

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 26, 1951

### **A Visit to Wagon Cave**

We left Mission San Antonio wishing that the time of the visit could have been longer, and continued our motor trip through the Reservation as far as The Indians, stopping on the way to walk off the road a bit to visit "Wagon Cave."

For many years before the railroad was built as far as Soledad, the residents of the lower Salinas Valley would journey by wagons and carretas as far as this very large cave, place their conveyances there where a huge overhanging rock protected them and taking their horses and pack animals, travel over the Santa Lucia mountains by trail to meet a boat at the foot of Anderson Canyon on the coast.

This boat would bring groceries and supplies from San Francisco to a landing there for these isolated people. When the railroad was completed to Soledad, after about 1875, the tables were turned, for the boat ceased its visit and the coast residents were forced to take the trail to the "Wagon Cave," pick up wagons and journey to Soledad for their needed provisions. Then go back to the cave, leave the wagons stored for the winter, and pack back to their homes along the coast.

It is said that many a school teacher, just out of school herself, made this trip to a tiny schoolhouse on the coast. The journey was probably her first away from home but the coast folk always bragged that they never allowed one to return unmarried.

For many hears one of the old wagons remained in the cave unclaimed but recently it had been removed, much to our disappointment and disapproval.

The marks of the wheels were still visible over the rocks and grassland down to the road. We pray that it will be kindly treated, away from the friendly cave where the dozens of Indian mortar holes in the rock floor prove that it had also sheltered many of the original inhabitants of this beautiful valley.

We proceeded on to the Indians – another old adobe home on the original Indian and Mission trail. The country in which it is located had been the home of Dona Perfecta Ensinales, one of the best known of the early day Indians and a famous basket maker and her family. Her descendants still live in that part of southern Monterey County.

The Indians is now owned by James V. Petitt of King City and he and his family spend their vacations and weekends there. The Hunter Liggett Reservation through which we had driven for many miles, is leased to a company of four cattlemen, who call themselves the Big Four Cattle Company.

The Company is composed of Petitt, Martinus and two others, all of King City. They rent 125,000 acres from the government, paying fifty cents an acre or \$62,500 a year rent. They run an average of 10,000 head of cattle on it. We met there Mr. Santos Boronda, who is a descendant of the Boronda family of Monterey.

On the high hill to the front of the adobe dwelling a tall wooden cross can be seen. It marks the site of an old Indian cemetery.

As we left the Valley motoring toward the old town of Jolon, we passed the original site of the Mission San Antonio, near which is another tiny cemetery of the early days. On the white headstone is this epitaph: "N.E. Adams, Co. B, Second Cavalry." This was probably one of the first groups of California Volunteers during the Civil War.

It is known that Adams was alive in 1875, for he is listed in a suit brought by F.D. Atherton in Monterey County to force all the residents from the valley under his claim of ownership. Atherton was an American merchant of Valparaiso, who had married a Spanish woman in Peru, and came to California as an associate of Hartnell.

There was once another very nice adobe dwelling along this road known as the Castro adobe, where Gertrude Atherton, noted California writer, went as a bride. It was her father-in-law who finally became the owner of these vast acres.

An old Indian known as Ygnacio Pastor was living on a small ranch at the Milpitas, the land having been granted to him for faithful service when he left the Mission. The property was one league in extent but when Atherton claimed it, it had mysteriously grown to eleven leagues.