

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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The Fish Ranch Adobe



VIEW SOUTHWEST SHOWING FLOOR PLANKING.

Donald Howard's presentation of his excavation at the site of a small adobe on the Fish Ranch is here continued with his report of the artifacts found and his original conclusions. He has also written an addendum for us based on research done since he wrote his original report. The historian and archaeologist is often faced with the possibility that immediately after publication new evidence may be found that either substantiates your original statement, or puts it in doubt, or directly contradicts a premise. We may never know who built the little adobe or who occupied it during many years of change, but the excavation and the search of available records has added to our knowledge of man's occupancy of this area.

A.E.

(Continued from June)

Glass was found in abundance. Pontels of old wine bottles, a broken beer bottle, a bitters bottle, fragments of possible window glass, and a glass button.

The sole portion of a crude leather boot was found next to the wall in Unit L5. The sole is constructed of leather laminates as is the heel. Small shoe nails hold the layers of leather together. This specimen is almost identical with the boot fragment shown in Pritchard (1968, fig. 17).

The perplexing problem of Mission Period artifacts at the Fish Adobe must not necessarily mean that the adobe was constructed prior to the secularization of the Carmel Mission. After the Secularization Act the Carmel Mission was vulnerable to plunder by the local occupants. This accessibility to Mission property and the desire to loot is one of the explanations for Mission artifacts at the adobe.

At least one of the occupants may have known how to write for a slate pencil tip was found next to the wall in Unit L10. This artifact could be a dating factor for slate pencils have been found in the floor boards of Colton Hall. In 1849 a public school was opened here and apparently continued intermittently until 1897.

The wedge corner of a plow with "A. B. Allen" in raised letters indicates that the occupants of the adobe practiced agriculture in the later periods of the adobe's history.

Reconstruction

No old photos or plans were located to interpret the external appearance of the adobe so reliance will be entirely upon inference based upon artifact and architectural implications. It seems logical that windows and doors would be present to deductive thinking could locate their approximate location. A shake roof is in evidence for a burned shake was found and a metal shake splitter. Construction was Carmel River adobe with the Monterey Shale foundation. Flooring and possibly roof supports were redwood with a veranda on the north and east sides. Two entrances are proposed on the east and west ends. The east end may have had steps. A tentative window is placed on the south side. See Figure 3.

Conclusions

From an analysis of available literature and oral communication with pioneer informants, the Fish Ranch Adobe may be the site of the lost "Las Virgines" adobe. Tradition does not locate the site exactly but a survey of the northern extremity of the San Jose y Sur Chiquito rancho revealed another adobe site. This site is located about 500 yards east of the Fish Adobe on the Oppenheimer property. The writer was told by "Tex" Rayburn that 40 years ago that this adobe was two stories in height and still in good condition. An examination of the nearby ground revealed roof tile fragments, porcelain sherds, square cut nails, and bottle glass. No foundation or other architectural features were noticed. It would seem that a tiled roof adobe would date further back into time, and the second story would show possible commercial use as a tavern or way station.

Artifacts show a trend of two occupational periods, immediate post secularization (1833-1870's), (1880's-1900?). The first date of course is conjectural but the second is from verbal evidence.

Sherds indicate three cultural traditions, Chinese, Mexican, and English. Just because of the fact that these types of sherds are present does not necessarily mean that these types of nationalities occupied the Fish Adobe. Mr. Chavote Vasquez the last known corroborated resident was purported to have "jumped" ship in Monterey in the 1850's and to have taken refuge in the Fish Adobe in the 1880's. Since Flora Woods was alleged to have lived here also she could have dwelled here after Vasquez.

Construction of the Fish Adobe is typical of the Mexican Era adobes of Monterey with foundation wall averaging 22 inches in thickness. At some time in the adobe's history a fire occurred which may have caused final abandonment of the adobe around the turn of the century. Archaeological evidence favors this structure being a residence rather than a cantina.

Bibliography

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Pritchard, W. E.
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Addendum to the Fish Ranch Adobe

Some time ago Mrs. Alfred Elkinton brought to the writer's attention excerpts from various deeds which are poignant to the Fish Adobe. In her Boston family folder she found reference to an adobe located on the Carmel River at the base of a hill called "La Loma de Las Virgines." Previous to Mrs. Elkinton's discovery the author thought that the Fish Adobe may be the long lost site of the "Las Virgines" although no documentary proof had been seen. Since it was evident that records may exist which could solve the enigma, a trip was made with Mrs. Elkinton to the Monterey County Courthouse in Salinas. In the County Records Office a careful search was made of all the leads we had. All prominent names were checked that were affiliated with the Mexican land grants, San Jose y Sur Chiquito and the Potrero de San Carlos. Since the Fish Adobe is located approximately on the boundary line of the two grants, there has been much legal litigations in regard to the surrounding properties. Since Bradley V. Sargent bought the Potrero de San Carlos in 1858, it was hoped that the sales records of 1897 would shed some light on any adobes on the Sargent lands. Only four houses were alluded to and their description and location were vague. In Volumes B and C of Deeds, the names of John Galbraith, Sheriff Aaron Lyons, Joseph Boston, Alice C. Boston, Alfred S. Williams, Chapman W. Wade, and Wm. M. Jefferson were affiliated with the properties in the area of the Fish Adobe. In Volume B of Deeds, page 308, the most pertinent passage was located. It reads: "Commencing at a stake on the Carmelo River in a line with the westerly side of the **adobe house**, thence running nearly southwest on a line with said house, 391 yards stake, thence running nearly southeast following the base of the hill known as La Loma de Las Virgines, 561 yards to a stake. Thence nearly northeast 266 yards to a stake on the Carmelo River. Thence following the course of said river to the place of the beginning. Including one **adobe house**, and all the improvements, together with the appurtenances and all the estate title and interest of said Joseph Boston unto said Alice C. Boston" etc.

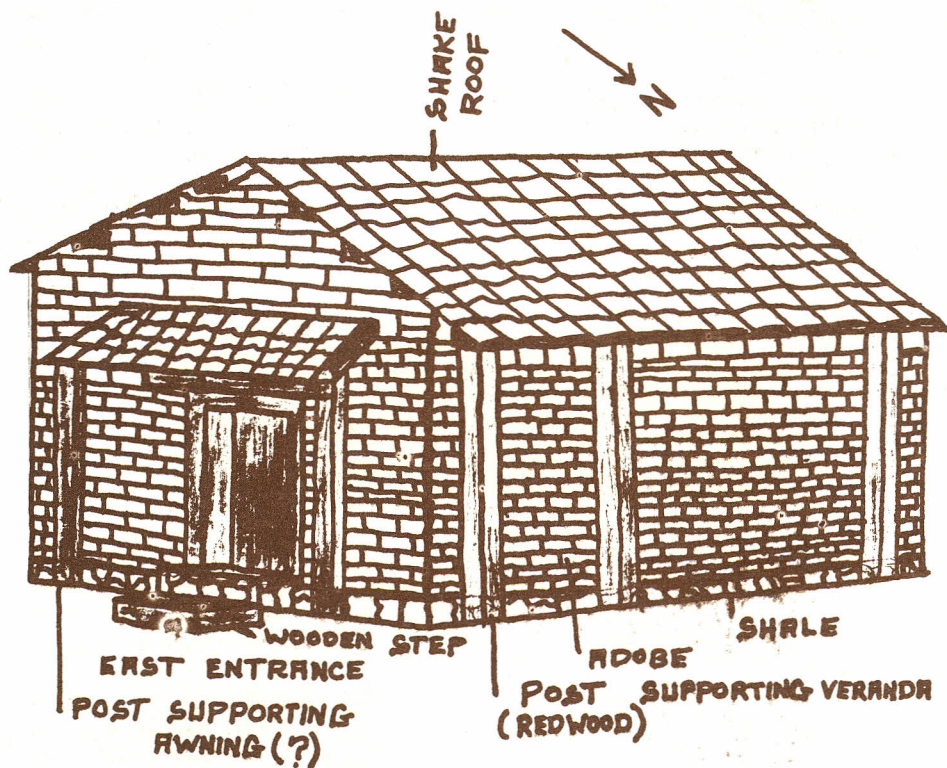
The author used the aforementioned measurements to see if the Fish Adobe would fit in with the geographic and topographic facts of Volume B of Deeds.

The southwest bearing of 391 yards fitted the topography, however, when the southeast measurement was attempted along the base of "La Loma" it was found that the 561 yards doesn't tend to fit, for it would send the southeast line directly into the steep mountain due south. The northeast measurement of 266 yards would not send one to the "place of the beginning" on the Carmel River. Of course there is a great possibility that compass vectors are incorrect in the deed. Apparently the property was "stepped off" and not professionally done by a surveyor. It was found, however, that the Volume B measurements could be those of the property of an adjacent adobe which is now on the Oppenheimer Ranch lands. Although the physical evidence of this adobe has been obliterated by land leveling, the land contour, could be that described in Volume B. An old photo by L. S. Slevin which was taken in May, 1919 shows one gabled wall standing. This adobe will be discussed in further aspects of the Fish Adobe.

In the Monterey History and Art Association archives the author found the original "Abstract of Title" of the San Jose y Sur Chiquito of the Carmelo Land and Coal Company. Many deed references were noted that described properties along the Carmel River although not exact delineation of borders were given. Names such as: Ireland, Hudnut, Escobar, Gutierrez, Bravo, Grove, Finly McKinley, Larios, etc. are all listed as owners or co-owners of Carmel River lands. Certainly an exhaustive analysis of these deeds would relinquish some more accurate property boundaries.

A trip to the Bancroft Library at the University of California was undertaken to research materials on the Potrero de San Carlos and San Jose y Sur Chiquito grants. In the claimant papers of Jose Castro for the San Jose y Sur Chiquito of 1852, some interesting references are made to an adobe house (373 SD, Page 10). In this document a question is asked of Marceline Escobar regarding improvements and cultivation of the rancho. The answer was: "Said Escobar had an **adobe house** on the place and lived in it with his family and cultivated a portion of the land before he obtained the said grant he had about 200 head of cattle, about 25 mares, and 8 tame horses, he also had a **tannery** on the place, he lived there until 1841." In the same document page 58 we find mention of another structure which is not of adobe. It could be however that the Fish Adobe foundations could be utilized, for the following excerpt mentions only the upper floor being of wood. It reads: "... a wooden house situated on the above mentioned rancho being eight varas in length by five in breadth, more or less, earthen floors, upper floor of ordinary wood and without a roof, two tanks for tanning, built of stone and mortar and three varas square each, a corral of wood with one side fallen down—and . . ." etc. Again the problem with these descriptions is the lack of precise data on boundaries, so one can only hypothesize as to whether these allusions are to the Fish Ranch Adobe. The original diseños showed no structures within their borders.

Through the courtesy of Mr. Camp of the Monterey County Land Surveyors, a map was located which shows the actual Fish Adobe structure. This map was surveyed in December of 1902 by A. T. Herrmann of San Jose. The interesting aspect of this map is that the adobe outlines were not actually printed on the map, but some interested surveyor later drew the outline on the map. Apparently his orientation was off for he has the foundation of the adobe miscalculated. The actual structure tends in a northeast-southwest direction, the drawing is northwest-southeast.



Interpretive Replica
(not to scale)

An intensive search for old photos of the area led the author and Mrs. Elkinton to the Monterey County Library where one photo was found by L. S. Slevin which shows an adobe in Carmel Valley about 1910. The photo is rather poor and is apparently a photo of another picture. The mountain terrain in the background blends with the Fish Adobe but the width of the structure is incongruous.

Previous to the author's investigations of the "Legend of Las Virgines" the contention of historians was that "Las Virgines" was an adobe site from which the Indians saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Contrary to this, the indication in Volume B of Deeds is that the site of Las Virgines is in actuality the summit of a hill from which the vision was allegedly seen. It is possible, too, that after the reference had been made to "Las Virgines" that any structures recently made in the region could easily acquire such a name. It must be remembered that human nature being what it may, imbibing Indians could see just about anything that good liquor will reveal.

New artifact finds at the Fish Ranch Adobe have tended to push back the age of the structure more into the pre-1830 period. One Mission San Carlos floor tile fragment and two roof tile pieces found outside of the adobe could indicate that these materials were utilized in construction at some phase of its history. It is noteworthy that the small east room of the adobe is bounded

by well placed and massive slabs of Miocene Monterey Shale and sandstone; in direct contrast is the west room with poorly cut and smaller pieces of shale. Since the tile fragments were located near the east room it could be that this room was the primary construction. Perhaps the threat of marauding Grizzly Bears stimulated heavier blocks of stone. Certainly while the sandstone blocks were being quarried for the San Carlos church a store room would be needed for food supplies and tools. Since the San Carlos church was completed in 1797 after 4 years of construction, much activity was conducted near the Fish Adobe.

Other artifactual dating criteria have been found such as the pipe stem fragment of a kaolin clay pipe. A kaolin clay pipe bowl was found at site Mnt-12 near an adobe structure which is on the Indian rancheria of Ichxenta, near San Jose Creek. This pipe bowl along with some stem pieces were dated between 1840 and 50 by Dr. Arnold Pilling of Wayne State University. The pipe stem fragment at the Fish Adobe site is very similar to the San Jose Creek specimens and may be the same age.

Of particular interest to the historical archaeologist are the ceramic wares found at the adobe site. All of the major types of wares can be found in mission sites. Similar Cantonese, Majolica, Stoneware and English Staffordshire wares have been found in the author's recent excavations at Mission Nuestra Senora de La Soledad. It is possible that ceramic ware could have been pillaged from the missions after the secularization decree, but it seems more likely that goods were obtained through barter and not theft.

Recently a kilned brick and a fragment were found near the west room. It is well known that the first bricks were kilned in Monterey around 1847 for the first Brick House. It is believed that contact with the Dickerson Family took place to incorporate the use of bricks into some aspect of the adobe building program. It is believed by the author that many of the construction materials incorporated into the adobe were taken by other land holders for their construction. Therefore few bricks, tiles, or shakes.

A green bitters bottle fragment with raised embossing found in the west room of the Fish Adobe was identified by a bottle collector as typical of the 1850-60 period. Raised and smoothed is apparently characteristic of this decade. Also a firearms cartridge was found on the surface of the ground with UMC 44cf on the base of the cartridge. The cartridge was sent to the Remington Firearms Corporation for analysis. A date of 1868-1871 was their best guess.

Looking back at all the evidence in retrospect, no really concrete data has been found to date. Many adobes were built in the post-secularization period in the Carmel Valley and few have good documentation. It is the consensus of opinion of many eminent historians such as Harry Downie, that the Fish Adobe represents a transitional cultural tradition in the early 1830's where the Mexican influence was being replaced by the Yankee. The architecture of the adobe is extremely utilitarian and represents the poor class or "squatter" of the period.

On a final note, one of the most interesting finds was an Indian arrowhead found several inches below the surface near the northeast corner of the adobe. It is made of black Monterey chert and has the typical prehistoric inslantated stem. Although no prehistoric midden was encountered at the adobe site, the author thinks the occurrence is of a historic nature. Arrowheads of this type have been found in many sites on the Monterey Peninsula, and the source of the black chert seems to be the shales of the Monterey Formation near the Mission Quarry.

The Early Mails in Monterey County

Addenda and References

In part I of our history (September 1968) we should add the following two offices: Asilomar, established July 2nd, 1914 and discontinued July 15th, 1915, and Marina, established March 3rd, 1916. On page 59 of the December 1968 issue add Pebble Beach, which was opened on October 14th, 1914.

After part II went to press the location of the Point Sur P.O. was brought to light through an article appearing in the **Monterey Argus** in January, 1883. It was situated at Bixby's Mill about a mile north of the creek that also bears his name. Thanks go to Mrs. Elkinton for finding it!

In addition to the source already footnoted, the following books were used for dates, site determination, local history and postmaster references. The latter are to be found in the biography sections of the county histories listed. The prime data source was material supplied by the General Services Administration in Washington D. C. which keeps nearly complete records of all offices. This same source, incidentally, was used by Mr. Frickstad in his compilations.

Frickstad, Walter M. **A Century of California Post Offices**.
Philatelic Research Society. Oakland. 1955.

See the sections on Monterey and San Benito Counties

Hoover, Mildred Brooke. **Historic Spots in California — Counties of the Coast Range**. Stanford University Press. 1937. pp.215-270.

Guinn, J. M. **History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties**. Chicago. The Chapman Publishing Co. 1903.

A Memorial and Biographical History of the Coast Counties of Central California. Chicago. The Lewis Publishing Co. 1893.

Thanks should be given to Mr. L. S. Stallings, Mr. Harry Downie, and a great number of people in both Monterey and San Benito counties who have contributed material through the years. More than once I have followed an old timer down a dusty road in search of building sites.

Rick Wilkerson

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

ANNUAL MEETING: Mark your calendar for the annual meeting of all members October 22nd, 8 p.m. in Casa Serrano. Directors of the Board will be elected and a program of interest will be presented.

NEW PUBLICATION: A book of interest is now being published. Entitled "Medical History of Monterey County," it has been edited by Dr. John Gratiot, Dr. Paul Michael and Dr. John Welton. Two hundred copies are dedicated for the History and Art Association. Members interested in reserving a copy should send a check for \$5.25 to Monterey Literary Associates, Box 1995, Monterey.

ANOTHER FIRST FOR MONTEREY: Six concerts this coming season will introduce the first series of symphony concerts in the city of Monterey. Conductor Haymo Taeuber will direct the 70-member Monterey County Symphony Orchestra and an outstanding group of guest artists in the Monterey Peninsula College Gym auditorium starting October 12th. Further information may be obtained from Box 3851, Carmel, California.

GIFTS: A scrap book of early California History material from Mrs. John A. Davies; a fine persian rug from Mr. Rudy Heinz; and an old china toilet to be used in the remodeling of the Doud House from Mrs. Richard Patterson of Santa Cruz.

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