

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **At Tejon Ranch**

After a most satisfactory tour through the Fort Tejon we realized that the actual building and plans for the fort were a great deal different from the construction of our old buildings in Monterey. Evidently the construction work had been done by ships' carpenters from the East Coast – that is, all the wood work, while the adobe brick had been made on the reservation, the rock for the foundation had been quarried a short distance away on a hill side and the iron work made in the fort's blacksmith shop.

Fort Tejon had its own saw mill, the machinery being brought in by the Army from Benecia. All wood work is morticed together and wooden pegs are used instead of nails. Louis Wakefield, the ranger in charge informed us that more than 55,000 adobe brick have been made since the start of the restoration program. All the adobe brick available have been used in reconstruction of new brick with the addition of some preservative materials. Much of the flooring in No. 1 barracks is the original and the fireplace brick is the original. This brick was made by a man named Mutah – no doubt a native of the country.

In the original fort there were six houses, of which number one has been completely restored but not furnished. Mr. Wakefield explained that for at least 60 or 70 years the buildings had been without windows or doors; but a couple of the frames had been preserved and these were used as models for the new ones.

Work of reconstruction of the historic fort was started in March of 1948, under the supervision of the California State Park Commission. Originally there were 210 acres in the reservation which the state is endeavoring to recover. At present there are five acres with much of the most important building sites lying outside the temporary fenced in area. We were shown much material, such as early photographs, documents and reference material, all of which are helping tremendously in the restoration program. General Mansfield, an early day Army officer at the fort, left a key or sketch of El Tejon which has been and will continue to be of inestimable value to the workers.

It is an interesting fact that 15 officers who served at Fort Tejon during its active period later became generals in the war between the States. Eight served in

the Northern forces and seven in the Southern. Edward Fitzgerald Beale, who was Commissioner of Indian Affairs for California and Nevada, was the first man to carry gold back to Washington from California. He had arrived in California on board the "Congress" with Walter Colton. He later acquired the great Tejon ranch and it remained in his family until 1912.

After the abandonment of the fort in 1864, the buildings were used as ranch houses, residences, stables and sheds for the Tejon Ranch property. Extensive bracing was installed by the Native Sons and Daughters in the fall of 1916. In 1939 the State of California through its division of Beaches and Parks acquired title to the five acres on which a number of the original buildings stood through a gift of the Tejon Ranch Company.

During the winter of 1947-1948 a permanent State Ranger was placed in charge to begin the ground work for future restoration. It was decided to begin with Barracks No. 1 whose outer walls were partially intact and then proceed with the officers' quarters at the upper end of the former parade grounds.

(More Tomorrow)