

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 5, 1957

### **A Rebuking Ghost**

The Dutton family of Jolon vacated the old Dutton Hotel twice, during the half century that they had owned the famed hostelry.

The first time was when George Dutton lost it to Frank Atherton, son of Faxton D. Atherton, a financier from San Mateo who in purchasing the large Milpitas grant had claimed boundaries that included Dutton's land as well as that of 70 other Lucia families, all of whom were dispossessed.

But later George was able to repurchase it and in 1882 received a clear title. At a later date, early in 1900, the hotel was rented for five years to a local family, the Redmonds, while Ed Dutton farmed the nearby Gil ranch and the historical ex-mission rancho, Los Ajitos.

When it became Hearst's property and the outbuildings were razed to the ground, rumor had it the picturesque adobe would become headquarters for his Sunical Land and Packing Corp. But this was never effected. Then another hope was incepted for its preservation as a museum, its furnishings to remain intact.

There was a parlor, dignified and solemn with its chromos and portraits; there was the bar room with its huge fireplace, its poker tables and old grand piano, its bar and mirrors and long brass footrail; there were bedrooms, large and amply windowed, furnished with big walnut beds, bureaus, basins, pitchers and commodes; there was the treasure room bulging with collectors items; and the cheery dining room and office desk; and there was the old register listing names such as Willie Vanderbilt, John Alden Mason, Laura Bride Powers, Joseph Knowland and the Fairs, as listed by Tid Casey in the King City Rustler.

What a gift from the past for a new generation! What a revelation for the generation to come!

But the old inn did not evolve into a museum. Instead, it stood lonely and inactive throughout the 11 years of Hearst ownership. Then, in 1940, included in the sale of the 150,000 acres Hearst had acquired in the Lucias, it became the property of the United States government, as part of the Hunter-Liggett Reservation.

Until then the adobe had remained in fairly good condition, shaded by the ancient grape vine reported

planted in the long ago by a pare from nearby San Antonio mission on his return from Santa Clara. In truth, it was in such good condition in 1940 that it would require no stretch of the imagination to envision it in its prime. And, whether or not you were an old-timer, it would bring back memories of all that you had ever read or heard about stage coach days.

Too bad that the old inn, with its hundred years of history could not have been preserved. But through disinterest, vandalism, neglect and perhaps a lack of historical knowledge all have contributed to its destruction. The roof has fallen in, the porch has sagged to the ground, the beautiful grapevine is gone and the remaining structure has become too dangerous for an entrance. So there it stands in skeletal state – a ghost from the past. A rebuking ghost proclaiming its demise as untimely and unnecessary. A wistful ghost begging each passerby for restoration. And a hopeful ghost, perhaps, for had not its venerable ancestor old Mission San Antonio – whose life had begun many years earlier and whose abandonment had endured many years longer been restored?