

# NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by  
The Monterey History and Art Association

Vol. XVI, Number 3

September, 1971



*photo courtesy of Monterey Library*

Photograph of the intersection of Alvarado, Polk, Pearl and Munras. The two story Cooper home stands on Munras to far left of photo. Adjoining it are visible three windows and a door which were openings to the home of Luisa Estrada de Diaz. The corner doorway was the entrance in 1888 to the bakery of Louis Carraine. In the large Alvarado building towards center of photo La Porte and Goldstine had general merchandise stores, and A. C. Keating had a small drugstore in the frame building just north of the Alvarado building.

## NONE SHALL DISTURB HER POSSESSION

Recent search of the county records concerning the Cooper-Molera property lying on the southwest corner of Polk and Munras has revealed that an important segment of that adobe wall enclosed area was not in the possession of the Cooper family for almost seventy years. It was in fact the home of Dona



Luisa Estrada de Diaz who lived on the property from shortly after her marriage in 1843 until 1900 when widowed and childless she left her home to live her last few years in Monterey under the loving care of a nurse companion.

Luisa Estrada was a younger daughter of Mariano Estrada, important ranking officer of the Presidio of Monterey under the Spanish flag, and his wife Isabella Arguello. By blood and marriage the Estradas were or became related to most of the important local families — Malarins, Pachecos, Spences, Gomez, Wolter, etc.

When Luisa was twelve she went to live in the home of an older sister, Adelaida Estrada, who had married the merchant David Spence. This we learned from a deed transferring and dividing property that had been owned by Mariano Estrada. The deed states that she "was under the guardianship of David Spence in whose house she lived and by whom she had been cared for since the death of her mother Isabella Arguello." The property then divided to her became part of her dowry when she married on December 1 of 1843 to Manuel Diaz, a trader who came to Monterey as master of the ship Trinidad.

Diaz was, according to Bancroft, a quiet man of influence and property, and well disposed to the change of flag. He served on the first jury of California called by Walter Colton, had served as Alcalde before the U.S. flag, and served again on the city council after the occupation. Diaz purchased the corner property on Polk two years after his marriage.

The corner land was originally part of the town lot granted to Captain John B. R. Cooper, and on which Cooper had constructed a store in about 1826, and a long house in 1832. October 2, 1833 Cooper sold one half of his house to John Coffin Jones, U. S. Consul stationed in the Sandwich Islands. The portion of the house sold contained five rooms and had a tile roof. The sale was made with the understanding that Jones would build a kitchen and also dig a well to entitle him to retain possession.

Jones did not settle permanently in Monterey, and probably lived but short periods on the property. He in turn sold it within three years — on November 16, 1836, to another merchant, Nathan Spear. Spear was actually occupying the property at the time of sale. The sale was for \$2,000.00 to be paid in one year with 1,000 cowhides at the rate of \$2 each in good merchantable condition.

During the ownership of Spear, Thomas Larkin had two sketches made of Monterey which were published in the east with notes showing the occupant of each house. The small adobe of one story along present Munras, and the fine hip roofed adobe on Polk show clearly in one lithograph and are identified as Spear's.

Spear also left Monterey, renting the house to various tenants, and finally sold it in 1845 to Manuel Diaz.

The 1850 census of Monterey County indicates that Diaz established his home and business on the property, and was an important merchant of the town. Under the same roof were Manuel Diaz, his wife Luisa, and their small son Vicent. A niece of Luisa, Maria de Los Angeles Estrada, was also part of the household with her husband Gabriel Avilla listed as merchant and as having been born in France. A nephew of Luisa, 18 year old Mariano Estrada, was also serving in the business as Clerk. Two other Clerks were living on the property; Carlos Rouchien, 28, born in California, and Juan Bessert, 15, born in Chili. The ninth and final person listed in the census was one Francisco — no surname — who was a 43 year old Carpenter —probably a general handyman.



The mid 1850s brought a severe depression to Monterey. Issue after issue of the local paper lists the bankruptcy proceedings, and the resulting sales of many properties at auction. Manuel Diaz' property was sold at public auction in March 1855 for \$1,100 to David Spence, and the proper deed given by Sheriff Lyon to Spence in October. The property was then described as "the dwelling house and store which they Manuel Diaz and wife occupied and lived in and now occupy and live in." Also on the property was a small fonda or house which had been occupied by one Antonio Augustine.

The next deed of record reveals the story behind the purchase by David Spence of this property at auction. Evidently David's wife, Adelaida, was concerned for her younger sister, and wanted to be assured that Luisa could continue to live in security in her own home. Manuel Diaz died in 1867. His only child had preceded him in 1860. Thus Luisa was a widow, and childless when Adelaida arranged for her security.

May 5, 1868 David Spence deeded the property to his own wife, Adelaida, "for love and affection" "all that certain lot of land, dwelling house, and Stores, that formerly belonged to the late Don Manuel Diaz . . . and at present occupied by Dona Luisa Estrada de Diaz." "it is understood and agreed that neither Adelaida Estrada de Spence nor her heirs . . . shall disturb the possession of Dona Luisa Estrada de Diaz . . . she shall have the same privilege as she had formerly to live and enjoy all the rents from said premises during her natural life" etc.

David Spence died in 1875, his widow Adelaida died one month later. Their only son David Stewart Spence had died in 1868. The property went by inheritance to the third generation of Spences, and they honored the wishes of their grandmother Adelaida. It was not until 1900 that the property was transferred to another owner. Rudolph, Alberto, and David J. Spence with their wives, and their sister Arcadia with her husband Luis Arguello, and Robert Johnson as attorney for the aging Luisa Estrada de Diaz signed a deed conveying the property to Ana Cooper Wohler, daughter of the original John B. R. Cooper. Mrs. Wohler in turn willed it to Frances Molera, and thus the entire walled area again came under one ownership.

This section of the property is that part running 183 feet along Polk, from the corner to the west end of the old Spear-store, now occupied by the Y. M. C. A., and along Munras from the corner south to the point where the two story adobe home of the Coopers stands.

Thus, through the love that Adelaida Estrada de Spence had for a younger sister, Luisa Estrada de Diaz was able to live in comfort and serenity in the little one story adobe house that had been her home as young matron and mother. There she was able to stay, visited by friends and relatives, surrounded by the brass candlesticks, the silk shawls, the fine lace mantillas that were part of her early life. She left only to be under the loving care of her companion and nurse in a little house on Webster. There she died two years later in 1902.

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## PRESERVATION FOR MODERN LIVING

The Cooper-Molera property is now facing certain changes that could vitally affect the future appearance of Monterey. At the south end of Alvarado, easily viewed from the full length of our main street, stands a group of struc-



tures known as the old Cooper place. Along Munras are the two story Cooper home, the one story adobe home of Dona Luisa Estrada, and a modern real estate office. Along Polk are a small store, the office of the Y. M. C. A. and the large double barn in which the Cooper family kept the carriages. In the past Polk street areas have been used by the Boys Club founded by a former Chief of Police, a dance studio, a private museum, etc. Records show that this has been rental property since the 1830s.

The group of structures has always been tied together by an old adobe wall enclosing all. Lying at the intersection of four important streets this has been the hub of the south end of town. This group has constantly maintained in appearance the serenity, the simplicity, that characterized the combination of early living and business areas of old Monterey. The Larkin property also has a group of structures enclosed within a walled area, but it does not stand out so prominently to the beholder as one wanders along the old original streets of Polk, Alvarado, Pearl, California (now Munras) and even part of Tyler as it cuts past the new Plaza towards Safeway parking lot.

This property has been willed by Miss Frances Molera to the National Trust in order that the adobe Cooper home and the adjoining one story adobe on Munras might be preserved and restored. The National Trust does not have funds to properly maintain areas they already possess, and so cannot accept new areas unless means can be established to support them. Miss Molera's will allows for part of the property (the area along Polk) to be used for suitable commercial ventures — professional offices, a bank, etc.

The problem is how to preserve the typical Monterey atmosphere and yet allow for a modern use by a profitable and rent paying commercial venture. The Cooper home must be restored and developed and open to the public as an historic home. Thus there must be two parts developed; restoration of the Cooper home, and establishment of a commercial venture. When the problem of preserving a structure from the past rises there are those who question whether it may not become "just another dead museum." Today modern historical groups are realizing that they must join with other fields of interest to keep not only our natural ecology but our cultural ecology in balance. This requires a harmonious blending of past and present — to keep a continuity into a modern living entity.

Robert M. Utley, Chief Historian for the National Park Service, spoke to the California Historical Societies in Monterey in June 1970. We repeat here some excerpts from that address.

"History is the cumulative memory of mankind, without which neither individuals nor nations can fully understand the present or wisely plan for the future. . . . There is no better way for citizens to gain this understanding of the past, to come to know the history and tradition of the country, than to visit the places where history was made." How well the vast numbers of visitors to Monterey's Path of History has proved that statement!

"The historic preservation movement in the United States has traditionally been propelled by patriotic, inspirational, and educational motives, and it has aimed primarily at the preservation of places significant for association with historic persons or events. These motives and objectives are still valid and still legitimate. But environmental concern has given them larger meaning. The new dimensions of historic preservation were born of a growing awareness that anonymous evidence of the past may be worth saving, too. Here we are talking about architectural, engineering, or even landscape survivals that are not associated with an historically prominent person or memorable event. A



building or group of buildings, a street scene, an historic open space, a bridge or canal, even the historic town plan as expressed in the street layout — all are prime candidates if they capture the flavor of past generations while remaining visually pleasing to the present generation, and if they can be given economically viable modern use without compromising the integrity of the basic historical fabric.”

The Monterey History and Art Association has in the past years set an example locally of preservation for modern use of historic structures. The association owns the Fremont adobe, Casa Serrano, and the Doud House, all of which have been preserved, restored, and which now house commercial ventures, and remain on the tax rolls.

Private owners, and business have followed this lead. We need only follow the Path of History to see how the past can be made a living part of the present. Restaurants — Casa Gutierrez and the Stokes adobe. Offices — the City Manager’s office, the Vasquez adobe, the law office in the de la Torre adobe on Polk, Casa Estrada owned by the Monterey Savings & Loan Assn., and in constant use by the public. These are but a few examples.

The Monterey History and Art Association has participated in several meetings in recent weeks concerning the Cooper-Molera Property. Members of the National Trust have visited Monterey. At least one large commercial concern has submitted a tentative program of use of the Polk street area on a long lease basis.

We feel sure that if all concerned work together in harmony this valuable bit of the past life of Monterey can become a vibrant part of today’s living — without destruction of the true values of the area. Modern “big business” can and has become aware of its part in creating out of the past structures and objects a pleasing environment for modern man, whenever such structures are available to so develop. The Cooper-Molera property is a challenge — a wonderful opportunity for imaginative modern architects. May they keep the “old Monterey” simplicity in the necessary new construction. May they restore the old adobe home with loving understanding!

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## FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

*The Board of Directors of the Monterey History and Art Association voted at the July meeting to authorize the formation of FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM — an organization of interested persons to maintain the ALLEN KNIGHT MARITIME MUSEUM. To implement the formation of the FRIENDS the following letter is being sent out. We repeat it herewith for those who may be interested.*

Dear Friends:

On the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Monterey History and Art Association — 19 January 1971 — the Allen Knight Maritime Museum became a reality which all may now enjoy, together with other Association achievements — the Adobe Tour, the Merienda, the Mayo Hayes O’Donnell Library, Sloat Landing Commemoration, and the Doud House and Garden. During the few months since opening, the Maritime Museum has become a recognized asset of the Monterey Peninsula Community.

Except for the Secretary, the Museum is being operated by VOLUNTEERS — both men and women. Without these VOLUNTEERS the



Museum could not have been created, and could not now be kept open. It is desired to continue this present operating arrangement indefinitely — if sufficient funds are assured to meet operating costs. The costs include a very nominal rental to the City of Monterey for about 5000 square feet of floor space, which permits three large display rooms and necessary office space. Other costs are for heat, light, telephone, janitorial services, refuse collection, office supplies, essential repair services, etc. Some desired museum equipment would be purchased, and some improvements made — when money becomes available therefor.

The Monterey History and Art Association has supported the Maritime Museum operation financially — with considerable assistance from a few interested individual contributors. It is now desired to place the Museum on as financially an independent operating basis as possible, in order to free limited Association funds for other worthwhile purposes. Accordingly, the Museum Director has been authorized to create a large group of voluntary financial supporters — to be known as FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM. Active membership dues will be a minimum of \$5.00 per person (or couple) contributed to the Association for "Maritime Museum."

All contributors will be given a membership card (receipt), dated and signed by the Museum Director. Membership categories are as listed below. Your generous response is needed to assure the successful operation and improvement of the Maritime Museum. All who contribute will be listed as FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM on a tablet to be displayed in the Museum.

#### Membership Categories

Active Membership . . .	\$ 5.00 per person or couple
Associate Membership . . .	\$ 10.00 per person or couple
Charter Membership . . .	\$ 25.00 per person or couple
Sustaining Membership . . .	\$ 50.00 per person or couple
Sponsor . . . . .	\$100.00
Patron . . . . .	\$500.00

If you wish to volunteer for watchstanding or to do other work for or at the museum please call the museum office (375-2553) and leave your name and telephone number. Address: P. O. Box 805, Monterey, California 93940. Checks should be made to the Monterey History and Art Association and marked "for Maritime Museum."

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### LIFE MEMBERS OF MONTEREY HISTORY AND ART ASSOCIATION

The Monterey History and Art Association has at present over 1700 members. Among these are a number who have generously contributed to the purposes and accomplishments of the association by becoming Life Members. The below listing of their names is our expression of appreciation.

Mrs. George Applegarth  
Mrs. Vanderbilt Adams  
Mrs. Elizabeth Hay Bechtel  
Mrs. Dorothy W. Blanks

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Mr. William A. Burkett  
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 Mr. W. Page Van Loben Sels  
 Miss Caroline E. Wood  
 Miss Alice Work  
 Miss Ardelia Work  
 Mrs. Edwin K. Wright

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## COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

**GIFTS RECEIVED:** To the ALLEN KNIGHT MARITIME MUSEUM — a ship's long glass from Mrs. Ilya A. Rudneff. To the MAYO HAYES O'DONNELL LIBRARY — two cane chairs from the former Isabel Hartigan; eight books of Californiana and an early photograph of a Spanish lady from Miss Dorothy Peacock; a copy of "Californios" by Jo Mora from Mr. Gordon Hurd; and one of the limited edition by Grabhorn of the Journal kept by William Henry Meyers while a gunner on the United States Sloop-of-war Cyane, presented by Mrs. Elizabeth Hay Bechtel.

**CASA SERRANO:** Like the one hoss shay the plumbing at Casa Serrano gave up suddenly and completely this summer after a conference in the building. We have found that the old style pipe is in a state of collapse. The only remedy is to install a complete new plumbing arrangement. This involves new rest room facilities, new underground lines to kitchen and toilets — in fact a major overhaul. We will not be able to have meetings in the building until repairs are complete so the series of evenings for members has had to be temporarily cancelled.

**MEMBERSHIP:** We will soon be receiving a notice of the time for renewal of our memberships. May we suggest to all that there may be a friend of yours who may be interested in joining, but has not as yet been asked to do so. Please send in their name and address, and sponsor them for membership.



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