

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 18, 1951

Through the Sacristy Door

The history of Salvador Vallejo, written by Myrtle M. McKittrick is one of the feature articles in the December issue of the California Historical Quarterly. That part of his life which deals particularly with Monterey is of interest to this column.

According to Mrs. McKittrick, who is registrar of the Humboldt State College at Arcata, Vallejo was born Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, and participated in 1769 as captain of a company of soldiers in the original Serra expedition. Five years later he was named military commander of the province Alta California and in September of 1774 he was joined by a new recruit from Jalisco, Mexico, bearing the name Ignacio Vincente Ferrer Vallejo. The arrival of this youth, writes Mrs. McKittrick, marked the beginning of a family history that has been linked with the history of California for 175 years.

We read that Vallejo had been schooled for the priesthood but had rebelled at the last moment; in fact, history tells us, that he bolted through the sacristy door to escape, with the aid of friends, to the port of Compostela where he remained in hiding until the chance came to follow a military career in the obscure outpost of Spain's New World empire.

After much research Mrs. McKittrick, who has had the privilege of investigation of the Vallejo family papers still in possession of members of the family, writes that Vallejo was already twenty-six years of age when he reached California, but he seemed to be in no hurry to assume family obligations. It was in 1776, in San Luis Obispo, he chose as his wife Maria Antonia Lugo on the day of her birth and was content to wait until 1790 when she would be of marriageable age – and he would be forty-two. Their home was established in Monterey, according to Charles Howard Shinn's "Pioneer Spanish Families" published in Century Magazine in January of 1891.

Most famous of the children of Ignacio and Maria Antonia Vallejo, was Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who early won a place of promise in California history as director of colonization, and as defender of the northern frontier when the Russian settlement north of San Francisco Bay threatened the security of Spanish

California. But it is with a younger brother, Salvador, that Monterey is concerned.

Jose Manuel Salvador Vallejo was born January 11, 1814, in the capital city of Monterey in the province of Upper California, as it was known in those years. He was the eleventh of thirteen children and was named for his maternal grandfather, Francisco Salvador Lugo.

When Salvador was four years of age, there occurred the attack (November 20 to 27, 1818) upon Monterey by Hyppolyte de Bouchard, the former pirate from Buenos Aires.

Of his boyhood, Salvador writes that he learned to read and write in a private school with an enrollment of about 60 boys. He says it was taught by Jose Pena and Manuel Toca. Bancroft lists Manuel Jose Toca as master of a school in Santa Barbara as early as 1795. He also took music lessons from a talented Indian named Cantor.

Salvador's niece, Guadalupe Vallejo, daughter of Jose de Jesus Vallejo, wrote this about her uncle:

"An educated young gentleman well skilled in many arts and handicrafts, he could ride, of course, as well as the best cowboy of the Southwest, and with more grace; and he could throw the lasso so expertly that I have never heard of any American who was able to equal it. He could also make soap, pottery, and bricks, burn lime, tan hides, cut out and put together a pair of shoes, make candles, roll cigars, and do a great number of things that belong to different trades." This quotation was also taken from Century magazine of 1890.

Very often one hears the comment, "They didn't have fine things in California in the early days" or some such remark. The following note on the possessions of Salvador and Maria de Carrillo Vallejo makes these statements incorrect. When the home was established near the plaza in Sonoma, "Dona Maria Vallejo took from the red leather-covered chest that she had brought with her, religious prints and intricate embroideries to relieve the bareness of the walls." As prosperity came to the Vallejos, imported furniture and objects of art were added, so that visitors frequently commented in surprise. In 1846, Edward Bryant referred to the air of comfort he found in the home of the general: "The parlor was furnished with handsome chairs, sofas, mirrors, and tables of mahogany frame work and a fine piano, the first I have seen in the

country. Several paintings and some superior engravings ornamented the walls.”

In 1844 Salvador Vallejo was given the title of “Captain de Defensores” and was expected to build up the provincial defenses. But he soon turned his attention to pursuits of peace.

Salvador’s oldest sister was Maria Isadora Soberanes. Her daughter Maria Ignacia Soberanes had married Dr. Edward Turner Bale, an English surgeon who resided for some time in Monterey. It was Dr. and Mrs. Bale who brought the piano now in the Stevenson House, to the Soberanes family in Monterey.

Salvador Vallejo died at the age of 62 years, at the home of his brother in Sonoma early in the morning of February 17, 1876. He is buried beside his wife, Maria, in the Tulucay Cemetery near the city of Napa.