

# T'epot'aha'l

The People of the Salinan Tribe

Vol. 19 No. 6

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## Found gold and grizzlies in the Jolon hills when he was boy



FRANK MCCORMACK

*Frank Blas McCormack, 87 year-old hunter and miner can spin a yard or two about the days when there were grizzlies in the mountains, gold and quicksilver in the mines.*

*McCormack, a King City resident since 1929 when he sold his ranch to Hearst, now lives with his sons at 416 S.*

*Seventh Street. He was born in the town of Santa Clara on February 3, 1862, as near as he can figure.*

*"The Mission burned down in 1910 and the records were destroyed," said the old-timer.*

*His father, Lewis W. McCormack, was a native of Marion county, Indiana, and settled in Santa Clara where he was a policeman. Lewis McCormack married a Santa Clara Indian girl by the name of Katherine. Frank's brothers were Benito and Lewis and his sister's name was Clara. His father had come to California during the gold rush of '49.*

*The McCormacks moved one mile west of Mission San Antonio in the year 1871. Three years later they moved to a place about one mile east of the town of Jolon. At one time the elder McCormack was a constable at Jolon.*

*"I got all my schooling around Santa Clara," McCormack said. "Never went to the Jolon school," A little known fact was brought out by **the** ex-hunter when he said that "a little town of Chinamen existed near Jolon in 1878." He said there must have been between 100-150 Chinese who had settled near Tidball's and Dutton's store in Jolon. "There's still a place near Jolon called China gulch where they used to mine," he remarked.*

### LEARNS TO SHOOT

*About this time young Frank was learning to shoot a rifle. When he was 12 years old he received an old muzzle-loader and did a great deal of hunting with it. "I was about 19 when I got my first Winchester 73 model 44. In my opinion the 44 was the best gun ever built. I've killed hundreds of deer with one,"*

*An outstanding incident, which McCormack remembers is the time he hunted with Barney Butte and Bill Sellers in 1881. They were hunters from San Jose and used a Winchester 45-60*

*"At that time the hunting season started first of July so we thought we would go into the Burro country. The others turned back, and me and Bill Sellers went over to the coast following the old Curtis trail. We got over the summit late in the evening and the trail was full of grizzly bear tracks when we got to Spruce Creek. It was so dark we had to crawl through the chamisal (an evergreen shrub with small narrow leaves, common in the chaparral of California)."*

*That night they stayed at one of Jim Lowe's line camps and Frank remembered Sellers saying "it was too risky to sleep. And the only way to hunt in that country was with a partner."*

*It was not till later he saw grizzly bears. But that season he hunted with Barney Butte until October and they took a great deal of dried deer meat to San Jose and sold it for 15 cents a pound. They also sold about 185 hides to a San Jose tanner.*

### \$30 A DAY

*As a hunter he could make more money than working in the field, said McCormack. He could contract with harvesting outfits to supply them with one deer a week. This way he could often make as high as \$30 a day.*

"I used to travel all hours of the night to be near Jolon to ship the game out to San Francisco where I had market contacts,"

It was soon after that Frank the hunter became Frank the prospector. The call of gold was raised in March of 1887 when Bill Cruikshanks found the yellow stuff in the Los Burros mining district. The cry brought the adventurers, the miners, the harvest hands, the clerks from all over California. Frank and Lewis McCormack followed that same shout of gold.

Frank says of this: "By the middle of summer there were hundreds of men looking for gold. Near Alder Creek I located a claim. I found gold in bed rock and could see little nuggets."

Then follows a story of doubt and confusion. At one time Frank was offered \$20,000 for his mine. Friends advised him not to sell. "Don't be a fool," they told him, "hold on to it." He did and somehow in the end he only received \$300 for the mine, which he called the King. Harry Lynn who ran the Abbott House in Salinas was the purchaser, said McCormack.

He had better luck when he and brother Lewis found a quicksilver mine southwest of what used to be the Piojo grant. The two brothers got a thousand dollars from old Harry Wetzel, Willie Cruikshank and John Harbolt. "They didn't do anything with it after they bought it," remembered Frank. "Too much bungling."

McCormack remembers the mining town in Los Burros district. At that time there was a hotel owned by Ed Caldwell, a store, four or five saloons. The town was six or seven miles from the ocean.

#### SAW GRIZZLIES

Another outstanding memory Frank McCormack has is the one, which concerns his meeting the two grizzly bears. He and an older man, Jesus Garcia were hunting in the mountains. McCormack, in his teens at the time, saw the two grizzlies in a small canyon. One of them started up the side, stopped, wheeled around and headed for young McCormack, crouched in a bush. "I got up and ran without looking over my shoulder," he revealed. He had his muzzle-loader with him, good for one shot only. "Lots of men say they wouldn't be afraid to meet a grizzly in a canyon. No use denying it, I was scared."

Frank married Mary Govers of Livermoore and they lived on his homestead between Jolon and Pleyto.

She is the mother of three of his children, Benito and daughters Margaret Burch and Katherine Pierce of Morro Bay. Mary died in 1902.

In 1915 Frank McCormack married Mary Bracisco, a native of Santa Cruz. She bore two sons, David and Frank. She died in King City last year 1950.

In 1929 there was rumor of oil in the country where the McCormacks had their 240 acres. That same year they sold to William Randolph Hearst at \$20 an acre and moved into King City.

The old hunter and miner has never believed in doctors. He has maintained vigor and strength through most of his life. "When I lived in Lockwood I would walk to the mines way up in the mountains and arrive there when the sun was only two hours high," he reminisced.

He fell a few years back and went to a chiropractor for treatments. "He came near breaking my neck," said Frank. Still active, huntsman McCormack walks though the streets of King City probably remembering those days of yesterday when he stalked through the brush on the trail of wild game and adventure.

This article was taken from the book Salt of the Earth 1951, published by the Rustler-Herald of King City, California.

Frank McCormack died in 1953 at age 92.



Frank Blas McCormack, Pleyto California 1930  
Frank also made a living hunting game along with mining.

**We are now printing the newsletter in full color. Please submit any information or recipes that you want posted in the newsletter by the 15th of each month to the tribal office or directly to [pgi@sti.net](mailto:pgi@sti.net) .**

# August 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4 Happy Birthday Elder Robert Ashley	5	6	7	8	9 Happy Birthday Elder Alison Aeinhardt	10
11 Happy Birthday Elder Gerald Nash Happy Birthday Elder Richard Martinez	12	13	14 Tribal Business meeting 6:30pm	15	16	17
18	19 Happy Birthday Elder Suzanne Perry	20	21	22	23	24
25 Happy Birthday Elder Suzanne Taylor	26	27	28	29	30	31
Tribal business meeting is the 2nd Wednesday of each month						

**THERE ARE NO DRUGS OR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ALLOWED AT ANY TRIBAL EVENTS.  
 PLEASE USE INFO@SALINANTRIBE.COM TO EMAIL THE OFFICE**

**WE ONLY LIST THE BIRTHDAYS FOR TRIBAL ELDERS.**

**THERE WILL BE NO GENERAL MEETING IN AUGUST**, the next General meeting will be Sat. Sept. 14 at Del Mar Park in Morro Bay. Make sure to bring a chair and food to share. Lunch will be at noon with meeting to follow.

We have a new T-shirt design. It comes in black and gray. Prices are Youth size s-m \$12.00, Adult - sizes s-xl \$15.00 and 1xl-3xl \$20.00. New design can be viewed on the website. www.salinatribe.com

## ← TRIBAL COUNCIL →

**Traditional Co-Leads:**

**Susan Latta** (831) 675.3037  
**Mary Rodgers** (805) 674.1525  
 marytwohawks@gmail.com

**Contemporary Lead:**

**Gary Pierce** (805) 466.6458  
 tink119@tcsn.net

**Elder Council:**

**Yvonne Ayala** (831) 385-6600  
**Don Pierce Sr** (805) 440-8993

**Sharon Thomas**  
 (805) 772.8372  
 sheshopsharon@aol.com

**Yvonne Davis**  
 (805) 391-3619  
 palmtreezz@aol.com

**Pam Flood**  
 (805) 540.1782  
 info@salinatribe.com

**Don Pierce Jr**  
 (805) 468-5039  
 don@armacorlabs.com

**Michael Woody**  
 805-305-0660  
 info@salinatribe.com

**Dayna Sciocchetti**  
 (805) 227.7137  
 dsciocchetti7601@gmail.com

**Robert Piatti**  
 949-677-0549  
 QUIGGYLLYNN@gmail.com

**Bruce Flood**  
 (805) 903-3089 (cell)  
 bruceflood123@gmail.com

**Fredrick Segobia**  
 (831) 385-1490  
 salinan.fs@gmail.com

Salinan Tribe  
7070 Morro Rd.#A  
Atascadero, CA 93422  
Address Service Requested (507.4.2)

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# T'epot'aha'ul The People of the Salinan Tribe

REMEMBER TO PRAY TO kensha:nel (CREATOR) TO keeheak (PROTECT) ALL lu wa' (MEN) AND lets'e (WOMAN) WHO ARE SERVING OUR COUNTRY. AND BRING THEM Ta'ma (HOME) SAFE.

## Vision of the Salinan Tribe

We, as the Salinan Tribe, follow the way of our ancestors as we walk the path of our heritage toward becoming complete individuals. We exercise our rights as a sovereign entity. We continue to reawaken our culture. Each and every tribal member has an equal voice.

We, as the Salinan Tribe, commit to honoring the rights of each and every tribal member to practice our spiritual, individual, or religious beliefs. We remember and honor our ancestors, elders, and children now and for all generations to come.

We as the Salinan Tribe, continue to gather as a tribal family.

