

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Another Story on Jack Cheese

A few days ago there appeared in the Peninsula Diary an article about Jack Cheese which we were asked for by one of the advertising agencies from which the Herald received national advertising. Joe Hitchcock of Carmel Valley was quoted as the authority for the information as to who made the first cheese and why the name was chosen.

Now a letter comes from S.F.B. Morse exploding that story and telling one which he claims to be more authentic, and we quote: "I read your story of the Monterey Jack Cheese with great interest, and while I do not like exploding such a romantic narration, according to information we have it is in error, but the real story is interesting enough. Here it is:

If, by any chance, you go to the San Clemente Dam after you go through the gate upon leaving the county road, and after you cross almost immediately a little bridge over Tularcitos Creek, you will notice in a short distance the ruins of an old house on the left.

The dairy building that used to stand there is entirely gone. This property was occupied in the early days by a man by the name of Pedrazzi. He was probably the first dairyman in that part of the world. It was pretty remote and he had no way of marketing his produce much other than by making cheese with it.

He developed a type of cheese that required the application of pressure. This he secured by putting his curds, or whatever you technically call them, in a heavy sack in the bottom of a small keg, then putting a properly shaped piece of wood above it, and he got his pressure by the use of an old house-jack that he had.

"He developed a fine cheese, and it became known as Pedrazzi's Jack Cheese. You will note that the name is 'Jack' not 'Jacks'.

"Somewhere in the 80's or 90's the Pacific Improvement Company acquired the Pedrazzi property, and Ed. Hatton became foreman at the ranch headquarters, which is now the Los Laureles Lodge. Opposite the ranch buildings or lodge can be found the old concrete foundations of the dairy and the cheese factory that was installed by the Pacific Improvement Company.

"As far as I know, the Boronda family had nothing to do with the making of the cheese. The Borondas sold out years before this to the Pacific Improvement Company. The company continued to make the Jack Cheese under the supervision of Ed Hatton. It was sold as Del Monte Cheese and was widely and favorably known.

"Sometime about 1915, which is the year that the writer took charge of the Pacific Improvement Company, the dairy was closed down and the Pacific Improvement Company made arrangements with Ed Hatton to supply milk and cream, and also cheese, from the Hatton ranch at the foot of the valley. That is where the cheese came from when I became manager of the company.

"In an adjustment which we had with the California Packing Corporation the Del Monte Properties Company reserved the right to market the cheese under the name Del Monte Cheese.

"For some reason or another, the company ceased to buy or market it and a group of local men gave careful consideration to the production and sale of the article. They found that they could not use the name "Del Monte," so they reverted to the original name and called it Monterey Jack."

We thank Mr. Morse most sincerely for his information and will forward it to the agency who requested the information. We also thank Mr. Joe Hitchcock for his version. We wish to be correct.