

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 16, 1968

Silver in 1802

The following translation dates back to 1802 in Monterey and concerns what might have been a discovery of a silver mine in this county, fifty years before the discovery of gold in California.

"After the year in which the deceased Mr. Diego de Borica went away. Ignacio Ortega was going about looking for lime (stone) to use in his work and found a view of silver-lead ore near the small mountain that may be seen opposite the King's Rancho to the northeast.

"After putting some of it in the fire where it melted into a leaden mass I gave it to his excellency the governor, who said, "Set about making an assay" in a badly made crucible resulting in six ounces (a mark of silver weighs 8 ounces), or very fine silver which I myself weighed.

"It is now proposed to make a larger assay in a more particular and careful manner for which purpose there has come from Santa Barbara the retired Sergeant Jose Marie Ortega. By the next mail I will give our excellency individually the results. The miner assures me that if the furnace had not broken during the first assay the small quantity of ore would have yielded, as he knows from its richness, two marks of silver. I send advice of the foregoing that your excellency may be properly informed. May our Savior protect you? Monterey, Feb. 2, 1802. Raymundo Carillo." the Governor Jose Joaquin de Arrillaga.

Copied from the E.W. Williams scrapbook.

Jose Joaquin de Arrillaga was born in Spain. He was captain and then lieutenant governor of the Californias at Loreto from 1783 to 1792, Governor at Monterey in 1793 and 1794, Governor of Alta California from 1804. He came to Monterey in 1806 and lived here until 1814, when he died at Soledad at the age of 64 years. Arrillaga was honest and efficient, of most excellent character and a model governor so far as the performance of routine duties were concerned according to records in Bancroft's list of California pioneers.

It was in May 1848, that Alcalde Colton directed his constable to get a pair of iron hinges made for the prison door. The constable gave the order to a blacksmith, who on completion of his work, charged the sum of \$8. Thinking the charge unreasonable, Colton

told the constable not to accept the hinges. The blacksmith came to the alcalde's office, and in a rage threw the hinges at his feet, and left. Colton then handed the constable \$8, told him to call at the shop of the blacksmith and tell him that his violence and indignation could not be passed over; that he would fine him \$10 for the good of the town, which he might pay or go to jail.'

After a few moments' hesitation, the smithy laid the amount of the fine on the alcalde's table, and took his departure, this time without uttering a word, but when clear of the office, he said to the constable:

"For once in my life I have been outwitted; that Yankee alcalde not only got the hinges for nothing, but \$2 besides, I would have tried the calaboose but for the infernal fleas.

It would be interesting to know if the original hinges are still there!

In closing his "Three Years in California" Walter Colton, the builder of Colton Hall, pays the following tribute to his fireside friends in Old Monterey: "David Spence, from the hills of Scotland; W.E.P. Hartnell from England, the best linguist in the country; Don Manuel Dias, a native of Mexico; James McKinley, from the Grampian Hills; Don Manuel Jimeno, once Secretary of State; Milton Little; Don Jose Abrego; J.P. Leese from Missouri, whose wife was the sister of General M.G. Vallejo; James Watson, born on the Thames; Charles Wolter of German origin; Governor Pulacio of Lower California; J.F. Dye (a partner of Thomas O. Larkin); James Stokes from England; Senior Soveranez, whose saloon is lit by eyes bright as nuptial tapers, and where the Castilian flows soft as if warbled by a bird; Padre Ramirez, and the Rev. S. H. Willey (Chaplain of the Constitutional Convention). Monterey lost one of its most cherished ladies, when Mrs. Thomas O. Larkin took her departure. Here for 18 years she had lent her charm to its society. She was the first lady from the United States that settled in California."