

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 23, 1954

More About Place Names

In the belief that the Spanish and the Indian names possess the greatest interest for the public, both "tenderfoot" and native, we have dealt with these almost exclusively in the two previous issues of the Peninsula Diary, mixing in a few names of American origin. Monterey County is rich in names of both origins as well as a number of surnames of early citizens.

Parkfield and Slack's Canyon were named for early settlers in those locations. Hames Valley took its name from John Hames who first settled there in 1858.

Lowe's Station was a stage station near the foot of Jolon grade, where there was also a post office and a store before the arrival of the railroad. Jim Lowe ran the station and settlers were forced to journey from as far south as San Ardo, to get their mail. Prunedale, where at present there are almost no prunes, was first planted to these trees, but they proved not to do well there and were soon u[rooted].

The small town of Greenfield, north of King City, was first known as Clark City in honor of a Dr. Clark who formed Clark Colony. He later resided in Pacific Grove, where he died a number of years ago. After water was developed and irrigation was possible, the field became green with alfalfa, the town was renamed Greenfield.

There is a beautiful canyon which is situated near the foot of the Jolon Grade which was used by travelers on horseback as a means of getting from the Jolon Valley to the Salinas Valley, called Quenada Canyon. It derived its name from an Indian word meaning "smelly waters" because of the sulphur springs there.

If a motorist crosses over the mountains from the southern end of the county to enter the San Joaquin Valley, the route leads through the Cholame Valley and the community by that name. In the Indian language Cholame has a meaning akin to "abide with me". It was also used as a name of a tribe and Indian village in the southern end of the county.

Cachagua, a creek that flows into the Carmel River, is an Indian word meaning "cold water," Chaupines Creek on the Tularcitos is an Indian word meaning "muddy."

Elk Horn Slough in the northern end of the county was inhabited by hundreds of swamp elk in the early days

and the name was no doubt derived from this fact. Now the country around the slough is a paradise for hunters.

There is a grade between the Tularcitos ranch and the Jamesburg road called the Ardillas Grade which was named for the squirrel population there. Another interesting name is Ventanas a series of peaks in the Big Sur country, so-called because the opening between two of the peaks resembles a window.

Tembladera Marsh lies east of Castroville. The name comes from the growth of roots and debris that floated over the swamp on which one could walk, and it would shake. In the old days of the Gabilan Gun Club George Grey, the gamekeeper, used to saw canals for boats through this top covering. The matted covering was about five feet thick, and one could stand on it and by jumping up and down could cause this covering to move 200 feet away. The reclamation drainage ditch removed the water and this covering has become rich land for vegetables. When dry this covering would burn like peat. (Salinas Daily Post, March 3, 1934).

In the Monterey Democrat of July 26, 1877, there appeared a story concerning the arrest of three boys in the Sanjon Slough in Salinas. They had gone naked to swim in the slough at a point midway between what is now the Carnegie Library and the south corner of the block as one enters Main street in Salinas. Sanjon Slough was covered up about 1880 after Carlisle Abbott had diverted the Salinas River through it to wash out the stagnant water which was thought at the time to be causing an epidemic of diphtheria. The water was deep in several places and many of the boys used to go swimming there.