

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

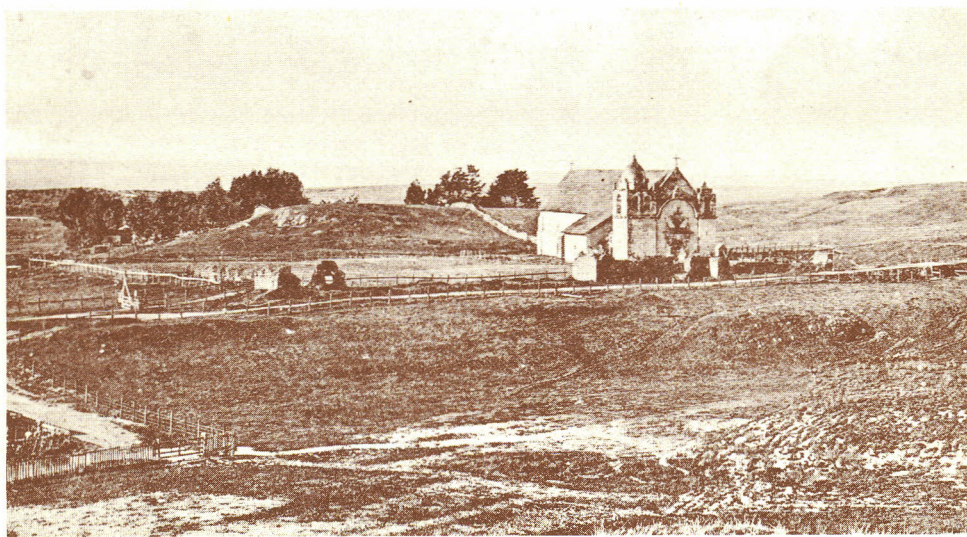
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Ghosts And Gold In Old Monterey

(Continued from the March issue)



Carmel Mission and the pastures of the Mission Ranch. The Martin ranch house and barns are in the trees behind the hill. Note the total absence of pines in what is now Carmel and Carmel Point. The date is 1884; the church has just been re-roofed.

— Courtesy Richard Wilkerson Collection

In the March issue, we were discussing the legends about the "Lost Mine of the Padres", which awaits discovery far in the wilds of the Santa Lucia mountains south of the Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Rio Carmelo. All solid evidence says that there never was such a mine, and yet

If there ever had been a rich silver deposit back in the canyons, it would have been hard to keep the secret. Each mission had a small armed guard of Spanish or Mexican soldiers attached to it, and no one would have been quicker than these men to smell out the slightest scent of gold or silver. Besides the padres probably avoided like the plague anything that might have led to a gold rush into their quiet realm of civilizing work and prayer.

What wealth the missions had was reckoned in cattle, horses, sheep, tools and land. None of the imagined hidden hoards of the missions was ever discovered after secularization in 1833 for the simple reason that they had never existed. Hard cash was remarkable for its scarcity in those days. Even in 1844, two years before the seizure of Monterey by Commodore Sloat, William Hartnell, a businessman who knew the economic resources of the country better than any native, estimated that there was not \$60,000 to \$70,000 in currency in all California. Commerce was almost entirely a matter of barter or paper I.O.U.'s redeemable in cowhides, lumber or grain. These were shipped abroad for sale, the profit banked in England or the United States and consumer goods brought back.

There was not a single local bank. The foreign traders held most of what specie existed: a motley collection of Mexican, Spanish, American, British, Peruvian and even Russian coins, and they kept their money well-hidden. Most holders of cash buried it, and not a few of the abandoned adobes of old Monterey came tumbling down because treasure hunters undermined their walls in a vain search for a gold or silver hoard.

It is only after the American occupancy that the first stories of the "Lost Mine" appear. The originator of them may have been William R. Garner, an English settler in Monterey since 1824 and Alcalde Walter Colton's secretary in 1846. In a letter dated November 9, 1846, he tells an interesting tale:

"Some few years ago, an Indian blacksmith belonging to the mission of San Carlos, in company with about twenty more Indians, went to a farm which then belonged to the mission, and which farm I have since purchased, to gather acorns for a winter store. The blacksmith, as he has since told me himself, was gathering acorns in a deep ravine . . . and observed something rising out of the earth . . . He got a piece of the substance separated from the mass . . . It pleased his eye on account of its brightness and he carried it to the mission to shew it to the priest. The priest told him he must never go back again, much less tell anyone where the spot was . . .

As soon as I had an opportunity, I sent for the Indian . . . , but he would never tell, saying that the priest had told him that if he ever shewed the spot to anyone his death would immediately follow. He held to this for about a year. At last . . . he agreed to go with me and shew me the spot, having previously pointed it out to me at a distance. We accordingly went, but when we arrived within about two leagues of the spot he had pointed out, I took notice that he was all of a tremble . . . I tried to inspire

him with confidence, but all in vain . . . (he would go no further), neither threats, entreaties nor payment had any effect on him.

Consequently I and those who accompanied me had a thirty mile ride for nothing."



Cristiano Machado, faithful sexton of Mission San Carlos. A photo by Louis Slevin taken about 1918. In his hand are the original wrought iron keys to the main door of the church.

— Courtesy Harry Downie Collection

This was the first frustrating experience in the long history of the "Lost Mine", but the climax was reserved for the late Carmel Martin, Sr., and his family.

From the 1850's to the 1930's, the Martin ranchhouse stood within a shelter of cypress and eucalyptus trees west of the old mission and old John Martin owned most of the land this side of the river. One day some sixty-five years ago, Carmel Martin told me, they found in one of the ruined adobe outbuildings of the mission, the remains of what they surmised was an old smelter. Among the debris of charcoal, slag and earth, they found a glittering yellow dust, and most thrilling of all, their eager shovels uncovered nearby a heavy bluish dump of what appeared to be silver ore.

Telling no one of their find, John Martin, Carmel's father, had the ore assayed. Sure enough, silver! Now the only problem that remained was to find

the vein from which it had come. Since there were no stories of pack trains of silver ore being brought into the mission from the mountains, the Martins looked closely at the immediate vicinity of the mission itself. At last they discovered an old over-grown and caved-in excavation. Eureka!

Mr. Martin, Carmel and his brothers and the ranch hands dug down forty feet but found no lode. Two more deep holes were dug without favorable sign. Discouraged at these locations, the Martins continued from time to time to put down shafts at likely places in the Santa Lucias. As Carmel Martin, Sr., said "I don't know how many we dug. Every now and then someone building a house thinks he has the 'Lost Mine of the Padres' on his property, but it's just another of 'Martin's Holes'".

The last time the "Holes" made big news was in March, 1940. Three 'teen-age girls, Doris Evans, Abbie Quinn and Ara McFadden, daughter of Don McFadden, the manager of the Mission Ranch Club which was housed in the former Martin homestead, were playing in the grounds and came upon the old timbered shafts where the covering boards had rotted through.

Not that there was much danger. Several people at the ranch knew of the holes and for many years both the Martins and the new owners of the property had used them as garbage dumps.

Harry Downie, in charge of mission restoration, took advantage of the occasion and got permission to explore the pits, for there was a rumor that some local Indian mortars and pestles had been thrown in them years before. He found no Indian artifacts, but he did solve a mystery. Unlike the surrounding hills, the substrata was not the familiar chalk rock or Carmel stone, but shale. Now the reason for the pre-Martin excavation was evident. The padres had not dug for treasure but for a solid fill for the corner of the mission quadrangle.

"As for the 'smelter', says Mr. Downie, who knows more about mission plans and architecture than anyone else in California, "that was just the mission blacksmith shop, and the glittering dust was brass filings. The dump of silver ore was real enough, but on careful assay, it proved to be South American in origin, probably brought as ballast in sailing ships from Peru or Chile."

There still remains a nagging question: why should cargos of silver ore have been trundled over the rough road to Carmel, where there was no smelter to reduce it, from the port and custom house at Monterey, by law the only anchorage where ships could discharge?

Surely, heavy loads of ore were not brought in through the surf onto the steeply shelving beach at the Carmel River mouth. The ore may have been brought ashore at Whaler's Cove on Point Lobos, but the only vessel recorded as attempting to make use Carmel Bay was the ill-fated *Star of the West*, wrecked on Point Lobos in 1845 in what was believed to be a smuggling venture.

Mr. Downie thinks there may have been some plans by the padres to teach simple metallurgy among other crafts. This is supported by a comment of Garner in the story of his fruitless treasure hunt. His Indian blacksmith guide mentioned that after the priest had told him never to go back to the silver outcrop, he had him make small crosses from the silver sample he had brought in, and that these were distributed among the Indian faithful.

Whatever the reason for the presence of the silver ore at the Mission San Carlos, its identification as South American in origin seems to close the chapter on a "Lost Mine of the Padres" in the nearby hills. But it does not finish the true tales of buried troves, and once again the Martins are involved.

The date of this next episode is uncertain, but it happened while the Martins had a dairy herd at their Mission Ranch and sowed hay in the fields around the unrestored church. An itinerant ranch hand, a Swiss milker, was set to deep-plow a field very near the mission but out of sight of the ranch buildings. All day he plowed, and that night brought the tired horses in to the barn, leaving the plow back in the furrow ready for the next day's work.

When dawn came, however, the Swiss did not appear for the milking, and upon investigation, it was found that he had packed his bed roll and gone. Later, when the horses were led out to where the plow lay, the reason for his

departure was clear. There to one side of the plowshare, was a shallow square hole on whose sides flakes of rust still clung. There was no sign of the small iron box that had been caught by the tip of the plowshare the previous afternoon. For that matter, they never saw the Swiss again, either.

Where there are legends of buried treasure, there will be treasure hunters, and it is not always necessary to cite instances from the misty past. Harry Downie remembers several attempts that took place in the last thirty-five years.

One day some men came to see him at the Carmel Mission and asked permission to use a World War 2 mine-detector outside the church to search for an iron chest. They had a map. "All right," said Harry, who had himself made extensive archaeological explorations there and found nothing of monetary value. "You may on condition that you give the mission any church vessels you find; you can have the gold."

Off they went, Harry close behind. The men moved the detector slowly over the indicated spot without success. They shifted the machine to one side, and everyone's heart stood still, for here there was a definite reaction. The shovels and picks worked furiously and soon the object of their fevered digging came to light: an iron-bound millstone.

The millstone, an interesting relic, is in the mission collection; the whereabouts of the mine-detector is less certain . . .

In 1932, four Danes arrived at the mission and camped near it for a couple of weeks while they searched for gold. They carried a sort of divining rod of steel which drew energy from the battery of the car which they parked nearby.

To test the apparatus, Harry secretly stuck a watch charm, a solid gold nugget, in an adobe wall. Keeping in line with the car, the divining rod led to the precious metal. Next, Harry hid his gold watch in the choir loft. The man and rod found it.

Ready now for serious business, the Danes and the still-doubting mission restorer walked around the walls. Outside the sacristy, in the Indian cemetery, the rod dipped. Down through five feet of earth the searchers dug until a solitary boulder was brought to the surface. On it shone some flecks of true gold, but the stone was not local and it had no counterpart. The hunters and their rod gave up.

Another foray with a divining rod led to uncertain results. This time there was a map which showed treasure buried across the river near the present sanitary district plant.

Under the guidance of the rod, digging was begun, and at a depth of about four feet the tops of four old stakes were found marking a square. The rod quivered violently at the center of the rectangle, but no matter how fast the men dug, the water rose even faster and the sand kept caving in. Wet and exhausted, the diggers finally conceded defeat, but Harry is not sure that they did not come back and try again.

To include Point Lobos in these stories of the Monterey peninsula may not be justified geographically, but culturally and socially it has always been identified with it. In the present case, we may cite Robert Louis Stevenson, who is supposed to have tried to explore the blow-hole on the ocean cliff there for buried treasure, only to be defeated by sand and tide. From this incident, Anne Fisher, in her book *No More A Stranger*, suspects that Stevenson got the idea for *Treasure Island*.

Another Point Lobos story was told to me by Mrs. L. J. Hudson, whose father, Alexander M. Allen, owned Point Lobos and the surrounding area from the 1890's until 1932, when the state acquired most of the present nature reserve.

A lame Chilean, old Garcia, was one of Mr. Allen's ranch hands. One night, after drinking deeply of *vino tinto*, he wandered off into the fields and forests of Point Lobos and ended his rambles fast asleep on a grassy hummock.

Late at night he awoke. There was only a sickle moon and the brilliant sparkle of the stars to give light, but the trees were clearly outlined against the craggy bulk of the granite domes. As Garcia looked around, he saw the flicker of a light under a big tree at the base of a hill directly in front of him. He watched it carefully and, by noiselessly sighting from various angles, he fixed the spot exactly. He knew as well as any native Californian or Mexican that such spirit lights hover over treasure.

At dawn, the chilled reveller rose, marked the spot well and walked back to the Allen ranch. He told no one what he had seen and went through the day's chores mechanically, his mind busy with plans for the evening.

When thick darkness again covered the sky, Garcia left his shack, drew out from their hiding places the pick and shovel he had hidden earlier and set out for Point Lobos. He went straight to the place under the big tree and below the rock outcrop where the ghost-light had danced. Losing no time, he dug rapidly, and suddenly, he knew he had reached the treasure.

Just before stooping to wrest it free, he gave a quick, cautious glance around him.

To his horror, directly behind him loomed a huge, black, menacing form, neither animal nor human. Paralyzed with fear, the digger stared at it, and then, from the figure came, in a deep, hollow tone, the Spanish words, "The gold is accursed!"

With the sound of the voice, Garcia found release. Dropping the shovel, he leaped from the pit, and like an arrow from the bow, despite his lameness, sped back to the ranch house, thrashing through the brush and falling in the furrows.

He used to tell the story often, but he never acted as guide for other treasure hunters. (1)

(1) Allen Knight, who also told me many years ago of Garcia's misadventure, ended up by saying, "I'll bet it was old man Allen come to find out what Garcia was doing with the shovel."

(to be concluded)

THE MERIENDA: MONTEREY'S 196th BIRTHDAY

June 4th this year marked the 196th birthday of Monterey, the Old Pacific Capital, and almost 700 members of the Association, the largest number ever seated in Memory Garden, celebrated the day with song, wine, barbecued steaks and good-fellowship at our annual Merienda.

After the invocation, given in flawless Castillian and English by Father Lawrence Farrell, our president, Robert Stanton, presented Mrs. Minnie Coyle, Mayor of Monterey, and Mrs. William McCaskey Chapman, the Duena. Lovely Lynn Tomlinson, La Favorita, and her doncellas, Linda Ann Ambrosio and Irene Robertson, made a beautiful picture in their mantillas and gowns as they acknowledged the applause of the celebrants.

Famed cartoonist Gus Arriola was a witty and authentically Spanish master of ceremonies and kept the entertainment moving briskly. Manuel Campos and his **Conjunto Tipico** played all our favorite Mexican tunes and prepared the audience for the featured dancers and singers. "Amparo", Moreno, Roberto and D'Aldo Romano, who made such a hit last year with his golden tenor, vivacious personality and Latin American charm.

At the head table where a dazzling row of dignitaries dined, a special feature of the Merienda had been prepared in secret. The Laura Bride Powers Award for service to the Association came as a complete surprise to Claude Faw when president Stanton called him up to receive it. Everyone concurred in the decision, Claude has for many years been a mainstay of the Association, always taking on the big jobs, the petty details and the diplomatic embassies that the good of Monterey and the Association demanded.

Mr. S. F. B. Morse was honored, too. His place in the history of the Monterey peninsula is secure, and this was just one more acknowledgment of the community's debt to his vision, generosity and unceasing vigilance.

* * *

With something of a gasp, we welcome the following 161 new members. We understand that over one hundred applications resulted from Bob Littlefield's missionary work among the Monterey Kiwanians. Congratulations, Bob.

NEW ADULT MEMBERS:

Mrs. Anne V. Whitworth, Samuel S. Farr, Francesca E. Farr, Mr. Julius Trescony, Mrs. Mary A. Downer, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Baugh, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bruno, Mrs. McCormac Bunting, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Maurer, Mrs. Anna Kavovic, Mr. and Mrs. Donald H. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Roderick Dewar, Mr. Albert Randolph, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Price, Miss Brenda Waddell, Mr. and Mrs. John Bouldry, Dr. Dickson Bell, Mr. A. Von Drachenfels, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Stearns, Major and Mrs. John C. Ford, Miss Patricia Myers, Mr. and Mrs. Roy F. Ambrosio, Mr. Patrick Church, Mrs. Stafford Hughes, Mr. and Mrs. Aime Michaud, Mr. and Mrs. Dale Hollenbeck, Mr. and Mrs. Monte Harrington, Mrs. Pearl Wood, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Berg, Mrs. and Mrs. Carl J. Silvey, Mr. and Mrs. David Rudolph, Mr. and Mrs. O. W. Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Bryce Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. John Coustette, Jimmy Hatlo, Jr., Mrs. William Roark, Mrs. Joseph W. Earnshaw, Maj. Gen. and Mrs. Leland J. Cagwin, USA, Shedo S. Russo, Arthur V. Dunn, Dr. and Mrs. R. G. De Vincenzi, Mr. and Mrs. Matt Corrigan, Mr. and Mrs. R. Rodriguez, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Siever, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Tibbits, Mr. Richard Phinney, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Marotta, Mr. John Werry, Mrs. Kent Mitchell, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sherry, Dr. and Mrs. A. K. Merchant, Col. and Mrs. Nelson Fooks, Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Notthoff, Mr. Melvin C. Perkins, Reverend

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* * *

JUNIOR MEMBERS:

Linda Ann Ambrosio, Julie K. Ambrosio, Wendy K. Ambrosio, Gregory F. Ambrosio, Allyn L. Ford, Kevin M. Ford, Miss Whitworth, Casey Catherine Silvey.

* * *

We regret to announce the death of these honored members:

Mrs. Kenneth Hardy, Mr. Leonard Carpenter, Mrs. P. J. Dougherty
and Mrs. Janet Bryce Wilson.