

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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When Land Was Cheap

The Monterey History and Art Association has in its file the interesting document which is the acknowledgement of the sale of a piece of property on Calle Principal in the City of Monterey, with the signatures of Jacob Leese, Joaquin Gutierrez, James H. Gleason and the seller; Graciano Manjares, recorded. The document is dated December 1, 1857.

The document, entirely written in longhand on blue-lined paper, relates that Graciano Manjares, the part of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of 350 and 59/100 dollars, the receipt for which is attached, has bargained, sold and conveyed unto Alexr. S. Taylor, all that certain piece or parcel of land, measuring on Main Street of said City of Monterey 24 varas, more or less in width, and running back from Main Street toward Colton Hall 32 varas, more or less, being all the lot of land between the land of Jacob Leese and that of Joaquin Gutierrez, together with the house and all and whatever improvement thereto, "the said property being my property derived from the town of Monterey."

Evidently Mr. Manjares could not read or write for the document states that "the contents has been interpreted to me to my satisfaction." He made his cross or mark before the witnesses: Jas. H. Gleason and A. W. Blair. The seal is a small blot of red sealing wax covered over with a small square of white paper.

According to the records of the City of Monterey, A.S. Taylor sold the property on June 25, 1860, to Doroteo Ambris who sold it to Petronito Ambris on the 24th of December in 1866 who on the same day, transferred it to John Miller, the father of Dave Miller, who still resides in Monterey. The old adobe house and the land described in the old document are now owned by Audrey Wittell Godwin and is occupied by Virginia Morris and her antique shop. It is next door to the Gutierrez adobe now being restored. John W. Miller, mentioned as one of the former owners, was the husband of Ramona Gutierrez.

The original owner, Graciano Manjares was a native of Mexico and was the grantee of the Soucito Rancho in 1836 when he was 35 years old. He married Maximiana Gongora and to them were born five children: Domingo

in 1829, Jose in 1830, Ponciano in 1831, Estanisloa in 1832 and one daughter, Juana in 1835. In 1842 Graciano Manjares was the Juez Auciliar or assistant judge.

Other judges of the 1840 period in the area were Joaquin Gutierrez in 1842; Panfilo Soberanes, head judge in 1843; James Watson, regidor (councilman) in 1844; and Felecino Soberanes, second judge in 1845.

On Saturday, July 5, 1890, there was held a huge auction sale of lots in the Oak Grove addition to Monterey. The sale was advertised for 2 o'clock p.m. on the premises adjoining the magnificent grounds of the Hotel Del Monte. Special excursion rates from all parts of the state were stated as an inducement for those interested, to come to Monterey.

The circular printed before the date for the sale is illustrated with cuts of an old woodburning engine, a bird's-eye view of Del Monte and the Monterey Bay, the old Del Monte bath house, scenes along the 17-Mile Drive and a large picture of Dr. J.P.E. Heintz's residence. The entire inner page of the circular is taken up with a drawing of the layout of the Oak Grove addition, showing its proximity to the hotel, the El Estero, the bay and Monterey, with sailing ships in the distance. There are no automobiles on the roads but many, many horses and buggies and carriages of all sorts.

One of the advertisements relates that water from the Carmelo River is piped to every lot, with an inexhaustible supply of pure mountain water.

The lots so the circular advertises, were disposed of in 1880 for from \$50 upward. At the time of the sale in 1890 not one of the lots could be purchased, so the auctioneer said, for less than \$800, and a sale of one lot had been recently recorded for \$2,000.

The proceeds from the first lot sold was to be given to the building fund for St. John's Chapel, according to a rubber stamp announcement on each folder. The old paper came from the collection of Miss Marie Lee, whose father, the late Thomas Lee, was superintendent of the grounds for Del Monte Hotel for many years.