

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 1, 1957

### **A Visit to 'Wagon Cave'**

Leaving Mission San Antonio after a recent visit we continued our motor tour through the reservation as far as "The Indians," stopping on the way to walk a short distance of the road to visit "Wagon Cave."

For many years before the railroad was built as far as Soledad, the residents of the lower Salinas Valley would journey by wagons and carriages as far as this very large cave, place their conveyances there where a huge overhanging rock protected them, and taking their horses and pack animals, travel over the Santa Lucia mountains by trail to meet a boat at the foot of Anderson Canyon on the coast.

This boat would leave groceries and supplies from San Francisco at a landing there for these isolated people. When the railroad was completed to Soledad, about 1875 the tables were turned, for the boat ceased its visits and the coast residents were forced to take the trail to the "Wagon Cave," to pick up their wagons and journey to Soledad for their needed provisions. Then return to the cave, leave the wagons stored for the winter, and pack back to their homes along the coast.

It is said that many a schoolteacher, just out of school herself, made this trip to a one-room school on the coast. The journey was probably her first away from home, but the coast folks always bragged that they never allowed one to return unmarried.

For many years one of the old wagons remained in the cave unclaimed but on our first trip there in 1951, the wagon was gone and the marks of the wheels down the hill were quite fresh. We hope that it has received kindly treatment away from its friendly cave where the dozens of Indian mortar holes in the rock floor prove that it's had also sheltered many of the original inhabitants of the beautiful valley.

We proceeded on to the "The Indians" – another old adobe home on the original mission trail. The country in which it is located had been the home of Dona Perfecta Encinales, one of the best known of the early day Indians and a famous basket maker, and her family. Her descendants still live in that part of Monterey County. The ranch now belongs to the James V. Pettitt family of King City, and he and his family spend weekends and vacation there.

On a high hill to the front of the adobe home a tall wooden cross can be seen. It marks the site of the old Indian cemetery.

As we left the valley motoring toward the old town of Jolon, we passed the original site of the Mission San Antonio near which is another tiny cemetery of the early days. On the white headstone is this epitaph: "N. E. Adams, Co. B, Second Cavalry." This was probably one of the first groups of California volunteers during the Civil War.

It is known that Adams was alive in 1875, for he is listed in a suit brought by F. D. Atherton in Monterey County to force all the residents from the valley under his claim of ownership. Atherton was an American merchant of Valparaiso, who had married a Spanish woman in Peru, and came to California as an associate of Hartnell.

There was once another very fine adobe dwelling along this road known as the Castro adobe, where Gertrude Atherton, noted California author, went as a bride. It was her father-in-law who finally became the owner of these vast acres.

An old Indian known as Ygnacio Pastor was living on a small ranch at the Milpitas, the land having been granted to him for faithful service when he left the mission. The property was one league in extent but when Atherton claimed it, it had mysteriously grown to eleven leagues, according to the old records of the transaction.