

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Trip to Big Sur And Jack Cheese

When we saw Carl Doelter a few days ago he expressed interest in the Diary's various accounts of the origin and manufacture of Jack cheese and then told us that when he was a young chap he had almost lived for a few days on Jack cheese and honey. Carl and his brother Ernest, Ralph Hubert and Fred Hooke and one dog decided to have a big venture and go camping down Big Sur way. They had a horse and wagon in which they took camping equipment, their guns and some food and Pop Ernest promised to keep them supplied with the necessities of life.

At Trotter's situated part way down the coast, the boys left the wagon and packed their equipment on mules and made the rest of the way to Big Sur on foot. They had been sure that they would be able to kill deer and rabbits, etc., and would eat well. But it was a temptation to sleep late and not a bit of game ever saw the camp. Carl says he fished and supplied trout, but Ernest said he was on vacation and was not going to cook. So time passed and food ran out. Then it was that Jack cheese came into the picture. Several old-timers down the coast were making cheese and others kept bees so they lived on those two items until they gave up and left for home. When the quartette stopped at Pfeiffer's they found a large sack of groceries from Pop waiting for them, but they had had enough of camp life and could not reach Monterey fast enough. This all took place about 1910.

Pop Ernest, one of Monterey's most colorful figures before his death several years ago, had lived in Stockton and Gilroy with his family before coming to Monterey first in 1907. Their first home, according to Ernest Doelter, Pop's son, was in the old adobe now occupied by Mrs. Virginia Norris, and her antique shop. He recalls that from their front door they stepped into open space – no sidewalks and just the bare outline of a street (now Calle Principal) weed-grown in the spring, muddy in the winter, and dusty in the summer. The Amesti house, now the home of Mrs. Frances Elkins; the Stokes adobe, the Casa de la Torre (Poor Scholar), were all standing pretty much by themselves.

Beyond the Stokes house toward the hospital the little creek was bridged over and there was almost a forest on the south side. In the back garden of the Gutierrez

adobe and the adobe next door, there was a lovely garden and many old fruit trees, Mr. Doelter recalls. The neighborhood was so quiet and peaceful that Mr. Christian Hansen of the Pioneer Bakery could let his two cows run loose to roam the streets of the neighborhood. Water was procured by use of a hand pump at the well in the backyard and there was also a good well back of the House of Four Winds, which was also a favorite place for the children to play.

After a time the Doelter family moved to a small house that once stood about where Dr. Winton Swingle now has his offices. At that time there was a rock and adobe wall almost completely encircling the block in front of the Doelter home where Montgomery Ward and the Professional building now stand. The White House owned by A.B. Gunzendorfer faced on Calle Principal instead of Alvarado as it later did.

For a short time, Pop Ernest had a little restaurant and bar in Monterey about where the Pep Creamery is located on Alvarado Street. There was then a narrow pathway leading from Alvarado to Tyler street beside the building and one could see the old Washington Hotel a block or so away. The Littlefields and the Steadmans had livery stables near and it was there that the officers of the 8th and 18th infantry kept their well-groomed horses and their shining rigs. One of those companies was later sent to the Philippines Ernest Doelter remembers, and the other to Philadelphia. The men who went to the Islands were returned three years later by transport and landed in Monterey Bay.

The Doelter family left Monterey for San Francisco in 1914. The three sons: Ernest, Carl and the late Otto Doelter were called into the service in World War I. After two years as a restaurant owner at the Hotel Fielding, Mr. and Mrs. Doelter and their daughters returned to the Peninsula and at the invitation of A.M. Allen, established themselves at Point Lobos where Pop prepared the abalone caught by the Japanese fishermen, and shipped them to the Palace and Fairmont Hotels in San Francisco. During the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Pop had introduced the abalone as a delicious food at a well-known German restaurant in San Francisco, which after war was declared, was renamed The States.

After the armistice was signed and the boys came home, Pop Ernest opened the restaurant near the Monterey Wharf in June of 1919, as a family business with Mrs. Doelter and the sons and daughters taking

part. The building had been the Monterey Yacht Club headquarters.

In 1919 Ernest Doelter recalled, there was at least twenty feet of water between the building and the shore. A Mr. Ferrante had a small wharf jutting out from the land between the Customs House and the restaurant and there he dyed and mended his nets. The tourists enjoyed hearing the Italian fishermen sing as they worked. Each wore a bright sash around his waist and Mr. Ferrante wore a derby, much to the wonder and amusement of the guests. There were no concessions on the wharf at that time, and no buildings except a warehouse at the very end.