



Three Rocks Research
So that others may know ...SM

The Three Rocks Report

A Message

This was a very busy, productive and stressful year. My wife's store is doing fine and she is also fully recovered from surgery. I completed the Archaeology Technology Program at Cabrillo College and now have my certification. Three Rock Research conducted many public presentations about Idria; led the Molina Ghost Run on an tour of historic Clear Creek; located another prehistoric site on Joaquin Ridge; conducted a reconnaissance of Pine Hill Cemetery and drafted a report; began mapping an old homestead site in Bitterwater; drafted a proposal for the New Idria Preservation Project; conducted several site stewardship visits; and I am now preparing an assessment of malicious theft and destruction of historic resources at Idria. The historic town of Idria (State Historic Landmark # 324) is held by The Futures Foundation, Inc., a state registered charitable trust (CT-46535) who obtained the property with government money and public donations.

Looking forward, the year 2006 promises to be just as busy, but hopefully less stressful. We've received many donations of cash and equipment this year, for which we are very grateful. We have a sponsor who will match public donations for the purchase of two ROKON ATVs. We already have several field projects planned for 2006 that include the study of a possible summer solstice site; a previously undocumented cave painting; mapping and preserving several gravesites; and, of course our continued effort with the New Idria Preservation Project. Additionally, several people have express interest in expanding the work of Three Rocks Research, creating more public involvement and conducting more outreach presentations ... which, while quite wonderful, is beginning to sound a bit like work. I never imagined that the Three Rocks Research would generate so much public interest. Our websites are now receiving about 2,000 visitor per month, and at least three unique telephone or email inquiries every week.

A Story

Ancient Mysteries in the Southern Diablo Range

Archaeological evidence suggests that people began occupying central California about 11,000 years ago. Although we don't know when the first people came to Los Gatos Creek, Hernandez Valley, and the surrounding area, most of the evidence points to occupation during the past 1,500 years. In spite of this evidence there are tantalizing clues suggesting even earlier habitation. One clue supporting early occupation is a feature found along the San Benito River that contains unique petroglyphs known as Pecked Curvilinear Nucleated cupules that might be 8,000 years old. Another clue to cultural diversity is found in the shadow of Joaquin Ridge, at a possible paleoastronomic site associated with winter and summer solstices that could indicate cross-cultural adaptation between the Yokuts and Chumash.

Most anthropologists associate the people who lived here with the Yokuts tribal groups that occupied the San Joaquin Valley. However, the area was more likely part of the wide region shared between the Yokuts, Chumash, Salinian and Ohlone. As a result of cross-cultural habitation, these people would have adapted many cultural attributes from one another.



Paleoastronomic Site in the Diablo Range

Many Yokuts groups found the winter solstice important and the Chumash observed the summer solstice.

A unique geologic feature known as Donut Rock, which collapsed during the 1983 Coalinga earthquake, may be associated with the Joaquin Ridge paleoastronomic rock art site. This would support a theory that the site may have been used during the winter solstice sunrise. It is also interesting that the primary petroglyph panel is precisely perpendicular to the summer solstice sunrise; thus suggesting a possible association with the summer solstice. This site, already listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a very special place that continues to reveal new secrets at every investigation. Certainly, many more mysteries will surface as research continues in this special region.

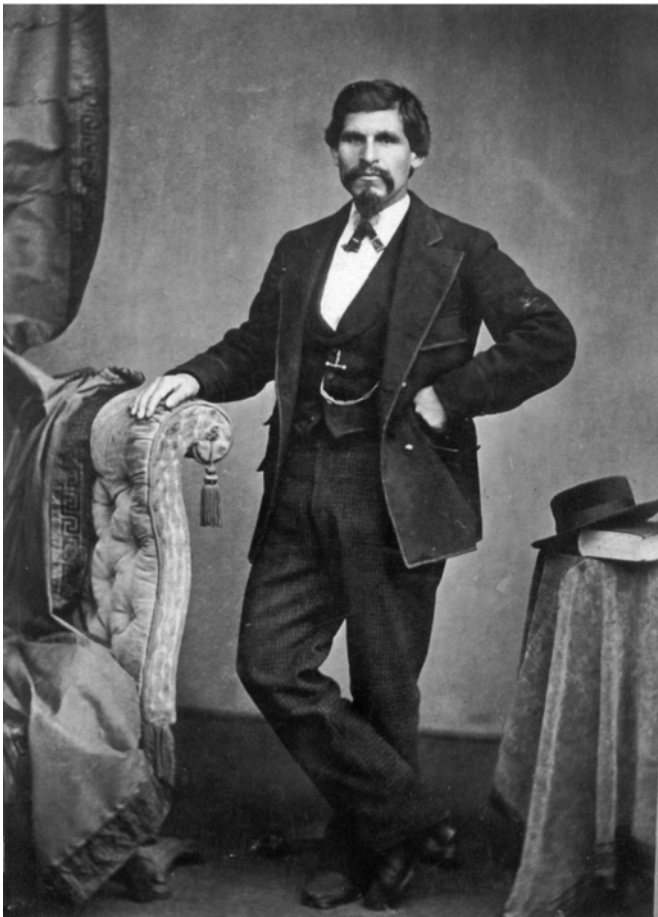
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Another Story

Tiburcio Vásquez



Tiburcio Vásquez

Courtesy the Ashurst Collection

Tiburcio Vásquez was the last of the famous *banditos* to terrorize California and his death marked the end of a turbulent and often violent era that occurred after California's independence from Mexico. He was born to José Hermenegildo Vásquez and Maria Guadalupe Cantua (daughter of Guadalupe Cantua) in 1835 in Monterey, Alta California. His first brush with the law came in 1854, when he murdered Constable William Hardmount in a Monterey fandango. With the law in pursuit, Vásquez headed for the hills near Idria and Cantua where two uncles, previous members of the Murrieta gang, still lived.

Vásquez was sent to San Quentin Prison in 1857 for stealing horses but escaped after two years and hid near Idria. He was recaptured after a few month and remained in prison until his release in 1863. He immediately returned to a life of crime and did another three years at San Quentin Prison. He was released in 1870 and joined the murderous band of thieves lead by "Red Handed Dick." They made their headquarters at Idria, where Tiburcio's sister lived. An agreement between the mining company and the gang, to ignore the gang's presence so long as the did not molest mine operations. provided them relatively safe heaven. However, Vásquez's crime spree in the surrounding area, becoming evermore bold and common, became intolerable in August 1873 when the gang robbed Snyder's General Store at Tres Pinos, murdering George Redford, Leander Davidson and Martin.

Leaving Tres Pinos for their Idria hideout, they had breakfast the following morning at Lorenzo Vasquez's place near Laguna mountain, then headed for Picacho and then on to Idria. But their murderous treachery proceeded them and they were quickly forced to leave. They sought refuge by escaping to southern California where they managed to elude capture for several months by hiding in the Tejon Pass area. Vásquez

was finally given up by another gang member, Abdon Leiva. Vásquez had been having an affair with Leiva's wife Rosaria and in jealousy, Leiva turned himself into authorities and agreed to turn State's evidence against Vásquez. Vásquez was finally captured in May of 1874 in the Arroyo Seco area of Los Angeles. He was returned for trial, convicted of the Tres Pinos murders, and was hanged on March 19, 1875 in Santa Clara, California.

— References —

Barrows, Henry D. *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Coast Counties of Central California*. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company. 1893.

"Murder and Robbery at Tres Pinos." *The Hollister Advance*. August 30, 1873.

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"Vasquez, Famed Bandit, Roamed San Benito County," *Evening Free Lance*, July 31, 1947.

The Story Behind that Name

Mexican Flat

Just above the now abandoned historic town of Idria, nestled on a small mountain terrace with breathtaking views over the San Joaquin Valley and the snow capped Sierra Nevada mountains a hundred miles away, was the small encampment where thirteen Chilean families made homes around 1860. Their tiny village, known as Chilano Camp was one of many small encampments that sprouted around the New Idria Quicksilver Mine. Just a quarter mile west was Camp 2 and to the east, across San Carlos Creek Canyon, was Centerville, a cluster of small cabins precariously attached to side of the steep canyon wall.

The workers at Chilano Camp were, for the most part, woodcutters hired by the New Idria Quicksilver Mine to harvest firewood for the mines large furnaces. Ignacio O. Nuñez, known locally as *Dude*, was born here. Jack James, who as a young man, knew Dude well, told me a story of how Dude once boasted that he had cut every tree, bush and shrub from the summit of Wright Mountain (around 1900) and left the mountain top and surrounding ridges completely barren.

Several rumors suggest that Chinese miners lived here, but this is probably a misunderstanding caused by the phonic similarities of "China" and "Chilano." Besides, China Camp was on the northeast side of San Carlos Peak.

Chilano Camp is known today as Mexican Flat. The site is located on the Idria property along side the road leading to the summit. The flat, overlooked by a single lonely grave hidden in bushes along side an illegal bike trail, is popular with campers; many of whom have horribly littered the site and burned several large oak trees that once grew here. The current land owner, Futures Foundation, Inc., seems to have abandon all interest in the property, thus allowing further environmental damage, and the destruction and theft of historic resources. Today, to our shame, Mexican Flat is repository for two abandon vehicles (used for targets), numerous heaps of garbage, fire pits filled with burned historic artifacts, stumps of cut trees, and an unhealthy scatter of broken bottles, shell casings and human feces.

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Brewer, William H. *Up and down California in 1860-1864*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1949.

Jack James interview.

Ciervo Hills

Ciervo Hills, located on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, northwest of Cantua, is named for the large herd of ciervo, red deer, or Tule elk (*elaphus nannodes*), that once ran in the San Joaquin Valley and Ciervo Hills before their predation by European hunters. The Tule elk is the smallest elk breed in North America. This animal was well adapted to the arid semi-desert conditions of the San Joaquin Valley and west side foothills. Instinct taught this animal to fear mountain lion and wolves, not hunters with rifles, so the animals were easy targets for Spanish explorers and gold prospectors. Their great number, ease of killing, and the voracious appetite of the gold-rush population brought this

species to edge of extinction. By 1854 the Tule elk were nearly gone and by 1885 there were only 28 remaining in California.

— **References** —

Elliott, Wallace W. & Co. *History of Fresno County California*. San Francisco, California: Wallace W. Elliott & Co. 1882.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo <http://www.chaffeezoo.org/animals/elk.html>.

Pioneers and People

Ramón Tirado

Ramón Tirado Sr. came from Mexico sometime after 1837 and settled in the Cantua area at a small Mexican community developing near the confluence of Arroyo Leona and Cantua Creek where he built an adobe home for his family. At that time, game was quite abundant and he was able to provide most of his family needs from the land. Later, he and his son, Ramón Jr., assisted Joaquín Murrieta's gang when they brought horses to the Cantua. Although there is no evidence suggesting that either were ever members of the Murrieta gang, they must have been well known and trusted by gang member. Frank Latta tells a story about Antonio Herrero, a Murrieta gang member, pawning his Colt .36 caliber revolver to Ramón for some needed cash. Antonio never returned to redeem the gun so Ramón kept the revolver.



Colt .36 Caliber Revolver

Ramón (Sr.) later became hostler of the Butterfield Overland Stage Line at Fresno City (now Tranquility). His son, Ramón Jr. remained in Arroyo Leona where, with his wife Maria, they had four children: Sylvester (1861), and Francisco (1869), Maria (1875), Miguel (1877).

Ramón's family remained in the community for the next hundred years and became involved in mining, ranching and real estate. Francisco "Frank" Tirado homesteaded a piece of land on the San Carlos Bolsa and later moved to Rancho de los Californios (near Mendota). Sylvester worked at the Idria mine for many years. He married Leonor Perez in 1895 and remarried to Ysabel Gusman in 1898. Sylvester had at least one son, Joe. Joe homesteaded property along the San Benito River southeast of Clear Creek road in the 1920s and ran goats on the mountain just above his land; the mountain became known as Goat Mountain.

— **References** —

Latta, Frank F. 1980. *Joaquin Murrieta and His Horse Gangs*. Santa Cruz, California: Bear State Books

Land Records from RootsWeb.com at <ftp://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/ca/>

1880 U.S. Federal Census Record

Jack James interview

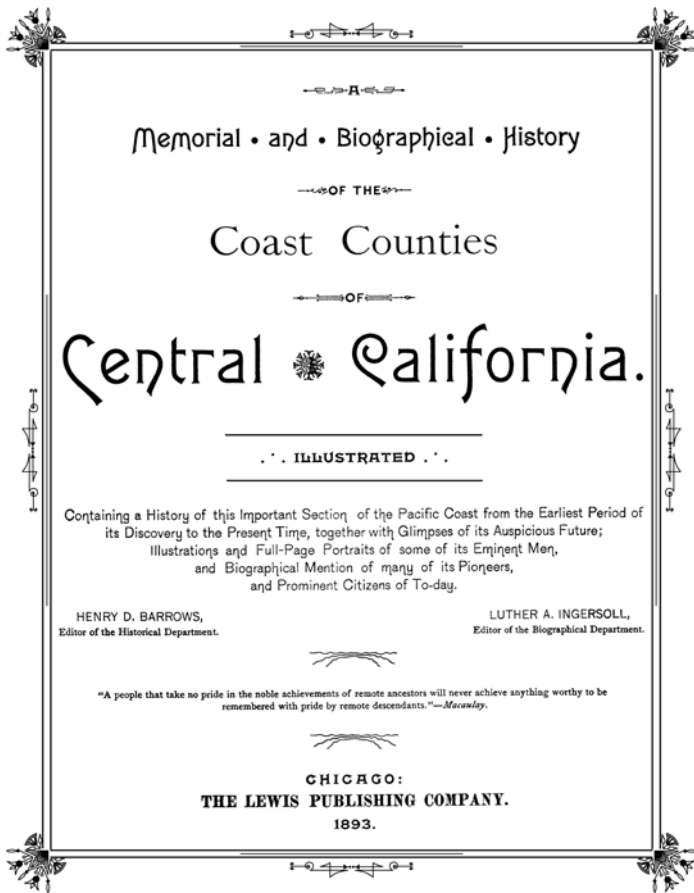
Adolph Dómingue

Born in 1856 in San Francisco to French parents. His mother died when he was 2½. Shortly after that his uncle took the family back to France where he lived until he was about 12. He then returned to live with his father who lived in San Francisco part time and ran sheep in central California. Adolph began working for his father part of the year and attending school in San Francisco during the other part. He left his father's job at age 16 and struck out on his own. By age 18 he began working for Miller and Lux taking charge of their sheep on the West Side of the Joaquin.

Adolph married Mary Ann Pfitzer in 1887 and together they had three children, Adolph M., Edna M. and Walter A. During the following years Adolph and Mary built the 15,000 acre Dómingue Ranch.

— **References** —

Latta, Frank F. *Black gold in the Joaquin*. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers. 1949.



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The Three Rocks Report

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Three Rocks Research Newsletter
142 Iowa Drive
Santa Cruz, Calif., 95060

or send an email message to ray@3rocks.org

Ph. (831) 427-0918

Fx. (831) 427-0928

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Three Rocks Research

142 Iowa Drive

Santa Cruz, Calif., 95060

Great News!

A sponsor has offered to match donations up to \$8,000 for the purchase of two ROKON off road vehicles. ROKON is a lightweight two wheel drive off-road motorbike that is built more like a tractor than bike. Its wide, low pressure tires are environmentally friendly, leaving less print than a human boot on the trail, yet ROKON is the most versatile and rugged all-terrain vehicle available.



Acquisition of two ROKON vehicles helps Three Rocks Research conduct more field work in remote areas and on private or environmentally sensitive land where permission often include concerns about the impact of four-wheel drive vehicles, or where trails are too narrow for other ATVs. Two vehicles encourage volunteer participation and facilitates land managers accompanying field research. Both vehicles will also be available to others conducting similar field work.

This matching fund offer requires public support ... Get Involved and Donate Today!

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation for the ROKON matching fund.

- \$50.00 \$500.00
 \$100.00 \$ _____

I promise to send \$ _____ every month

I'll make my donation of \$ _____ on-line.

- This is a great idea, but I simply can't afford to donate right now.

Name		
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*The sponsor wishes to remain anonymous until the matching fund is met.
You can learn more about ROKON at the website, <http://www.rokon.com>.*

The work we do on public land gets most of the publicity, simply because it is public land - but we also do a lot of work on private land and on "confidential" projects. We draft formal reports on everything we do, but we publish and circulate the information in ways that appropriately share the knowledge, protect historic resources, respect property rights and as permitted by land owners.

Fill the Void

We have a vacancy that needs filling on our Board of Directors. Additionally we are increasing the size of our board creating three additional vacancies. Please send me a note or telephone call if you'd like to be considered.

On the Web

Anyone can download copies of the newsletter. *The Three Rocks Report* is archived on the web at <http://www.3rocks.org/> - Click "Newsletter" on the left-side Table of Contents.

We also have several web presentations - Click "Projects" on the left-side Table of Contents.

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