

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Remembrance of Times Past

It has been interesting to listen to Victor Mossop tell of his remembrances of the Bitterwater Valley in San Benito county where he went with his parent from San Andrea on Oct. 23, 1872. Mr. Mossop was born in San Juan Bautista, the son of pioneer settlers. Although he moved to Monterey about the turn of the century, his interest in the valley and its people has never diminished. Because of his sincere interest in the history of Monterey and California in general the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Association made Mr. Mossop a life member of the Association at a recent meeting of the group.

In recent issues of the peninsula Diary we have quoted from the diary of J. Warren Mathews another early settler of the Bitterwater Valley, and an uncle of Mr. Mossop. The diary is now in the possession of Mr. Mathews' daughter, Miss Carrie Matthews of Hollister, who was also born and reared in the valley. Dr. Robert Mathews, father of the diary's author, was grandfather of Victor Mossop. He kept the recording of the happenings of the day during the 1870's and in the middle 80's.

As Mr. Mossop told of the Bitterwater Valley he began with Edward C. Tully, who was the first to bring a white family to settle in the valley in 1861. A couple of years ago Mr. Tully's granddaughter, Mrs. Maggie Traut of Lone Oak, in Monterey County, loaned to the Stevenson House in Monterey two oil portraits of her grandparents which now hang in the upstairs "sala" of the old adobe on Houston street along with the primitive oil paintings of their three children. These family likenesses were painted by Howard Campion of Sacramento in 1887.

Mr. Tully served in the California State Legislature for three separate terms—1857-1858; 1868 to 1869 and 1887 to 1888. After the arrival of Mr. Tully, Dr. Robert Matthews took up his claim and moved his sheep down on the San Lorenzo Creek on April 28, 1871. His house is still there, about five miles from King City, out on the Bitterwater Road. The ranch is owned by John Roanda.

According to Mr. Mossop San Benito was quite a town in the early 1870s; it had two general stores, a hotel, livery stable, blacksmith shop, school house, a hall for the Grange and other public meetings, and three or four

saloons. "It was the first town a lot of us Bitterwater kids ever saw, declared Mr. Mossop.

Mr. Mossop thinks that the first people to live in the Bitterwater Valley were two California Spanish families, the Domingo Villas and Chico Games. These were both large families and lived in the upper end of the valley. Their old adobe homes were the stopping places for all who passed through the valley in search of homes or a piece of land to settle on. It has been said that these homes were also the favorite stopping places in the 1870's of Tiburcio Vasquez and his night riders.

All of the adobes in that valley have now disappeared. There is not a sign of any of them left. The old Domingo Villa adobe must surely have been an Indian rancheria, Mr. Mossop believes, because there are so many Indian relics found around the old spring, and it was the only good water in that part of the country.

In the early and middle '80s there were a great many people traveling north and south through the valley. These people were always welcomed. Mr. Mossop remembers, and treated well by the settlers who never thought of charging anyone who stopped overnight under their roofs. As his memory goes back over the years that he lived in Bitterwater Valley, he says he can honestly say that the pioneers there were the most honest, honorable and hospitable people he has ever known.

"They stand out clearly in my mind as the best there is in humanity." With these words our interview with Mr. Mossop ended for the day.