

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Following The Call of Gold**

There have been many disappointments among the miners and claim owners in Los Burros district since the discovery of gold there in 1887, but there has also been happiness among the settlers in this remote district of southern Monterey County.

Frank Blas McCormack, a resident of King City, gave an interview to a reporter for the "Salt of the Earth," a publication of The King City Rustler-Herald, in which he told of his experiences as a miner and mine owner. It was soon after Bill Cruikshank found the gold in Los Burros mining district that McCormack joined the adventurers, the miters, the harvest hands and the clerks from all over California and followed the call of "gold."

"By the middle of summer there were hundreds of men looking for gold. Near Alder Creek I located a claim and found gold in bed rock and could see little nuggets," McCormack told the reporter. Then there followed a story of doubt and confusion. He declared that at one time he was offered \$20,000 for his mine, but friends told him not to sell – to hold on to it. He did and somehow in the end he received \$300 for the mine which he had named the King. Harry Lynn, who operated the Abbott House in Salinas, was the buyer.

Later Frank McCormack and his brother, Lewis, found a quicksilver mine southeast of what used to be the Piojo grant. The two brothers got a thousand dollars from Harry Wetzel Bill Cruikshank and John Harbolt. El Piojo grant is in the Nacimiento district. It originally contained 13,329 acres, was granted to Joaquin Soto in 1842 and confirmed by the United States to his heirs in 1860.

J.W. Krenkel, who was killed several years ago, the victim of a gunshot fired by an erratic neighbor near his mountain home in the coast range mountains, was another of the early day miners at Los Burros. He had staked a claim at Pleyto and that was home until he heard of the gold rush on the coast at Alder Creek.

A little mountain settlement, over the trail from Jolon was named for Captain Manchester. It was Manchester who claimed to have interested Cruikshank in the search for gold along the creek. Krenkel joined him there in 1887 and the two with Tom Barrett, settled in a cabin a stone's throw from the settlement. When other

locators arrived, and Los Burros mining district was formed, Krenkel was given charge of the records, according to a story in "Salt of the Earth." The first entry made by Krenkel was dated June 23, 1887 and hundreds of entries written in beautiful penmanship followed.

According to an interview with Mrs. Margaret Krenkel, who has lived in that country where she went as a bride more than half a century ago, there were 215 locators the first year at Los Burros, 110 during the next four months and 162 in 1889. The last entry was made in 1923, long after Mrs. Krenkel had been deputized secretary and had taken over the duties from her husband.

Mrs. Krenkel related that Manchester went up in smoke in 1906, and its five saloons, Gillis' hall, the mine superintendent's cabin and office, the post office, along with the hotel were a total loss. It was thought that college boys, staying at the hotel, had fallen asleep while smoking. The fire spread too rapidly for the volunteer firemen to be able to save any of the buildings from destruction.

Krenkel and Cruikshank mined the "Last Chance." Interest continued in Los Burros country and the Buclima mine was brought into operation in 1909, according to Mrs. Krenkel. Its yield was \$46,000 and when the shaft filled with water the work ended there, to drift a 900 foot tunnel from Dodge's grizzly mine to Buclima, to drain the latter. She added that World War I also had its effect in stopping work in 1914.

Fourteen busy years passed before Mrs. Krenkel left the mountain home where she went as a bride. But she has loved all the happy years she has lived there. "Occasionally the Syrian peddlers would come down the trail their packs filled with anything from pills to clothing. The children were excited then for there was always something for play and the sweaters, levis, shoes or shirts they needed and which were not always procurable through the mail order catalogues. The Syrians were also great story-tellers and we, as well as the children, were greatly entertained with their tales of other countries which they had known.

"Exciting days too, when the ships of the Pacific Steamship Company had anchored offshore and the Mansfields in their launch, went for the provisions intended for us all. We would write for the things and the heavy ones were sent by boat; other things came by mail to Jolon (then in pack trains). Sometimes the sugar

(500-lb. barrels) would taste a little salty because of the unloading! The ship arrived in October and in the Spring, so we had to look forward to our needs. The mail came from Jolon, and not too often, at that.”