

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Trip to Jolon

Nature lovers who will be looking soon for the best place not too far from home, to see California wild flowers should make the delightful trip to San Antonio Mission near Jolon. Now that it will be spring before we realize it, we recommend a motor trip, to follow the River road off the Monterey-Salinas highway before crossing the Salinas River bridge.

The silence of the country, the freshness of the air, the beauty of the large and ancient oaks all combine to make one feel at peace with the world. It's also a satisfaction to motor over this winding country road where the traffic is not terrifying, and the driver may also enjoy the scenery.

As we progressed, we picked out again the land marks which had been described to us a number of years ago by Victor Mossop an excellent guide with a fund of information about the early history of the country through which we traveled.

The River road was the route we chose again in ,1957 - very soon after leaving the main highway one can still see traces of the old Hill Town crossing, for the tracks in the road which led to the crossing are still to be seen if the motorist does not rush by.

Then Los Paltos Ranch and the David Spence holdings, both to our right. On the latter property is the remains of an old adobe and nearby is the site of another adobe where Anastacio Garcia killed Under-sheriff Joaquin de la Torre and two citizen volunteers, Charles Layton and Jim Beckwith, when they went there from Monterey to arrest him for the murder of Lewis F. Belcher, the "Big Eagle of Monterey."

We were now on the original Camino Real which had been traveled in the early days by De Anza and the other explorers and the mission fathers. The Guadalupe Ranch is to the right, which was later the home of Spence and then the Arguello family. The huge holdings of Juan Malarin, which had been granted him in the early 1830s, adjoins that of Jose Maria Soberanes, granted to him in 1841. Soberanes later lost the 8,794 acres to Estrada.

We paused briefly at the Samavia School to look upon the camp site of the De Anza expedition. The spot has

been identified many times in the past years by the descendants of the men who made the trek.

The Lugo Rancho and the Soberanes Rancho have preserved the adobe homes on each. The Soberanes grant was originally part of the ex-Mission Soledad property and contained 113,000 acres. The Lugo Rancho was known in 1839 as the Paraje de Sanchez pasture of Sanchez. The Feliciano Soberanes adobe was very near to the road as we traveled south and a bit further on and to the left was the Rancho Los Coches, 8.794 acres in 1841 when it was granted to Josefa Soberanes and confirmed in 1855 to Maria J. Soberanes.

Adjoining the Los Coches is the Arroyo Seco Rancho which contained 16,523 acres when it was granted to Joaquin de la Torre in 1840. Later it was sold to Pedro Zabala who built the adobe residence on it.

The historic trail now led us out to the main highway where the first historic spot is Thompson gulch noted as the setting for an early day stage robbery. It was the route of Vasquez, the bandit, who crossed the river at this point to go on to his hideout at the Pinnacles.

Just beyond the State Parks Commission's rock marker for San Antonio Mission we turned right. We had left the fertile Salinas Valley and its hundreds of irrigated farms with long, straight rows of lettuce and other vegetables for a hilly country where cattle roamed.

We were soon passing the San Bernabe Rancho which had been granted to Jesus Molina and where the first adobe building in that part of the country had been built Davis Leese. Well known in Monterey was once the ranch manager and it was there, we have been told, that his daughters were born. The Tom Doud Ranch is immediately across the road. In 1885 this ranch also part of the San Bernabe, was owned by Francisco Garcia. His daughter married Henry Cocks, to whom the grant was transferred in 1859. It was later sold to Juan R. Cooper and Cooper sold it to Doud.