

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 4, 1951

The Old Hotel at Jolon

Hold-on, Holon or Jolon. There have been a number of different stories told as to how the old town of Jolon got its name. One story says that the name was chosen because it was built on the site of an old Indian Rancharia inhabited by the Jolon Tribe, but as far as we know there never was any tribe of Jolon Indians. All Indians in that country belonged to the Salinan Tribe.

Victor Mossop says that he has heard old men tell a different story about it and says that when he was a small boy sixty years ago, the story was that in the early gold rush days there were a couple of miners walking up the old Camino Real with their belongings packed on a donkey, going to the mines. When they arrived at the fork in the road about where the new Jolon store now stands they did not know which road to take – the one going to the left and up over the Jolon grade or the one straight ahead which would take them to the San Antonio Mission.

While they were pondering over this question, an Indian came along riding a horse, and being suspicious of all Americans, he started to circle around them. One of the miners called out to him, "Hold-on, Hold-on, we want to talk to you." But the Indian kept going all the faster. They called again, "Hold-on, Hold-on, we want to ask you a question."

But the Indian, not understanding English, galloped on up to the Mission and he told the Padre that a couple of Americanas were down at the fork of the road and as he rode by kept calling the pronunciation of the words, "Holon, Holon," which was the nearest he could come to the pronunciation of the words, "Hold-on, "Hold-on." In the Spanish language it would be spelled Jolon, the J taking the place of the H. So since that time, the place in the fork of the road has been called Jolon. Years later when George Dutton and Captain Tidball, two sailors, built the adobe hotel, since known as the Dutton Hotel, which started the town, they named it Jolon in honor of the miners, the Indian and the story of "Hold-on, Hold-on."

According to Mr. Mossop, who has told this story, there are many old timers living in that vicinity who will tell you this story.

On Memorial Day the little Episcopal church "St. Luke's-In-the-Hills," was crowded to the doors with worshipers who came to honor those pioneers who had built Jolon and who had lived there in years past.

They and their families lie buried in the little churchyard which was blessed following an 11 o'clock service, with Rev. Vincent Coletta, rector of St. James' Church, Monterey, officiating. Mrs. Edward McGowan of San Miguel, the daughter-in-law of the Rev. Edward McGowan, the builder of the church, was present for the service.

According to "1,000 California Place Names" published by the University of California Press, the rancharia was recorded in the early 1800's. The name of Jolon was applied to the post office in 1860.

At present the old Dutton Hotel, which is about all that is left of the once prosperous town of Jolon, is becoming slowly a ruin. The Monterey County Historical Society has become interested in its restoration and have asked the membership to write letters to their State representatives asking that it is possible the old adobe be made a State Memorial and restored.