

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Buffalo Vanquished

One of the most colorful episodes in the history of the Monterey Peninsula and the coast country south of Carmel concerns the raising of buffalo on the Cooper or Molera ranch in the Big Sur country. In last Friday's report in our Diary we began a story of this era dated about 1892. Today we will continue the story of the fight between a single bull and the riders of the ranch

"Juan, a rider," reports the late Frank Post in an interview printed about 1940, "learned that a lot of two or three acres is not big enough ground for to tackle a bull buffalo. At every thrust the horn of the bull would comb the hair of Juan's horse's tail.

"While the "bull was taking out after Juan, three or four riatas from the other horsemen fell short. Finally, Joe swung and threw his riata with all his might. It, too, fell short, but in some way or other the bull got his hind leg in the loop. Joe gave the riata a terrific yank, the noose tightened around the shin.

"Joe, having only the bare end of his riata, started to take two or three turns around the horn of his saddle. He then yelled for the others to hurry. A tremendous kick on the bull's part nearly knocked Joe's horse off his feet. By this time other ropes were on the bull and in short order they had him sprawling on the ground.

"Juan says, I'll fix him and in short order, so he gets a redwood post and ties and lashes this rail across the bull's forehead. Well tied by the two horns, the vaqueros released him, and the bull got onto his feet. He behaved for a while. Then he got outside the enclosure.

"All that night the bull walked back and forth along the outside of the fence, with the end of the post-klick, klick, klick, rubbing along the picket fence, never letting up with that hideous grunt. By morning, the post was dragging on the ground, fastened only by one horn. In a short time, the lashing on the other horn broke and the bull was free again and up on the Mesa Grande.

"One of the buffalo cows later had a bull calf. The son began to think that the old native of the plains was in the way and getting too old anyway. So, the younger one had a fight with the older one. He followed the old man and cornered him in a narrow gulch and here is where he finished the old vicious demon of the plains

and not only that but stamped and hooked the earth on both sides of the gulch until he buried his old dad."

As to a famous trip up the coast, Post wrote, "There were eight or nine buffalo. Joe hired for help, I think, Solomon Arantas and Jim Meadows. They got some tame, domestic cattle so they would take the lead.

"All went well until they met John Sozier, with a big wagon and four horses. Here they had some trouble, as horses were frightened. It was a miracle that Sozier didn't land in the ocean, horses, wagon and all.

"Along about Seaside old Ben (Benjamin Harrison, one of the buffalo), either broke the fence or walked into a woman's flower garden in front of her house. There were climbing vines in front of the porch. Old Ben got his horn in the vines and came near bringing down the porch as he walked out of the flower garden with the vine trailing from his horn. Joe said that the woman screamed from the house."

There is still more exciting reports to be written about this brief life of the buffalo in Monterey, so we will continue the story as told by the late Frank Post in the next issue of the Peninsula Diary.

(To be continued)