

**LITTLE KNOWN  
TALES  
IN  
CALIFORNIA  
HISTORY**

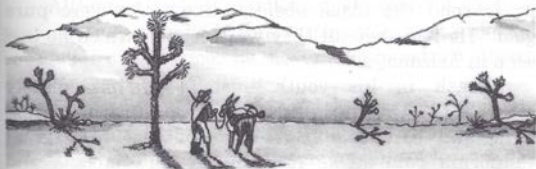
**ALTON PRYOR**

## Acknowledgement

I wish to express especial thanks to Erin Fulkerson for her beautiful and descriptive art work. Erin is a freelance artist living in Roseville, California.

According to legend he cut the muscles in his own leg in aiding an amateur frontier surgeon with the amputation.

Smith felt more comfortable with the Indians than with his white brethren. After his serious leg wound, he returned to the tribe to rest from his frontier surgery. While with the Indians, he whittled a wooden pegleg from an oak sapling. This piece of wood served him well, both as a leg and as a weapon in many later encounters.



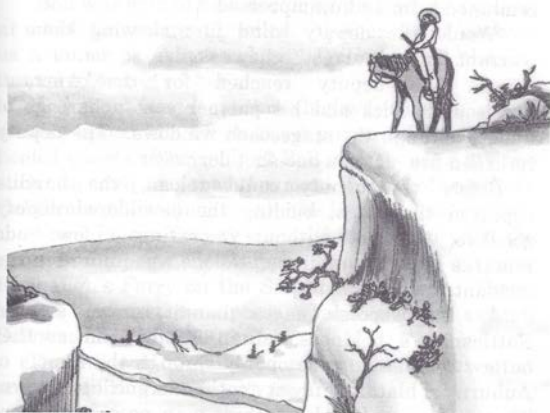
Pegleg could never relocate the three buttes  
he had used as a landmark.

In 1829, the adventurous Pegleg journeyed down the Colorado River, trapping along the way as he continued toward the legendary gold country of the

he left, "You have just been robbed by 'Rattlesnake Dick, the Pirate of the Placers'".

With vengeance in his heart, Dick returned to Auburn country. He would show his accusers, who had ruined his name and reputation, what a bandit he could really be. For the next six years, Rattlesnake Dick plundered the roads from Nevada City to Folsom.

Rattlesnake didn't always get away with his escapades. He was often caught and thrown in the local jail to await trial. Just as often, he proved his slipperiness by escaping his jailers.

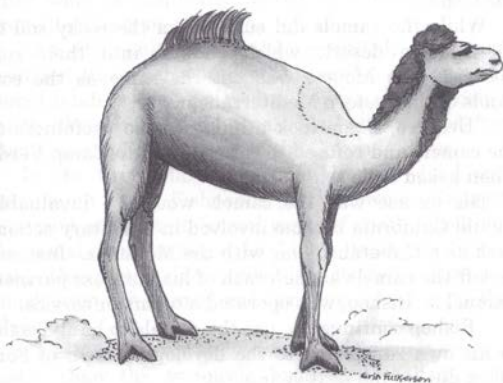


When falsely accused of crimes he didn't commit, Rattlesnake Dick decided he would live up to his outlaw reputation.

John B. Floyd to pick up 25 camels from Camp Verde and take them to his command post in California, he exploded.

"What," he asked, "was an Army man going to do with a herd of camels?"

While Beale fumed, both orally and in written letters to Secretary Floyd, the secretary stood firm. Beale had no choice but to travel back to California with 25 camels in tow, along their Greek camel tenders.



The army found camels could carry heavy loads, but they were too slow to carry the U.S. mail.

The first contingent of camels made its initial experimental trip from Arizona in only fifteen days, with the camels swimming the Colorado River on their way.



Horsemen use a fifty-yard rawhide lariat to measure and map Don Jose Verdugo's property. The measuring method has withstood court challenges.

This wasn't the only trouble for Don Jose. On the other side of the rancho, Don Jose found workers from Mission San Fernando harvesting crops on land that he owned.

Not knowing how to deal with the problem, Don Jose complained to the governor. "The missions are using my land, They are stealing my crops and altering my water."

The governor notified the alcalde in the pueblo of Los Angeles: "Go out to Rancho San Rafael and help Don Jose Maria Verdugo. His land is between two

12,000 people to 100,000 in 1849 alone. It is ironic that this increase in population was brought on by the finding of the very gold that had eluded the early Spanish explorers.

*Few Spanish place names  
are ever pronounced  
correctly.*

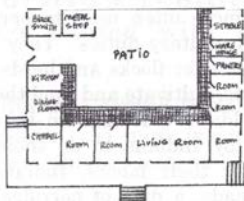


Gaspar de Portola's expedition from San Diego to Monterey is considered the richest source of California place-names.

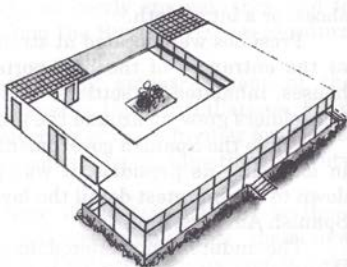
These explorers applied names to California's lakes, mountains, and locales. It was the trail Portola blazed through the wilderness stretching from San Diego Bay to San Francisco Bay that became the well-known "El Camino Real" (the Royal Road or the King's Highway).

Hundreds of California's existing place and street names are derivations from actual ranchos. Consider, for instance, Rodeo Drive, the penultimate residence of "los ricos" in Beverly Hills.

land and pasture for livestock maintain the pueblo's populace. A great requirement was the proper soil for the building of adobe structures.



*A typical floor  
plan for a  
Spanish Hacienda*



While the designers of the pueblos were exact, the towns in Alta California were much alike. A plaza was center of town, for that's where the people met, shopped, and held their celebrations. Around the plaza were grouped the church, the town hall, and other important buildings.

To induce colonists to come to the new province, Spanish authorities provided many incentives. Each

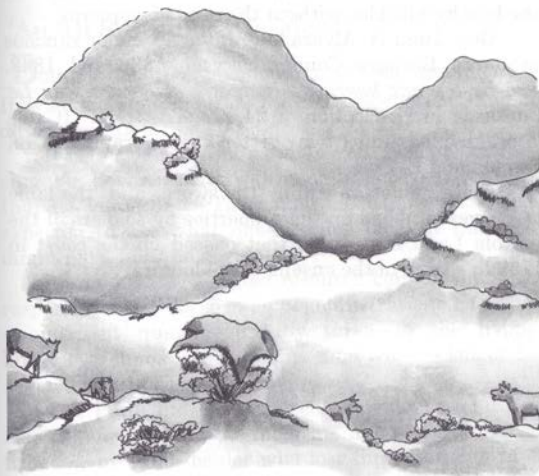


Erwin Shepard, had wonderful food, good beds, and pleasant hospitality.



Charlie Parkharst was a respected stage driver who hid his secret for years.

Capt. Jose Francisco de Ortega, who acquired the grant in 1834.



Spanish vaqueros placed the fresh hide of a slaughtered steer over a bush. The smell of the bloody hide drew wild cattle out of the brush like a magnet.

James J. Hollister, Sr., a son of Col. Hollister, supervised Rancho Refugio, running it in a style not unlike the "Old West". He was known for employing the "bloody hide" method of drawing stray critters from the chaparral-choked canyons on the ranch.



Sea otters attracted foreign hunters to San Nicholas Island in search of the valuable pelts. I

Indian tribe itself had dwindled to a puny population of inhabitants.

Because of the ominous storm, the *Peor es Nada*, sailed to San Pedro, distributing its load of Indians among the various missions, while the woman who had jumped overboard to search for her child was all but forgotten.

When Nidever stepped ashore, he spotted a faint, yet fresh, footprint in the hard sand. He found other prints moving away from the sea toward steep cliffs that sheltered a cove.

Before he could trace the footprints up the cliff, a furious blast of a northwest wind sent the captain's schooner reeling. It was heeled over, tugging at its anchor, forcing the captain and crew to board and sail away from the island before the ship was wrecked against the rocks.

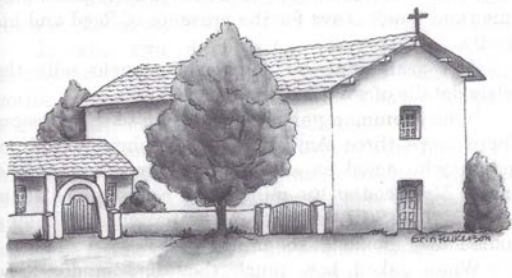
The area was marsh and swamp land. A provision in the law required the buyer of such swamp land to survey the property in a boat. Henry Miller surveyed his property during the dry season. He sat comfortably in boat carried in a horse-drawn wagon.



Cowboys read their mail from their saddles.

Miller established a commissary and trading center near the buttonwillow tree. For a long time, cattle kept nibbling at the tree so Miller built a fence around it.

Some accounts say that Miller fenced the tree to provide shade for chickens which he kept inside the fence. Miller, historians claim, needed chickens to



*Mission San Miguel is mainly a tourist stop today, although services are held there.*

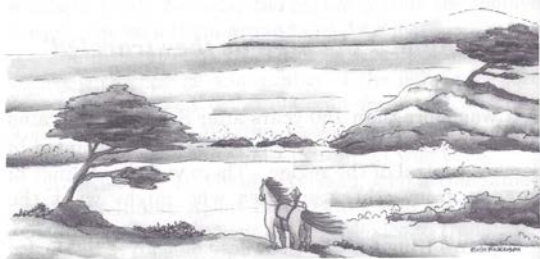
All our acquaintances are getting rich, while we are muddling along here."

The pair did moderately well at the placers, but by no means to the extent that Reed had hoped. Unfortunately, the foolish young Reed was given to braggadocio, implying to those around him that they had indeed struck it rich.

The older and more sensible Don Petronelo did not like him talking so loose. "Here we are," Rios would say, "among all kinds of wild fellows, and it is not wise to make all this talk of the money we are supposed to have. We are in danger of losing the little we have made."

Tiring of the mines, Reed returned to his sheep and cattle at San Miguel, while Don Petronelo settled

handful of scurvy-ridden men, surrounded by none too friendly savages.



*Gaspar de Portola thought he had miscalculated the location of Monterey Bay*

When the Spaniards resumed their march northward under Portola's leadership, Father Serra stayed at San Diego to consecrate the first of the California missions and to minister to the sick who were unable to take the long trail to Monterey.

Spain's King Charles III, a vigorous and able statesman, ordered Don Gaspar de Portola to lead an expedition to develop an overland trail from San Diego in search of Vizcaino's Monterey. He was accompanied by Father Francisco Gomez and Father Juan Crespi, who kept a descriptive journal of the trip.

As Portola and his companions marched across the fertile plains and valleys near the coast, they made careful notes of the most desirable locations for