

# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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The Monterey History and Art Association

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## The Gentle Art of Grizzly Bear Hunting

Monterey, (California) Nov. 29, 1846

"Bear hunting is one of the most prominent diversions in California, and it is worthy the entertainment of an Emperor, when it is conducted by the natives of this country, and after their own fashion.

"Whenever a Californian wishes to catch a bear, and which at any time he is ready to undertake for the sake of the diversion, he goes, in the first place, and looks well over the ground for about two miles all around the spot where he intends to lay his bait. This is done for the purpose of reconnoitering every step of ground that he thinks he may have to ride over, for the purpose of ascertaining if there are any squirrel holes or ravines, and likewise to form a judgment which way the bear will be most likely to run from the bait, on her being surprised. At least one of his companions accompanies him on this excursion.

"They then go and catch a mare, (it matters not much who is the owner) or if this is difficult, a stray horse will answer the purpose. As soon as they have lassoed their victim, they take it to the place previously selected for laying the bait. On this spot they strangle the animal, and then let out its entrails, that the bear may scent it at a great distance. They then cut off one quarter of this animal, and drag it all over the ground for a half or three quarters of a mile around the spot, then take it back and leave it with the carcase, always covering it over with some grass or bushes that the birds may not devour it before the bear makes his appearance.

"The bait being left in perfect order, and the ground well reconnoitered, they go away and do not trouble the bait the first night, because if the bear comes the first night, he will be sure to return if he is not troubled, and most likely with two or three more. Consequently the second night is the best hunt. The owners of the bait then invite, in secrecy, four or five choice friends. They do not invite too many, because, through too much excitement amongst many persons, or eagerness to get the first chance to throw the lasso, the bear gets wind that all is not right, and being a very cunning animal, if he once begins to suspect that the enemy is near, he keeps so good a watch that it is impossible to catch him. This company catch the very best horses they can find. It is not

the fleetest horse that is considered the best for this employment. It requires a tame, lively horse, with a good government in the mouth and a strong back.

"Everything being prepared, men, horses, saddles, and lassoes, they all start at sun down or dusk, and keep carefully to windward of the bait, which must be placed on a piece of ground clear from rocks, trees or bushes, and near or within about eight hundred yards of one of these, for the purpose of hiding themselves, that the bear may not see them when he is approaching the bait. A horse that has been catching bears three or four times, will keep a strict watch for the approach of the bear at the bait, and will invariably let his rider know, not by any noisy motion, but by deep, suppressed sighs, and pricking up his ears. Whenever one or more of the horses do this, the men, who have been lying by on foot, mount as quietly as possible, and when all are ready with their lassoes in their hands ready to swing, they put spurs to their horses, which at that moment is very little needed, that noble animal appearing to all intents and purposes to be as anxious as his rider to capture the savage animal. The horse, being swifter than the bear, if the plan has been well laid, is sure to overtake him before he can get to any bush. The foremost rider throws his lasso, and seldom fails of catching the bear, either by the neck or round the body or one of its legs. Should he miss, there are several more close at his heels to throw their lassoes. As soon as the bear finds himself fast, he rears and growls, taking hold of the lasso with his two fore paws. At this crisis the lasso must always be kept tight; if not, the bear will extricate himself immediately. Now comes in play the sagacity of the noblest of animals. The horse, from the moment the bear is lassoed, keeps his eye on every movement, and appears to do, or rather I believe actually does do all in his power to protect and defend his rider as well as himself; as it often happens, that from carelessness or inattention on the part of the rider, the bear will entangle the horse's legs with the lasso, and in such cases, if it is a horse that has been used to lassoing bears, he will with the greatest agility clear himself, without the least motion from the bit. I have several times seen a horse when the bear has been approaching him from before, instead of turning around to run away or to run on one side, wait until the bear got close to him, watching him all the time with a steady eye, and all of a sudden take a leap right over the bear, and then turn suddenly round and face him again. This feat of course is only done by such horses as are well acquainted with bear hunting. I never was in either a military or naval engagement myself, but I have heard hundreds say that fear exists in the breasts of warriors no longer than till the first volley is fired. The same may be said of the horse in bear hunting. From the moment a horse sees the bear, it matters not at what distance, he begins to tremble, and his heart beats so loud that his rider can distinctly hear it. But this lasts no longer than the first momentary onset; for as soon as the horse feels by the strain of the lasso that the bear is lassoed, his fear leaves him, and he is from that moment to all appearances in his highest glee. If the bear is a very large one, two or three more persons will throw their lassoes on him, because an old bear will be very apt to take the lasso in his mouth and bite it off, or to bring such a strain on it as would break it.

"The bear now being well secured, with three or four lassoes on him, the horses arching their necks and snorting with pride at their prize, walk away with the savage animal, which is rearing, plunging, and growling. Each motion from the direction in which it is the intention of his captors to carry him, is checked by the horsemen on the opposite side; and if the intention is not to kill him at once, but to make him fast alive, for the purpose of baiting him next day with a bull, then the most dangerous part of the business has yet to be performed, which is that of making the bear fast alive, in such a manner as is least likely to injure him or affect his agility for the ensuing combat with his savage antagonist.



"When it is the intention of keeping the bear alive for the purpose of baiting him the following day, they take him as near to an oak or some other sturdy tree as they can well get him; then two horsemen try to get their lassoes over his head and one arm, and another two lasso each one a leg. These latter horsemen then drag the bear, going on opposite sides of the tree, until they get his after parts close up to the tree with a leg on each side of it. All four horsemen now keep a tight strain with three turns round the loggerhead of each saddle, turning their horses so as to face the bear and hold back, a position to which all Californian horses are well accustomed, and in which position they hold the greatest strain. There must now be a man on foot, who takes a good strong lasso and makes one end fast to one of the bear's legs just above the ankle, in such a manner that it will not jam or draw tight around the leg. He then leads the lasso to the other leg, and makes it fast after the same manner, and so keeps on from leg to leg, until he has eight or ten turns. He then takes the lassoes which the two hinder horsemen have fast to the bear's legs and casts them loose. The bear being now well secured, with the tree between his legs, and the lasso behind the tree, the forward lassoes are taken off by slacking them with long poles, pushing the sliding parts with the ends of these poles. This is a dangerous piece of work, and the lassoes are sometimes left on the bear. When this is the case, he invariably takes them off himself, though they are seldom of any service afterwards, on account of their being generally bitten to pieces.

"The bear is now left with all his body perfectly free, so that he can move round and round the tree. Care is always taken not to irritate him unnecessarily, because it often happens that these ferocious animals die with rage; and sometimes water is thrown on him to freshen him, though, as this is some trouble, and consequently contrary to the inclinations of these people, it is seldom done.

"This method of hunting the bear is one of the noblest diversions with which I am acquainted. There is no cruelty annexed to it, so far as the catching is concerned. The cruelty consists of the baiting of the animal, of which I shall give a description hereafter; but there is something extraordinarily grand in this exercise, which requires courage, skill, and activity. It requires an extraordinary degree of courage for a man to ride up beside a savage monster like the grizzly bear of this country, which is nearly as active as a monkey, and whose strength is enormous. Should the lasso happen to break, which is often the case, the bear invariably attacks the horse; and it requires very often the most skilful horsemanship to prevent the horse or its rider from being injured. It requires also great skill to know when to tighten the lasso, and to what degree, to prevent it from being suddenly snapped by too sudden a strain. The rider must have his eye constantly on that of the bear, and watch his every motion. Sometimes either through fear, carelessness or inadvertence, a man may let go his lasso. In this case, if the bear takes off, (which he is likely to do), he will go as hard as his horse can run, and without stopping his speed, will stoop from his saddle and pick up the end of the lasso from the ground, and taking two or three turns around the loggerhead of his saddle and checking his horse's rein, again detain the bear.

"In short, from the moment that a person arrives at the spot fixed upon to lay wait for the bear's coming to the bait, until he is fast to a tree or killed, he feels himself elated. Every motion of those noble animals, the horses, which seem as though they were doubly proud when they feel the strain of the lasso from the saddle, and appear to take as much delight in the sport as the riders themselves, is grand beyond my power of description.

"I have dwelt at length on this subject, because it surpasses everything of the kind on horseback that ever I either saw or read or heard tell of."

W. G.

The foregoing article is another example of William Garner's attempt to introduce the newly-acquired territory of California to the American public. First published in the *New York Journal of Commerce* on July 30, 1847 (from whence we resurrected it), it was borrowed by the magazine *Littell's Living Age* in the same year, and from that source quoted in *California Grizzly* in 1955.

The latter book, by University of California zoologists Tracy I. Storer and Lloyd P. Tevis, Jr., is a comprehensive study and fascinating history of the ferocious animal, but apparently it fails to include a most interesting part of Garner's story: how the captured grizzly was secured until he could be brought to town for a bear and full fight.

An unusual coincidence is that the bear-catching scene described by Walter Colton on page 214-218 of his *Three Years in California* seems to be the very hunt pictured by Garner. Since Garner was Colton's secretary, interpreter and guide, we may surmise that he was instrumental in seeing that the new alcalde of Monterey witnessed this unique and dangerous sport. Colton notes it in his diary for October 28; Garner sends his information to the *Journal of Commerce* on November 29.



## Letters From An Abandoned Sister, 1838 - 1851

(Continued from the December Issue)

From Antonio Carvajal, his 20 year old nephew, to Don Florencio Serrano:

*Mejico, November 29, 1848*

Beloved Uncle:

You can have no idea, not even the slightest, of the pleasure that it gives me just to think that my letter can reach you, and I feel an indescribable joy upon thinking that you are to hear my words, even on paper. After so many years of not seeing you, and after having written so many times without getting any reply, having the assurance that this letter will really arrive in your hands is already some happiness.

By your letter which Mama received, we have found out that I have a little cousin whose lock of hair my sister is keeping as a souvenir, and to whom you must give (not kisses, for I am a man) but many hearty embraces, being careful that they don't all add up to a little broken rib, for according to his age, they must be very tender and consequently weak. Also, please do me the favor of putting me at the entire disposition of your wife, my aunt, and tell her that she has a big nephew whom she can command as she pleases.

Mama tells me to inform you of our situation, which I will do, beginning by telling you that I am employed in a large silk-mercier's shop with a salary of 400 pesos per year and my board, which position has given me many and very good contacts, for since it is a Spanish concern and my employer does me the favor of noticing me with some appreciation, the result is that his friends esteem me a good deal and I enjoy a position of respect among them as an intelligent and well-brought-up young man, (which I do not know if I merit, for I have just done my duty). From these contacts I hope to obtain numberless advantages, as I shall tell you further on, but in order to capitalize on them, I need you to help me with certain information that I shall ask of you.



As for Mama, since I cannot take charge of her entire maintenance because my salary will not go so far, I have the grief of seeing her reel silk which, although it is quite proper for a decent woman, bothers her a great deal; and as for me, it fills me with bitterness for I don't really want her to touch a needle, but I hope that if you give me an exact answer to what I ask you, so that I won't be frustrated in my plans, I shall be able to make my fortune and help Mama out of the hardships from which she has suffered so much in her unfortunate life and to give her a real rest, even though it may be in her old age, for in her youth she has had nothing but affliction.

Well, Sir: Since around here the newspapers talk of nothing but that California is progressing rapidly, that its sources of wealth are bearing much fruit in the hands of the Americans, that extremely rich mines have been discovered, that the population has grown considerably, that all goods cost a great deal; — in short, that all goes marvelously, — I have decided to make a voyage to that promised land with a cargo of goods, for whose expense I already have someone who will back me, and I only await your most detailed instructions as to what effects are most saleable there, at what prices they are sold, what customs duties are to be paid, how business is done nowadays — whether for ready money or in exchange for tallow and hides. In short, all the information that may lead to a profitable outcome, so that I may make my calculations on what the goods will cost here and how much they will sell for there, and once this is figured, to proceed as may be proper.

I believe that you will take charge of this (responsibility) with pleasure and efficiency if you will consider that upon it depends in large degree my fate and that of my family, for such information is extremely valuable here for any project that one may have.

I conclude by repeating my greetings to your family and assuring you that you can count on your loving nephew who has always loved you and who will never, until death, forget you.

*Antonio Carvajal*

P.D. If, by your reply, I see that the venture may be started, I shall leave for there immediately, and if fortune is with us, we shall see if we can establish a business between the two of us, I being the shipper and conductor of the merchandise, and you the one who distributes them in your home and among your contacts. Consequently, whether we embrace each other soon depends on your reply.

*(rúbrica)*



*Mejico, February 21, 1851*

Dear Brother:

Through the kindness of Señor Gonzalez, I received your letter dated December 22 of last year, and through it I had the impression that you had received my previous one, but that you did not answer it then for fear (as you say) that some biting words might have escaped you in reprisal for the things for which I blamed you. To this I reply that if I did use somewhat severe expressions with you, it was not with the intent to wound you, but because I was impelled to do it through just resentment caused by the ingratitude of a brother whom I have always loved dearly. This, far from offending you, should be the evidence which proves to you that I still hold the same affection for you as before, since it was the oblivion to which you had apparently condemned me that made me employ harsh language with one to whom I would only have wanted to use tender phrases. Well, enough of these heavy memories; let us pass to something else.

According to the picture you paint me of your situation these days, it seems very sad to me, and consequently, the reading of your letter has caused me much pain. When I think of you with such scanty livelihood in a country where you are out of sympathy with the dominant class, beyond your youth, exhausted by work and surrounded by a numerous family, naturally the saddest reflexions occur to me. I would that I could be at your side to alleviate your troubles or to participate in them in any way that I could. I realize the impossibility of doing either because of the distance. Oh, that I had sufficient means, then, to take you out of that exile and bring you here to rest and pass your life quietly and happily in the bosom of your whole family; but I feel myself powerless to carry out any such desire and these thoughts serve only to make me feel all the weight of your misfortunes. To lessen my sorrow, I think of the fact that you are enjoying complete health and that you have at your side a loving wife, gifted, as I picture her, with all the most beautiful qualities, and finally, I think of you caressing and instructing your three children who must cheer your hours of rest with their embraces.

I received the lock of Rafaelito's hair, and Genoveva, who is its guardian, has it in a preferred place on her sewing cushion. My two children often ask me what my father looked like, so that they can picture the features of my (?) nephew. I tell them what I remember, and according to my answers, each makes a picture as best suits him as to little Rafael's looks.

I only want to speak of agreeable things in this letter, but I must let you know that you and I are the only ones of our numerous family left in this world: Dominga died in Toluca the (blank) of 1850. Pepe was in this city, as you supposed in your letter, but now he has set himself up in Toluca where he is the manager of a bakery.

As for what you tell me of your coming here, I must warn you that although I long for it with all my heart, I charge you to think it over very well, and in order to make up your mind, consult with Abrego<sup>12</sup> and Gonzales, who can inform you of the state in which Mexico finds herself, and thus you will easily be able to deduce and calculate whether you would be able to provide yourself with a secure living here with what you have up there.

I affectionately beg you to give my sister all my love. As for my little nephews and niece, I shall never tire of asking you to give them a thousands hugs and kisses for me and my children.

I tell you nothing of our situation because Antonio is writing to you and in his letter he will inform you of our manner of life. As you asked, I gave your greetings to Rafaelita and her children, and they request me to give you thanks for your remembrance of them and to send you the most sincere expressions of their affections.

Florentino Meneses (to whom I read part of your letter) sends you a hearty embrace and asks you to find out the whereabouts of his daughter (the one he had during his relations with Josefa (Chepita) Coronel<sup>13</sup> according to what he has told me) for although the last news he had was that Chepita was in Los Angeles, he wants a more certain and circumstantial account of the child. As for him, he has a regular job and is very good friends with Antonio.

I conclude by begging you to take care of your health, for it is now your best resource; and also that you be more at ease in your dealings with the Americans. I think it is necessary that you be friendly with them in order not to attract their dislike, and that you try to reconcile the dignity proper to a man of honor with the pleasantness and affability that are indispensable for making oneself liked. In short, I cannot advise you as to your family management, for I know you and I know very well that you must strive earnestly to make happy those who have you as their only support.

<sup>12</sup> Came with Serrano in 1834. A hatter, he became a very prominent citizen and official.

<sup>13</sup> Daughter of Ignacio Coronel who came with Serrano. She was 18 when her family came to Monterey.



Lose no opportunity to write to me, for your letters are a sure consolation for my worries about you, and if you run out of paper again as you did last time, take another sheet, and don't be so laconic.

Goodbye, dear brother, be happy and until Heaven, sorrowing for our misfortunes, re-unites us, receive this letter, the whole soul of your sister,

*Francisca (well written)*

The final document is a money order for forty pounds sterling (\$180.), drawn on the Mexican Bank of Lascrain & Co., to pass through N. M. Rothschild & Sons of London, to Don Florencio Serrano, resident in Monterey, Upper California, in 1868. It was sent by Antonio Carvajal, now, apparently, a well-to-do merchant of Mexico City, to help his blind, poverty-stricken, proud uncle.

The check was never cashed.

*Donald M. Craig.*



## COSAS DE INTERÉS PARA LOS SOCIOS

We welcome the following new regular members: Col. and Mrs. Karl Hisgen, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Porter, Dr. Antoine Da Vigo, Mr. and Mrs. M. T. Park, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Powels, Mr. and Mrs. Zander H. Klawans, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond G. Conan, and Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Twitchell. Sustaining members are Miss Hilda van Sicklin, Col. Allen Griffin, Mrs. H. Danzell Wilson and Mrs. William Hatton.

Miss Caroline Wood has been made a Life Member, and Mr. Dwight Morrow, Jr. has also been made a Life Member in recognition of his gift of \$150 to the Association.



Miss Hettie A. Withey has donated two fine examples of Spanish wrought-iron work to the Casa Serrano. One is a medieval *espetera*, or kitchen rack for forks and ladles, and the other is a 16th century toaster for the hearth. Mrs. Mora has given a photograph of Joe Mora, the famed sculptor, to the Association, together with a rare United States 50c he designed for the centennial and a copy of his book, *Californios*.

We are indebted to the Arthur Porters, Mrs. Nelson Miles Leoni, Paul Colman and Frank Work for rugs for the chilly floors of the Casa Serrano. Thanks also go to Mrs. Anne B. Fisher, distinguished author of *Cathedral in the Sun*, *No More A Stranger*, and other books dealing with the Monterey scene, for the gift of 408 pictures of early days on the Peninsula. We are also the proud recipients of a Wedgewood tea set, the gift of Mrs. Stanley Ponton de Arcy. For all these donations we are sincerely grateful.



Mrs. Mary Greene, former curator of the Customs House and a key figure in Monterey's fight to preserve its historic values, will return from an extended European tour in April. We hope to announce soon that there will be a membership meeting in that month to hear a full report of her travels, especially that part which deals with her visit to the original Monterey, a castle in old Spain.

The Monterey County Historical Society, 75 strong, met in our clubrooms at the Serrano Adobe on February 21, and listened to a talk by Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell on *Monterey's Place in History*. After visiting local historical shrines, they travelled to Pacific Grove to enjoy Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Holman's collection of Indian artifacts and the exhibits at the Pacific Grove Museum.

*(continued on page 8)*

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HONORARY DIRECTORS: Miss Margaret Jacks, Carmel Martin, Sr., Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell.

## COSAS DE INTERÉS PARA LOS SOCIOS

(continued from page 7)

Fritz Wurzmann has been working hard on a committee to save the Fremont Headquarters Adobe, which has been purchased by the Federal government and is to be razed to make room for enlargement of the post office. It cannot be moved intact, but perhaps it can be incorporated into the new building.

The Adobe House Tour, one of the most successful fund-raising projects of the Association and which last year, under the enthusiastic chairmanship of Mrs. Tod Singleton, provided much of the money for the preservation of the Casa Serrano, is in the planning stage now. Mrs. Singleton will be in general charge again and the time will be early summer. Volunteers are welcome; call the chairman.

President Allen Knight reports that the Sloat Landing, a yearly re-enactment of Monterey's capture by the Americans in 1846, will be able to count on four warships from the Navy on the Fourth of July. Vice Admiral Eckstrom, ComAirPac, will also attend.

We regret to see three valuable members of the Board of Directors yield up their places. Mr. Van Loben Sels, several times president of the Association, has, as a parting effort, helped to secure for Monterey a number of representative paintings by Peninsula artists of world renown. Mrs. Raynsford has been active for many years and has served on almost every committee; Mrs. Tostevin served as treasurer during the period when financial negotiations regarding the Casa Serrano were at their height and her expert accounting was of prime importance. We do not say "Adios" but "Hasta pronto" to all three.