

News from

The Monterey County Historical Society

July 2003



Museum Construction Set to Resume

The next phase of construction at the Monterey County Historical Society's Boronda History Center is about to begin.

This phase will start with landscaping, road and parking lot installation, and construction of a perimeter fence.

The next part of this construction phase will take place inside the museum building, and will include portions of the front wing and the mezzanine. This will allow us to begin storing our collections in the museum building, and to reopen the Lagunita School to visitors.



Hilltown Ferry Crossing

By Robert B. Johnston

The State of California, and Monterey County especially, is rich in material for the study of local history. Hilltown ferry crossing from earliest California beginnings to the present has been associated in some degree with most of the historic developments of the State through the many individuals, great and not so great, famous and infamous, who made use of this link in the local transportation system.

Hilltown Ferry Crossing

What and where is Hilltown? At the point where the Monterey Highway (the extension of Salinas' South Main Street) curves to the right for a few hundred yards before crossing the steel bridge, a general store and motel stand on the site of a very small community that has existed for slightly over a hundred years, serving the traveler crossing the Salinas River on his way to Monterey. Hilltown itself is located near the southeast corner of Rancho Nacional. Directly across the river is the northeast corner of Rancho del Toro. This rancho extended in a southwesterly direction up the little valley of El Toro Creek, which flows between low hills at the foot of a mountain of the same name. Hilltown almost marks a corner common to four ranchos established along the Salinas under Spain and Mexico -- Buena Vista and Llano de Buena Vista joining El Toro and Nacional along their eastern boundaries. No doubt even before the first white man came to the valley, the Indian hunter crossed at this natural fording place. It was been known successively as El Paso del Quinto, Estrada Crossing (after one of the rancheros), Salinas-Monterey Crossing, Hilltown (after one of the first American farmers to locate here), and Riverside. The earliest Spanish explorers followed the Salinas River along the bank opposite Hilltown by a route which hugs the feet of the Santa Lucia Mountains from Soledad to its junction with the crossing at Hilltown. This is the River Road of today.

Gaspar de Portolá, first governor of California, and a courageous but half-starved company of forty to fifty soldiers and devoted Franciscan padres, looking more like "skeletons" than courageous explorers, rode their mules or walked down the Salinas Valley in late September, 1769. These first white men to view the future "Salad Bowl of the Nation" were not in the mood for singing hymns of praise. They sought the elusive but marvelous

port of Monterey. Fathers Crespi and Gomez hoped the river would be named El Rio Eleazerio after the saint; but the soldiers, dreaming of the luxury they might never taste again, suggested El Rio de Chocolate. A compromise led to naming this erratic waterway El Rio de Santa Delfina. Other late comers called it El Rio de Monterey and El Rio de San Buenaventura before Salinas (after the salt flats near the mouth) became the common and lasting choice.

On the evening of September 30, 1769, Portolá and his men camped along the river between Hilltown and Blanco. Father Serra and others undoubtedly used the crossing at Hilltown before 1774, for Serra seems to have passed by here on two historic treks by mule train. In mid-July, 1771, the enthusiastic Franciscan proceeded up the Salinas Valley to the Valley of the Oaks near Jolon to found Mission San Antonio de Padua. A little more than a year later, Serra set out up the Salinas Valley by mule and on foot to reach Mexico City and report to the authorities. En route, he stopped one day, September 1, 1772, to found the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa. Governor Pedro Fages had followed this path only a few months before to the Canada de los Osos for "the most celebrated bear hunt in the history of California." Fages and Father Crespi were the first to open the route of the present-day highways from Monterey to San Juan Bautista and on to the San Francisco Bay by way of the site of Salinas, and they may have been the first to use a river crossing at or near Hilltown.

Captain Juan de Anza, Founder of San Francisco, in 1774 and again in 1776 when arriving on his great marches from Mexico to Monterey, followed the trail of Portolá down the Salinas Valley but turned from the river at Buena Vista before reaching Hilltown crossing. On Sunday, March 10, 1776, Anza's colonists rode their last day into Monterey from near Somavia along the west bank of the Salinas in "almost continuous rain" after eighty-eight days of actual traveling, covering almost fourteen-hundred miles. Governor Rivera and grey-robed Father Palou, and later Captain Anza with his leather-jackets, crossed the Salinas plain, passing the sites of Salinas and Natividad on their way from Monterey to search for suitable locations for the mission and the presidio of San Francisco. From this time forth, thousands would cross the Salinas by one or another ford near Hilltown on foot, on horseback, in ox-cart, in wagon and carriage, threading their way through the willow-grown dry bed, splashing through the yellow water, or riding the flatbottom, cable-guided ferry boat, though at times all crossings were blocked by high water.

Between 1776 and 1797 (from the year of the Dec-

Note

This essay was written in approximately 1958 and donated to the Society with Robert B. Johnston's research collection.



laration of Independence to the end of George Washington's second term as President of the United States), the six most important missions north and east of Carmel were established, including San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Soledad, San José del Guadalupe, and San Juan Bautista. These settlements, destined to grow into prosperous communities and cities, had determined for the most part the transportation patterns across the Salinas plain from Monterey before 1800. Fermin Francisco de Lasuen was second only to Junípero Serra as presidents of the missions of New California. They each founded nine missions out of twenty-one. The year 1797 was an especially busy one for Lasuen as four stations were dedicated from San José, San Juan to San Miguel and San Fernando. The Salinas crossing must have seen many Grey Robes coming and going to and from headquarters at Carmel.

Meanwhile, Monterey was visited three times between 1792 and 1794 by George Vancouver, leader of an English expedition sent to negotiate the Nootka dispute. November 19, 1794, Vancouver joined "in a party to the valley through which the Monterey River [Salinas] flows." He turned aside at Corral de Tierra to view "the most extraordinary mountain I have ever beheld." Proceeding on by way of the Salinas [Hilltown] crossing, he observed the "extensive valley...composed of luxuriant soil" to be "a natural pasture, but the long...dry weather had robbed it of its verdure."

Rancho Nacional from its southeast corner at Hilltown extended from the river onto the plain covering most of the present site of Salinas. This was originally one of the Ranchos del Rey where the San Carlos Mission at Carmel and the presidio of Monterey pastured "herds of cattle, bands of horses, and flocks of sheep." Extending upstream along the river, the Buena Vista

Rancho was held by José Maria Soberanes and Joaquin Castro under an "occupancy permit" issued by Governor Borica in 1795. The rancheros and vaqueros crossed and recrossed the Salinas, driving their stock before them. San Carlos Mission "supplied the cattle for the new San Juan Bautista Mission." Violence and dissension sometimes interrupted the peaceful scenes near Hilltown. Grizzly bears destroyed many cattle in the Chamisal Ranch and Toro Creek area across the river from Rancho Nacional; and in 1795, Indians wiped out four ranchos along the Salinas though Buena Vista escaped.

In late November, 1818, Monterey was evacuated by Governor Sola, and all the civilians and troops, except "one Molina—too drunk to flee" from the marauding freebooters led by Hypolite Bouchard, the Frenchman sailing under the rebel flag of Buenos Aires. The refugees, including all four-legged animals, no doubt crossed the river near Hilltown, some turning up the valley to Soledad, while the troops, stock, and a few civilians went to the headquarters of the Rancho del Rey (Nacional). By early 1819, most of the inhabitants were back rebuilding the capital.

With the inception of the Mexican regime in 1822, the pastoral or "golden age" of the ranchos began. Numerous grants of land were made in the Salinas Valley during the twenty-five years before the American conquest. Trade in hides and tallow and the sea otter and beaver attracted many foreigners to seek fortunes and adventure in the land of the easy-going Californians. Trips from the Salinas to Monterey by way of Hilltown or nearby crossings increased as ox-carts creaked under the loads of smelly hides (the "California banknotes") offered in exchange for merchandise aboard the Yankee ships in the Port of Monterey. The ladies of the rancheros frequently made the journey to inspect the

goods the "Boston men" had for trade.

In the middle 1830s, events took place on the Alisal and Natividad ranchos which stimulated the course of communications between Monterey and the Salinas Valley. Isaac Graham, Tennessee rifleman, fur trapper, and soldier of fortune, leased a tract of land in 1836 on the Natividad Rancho near the site of the village of the same name. Graham and two partners erected a distillery for manufacturing *aquardiente* (distilled wine). This community was later to become for several years the important stop in the Salinas Valley for travelers between San Juan Bautista, Monterey, and other points north and south. During the 1830s Natividad attracted outlaw trappers and deserters from ships at Monterey who insulted the rancheros and their wives while stealing that which was not nailed down.

A short horseback ride southeast of Natividad, Graham's neighbor, Guillermo (William) Eduardo Petty Hartnell, the former English hide and tallow trader, had established on the banks of Alisal Creek his Seminario de San Jose. This school for boys had opened first in Monterey. Hartnell tutored several young men destined to become famous leaders of California before his school was started. One of his former pupils, Juan Bautista Alvarado, led a successful revolt to become governor and appointed another, Guadalupe Mariano Vallejo, as comandante general.

After confirmation as a Roman Catholic and marriage to Maria Teresa del la Guerra y Noriega, daughter of a leading California family of Santa Barbara, Hartnell became a naturalized citizen of Mexico in 1830. This last step made him eligible to own land in California. Arrangements were made early in 1831 with the Soberanes family for a share in Rancho del Alisal. Hartnell enlisted the assistance of his cousin by marriage, Jose Antonio

Carrillo, in driving 500 head of cattle from Monterey across the Salinas to pasture on the Alisal. By the spring of 1832, Don Guillermo began building his ranch house on his portion of the Alisal, El Patrocinio de San Jose, as confirmed in an outright grant from Governor Figueroa in mid-1834.

Hartnell's school, California's first institution of learning above the elementary level, moved to "this Paraiso delicioso" in the late spring of 1835 for a brief year's existence. Hartnell had been compelled to close down the school earlier in the summer of 1836 because of lack of attendance. The demands of his new position meant leaving Dona Teresa and the children at the ranch while he made numerous trips over the Salinas to Monterey where they joined him occasionally. Never were peaceful and quiet days to return to El Patrocinio de San Jose.

Monterey, Natividad, and Hartnell's Alisal were tied together by events stemming from a flight from the capital across the Salinas to San Juan Bautista by the ambitious custom's house clerk, Juan Bautista Alvarado, in the latter part of 1836. Alvarado stopped overnight at the Natividad cabin of Isaac Graham where he plotted with the Tennessean to overthrow the Mexican government and give land to foreigners. Next day, Graham soon rallied fifty land-hungry characters as tough and rough as himself. These frontiersmen, as they forded the river near Hilltown, were little aware that less than ten years would elapse before Fremont and his men passed this same way as part of the band of conquering Americans. With Graham's help, Alvarado engaged in two days of comic revolution California style; and then the former, becoming impatient, gave the governor in power just two hours to surrender. Receiving no white flag, Graham fired a ball from a small brass piece through the governor's roof. Alvarado became the new governor in a few hours time. Don Guillermo received an appointment to three posts combined in one—administrator of customs, commissary treasurer, and tax collector in the capital of "the free and sovereign state of California" as declared by Alvarado.

The Californians were soon regretting the acceptance of aid from the Americans at Natividad when they awoke to a tardy



realization that the West coast was a prize on which the British, French, and Russians, as well as the aggressive Gringos, looked with envy. Moved by fear, patriotic pride, and the misdeed of the lawless trappers and deserters at Natividad, Alvarado ordered his uncle, General Vallejo, to round up all suspicious foreigners living unlawfully in California in 1840. About the same numbers of Americans and British subjects were taken to



Monterey to be shipped to Tepic, Mexico, for trial. Thus began the Graham Affair. This time the Tennessean and his friends rode through the yellow waters of the Salinas in disgrace. A little more than a half-dozen years and Walter Colton, Alcalde of Monterey, asked Hartnell to serve on the first jury trial in California, the case of Isaac Graham vs. Charles Roussillon. The Americans had returned to rule California.

Before the Americans came to stay in the Salinas Valley, the Hartnells were hosts to many important visitors. Don Davido Esteban Spence, the Scot meat packer and ranchero; Don Alfredo Robinson, the Yankee trader and author; Sir James Douglas, chief factor of the Hudson Bay Company; and the insolent French diplomat, well-known writer and world traveler, Count Eugene Dufлот de Mofras, were among those who rode through the Valley of Toro Creek and over the Salinas between Monterey and the house on the Ranch of the Sycamore (Alisal).

In early March, 1846, a series of messages followed each other in rapid succession past Hilltown, changing rapidly in tone from friendship to bitter hatred, as the Castros ordered Captain John C. Fremont and his "scientific expedition" of sixty-two well-armed men to leave the Salinas Valley. Fremont's men had abused their welcome while their leader was entertained at the Hartnell ranch. Fremont claimed the valley "lay outside the more occupied parts of the country" which he was by agreement to avoid. After he had spent three days in a fortified camp atop Gabilan Peak, Fremont retreated into Oregon but returned to the Salinas and Monterey to participate in still more controversy.

The conquest of California, begun with the flag raising at Monterey July 7, 1846, was not an especially bloody affair; but Hilltown was a military objective in

the one skirmish or battle at Natividad November 15-16, 1846. Thomas O. Larkin, former American Consul at Monterey, left Monterey on horseback November 15, 1846, to join his family in San Francisco. After crossing the Salinas, he stopped overnight at the house of Don Joaquin Gomez near Natividad. Fremont at Monterey had ordered a party of about sixty men under Captain Burroughs to drive a band of several hundred horses from Sutter's Fort to Monterey where the California Battalion was organizing. The American were in San Juan Bautista on November 15. Awakened in the middle of the night by native Californian forces, Larkin was returned to a camp on the Salinas River (Monterey River by Larkin). Here the Californians endeavored to force Larkin to assist them in laying an ambush for the Americans at the river. Failing in this, they proceeded toward San Juan on the 16th to intercept the Americans on the plain before they could reach the crossing at Hilltown with the horses. Although Captain Burroughs and Foster and two other Americans were killed with a like number wounded, the Californians, in spite of fewer casualties, could only delay the Americans who returned to San Juan. Fremont joined them there in a few days, and the California Battalion soon received marching orders to set out down the coast to Los Angeles.

Edwin Bryant, a member of the Battalion and later Alcalde of San Francisco, returned by horseback in company with Captain Hastings from Los Angeles to San Francisco in January and February, 1847. After riding and camping for several days in heavy rains, he "reached the Monterey road just at daylight" on February 9 intending to visit Monterey, "but the Salinas being unfordable, and there being no ferry, it is not possible." They rode across the plain to the rancho of Don Joaquin Gomez, and eating a slim breakfast of quesadilla



(cheese), reached San Juan Bautista about noon.

Walter Colton, Alcalde of Monterey (1846-1849), in *Three Years in California* gives a colorful description of two crossings at Hilltown during 1848. On being invited to visit a ranchero of the Salinas Valley in August, he tells of riding past beautiful lakes, many waterfowl, deer, and a grizzly bear, until “we were now on the bank of the Salinas, through which we dashed, allowing our horses a taste of its yellow waters, then up the opposite bank, and away over the broad plain, which stretches in vernal beauty beyond.”

Returning from a visit to the gold mines by wagon in November, 1848, Colton writes, “It was midday when we rumbled from the hills of San Juan upon the plain of Salinas and near sunset when we reached the river, which rolls its yellow wave fifteen miles from Monterey.”

The party camped there but were “roused in [the] night by screams from the river; an ox-cart, with three women in it, had tumbled down the opposite bank. The cattle seemed as much frightened as their passengers, and fared better.”

Colton and his friends plunged into the cold stream which “lowered the thermometer of our enthusiasm.” Finding it too difficult to lift the women from the ox-cart because of their great size and weight, they drove the team out.

Less than a year later, several leading men of the new state-to-be rode through the Salinas en route to California’s first constitutional convention in Colton’s school house and public hall at Monterey.

An agricultural revolution was soon to transform the Salinas Valley. By the 1860s, it was being “cut up into small ranches and farms; and thriving settlements and extensive fields of grain are now to be seen where formerly ranged wild bands of cattle, mustang, and innumerable herds of antelope.” In reporting on the fertility of the valley, the *Pacific Railroad Reports* stated that:

At Mr. Hill’s farm near the town of Salinas, sixteen miles east of Monterey, sixty bushels of wheat have been raised off the acre and occasionally eighty-five bushels. Barley, one-hundred

bushels running up to one-hundred and forty bushels, and vegetables in proportion.

Mr. J. B. Hill farmed near the crossing and served as postmaster for the community which soon bore his name. This was in the 1850s, the years which marked the arrival of a number of pioneers of the valley who were interested in its agricultural and commercial resources. Among these pioneers were the "canny Scotsman," David Jacks; Jim Bardin, "the Democratic hypocritical secessionist from Mississippi"; Deacon Elias Howe, whose tavern in the mustard fields became the nucleus of Salinas City; George L. Davis, Canadian by birth; the Martins, McDougalls, and many others.

According to Paul Parker,

Before the ferry was installed, it [Hilltown] was the Salinas-Monterey ford crossing. I have heard Dan Martin and Harvey Abbott tell when they were young how they assisted in driving cattle and horses to and fro across the river at this spot in order to pack down the quicksand. Also in cutting willow branches to cover the approaches to the water's edge.

The ferry at Hilltown began operating at Hilltown about 1852; and a shack, saloon, and blacksmith shop comprised the settlement. High water often closed the crossing, for "in those early days...in the winter time, even when there was but an ordinary rainfall, it [the Salinas] was a much more torrential stream than it is now..."

Hilltown's ferryboat was designed and powered according to basic principles used at many other locations in early California. A wire cable or stout rope of hawser-like size was stretched across the stream either from one tree or stump to another or between "dead men," heavy posts set firmly in the ground. The ferry itself was of the scow or large type, flat-bottomed, twenty-five to forty feet long by at least ten feet wide. Passengers and vehicles were protected by side railings. On each bank of the stream, landing platforms were usually constructed.

At either end, on the upstream side of the ferryboat, were ropes running in blocks or pulleys, which slanted upward and were attached to two enclosed sheaves or wheels, which ran freely on the [overhead] cable-like trolley rollers."

The bow of the ferry was always pointed upstream at an angle between twenty-five and thirty-five degrees by taking in or slackening the rope at either end. The current then acted as a beam or side wind in sailing to propel the ferry across the river.

Regular stagecoach service came to the Salinas Valley in the summer of 1851 with the extension of the Hall and Crandall Line from San Jose to Monterey, though the Pacific Coast Stage Company may have been in oper-

ation through the Salinas Valley as early as 1850. According to J. M. Guinn, State Senator Selim E. Woodward rode the stage from Monterey to a session of the legislature at San Jose in twelve hours during April, 1851; "...it was considered very fast time." The stage to Monterey crossed the Salinas River by ferry at Hilltown. Between the river and Salinas, the road "followed the present course, but...was then little more than a wagon trail with turnout places at intervals for traffic to pass." If the stage succeeded in making the river crossing, there was another challenge in the so-called "slough of despond" which during wet weather threatened to bog it down on Main Street in Salinas between San Luis and John Streets.

But in 1851, there was no Salinas City. For another twenty or twenty-five years, Natividad was the stage stop between San Juan Bautista and Monterey as well as for lines extending on up the Salinas Valley toward Missions San Miguel and San Luis Obispo. The story of Hilltown and its ferryboats is a part of a larger one on community development, road building, and stagecoaching. Both ferryboating and stagecoaching were but passing through very important phases; for in a short thirty-five to forty years, they were gone from the scene but not from the memory of men in the Salinas Valley. During the fifties, a new, aggressive spirit of business enterprise came to the valley, pushing and elbowing across the sloughs and mustard fields.

Between 1851 and 1855 through a series of mergers, at least 5/6 of the stage lines of California came under the management of the California Stage Company with headquarters at Sacramento. In January, 1855, this company extended its service south of San Francisco through the purchase of the Dillon, Hedge and Company. The latter company, about two years before, had bought out Hall and Crandall. Direct connections were now well established between Los Angeles and San Francisco via San Luis Obispo, San Juan Bautista, and San Jose.

Wells Fargo and Company, who contracted with the California Stage Company to carry its express, reported offices in Monterey and Santa Barbara as the only ones between San Jose and Los Angeles in 1855; but five years later, as of December 31, 1860, there were offices at Gilroy, Santa Cruz, Watsonville, San Juan Bautista, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara. And yet, there was no Salinas City.

Flint, Bixby and Company of San Juan Bautista and Hollister also ran the Coast Line Stage Lines through the Salinas Valley and on to Los Angeles. Included in this system was the former William E. Lovett Stage Line between San Francisco and Paso Robles.

The Pacific Express Company, founded on the ruins of Adams and Company, advertised in the California Farmer during March, 1855, "Expresses" leaving "the office at the Northwest corner of Washington and Montgomery streets daily for Sacramento and the Northern

Mines, Stockton and the Southern Mines, San Jose, San Juan and Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Pedro, and the Southern Coast generally...”

Roads and bridges or ferries were necessary for efficient operation of stagecoaches. However, neither state legislature nor Congress appropriated money for road building in California until 1855. After that, limited funds were available from these and private sources. In 1859, the state authorized the counties to retain a large portion of the poll tax for road building. “By 1860,” Winther says, “practically all of the towns in the state were knitted together by a network of passable roads.”

It is not surprising that a fever of town building became epidemic between 1855 and 1875 in the lower Salinas Valley. Here the farmers and merchants looked across the Salinas past Hilltown to Monterey, the “Old Spanish Capital,” for there was the traditional seaport and the seat for the county offices. Northward they looked to the commerce of the great bay of San Francisco and first to San Jose and then to Sacramento for the State Capital. Sacramento was especially important since it was a principal gateway to the gold mines. To the northeast lay the rich Pajaro Valley and nearby, the Port of St. Paul or Moss Landing, which one day might provide a very convenient route for valley products to reach the mines. Some dreamed of the day when railroads would replace the stagecoach.

If Deacon Elias Howe hadn’t erected his tavern at the crossroads in 1856 and offered drinks as prizes to fast-driving stagecoach drivers, surely a town would have soon been born here. Hilltown supported the lower end of one of several routes across the plain which intersected rather naturally, if inconveniently, in the vicinity of the Alisal Slough.

Some of the cities in embryo eager to be born, all with ambitious sponsors, were Pajaro, Blanco, Santa Rita, Castroville, Springtown (“Confederate Corners” from 1860), Chualar, Natividad, Salinas City (laid out in 1868 by Riker, Jackson, and Sherwood), and Hilltown (suggested as a terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad at one time).

Monterey County’s Assessor, W. Lovett, reported in 1858 that there were three ferries in the county (San Benito was then a part of Monterey County). One crossed the Pajaro River on the route from San Juan Bautista to Gilroy, established at a cost of \$1,200. The other two were over the Salinas at “Paul’s and Hill’s crossing,” each costing \$1,000. The cost figures seem to indicate that improvements had been made. Lovett further explained how the recent dry season made the Salinas ferries almost useless. The great flood of 1861-62 no doubt rendered them useless also. Jim Bardin made plans for operating a ferry boat at a new crossing following this flood, which is reputed to have carried the water level to the top of the wainscoting in Deacon Howe’s tavern and brought stagecoach travel across the plain to a halt.

Three years of drought in 1863, ‘64, and ‘65 greatly reduced the sheep and cattle of Monterey County; but by 1867, there was need for a ferry once more at Hilltown. George L. Davis was licensed “to keep and construct a ferryboat across the Salinas River at Hilltown...for a period of five years, beginning December 1, 1867.” He was required to post \$250 as bond and pay \$3 per month for his license. The rates were set at: footman, .50; buggy, \$1.50; man and horse, \$1; two horses and wagon, \$2; four horses and wagon, \$2.50; sheep @ .02; and cattle @ .10.

Mr. Davis came to California from Canada in 1852. He located at Hilltown in 1858 where he was postmaster for several years before Salinas City was laid out. Two years before beginning operation of the ferry, he formed a partnership with his brother to engage in dairy farming on the Chamisal Rancho directly across the Salinas River from Rancho Nacional and a mile or two west of Hilltown along the river, the common boundary of the two ranchos. About 1875, Davis bought 500 acres of Rancho Nacional and went into business for himself.

Hiram Corey seems to have succeeded Davis as proprietor of the Hilltown ferry under similar terms though the rates were reduced; for example, horse and buggy was .25; 2 horses and buggy, .37 1/2; footman, .12 1/2. Corey was also a Canadian and came to California in 1852, the same year that Davis arrived. In 1872, he leased over 7,000 acres on the Buena Vista Rancho to pasture his dairy cattle. After leasing for about twelve years, he became the owner in 1889, the year the Hilltown bridge replaced the ferry. It is doubtful that either Davis or Corey personally operated the ferry, although they held the license, since they were both very active and successful farmers and businessmen.

Hilltown was the scene of many incidents which seem strange and humorous as viewed from the age of the automobile and airplane. William H. Brewer, scientist from Yale University, with a survey party, camped May 18, 1861, in the valley just beyond Hilltown. As the stage stopped to water the horses, Brewer approached the driver to ask that a letter be carried to the next post office. In shirt sleeves, buckskin pants, bowie knife and colt revolver in belt, and bronzed from sun and exposure, he was recognized by a lawyer friend from New York aboard the stage who claimed the Yale scientist “fulfilled his beau ideal” of a stagecoach bandit. During July, 1861, Brewer rode muleback from San Juan to Monterey with Professor Whitney. Though they arose at dawn and left by five-thirty, it was noon when they reached Salinas for food and rest. After passing Hilltown, they left the fog-cooled, though dusty plain and encountered “hotter air but not so much dust.”

About ten years later, a writer for the Overland Monthly, Miss Josephine Clifford, rode the Coast Line Stage and told of being shown the spot where robbers had attacked another driver at the Salinas Crossing. Per-



haps by this time (1871), Charley Parkhurst, “toughest of the West’s stage drivers,” had already retired to his farm near Watsonville where he died December 28, 1879. Undoubtedly, Charley, who was never suspected of being a woman until “his” death, had crossed at Hilltown since he knew all of the runs of the California Stage Company “like the palm of his hand.”

One of the pioneers of the Salinas Valley tells of mishap which might have proved fatal to a mother who took the stage across the Salinas by way of the ferry to visit her daughter. The stage ran off the ferryboat in mid-stream and upset; but the alert lady grasped hold of projections in the interior of the stage to hold herself out of the water until rescued.

Robert Louis Stevenson in his essay on Monterey, written during his short stage there, explains how David Jacks was almost murdered on the stage run to Salinas near Hilltown:

His life has been repeatedly in danger...the stage was stopped and examined three evenings in succession by disguised horsemen thirsting for his blood. A certain house on the Salinas road, they say, he always passes in his buggy at full speed, for the squatter sent him warning long ago.

High water in the Salinas River sometimes caused the overhead cable to break leading to diverse results. Heavy rains in March, 1876, broke the cable, and it was necessary to carry passengers and the mail across the “Hill’s ferry” in small boats. This was not efficient

enough for one imaginative businessman in Monterey who leased the narrow gauge Salinas-Monterey Railroad. Operating a hand car on each side of the river assisted by a small boat, he transported fresh fish and other fast freight to Salinas. This was considered “infinitely superior to struggling through the mud on the stage road.” It may have been at this time that “one Starke,” pilot of the ferryboat and an avowed atheist, experienced a sudden conversion, praying with great enthusiasm as he took an unscheduled trip down the Salinas.

Progress came to Salinas in the 1870s. Salinas City was incorporated in 1874, shortly after becoming twice blessed by the transfer of the county seat from Monterey and becoming the terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Elias Howe, the founder, registered to vote in the election of 1882 giving his age as sixty and occupation as expressman.

Plans for steel bridges across the Salinas River were begun in 1886, and the voters approved a \$150,000 bond issue for construction at Hilltown, King City, Bradley and Soledad in 1888. A contract for the bridges was awarded to the California Bridge Company allotting \$35,085 for the Hilltown crossing, which was officially accepted as completed February 9, 1889. The Salinas Board of Trade published a brochure on Monterey County, Resources, History, Biography the following year to advertise the advantages and opportunities of doing business in this modernized community. “The Hilltown bridge is already completed.” The Hilltown ferry is no more.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 9, 2003 — Boronda Family Reunion

September 21, 2003 — Society's 70th Anniversary Celebration, Membership Meeting & BBQ

Announcements and information will be forthcoming on all events.

NEW ASSISTANT

The Society has just hired Evelyn Escolano to assist our Executive Director part time in the office. Evelyn previously had worked for Bruce Church and then the John Pryor Fertilizer Company in their offices. She is a long time resident of Salinas whose roots are deep. Drop by and meet her we are sure you will be delighted with her warm smile and welcome.

MEMORIALS

DonorIn Memory Of
Beverly Silliman & FamilyNeville Silliman
Nick G. CominosLaurine Jenkinson
Nick G. CominosAline "Scotty" Husser
Carl ReichMarie Cosseboom
Marie CominosDian Kriling
Nick & Theodore N. CominosStanley C. Seedman
Carl ReichRobert Hamilton
Jean RudolphIona Lang
Comgro IncorporatedRay Maschmeyer
Comgro IncorporatedLouis V. Lanini
Nick G. CominosStella Kokoris
Nick G. CominosCathy Petroutsas
Carl ReichElmer Machado
Matsuye ShingaiIsaac Shingai
Carl ReichJames Hughes
Carl ReichEugene Frassetto
Joyce McBrideJo Fanning

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| David Wynne | Catherine H. Arp |
| John Sanchez | Marvin J. Henderson |
| George Peabody | Dr. Harold E. Raugh, Jr. |
| Donna J. Starr | Stephen McShane |

IN HONOR OF

Mrs. Ed (Joan) Lowry . .Dr. Marjorie Belknap

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER WELCOMED

The editors of the *Newsletter* are always seeking photographs, historical recipes, articles, and other items for these pages. Please contact us if you have any appropriate materials.

CALVARY CEMETERY

The Monterey County Historical Society is presently sitting on a committee to assist in the restoration and preservation of the Calvary Cemetery. The committee was organized by John Futini, Esq. and his wife Melba of Napa California, whose family was one of the early pioneers of the Salinas Valley. Members of the committee consist of: Clancy D'Angelo, Director of Cemeteries, Diocese of Monterey; Mr. and Mrs. Roy Frontani of Salinas; Dick and Mary Lou Zechentmayer of King City, and Wayne Gularte of Gonzales.

The Calvary Cemetery was established in 1870, the cemetery land originally belonged to George Graves, a prosperous farmer who settled in the valley in 1855. Graves set aside land for private burial of some of his family and then realizing the need for a community cemetery deed a 2-acre site for this purpose to the Catholic Church. The cemetery is located on Castroville Highway just off of Market Street.

Ornate headstones and markers, small wooded crosses, and mausoleums bear the names of many well known pioneers and some of their descendants. Names such as Baroness Von Ende, Zabala, Fontes, Vosti, Geil, Lanini, Pedroni, McFadden, Boronda, Vierra, Sgeiza, Soberanes, Martella, Breschini, and Futuni...

Over the years the cemetery has become a nesting place for gophers digging and raising the grounds into mounds of dirt, and headstones have become defaced or have tilted or fallen over. The committee will be working to together to seek means of restoration along with re-

searching the possibility that the cemetery be placed on the National Register of Historic Places and state historical registries.

The Society has a listing of those who are buried in the cemetery. Anita Mason has spent hours putting the names and pertinent genealogical information obtained from the list into a data base. The list will eventually be placed on the Diocese of Monterey web site, and hopefully the Society's. Anyone interested in our goals or wish to assist please call the Society at 831/757-8085.

PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT

The National Park Service has requested the assistance of the Society in compiling the "human" history of the Chaparral Area of Pinnacles National Monument—homesteaders, tenant farmers, and prospectors. The NPS is planning to build a Visitor Contact Center, maintenance, and employee housing on the west side to compliment the existing facilities on the east side. The Chaparral Area is accessed by Highway 146 just south of Soledad.

The Society has identified Henry Frederick Melville and George Washington Root as the leading prospectors in the area, and are interested in learning more about them or any other

individuals who were involved in mining activities in the area.

Likewise, the Society has identified Harrison Lyons, Andrea Raggio, Robert Eggebrecht, Electa Lyons Pura, George Washington Root, Allen Blaine; and Forest Rangers Daniel King, Herman Hermanson, and Zotic Marcott as having received federal patents for land within the Pinnacles. The Society is interested in learning more about any of the above individuals, as well as any other individuals who lived or worked in the area.

The Society is also interested in any personal stories of life in that area during the 1870s-1930s. Anyone who can help please call the Society at 831/757-8085.

WEBSITE

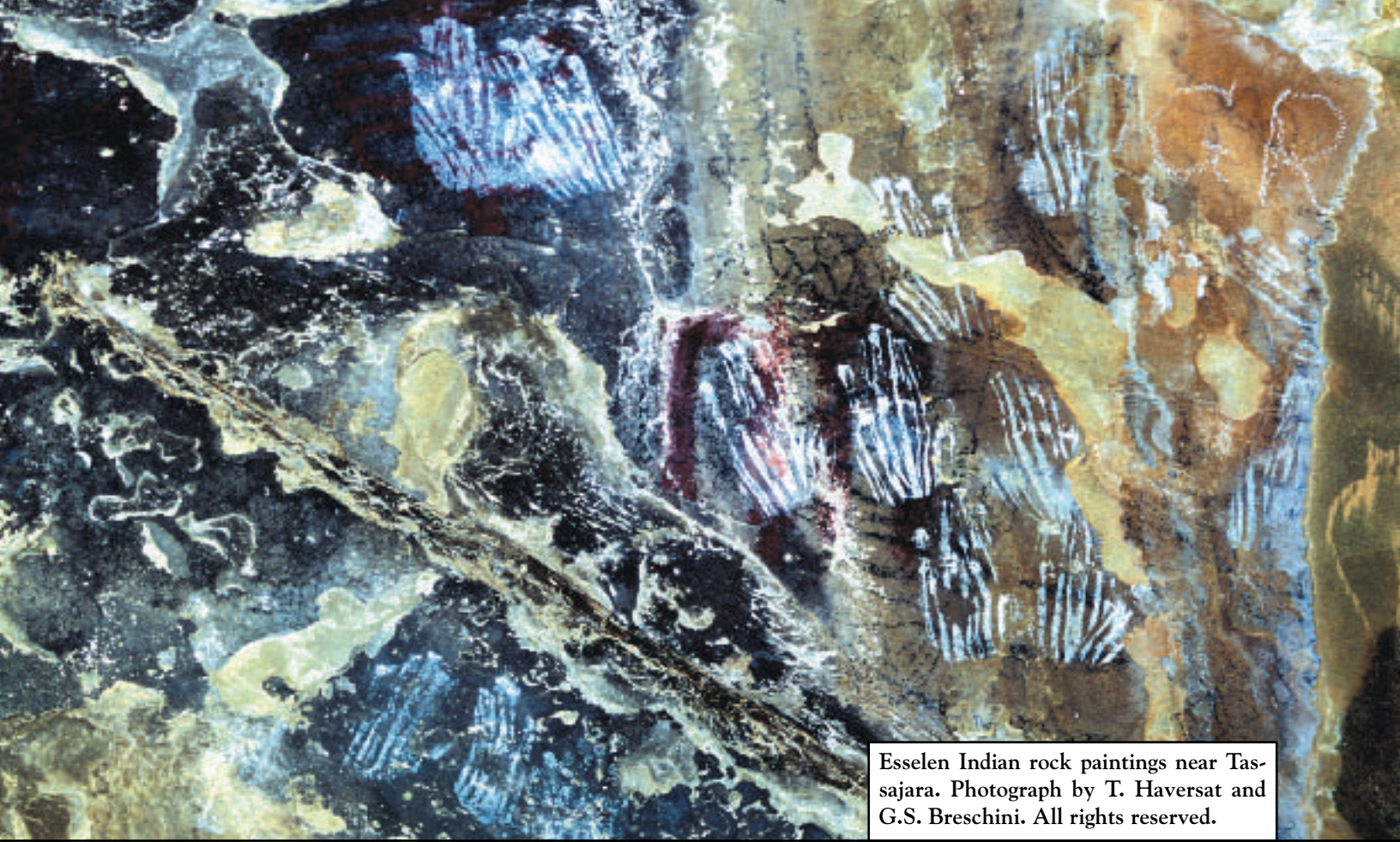
If you haven't visited the Society's Website lately, please do so. Gary Breschini continues to upgrade, add new material and thus far since February 25, 1997 we have had over 208,000 visitors. The site has generated researchers, new members and many donations of artifacts for our archival vault.

The website address is:

<http://www.dedot.com/mchs>

Monterey Public School #1. Monterey Soda Works across street.





Esselen Indian rock paintings near Tassajara. Photograph by T. Haversat and G.S. Breschini. All rights reserved.

Contents copyright 2003 by the Monterey County Historical Society.

MONTEREY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 3576
SALINAS, CA 93912
831/757-8085

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SALINAS, CA
PERMIT No. 240

