



Three Rocks Research

So that others may know ...SM

The Three Rocks Report

A Message

We had some good rain and green is sprouting everywhere reminding us that spring is coming soon. The weather has kept me close to home, which has encouraged me work on the New Idria Preservation Project and to develop a web presentation for it. The project is led by a group of community spirited people who wish to see the remaining New Idria property and town site preserved as a community park. The State approved our nonprofit corporation and we have just submitted a 501(c)(3) application to the IRS. The web presentation may be viewed at <http://www.new-idria.org>.

New Idria was the second largest quicksilver mine in the western hemisphere and home to many innovations in mining technology. The original rotary furnaces, constructed in 1917, which revolutionized quicksilver processing, still stand, at Idria.



New Idria Quicksilver Mine, 1917.

We hope that you will join us with this difficult and important project. You may learn more at the website or by contacting Ray Iddings at (831) 427-0918..

A Story

Cantua Man

Many people know that the "West Side," in the area of Cantua Creek and Dómeengine Ranch, is rich with exotic fossils. In fact, nearby Madera's Fairmead Landfill contains one of the West Coast's largest deposits of Pleistocene fossils. In a decade of digging, workers have uncovered

15,000 bones and skulls from prehistoric sloths, camels, mammoths, saber-toothed cats and bears. Moreover, the discoveries continue, this author was recently privileged to visit a paleontology project in the Ciervo Hills, north of the Cantua area, where several significant discoveries were recently made. However, nothing has yet approached the momentous unearthing made in 1890.

During December S. L. Packwood and I. N. Barrett were constructing a small irrigation dam along Cantua Creek when they uncovered a complete petrified human. According to the story,

The specimen was a very tall, well-proportioned male. The nose was rather large and on the aquiline order, giving the face a Grecian appearance of apparently a once handsome type. Even the wrinkles in the hands and feet were easily discernible to the naked eye and appeared as natural as in life.

This significant find went on display at the Popular Drug Store in Fresno until it was bought by J.J. Donahoo for \$1000. The discovery caused such great interest that many other would be paleontologist began searching and almost immediately, Presley Bozeman, Jr. and J. W. Livermore discovered a petrified woman in Jacalitos Canyon. This fabulous discovery quickly lead to the completion of the family with the discovery of a petrified boy in Los Gatos Creek.

This series of finds almost become the world's greatest paleontological discovery until the boy's leg broke off and exposed the fresh plaster of Paris. An inspection of the woman exposed another fraud and the petrified Cantua Man suddenly vanished. Of course, most historians are aware of how Mark Twain popularized the discovery of "A Petrified Man" in 1861 and how that led to a series of human petrification stories appearing in newsprint across the country. Each story only encouraged another to tell a better story.

— References —

Elliott, Wallace W. *History of Fresno County California*. Wallace W. Elliott & Co., Publishers. 1882.

"Discovery of Petrified Man Causes Furor." *Portraits of the Valley*. Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE. <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/>.

The Story Behind that Name

Larios Canyon



Larios Spring, Homestead site of Jose and Juana Larios.

Larios Canyon is located in the Vallencitos about 40 miles southeast of Hollister, near New Idria. The John Ashurst ranch home is located near the entrance of the canyon. This canyon, Larios Spring and Larios Creek are named for the Larios family who built their homestead at Larios Spring sometime around 1850. The Larios homestead was built by Jose (Maria Demetra) Larios and Juana Castro. Jose was the son of Manual Larios, the original grantee of the Santa Ana y Quien Sabe grant.

The Larios family cemetery is located on a small knoll just above the old homestead site. It is believed that six people are buried there: Baby Larios, Jose Larios, Juana Larios, Teofilo Larios, David Larios, and Carmel Larios. Cattle broke the cemetery fence many years ago and the wooden grave markers have all been destroyed. The cemetery is being restored by Robert and Fermin Graves, the sons of Carmel Larios. Three Rocks Research was able to provide research assistance and field work that identified the individual grave locations.

The San Benito Coal Mine, located nearby was by the Larios family around 1906. The Sampson Magnesite Mine mill was build at the head of Larios Canyon in 1914. Larios Creek was spelled correctly on the 1891 McCray map but was misspelled by Anderson and Pack during their 1915 survey, thus creating the misspelling we see on today's maps.

— References —

- Robert Graves, son of Carmel (Larios) Graves
- Patricia Ashurst, gdaughter of John Ashurst
- The Hollister Free Lance*, August 16, 1889
- The Free Lance*, September 4, 1891
- McCray, Vic. T. and Harry W. *Official Map of San Benito County California*. 1891.
- Anderson, Robert, and Pack, Robert W. *Geology and oil resources of the west border of the San Joaquin Valley north of Coalinga, California*. United States Geological Survey Bulletin 603. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office. 1915.

Larios Cemetery



The Three Rocks Report

Pioneers and People

Joseph Byles

Joseph "Joe" Byles was a miner and rancher who lived in Hernandez Valley near the mouth of Byles Canyon. Joe arrived in San Francisco as a sailor aboard a British ship. He jumped ship in 1861 and began a new life in California. He joined the U.S. Navy on August 8, 1872 and served three years as a nurse. He was stationed aboard the USS Benicia when that ship carried King Kalakana of Hawaii to San Francisco.

After his discharge from the Navy in 1875, Joe lived in Nicasico, California for a short while. He moved to the little town of San Benito around 1880 and married Emily Jane Prater on her birthday in 1882. Jane was born in Missouri on December 9, 1862. Their first child, James "Jim," was born on the Rosetti Ranch near San Benito in 1884 and they moved to Hernandez Valley a short time later where he became a prospector, miner and rancher. Their other five sons were all born in Hernandez Valley.

According to Louise (Byles) Miracle, the great-granddaughter of Joe, he was born on the Isle of Wight in

southern England on February 16, 1847. He left home at early age to get away from his father's pressure to become a doctor. Louise said that he jumped ship in San Francisco to see his sister who was living there. He remained in contact with her until 1906, but never heard from her after the earthquake. Joe's wife Jane died on Thanksgiving day in 1901, six weeks after giving birth to Archie. It is thought that she is buried in Hernandez, somewhere near the old Byles homestead. Joe never celebrated Thanksgiving after that and never remarried. Joe Byles died at Louise's home on September 13, 1944 and was buried in the Nordhoff Cemetery in Ojai, California.

— References —

James C. Byles, gson of Jim Byles

Louise (Byles) Miracle, gdaughter of George Byles

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