

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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The Monterey History and Art Association

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The Best Calabozo In All California; 1834

The course of civil government held much the same satisfactions, irritations and disappointments in Monterey in 1833 as it does in 1962. At that time Monterey was the capital of California and understandings between the city council, the territorial legislature and the governor were more easily arrived at when everyone met daily on the street or at the nightly fandango. Even with that advantage city projects floated slowly down a stately river of red tape, enlivened by side visits to committees to take on cargoes of advice.

The following account of a modest proposal for a city jail, the ballooning of the idea into a plan for a civic center complete with sumptuous chambers for the territorial delegation and the city council, secretarial offices, a courtroom, anteroom and police station in addition to calabozos for men and women, and, for lack of money, its gradual deflation to a jail plus simple city quarters, is of more than antiquarian interest. How many civic improvements of our own days on the Monterey peninsula have followed this melancholy course!

The fiasco of 1833 has one of the few completely documented accounts to survive intact from the pre-American period. The original papers, consisting of 27 pages of writing and 4 of drawings in brilliant color, belonged to the estate of the famous sculptor and author, Jo Mora. The Monterey History and Art Association, reluctant to see them sold out of this area, contracted to buy them, but the association's sense of responsibility outran its ability to pay and eventually they were purchased by Thomas Norris, a noted collector of Californiana and at the time of his death in 1952 the president of the association. The delicate and valuable relics were then acquired by the Bancroft Library of the University of California and safely lodged in its archives. Library Director Professor George Hammond, in view of the local work done to save the papers, sent down photostatic copies. We have the honor to publish them for the first time.

The interesting points of the documents concern not only the similarity between the civic processes of 1833 and 1962 but they are also corrective of the prevalent idea that democracy entered California with the Americans. The city council, or *ayuntamiento*, was an elected body and responsible for all the duties observed by

the present one while it also acted as judges in civil and criminal cases. Another unusual feature of the papers is a complete list of building materials and a budget for the construction costs of the city hall and jail. Since the Larkin house was begun a year after the foundation was laid for the city work, a comparison with his costs given in the March 1957 *Noticias* provides a clearer picture of the economy of Mexican Monterey.

The whole question started with the annual meeting of the seven territorial legislators in Governor Jose Figueroa's rooms in Monterey on May 1, 1833. The governor acted as chairman and immediately, for it was the muddy season, there arose the perennial subject of providing a decent road to the capital. The governor, however, had a pressing problem of his own, and by May 10th, all had agreed to postpone consideration of the road in favor of building a jail and city offices. Since the *ayuntamiento*, naturally, was expected to do the work, Alcalde Don Marcelino Escobar received this letter from the governor on May 31.

"Since the quarters of the jails of this presidio are very small and scarcely provide comfort to the military prisoners, and since the ordinary civil criminals are also held in them, it is very easy to see that as a consequence of continuous occupancy of quarters of this type that diseases may be propagated and an epidemic take place among the unfortunate delinquents, and since the law requires that a very special care be taken for the healthfulness of these places, it is indispensable that the illustrious City Council take measures so that a jail may be constructed in the best possible manner and the prisoners of the civil jurisdiction secured in it. I mention this to your Honor so that by bringing it before the indicated officials it may have the desired effect.

God and Liberty. Monterey, May 31, 1833"

Jose Maria Maldonado, scribe to the legislature, and by a happy coincidence, apparently also secretary to the city council, notes the progression of the governor's request.

"Monterey, June 1, 1833.

"Today's session: The foregoing was brought to the attention of the illustrious *ayuntamiento* of this capital. A special commission, consisting of Councilmen Moreno and Romero was thereby named and ordered to begin an investigation of this problem."

What pressing civic or private business now claimed the *ayuntamiento's* attention is not recorded, but for seven long months the project moved very slowly. The investigating committee, having verified the conditions described by the governor and made its report, debate started on the plan of the proposed jail. Obviously someone suggested that since an adequate jail would occupy a sizeable area and necessitate numerous workmen and tools, why not take advantage of the occasion to put up a building Monterey might well be proud of, a real capitol with twin council chambers for the territorial delegation and the *ayuntamiento*, a court where the accused might be tried, quarters for the jailer and police and proper exercise yards in the calabozos.

By the year's end Councilman Juan Bautista R. Cooper was appointed a committee of one to investigate the cost of such a building, for he was in charge of Monterey's public works. He seems to have had as a guide a rough sketch of the building desired by the council, but, as he tactfully points out, there is a wide gap between what the *ayuntamiento* wants and what it can afford, and he recommends the construction of an unpretentious jail.

"Most illustrious *ayuntamiento*:

"The committee charged with investigating and estimating the expenses that may arise in the construction of a city hall for this municipality has completed the duty which was presented to it on December 28th of last year, and having carefully checked its figures, is in entire agreement with the plan of construction as concerns location and the fact that it should be built for several purposes. It adds to the aforesaid plan the scale that it has considered necessary to facilitate the making of the first estimates, and as regards the budget of expenses, it has made some corrections and additions of various materials and their costs which the previous one did not have at the time it was presented to the illustrious council. Therefore it shows in the following the quantities that it believes necessary together with the most careful explanation and the cost estimate.

"The brick wall around the 935 feet square, so that it will have the requisite height and a 3 foot thickness, will need 57,480 adobes. Pay for 10 men for 60 days to make adobes at 4 reales a day is \$300; their rations \$150. 4 crowbars at \$4 each; 6 carriers: \$9; 4 shovels at 20 reales each: \$10; 3 picks at 20 reales each: \$7 4 reales; 2 hoes and 2 hachets at 12 reales each: \$6. Chopped straw: \$10. One big cart: \$15; 2 little hand carts: \$24; 4 yoke of oxen: \$48 and 3 adobe forms at \$2 each, \$6.

"112 rafters at 12 reales each: \$168; 112 floor joists, same. 420 feet of 4 inch boards; \$82; 30 timbers for the rafters to rest on: \$45; 3 beams for hoisting at 20 reales: \$7 4 reales. 2000 feet of flooring: \$495. Eight arrobas (25 pounds each) of nails: \$80. 30 beams 33 feet long by 8 inches wide for framing: \$45. 1000 board feet for doors and windows: \$55.

"100 days labor, 2 carpenters, \$2 daily: \$400; 20 laborers for 120 days, a half peso daily: \$1200. Laborers' rations; at 2 reales daily: \$600. 4 bricklayers, 120 days, at one peso daily: \$480. Their rations: \$90. 500 moxillas (?) for the roof beams at six reales: \$375. 20 cartloads of tar for the roof: \$200; 2 iron pots for melting it; \$60; 2 little pots to carry it to the roof: \$4. 90 window panes for the front of the building at 2 reales each: \$22 6 reales. Grand total: \$5,179.2 pesos.

"The result of the preceding sum is noted at \$5,179 pesos and 2 reales. (*1) This weighty sum and its investment in the building should not blind the town council to the fact that considerable time will be spent in its acquisition. The time-lag which may occur ought not to be permitted if an attempt is made to carry out the proposal that the governor made to this body on May 31st of last year, which was the basis for this undertaking.

"The committee, in view of the powerful reasons that the aforesaid chief gave for proposing the building of a jail to hold the civil criminals, is of the opinion that there are equally powerful obligations on this council to act its part by putting the construction of a jail in precedence to the other uses which, although they are of extreme necessity, are not of such immediate and obvious urgency as the former,

"In virtue of this, I beg this council that, considering the time element involved in the approving of this work, it use all possible means to erect

(*1) All figures are in pesos; there were eight reales to the peso. Comparison with today's value in dollars is difficult to figure, the local situation, then as now, strongly affecting purchasing power. An indicator may be found in the pay of skilled American carpenters: two pesos a day, while an iron crowbar was worth four pesos, or two days' such wages, because of the scarcity of iron.

the jail here referred to, thus carrying out the request of the governor.

Juan Bautista R. Cooper Monterey, January 25, 1834"

The council paid scant heed to cautious merchant Cooper and sent the full plans and cost estimate over to the governor on January 27th. He, after a brief inspection, turned them over to his personal secretary, Captain Agustin Vincente Zamorano. (*2) This is explained in a letter from the governor to the Territorial Diputation on May 6, 1834, in which he passes the corrected city plan to the legislature for approval:

"For the information of this body on the opening day of its session.

"I suggested to the city council of this capital that it undertake the construction of council chambers and a jail. Encouraged by my suggestion, it entrusted planning of the project to a committee of its own members whose decision, approved in the meeting of January 25th last, was sent to me on the 27th with a request for my approval.

"Upon reviewing the matter, I thought it necessary to consult on it with my secretary, Captain Agustin Zamorano, whose scientific knowledge was employed to check the said project and who made several interesting observations for the improvement and accomplishment of the work.

"By its very nature the matter is important and urgent. To Your Excellencies belongs the responsibility of proposing the means for its execution and to the national congress its approval, but using the power expressed in the second part of the fourth section of Article 339 of the constitution, Your Excellencies can agree upon the means that you judge proper and put them into immediate effect. I shall gladly give my assent in conformity with the foregoing section and article while the Federal Government of Mexico is informed so that it may approve of the city hall, for to break ground prematurely would be to follow a course prejudicial to the good government and policy which this people so sincerely expect of us.

"With this thought in mind, I have the honor to present to Your Excellencies the papers on the matter, requesting action by the proper office according to the terms that I have explained.

God and Liberty Jose Figueroa Monterey, May 6, 1834."
(*Enclosure from Captain Agustin V. Zamorano to Governor Figueroa follows*).

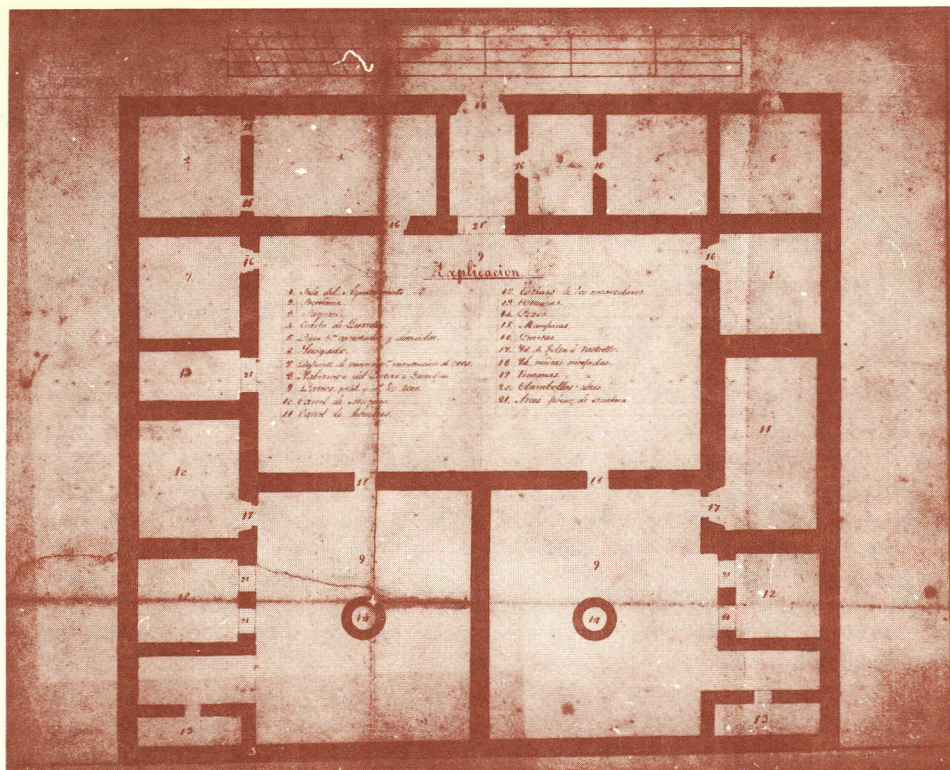
"You have condescended to ask me to review the plan and cost estimate of the building which the *ayuntamiento* of this capital proposes to erect for its city hall and to give you my opinion of them.

"Despite my rudimentary acquaintance with these matters, I shall attempt to check them with the greatest possible exactitude, but the complete lack of certain information disturbs me. I do not find it either in the plan or the budget and it would be necessary for my calculations.

(*2) Zamorano deserves a special note. His name is familiar to all interested in the history of California, for as the printer and publisher of her first book, issued at Monterey late in 1834, he has been commemorated by book-lovers in the title given to the four score basic works on California by diverse authors: **The Zamorano "80"**.

He was a man of many talents: soldier, printer, architect, engineer and politician. Born in Florida, he came to California as an army engineer in 1825, served as secretary to unpopular Governor Victoria, and when the governor was ousted in 1832, he, as commander of the Monterey garrison, seized control of northern California while a rival politico ruled in Los Angeles.

Fortunately, the newly-appointed legitimate Governor Jose Figueroa arrived in January, 1833, and both claimants resigned at once in his favor. Zamorano was picked by the new governor as his secretary. He was evidently a respected person for his children's godparents at Monterey included representatives of the best families as well as the governor himself. He died in San Diego in 1842, aged 42.



Courtesy Bancroft Library, University of California

Explanation of floor plan of City Hall and Calabozo:

1- City Council Chamber; 2- Secretary's office; 3- Entrance hall; 4- Guards' room; 5- Room for those held for judge; 6- Courtroom; 7- Prisoners' food storage room; 8- Room for porter or jailer; 9- Patios and prison yards; 10- Women's cell; 11- Men's cell; 12- Kitchens for convicts; 13- Latrines; 14- Wells; 15- Screens; 16- Doors; 17- Barred doors; 18- Doors with small grating inset; 19- Windows 20- Clerestory windows; 21- Flat wooden arches.

"I notice on the rough plan that a part of the building is indicated for the use of the territorial legislature and its secretary; this part certainly ought to be considered superfluous if we hearken to the desires of the people of the territory and to the recent news that the capital of the territory will be moved to the town of (Nuestra Senora Reina de) Los Angeles, as is to be expected. (*3) Under this consideration, I am of the opinion that the work should be reduced to only the absolutely essential rooms.

"With this motive, it has been necessary for me to depart from the literal sense of Your Excellency's honorable decree dated January 30th, and I am honored to present you with another plan of the work which I judge indispensable for the chambers of the city council which has promoted the undertaking. At the same time, I also add two drawings of the views which the work should present (to which I have not given any orientation

(*3) Bancroft, H. H. **History of California**, Vol. 3, page 292-293. Jose Antonio Carrillo was California's representative in the Mexican Congress. He pulled strings in favor of Los Angeles and a congressional decree was actually passed, May 23, 1834, making it the future capital, but such an outraged howl went up from Monterey that the move was postponed indefinitely. Monterey cited the fact that not only had it been the capital for 70 years, but that its "people were more moral and cultured". Even then!

at all, for this depends on the location and where the building spot is chosen.)

"I also send you the budget calculation for the cost of the work. It seems to me both easier and more economical that the laborers be paid daily, without the expense of providing them with rations, and that the builders be paid for the 62,000 adobe bricks at the rate of \$15 pesos per thousand. Only the necessary tools should be given them on a loan basis or credited to the construction. Thus will be avoided the difficulty which often is present when rations are given and useless waste is commonly noticed.

"Concerning the cost estimate that the illustrious city council presents to Your Excellency, several items are lacking, the most notable being the plaster for the walls, the hardware and locks for windows and doors, and a sum which is commonly set aside for unexpected expenses. Adding the quantities lacking on the (original) budget would bring it to not less than \$5,500 pesos.

"The difference between the two constructions according to the budget I present is \$700 to \$800 pesos, and if the money destined for the work is administered with the economy that one should expect, joined with what may be realized from the sale of some articles which are afterwards unnecessary to the *ayuntamiento*, the building will cost even less and the savings may be invested in the decoration of the council chamber and in furniture for that room as well as for the secretary's office, the courtroom, the guards' room and the prison kitchens.

"The rooms which are shown on the plan that I present are so indispensable and necessary that without them there would be neither the comfort nor the security that a building of this type requires. They have, however, been reduced to the least terms which seem necessary to maintain comfort, decency and health.

"Since the project is reduced to a single council chamber, and so that it may not seem or present too low an appearance, it has been necessary for me to give it, on the walls that run from the ends of the jails to the front part and its corresponding walls, an elevation of 16 feet with 4 feet more in the middle of the figure for formation of the roof-tree, the others being from kitchen to kitchen and the walls 14 feet with 3 feet more above the wall where the peak of the roof is supported.

"The jail or calabozo which is indicated for male criminals is two feet narrower in its interior width than that which is indicated for the females because this narrowness seemed to me more sensible in order to strengthen a place which the convicts would easily bore through (waste?). It did not seem proper to me to carry it beyond that (?) because it would present an irregularity in the work.

"The customary sight of unevenness in doors and windows, which even today is evident in the territory, seems to make the height of those represented in the drawing of the building excessive when compared with their width, but as I am convinced that they form part of the best appearance of an edifice, it is a necessity to place them and elevate them so that they supply adequate light for the rooms, -and all the more reason for this when the chambers are also lofty, -and so by simply giving sufficient bevel to the wall at the windows and doors, there is enough light to brighten the rooms without the need to make the windows very wide.

(to be continued)

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Mrs. Tod Singleton, chairman of the hostess committee for Casa Serrano, has announced a list of hostesses who will be on duty each Wednesday afternoon when the adobe is open to the public. Serving will be: Mrs. Anna Krause, Mrs. Katherine Lindholdt, Miss Hettie Withy, Miss Eleanor Henry, Mrs. Howard D. Dabney, Mrs. Alice G. Pitzner, Miss Edna Browning, Miss Marian Eley, Miss Margaret Bott, Mrs. W. E. Oberholtzer, Mrs. Frank La Cauza, Mrs. Jessie Caffee, Mrs. Wilma Ostrander, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Hull, Miss Joy De Camp. Mrs. Josephine Fussell, a pioneer of Monterey and well known as the daughter of the late Jules Simoneau, who befriended Robert Louis Stevenson while the latter was a resident of Monterey, will act as hostess chairman, during Mrs. Tod Singleton's absence on a tour of the Orient.

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Members are reminded that when an address is changed, a name is spelled wrong, or they are not getting notices or the Noticias, the secretary should be notified as soon as possible. We wish to give service but how can we when we are not informed. Also deaths should be announced and resignations sent to the directors.

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Since the last issue of the Noticias we have received a number of interesting and valuable gifts. Mrs. E. G. Ryder (nee Gertrude Hamilton) has presented a very beautiful old pink platter to the association. The platter is 300 years old. It originally belonged to Gallatin Hamilton of Glasgow, Scotland, and was later given as a wedding present to his son, William. William was born in Glasgow, Scotland, March 7, 1647. He emigrated to America and landed at Cape Cod, Mass. in 1668. He married Mercy Benny of England. Gallatin Hamilton sent them a sea chest of various household articles, including the platter. The last one to own the platter was Gallatin Hamilton, the father of Mrs. Ryder of Pacific Grove.

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Mollie and Yukio Sumida surprised the committee and Mrs. Oberholtzer, the chairman, by announcing, after the plantings were in the Memorial Garden at Casa Serrano, that the trees, the shrubs, the vines, etc., were a gift from the Cypress Nursery. There are many grand and generous people in this world, but how can we thank Mollie and Yukio for their thoughtfulness and generosity?

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Mrs. Geneva Smith left in her will a painting by the late Frank Myers, entitled "Clear Day". The gift is presented to the Casa Serrano in memory of the artist.

Mrs. Raymond Spangler added to the list of gifts with a small round table with a marble top which has been placed in the "Parlor" at Casa Serrano. The table had belonged to Mrs. Spangler's great-aunt, Mrs. Alfred F. Wise of Brooklyn, New York and is very old and charming.

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A gift of \$100.00 has been given by an anonymous donor to be added to the memorial garden fund and used exclusively for a small patio at the south side of the building.

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Mrs. Edith Lee Keith and her daughter have given a child's cradle of American Empire style, about 1805. It was first owned by Edwin S. Keith of Brooklyn, N. Y., great grandfather of Alice Keith and later by her father, Benj. Keith, the husband of Mrs. Alice Keith. With the cradle came a quilt knitted by Mary O'Neal, Aunt of Benj. Keith.

Mrs. Walter Norris and her son, Geil J. Norris of Salinas, cousins of the late Mrs. Maria Bach Thompson of Monterey, have given Mrs. Thompson's doll collection to the Association. Several of the old small Indian dolls, made by Mrs. Thompson's great, great grandmother in the late 1700's are on display at present in the cases at Casa Serrano. Others will be added from time to time.

Mrs. Robert Giet of Carmel has given a handsome figure of St. Francis to the garden at Casa Serrano. Ralph Hitchcock of Salinas made the shrine to hold the figure and Mrs. Oberholtzer, garden chairman, has designed the setting for the gifts which will be placed at the rear of Casa Serrano.

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In our "Book of Memory" should be added the names of Parker Fox, Frank Massie, L. R. McWethy, Dr. Robert J. Oberfohren, C. Du Val Hyde, Mrs. Elvira S. Marshall, Herbert Vaughan Alward, Victor Mossop and E. B. Coyle.

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The Adobe Tour and Party Table Fiesta this year was not only a financial success, with \$2,500 being deposited to the Association's account, but under the direction of Mrs. Robert Stanton, a thing of beauty.

Hundreds of visitors thronged the historic adobes to see the imaginative table settings. At the Casa Serrano there were three, arranged by Mrs. Robert Stanton and Mrs. Peter Kim; Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell had her table at the Casa Soberanes set for a Monterey Bay salmon dinner; at the Casa Abrego the tables were ready for a luncheon, and at Miss Jack's adobe Mrs. Mark Raggett had her table festooned for a children's Hallowe'en party. At the Larkin House, Mrs. Toulmin presided over her traditional delicious tea. At the Casa Amesti a formal "black tie" dinner table was displayed by Mrs. Robert McKeever, while at the Old Whaling Station Mrs. George Leutzing presented a

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COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

gorgeous Thanksgiving setting. Completing the holiday tables was the Christmas feast at the Casa de la Torre prepared by Mrs. Wilma Ostrander and Mrs. Robert McKeever, Jr., and the House of the Four Winds wound up the tour with a "breakfast for two" arrangement by Mrs. Frank Reiser.

Mrs. Lucy Jones was general chairman for the event and wishes to thank all those enthusiastic people who worked so hard and to such good avail to make this tour the most strikingly beautiful yet.

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The Editors regret missing the September deadline, but matters beyond their control have delayed the issue until this month.

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Myron Oliver is sketching a design for the marker commemorating Monterey Bay. This cairn, surmounted by the beautiful and appropriate plaque designed and cast by Margaret Bruton, was the idea of the late Tal Josselyn. Cooperation and concurrence of the State Division of Beaches and Parks is necessary before the monument can be erected near the Customs House.

Claude Faw has completed his task of bringing his illustrated lecture on Monterey up to date, not an easy task when each month sees the Association engaged in a new project for the preservation of the historic features of The Old Pacific Capital. The directors have ordered photographs of the Association's work at the Casa Serrano sent to other California historical societies as an example of what use may be made of the old adobes at relatively little cost.

Members of the National Trust for the Preservation of Historical Buildings will visit the Peninsula this month and view the Casa Amesti, which is one of the buildings that they own. We extend them our heartiest welcome and thanks for their work.

A letter has been received from Senator Fred Farr thanking the Association for its assistance in arranging an adobe tour and tea for the wives of the Commissioners of the National Conference on Uniform State Laws, and enclosing a substantial contribution. We thank the Senator in return; we are happy that we could show the finest old houses in California to these distinguished guests and make their stay here a pleasant one.

In line with our established policy for the use of the Casa Serrano by other historical, artistic or cultural societies, the directors approved in September the request of the Native Daughters of the Golden West and the Monterey County Symphony Guild to hold teas at our clubhouse later in the year.