

Box 15.

Ramona, Calif. 92065
January 26, 1968

Mr. Jerry MacMullen
1306 N. Harbor Drive
San Diego, Calif.

Dear Mr. MacMullen:

Your recent article in a Sunday issue of The San Diego Union, concerning the mysterious disappearance of Capt. George Porter, was read with a great deal of interest. It so happens that I heard that story many years ago from two of the captain's closest friends in San Diego, the late Herman C. Cooke and his sister, Miss Jeanette M. Cooke. Mr. Cooke was editor and publisher of a weekly paper, The San Diego News, and Miss Cooke was the captain's partner in the operation of the shell and curio store.

They offered two possible solutions to the mystery. One was that the seaman, Johnson, might have enraged the Seris by unwise approach to their women, thus provoking the murder of the two men. The other, and much more likely one, was that the Mexican Custom Service was somehow mixed up in it. Porter had incurred the enmity of that group by reason of his repeated smuggling activities and had been warned to stop - or else. Porter had traded many times with the Seris and had never had any trouble with them. The finding of the charred plank from the stern of the World was never corroborated - no one else ever saw it. Incidentally, Miss Cooke continued the business of the World Shell & Curio Co. for many years, for a time at the Fifth Street address and later on C Street, between Fourth and Fifth.

One of Capt. Porter's activities, shortly before his disappearance and one never before publicised, was his investigation of a mysterious and apparently very old mining activity a short distance southeast of the upper Old Mission Dam, west of Santee. On a flat were several adobe mounds that had once been huts and nearby was the remnant of slag pile, apparently the residue of a small smelting operation. A short distance south, on the west side of a shallow canyon was a large dump of broken rock. There was no visible hole from which this material could have come, so Porter and one or two companions, out of curiosity, dug into it. And at a depth of about four feet, still in dump material, found a chunk of rock about a foot in diameter that looked like gold ore. Ore it was, for an assay disclosed values of just over \$1,000 per ton.

Theorizing that a hidden gold mine was in the area, Porter and his friends set feverishly to work in an effort to uncover it. They sank shafts and drove drifts and made cuts, to no avail, for no trace of the hidden workings was ever found. The early-day Spanish miners, who undoubtedly were responsible for the original work, knew how to hide their workings. In this case they did leave a clue, for there were two stone monuments, some distance apart, near the slag pile, that could have been intended as pointers to indicate the location. Unfortunately, in their zeal to find more ore, Porter and his companions pulled down the monuments, without realizing their significance.

Hope the above may be of interest. Incidentally, this is not the only place in this County where early-day mining was carried on.

Sincerely,

L. B. Spradley

