

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Capture of Andrea Laing

Mrs. Rebecca Deleissegues and her sister, Mrs. Lucretia Mylar, were the daughters of Benjamin Hames, millwright, surveyor, builder and adventurer, who founded Corralitos in 1854 or earlier. John Hames, his brother, also a millwright and adventurer, founded the town of Soquel several years prior to that date.

Mrs. Deleissegues wrote a pamphlet entitled "Early Days in Corralitos and Soquel," in July 1929, relating some of the history of California which had never before been printed. One of the most thrilling and interesting is the true story of the capture of her aunt, Andrea Laing, by bandits. Andrea was the daughter of Captain George Foster Laing, an Englishman, and his wife, Francisca Joffre Laing.

Andrea had married a very wealthy Frenchman, M. Baratie, and moved to a sheep ranch near San Juan Capistrano. Before her father could complete plans to journey from Corralitos to visit his daughter, the family received the tragic news that outlaws had raided the Baratie ranch, killed Baratie and carried off his wife.

Bartola Baratie, his wife and his partner, M.J. Borel, and their two servants, Ysidro Silva and Luis Morillo, had been on their Rancho San Juan Capistrano only ten days and at the time the Frenchman, new to the country, did not know there was any town near them, and also they were ignorant of the fact that bandits had been committing depredations throughout the surrounding country.

On the morning of May 10, eight men came along, representing themselves as horse hunters, and stating they wished to buy food. The open-hearted Frenchman refused to sell any provisions but gave them food, and that night the men remained at the rancho, sleeping in the small house occupied by the servants.

On the morning of the 11th they went away at an early hour, but on the next day one of the men, Miguel Blanco, came back alone, saying his comrades were away running horses. He asked permission to unsaddle his horse and rest awhile, and this was given him.

The two partners then went to a nearby cluster of willows and started cleaning out a spring which was the source of their household water supply, and Mrs. Baratie accompanied them. The two servants were a

short distance away, cutting hay, but were hidden from their view.

Miguel Blanco stood on a small hill, where he could see both parties, and was evidently keeping a lookout for his companions, for the other men of the gang suddenly appeared on the scene, capturing both the servants and the owners of the rancho. The servants' hands were tied and they were driven into the house by two of the gang, Friolan and El Misteno. They were then placed on horses and taken some distance away, but the outlaws finally agreed to spare their lives on the condition they remain where they were until dark.

When the bandits attacked Baratie, his wife and Borel, they pleaded for their lives. Mrs. Baratie implored the men to spare her husband and herself, and they promised they would do so. The gang then looted the house of a good supply of clothing, a great deal of valuable jewelry and several thousand dollars they had concealed in the bottom of a trunk. They also drove off their horses and cattle.

Despite their promises, after the gang had robbed the place they shot down Mr. Baratie and started to kill his wife, but one of the robbers called El Misteno (The Wildman), said he would take her as his share of the booty. Mrs. Baratie knelt by her husband's body and covered it with her cape before the robbers seized her and tied her on a horse.

When the frightened servants ventured back to the house about 5 o'clock in the afternoon they found Borel lying dead beside the spring, with three bullets in his body, but were unable to find any trace of the body of Baratie. The house was in confusion and had been rifled of almost everything of value that could be easily carried away. Only two horses had been taken, however, one handsome black animal that had been appropriated by El Misteno and the mare upon which Mrs. Baratie had been taken away a prisoner.

(More Tomorrow)