

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 8, 1968

### **Mexican Grants**

In this list is first the name of the rancho grant by Mexico, to whom granted, and acreage.

Bolsa del Portrero y Moro Cojo, 1822, J.J. de la Torre, 6,915 acres. (Pocket of the pasture and the lame moor.) As explained in a previous issue "bolsa" was used as a name for many grants and convey the idea of being shut in. Tradition says that there was a lame black horse running wild on this grant which lies near the mouth of the Salinas River. On account of the Moors who conquered Spain in early days the name is applied to anything that is black or swarthy.

Bolsa Nueva y Moro Cojo: 1825, heirs of Simeon Castro, 28,827 acres. (New pocket and lame moor.) This large grant extends north of Castroville and follows along the Elkhorn slough for many miles.

Buena Vista: 1822, J. E. Estrada, 7,725 acres. This ranch lies across the Salinas River from Spreckels. A portion of the old ranch house can still be seen from the road on the old Gerlach ranch. This ranch house figures in many travelers' accounts as it was near the road that ran from Monterey to all the southern Missions. It was here that John Sutter, Dr. Marsh, John Bidwell and others with 100 riflemen and as many Indians, joined Governor Micheltorena in 1845 in their march to Los Angeles against the rebels under J.B. Alvarado. It means good view in Spanish.

Chualar: 1839, Juan Malarin, 8,889 acres. Covered the section where town of Chualar now stands. Named after a patch of pig weed that grows there by the Indians. David Jacks bought this ranch for 25 cents an acre.

Cocks tract or El Tucho, 1840, 1,106 acres. A very fertile piece of land that lies in the Blanco section. Henry Cocks, the fighting justice of the peace, whose exploits were published in this column some time ago, was awarded this land in 1867.

San Bernabe, 1841, Jesus Molina, 13,296 acres (St. Barnabas or Barnaby).

The San Bernabe is located on the opposite side of the Salinas River from King City, and Jolon road running through the property. The United States patent to this ranch was given to Henry Cocks, the fighting justice of

the peace at Natividad whose exploits in cleaning the Salinas valley of its horse thieves and bandits was told in this column several weeks ago.

There has been a great deal of interest created in Cocks, and Bancroft's history states that in 1866, still in a quest of adventure he went with an expedition to Alaska and Siberia; as soon as he returned he was appointed in charge of the Tule River Indian reservation to keep some of the renegade Indians in their place, but that work was to tame, so he went with Lieutenant George Wheeler's expedition for three years exploring the Colorado River. He returned to San Bernabe about 1880 and opened a stage station known as Cock's Station. The last heard of him was in 1885.

San Benito, 1842, 6,671 acres, F. Garcia. (St. Benedict).

This ranch is located on both sides of the Salinas River extending from the town of San Lucas for several miles north. The state highway runs across it. The U.S. patent to this grant was confirmed to James Watson.

James Watson was an Englishman who left his ship, the Royal George at Santa Barbara and came overland to Monterey in 1823, where he engaged in trading. In 1832 he organized the "Compania Estranjera," company of strangers, for the defense of Monterey against rebel forces from the interior. In 1834 he married Mariana Escamilla and they had eight children. One of them, Thomas Watson, was afterwards sheriff of Monterey County for four terms and lived in Corral de Tierra where he had a large family, many of whom are still living in Monterey County.

A portion of the old San Benito Adobe is still standing along the banks of the Salinas River. James Watson lived there until 1864 when the worst drought California has ever seen, killed off all his stock and ruined him financially, as it did many other large ranch owners that year. He died the next year.

Las Milpitas, 1838 Ignacio Pastor, 43,280 acres. This large ranch takes in most of the valley land of the San Antonio River and Mission Creek. Ignacio Pastor was an Indian; in fact, in his petition to obtain the grant he classes himself as a "neophyte of the San Antonio Mission." With the exception of 33 acres around the San Antonio Mission, this ranch included everything in that section. The Mission Creek from which the padres obtained their irrigation water is included.

This ranch later belonged to William Randolph Hearst on which he had built a \$300, 000 "farm house." It is a beautiful building done in mission style and looks majestically upon the San Antonio Mission in the valley below. It is said that Hearst paid \$1,250.000 for the Milpitas ranch to James Brown and the Atherton heirs.

The real meaning of Milpitas is not known. Some claim that it means "little gardens" from milpa, meaning corn patch. The gardens of the San Antonio Mission are located near the mission and wonderful crops were raised. Another explanation of the name is that it is a compound of the word mil meaning thousand and pitas, meaning agaves or aloes. However, none of these plants grow in that section, so most authorities seem to think that it means little garden.

When this column started articles on place names, there were two stickers that have been bothering those interested in Monterey County history. They were the meaning and origin of San Carpojo, a stream that runs into the Hearst ranch near San Simeon and the other Neponset, a station on the SP Railroad near the Twin Bridges over the Salinas River.

Miss Ellen B. Frink, then county librarian, discovered that Neponset is the name of a coast village in Massachusetts. How did the name get to this former Indian village near the mouth of the Salinas River? Can anyone enlighten us? Possibly it is like the word Cayuga street in Salinas. Many people think that this is a Spanish word, when in fact, the surveyor who surveyed the Riker and Jackson additions to Salinas was a native of Cayuga County in New York State, or had lived there, and for some reason gave the name to the street.