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Grant W. Heil, Editor

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SOME PIONEER LETTERS

By Thomas R. Bard

SOME EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

By Mary Beatrice Bard

SOME CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

By Beryl B. Bard

Notice

Fern Middough recognized the value of the Bard material when she salvaged it from the discards at her Ojai Valley School. Yetive Hendricks discovered that Beryl Bard's account was entered in the 5th Annual Ventura County Eisteddfod. Mark Huffman located a complete collection of the letters, which included a preface, the missing page and an additional letter.

The photographs were lent by Mrs. Richard Bard and the Ventura County Historical Museum. Maps and Surveys of the Ventura County Engineering Services supplied the three maps. The pictures on the cover were drawn from the wedding photographs of the Bards by Danilo Matteini. Christine D. Bush photographed the Olivas organ.

Miss
Louisa
J. Bard



held on to the pommel of the saddle and thus approached the house.

3.

Rancho de Ojai,
January 3rd, 1866.

My Dear Sister Louisa:

The old year was passed by without the usual gathering together of our family. How it has been spent by each of us should be described to all. So I'll begin with my Christmas and New Year story. I gave our men a promise of two days holiday sometime ago, and they agreed to take Christmas and the day following. I had determined to spend mine in hunting deer in the mountains though I was invited to a dinner with an American family at The Mission, and made my preparations for an early start; but the mail that evening (Saturday) brought my eastern letters, one of which demanded my going to Santa Barbara immediately to attend to some business. So reluctantly I had to give up my mountain tramp and make preparations for going to Santa Barbara. Learning that four of the men intended to go, I made arrangements for the whole party. Nearby our first well lives an old Spaniard, the proprietor of an adjoining ranch, who is poor, but proud of his Castilian blood and very

unfriendly to Americans generally. Old Don Jose de Arnaz and I, however, are quite good friends though we have quarrelled many times over the price of a sheep or his monthly bill for milk, etc. Still we are friends, and I knew he would not hesitate to hire his carriage to me if I wanted it. So though it was late, I called to see the old fellow, hired his coach for 3 days for the moderate sum of 25 dollars. Now that sounds a great deal of money; but you must know that Don Jose particularly reminded me at the time that this was at one time the carriage of the old Mexican Governor [Juan] Alvarado, and used by him and his family long ago, before the conquest by Americans under Fremont of Alta California.

At 4:00 a.m. Sunday morning we started, drawn by two diminutive horses which I rather thought would peg out before we reached our destination; but the Dutchman who drove let them have the whip pretty lively and kept them going at a respectable rate of speed and at 4:00 p.m. we reached Santa Barbara. I wish you had been along, not however with my rude company, but that we were just setting out for that proposed continental tour; I am sure you could not wish for a more exhilarating ride. The road runs along the beach the whole way from San Buena Ventura, following the indentations of the land. To our left lies the broad Pacific and the islands of Santa Cruz and Anacapa, while high hills shut off any extended view landward. At any place a mountain ridge juts out to the water, and can only be passed at low tide. This is rather a dangerous pass for the sea at times piles up rocks, one on top of another, till it is almost impassable. Should the tide come in when an accident occurs to the wagon, horses and vehicles would soon be ground to pieces. Halfway is a station on the seaside, which is famous for clam soup and chowder,⁸ further on The Rincon, a property owned by Mr. [Levi Gould] Stanchfield, where high on a cliff on the sea is the most remarkable phenomenon⁹ I ever saw. I call it a natural oil refinery. It is an adventurous trip, however, and only those foolish fellows whose necks are worthless will be willing to seek the place. In that class of vagabonds you will have to class your brother. Having climbed the mountain and as I approached the cliff, my nostrils were offended with the odor of brimstone and petroleum; and of course, I must find where it originated. Following my nose, I

saw I must descend the cliff about 40 feet where I saw a shelf of loose shale; and by a little care and agility I reached the spot, covered with a cloud of dust and almost choked with gas. The sea breeze soon wafted away the dust and I was repaid well for my adventure. The shale rock is loose and broken, and from small fissures or crevices issue a gas which is so hot I could not bear my hand in it; and as it comes in contact with the atmosphere, is condensed and forms an oil on the shelf of rock. Pure yellow sulphur exists close by intermixed with shale; and out at sea beyond the line of breakers, you might see the water muddied and much disturbed by the escape of gas there which attends the exudation at the bottom of thick petroleum that covers the water on the surface. It made my head giddy to look over the shelf away down the precipice to the beach road below where a wagon looked like a toy cart and the horses like the pigmy horses of Gulliver's descriptions; and as I clambered back, the rolling and sliding debris which followed my steps gave evidence that there was some danger in the enterprise. But in reality there was not the slightest danger to me, not to anyone who can keep a clear head which is soon learned in a mountainous country. Further on our road, we saw a huge whale which had just that day been washed ashore, having escaped from the harpoon of some whalers who are doing a successful business in the channel. This whale was large for its species, but the species is small for a whale and known by the name of California Greys. He was of sufficient size, however, to swallow half a dozen Jonahs. I measured and found him to be 42 feet long, about 8 feet high and if his mouth or jaw was extended would probably leave room for a horse to gallop into. Some enterprising *cholos*¹⁰ and Indians were engaged in dissecting him, or rather taking off the blubber which is the flesh or meat, and measured 5 inches thick.

At one time we saw a number of seals¹¹ which look very like dogs swimming in the surf. I should have liked to have had my rifle with me for I easily could have secured one of their hides. At another place pelicans by hundreds were feeding on a school of fish. It is amusing to see them dive, extending their wings at the height of 30 or 40 feet and cutting wind and water with one sweep, remain buried in the waves till at last they appear with a fish in their long awkward bills while a

dozen hungry fellows would be ready to dispute his right to it. Thousands of gulls, curlew, cranes, ducks and snipe line the beach and fill the air, frightened at our approach, while on the cliffs eagles and owls hoot and scream.

But as we round Rincon we catch a distant view of the town of Santa Barbara; but its irregular, mixed-up streets of adobe houses and tiled roofs are not very attractive, though the old mission church building with its white turrets adds a beauty to the natural surroundings. In the roadstead lie two or three little schooners and a whaling vessel from which issues a stream of smoke from their kettles, finishes the picture. The climate of this town is milder and warmer than at S.B.V. for it is sheltered by a hill and point running out to sea from the SW winds, and by a chain of mountains from the cold northeastern breeze. Some of the Americans living here have very pretty residences surrounded by hedges of pepper trees which are evergreen here and are the most beautiful trees I have ever seen for the purpose.

* * *

As I have many acquaintances here and have been to the place several times, I was not at a loss to know how to spend my time. But of all places in the world, I never saw another town where there is so much gambling and drinking. One half of the people live by gambling for the money earned by the labor of the other half, and are all poor miserable wretches. Having plenty to keep me busy, I of course avoided such places, though gambling and drinking scenes met me wherever I went. Christmas Day I was very busy and did not witness the usual entertainments of bull fighting and horse racing, though I am sick and tired of such things but accepted an invitation to dine with Mr. and Mrs H . . . ,¹² pleasant people for these parts.

There would be many more interesting things to speak of, which, however, I have become so familiar with that they have now lost their charm which a stranger would notice.

But having been confined to my mountain home for a longer time than pleasant, I determined to have a holiday of New Year's Day and have a good time. Sundays in this country are very little respected as God's Day; and I am sorry to say I have unfortunately adopted some of the habits of the people. •

I went to the mission on my mule Sunday morning (by the way I don't think I ever told you of her yet and will do so before I close if I find time).

* * *

Had a very excellent dinner served by a good French cook at the hotel where the proprietor had invited a few of his choice friends. One of the dishes worth mentioning which I affected to know all about was an omelet brought to the table in flames of burning wine. I noticed some of the guests agape and others tried to hide their curiosity to know what it was; the thing kept burning and at last for fear of an explosion or what else, I found fault in a whisper with a friend sitting close by for not blowing it out and serving it. In his attempt to smother the flame, he spilled the liquid on the tablecloth which was soon on fire and a scene ensued which was very laughable. In the evening we had a dance (in which I never participate however) and plenty of very poor music and horrible singing. While the young folks danced, the old men and women and myself gathered around the hearth, smoked our *cigarittos* and drank our wine till early bed time when I bade them all good bye, and started for the ranch on my mule. The night was cool, but bright moonlight and pleasant.

* * *

Last year on this day I was out at sea, rocked by a rough sea; and now this year trying to find comfort, sympathy and home at the hearth of strangers, I wondered where I would be another year. No one without similar experience, can appreciate the utter misery of such thoughts. Jennie, my good mule, must have known I was sad for my reveries were interrupted by her long-drawn sighs. Ever since I first came here, she has been my constant companion in my solitary tramps. She was brought from Santa Fe, and had been in the hands of Indians of whom she is in constant dread. A very timid, or rather nervous creature, she is brave as a lion when danger is to be met; is as sure footed as a deer and nimble as a cat, making her perfectly safe for mountain climbing. She won't allow me to fire a gun or pistol from the saddle, but will remain motionless when I approach any game until I have fired from the ground and glories in carrying a deer behind me. Once on descending a steep hillside, I found it impossible to get to the bottom of



Dr.
Cephas
L. Bard

the valley below without climbing down a steep bank but did not know how to get my mule down. Being thirsty, I hastened down and left her untied on the bank; when to my astonishment, she gave a jump and landed safe and sound by my side though the bank was 20 feet high.

4.

Rancho de Ojai
February 15th, 1866.

My Dear Cephas:

Fourth of July was a great day in The Mission. We had an oration, dinner, and ball. Everybody turned out, Americans, all the dons, *vaqueros* and Indians, with a small sprinkling of Kanakas and Tartars.¹³ The oration was delivered by a recently naturalized Irish nobleman who forgot all about our independence, and talked of nothing else but Fenianism.¹⁴ The dinner was mighty. An oil man presided at the head of the table; another (that's me) had the honor of escorting *Senora Viaja*, the lady of a Mexican general of that name, who didn't understand English at all and laughed at my *Espanol*. In the evening I saw her to the ball; but as I don't dance, I handed

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Founded by Methodists, Pacific was California's first chartered college.
- 2. Coachman.
- 3. The Franciscans are an order of friars: O.F.M.
- 4. George Noble was a nephew of Thomas Scott, and worked for him.
- 5. An offhand Yankee generalization found in many writings.
- 6. Dr. Jonathan Letterman was General Superintendent of the petroleum company which bought San Francisco Rancho.
- 7. James de Barth Shorb.
- 8. Rudolph Scheidman was the last proprietor of Frank & Rudi's Muscell Rock Inn; but there had been another restaurant at Rincon Point in the 1800's, according to Virginia Faria Baptiste.
- 9. Solfatara; see "Santa Barbara's volcanoes" by Richard S. Whitehead in the Summer 1976 *Noticias* (v.22, #2, p. 8-19).
- 10. Bums.
- 11. Probably sea lions.
- 12. Probably Hollister, possibly Hope, hardly Huse.
- 13. Common designations for Hawaiians and Chinese.
- 14. The Fenian Brotherhood was a secret organization of Irish nationalists.
- 15. The War Between the States, 1861-1865.
- 16. The Secessionists of the 1860's were the Confederates.
- 17. The Rt. Rev. William I. Kip, Episcopal Bishop of California.
- 18. Stephen F. Peckham was a chemist and petroleum expert.
- 19. The evening Angelus, a devotion pictured by Rosa Bonheur.
- 20. Don Raymundo Olivas at San Miguel Rancho.
- 21. John T. Stow became Bard's principal field assistant.
- 22. A meaningless name; the Utes were famous for their horse raids.
- 23. Mrs. Olive Mann Isbell acted as housekeeper for Bard for a time. *Beryl Bard*.
- 24. Jarrett T. Richards was a boyhood friend and lawyer.
- 25. Thomas A. Scott was Bard's employer in his oil and land deals.
- 26. Mrs. C. O. Gerberding.
- 27. Mrs Clara or Clickie (Gerberding) Bard, wife of Dr. Cephas Bard.
- 28. Mrs. Elizabeth Parker Bard.
- 29. The body of the carriage is supported on leather straps.
- 30. Casitas.
- 31. Albert Gerberding.
- 32. Beryl Beatrice Bard.
- 33. Albert Bard.
- 34. A four wheeled vehicle, having a spring platform to carry the seat.
- 35. An adjustable light wagon with platform springs between the axel and bed of wagon.
- 36. Filaree; *Erodium macrophyllum* in southern California.