

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### Hi Jolly

We are traveling the El Camino Real from Monterey into Texas. It has been a most satisfactory and interesting trip with excellent road conditions and stops wherever fancy dictated. We have enjoyed the changing scenery and anticipated the next stop along this historic route which early explorers and California settlers traversed on their way to the Western shore.

After leaving the border between California and Arizona we paused near Quartzsite to visit the last camp of Hi Jolly. There a tomb has been built by the Arizona Highway Department in memory of this Arab who came to California in 1856 from his native country with a herd of camels which the United States Army thought would be a valuable addition to its equipment in the Far Western deserts. The experiment did not prove as satisfactory as was anticipated and the camels were later disposed of.

At the top of the 10-foot monument was a miniature iron camel, and below it are specimens of quartz, petrified wood, rocks and minerals which are found in Arizona. On a bronze plaque are these words: "The last camp of Hi Jolly. Born somewhere in Syria about 1828. Died in Quartzsite Dec. 16, 1902. Came to this country Feb. 10, 1856. Camel driver, packer, scout, over 30 years a faithful aid to the United States Government. His Arabic name was Hadji Ali" The name had been shortened by the soldiers who journeyed with Hi Jolly and the camels to Fort Tejon near Bakersfield in California. The fort is now a State Historical Monument and is being restored by the Division of Beaches and Parks.

It was in 1855 that the Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, appointed Lt. David Dixon Porter to command an expedition into Levant to purchase camels. He was to be captain of the Navy storeship, Supply, which had been placed at the disposal of Davis by the Secretary of the Navy, J. L. Dobbin. This was several years after Davis had first tried to get Congress to appropriate a sum of money to purchase the camels and bring them west. He argued "for military purposes, for expresses, and for reconnaissance, it is believed the drome would supply a want now seriously felt in our services and for transportation with troops rapidly moving across the country, the camel, it is believed, would remove an

obstacle which now greatly serves to diminish the value and efficiency of our troops on the western frontier."

Hi Jolly, the most colorful of the camel drivers, gave up his dream of making a fortune at gold mining in California, after the camels were given up by the Army, and settled down to the life of a scout in Arizona. He died at the probable age of 75.

On the front of the pyramidlike monument to Hi Jolly in the Quartzsite cemetery is a padlocked crypt where were placed the ashes of a camel which died in the Los Angeles zoo in 1934 and some historical records of the Camel Expedition.

El Camino Real, U.S. Highway 85 is the oldest road in the United States. It has been used since Friar Rodriguez opened the way in 1581. Espejo followed in 1582 and Ornate led his band of colonists over the route in 1598 to Santa Fe, New Mexico. All the information is well told on attractive and appropriate signs along the great highway, with turnouts provided for the visitors to stop and read.

On another historic marker we learned the meaning of the Espijos Route, "Don Antonio de Espijos, the second great explorer of New Mexico, marched up the Rio Grande from Mexico in 1582. In a humanitarian effort to locate two Franciscan padres. On his trip he blazed the Camino Real, the King's Highway, which roughly parallels the U.S. Highway 85 to Santa Fe."

In Las Cruces, New Mexico, we stopped again to visit the Amador Hotel, which nearly century ago began as the Amador Rooming House, a haven of rest for bone-weary teamsters and passengers on Don Martin's freight lines, which ranged from Chihuahua, Mexico, to Santa Fe.

In 1885, Don Martin rearranged the interior of his rooming house to accommodate theatrical performances and "bailes" (social dances) which formed so large a part of the early-day Southwestern entertainment. Stairs at the end of the long narrow lobby have replaced the stage, and over the doorway by which the guests enter there is the children's gallery with a sloping floor so that the youngsters would get an unobstructed view of the stage. Each guest room has a screen door, partly covered by a small Mexican blanket, so there is sufficient ventilation for the sleeper.

It is interesting to observe the many features of these western towns which are repeated in Monterey, such as

a rooming house turned into a theater, just as First Theater was in Jack Swan's time.