

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 16, 1954

Old Indian's Passing

King City lost one of its most beloved and picturesque citizens early this month with the death of Dolores Encinal, a colorful San Antonio Indian, who had the distinction of being baptized by the last of the Franciscan fathers, Padre Doroteo Ambris, at Mission San Antonio de Padua near Jolon. Dolores was one of the very few who remembered enough of the Indian language to speak it.

Visitors and residents of King City will miss old Dolores from the bench on Broadway where he became a familiar sight during the past several years. Those who knew Dolores were wont to sit with him, and chat in his preferred tongue, Spanish, the King City Rustler-Herald reported. He had never bothered to learn English for conversational use, though he understood it. Strangers sensed drama in the still figure as Dolores basked in the sun on his favorite bench, enjoying his last years in a leisure denied him in his youth. He was about 87 years of age. His father, Eusebio Encinal, at one time owned "The Indians," a ranch above the San Antonio Mission, now owned by James Petit.

He liked to talk of the early days as he recalled what was told to him by his father and his mother, Dona Perfecta. Both were mission Indians but whether originally from San Antonio or San Miguel, no one knows. His mother used to tell Dolores, so he said, that she carried bricks to those who were building the mission walls.

His parents were married at San Antonio Mission, and lived a few miles above it where seven children were born – four boys and three girls. Dolores never attended school nor did he ever marry.

We missed Dolores when we spent last weekend in King City. We missed seeing his broad brimmed hat with the high crown which always tipped over in front and a brim rising in back. His hair was now white, as were his mustache and eyebrows – a decided contrast to his dark skin. For all of his years he did not drink or smoke. Hunting, fishing and stalking the mountain lions which pestered the sheep, were his pastimes.

For many years he was a cowboy for different ranchers. When he started receiving the old-age pension he moved into King City and lived alone in a small house

there. His mother, Dona Perfecta, was quite noted for her basket making. She lived to be about 100 years old. It is said that when the California Landmarks League began restoration of the mission in 1904 she made all her sons go down and help with the work each day.

Not so long ago we visited the Salinas Catholic Cemetery to find the grave of Old Gabriel, a Carmel Mission Indian who died in 1890. We found it in a very bad state of repair – in fact the historic headstone was lying on the ground – but we have learned recently that that condition has been corrected and now it is upright. On the stone is the following inscription:

"To the memory of Old Gabriel, who died March 14, 1890. Aged 151 years.

"Gabriel was baptized by the Rev. Fr. Junipero Serra, the first missionary of California."

Old Gabriel was employed for many years in the family of Mr. W.S. Johnson, the first recorder of Monterey County, who arrived in Monterey with the New York Regiment under Col. J.D. Stevenson in 1847. When the county seat was moved from Monterey to Salinas, he moved there. Old Gabriel became the nurse for the family of growing children of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, including Robert F. Johnson, the father of Mrs. John Cooper (Juanita Johnson Cooper) of the Carmel Valley. He lived for many years at the County Hospital and upon his death Mrs. Johnson arranged that he should be buried in the Catholic Cemetery where members of the Johnson family also rest.

The following facts about Old Gabriel were obtained more than 70 years ago by the Rev. Father Sorrentine, the first parish priest in Salinas, and from Mrs. Johnson and published in the Monterey Democrat when the old Indian was still alive.

"It is well authenticated that at the landing of Junipero Serra at Monterey Gabriel was a grandfather and when the first chapel was built on the site of the present Mission Carmelo in 1771 he was present and assisted in erecting the adobe walls. He was a native of Tulare County but came to Carmel when quite young.

"Under the instruction of Father Serra he learned to cut and lay stone, so that he was one of the principal workmen at the building of Soledad and San Antonio Missions. When it came to the erection of Carmel Mission, he was so well versed in the use of tools that

he often spoke of his ability as a stone cutter during that work.

“The late tax collector, Manuel Castro, told that his mother who died in 1930 at the age of 95 years, often spoke of knowing Gabriel when she was a child and that even then he was known as Old Gabriel and his grandchildren were older than herself.”