



Three Rocks Research

So that others may know ...SM

The Three Rocks Report

A Message

I completed a busy, but rewarding three day trip to San Carlos Peak during the beginning of the month. Based on information provided by Mark Ward I visited a site known as China Camp where Chinese miners made home in the mid 1870s while working a New Idria claim on contract.

The camp is located on a natural terrace with a breathtaking vista of the San Joaquin Valley and the snow-capped Sierra Nevada Mountains. I arrived late in the afternoon I camped on a small flat, above and some distance from China Camp. The location provided a good view of the site and an awesome view of the San Joaquin Valley.

Evening came quickly, and the distant valley lights slowly intensified as a glittering reflection of the clear celestial expanse unfolding above me. No sooner had darkness swept across the high peaks, did the distant voice of a lone coyote begin calling from the balsa ... his lonely voice climbed the steep canyon to a nearby peak where it was quickly answered by friends and soon the entire wilderness was alive with their conversation. Luckily, they had little to talk about that night and I soon drifted off to sleep.



China Camp

Story continued on page 3.

A Story

Idria Influenza Epidemic

The following story is clipped from the Julius Nuñez interview conducted March 13, 1979 by David B. Kier, for the Oral History Project of the San Benito County Historical Society.

Julius Nuñez: [A] sad thing that happened was when we had that terrible influenza, 1917-18-19. People were dying like - well, every minute you were seeing bodies dropping on the streets, like dead rats.

A cousin of mine and I were able to get around while pretty near everybody was dying or sick. It was a mess. There were a lot of single men in those days up there, and we didn't know whether their families had come from Mexico, or Spain, or wherever. They wrapped their bodies up with a sheet and we'd hook up some horses and take them out and dig ditches - with the four horses and mud up to our knees - and bury them by throwing dirt over them and letting them rest. Isn't that terrible?

And the smell was so bad that you had to fight with the horses to make them do their work. It was a terrible thing. That's something that I hate to talk about - but it's what we pioneers went through.

My mother was up there and helped whenever she could - and she wasn't feeling too good. The doctor, I remember, said, "Mrs. Nunez, you'd better go and get to bed yourself; you're not too well." And she said, "No, I'm going to stay and do as much as I can." Nothing happened to her; I was amazed as to how she kept on going.

David: It was pretty frightening at the time, because it was worldwide; it wasn't just here.

Julius: I was in my sister's place there and my brother-in-law's. His name was Bob, and was a fine fellow and an engineer. I think he was thirty-five years old. I'll never forget: I was sitting with my sister and right away, he turned green and yellow in the face and went into the bedroom, and dropped dead. It would kill people that fast! That was a terrible thing.

Story continued on page 3.

The Story Behind that Name

Agua Buena Spring

We don't know when this spring was first called *Good Water Spring*, but given its Spanish name the title probably reflects early utilization by Mexican settlers during the early mining days of the region. However, given its location and production, the Spanish name could have an even earlier origin.

The spring is located east of Santa Rita Peak. According to Jack James, a local pioneer descendent, there was once a 2-story cedar house near this spring that was built during the late 1800s. The house was known locally as the French Cabin because two French men and a woman lived there. The French cabin burn down during the 1942 forest fire. During the 1950s, Slim Houser, a prospector from the bay area, built a small cabin here, but it burned down in a later fire.

Although nature has reclaimed its human story, Agua Buena Spring still flows with good water.

— References —

Interview with Jack James, a local pioneer descendant.

Area reconnaissance by author.



Agua Buena Spring -

The spring is located just below the rock outcropping in the center.

Pioneers and People

A. T. D. Button

Adherble Thomas Dean Button became an established and respected figure in San Benito county. He served on the board of the local school district and as postmaster of the local Post Office. Button was twice elected Justice of the Peace in 1875 and 1877 and he was instrumental in naming Erie Township, San Benito County, after his Pennsylvania birthplace. Mr. Button was born in England February 15, 1832 and married Lucelia Honer Murphy August 7, 1853 in Erie, Pennsylvania. In 1859, at the age of 27, Adherble left his wife family, journeyed to California and settled in Redwood City where he remained until his family joined him in 1862. He then moved to Placer County and purchased a partial interest in the Golden Gate Mining Co. claim. He moved to Hernandez Valley, San Benito County in 1870 and purchased the Augustine Hernández ranch.

In 1871, Button obtained power of attorney to manage the Picacho Mine and fired Michael Cody. He continued to manage the mine for ten years until it was purchased by McGarrahan. Although he had no formal training in either engineering or law, Button assumed both titles by default of his work with the Picacho Mine.

Adherble and Lucelia had seven children: Ival M., Ira I., Carol A., Stafford Grant, Nelly, Edward J., and May Lucelia.

Adherble Button died July 13, 1904 and his wife, Lucelia, died August 21, 1912.

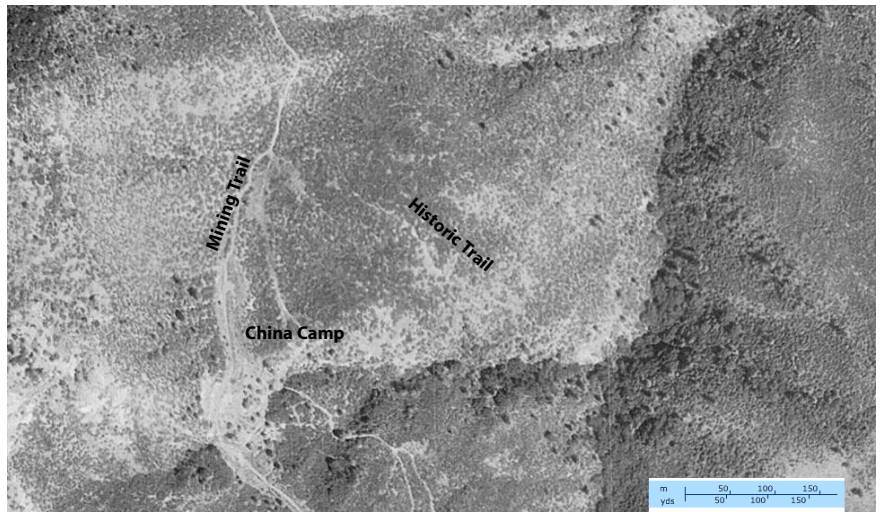
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A Message - continued from page 1.

Clouds and fog moved in during the night, but cleared soon after sunrise. After a simple breakfast and a cup of coffee, I hiked an old mining trail a short distance to China Camp. Thick chemise covers the flat today, but the aged duff of fallen pines suggest the terrace once supported a pleasant pine forest. Only a few historic artifacts mark the area, more are probably hidden in the thick chaparral and I am tempted to search for them. However, my plan to conduct a preliminary reconnaissance doesn't include time for bushwhacking and I still have several hours of scheduled work ahead of me. My goal today is to visit the terrace, identify historic debris and then photograph the terrace from the tops of the three surrounding peaks ... which involves hiking several miles. I'll use the photographs at home to verify data and plan my next trip ... the results of which will be reported in a future newsletter.



Aerial Photograph of China Camp Terrace.

Image courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey via Microsoft Corporation TerraServer

Idria Influenza Epidemic - continued from page 1.

This is something funny, but I think that what saved my life and my brother's life was what a friend of ours told us. He said that if you wanted to keep from getting the influenza and dying, you should get a bottle of whiskey, get drunk, and go to bed. (laughter) Well, we did that - it was hard to do, but we did it. We got a quart of whiskey, a cot, and a little table, and we just got drunk. I think that's what saved us!

David: That's an interesting remedy for the flu; I hadn't heard that one before. I'll remember it next time!

Julius: I think that's what kept us from dying. We'd wake up and the room would be turning around, and we'd load up with more whiskey and start to sweat - that's what saved us.

— References —

Nuñez, Julius. "Recollections: New Idria and Hollister, 1902-1923." Transcription of a tape recording by David B. Kier for the Oral History Project of the San Benito County Historical Society, 13 March 1979.



Julius Nuñez

Photograph courtesy Peter Frusetta Collection.

Three Rocks Report Annual Audit

Three Rocks Report is a newsletter published by Three Rocks Research. As of December 31, 2005 the newsletter had 33 print subscribers and 49 email subscribers. Total contributions supporting the newsletter were \$320.00 and the total cost of production and mailing (excluding donated labor) was \$480.00, producing a net operating loss of \$160.00 subsidized from Three Rocks Research general fund.

The Three Rocks Report

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