

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Her Hand in Marriage**

We have found a delightful story concerning the forefathers of General Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, born in Monterey, July 7, 1808 whose birthday is celebrated when we observe the anniversary each year of the raising of the American Flag at Custom House by John Drake Sloat on July 7, 1846. Although 78 years of age at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1886, General Vallejo came to Monterey and delivered an address in Spanish, his native tongue, and raised the Spanish and American flags.

In the earliest days of the Spanish occupation of California, when it was very sparsely settled, a young sergeant was at that time sent to carry a dispatch to one of the then remote western missions. After a long and hard day's ride, so the story goes, he arrived at a small rancho, (now in San Luis Obispo County) occupied by a young couple who had been married a year before, and who lived there alone and whose nearest neighbors were nearly one hundred miles away. About midnight the young man was aroused by his host who asked him to assist in "taking a census," a new duty for him and under very peculiar circumstances.

There being no physician present, the young sergeant and the young husband ushered into the world a tiny seniorita. When the sergeant placed her in her mother's arms, he took her hand and said to the parents: "I demand the hand of this little lady in marriage," to which they laughingly assented and gave their promise. The next day he resumed his journey, and in about a week reached his destination, where he attended to his business and after buying a few presents, he returned and again stopped overnight at the house of his young "fiancée" on the way to the post where he was stationed.

About fourteen years later he was sent on a similar journey to escort one of the mission fathers and again stopped overnight at the same rancho, where there were quite a number of olive branches around the table. Walking up to the oldest girl, he took her hand and said "I have come to claim you as my wife, for your parents betrothed us here some fourteen years ago. I have brought the padre along, who is to unite us together."

The young lady was overwhelmed and bewildered with astonishment, not remembering that she had ever received a proposal of marriage. She appealed to her parents, who assured her it was nevertheless true. Accordingly the promise was carried out. The sergeant continued his journey, and on his return his young bride accompanied him home.

In due time there was another increase in the census, in which that sergeant was interested; and a boy appeared upon the scene who grew up to manhood, bright and intelligent and as brave as any of the chivalrous dons of Old Spain. He became a soldier, and was educated in military science fitted to command, and the flag of Spain was replaced by the flag of the Republic of Mexico.

When California, neglected and abused by the central government of Mexico, and an army of convicts was sent to govern California, the movement was resisted, so Major Sherman said in his address of the day on July 7, 1886.

By this time the young soldier was old enough to say: "Never will I consent to place my native land again under the government of a monarchy or appeal to a European power for protection; but if it is our destiny that we shall have to apply somewhere for protection, let us go to that great Republic of our own continent where true freedom and protection exist for all – the United States of America.

That man, the offspring of that romantic birth and marriage, who raised the flags of Spain and Mexico at the celebration in 1886 – Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.