

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Near Whiskey Hill

William Roach, who has figured so prominently in the story of the buried and lost treasure of Monterey and in the Roach-Belcher duel, of the early 1850s in Monterey County, left the community about 1880. He purchased a farm near Whiskey Hill, a few miles from Watsonville. The only time he would talk about his past exploits was when he was drinking. These remarks often brought warnings from his friends, who were not so proud of the parts they played in the murders committed.

On September 3, 1866, a county election was being held, and Roach went to Watsonville to vote. He remained until the votes had been counted, then started home late in the evening. The next morning his horse, with the empty saddle, was seen; and in a well, not far from the road, was Roach's body. The marks in the ground indicated that he had been lassoed and pulled from his horse, and had then been dragged 300 feet to the well. Before being tossed into the water, his head had been caved in with a huge rock. This story of the murder was printed in the Pajaro Times on September 8, 1866.

The home of Jose Maria Sanchez, over whose estate the trouble and the "feudin" all started, was a large two-story adobe on the east side of the Pajaro River, near where it joins the San Benito. In May, 1853, \$13,555 was found hidden in a wall, and this started treasure hunters in later years. In the spring of 1914, Paul Parker reports that he read an item in the Hollister newspaper that a man with a divining rod was looking for the Sanchez gold, so with a group from Salinas, he watched the hunt. The hill near where the house stood was torn up for a hundred yards. There were many persons searching, some with maps, but nothing was ever found.

One of Sanchez' ranchos was the Llano de Tequesquite in Santa Clara County. It was named after a mineral deposit on the edge of a small lagoon, now known as Soap Lake. It has been recorded that in 1844 Thomas O. Larkin and Sanchez made soap there. They brought an old caldron from Monterey and increased its sides to a height of eight feet by means of adobe bricks and iron bands. With the fire underneath, they made soap from cattle fat and tequesquite, and sold it in Monterey where it was in demand because it mixed easily with

water. The tequesquite was also brought to Monterey and the housewives made their own soap with it.

Mr. and Mrs. Crane had one daughter. After Crane's death from smallpox, Mrs. Encarnacion Ortega Sanchez-Godden-Sanford-Crane married for the fifth time (husband's name unknown) and spent her last days at the home of one of her daughters by the first husband in the list.

A bit of news about the working of the Monterey County Courts and the Grand Jury is interesting. Roach's agent Thomas K. Monk, wrote the notes which Roach was taking with him on this flight to Mexico when he was apprehended and returned to jail in Salinas. Monk was in jail so his testimony was taken by deposition.

In his deposition, Monk said that he was in a poker game the night before the case of McDougall and Belcher was to be tried, and that he caught a professional gambler cheating. In kicking the fellow out of the game, he said, "shooting is too good for you should be taken out and hanged." The next morning the gambler was found dangling from an oak tree behind the J.B.R. Cooper home in Monterey.

While Monk was waiting outside the court room, Belcher came to him and told him to leave the country as the grand jury had just indicted him for the murder of the gambler. Belcher offered him a bag of money, a horse and a bodyguard. Monk denied killing the gambler and asked Belcher where he had heard of the indictment. The latter replied, "Through a crack in the grand jury room." Monk refused to leave, and within fifteen minutes he was arrested and jailed. After Belcher received the decision, Monk was released nothing more was every said about the murder.

So, I believe, this accounts for the thirteen deaths, caused by the first death that of Jose Maria Sanchez, drowned while crossing the Pajaro River in 1852.