

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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The Fish Ranch Adobe



View east showing general plan of the Fish Ranch Adobe. Donald Howard and Nicolaus Vertin in photo.

(Donald Howard, Oakland born, graduate of Pacific Grove High School, former student at Monterey Peninsula College, and with a B.S. in Zoology from San Jose State, is welcomed as a new writer for the Noticias. He intends to attain his master's probably in anthropology as his particular interest is the evolution and migration of early man in California. To this end he has on his own free time located several early Indian living sites in this area and given artifacts to both the Monterey Peninsula College and the Museum of Natural History in Pacific Grove. His present home is in Carmel and his wife is a teacher at the River School.

The Fish Ranch adobe site is located on the Styvesant Fish property on a low hillock about seventy-five yards from the south bank of the Carmel River. At the eastern end of the adobe is a square wooden post which is the survey bench mark for the area. Access to the area and the area itself all are on private land.

Prior to excavation there were no surface foundation patterns to indicate any architectural plan. A few quarried Monterey Shale slabs and blocks were noticed lying about in a chaotic fashion. Sherds of porcelain on the surface gave the clue to the area being used for human habitation.

Review of Literature

The writer could find only one written reference to an adobe that may correspond to the Fish Adobe, Hoover and Rensch, (pg. 232). This text describes an adobe located on the northern end of the San Jose y Sur Chiquito land grant near the Rio Carmelo where the Indians saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary and subsequently the site was called "Las Virgenes." The description is ambiguous and no precise location is given. It is believed by the author that an exhaustive investigation of Monterey County records at Salinas may reveal some more concrete data. Mission records were discussed with Mr. Harry Downie in the hope of finding some reference. Since the Carmel Mission church was constructed of stone quarried near the Fish Adobe it was considered logical that the Padres may have made a graphic entry in some of the records. Only the type of stone is mentioned, "cantara y piedras ordinales."

Acknowledgments

The writer wishes to show special gratitude to my friend and co-worker, Mr. Nicolaus Vertin of Carmel. Through his help in excavation the writer was able to completely uncover and salvage all artifacts within the adobe structure, and with his aid in field note keeping, the exact positions of all artifacts are known.

Verbal Historical Accounts

The writer tried to interview all potential informants in the Carmel Valley area for possible pertinent data in connection with the Fish Adobe. Mr. Emelio Odello proved to supply the most information if not the most controversial. Mr. Odello informed the writer that 40 years ago he could remember some adobe wall still standing on the west wall of the adobe, for he used to target practice in this region. Mr. Odello was told by a Mr. John Sutton that the famous matron of Cannery Row, Miss Flora Woods was born here at the Fish Adobe. Also a Mr. Joseph Wolter said that the wayside cantina was established at the adobe site in the 1870's. Mr. Harry Downie came up with a similar story in that he was told by Juan Narado that a cantina was established on the south side of the Rio Carmelo to supply travelers during the flood season.

Mr. "Tex" Rayburn foreman of the Fish Ranch informed the writer that his wife's grandfather, a Mr. Chavote Vasquez, lived in the adobe around 85 years ago but could give no further data about the adobe itself. He could how-

ever remember an adobe wall standing about 3 feet in height on the northeast corner. According to Mr. Rayburn the remaining adobe walls were reduced to rubble by marauding cattle and indiscriminate children.

Mr. Roy Meadows, a long time resident of Carmel Valley, was aware of an adobe structure on the Carmel River and could remember some ruins in his childhood but had no knowledge as to who or what was at the site.

Archaeological Technique

Since the architectural limits of the adobe were not known prior to excavation it was decided not to grid the structure into even meter units. Instead the width of the adobe was determined by preliminary work and then the internal width of the floor was divided into two units. The U.S.G.S. survey marker was used for the datum point and the longitudinal axis of the adobe was divided into five foot intervals with stakes driven into the ground to mark the surface point. As one faced towards the west the unit on the right was designated with a capital R, and the unit on the left with a capital L. Mr. Nick Vertin worked on the R units and the writer on the L units. Where possible, unit leveling was accomplished by troweling. The positions of all artifacts were recorded from the datum point in the horizontal and vertical planes. Units were completely dug at a time and the artifacts placed in bags.

Building Material

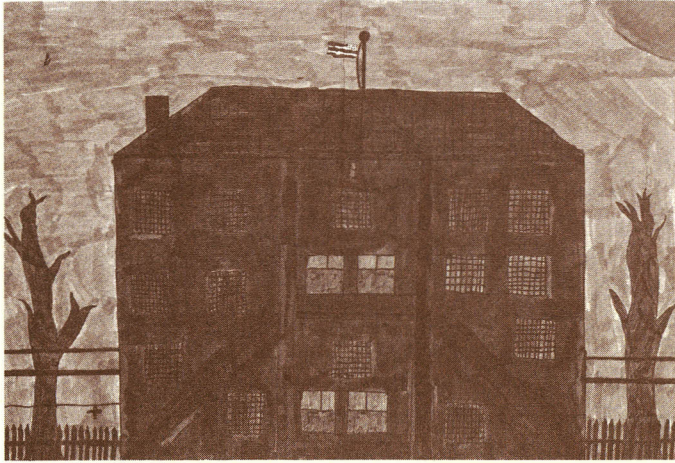
The foundation is entirely composed of Miocene Monterey shale slabs and blocks well placed with considerable skill and thought. A mud mortar was used to secure the stones. The foundation at the east end was very substantially constructed with large slabs placed vertically into the soil on the inside and outside and then the interstice filled with smaller fill stones. It is not known how high the original foundation was from the soil to the first adobe bricks. However the foundation at the east end was 32 inches thick. Much foundation rubble was noticed lying about so the foundation extended maybe 2 feet above the surface of the ground. No complete adobe bricks were seen however adobe "melt" was noticed covering foundation stones.

The adobe constituents appear to have been derived from the banks of the Carmel River. Muscovite mica sands and some form of clay binding material were used. No straw or vegetable agents were seen in situ.

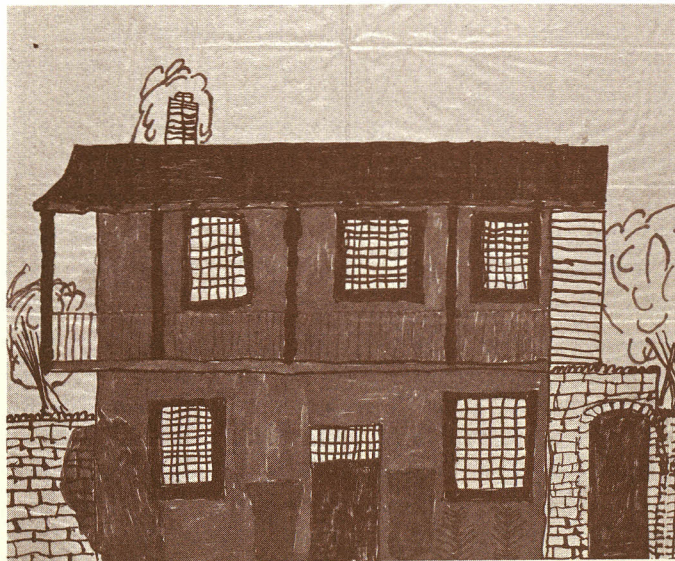
Redwood floor boards were found at an average depth of 22 inches in the small eastern room. Most of the planks in the Units R5-10 and L5-10 were oriented in the east-west bearing, however in Units L5-10 two planks were in a north-south orientation. The floor board idea is postulated because of the pattern; roof material or supporting beams would tend to fall from ruin in a chaotic pattern. In Units L and R15 redwood laths were found parallel but in no pattern, however nails of the square type were found imbedded as in the floor planking. Between Units L20-25 a trapezoid frame was encountered and it may be theorized that a window frame may have collapsed here.

(Continued on Page 14)

CHILDREN'S ADOBE ART AND ESSAY CONTEST



Patrick Hallett—4th Grade Monte Vista



Darcy Dowling—Salinas

The Monterey History and Art Association sponsored two contests for children in connection with the recent adobe tour.

"My Favorite Adobe" contest brought forth many fine essays from the local schools. David Lange, fourth grade at Gen. George Patton School wrote on the Royal Presidio Chapel, winning first prize. The Daughters of the American revolution co-sponsored this contest and awarded the gold, silver, and bronze medals. Judges were Mrs. Duncan Murray, Mrs. Nelson Howell (Elizabeth Clemens), Mrs. Fenton Grigsby, and Nelo Drizari.

The art contest had two sections—color, and black and white. Patrick Hallett fourth grade at Monte Vista school won the first color prize with his charming picture of Colton Hall. Susan Long, Lighthouse school, won first in black and white. Judges for this contest were Donald Teague, N.A. artist, Mrs. Frank La Cauza, and James J. Kramer, architect.

An entire page of the daily paper, Monterey Peninsula Herald was devoted to results of the contests with a color print, black and white prints, and twelve of the essays printed in full. The editor wrote their only regret was "there just wasn't enough space to print all of the essays and drawings."

We salute all who helped with the contests and hope this first year has set a precedent for future contests. Children who study and express their love for the historical background of their home area are also contributing to the history of that area.

ESSAY

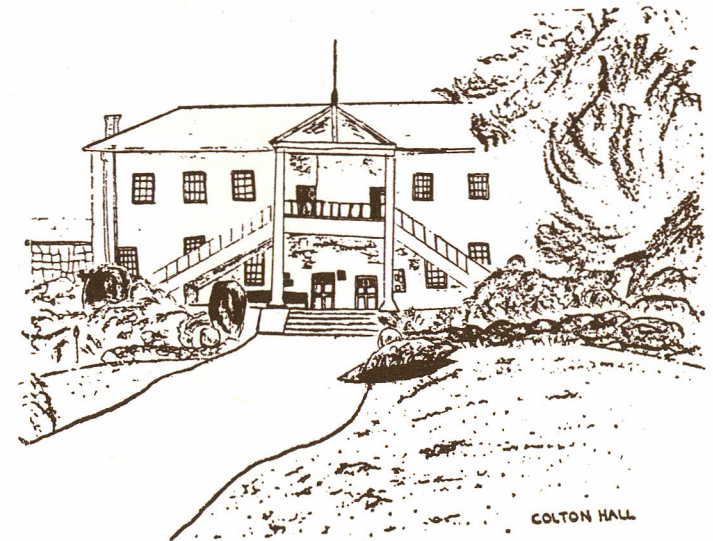
By David Lange

*Fourth grade, Gen. George Patton School
(First prize winner)*

I like the Royal Presidio Chapel the best because it looks very inspiring and it's very beautifully made. I like the design on the outside of the walls. I like the big bell tower. I like the bell tower because it's the thing that brings people to church.



John Riner—4th Grade Del Rey Woods



Kenneth Hubler—5th Grade Del Monte School

Five decided posts were uncovered around the periphery of the adobe. The three largest were located on the north side with two on the east side. It is difficult to explain the functions of these redwood posts for they are not evenly dispersed and are next to the foundation. The writer has two theories in this regard. Either the posts supported a veranda or awning or that the posts were used during the building process to support a frame-which held the foundation blocks in place much as a mold would support cement in modern construction. Two large redwood blocks, 6x1 and 10x4 inches were found at the base of the foundation below the O stake. It is believed by the writer that these represent part of the entrance stairs.

On the foundation surface between Units R25-30 a burned shake was seen. This would tend to indicate that at one point in the adobe's history a fire occurred which may have devastated the entire structure so that a rebuilding was necessary. This is corroborated by the fact that two distinct periods have been recognized at the adobe, Mission and the post-secularization era.

The very common square cut nails are characteristic of post 1830 and are rectangular in cross-section. The hand wrought nails of the Mission Period are rare but present and show that two periods in construction may have taken place.

Architectural Plan

The design is extremely simple and strictly utilitarian in plan. Two rooms are in evidence with the small eastern room measuring 8 feet 2 inches wide by 12 feet 7 inches long (inside measurements). The large western room is about 17 feet 4 inches in length and 12 feet 7 inches in width. No trace of any external buildings have been found but that doesn't preclude the idea that there aren't any. As was typical of many early adobes in Monterey the baking ovens were external to the living area and the outhouse. The use of the two rooms is still conjectural for lack of concrete archaeological evidence. The discovery of an old food fork with a wooden handle and the burner plate of an old wood stove in the small room could indicate that this was a kitchen area after the Mexican Period. Artifacts found in the large room shed little light on its use. A door knob plate in Unit L5, and a Mission Period hinge with fluted ends was found in Unit L10. This would point towards a door being between L5 and L10. Another door lock piece was found 1 foot 8 inches north of the 25 foot stake at 1 foot in depth. It is interesting to note that the Mission Period hinge was found at the same depth (11 inches). The Unit R25 hinge may represent a door on the western extremity, which from archaeological evidence would have been in place the same time as the L5-10 door pieces. So from slim evidence based upon artifacts the writer has proposed an adobe with one southern exposure window, 2 doors at east and west, and a door to join the two rooms in the vicinity of the 10 foot stake. The large room floor doesn't seem to have ever been entirely planked for the type of planking in the small room was not found. Apparently compacted dirt was the floor base however no really indurated soil was noticed. It is believed that 14 inches below the 15 foot stakes is where the floor may have been.

Artifacts

Many hand wrought iron tools and wagon pieces were found at the adobe. Unfortunately hand forged tools are very difficult to use as chronology indicators for the style of forging varies with the individual and not with the period. According to Mr. Harry Downie, who analyzed some of the artifacts, four Mission Period artifact types are represented. A forged hoe blade, a fluted hinge, square wrought nail and a smashed riveted copper vessel. The rectangular hoe blade was found outside the south wall between L15 and L20. The fluted hinge has been referred to. A bent Mission nail was found in Unit L20 deep (2'2"). A squashed copper vessel of unknown use was found about 1 foot in depth near the northeast corner stone. Several large copper rivets are in place and upon comparison with Carmel Mission copper ware a similar situation was noted. Other metal items included: rings for harnesses, buckles, single tree, minnie ball, brass bracket of old "44" rifle, bolts, kerosene lamp handle, file, axe head, plus undetermined objects.

As the present paper is not intended to be a detailed final report, a critical analysis of all artifacts cannot be presented until detailed research is pursued.

Many interesting sherds were recovered at the adobe site. A total of 34 sherds were found within the adobe walls. Three main categories of wares were recognized, English, Cantonese and Mexican. Their abundance is in the respective order. Many of the pieces represented at the adobe are found in the Carmel Mission Museum collection.

Chart A shows the abundance and distribution of sherd types at the Fish Adobe. This chart does not represent the entire sherd collection as many were found outside the walls.

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Maritime Museum: An historic step toward opening a Maritime Museum on the peninsula was taken by the Board of Directors when the Business Affairs committee was authorized to negotiate with the City of Monterey for a five year lease on the lower floor of the old County building on Pacific Street. Admiral Stone and his museum committee are already starting plans for the museum.

Adobe Tour: Take all the good superlatives and you have a small idea of the success of the 1969 adobe tour. Literally hundreds of members and friends helped, and the public "came in droves" from far and near! Financially the tour this year will realize about \$7,000.00 profit.

Doud House: The title papers are now being transferred from the Urban Renewal to the Monterey History and Art Association. Another historic home of Monterey has been saved! Now to restore it and bring it back to life as part of our heritage.

Ed. Note: The promised bibliography for "Early Mails in Monterey County" will have to be given in the next issue. The author is presently struggling with finals and adverse conditions to complete his senior year at San Francisco State.

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