

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by
The Monterey History and Art Association

Vol. X, Number 3

September, 1966

Ghosts And Gold In Old Monterey

(Concluded)

As the British newspapers say, "This correspondence must now cease." We have not exhausted our material, but we fear that we have exhausted our readers' interest in the subject. It was necessary to collect these legends and stories, however, for in this day of radio, television, newspapers and books, we no longer have the retentive memories of the older generation. Soon, the word-of-mouth legends will pass into oblivion. For that reason we have collected them; many are now printed for the first time. Of such tales is local history made.

* * *

The late Carmel Martin was philosophic about it, but there are still hundreds of people on the Monterey Peninsula who remember the day in January, 1948, when the bulldozer clearing the site of his uncle Will's home near the Monterey High School, scattered nearly \$10,000 in \$20 gold pieces from a hidden hoard. On this spot today stands the high school's music room, fittingly named Treasure Hall.

The worst of it was that the Martin family knew that the gold was there somewhere. Before he died in 1913, Will Martin told Carmel that he had buried the money back in the 1890's, but even then, he was cautious about telling how much or exactly where it was hidden. In 1946, when the house was moved after the sale of the property to the school district, about \$1,500 had been found. The bill of sale reserved the rest of the treasure to the Martin family if and when it ever came to light. Douglas Martin, grand-nephew of Will, kept

vigil at the site during the grading operation, but on the day that Nick Marazzo's bulldozer tore through the gold cached in mason jars and tin cans, he was elsewhere.

The Granite Construction Company's laborer Damon Burgess was the first to find a coin. Within minutes, the gold rush was on. Men and boys, in the words of a reporter, congregated "like seagulls around a plow when the 'dozers moved." Police had to put up ropes during the working day so that the crowds would not interfere with the construction crews. After working-hours, at least a thousand people swarmed over the area. Some searched through the night by the light of bonfires, flashlights and lanterns, but the returns were scanty.

Early the next morning, twelve year old Mike Maiorana found a can containing thirty-seven \$20 gold pieces. "It was one of the ugliest scenes of mob brutality and greed that can be imagined," said a witness. "A dozen grown men jumped the boy and snatched most of the money from him. One man was knocked unconscious before the police could get there. If Marazzo had not put his bulldozer right on top of the boy's claim, they would have stolen it all." Young Maiorana, thanks to this help, saved fourteen coins.

Billy Thrasher and Ray Ellis, thirteen year olds, said that a man of about forty-five told them he was a "detective" and confiscated their few coins. Soon after, when they found a jarfull, they hid it in a storm drain and went to find their parents. When they returned, the jar had been stolen, presumably by the same "detective".

One gold seeker brought a mine-detector, but even if he had found a treasure-can, it would not have profited him; a crowd hovered right over the apparatus and would have grabbed whatever was unearthed.

On that morning, Mrs. Hatsu Miyamoto and Carmel Martin, Sr., standing near the crowd, watched the frantic search. Mrs. Miyamoto remarked, "They say there is gold on the property." Mr. Martin replied, "Maybe there is. Why don't you look?" Before his astonished eyes, she took a few steps forward and picked up a \$20 piece.

By January 15th the gold rush was over. The last big strike was made by policeman Joe Duckworth, who was off-duty but was keeping an eye on events. The bulldozer tossed two jars with forty or fifty coins in them at his feet. In one of the rare acts of generosity seen during those hectic couple of days, he lined up the construction workers, his friends standing by and Doug Martin and divided with them almost all he had found, keeping only a few coins as souvenirs for his family.

At first, the rumor was that it was illegal to hold the gold pieces, but the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco cleared that up. As rare and unusual coins they could be acquired and transported without a special license, but holders of the Martin Gold Strike coins had to report their finds to the bank within ninety days. Very few were turned in at the local banks for face value; as collectors' items, they had a value of \$35 to \$50 each. (*1)

(*1) Monterey Peninsula Herald, January 12, 13, 14, 15 and 23, 1948

If Robert Louis Stevenson had been in Monterey in 1948, he would have given the above scenes a full report. As a penniless writer, his thoughts naturally turned to buried treasure. His search for hidden gold at Point Lobos is supposed to have furnished the background for his most successful book, *Treasure Island*. Not so well known are the few articles he wrote for the *Monterey Californian* in December, 1879, but they, too, show an absorbing interest in the quick wealth that lay waiting for the lucky seeker.

In the December 16th issue, he tells of a story that still enlivened the conversation in Jules Simoneau's restaurant, although it had taken place three years before. It seems that in 1863 two Americans turned up in Monterey with a memorandum given to them by an old Mexican whom they had befriended and who had died at their home in Los Angeles.

The note told how, on his way back from the "placeres" in about 1852, the Mexican had buried about \$10,000 of nuggets in a place called The Willows, just east of Laguna Seca. In translation, the description went on: "There was a small adobe house at the side of the road going in to Monterey and the road crossed a gully nearby. To the left there were some willows in which we buried the gold and two pistols. We covered the spot with two white stones."

The Americans searched diligently but without success. A man named 'Guapo' Espinosa who was living in Monterey heard the tale and he, too, checked the area with no greater fortune. The next to try were Juan Garcia and Mendez Vasquez who lived on the adjacent Myers Ranch. They had no luck either.

In 1876, four men were hired to chop wood in the chaparral near the road but about one-half a mile from The Willows. They worked there for a week and then disappeared, leaving their tools abandoned at their work camp. The ranch owner collected the tools and thought no more about it until, according to one version, he stumbled on an excavation near where the men had been working. At the bottom of it was a rough old box with the cover wrenched off. It was empty.

The other version is that Percy Dolley, who grazed cattle there, was rounding up strays. He had located a cow in a willow thicket but could not make her come out; the brush was too high and thick for his horse. He brought more men and a dog to drive the cow out. Still she would not budge, but stood bawling. Dolley went in on foot, a dangerous business, and discovered why the cow would not leave. Her calf had fallen in a fresh excavation with a broken box in the bottom.

There were conjectures that the wood cutters had been the old Mexican's partners in 1852, that they had not been prospectors with him but bandits, and that they hired out as wood choppers simply to unearth the gold. The story went unchecked, for the men were never seen again.

However, the greatest gold cache in Monterey's history has never been found. In 1855 it amounted to \$80,000; today it might easily be valued at twice that sum. There is not the slightest doubt of its existence, but neither is there the

slightest inkling as to its whereabouts. The only clue is that it lies, or lay, within about fifteen minutes walking distance of the Abrego Adobe (or that general area).

This is the famous Sanchez Treasure. Its story is inextricably entangled with the equally famous Roach-Belcher feud of Monterey in the 1850's and '60's. In fact, the feud grew out of the contest for possession of the treasure, and by 1866, when Roach's battered body was found in a well in Santa Cruz, it was credited with a list of ten murders. This is a rather modest achievement; according to Bancroft, there were sixty-three murders in and around Monterey from 1853 to 1856 without a single execution for crime.

In barest outline, the story of the treasure runs thus. Conception Ortega de Sanchez was a beautiful young widow. Her first husband, the rich and astute Jose Maria Sanchez, was drowned while crossing the Pajaro River near Las Animas in 1852. Unprotected, her lands open to encroachment, her cattle and horses prey to thieves and the gold her husband had amassed coveted by every sharper in Monterey County, Conception quickly married a young American lawyer, Thomas Gordon. Her sense of security was short-lived; Gordon drowned when the steamer *Jenny Lind* exploded on the way to San Francisco.

Judge Merritt (whose adobe home still stands on Pacific Street) appointed William Roach, county sheriff and political czar of Monterey, administrator of the widow's estate. \$80,000 in gold nuggets, coins and slugs was given into his charge to keep for the minor heirs.

Conception, however, married again. Her new husband, Dr. Sanford, was not happy with Roach's administration of the estate, but the break did not come until a man named Wilson married the under-aged daughter of Conception and demanded his little wife's share of the \$80,000. When Roach objected, Wilson hired David S. Terry, a judge of the Supreme Court of California, a fire-eating Southerner and "a very devil with a Bowie knife," as his attorney.

Feeling that Roach and his friends were too strong for him in Monterey, Terry got a warrant for Roach from San Joaquin County, arrested him and took him to Stockton. Roach was locked in jail for several months without trial while Terry tried to find out where Roach had put the \$80,000. Eventually, Roach told him, but by this time the jailor, Frank Foote, had become a friend of Roach, and when the latter promised him a reward if he would out-ride Terry and warn his wife, Annie Roach, to hide the money, he assented.

In a wild night ride, Foote did beat Terry to Monterey. He got there about five o'clock in the evening. Annie and her gun-fighter brother Jerry McMahon dug up the floor in her house and pulled the gold from its hiding place. McMahon took the small heavy sacks and loaded them on a mule. He led the animal away and returned within half an hour. "I've buried the gold, Annie," he said. "Neither the devil nor Tom Walker will ever find it." He then left at once to gather Roach's friends.

Terry arrived a short time later that same night, almost mad with rage at being outwitted. According to one story, he forced his way into Roach's home

and ransacked the house, retreating only when McMahon and his adherents galloped up. Roach's friends awaited their chief's arrival and McMahon would tell no one but Roach of the treasure's whereabouts.

The next day, Dr. Sanford was in the bar of the Bola de Oro (now called the Casa Alvarado on the corner of Alvarado Street and Pearl Street). He was outspoken in his criticism of Roach. McMahon entered. There was a brief dispute. Both men drew their revolvers and both shots hit dead center. Dr. Sanford fell dead on the floor, McMahon staggered to the street and died a few feet away.

Concepcion was a widow again (for the third time in three years) and the \$80,000 was lost forever, for Jerry McMahon had not had the chance to tell the secret of its special hiding to Roach. Since that day late in March, 1855, no trace of the gold has ever been found.

Roach searched high and low for it; other seekers have dug and investigated every arroyo bed, every sandhill, every grove of oaks or pines within a quarter of a mile of the Roach adobe. Nothing more has been heard of the treasure these 111 years, nor has there been a rumor that someone found it. It lies there yet in the secure hiding place that Jerry found for it that foggy spring night in 1855, awaiting a discoverer.

For discoverers are still finding buried treasure here. Last winter the boys and girls at the Carmel Middle School at the entrance of the Carmel Valley were picking up bright silver dollars in the mud around the excavation for new classrooms. The bulldozers had again unearthed a long-forgotten cache, but it was an unpretentious one. No one kept count of the big coins, but there were probably no more than fifty of them, all dated in the 1880's and as shiny and unworn as when they were first minted.

In the long-ago, what fleeing robber hurriedly hid the money there, what thrifty cowboy, farmhand or Chinese cook at the Hatton Ranch stealthily put aside this nest egg and never returned to claim it? Why did he not retrieve it? Useless questions,—as useless as wondering where the next hoard of nuggets, or bright coins or fine gold dust will appear or who will find it.

Such things lie in the lap of fate.

Donald M. Craig

* * *

PROGRESS ON THE MARITIME MUSEUM

Monumental plans for a state historical park in conjunction with the maritime museum advocated by our association were revealed at a meeting of state personnel, city officials and Monterey History and Art Association committees in the Casa Serrano on August 8, 1966.

Admiral Earl Stone, chairman of the Maritime Museum Committee which came into existence last year after Mrs. Adele Knight offered the unique Allen Knight collection of ship material, photographs, and library to Monterey, is

greatly encouraged by the state's proposal to lease 16 acres of Presidio land containing the Castillo and the waterfront from the Army. The Army indicates that it will be agreeable to the idea if the state will pay relocation expenses. Mr. Harry Dean, Regional Supervisor of Planning Development for the State Division of Beaches and Parks, has already done the initial spadework on these negotiations and, in an interview in the Monterey Peninsula Herald on August 9th, said that he submitted a requested for \$350,000 from the state park fund for necessary costs connected with moving Army buildings and facilities now occupying the acreage.

If everything progresses smoothly, the money could be available for 1967 and a sizable portion of the work done by 1969-1970, the year of the state-wide celebrations of the settling of California, the establishment of the first missions, the discovery of San Francisco Bay and the establishment of San Diego and Monterey.

Karl Kortum, director of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, gave valuable practical suggestions for the building, maintenance and operation of a museum on the sea front of such an historical park. He particularly urged that a large sailing ship be acquired and made part of the museum, both for interest and as a great source of revenue for museum upkeep. Admiral Stone is very receptive to this proposal, which was initially made by another committee member, Admiral Ira Hobbs. He would prefer a vessel that has a connection with Monterey, but old sailing ships are hard to find now, and right now, the committee will investigate any possibility.

President Robert Stanton has written a letter to Mayor Minnie Coyle informing her of the new developments and has urged the city to obtain the lower part of the proposed area by the shore for the museum and the necessary parking space. The problems and cost connected with removing Army buildings is not severe at this point. "It will certainly be a fine accomplishment if the Monterey Maritime Museum, sited in a beautiful waterfront park is completed in time for the City's 200th birthday celebration in 1970", he concluded.

* * *

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Mrs. Oliver Watson, chairman of hostesses for the Casa Serrano, reports that during July, August and September there have been from forty to seventy visitors a day on each of the Saturdays and Sundays. Labor Day weekend had the highest count, but the steady stream of people proves the worth of the project.

The ladies working with Mrs. Watson from one o'clock until four on the weekends are Mrs. G. V. Nevius, Mrs. Josephine Fussell (the daughter of Robert Louis Stevenson's friend Jules Simoneau), Mrs. V. C. Warren, Mrs. Norman Downer, Mrs. Elizabeth Hill, Mrs. Gordon Hall, Mrs. Donald Goodhue, Mrs. Margaret Lang, Mrs. R. C. Barkedew, Mrs. Wilma Lazenby, Mrs. E. M. Porter, Mrs. D. R. Hull, Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Thomsen, Mrs. C. R. Spangler, Mrs. Stewart Goode, Mrs. Leland Paul, Mrs. Parker Fox, Mrs. Andrew Beaumont and Mrs. Frank LaCauza.

The landing of Commodore John Drake Sloat at Monterey on July 7, 1846, was celebrated in Monterey on July 4th this year, sponsored, according to custom, by the Monterey History and Art Association, assisted by the Navy League and the city of Monterey. Our valued member Admiral Earl E. Stone was the chairman of the event; Mayor Minnie Coyle gave the welcoming address, Ted Durein spoke on the historical background of Commodore Sloat's action and Admiral Edward J. O'Donnell read Sloat's proclamation to the People of Monterey and California.

A memorial redwood tree was planted in Colton Hall plaza by Emmett McMenamin and John Boit Morse to replace the one they had planted at El Estero Park during the centennial celebration in 1946.

Mrs. Charles Bentley reports several acquisitions of historical interest, among which are two letters sent from San Francisco on April 20, 1906. Although they had neither envelopes nor stamps, they were honored by the Post Office and forwarded because of the destruction of equipment and lack of both stamps and envelopes during the period following the Great Fire and Earthquake. These were presented by Mrs. Roy W. Bauman.

Mrs. Sorley, grand-daughter of Mrs. Charlotte Layton, presented the document which appointed Mrs. Layton keeper of the Point Pinos Lighthouse in 1856. Mrs. Layton was the second keeper, replacing her husband Charles, who died in 1855, aged 38.

Mrs. Sergei Bormenko of the Carmel Highlands has given several gifts of great interest and beauty. One is a Chinese gentleman's ceremonial tribute robe of white silk in a chrysanthemum pattern trimmed with the very finest hand-embroidery. Another is a Chinese lady's thin black silk coat heavily embroidered with a small embroidered snuff bag and a black hand-painted fan,

Two bronze cannons, "one-pounders", have been presented by Mrs. Marjorie Doolittle. Mrs. Kissiah Zanetta has given us two old tin figurines in memory of the late Mrs. W. E. Parker and Mrs. John Shepherd has donated a handsome wedding dress of about 1905.

Mrs. Alfred Spinks has presented a reminder of long-ago days in Monterey: an exquisite Chinese wedding skirt of heavily embroidered silk. In recent issues of the Monterey Peninsula Herald, Mayo O'Donnell has written a most interesting article on the Chinese family to whom the skirt originally belonged and the first Chinese wedding at China Beach at which it was used.

Anxiety that the fine old Doud House, erected in 1849 and one of the oldest and most characteristic wooden houses in California, was to be razed or removed has prompted the directors to ask the Urban Renewal Agency for reassurance that it would be preserved. Dr. Arnold Manor, Chairman, and Mr. Arthur Chang, Secretary of the Agency, have forwarded to President Stanton a resolution adopted by their body on June 20, 1966, reaffirming the Urban Renewal Agency's position that the Doud House is officially designated as an historic building and will be protected.

The Agency previously on January 12, 1963, went on record in the Monterey Peninsula Herald as intending to preserve the Whaling Station, the First Brick House, the Merritt Adobe and the Rodriguez-Osio Adobe which had heretofore been in private hands. The Serrano Adobe had already been purchased for a clubhouse by our association and its future made secure; Capitular Hall, next door to it, has been tastefully incorporated into a new development and so retained.

However, the acquisition of the Doud House from the Agency is still an open question. The estate problem is complicated and a mutually satisfactory price has not been set on the property. Meanwhile, the directors are keeping alert and will report regularly on the matter.

THE EDITORS
MONTEREY HISTORY
AND ART ASSOCIATION

336 Pacific Street
Monterey, California

Non-Profit Organization
Bulk Rate
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 20
Monterey, Calif.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Johnson
1145 Harrison St.
Monterey, Calif.

OFFICERS 1966

President: Robert Stanton
Vice-Presidents: Prof. A. Boyd Mewborn
Edwin Bliss
Secretary: Mrs. George Clemens
Executive Secretary: Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell
Treasurer: B. L. Heckenlaible

EDITORS

Donald M. Craig
Mrs. A. W. Elkinton
Mrs. Wm. M. O'Donnell

Directors: John Alexander, F. K. Arthur, Mrs. Charles Bentley, Edwin Bliss, Mrs. Richard Bower, Mrs. George Clemens, William D. Concolino, Mrs. Horace Dormody, Kenneth Ehrman, Father Lawrence Farrell, Joseph Fratessa, Mrs. Marie Gragg, Norman Hasselo, Mrs. Wesley Heard, B. L. Heckenlaible, Leonard Heller, George Leutzinger, Robert Littlefield, Emmet McMenamin, Prof. A. Boyd Mewborn, Mrs. David Muir, Mrs. William Oberholtzer, John Nail, Gallatin Powers, Robert Stanton, Adm. Earl Stone, Mrs. Yukio Sumida, J. O. Tostevin, Eben Whittlesey, Mrs. Elmer Zanetta. **Honorary:** Mrs. Wm. O'Donnell, Col Allen Griffin, Myron Oliver, Col Harold Mack, Miss C. Fortune, Claude Faw, Miss. Willard Wheeler
Honorary Directors: Mrs. William O'Donnell, Myron Oliver, Col. Allen Griffin, Col. Harold Mack, Miss C. Fortune, Claude Faw, Mr. Willard Wheeler.

New Life Member:

Mr. John Boit Morse.

New Members:

Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. DeTurk, Mrs. and Mrs. Mike Lando, Mr. John Sokolich, Mr. and Mrs. Everett K. Messinger, Dr. S. F. Cook, Mr. and Mrs. John B Payne, Jr., Mr. and Mrs Karl Von Christerson, Miss Georgia Wintringham, Mrs. Roberta Hancock, A.I.D., Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. French, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Davis, Mr. and Mrs. J. Earle May, General and Mrs. John T. Bissell, Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Castle, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Abinante, Lt. Col. Henry H. Banke, Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Cortright, Dr. and Mrs. Jefferson Larkey, Mr. and Mrs. Francis P. Lloyd, Mr. Donald C. Biggs, Mr and Mrs. Robert V. MacDonald, Mrs. Annette Z. Thorn, Mr. and Mrs. J. Breck Tostevin, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Patterson, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Lowry, Ruth Avis Mendell, Mr. and Mrs. John R. Burns, Mrs. and Mrs. Walter Haluk, Mrs. Elizabeth Buckley, Miss B. Adams, Mrs. Alfred Gordon Burns, Mr. Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Paul, Mrs. Florence B. Gates, Mrs. E. C. Lapham, Mrs. Thomas A. Work, Sr., Mrs. Ann Bethel, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur C. Stewart.

* * *

We are sorry to record the passing of Mrs. John McClelland, Mrs. Maude C. Lukens, Mrs. Frank Work and Mrs. Mary Little Greene. Mary Greene was for many years one of the most valued members of the Board of Directors and a key figure in the preservation of historic Monterey. She carried on the work so brilliantly begun by Laura Bride Powers, whom she followed as curator of the Custom House. The old Joaquin Soto Adobe, falling into ruin, was purchased, restored and lived in by Mary for many years before she sold it to Dr. Scott Heath. After her retirement she travelled in Europe, her last days were spent in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where her home was the center of attraction for her American and Mexican friends. She died on July 29, 1966, but as long as there is a Monterey, Mary Greene will not be forgotten.