

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Buried Outlaw Treasures

When William Hatton took over the Carmel Valley Dairy Sinclair Ollason bought 420 acres of land in the Gabilan foothills north of Natividad, adjoining that were Henry J. Kaiser now has his Permanente excavation. E. J. Bolce informed us during an interview recently. Then he continued to explain to us how several of the turns in the road got their names.

A short distance north of the Permanente plant the road makes a sharp turn east. There is a Gabilan creek crossing at this place making a sharp cut to Salinas and here are a number of sycamore trees, so the Bolce boys called that place Sycamore turn. Following the road east a short way the old Stage Road makes another turn where the land above the road is covered with buckeye trees, so the children named this Buckeye turn. These names stuck and are still used by the residents of that area.

At the time Mr. Bolce and his children traveled the road there were parts of two adobes visible from the road just before Buckeye turn was rounded. On the Ollason land there as a side hill covered with oaks and brush which Ollason wanted cleared to make way for an almond orchard. He brought out a woodchopper from Salinas, gave him a pick, axe and shovel and showed him which oak trees he wanted out, roots and all. He also told the chopper to come in to dinner at noon. That was in 1894 and Mr. Bolce was there at the time.

At noon Mr. and Mrs. Ollason and Mr. Bolce, then a young boy, sat down to dinner. Soon after the meal Ollason went to see what had happened to the chopper and Bolce went along. They found the axe, shovel and pick but no man. He had dug all around the tree to some depth and on the lower side they found a round hole where a can or some similar container had been lifted out. The wood chopper never returned for his blankets and other belongings.

This incident gave our Mr. Bolce an urge to do some exploring at the ruins of the two old adobes. He had been joined at the ranch by two of his brothers and one night they decided to explore at the old buildings. There had been some digging there previously and as soon as the lights went out in the dairy house below, one boy got in the hole and lit a candle. By that light they started

digging until daylight, when they jumped the line fence and went back to the Ollason House without a treasure. Two or three days later the boys again returned to the old adobes where they found signs that someone had dug where left off and found another round hole was left where something had been lifted out. So the talk about outlaw buried treasure had not been idle talk, the brothers decided.

Sinclair Ollason died later that year, and Mrs. Ollason asked her brother, E. J. Bolce, to stay and run the ranch. They milked about 20 cows and made butter and also produced eggs, poultry and hay. Eggs were shipped to Dodge-Sweeney & Co. in San Francisco. Returns from eggs were 11 cents a dozen which just about paid the express charges.

During this epoch wheat was the main product raised in the Salinas Valley and the best yield in any one year was 2,175,960 bushels. Gradually wheat gave way to Burbank potatoes. One year, Mr. Bolce reports, potatoes were in a slump and he bought 120 pound sacks for 10 cents each and cooked them for the hogs. Highest potato yield was 726,000 tons.

Mr. Bolce advises those who motor over the Old Stage Road to look to your left when you pass Buckeye turn going north and there will be seen an apricot orchard. This place was once known as the famous Cornett Orchard which he operated on lease from the Pajaro Bank of Watsonville. Salinas staged its first Rodeo that year, 1911, and called it Salinas Big Week, Bolce was awarded first prize for the best exhibit of apricots.

The country road ran between the orchard and the old Ollason ranch. A few yards further on were the ruins of the abandoned lime kiln, across from Sugar Loaf Mountain. This is on the Henry Cowell ranch. Also on the Cowell ranch you could see the cupola of the Hop House. In 1876, we learned from Mr. Bolce hops were still growing on fences on both sides of the road.