

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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How the Casa Castro Adobe Was Raffled Off in 1848

Within the city environs the Monterey-Salinas Highway resolves itself into Fremont Street. To the south of this street and southwest from the roadside shrine built in the mission enclosing wall, is a fair size table land, designed as the Mesa Tract. It is approached by a wide macadamized road leading south from Fremont Street that follows a rather circuitous route approximating an old cattle trail, known as Mesa Road.

At the western extremity of the mesa, resting proudly upon its height and looking down upon the lesser elevations of the surrounding terrain, is a rambling white stucco and adobe house within ample grounds enclosed in a stone wall. Such was the introduction given to the location of the Casa Castro by the WPA Historical Survey made in 1937.

This large hospitable house is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Work, who acquired it several years ago from Gouverneur Morris, noted novelist. As late as 1915 cattle roamed the mesa and the lowlands. It was excellent grazing land and throughout the year water was plentiful in the sloughs below, due to numerous natural springs. It had served this purpose from the time of the early Spanish settlement. It was part of a large grant of land bestowed upon General Castro by the King of Spain. Standing aloof and unprotected by either garden wall or trees of any sort, it was a four room adobe dwelling, oblong in shape, and with a lean-to shed of unpainted boards extending the full length of the east wall. The adobe walls were mud colored as no whitewash had been applied to them for many years prior to the 20th century. Whatever its pristine appearance may have been, no living man has any recollection of it. There was no porch or other adornment to the structure and the tile roof had long since been replaced by a shingled one.

The General Castro estate was in litigation in the California courts over a period of many decades, and when it was finally settled in the early years of this century, this section fell into the hands of Manuel Diaz, a son-in-law of General Castro.

In the *Californian*, the first newspaper published in California, after it had moved from Monterey to San Francisco, there was published an advertisement under

the heading "Grand Raffle" and the date of Monterey, November 11, 1847.

The undersigned, being desirous of disposing of his house in Monterey and as it is difficult to find a purchaser to pay its value immediately, he has adopted the method of raffling it, as less burdensome to the purchaser.

"It is useless to recommend this establishment, all those who have ever visited Monterey must be aware of its excellent location, it being, without exception, the best situation for business in the town.

The raffle will be held in the presence of the Alcalde of Monterey, and sufficient notice will be given in the papers of the day, which will be as soon as the tickets are sold. The number of tickets will be 270 at \$30 each. The tickets will be found for sale at Monterey at the home of the subscriber; in San Francisco at Mellus and Howard; in the Pueblo of San Jose at the house of Don A. Sunol; in Santa Barbara, at the house of Don Jose Antonio Aguerre, and at Los Angeles, at the home of Son Manuel Rynna.

"It is a condition of the raffle that the owner of the house shall allow the occupant six months to move, he paying from the day of the raffle until he shall leave the house \$50 per month rent.

Signed, Manuel Diaz.

Miss Caroline Wenzel, director of the California room at the California State Library, in reply to a letter of inquiry from this column, writes "We regret that a search of the *Californian* fails to reveal the name of the person who won the Manuel Diaz house in the advertised raffle. As you know the *Californian* suspended publication for a time of May 29, 1848. The raffle advertisement appears, in both Spanish and English, in the last issue prior to suspension of publication, and it last appears in Spanish only, in the first issue (July 15, 1848) with which publication was resumed. It would be interesting indeed to know who won the property."