

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 28, 1962

### **The Legend Of El Toro Ranch Is Retold**

In the year 1915 John J. Newbegin of San Francisco published "Old Mission Tales" by Kate P. Sieghold. The printers were Taylor, Nash and Taylor. The booklet was dedicated to Monterey - I spent happy days with those I loved, 'Mi corazon para ti.'

Contained within the handsome brown cover, illustrated with a wooden door and an adobe wall and tied with a bit of leather, are four stories - possibly legends of Old Monterey, reprinted by permission of the Overland Monthly.

The stories include: "The Padre and His Dog - a Tradition," "The Enchanted Mountains," meaning the Santa Lucias; "Told to Manuel, the Virgin's Crown" and "The Legend of El Toro Ranch." The latter story we have chosen to repeat in part in today's Diary.

"There was a tract of land lying midway between the coast and the mountains near Monterey that many years ago was a Spanish grant, presented by the government to a Mexican general for services rendered. It is many leagues in extent and was an ideal grazing ground for the herds of wild cattle that roamed over its rolling pastures.

"The Indians in days gone by were in such terror of the monarch of the herds - a bull - that they dare not molest them. No matter how hungry, a meal of herbs must suffice, and the taste of the delicious flesh had almost become a tradition.

"This terrible bull had never been seen by mortal eyes, but his voice and the tramp of his hoofs could be heard above the storm. Deep chasms in the hillsides and uprooted trees gave proof of his anger.

"Among the Indians there was one excelled in all the sports of the tribes - stronger, more agile, more courageous than the others; yet he was possessed of a peaceful and gentle nature.

"Wandering over the hills one morning, he saw the smoke of a fire, and, thinking to find some companions, he was surprised to see two strange men busily engaged in dressing a wild cow they had just slaughtered. The Indian was horrified, and telling them of the bull, warned them to beware of its vengeance.

"In the night, a fearful storm arose, as if the very elements were in league with the bull. Rain fell in torrents, trees and rocks crashed down the ravines, and lightning played around the mountain peaks, and thunder rumbled in the canyons and gulches.

"In the morning, the Indian came upon the dead bodies of the two men, crushed beneath the branches of a fallen oak tree. Realizing that the innocent sometimes suffers with the guilty, he fled from the vicinity. The wind whistling by his ears he thought was the breath from the bull's nostrils, and the sound of his feet as he ran seemed like the tramp of hoofs pursuing him. Reaching the Salinas river, he stopped not, but plunged in and swam swiftly over.

"Panting and exhausted, he cowered in the willows that lined the opposite bank. He wondered many weeks over the great plains. As there were no trees or rocks to shelter him from the storms, he suffered from cold, and hunger was his constant companion. Only for his skill in snaring small game he would have starved.

"He often cast longing eyes toward the mountains where his people dwelt, but the fear of the bull prevailed in his heart to such an extent that during the rest of his life he never recrossed the river.

"After a while vast herds and flocks were pastured on the plains, and he found employment watching them. Later he learned sheep-shearing and became so dexterous that his fame reached to the south, and he and his band were in demand through three counties. Occasionally some of his people came over the river, but as the years passed, he saw less and less of them. Ranches were taken up on the plains and cities arose. Strange things were to be seen now every day. The Indian made his home with a Spanish family, his amiability and gentleness endearing him to all.

"On going into town one day he found it gaily decorated with flags. Crowds were on the streets. Whole beeves were being barbecued and there were bands of music. Hearing shouts and cheers he followed the crowd. Suddenly from out of the mountain pass and over the valley thundered a creature shrieking and hissing smoke and fire belching from it. Flags adorned it, and a wreath of flowers decorated its massive neck. The Indian turned to flee, crying loudly, "El Toro! El Toro!" but fell face forward on the ground, unconscious from terror. The people laughed to see an Indian faint from

fear at the first sight of a locomotive, but kind hands bore him to a place of safety.

"However, in time his curiosity overcame his terror. It seemed as if the angel for whom he was named had forgotten to call him. The years had bent, twisted, and warped him like iron in a fire, but his nature remained to the last as gentle as the wood doves that nest in the live oaks on the Toro Rancho."

Copies of the "Old Mission Tales," printed in 1915 and now collectors' items, are on sale by the Monterey History and Art Assn. They were given to the association by Mr. and Mrs., Myron Oliver.