

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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It is always with considerable pride and satisfaction to those interested in the preservation of the old adobe buildings and the historical atmosphere of Monterey when an old house is restored with feeling and authenticity by a new owner. Dr. and Mrs. Wesley Heard have done just that to the Alvarado house on Dutra street.

The home of the first governor of California was purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Heard in 1947 and restoration started immediately upon their arrival from their former home in Pasadena. Since its completion another lot has been added to the property at the corner of Jefferson and Dutra, and a small wooden house at the rear of the property, facing on Van Buren street, completes a most attractive home and surrounding garden.

When Dr. and Mrs. Heard opened Casa Alvarado for the historic tour during the Centennial celebration last September, Dr. Heard had a short history of the building and its owners printed to be presented to the visitors. We are happy to reprint that information here.

The building was erected in the early 1830's and served as the home of Don Juan Bautista Alvarado. Monterey-born governor (1836-1842) of California.

Alvarado was born in Monterey February 13, 1809. He was the son of Don Jose Francisco Alvarado and Josefa Vallejo, and was a direct descendant of Captain Cortez.

By a deed or bill of sale dated 1842, Alvarado sold the property to Manuel Dutra, a Portuguese trader. The property was described as "Consisting of a three-room house and tile roof for the sum of 300 silver dollars." The property remained in the Dutra family until 1946. Dutra added the present music room, which was used as a general store until 1851.

The building acquired the board sheeting in 1862 when Judge Parker, who married the eldest daughter of Manuel Dutra, used it as a home and office until 1874. Many marriages of well-known residents were performed in this adobe by Judge Parker.

As was customary, the adobe was built to face the east. This was done so that the occupants could take full advantage of the morning sun on the front of their dwellings. The walls are all 24 inches thick, made of adobe bricks and laid up with adobe mud as a mortar,

and all is supported on a heavy chalk rock foundation. Each room opened directly to the out of doors. One of the early doors is still in place in the room to the south of the living room. Originally the window openings were barred with square wooden bars set in the sills and lintels. Remnants of these are still present in some of the sills. There were inside wooden shutters on the windows to keep out the weather.

When Judge Parker moved into the building in 1862 the house was full of bullet holes, and in order to protect the adobe he had the sheeting installed. It is likely that window sash and glass were added at this time. The outside shutters came at a later period as did the rail on the front porch. There were no floors originally except the swept adobe which followed the contour of the grade. The ceilings were evidently built to coincide with the floors so that one end of the living room is lower than the other. Later, redwood sills were laid and wooden floors installed. There was no provision for heating until Walter Colton, the first alcalde of Monterey, built the two fireplaces. Colton built many of the fireplaces and cisterns in Monterey, having brought this knowledge from New England.

In restoring this adobe, which had taken the better part of two years, every effort has been made by Dr. and Mrs. Heard to bring it back to us as near the original as possible, consistent with present-day living.

Governor Alvarado himself one of a handful of Californians who in spite of all obstacles had acquired some little education, was persistent in his endeavor to advance the cause of learning. His first message, according to Bancroft, to the so-called congress of California, urged the necessity for public instruction, and he made other appeals to the same effect. But financial help was not available. Continuing his efforts, however, the governor visited frequently the schools at the capital (Monterey).

After four years, Alvarado, in another speech delivered at the opening of the assembly, said: "In the whole territory there was scarcely a single school. That the ignorance of the people was as great as ever, is evidenced by a mass of documents in my collection."