

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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History of the Mission Inn

Located on Tyler Street near Bonifacio Place, the three-story building at present housing the Mission Inn was presumably erected about 1823 during the Mexican regime by Don Jose Mariano Estrada for his residence. Originally it was a two-story adobe with a one-story lean-to at the rear.

Estrada arrived in Monterey in 1806, as alferaz (ensign) of the Monterey Military Company, which position he held for 12 years, being habilitado (paymaster) most of the time. He was made brevet lieutenant in 1818 for his services against Bouchard, the pirate, and in 1824 lieutenant for services in suppression of the Indian revolt, according to Bancroft's history. He retired from military service in 1829. In 1832-1833, Estrada held the important position of sub comisario at Monterey, and in 1835 he was juez de camp (judge). His son, Jose Ramon, was educated in Monterey, and in 1836 at the age of 25 was alcalde.

Pancho San Francisco Watson at a later date owned the adobe and it was known for years as the Pancho House.

From various sources of information acquired by the Historical Survey of 1937, it seems to have been used first as a hotel in 1849, during the gold rush period. At various times, the original structure has been added to, but carefully preserving the old lines and the early mission design. It has incorporated within some features taken from the old Washington Hotel, which those familiar with the early pictures of that structure (which stood where the Herald building is now), will recognize.

By the 80's the building had become a three-story hotel building, and at that time laid claim to being one of the leading hotels on the Pacific Coast. R.C. Wornes was the manager for a number of years after the building became known as the St. Charles Hotel. About 1887 he gave up the management of the hotel, but again took it over in 1890.

After the St. Charles regime, the place was known as the Everett House, until January 15, 1902, when it was leased to C.P. Casper, a realtor, for a term of five years. Casper did considerable remodeling and added a music hall and changed the name to Casper House. Eventually he became the owner of the property.

The heirs of Casper added another wing several years ago, and again the name was changed, this time to Mission Inn, which name it retains to this date. The late Bernie McMenamain and his son Bernie Jr. have been the owners for a number of years. B.V. McMenamain Jr., grandson of the late Mr. and Mrs. Casper, is now the manager-owner of Mission Inn.

The Sanchez adobe, more commonly known as My Attic, is located on the west side of Alvarado street, between Franklin and Pearl streets, and the southern portion is the only part of the original building standing.

The building, which is said to have been erected about 1829, was a long rambling one-story adobe, with a veranda extending over the full length at the rear, and overlooking a very elaborate garden which faced on Calle Principal. The Alvarado street frontage extended to the southern wall of the portion now standing and embraced the present hardware store on the north.

The first record of ownership is credited to Gil Sanchez, but there is no authentic information as to whether he acquired the property by right of purchase, inheritance or built the original adobe.

Gil Sanchez, who was regidor of Monterey in 1836, arrived from Mexico in 1820 and is credited as being one of the founders of Santa Clara College in 1852.

According to Hittell and Bancroft, both noted California historians, Sanchez was grantee of the Rancho de Arroyo de la Laguna in Santa Cruz County in 1840. This was one of the few land grant titles later approved by the United States courts.

After the death of Gil Sanchez, the property was divided among his heirs, and eventually a daughter, Ygnacia Maria Sanchez, purchased the shares of the others. In 1890, all but a portion now standing was wrecked. This existing portion she remodeled and used as her residence until her death in 1917. The adobe then became the City of Monterey police station until the department was moved to Calle Principal. The next tenant was a candy shop and tearoom owner, and the building derived its name of "My Attic" from the fact that the tables were placed upstairs and on the balcony overlooking the street.

The records of the City of Monterey assessor's office show the adobe assessed to Gil Sanchez from 1851 to 1855.