

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Old Dutton Hotel

A few weeks ago we motored through the Hunter-Liggett Reservation which, of course, took us by the old Dutton Hotel and Jolon. What a sorry sight the old hotel is now in comparison to a few years ago when it could have been restored and made a historical landmark.

The King City Rustler-Herald printed a good history of the old hostelry recently repressing the gnawing regret of the people of Southern Monterey County, and all interested in California history, of the obvious abandonment of the old adobe hotel, in the Lucias, at Jolon. A valuable landmark, they recorded, it now appears destined for oblivion.

Dating back to stagecoach days, it was built on what, then, was the main route from San Francisco to San Diego – the original Camino Real or King's Highway – which followed the trail of the Portola Expedition of 1769.

Established as an inn and store by Antonio Ramirez of Monterey, it not only met the needs of travelers but those of the miners who, subsequent to the gold rush of 1849, had opened up mines in the Lucias. Quite naturally, then, it became the nucleus for a settlement. This settlement, on the site occupied by an Indian village when Portola passed that way, was called "Jolan."

In time Ramirez sold to Bowen who, in 1871, sold to John Lee. From Lee, it was purchased by H.C. Dodge, who sold to his brother-in-law, George Dutton, and Capt. Tidball, old army friends who had fought together against Indians in Arizona. Ultimately, in 1876, when numerous families were settling in the environs, Dutton became the sole owner, purchasing the building and surrounding acres for \$1,000.

Originally built with all doors opening on the porch, it lent itself beautifully to remodeling into the spacious, comfortable, two-storied hotel and store which Dutton and his wife, Deborah, maintained until their respective deaths – Deborah in 1896 and George in 1905. Of their seven children, Alice, Edwin, Lorraine, Susie, Ethel, Winslow and Marno, only Edwin, Winslow and Marno were still at home at the time of the father's passing. Edwin, who had come of age in 1892, had, at that time, been made administrator of the business and

continued, after his father's death, to dispense the same wonderful hospitality for which the hotel had become famous, wrote Tid Casey in the Rustler-Herald.

Guests, as throughout the preceding years, included celebrities – authors, artists, historians, anthropologists, engineers – who came to explore the abandoned old Mission San Antonio a few miles distant. Often, they discovered the material in the hotel itself, for George Dutton had left a prized collection of firearms, Indian relics, nuggets and artifacts, garnered from various sections of the United States, Canada, Australia and the South Seas. Among them were many valuable articles brought for safekeeping from the mission.

In 1921 Edwin passed away, leaving a widow and four children, Doris, Russell, Cecil and Vivian. By that time Jolon, which had been such a lively little town for so many years, had devitalized. In fact, it had been depreciating gradually since 1896, primarily because the highway had been rerouted to pass through King City instead of climbing the mountain to Jolon. So in 1929 Mrs. Dutton sold her properties to William Randolph Hearst who, since 1923, had been acquiring vast acreages in the Lucias. Thus after more than a half century, the famed hostelry passed from Dutton ownership.

(To be continued)