

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 21, 1964

Life And Death Of An Adobe

The old stage coach stop, store and hotel known as the Dutton Hotel was familiar to residents of southern Monterey County after the 1870s.

It was situated 20 miles west of King City, near San Antonio de Padua Mission, and was on the direct Los Angeles-San Francisco route before King City was born.

I have been doing a bit of research beyond what I already knew about the old adobe ruin, once a well-known early California small hotel noted for its hospitality. From its veranda the George Dutton family which long maintained this early-day stage stop, and their friends, neighbors and patrons, watched the world go by.

Jolon was a thriving community near the mines on the coast and was a stopping place for every prospector on his way there. It was also a place to celebrate his spoils or drown his disappointments.

The Duttons furnished supplies for homes on the coast and throughout the Salinas Valley until a good road was built through King City – this, in 1886, proved a death knell for little Jolon.

Jolon was established in 1870, though its immediate area had been active since the founding of San Antonio Mission by the Franciscans in 1771. Antonio Ramirez came from Monterey and built himself an adobe “with all doors opening onto the porch, California-style.”

H. C. Dodge, a relative of George Dutton, purchased the adobe building in 1876 with 100 acres of land for \$1,000. He remodeled the place into a two-storied hotel – store, which soon became the center of social life in the area. Young people gathered for singing and dancing, for it boasted the only piano for miles around.

George Dutton was a self-taught man though, as one authority has said, he could keep his share of any discussion on a level with the best-educated traveler. He used a quill pen to the last and often had his children run down to the family goose for a new one.

He taught those children to read even before they went to school. Dutton had arrived in Jolon with Capt. T.T. Tidball. They established the store but later disagreed, and another one was built in Jolon by the captain.

Dutton had a corner on the social life of the community. His wife was the former Deborah Winslow Dodge; the two became parents of six children.

In 1929 the famous old hostelry was sold by the widow of Dutton's son, Edwin Dalton Dutton, to William Randolph Hearst and now is part of the Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation.

The part that the Dutton's played in this wonderful period of history is well-remembered, as are members of the family. George Dutton is buried in the little cemetery adjoining the tiny Episcopal church, “St. Luke's in the Hills,” with other members of the family. Mrs. Dutton, the hostess, was buried at her request in the backyard of the now-crumbled house.