

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 19, 1964

### **Vasquez Escapes**

In an old scrapbook belonging to Paul Pioda of Salinas, compiled many years ago by his uncle, E.D. Williams, we have discovered many notations of interest to all our readers who are interested in Monterey's history.

Evidently Mr. Williams was genuinely interested in the history of Monterey County, for he saved clippings of events and items concerning people living before and during his lifetime. Mr. Pioda brought the scrapbook to the Custom House several years ago that we might read it and copy some of the items for the historical files.

One of the newspaper articles found pasted in the book was entitled "Interesting sidelights on Vasquez." We are reviewing it in the column today, thinking that it might prove of interest to our readers. The clipping bears no date, but credit for the facts in the story is given to Daniel Martin. It tells of the near-capture of the bandit gang just across the river from Salinas.

Mr. Martin writes that a former article recalled to his memory the incident that happened in the vicinity of his old home in the Corral de Tierra Canyon (Lime Kiln Canyon) from which material used in building the old Custom House in Monterey was taken.

In this canyon, about half-way between the Speegle ranch and the ranch of William Hatton, there stood on an elevated flat an adobe building occupied by the Valensuelo family. Also in the vicinity lived Semon Ebara, his wife, Juana, Esidor Solesar, and his wife, Nacimenna.

These last two named couples had been for many years inhabitants of that once notorious Pilarcito village situated just across the Salinas River from Davis crossing, then on the main thoroughfare from Salinas to Monterey.

Living with his friends in Calera Canyon was a man named Agapito who was an expert blacksmith, spur and bit maker, and on Vasquez's arrival, Agapito was at once engaged to make and repair bits and spurs for him and his party, so the old clipping relates.

"This was in the early summer of 1871, and as it was my daily duty to drive cattle to the Calera creek to water, I met and talked with Vasquez frequently, and when he learned that my native town was Monterey, that I had

attended school in the old Cuartel and that Dona Senora Catherine Cole (Mrs. Tom Cole), who had owned the Rancho San Carlos, or Potrero, in the Carmel Valley, was my aunt, for whom he had worked in his youth as a vaquero, we became quite friendly, which allayed my feelings somewhat," writes Mr. Martin.

After some weeks someone informed Sheriff Tom Watson of Vasquez's presence at Calera Canyon and advised that in the course of a few nights there would be a full moon and Vasquez and his gang could be easily captured.

So, relates Mr. Martin, a few days later a posse was selected and at midnight under a bright full moon the Valensuelos' residence was raided. They tied their horses a distance away, approached the house very cautiously and called for Vasquez and his gang to come out and surrender. But they were gone. The door was opened by Valensuelo, and they were permitted to search the house and surroundings.

In a small hay field nearby, they found where Vasquez and his men had been lying in the hay, their horses saddled ready to make a hasty retreat. When they heard the commotion in the vicinity of the house the bandit and his men (five in all) mounted their horses and rode up the canyon.

Mike Noon of Monterey, Mr. Martin's half-brother, was a member of the sheriff's posse and Mr. Martin wrote that he had heard his brother say that perhaps it was just as well that the raid has been "tipped off" to Vasquez, thus avoiding, no doubt, a fierce encounter.