

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Wapo Searched the Willows**

The hidden treasure of Monterey is a true story which has been repeated many times by old timers and handed down to the present generation by those who remember the father and son who arrived in Monterey to hunt secretly for the buried gold.

It was in the year 1863 or '64 that strangers were observed digging in various parts of the "willows," east of Laguna Seca, attracting the attention of several parties. In reply to their interrogation they said they were "prospecting." They were an old man and a young man – Americans.

As no gold was ever known to have been found in the neighborhood it was thought somewhat strange that they should waste so much time and trouble, and at last after spending several days in fruitless efforts, they made the following disclosures to parties who have furnished us with the leading incidents of our story. The men were from Los Angeles County – father and son.

Something over a year before, or about 1862, the old man related that there had stopped at his home a Sonoran who was in very feeble health and wanted the privilege of staying with them until he might grow stronger, a request that was not denied him as the gentleman's pitiable condition excited the compassion of the old man and his charitable wife. He was evidently suffering from some fatal disease, as he gradually grew worse and died a few weeks after coming to their house.

Before dying, however, he told the old gentleman that some ten years previous he had been in the mines, in the northern part of California, that he, with a companion and a Spanish woman, had got away with a large amount of gold dust, upwards of \$10,000 in value, whether stolen or not he did not say; that they went southward and at San Jose had stolen fresh horses and were pursued by a party of men who overtook them at the crossing of the river, where his companion was shot and died the next day at Monterey.

It seems they took refuge in the willows. After hiding for several days they decided to bury the gold dust and escape by a steamer that was in the port; and, continued the old man, he wrote me a description of the place where they buried the gold, which I have with

me." Pulling out the old memorandum he showed the following entry in Spanish:

"Habra una pequena Casa de Adobe, a la del Camino entrando a Monterey, el camino cruzaba un arroyo cerca a la izquierda habian unos sauces endonde enteramos el oro, y dos pistolas, Cubiendo el lugar don dos piedros blancas."

Which translated reads:

"There was a little adobe house on the right of the road going into Monterey. The road crossed the creek of running water; near to the left was a thicket of willows, in which we hurled the gold dust and two pistols, covering the spot with two white stones."

The next day the Sonoran took passage on the steamer, landing at Da Paz, in lower California, and was at the time of his death on his way back to recover the treasure.

The American and his son soon after disappeared. They had told the same story to several parties then living in and round Monterey, amongst others to a man named Espinosa, who lived over the hill beyond the church. Espinosa went by the nickname of "Wapo" and supposed he had obtained a clue to the exact spot where the gold was buried. "Wapo" searched long and diligently, but the "white-stones" and their hidden treasures he did not find.

Then we hear of Juan Garcia, who lived on the Myers range with Mendez Vasquez and others, making diligent search that was to enrich them to the extent of \$10,000. But the gold has never been found and remains for some one more fortunate or for the time to come when the earth shall give up its hidden treasures or the divining rod, like the magicians of old, shall dip to the great attraction that lies buried beneath the earth's surface

Tomorrow we shall tell of later developments in the story of Monterey's hidden treasure.