

# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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## Ghosts And Gold In Old Monterey

BY DONALD M. CRAIG



—Bearskin used by Shaman, Sonoma County. In Peabody Museum, Harvard University.  
(From Barrett, *Pomo Bear Doctors*)

For a settlement almost two hundred years old, Monterey, with its environs, has remarkably few ghost stories or even tales of the supernatural. One would suppose, given Monterey's checkered history of war, hot-blooded rancheros, murders, lynchings, treasure troves, adobe ruins and a long deserted mission at Carmel, that each foot of ground would cry "Hark!". But it is not so; the few printed stories rarely go back beyond the 1900's, and most of these are mere romanticizing by American writers who felt that where tradition's voice was weak, inventiveness could provide a more attractive substitute.

The only weird tale with any unusual qualities is the oft-told one of *La Gallina y Los Pollitos* or "the hen and chicks". According to the legend, a long time ago a good padre of the Carmel Mission crossed the top of Carmel Hill about where the Del Monte Properties toll-gate formerly stood. In a sack he carried a white hen and seven chicks, intending them for a poor sick man in

Monterey. The kind gift never reached its destination, for there at the *Camino de las Brujas*, a wicked robber struck down the priest, seized the bag, looked ruefully at its contents and ran home. Safely there, he opened the sack. Empty! Puzzled, he hastened back to where lay the body of the padre. There, around it, the hen and chicks scratched busily. The murderer stuffed them in his bag and returned home, only to find that the birds had disappeared. For the third time he retraced his steps, to find the chickens as before. Cold with fear, knowing he was marked for divine vengeance, he placed his pistol against his head and pulled the trigger. (\*1)

What gave rise to this story is lost in the mists of the past, but some intriguing guesses might be made. That the little hollow at the top of the hill where automobiles rush by today once had an evil reputation is indicated by its old name of *Las Brujas*, "the witches". Mysterious little lights were seen there at night, flitting through the pines as the fog wisps crept across the hill. December was a particularly bad time. However, no padre was ever slain between the Carmel Mission and Monterey, and although the sight of the ghostly white hen and her brood were supposed to bring the blackest misfortune to a Montereno, actually, in old colloquial Spanish, an *hijo de gallina blanca* is "a lucky son-of-a-gun."

The clue to the legend may lie in this exercise in semantics. Possibly at one time before the coming of the missionaries, the swale was a place frequented by shamans, commonly called "medicine men": the most gifted, influential and feared persons among the Indians. After their conversion by the padres, the spot might still be regarded with superstitious apprehension by the descendants of the pagan natives, and "fortunate", or "spirit-favored", become "unfortunate", or "cursed", just as the Indians' totems became "demons" after Christianity had supplanted the old religious practices.

Curiously enough, a very slim piece of evidence seems to support such a hypothesis. The most dreaded of all shamans (who were sometimes women) in central and coastal California, were the "bear doctors", who were believed to have the power to turn themselves into huge, ferocious and practically invulnerable grizzly bears in order to kill and plunder their enemies. Such shamans inspired extraordinary fear; not unwarranted, for many anthropologists agree that some shamans actually dressed in bear-skins and killed people. Besides this, some Indian groups, near San Luis Obispo, for example, believed that real grizzlies were inhabited by the souls of evil men who had died. (\*2)

With these points in mind, there may be more than meets the eye in the report that Father Serra, after a grizzly had attacked a child near where today's Carpenter Street meets Highway One, within a couple of hundred yards of *Las Brujas*, went personally to the spot and blessed or exorcised the grizzlies from

(\*1) W.P.A. Writer's Project, American Guide Series: **Monterey Peninsula**, 1941, pages 169-170.

(\*2) Barrett, S.A. **Pomo Bear Doctors**, Univ. of Calif. Pubs in Archae and Ethno. 1916



that place. Such an action, after probably less than ten years of Christian doctrine, must have impressed the Indians as a counter-measure against demon-grizzlies, were-grizzlies and sorcerors in general. The atmosphere may have been cleansed, but the area's reputation lingered on confusedly in its name and the later fanciful tale of chickens.

The other popular story having to do with the Carmel Hill sounds more like a cautionary moralistic sermon tailored to fit church back-sliders or those who put worldly pleasures above spiritual duties. It runs in this manner: Once upon a time a childless young couple were sleepily returning to the Carmel Valley at dawn after having spent the night at a gay fandango in Monterey. Just at the top of the Carmel Hill, they saw an infant weeping forlornly in the dust of the road ahead of them. They picked it up and rode on, but within moments the child ceased wailing and began to laugh horribly and fiendishly. Before their affrighted eyes, it turned into a squirming red devil. They dropped it and fled, — and never again missed mass because of a fandango. (\*3)

More amusing, and somehow more redolent of a true Spanish old wives' tale, is the story of the two pious old ladies of Monterey who made a pact that the first to die would receive the benefit of daily prayers for the repose of her soul from the survivor.

In due course, one of the *beatas* did die, and the other old lady scrupulously told her beads and was assiduous in her promised devotions. But as time went on, she began to be less attentive, and finally, days passed without a special prayer for her old friend.

Early one morning, as she was preparing her coffee, her big red rooster stalked in, flew up on the back of a chair, and facing her, crowed loudly and indignantly. She soon ejected him with the aid of the broom, but the following mornings, the same thing happened. The rooster, it now seemed to her, crowed not only loudly and incessantly, but with a plaintive note.

The thought suddenly struck her: the rooster flew into the kitchen lean-to just before early mass, the service she had formerly attended with her *comadre*. Could it be that the rooster had come to chide her? She remembered Saint Peter's experience with the cock. Without further hesitation, she put on her *rebozo* and hurried off to offer a novena for the souls in purgatory.

From that day, her departed friend never lacked for a candle, and although the old lady noticed that the rooster's beady eye still seemed to show more than ordinary interest in her, he never again flew into the kitchen to bring her to account for negligence.

Over the hill in Carmel, the old mission of San Carlos, naturally enough, had its share of legends. After the secularization proceedings of 1834, the mis-

(\*3) Monterey Peninsula, 170.

sion went rapidly to ruin. All but a few Indians left, the priest soon moved to Monterey (for he had responsibility for both churches), part of the roof fell in 1852, vandals stripped it of timbers and tiles, chowder picnics used the old doors and paneling for bonfires, and by the 1880's, the outlying adobe buildings had melted down or been razed and fields of grain came up to the very walls.

It was a lonely, romantic remnant, and by many, it was considered to be haunted. The sexton, Cristiano Machado, who lived in a cottage in the old mission pear orchard where the Tevis house now stands, told of seeing eery lights flickering from the gaping windows . . .

(To be continued)

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## Rescued In The Nick Of Time

Two fascinating gifts have been made to our Association by Mr. Norman Winslow, house painting contractor of Carmel. One is a small tinted engraving of Portland (England?) harbor about 1850, and the other is an old folio atlas, somewhat frayed and water-stained; both were in some junk Mr. Winslow was given from an old house in Pacific Grove.

The atlas, whose twenty hand-colored maps are dated from 1741 to 1753, was published in Nuremberg in the latter year. It is primarily concerned with European nations of the period, but there are interesting drawings of Asia and Africa before they were subdivided by the British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, etc. There is, in addition, a title page, which reads in translation from the Latin used throughout: **An Abridged Atlas, or so-called Scholasticus Minor, for use in the instruction of youths, edited by the heirs of Homanns, Nuremberg, 1753, under license of the Holy Roman Emperor.**

For the most part, the actual drawings appear to be the work of other Germans, for the legend on the plate showing the western hemisphere is **America: a general map made according to correct stereographic rules and derived from the most recent observations of the members of the Royal Academy in Paris and other reports. It is based not only upon the specifications of Professor John Matthew Hass, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Wittenburg Academy, but drawn by August Gottlieb Boehme, Professor of Philosophy, and published by the heirs of Homanns, 1746. (\*1)**

This **Americas** sheet is of particular interest, for it shows eastern Canada and the great Louisiana territory, from the Appalachians to the Rockies, still in French hands (Britain did not gain it until 1763), the yet-loyal American colonies snugly nestled along the Atlantic sea-board and Spain in quiet enjoyment of practically all the rest except eastern Brazil. The accuracy with which the Spanish possessions are drawn is noteworthy; the Pacific slope of California, however, is another matter.

Apparently no fresh information about our coast-line had seeped back to Europe since Viscaïno's voyage of 1602-1603. The known world still ended at Cape Blanco, although the mythical passage supposed to have been found by Martin de Aguilar, Viscaïno's subordinate, is noted. At least, California is no longer pictured

(\*1) Translation thanks to Mrs. Mira Jordan's Latin IV class, Carmel High School.



as an island. Father Kino's explorations at the mouth of the Colorado River in 1701-1702 had proved it was not, but it was not until 1746, the date of our map, that the island idea was finally abandoned. (\*2) Some curious misconceptions still remain evident: Point Pinos is far north of Monterey Bay, Drake's Bay and New Al-bion are north of Cape Mendocino and the lordly Carmel River described by Vis-caino rolls majestically to the sea near present-day Santa Barbara. The area near Monterey Bay and its interior is labeled **Oppidum Canots**, which, as far as I can deduce, is a mixture of Latin and French for **Canoe Villages**, probably in reference to the towns of the sea-going Chumash Indians seen by Cabrillo and Vis-caino in the Santa Barbara Channel. San Francisco, of course, is not mentioned; it waited for its discovery in 1769.

Our Association is greatly indebted to Mr. Winslow for his alert action in saving this fine old folio from destruction, and to Mr. Myron Oliver for suggesting that he donate it to our society where it will be cherished and made useful. One wonders how many other historically valuable letters, photos, pictures, books, and artifacts go unnoticed down the long slide to oblivion every day at city and county dumps. Before **you** throw away **your** old papers and documents, check with the local museum people or our directors.

Donald M. Craig

## A Naturalist Looks At Viscaino's Relacion

*(Mr. Vern Yadon, Curator of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, has looked upon the biological data brought back by the Spanish expedition of 1602-1603 and found it rather less than reliable in all its observations. However, in most instances, he finds still here today, or only extinguished within the last one hundred years, the birds, trees, plants and animals noted three and a half centuries ago in the dead of winter. It may give us cause to wonder what the scientist who comes to the Monterey Peninsula three hundred years from now will find.)*

"Montesclaros should have hanged the naturalist, not the cartographer." This is the first impression that comes to mind as I read Donald Craig's translation of **December in Monterey, 1602: Viscaino's Diary**. The mention of cardinals, grouse, wagtails, bustards and some notations on mammals seems pure fabrication. However, one must project himself into the position of Viscaino or whoever actually did the writing. It then seems perfectly natural to speak of the fauna and flora in terms of what was known in Spain and Mexico. The diarist was probably even further hampered by having to depend on the commentary of blunderbuss men who probably received assignments to make small expeditions in various direc-tions.

I can personally imagine a very small party unenthusiastically tramping through the reported snow until out of sight of the ships—building a nice warm fire—and "dry lab"-ing the rest of the report. I can imagine one of the men mut-tering that the assignment should be properly carried out, else the group would be whipped. And perhaps a reply from one of the others, "Ah, sit down, José. Which would you rather have—a brief taste of the whip or be frozen to death in this God-forsaken place? See, even the savages have gone. They must think we're out of our minds. The birds and things here are the same as those in Mexico. We'll make up one or two. The General will be happy, and we'll be warm."

(\*2) Chapman, C. E., **A History of California**, (1921), Vol. I, page 162.

But now let's become factual and try to reason what was probably seen. Rabbits and hares are obvious. The rabbits would have been the small brush rabbits of our coast, and the hares the black-tailed hare (jackrabbit). Deer would be the same. The Roosevelt and Dwarf elk probably were intergrades around Monterey Bay, but no Spaniard or anyone else ever saw one with a spread of eleven feet. Even the fossil Irish elk weren't so large. I would suspect that a circumference measurement was taken rather than the spread. The rump of an elk is noticeably marked with a large white patch and the tail is very short. Perhaps a herd of these seen from a distance brought the comment: "There are others as big as yearling bulls, and their shape is that of deer. Their pelt is gray and a quarter of a yard long. (Elk have shaggy manes). On their heads are wide antlers like those of stags; the tail is about a yard long and half a yard broad, and their feet cleft like those of oxen."

The California grizzly was the large bear seen. The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History has three skulls of these animals—one is from an Indian midden at Point Pinos, one from Carmel Valley, and the third from Sonoma County.

Concerning the birds reported, our problem becomes more difficult. Quail, grouse and partridges are mentioned together. Obviously there were none of the latter two. Pheasants were not yet introduced, so no confusion could be made here. Grouse do live in the Sierras and in the Coast ranges farther north, but none occur here. The "quail" was, of course, the California quail. No bustards could have been seen and it is hard to give a charitable answer as to what may have been called this bird; perhaps long-billed curlews which often work open fields is a possible answer. Wagtails were probably the bird we call pipits. Buzzards would have been our red-tailed hawks. Vultures may have been either turkey vultures or California condors. We can question the report of swallows being seen in December unless our writer visited Point Lobos to see white-throated swifts which often winter there. As for cardinals, perhaps a rare summer tanager was seen, but this is doubtful. Since linnets are mentioned elsewhere the observer was probably familiar with this bird, and did not confuse it.

The diarist noted "white" and "black" sycamores. One tree was probably what we also call sycamore, but the other was possibly the cottonwood tree, abundant along the Carmel River. The live oaks mentioned are the same that we enjoy today.

In the chronicle by Venegas, mention is made of big straight pines which, of course, were Monterey pines. The rock roses were probably the stone crops that are so beautiful along the shores of Point Lobos and elsewhere. The notation of broom is confusing. The plant we call **genista** was not yet introduced; so possibly one of our chaparral species was confused. The Castilian roses would have been the California wild rose or one of the close relatives.

Venegas also mentions lobsters, of which we presently have only two Monterey Bay records. The distribution of these animals is south of Point Conception.

December would have been the time of whale migration, so the report in Venegas of many whales and sea lions is surely accurate.

Vernal L. Yadon

## COSAS DE INTRES PARA LOS SOCIOS

The directors report that at the October meeting the following decisions were made: that dues paid for new memberships in the last calendar quarter be accepted for the dues of the ensuing year; that an appeal for contributions to the Carmel Martin Memorial Scholarship Fund be made through the **Noticias** (each director



thereupon pledged to give \$5 as a personal donation, bringing the total collected to \$815.); that the office attached to the Casa Serrano was to be occupied by the Monterey Foundation and that the Foundation be forwarded the bills received for its renovation, and that complimentary memberships in the Association, not being authorized by the constitution and too subject to criticism, be eliminated.

The November meeting approved requests of the Visiting Nurse Association and the "Views" group to meet at the Casa Serrano on December 11, and January 26. Mrs. Singleton was granted permission to have some necessary electrical wiring done, and the president set the date of the annual meeting for Monday evening, January 10, 1966.

President Robert Stanton has asked Mr. Oliver to talk to the Urban Renewal committee in charge of the reconstruction of the Rodriguez-Osio adobe and advise them on its original appearance. However, no one has a picture of its original state; have you one to lend us?

In December, Mrs. Claude Faw reported the \$100 worth of work has been done to inspect and termite-proof the roof beams at the Casa Serrano. Mr. Donald Craig displayed the folio of eighteenth century maps given by Mr. Winslow.

At the same meeting, the directors, faced with requests by academic institutions and nature conservation groups for the use of our mailing list of members, decided against granting such a use, but declared their willingness to give publicity to fund drives by such organizations through the **Noticias**.

Mr. Charles S. Pope, A.I.A., Superintending Architect of Historic Structures, National Parks Service, will speak on "Recording California's Notable Buildings" at the general meeting on the evening of January 10, 1966 at 8 p.m., at the Casa Serrano. We hope that you make it a date to hear Mr. Pope; he gave a most interesting talk at our annual gathering some years ago.

Gifts have come from many of our members and friends to be placed in the Casa Serrano. Mrs. Van Court Warren has given over sixty books on California history and a map of the missions to the Frank La Cauza Memorial Bookshelf; Miss Allis F. Hussey, several pieces of wearing apparel which belonged to her grandmother, Mrs. R. O. Fountain of Santa Rosa; Mrs. Roy W. Blair, a picture of the Old Adobe Jail; Mrs. Winifred Wolf of the Gonzales family, a great number of items of interest; Mrs. Green Chapman, an antique sofa and Brig. General and Mrs. A. G. Elegar, a pair of very old Spanish stirrups which belonged to the conquistadores of Ecuador.

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All members and friends are invited to the Casa Serrano on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1 until 4 o'clock to see the exhibit of early American, Oriental and European small boxes. They were arranged by Mrs. Guernsey Nevius and Mrs. Margaret Hanna Lang.

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On Saturday, December 18, Mayor Minnie Coyle dedicated a bronze tablet on a boulder at the Monterey waterfront to the late Prof. Frank La Cauza, a devoted worker for our Association and a fine citizen of Monterey. Prof. La Cauza, born in Sicily, came to the United States at 4 years of age, graduated from Harvard, was on the first faculty selected for the Naval Post-graduate School here, served on the City Council, Planning Commission, Library Board and was responsible for putting the benches dedicated to the 21 California missions along the waterfront. Prof.

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MONTEREY HISTORY  
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La Cauza was buried with honors in Arlington Cemetery. His widow, Mrs. Frank La Cauza, is our valued secretary.

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President Stanton is keeping up steam for the maritime museum project presented by Admiral Earl Stone's committee. Already George M. Clemons has accepted the chairmanship of the Land Acquisition Committee; Palmer T. Beaudette, that of the Ship Acquisition Committee; and Ted Durein, that of the Publicity and Education Committee. He is now approaching people to head the important Building and Construction Committee, the Museum Acquisition Committee and the all-important Finance and Fund Raising Committee. If you would like to be part of this tremendous historical, artistic and educational drive for the betterment of the Monterey Peninsula, call or drop a note to Mr. Stanton or Mrs. La Cauza. We need the whole-hearted support of the membership and the community.

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**Obituary**

With deep regret we note the passing of our good friend and member  
Col. Charles R. Sargent

\* \* \*

**New Members**

Mrs. Arthur Marotta, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest F. Zanetta, Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Barkelow, Mrs. Julian Gilman, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks J. Lockhart, Mr. Norman C. Winslow, Mrs. Richard Garrod, Miss Ethel L. Turner, Dr. and Mrs. William D. Concolino, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel L. James, Mrs. Albert Taix.