

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Gold Mine On The Coast**

We have found another entertaining story about the cast and mountain country south of Monterey. Mrs. Mabel Plaskett is our informant and her knowledge of the territory about which she writes is without question historically correct and delightfully told, although there have been many tragic incidents along these mountain trails in years past.

This story, as published in "The Land." Concerns William Cruikshank Sr., who arrived early in the 1870s from Calaveras County with his family to settle on the south side of Villa Creek about 70 miles south of Monterey. Here, in a small clearing three miles from the sea, he built a cabin, planted an orchard of apples and plums and set out cuttings of mammoth blackberries, brought from the old home. All these thrived amazingly and old timers still tell of the luscious fruit and berries grown on the old Cruikshank place," Mrs. Plaskett recalls.

"Young Willey was 10 years old at the time and he lived all the rest of his life on the coast, destined to become one of those "pioneer souls that blaze their path where highways never ran." Willey and a sister Emily comprised the family and Emily spent a great deal of time in Jolon with her friend Oda Butterfield, who later married Ed Dutton. Emily moved to Alameda where she spent the remainder of her life.

Willey's mother died when he was 16. She was buried near the home in Villa Creek: "Villa Creek runs through a deep and beautiful canyon. The tourist driving down the coast road, crossing the high bridges gives little thought to the beauty he misses. Those who take time to explore the deep canyons will find woodwardia ferns growing six feet high and delicate five-finger ferns often growing out of old logs, a natural hanging basket, and everywhere the smell of cool damp earth and leaf mold and one feels a deep sense of peace."

The Cruikshank house was above the creek and their water supply came from a spring nearby.

Willey was always interested in mining and prospecting. He watched the Chinese, who were the earliest prospectors along the coast, placer mining along Salmon Creek when he was a boy. Willey then looked for gold in every creek. He found small nuggets and traces of gold in Spruce creek and dreamed that some

day he would find a bonanza. A few mines had already sprung up and small amounts of gold taken out. Willey's father was the first recorder of mines as far back as 1875. Later Jim Krenkel kept the records.

"The Los Burros region lies higher in the mountains and Willey felt sure the red earth, so like that of the gold country of the Sierras, should be good prospecting. His faith was justified, and his big dream came true when he discovered the 'Last Chance' mine. This was truly a great mine and started the gold rush to the Los Burros district. A town sprang up almost overnight with a hotel, store, and of course saloon, and many are the tales of the rioting and violence in the short life of the town which was named Manchester."

Jim Krenkel became a partner of Willey Cruikshank and they worked the mine until in 1878 they sold out to a group of men who changed the name to the Buclimo Mine. The Buclimo Company worked the mine, taking out a fortune of gold until they struck such quantities of water, they were forced to quit. At that time there was no equipment capable of pumping out the water at such a depth.

After that excitement died down and the town of Manchester died with it and by 1901 when Jim Krenkel brought his bride to Los Burros nothing remained but the Krenkel home and a few abandoned buildings.