

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Every Bucketful of Earth

“Ed Caldwell, a merchant and hotel-keeper at the mines, dug a well, and found gold in every bucketful of earth he examined.”

The above quotation was taken from a news story appearing in a county paper telling of the excitement and results of the gold find at Los Burros Mines in the mountains of southern Monterey county. W.T. Cruikshank, the discoverer of the gold croppings in a ledge at the head of a canyon about three miles from the ocean, also thought he had a mine in his well. Nuggets had been found weighing as much as \$13, and the children panned out gold in the gulches, the story continued.

When the article from which we quoted was written there were about one hundred persons at the mines, but it was predicted that there would be a rush for the camp the following spring, and that within a year it would not be surprising to find Los Burros a thriving camp of one thousand or more persons.

The Cruikshank family, one of whom was the discoverer of gold at the Los Burros Mine, was founded in the county by W.T. Cruikshank, a native of Troy, New York. He came to California in 1849 and settled down the coast about ninety miles from Monterey, about 1872. Here in a little valley of these rugged mountains he built himself a home, and passed a comparatively uneventful life until his son, W.D. Cruikshank, discovered gold in the neighborhood.

Another historical source we have discovered reads: “This mine is one of the most valuable in the state, as a tunnel 450 feet below the surface has encountered five veins, the first 14 inches, the second 18 inches, the third six feet, and the fourth 10 feet, then 18 inches, and not yet through it, the whole aggregating more than 20 feet of vein matter, which mills on the average of \$200 per ton.

W.D. Cruikshank, the discoverer of the gold, was born in Fresno county, and came with his parents in 1872 to live in Monterey county. March 24, 1887 was the date of the discovery of the Cruikshank mine, which later became the “Last Chance.”

Another part owner of the Los Burros mines, was Ellis Roberts, native of North Wales where he was born in

1831. Early in life he went to sea as an apprentice, serving his time as a good sailor. In that capacity he traveled over most of the known world. In 1846 he went around the horn to Callao, Peru. He was in Australia when gold was discovered there. In 1853, so his biographer reports, he gave up the life at sea and took up mining in Sierra county, California.

Later Roberts settled in Contra Costa county where he met Cruikshank in 1865 and clerked in his store. They formed a warm friendship and when the Los Burros Mine was discovered, he gave his friend Roberts, an interest in it. Roberts later became a member of the police force in San Francisco.

The name of the town, created by the Los Burros Mines, was Manchester, a short distance toward the Pacific ocean from the mines. “Here, in this solitude of human sounds and babel of nature, a town, thriving, busy and active, would be the last thing expected,” but in the late 1890s the visitor could hear the thump, thump, thump of the mill where the ore was crushed and precious metal extracted.

In these present days news stories often bring to the outside tales of feuds, murders, and still taller tales of more gold discovery, but the difficulty of travel to the region still keeps visitors out of the thinly populated region and so the romance of the Los Burros mines makes good reading.