

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 24, 1950

Early Monterey Home

For a few days we wrote in this column about Don Sebastian Rodriguez and his family who owned many leagues of land in the Pajaro Valley. His son, Jacinto Rodriguez, lived in Monterey in the middle 1800's and was one of the signers of the California State Constitution and a delegate to the first Constitutional Convention held in Colton Hall 100 years ago last September.

Now it would be interesting to know where this early citizen of Monterey lived. The Rodriguez adobe is a two story building, built originally with a balcony overhanging the sidewalk. It is located at 380 Alvarado Street, near the corner of Franklin Street. It was erected in 1918 [?] by Don Jacinto Rodriguez and there, it has been said, the California Constitution was first signed. The balcony was later removed from the structure by city ordinance. According to the WPA Historical Survey records, "The house known as the El Adobe or Osio building, has been so grotesquely disfigured that it bears little resemblance to the former structure."

Don Jacinto Rodriguez, the builder of the adobe house which has been known by his name, was born January 12, 1815, in the Pajaro Valley. He moved to Monterey shortly after the death of his father, Don Sebastian Rodriguez, and was soon very prominent in the affairs of the capital city. He became a lieutenant under Alvarado in 1836, and in 1839 was selected as Alferez of Monterey. The following four years he served as Celador of the Monterey and San Francisco custom houses (1843-1846). In 1849 he was appointed Alcalde.

Rodriguez dies in 1880, leaving considerable property on the principal business street in Monterey, he having purchased the property from Curtis and Conover, on which was built the first brick store in the city, in 1857.

Jacinto Rodriguez also owned an adobe building, long since torn down, about where the present Ordway building is on the corner of Alvarado and Franklin streets. In 1851 the property was assessed to Bicinto Rodriguez for \$1,500. In 1855, Jacinto Rodriguez was shown as the owner, and the assessment against the building had been raised to \$2,500.

The Gordon House is one of the most charming of the old wooden houses in Monterey. It is located on the

corner of King and Pierce streets, across the former street from Colton Hall. It is one of the first milled lumber houses erected in Monterey and was built by Philip Roach, being one of two such houses he imported around the horn in 1849. Roach, who was the last alcalde of Monterey, and the first mayor (1851) built the house about 1849 or 1850.

At the time of the building of the house, the small street on the side of the house had not been named, and this excerpt is taken from the meeting of the council dated June 3, 1853 – "It was moved and seconded that the street between Colton Hall and the house of W.S. Johnson be thereafter called 'King Street'."

In 1850 Roach sold the property to William S. Jonson, who was Sindico to the Ayuntamiento, the first meeting of which was held in Colton Hall, January 2, 1850. Johnson was born in England and came to Monterey with Colonel Stevenson's New York Regiment in 1847. Under the Mexican government he served as Casaque and was also clerk to the alcalde. Johnson was afterwards elected the first recorder of Monterey County, and later elected County Clerk. When the county seat was changed to Salinas in 1875, he removed there and organized the Salinas City Bank, of which he was cashier. His son, R.F. Johnson, was born in Monterey in 1862. He removed from Monterey for some years and in 1892 was elected mayor of El Paso. Some years later he returned to Monterey and in April of 1897 he was elected mayor of Monterey. He also was owner of the Larkin house before it was purchased by Mrs. Harry Toulmin the granddaughter of Thomas Oliver Larkin, the builder.

The next owner of the Gordon House was John Burke Phillips, an attorney, to whom Johnson disposed of the premises in 1853. Phillips arrived in California in 1847 with Company D, New York Volunteers. In later years, 1874-1882, he lived in San Francisco.

In 1871, Samuel B. Gordon, from whom the house at present takes its name, became the owner. Gordon was well known in civic affairs, and was president of the board of trustees, 1877-1883.

Twenty-nine years later, in 1900, according to the Historical Survey, Gordon conveyed the house to T.A. Work turning the property over two years later to C.D. Casper, owner of the Mission Inn, now the property of his grandson, Bernie McMenam Jr.

Casper only held the property about two years, for in 1902, the records show that Bert Guidotti became the new owner. Guidotti in turn sold it to J.A. Davis in 1903. By a deed, dated 1903, but not recorded until 1912, Davis conveyed it to Mary C. Davis.

The next owner (1937) was Julie Stohr, who purchased the property from Mrs. Davis in 1925. She in turn sold it to Mr. and Mrs. M.A. Antoncich several years ago and about a year ago they resold it to Mr. and Mrs. Neville M.J. Cramer, who have many improvements both inside and out, not losing any of the historical charm of the old building.