

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Saving the Adobes

While some citizens try to make Monterey attractive to the tourist and preserve as much as possible the historical atmosphere of the old town which certainly appeals to the tourist and home fold alike, others are destroying that charm. The Monterey History and Art Association has been for years the leader in a program of preservation and acquisition of old furniture, old manuscripts, and ancient mementoes of Spanish Mexican and American periods. Later the Monterey Foundation was organized to build up a fund which might be used to acquire historical buildings in danger of being destroyed, and also to assist in building and maintaining an interest in the past history of this city, the first capital of California.

In the past several years we have had city beautification committees, city planning commissions, committees that were supposed to pass on the architecture of new buildings and in the changing of old ones. Where have they all gone at this date?

The charming typical old adobe, My Attic, or as it is sometimes known, the Sanchez Adobe, is being modernized and as soon as the wooden wall is torn down from the front of half of the building a modern glass-brick and Arizona rock front will greet the visitors and home folk alike. Why, if a new front was entirely necessary, was not local stone or old brick used? Why modern glass brick in an adobe which was probably erected about 1829? Why was it necessary to put in a new front at all? All those questions will probably never be answered but we think that it is a shame that the City of Monterey, or the committee or individual who should pass on these changes, allowed such a thing to happen in the Old Town, which had its beginning 180 years ago last June 3rd.

The Sanchez adobe or My Attic, was built in 1829 as a long, rambling one-story adobe, with a veranda extending over the full length at the rear overlooking a very elaborate garden which faced Calle Principal. The Alvarado street frontage extended from the southern wall of the portion now standing.

The first record of ownership is credited to Gill 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 both Hittell and Bancroft, noted early historians, Sanchez was grantee of the Rancho del Arroyo de la Laguna in Santa Cruz County in 1840. This 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 and acquired the property. In 1890, all but the portion now standing was wrecked. The existing portion, Miss Sanchez remodeled and used as her residence until her death in 1917. It is said that she was a woman of great charm and intelligence. She gathered about her persons interested in art, literature and world events. The evenings spent in conversation in her home were ones long remembered by those who appreciated such worthwhile pastime.

After Miss Sanchez's death his adobe became the Monterey Police station until its removal to Calle Principal. The next tenant was a candy shop and tea room and this writer remembers the thrill she received having tea and luncheon one day years ago out on the balcony of My Attic.