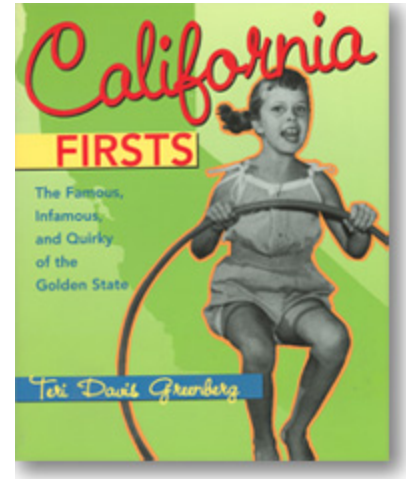
# California Firsts

## The Famous, Infamous, and Quirky of the Golden State

Teri Davis Greenberg

### From the Introduction

First California's gold beckoned risk-takers in search of wealth and adventure. While some returned home disheartened and broke, others made a living, even a fortune, and chose to stay. For those without ties and those wishing to sever old ones, California provided the perfect haven. Its enviable climate, wide-open opportunity, and anonymity appealed to anyone looking for a new start....



The number of "firsts" to which the Golden State stakes claim is truly mind-boggling. This book only skims the surface of California's mother lode of national and global firsts. The high-tech, biotech, tourist, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, agriculture, aerospace, and communications industries have all achieved firsts in California. Innovation, creativity, and genius have flourished in the spiritual and cultural realms as well, with the state giving the world some of its most charismatic religious leaders and most of its best-loved film stars.

### ***THE WORLD'S FIRST MOTEL: THE DRIVE-BY BEDROOM***

Credit for coining the term *mo-tel* (a contraction of *motor hotel*) has gone to hotelier James Vail, a Californian associated with the world's first motel.

The motel concept evolved from the autocamps of the 1910s and the municipal campgrounds and cottage camps of the 1920s. According to Warren J. Belasco's *Americans on the Road*, Vail visualized a chain of motor inns that would offer "antimodernist gypsies" who valued "simplicity, self-sufficiency, and comradeship" the amenities they sought as modern consumers--"comfort, service, and security."

Inspired by California's Spanish missions, situated a day's horseback ride apart, Vail, with the help of architect Arthur Heineman, planned to build 18 motor inns or "mo-tels" up the West Coast from San Diego to Seattle. Each would be a day's drive from another, and all would be designed in the Mission Revival style.

On December 12, 1925, the Milestone Motel opened for business in San Luis Obispo at 2223 Monterey Street at the foot of Cuesta Grande. It featured a red tile roof and a bell tower modeled after the Santa Barbara Mission's; 55 paneled rooms, each with an adjoining garage; and a central courtyard planted with orange, lemon, and lime trees. Gypsum board bungalows of three or four rooms backed the sturdy frame-and-stucco main building. Guests would pay \$2.50 a night for the pleasure of staying at the motel.

Due to the Great Depression, Vail's dream of a string of motels never materialized. Perhaps that is why the name was eventually changed from the Milestone Motel to the Motel Inn. The motel would not be one in a chain of 18; rather, it would be one of a kind. Today, hotelier Bob Davis owns the Motel Inn and someday plans to restore the main building. For now, however, the motel stands along U.S. Route 101 in disrepair.

### ***THE POPSICLE: MOTHER NATURE HELPS A YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR***

One chilly night in 1905, 11-year-old San Francisco native Frank Epperson decided to fix himself a drink of flavored soda water. After stirring the soda powder and water with a wooden stick, young Epperson left the concoction, stick and all, on his front porch. As luck would have it, the temperature dipped below freezing that night, and the soda water froze around the stick. The following morning, the boy awoke to discover the frozen concoction and realized he had accidentally created a tasty treat. The enterprising young man began his entrepreneurial career by first sharing his frozen creation with his schoolmates and then selling it.

Less than a year after Epperson's serendipitous night of creation, the Great Earthquake of 1906 struck. While Mother Nature had lent a hand to young Frank Epperson one cold winter night, she now dealt a cruel blow to the residents of San Francisco. The quake and

its aftermath of fires and floods destroyed almost the entire city and certainly sidetracked Epperson's entrepreneurial venture into the frozen-confectionery business.

In 1923, when Epperson was 29 years old, he applied for a patent for his frozen treat. The patent documents list the creation as "frozen ice on a stick." First naming the incredible edible the "Epsicle" (merging his surname and the word *icicle*), Epperson later changed the name to "Popsicle" because, according to newspaperman Al Sicherman, his own children called it "Pop's sicle."

At the time Epperson applied for his patent, he owned and operated a lemonade stand at an Alameda amusement park. Within five years, the lemonade salesman had sold more than 60 million Popsicles in seven assorted fruit flavors and had earned royalties for each Popsicle sold.

In the 1930s, with the Great Depression eating into his profits, Epperson made the Popsicle more economical by creating the twin Popsicle. This "new and improved" version came with two sticks and enabled two children to share one Popsicle for a nickel. (Epperson also invented the Fudgsicle, the Creamsicle, and the Dreamsicle.)

Until the 1950s, Popsicles could be purchased only from the ice cream man. Then, as the baby boom progressed, grocery stores began selling them in multipacks. Today, Good Humor-Breyers owns the Popsicle line of products and offers more than two dozen Popsicle products in a variety of flavors, colors, and shapes.