

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 17, 1951

Beyond Rough and Ready Is Timbuctoo

And we went to Timbuctoo! Beyond Rough and Ready a few miles is Timbuctoo, a name which has always had an air of mystery about it and has never seemed to be just real. Timbuctoo was once a large camp in the Mother Lode country. In the autumn of 1848 prospectors dug "boots full o' gold" from a ravine at the location. News traveled fast and one old timer described the strike thus: "By nex candlelight a roarin' camp was borned."

The miners called their new camp Timbuctoo. They laid out streets and trading posts, saloons and hotels crowded each other for a mile and by 1852 there was even a Chinatown.

Today, one author writes Timbuctoo lies stripped and naked, stripped of gold and naked of buildings; that is of all but one abandoned stone and brick store. A sign on the wall tells that it was Stewart's store, and announces that it was also a saloon, a Wells Fargo office, a post office and that it dealt in boots, hats and miners' supplies and was a gold-dust exchange.

In Grass Valley we detoured off the main street to take a look at the former residence of Lola Montez, an ancient looking building, very weather beaten and almost hidden by a heavy growth of vines. Lola arrived in Grass Valley in 1853 and settled herself in what was then a little mountain camp. For two years she was hostess to many famous guests in the house which now bears her name. While in Grass Valley she discovered the talented little daughter of boarding housekeeper Lotta Crabtree, and started her on the road to fame and fortune.

Motoring through beautiful Lake County in the rain, we arrived in the late evening to spend the night on the shores of Clear Lake. The following morning we visited Sonoma Mission Historical State Monument and the Vallejo Home State Historical Monument, to complete our tour of the Mother Lode and the State Monuments.

The Sonoma Mission occupies one acre of ground within the city of Sonoma. It is a complete restoration, and is no longer used for church services but as a museum. In the former monastery wing there are collections of historical items relating to the early

history of the mission and of the families who were early day settlers in Sonoma.

Mission San Francisco Solano, now generally spoken of as Sonoma Mission, was the last of the chain, founded July 4, 1823. It was the final virile thrust of the missionary spirit in California, and was politically forced (without permission of the church superiors), by the encroachments of the Russians, then established at Fort Ross. The life of the mission was short, for it was declared "without value" in 1845.

Lachryma Montis built in 1851 by General Vallejo as a home for himself and his family, is truly a beauty spot. The home is a two story wooden structure with kitchen and servants' quarters in a detached building at rear of the main house. A very charming garden surrounds it and there is a chalet, which is now the museum. On the hillside above the house is the reservoir which supplied the water not only for the Vallejos but for the entire city of Sonoma in the early 1850s.

Mrs. Madie Brown, the curator, met us and conducted us through the museum and the home. In the museum is a wealth of historical possessions of the Vallejo family. There is the General's library of beautifully bound books bought for him in New York by Thomas Oliver Larkin for \$1,000.

Many of them were printed by Lockwood and Son in Paris, dated 1838. His dictionary printed in Spanish and published in France in 1824, has written in the front in the General's own handwriting, "1847, La Bear robbed me of this dictionary" but evidently it was restored to him later.

Everywhere one looked there were reminders of Monterey, for the Vallejo family was closely connected with the early history here.

In one exhibit case there was a small white sack marked "a bit of dirt from General Vallejo's birthplace in Monterey." It is said that once when he visited Monterey and stood in Colton Hall to make a speech, he said that he was standing on his birthplace. But we have not been able to discover in all our reading just where in Monterey he was born, but the date was January 1, 1814. He learned to read and write in a private school here taught by Jose Pena and Manuel Toca and he took music lessons from a talented Indian named Cantor.

Recently the General Vallejo Memorial Association has been organized in Sonoma, with the following by-law: The purpose of this Association shall be the complete furnishing of the General Vallejo Home, Lachryma Montis, now a State Monument." Already they have had returned one of the original bedroom sets and some of the "parlor" furniture, including a piano, has found its way back to the home.