

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 9, 1950

Adobe Once Sold for \$7.50

The De La Torre, or the Oliver, adobe is a charming old building on Jefferson street facing the Friendly Plaza, between Pierce and Dutra streets. It is set in a nicely planted and kept garden and is in excellent state of repair, having been done by two artists who have the feeling for the old adobes of Monterey and for their historical and artistic value to the community – Mr. and Mrs. Myron Oliver.

According to the records, the home was built in 1852 by Francisco Pinto.

In 1850, Philip A. Roach, then Alcalde, made a grant of the property belonging to Monterey to Francisco Pinto, the same being described as on "La Calle del Deste," (now Jefferson street) with the rear portion extending to the lane (now Dutra street). According to the terms when the grant was made, Pinto was to erect a building on the premises within two years from the date of the grant.

June 12, 1851 Pinto is recorded as having sold the property to Juan Bonifacio for \$150. Described as on the west side of Vallejo street, now known as Pierce street.

On February 7th, 1857, according to the historical survey, Juan Bonifacio signed a release and quit title in favor of Pinto. Two days later Pinto mortgaged the place to Jose Abrego. According to the tax records of June 30, 1858, the location was given as on the west corner of Pierce and Jefferson street. The land was assessed at a value of \$7.50, and the improvements on the same for \$150. Shortly after it was sold for taxes for \$7.50.

Jose Abrego sold the place to Jose Torres August 1, 1862, for \$250. The records had to be changed in order to take care of a correction in the name of Torres, the correct name being Jose de la Torres.

March 2, 1864, de la Torres laid claim to the property according to the new homestead law, stating he was living there at the time he made the request. This request was granted, and the property was duly homesteaded.

De la Torre and his wife, Guadalupe, deeded the property February 13, 1907, to their daughter, Mrs. Maria Hernandez.

When it was found necessary to widen Jefferson street, which had up until this time been little more than a trail, D. and Mary Hernandez deeded 11 feet to the City of Monterey for the sum of \$10.

April 8, 1920, Maria and Don Hernandez deeded the property to their son, James Hernandez. The property at this time being described as between Jefferson and Gordon street.

James Hernandez and his wife, Henrietta, with his father and mother, Marie and Dan, sold the property to Katherine Osborn on May 24th, 1923. In less than a year, February 9, 1924, Miss Osborn disposed of the same to Mr. and Mrs. Myron C. Oliver, the present owners.

The house originally was of only three rooms and an entrance hall, but from time to time, several frame lean-to's have been added, all of which remain intact today.

The house has no special history attached to it, as no outstanding historical events took place there. It is a charming part of the all together beautiful setting of Colton Hall and the Friendly Plaza and it is hoped that it, with the Gordon house, the Vasquez house, Casa Alvarado and the entire surroundings of this interesting part of Monterey will always be kept intact, and unspoiled by too much modernism and wrong architecture.

This two-story part adobe and chalk rock residence which still stands on the corner of Scott and Olivier street – the House of Gold (La Bola de Oro) was erected prior to 1849, under orders from General Manuel Castro as a barracks for his men.

At the time Lieutenant Sherman, (afterward the famous general) was stationed in Monterey, he used the building as a part of his quarters.

In 1851, according to the assessment records, the house was assessed to James McKinley as "La Bola de Oro" for \$2,500. In 1855, the records show it assessed to Jose Abrego for \$1,000.

There are four versions pertaining to the name of "The House of Gold" (La Bola de Oro) meaning ball of gold. First that about 1851, the building was in use as a store and gold was left there for safe keeping. Second, from the fact that about this time, it was operated as a saloon, the liquor to a great extent being paid for with gold dust. Third, it was the headquarters for the exchange of gold dust, which the miners brought from the mines after the

gold rush. And fourth, in an interview which the Historical WPA worker had with the late Mrs. Elizabeth Dutra in 1937, she stated that this building was known as the "Mint" in her girlhood days. During the Civil War, a Captain Coates arrived in Monterey and established himself at the "Mint," and began soliciting funds for the government to help carry on the war.

Mrs. Dutra's grandfather, Francisco Garcia, who was employed at the Custom House at the time, took all his gold over to the "Mint" and placed it at the disposal of the captain. Because of the spirit of his act, her grandfather received a letter from the authorities at

Washington stating that he would be forever exempt from taxation. She further stated that Captain Coates came on a "wheat ship" and by reason of this was named Wheat. Men were often named after the cargo they brought.

After 1855, the property was purchased by David Jacks, and following his death many years later, the building was restored and was presented to the State of California as a historical monument by the Misses L. M. and V. Jacks. It is now occupied by the district superintendent's office of the Division of Beaches and Parks, Department of Natural Resources.