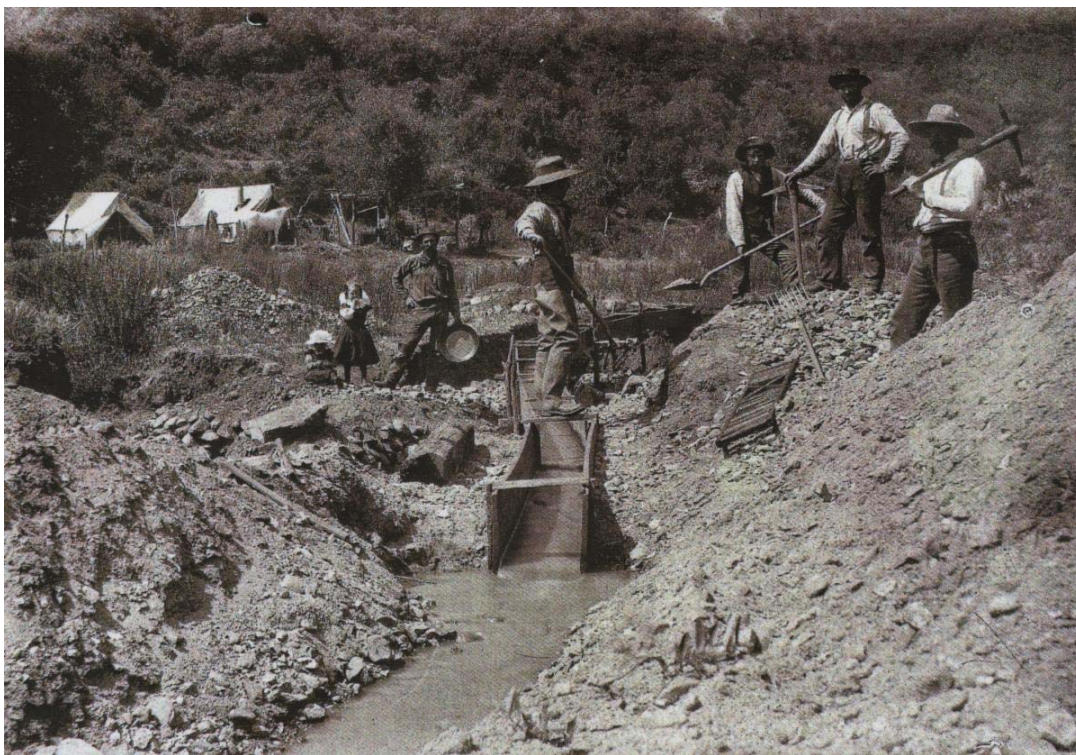




# HISTORY CENTER

## SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

### The SLO County Gold Rush of 1877-78



Miners at work in La Panza



The landscape at La Panza

#### The Story of La Panza

In the San Jose Range of mountains joining the Santa Lucia Range, lie the gold mines of La Panza, the seat of the Gold Rush of San Luis Obispo County in 1877. Oh, didn't you know we had one? It was the only real Coast Range Gold Rush in California except for a smaller one in the Redwood country of Northern California.

\$10,000 of gold was taken out before 1878 according

to the 1917 report of the Mining Bureau. A miner averaged about \$2.50 a day and gold sold for \$20 an ounce. Mason and Still, two pioneers of the La Panza area, claimed that a man could have averaged \$10,000 a year if he had had sufficient water. This was placer mining and they mined only at that time of the year when water ran in the creeks and river. And so the lack of water defeated the Gold Rush at La Panza. Water - always a problem in California, either too much or too little.

There are several conflicting figures on the number of men who sought the elusive gold in that area. The Mining Bureau says 250 men, while another source gives 400.

La Panza is an unusual name and describes a certain happening. It is a Spanish word which means paunch or belly. There were many fierce grizzly bears there in the 70s who killed and mauled the livestock on the rancho. The rancho had one of his herd killed from time to time and the entrails disgorged to entice the grizzlies. If he wished to kill the grizzly, he poisoned the entrails. If he wished to capture the bear, he hid a trap in the entrails - aka the paunch or belly, hence the name.



Dr. Still's Dairy

La Panza is only a ghost town now. There is nothing there of the 1877 era except the beautiful old dairy building of Dr. Thomas C. Still's built of field stone. Incidentally Dr. Still is a brother of the famous Dr. Andrew Taylor Still who founded osteopathy in Kirksville, Missouri in 1878.

One mining report says that there was even a three stamp mill as late as 1908. Then a \$25,000 stamp mill which operated only one month and took out \$700 in gold. In 1913 a 160-foot tunnel was abandoned and the plant was dismantled.



The post office & store at La Panza.  
Meals for 25¢!

Old timers say that Native Americans and Mexicans mined there before the 1877-78 Gold Rush. The gold was found mostly in gravel 12 to 15 feet deep in the streams flowing from the east slope of the San Jose Range to the San Juan River. Some nuggets were found that weighed out at 50¢ and 85¢ each.

Someday, if you wish to try the La Panza Grade, you will find a picturesque and beautiful but lonely country. California bush poppies grow beside the road and, at a certain time of year, the evening

primroses unfold. There are deer and jackrabbits and quail and you are far from the madding crowd.

The grade has two names - from Pozo up to the summit, it is called the Pozo Grade, but down the other side it is known as the La Panza. The mail used to be taken over that lonely road every delivery day but now it goes from Santa Margarita over Highway 58.

*Written in 1978 by then-History Center Executive Director Louisiana Clayton Dart*

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December Carnegie Lecturer Jim Worthen.

## The Carnegie Lecture Series

Our next Carnegie Lecture will take place on Friday, March 6th, with Professor Zachary McKiernan discussing the universality of public history with very local "case studies," memorializing a concentration camp in Chile, recovering the memory of the once segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Hampton, VA, and the Central Coast Queer Archives Project here in San Luis Obispo County.

More details coming soon.





## Dallidet Grand Opening

Mark your calendars! The Dallidet Adobe and Gardens will be reopening on April 5th. Join us for our annual Spring Fling. While we're stuck in the chilly winter, here's a springtime joke to warm you up: we can't guarantee it will be Awesome, but at least it will be Rad-ish.

*Executive Director Thomas Kessler came up with 6 jokes at first, then thought of 4 more. He tried them all on Collections Manager Kaylee Scoggins Herring to see if they would make her laugh, but sadly no pun in ten did.*

### History Center of San Luis Obispo County

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