

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Pyroglyphics of the Range

The Diary's article a few days ago on the history of cattle bands had received a few favorable comments, of which one of the most appreciated was from Forrest P. Nason of Pacific Grove in which he gave further details of some historical facts.

Mr. Nason declares that he is far from being an authority on the subject of brands but that he has always enjoyed coming across new ones and learning a bit of their history. He writes: "Several years ago while living at Santa Catalina Island, I was asked by Jim Chandler, then owner of the riding stables there, to concoct some idea for decorating the outdoor waiting room at the stables". He did so by painting authentic brands on ten posts in reddish brown paint, plus a replica of the "Broken Heart" iron, painted to look as though it was hanging on a spike driven in one post.

Mr. Nason then made up a mimeographed description of these brands to be taken by interested customers. The idea received much attention and comment. With Mr. Nason's letter came a copy of the original issue.

Brands are a pyroglyphics of the rangeland. Back of many of them are stories of love and hate and blood and sweat, wrote Mr. Nason, before proceeding with the drawings of the brands and the names of their owners and meanings.

There were drawings of the corkscrew, pear, the M Bar Y, keyhole Slashed Lazy S, (an S lying on its side with a line through it), Tumbling T, Masonic Emblem, T over A, Diamond K; 45; Christmas, XMS, Scissors, Hat, Sunrise; Lazy W. with W lying on side, Peter Coffin, an outline of a coffin with the P inside, Swinging H, Four Strips and a Slash, I-O, I Borrow; Seven Up; Bridle Bit; Christmas Tree; Baby Turtle, 3-, Three Bar, all of which did not name the owners.

The cattle of Jerome Eddy in Chino Valley are branded with an A and a half A. The King Ranch in Texas, which is now the world's largest, has a running W for the brand. The Miller-Lux ranch near Bakersfield brands with an S Wrench. A Spider Web denotes cattle from the Webb Ranch.

Don Luis Terrozas, through whose ranches one travels for miles on the way from El Paso to Chihuahua, Mexico, has an interesting brand which is too

complicated to describe without the drawing. Terrozas once had the largest herd of cattle in existence 400,000 head. The Cortez brand was the Holy Trinity (three crosses); Three Feathers form the brand for the Prince Edward Ranch at Calgary, Canada.

Brigham Young – Mormon church brand is JWY, Don Castro used three hills for his brand and Burk Burnett had a string of four sixes because he had won his ranch in a poker game with that number. Another brand not easy to describe was that of Stephen F. Austin, the first Anglo-Saxon cattleman. Will Rogers knew his cattle by the Andirons brand. XIT meant ten in Texas to the owners of the cattle bearing those letters. The syndicate that built the State capitol building was paid in land – ten Texas counties. The figure two and FAT – Too Fat – refers to the owner's waistline. One post at the Catalina Stables was decorated by Mr. Nason with the brands of Ranchos and the dates. Camulos Rancho, 1850, San Joaquin, 1839, San Bartola, 1847, Ex Mission de San Fernando, 1851, La Cienega, 1843, La Ballona, 1844, Santa Ana, 1844; El Miguel, 1833, Palos Verdes, 1839; Las Cerritos, 1844; La Puente, 1852; Santiago de Santa Ana, 1844, Los Verdugas, 1836, and Alamitos Rancho, 1839.

Mr. Nason finishes his note with the remark "Might I also mention that I worked for a time in California and had a number of contacts with the people at the Bancroft Library – including Doctor Bolton – and certainly enjoyed the association. Would like to have a year's vacation with nothing to do but spend it going through the many books and manuscripts." So would we!