

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 19, 1966

The Big Sur Story

Mrs. Vesta Bauman of Lakewood, California, has written a note of appreciation for the several articles which have appeared in this column regarding the history and scenery of the Big Sur Country. She writes in part:

"I was rather small when we used to summer at the ranch (Westmere) which was the property of my grandfather, Richard West Smith, who was one of the pioneers of the coast since 1888. The ranch was twelve miles from Carmel bridge and was well known by local people until the time it burned down a few years ago.

"It was rugged down the coast with no electricity and the old road took hours to travel from there to Monterey. We had a wonderful time and lived a life no money can buy. The colorful personalities we heard about and met!

"Jim Fat, the old Chinese man and his horse and buggy. The barbecues under the Eucalyptus trees at the mouth of the Palo Colorado Canyon, at the Corbett Grimes ranch, and that evening the Fourth of July dance at Notley's Landing in the old two-story building.

"Even as a child I remember the old gate into Notley's Landing in the old two-story building. The old gate that read, "Keep Our This Mans You." It was never changed. I'll never forget that beautiful dark haired lady musician who played the accordion. She had dark, deep brown eyes. My Mother Anita Smith, now deceased, kept the family tree and precious articles of history alive.

"I am writing you also as I have inherited the family tree and its possessions. I discovered two letters, written on plain paper and sent to my grandfather from San Francisco during the earthquake and fire.

"I am enclosing copies of each. Daniel Zirker, a young Stanford University doctor, married my Aunt Pren. Both are now deceased. He is the one who wrote the enclosed letters. What makes these treasures is no stamp was necessary and just any ordinary paper was used, both are written in pencil.

"I feel Monterey should preserve these letters and hope you can advise me where best they should be kept. I want to donate them in my mother's name, as she was the true preserver of these records and memories. I

wish to remain anonymous but would be overjoyed that my mother's toil was not in vain. I am hoping you could find the time to advise me and that some time in the future we might meet."

Needless to say that I have advised Mrs. Vesta Bauman that the letters should be given into the safe keeping of the Monterey History and Art Association where they will be cherished and preserved.

The letters read: "San Francisco April 20, 1906 – We are safe and at Couzes. I am now in line for bread and they told us we could write. The trains are so unsafe and so terribly crowded that we are afraid to try to go and while all our clothes are burned, we thank God we are all uninjured. The suffering here is terrific...We will be home as soon as possible. Love to all and if anything further should happen we are all together."

In another letter dated April 20, 1906, he wrote: "The entire heart of city has been wiped out, but fire all out now. As I happened to see a chance to write a few letters and knowing the girls would not, I took liberty to let you know that they are absolutely safe and are not suffering. They will be home as soon as possible (three or four days)."

Both letters are addressed to Mr. Richard Smith, Monterey, California, stage line.