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AUSTRALIAN CONSULATE-GENERAL  
350 POST STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO 8, CALIF.

January 21st, 1964

The Editor.

Dear Sir:

Sunday next, January 26, is 'Australia Day', the anniversary of the landing of the first British settlers in the island continent on January 26, 1788.

In view of the current great interest in Australia, we have taken the liberty of sending you a story commemorating the event, discussing the happenings there in the intervening 176 years and providing a brief glimpse of the country as it is today.

We hope you will be able to publish the story. It has not been published hitherto, and has not been sent to any other newspaper in your city. It was written by a member of the staff of the News & Information Bureau, an agency of the Australian Government, and may be abbreviated or used without any credit or acknowledgment at your pleasure. It is sent to you with the compliments of the Consulate-General.

A tear sheet for our records would be greatly appreciated if the story is published.

Yours truly,

Norman McRae  
Press & Information Officer.



AUSTRALIAN CONSULATE-GENERAL  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST CONTINENT

(by Ian Healy)

CANBERRA: The world's oldest continent - Australia - will have its official birthday on January 26.

How old will it be? Officially, a mere 176 years, for while it is billions of years old - the oldest geologically - it is the youngest in terms of settlement.

And the official birthday, known as Australia Day, is the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Harbor, bringing the first settlers from Britain, in 1788.

It was the last continent discovered.

Earlier explorers had touched and charted part of its coastline, but it was not until 1770 that it was firmly found and claimed, in Britain's name, by Captain James Cook.

Before the First Fleet arrived, Australia's only inhabitants were scattered tribes of aborigines, whose origin have never been traced conclusively, and unique birds and animals - among them the kookaburra, kangaroo, platypus and frill-necked lizard - some of which provide conceivable links with prehistoric times.

It was a rugged, untamed land.

Though the early process of taming it was arduous and slow - with explorations, for instance, that lasted a year or more at a time - Australia has caught up with the longer-known world and in some fields, perhaps, surpassed it in less than two centuries.

It is already among the leaders in rural and secondary industries, science, medicine, art and sport and has progressed to the stage of being able to be a considerate neighbour, giving aid - food, money, technical equipment and knowledge - to longer settled, but less developed countries.



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Two of the most significant aspects of its first century of growth were the arrival, along with the 1030 men and women in the First Fleet, of a mere handful of sheep - the basis of Australia's great wool industry of today - and the discovery of gold in 1851.

Gold lured nearly 1,000,000 people to the new land in two decades.

As a result, new settlements were opened, until there were six separate colonies - colonies from which sprang the six States of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The six basic settlements have become bustling and attractive cities. The biggest - sprawling and sunny Sydney and sedately sophisticated Melbourne - are cities with populations exceeding 2,000,000.

The pastoral activities in which the early settlers engaged have remained dominant in Australia's productivity.

But discoveries of iron ore and coal, following those of gold, soon led to the establishment of important secondary industries, including steel manufacturing, which is now one of the most vital in the land.

In the years since World War II particularly, Australia has developed rapidly.

In the industrial field, new projects and discoveries have followed each other at dramatic rate - the discoveries of uranium in northern regions, of oil in Queensland and large new deposits of iron ore in Western Australia, the discovery and development of the bauxite-aluminum industry, the expansion of copper, silver, lead and zinc production and the development of rice, cotton and tobacco growing, together with a mass of smaller crops and industries.

The population has grown to more than 11,000,000 - a large percentage of them post-war settlers who, in their travels within the continent, find it not only a land of individual scenic values, but for many, offering reminders of the lands from which they came.

In the wild blue mountains of the eastern seaboard are the Australian Alps, with their large snowfields. And there are areas of rain forest and



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jungle, blue lakes in the craters of long-extinct volcanoes, mile upon mile of forest, sweeping acres of wheatfields, sugarcane and pastureland, soft green "English" meadows, great expanses of burning-red desert and stony plains, long rivers and waterways - long beaches too, which are the nations favorite playgrounds.

Geographically, the heart of the continent is the colorful, near-desert township of Alice Springs, but the real heart of Australia is Canberra, the national capital.

Inland and part-way between Sydney and Melbourne, Canberra epitomizes the post-war development of the land.

Here an immaculate city is rising at exhilarating pace, under the guidance of expert planners, in a lavish pattern of alien and Australian trees, amid green hills and on the shores of an artificial lake, now almost filled, that was named for the man who designed the capital, Burley Griffin.

The capital grows as the symbol of progress - in industry, trade, international relations, space age research and domestic achievements (like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, one of the biggest in the world)-in the youthful land where life has a tempo of exciting vitality.

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