

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Adobes

"Thirty-two Adobes Houses of Old California" is the title of a small paper-covered book which has just been published by the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles. The photographs in the book are reproduced from watercolor paintings by the late Eva Scott Fenyes, with the descriptive text written by Isabel Lopez De Fages.

In the foreword the publishers explain that Mrs. Fenyes, a resident of Pasadena and Santa Fe, New Mexico, justly realizing the impermanence of structures created by man, accepted the suggestion offered by Dr. Charles F.L. Lummis to preserve by means of watercolors the features of the remaining Missions and other historic buildings of California while the opportunity still offered. This laudable enterprise continued for more than 30 years, with the result that 301 such paintings were made representing practically every important early building from San Diego to Sonoma.

After Mrs. Fenyes passed away in 1930 it was learned that the entire collection of these faithful paintings was included in a munificent bequest to the Southwest Museum

The watercolors composing the Fenyes Collection, with the exception of the Missions, are listed in the book just published. It is for the purpose of affording a glimpse of some of the more characteristic of the old adobes, to the number of 32, that the brochure was evidently presented.

The first reproduction in the book is the Guajome Ranch house in San Diego County, reproduced in color, all the rest are in black and white. On the opposite side of the pages from each picture is a description and history of the house or building.

The first painting of Monterey reproduced in the book was painted in Monterey in 1904. It is the Fabian Barreto House. The following information concerning this house as recorded in the Spanish Archives, in the recorder's office in Salinas, is

"In possession of Fabian Barreto is a petition on paper, with seal, which he presented to the honorable ayuntamiento in the year, 1835, in which he requests that entry be made of the house and lot he occupies, said lot being 40 varas square, and situated back of the Presidio church, between the two canons and which lot

was granted in Governor Sola's time to citizen Manuel Cota, from whom it was purchased by Barreto. And at his request (the corresponding) entry is made in this book for the section of his property, returning him the original Monterey, April 3, 1835.

Secretary, Francisco del Castillo y Negrete (and) Dave Spence."

Several old timers of Monterey have identified the Barreto house painted by Mrs. Fenyes as that described in the deed. Although there are later records proving that Don Fabian obtained other lots nearer the town, this property has been recognized as having been his home. The exact site of the house has not been located. Probably the dwelling has long since vanished.

The next reproduction of a watercolor in "Thirty-two Adobe Houses of Old California," is one that is of utmost importance today, 41 years after the picture was painted, the "House of Jose Castro." That house is the old adobe on the corner of Tyler and Pearl street now threatened with destruction.

Mrs. Isabel Lopez de Fages, who wrote the text, gives the following history of this building, "Jose Castro, to whom this grant was made, succeeded Figueroa as governor, serving in 1835-36, but was opposed by leaders in the south. Jose Antonio Carrillo, as provisional deputy in the Mexican congress, procured the passage of an act making Los Angeles the capital, but the Diputacion refused to go there, and recognized Castro as governor. On January 2, 1836, he resigned in favor of Lt. Col Gutierrez, who formerly had been accepted as military commander. Col. Mariano Chico arrived from Mexico in May of the same year and assumed the governorship. As commander general of the Mexican army during the American conquest, Castro was recognized as the chief executive of the north. He retreated to the south in July, 1846, and retired to Mexico where he was killed by Manuel Marquez, a Mexican, leaving his widow, Modesta Castro. No children are listed by Bancroft, although a son, Esteban, was living when Mrs. Fenyes visited Monterey."

Authority for the grant of this property is recorded in Libro Solares de Monterri, as follows

"On the twenty-second day of January in the year 1843, there was granted to him, Jose Castro, a lot of sixty varas front and of eighty varas in depth, situated in the southerly direction from the house of Don Jose R.

Estrada, a street running from east to west intervening.
As witness my hand, Jose A. Chavez.”

“The old bull and bear pit in the rear is surrounded by a high limestone and adobe wall, there are stalls for horses and a shelter within the enclosure. The house contains two great rooms and much of the original molding around windows, doors and ceiling are still there.”