

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Sanchez Estate Case

After Roach was found guilty of embezzlement in the Sanchez estate case in the Stockton court and ordered to jail, Belcher was appointed guardian of the heirs and took office at once. According to Paul Parker's version of the case and the disappearance of the money hidden in Monterey, the home of Roach's brother-in-law, Jerry McMahon, was the hiding place.

In looking for the gold dust, Belcher and Terry nearly wrecked the building. They could find nothing. Roach who was now out of jail and in hiding on the ranch of John Robertson, his bodyguard and a former member of California Battalion. When he had been arrested the second time in Santa Barbara, three notes had been found upon him—one for \$8,000 made out to himself, and one for \$1,000 and one for \$100 made out to Dr. Frederick A McDougal, owner of several large land grants near San Juan.

The three notes were turned over to the sheriff of San Joaquin County and advertised for sale. Owing to the fact that wealthy Dr. McDougal was the maker and that they bought three per cent interest a month, they were sold at a premium to Belcher. Roach testified by deposition that he had given McDougal gold dust in exchange for the notes, because of difficulty of handling the metal on a trip to Mexico. (He had been fleeing to the southern country when arrested.)

The transaction had taken place in Jose Abrego's store in Monterey, the dust being weighed by Pedro Zabala, as he was the only one who knew how to use the gold scales. Abrego was a member of the Hajar and Padres colony, who arrived in Monterey from Mexico in 1834. Bancroft speaks well of his intelligence and character. He built the Abrego adobe on the corner of Webster and Abrego streets and the family piano is in the historical collection of the California Historical Society in San Francisco.

Pedro Zabala a Spanish Basque, learned to operate gold scales in Chile, where he was in business. In 1849 he came to San Francisco to sell a shipload of goods, then settled, the same year, in Monterey. Zabala married Anna Hartnell, daughter of W.E.P. Hartnell, prominent in Monterey and a member of the Constitutional

Convention in 1849. He founded California's first college near Salinas.

Dr. McDougal, the maker of the notes, was educated in Edinburgh, practiced medicine in San Juan. He married the widow of Juan Anzar and took over the management of the Aromitas, Santa Ana, Vega del Pajaro, Los Carneros, and Canada de la Carpinteria ranchos. He was never known to send a bill to a patient.

According to court records Belcher received the judgment and was declared owner of the notes. Finally Roach and his bondmen were forced to settle with the widow of Jose Maria Sanchez, now Mrs. Sanford. She received \$7,000 from P. Ord and Charles Wolter and \$2,000 from Simpson Conover.

Charles Wolter was a German captain of a Mexican vessel, who settled in Monterey in 1833 and married a daughter of J.R. Estrada, becoming by this marriage claimant for El Toro rancho, according to Bancroft's History of California. Simpson Conover was a prosperous merchant of Monterey.

Becher was shot at many times on his way to and from his Carmel Valley property but was never wounded. On June 19, 1856, "The Big Eagle of Monterey," as he was called, was drinking in the Washington Hotel bar, when a shot which hit him in the stomach was fired through the lobby door. He died the next day.

Shortly after this Mrs. Sanchez Godden Sanford married her fourth husband, George W. Crane, a handsome Virginian, college graduate and an able attorney, according to Mr. Parker's writings. He had come to California in 1834 with Fremont's California Battalion. He represented Monterey County in the state legislature. When he died in San Juan in 1868 of smallpox, very little was left of his wife's estate because of his gambling failures.

(More tomorrow)