

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 14, 1962

Beans A La Gold Fields

If a cookbook can be amusing as well as educational then the "49ers Own Cookin' Book" takes the prize. It is published by The Church of the '49er at the Columbia State Park.

Mrs. Margaret Lang, formerly a resident of Monterey designed the cover plate; Robert Athal did the inking and the sketches throughout; Richard Ewing accomplished the printing; Bonnie Douglas was the coordinator, and grateful friends cheerfully parted with family recipes. Every word in the 38-page book was printed by hand in '49 fashion, even the advertising, which also carries out the theme of the edition just off the press.

A history of this church is the introduction to the book: "Six days before Christmas 1854, a group of miners met to organize the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia." Four months later, in April 1855, the Presbyterians bought the little building from the Methodist Church. After the disastrous fire of 1857, the church was used as a schoolhouse during the week. So, plans were made for a new edifice. The new church was constructed in wood stockade fashion, and opened for worship on Oct. 7, 1864. The lumber was hand-hewn: the roof was constructed of sugar pine shakes. After serving, the residents of Columbia for almost 90 years, it burned to the ground June 22, 1950. A replica was dedicated on Dec. 12, 1954, as part of the centennial celebration of the Columbia church.

"Mark Twain wrote in 'Roughing It': 'It was a driving, vigorous, restless population in those days. It was the only population of the kind that the world has ever seen gathered together. And it's not likely that the world will ever see its like again. It was an assemblage of two hundred thousand young men – stalwart, muscular, dauntless young braves, brimful of push and energy. The very pick and choice of the world's glorious ones . . . bright eyed, quick moving, strong handed-young giants . . . the strangest population, the most gallant host that ever trooped down the startled solitudes of an unpeopled land. . .'"

Then E. Clampus Vitus in 1962 wrote this in tribute to the Women: "And then came the women, to settle, to temper, to polish, to soothe, to love and to care for this

gallant host. They too were brave and strong . . . and glorious. They made homes for the men they loved. They cleaned, they sewed, and they cooked for these men who were making history . . . and they too became a most important part of that history . . . We pay humble tribute to the '49ers and their women. God-fearing, courageous, they made the Golden State what it is today."

Within the covers are many recipes which have been handed down from generation to generation. All are basically the food of the '49ers and their women.

Among the recipes is one for Miners' Beans: "Place in a large kettle, two cups Pinto beans (washed), five cups water, ¼ pound salt pork (diced), cook two hours or so. Add 2 diced onions, 1 No. 2 can tomatoes, ½ oz. chili powder, 2 diced garlic cloves and 1 green pepper (sliced). Cook until tender, add water as needed.

"Serve up with sour dough bread. Family and friends will be broad and happy."

Sour Dough Pancakes

One cup sugar, ½ cup mashed potatoes, 4 cups of flour, potato water to thin. Combine and make thin batter. Place in a crock and leave in a warm spot for 4-8 hours. Refrigerate for future use. For the pancakes at night you take 1 cup starter dough and ½ cup sugar, 2 cups flour, 2 T plain mashed potatoes and potato water to thin with, store in warm spot overnight.

In the morning, pay back 1 cup starter, now add to the remaining batter the following (sic) 2 eggs, 2T melted butter, 1 teaspoon soda dissolved in 2T hot water. If batter is too thick, it was not kept warm enough and you can thin with milk.

Drop batter onto a very hot griddle. Cakes will not brown if griddle is not hot enough.

Now off to the mines ...