

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Hacienda of The Week...Rancho San Lucas

It took a name change, a lot of work, and a lot more determination to make the Rancho San Lucas what it is today.

Hidden away in a valley just seven miles west of San Lucas in Southern Salinas Valley, the ranch owned by Julius G. Trescony, is evidence of the early Spanish influence on California.

While ranch operations have changed with the more modern trends and practices, its buildings are the same adobe structures erected nearly a century ago.

The ranch was a Mexican land grant which has been in the Trescony family since about 1860. It was first granted to Rafael Estrada on May 9, 1842, by Juan B. Alvarado, then Governor of California in Monterey. The ranch passed from Estrada to a man identified only as McKinley in 1863, and was later sold to Alberto Trescony, grandfather of Julius the present owner.

The original deed or title report was confirmed by the US government in 1872.

Oldest Brand

Trescony still has the original application, written in Spanish, in the Alcalde in Monterey for the cattle brand which is still in use.

The application is dated May 5, 1846, the year of US acquisition making this the oldest brand in continual use in the state. Originated by the grandfather, Alberto, California's mission influence is also evident in the brand, which was patterned after the brand of Mission San Antonio scarcely 25 miles from the ranch.

All of the buildings, including the barn, are adobe made from soil taken from the ranch. One historian claims the barn is the only adobe barn still standing in the state which is still used for that purpose. Box stalls, a tack room and harness hangers are all housed in the barn, which has walls nearly two-feet thick. Only the paint has been changed.

Name Changed

While the buildings haven't changed, the Trescony name has. Originally spelled Trisconi, an error in the government document brought about the change. This was actually a question of safety more than just

convenience, as many people lost their lands at the time of the confirmation of title under the US. In many instances, part of all the land was lost through manipulation during transfer and confirmation.

Grandfather Alberto Trescony came to America from Italy. Arriving in New York, his wanderings took him to Tennessee. While there, he heard that there was a shortage of livestock in Mexico City, and therefore, a good opportunity to sell animals there.

He travelled to Texas, where he purchased 3,000 sheep and drove them across the Barrancas to Mazatlan, where he shipped for California by steamer and landed Monterey. He converted a house into Monterey's first hotel.

Resourceful Owner

With Alberto's death, the ranch passed into the hands of J.A. Trescony, and from him, onto the present owner. A resourceful man himself, Julius has several inventions, some of which are copyrighted and which he says "came about through necessity."

He has a cattle chute which he designed to adjust to any size animal, a build-in toolbox for the inside of his pickup door and fool-proof water floats for cattle troughs which were constantly breaking until he came up with the idea of using gallon jugs attached to a quarter-inch rod for a float.

Trescony is an honorary director of the Salinas Valley fair, and fair officials claim he does even more now than he did when he was active as a director, which is considerable from evidence at the fairgrounds.

Initiates Scrambles

The popular lamb, pig, and calf scrambles at the fair were instigated by Julius. Here youngsters can get money toward next year's projects by catching the animals in a rough and tumble wrestling match of brains and brawn.

Chairman of the Mission San Antonio restoration project, Trescony has done much toward the rebuilding of the mission to its original condition.

He has hosted numerous celebrities during the annual mission fiesta, including Chief Justice of Supreme Court and former California governor Earl Warren.

And the small church in San Lucas bears the imprint of the generous Trescony family, Julius' father J.A. Trescony, promised he would refinish the church inside

and out if Julius came home from navy service uninjured in the first world war. This was done as soon as the Armistice was signed.

No Slouch in the saddle Trescony won the trick riding contest at the California Rodeo in Salinas two years running, and was the first man to do a shoulder stand and a trick called the drunken ride on a cowhorse.

“I saw a Cossack do it in a circus,” he said, “and figured that if he could do it, so could I.” There were no such things as trick saddles then he added, so stunt men had to use regular stock saddles and wore cowboy boots rather than the sticky-soled tennis shoes in use today.

Movie actor Gary Cooper made his first western picture on Rancho San Lucas, as well as other movies later on. Hoot Gibson and Bill Desmond, other cowboy stars who were popular during the day, and now making a comeback on TV screens, also used the ranch as the scene for their pictures.

The road leading to Rancho San Lucas may not reveal anything uncommon to a prosperous cattle and grain ranch, but once inside the ranch gate, a picture of “Old California” is painted on nearly every inch and every object seen by the viewer.