

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Monterey's Early Adobes

In the early days in Monterey it was the custom of families to build their adobe homes close together as a means of protection. In the vicinity of the Casa Buelna, about which we wrote in the last Diary, was the home of Senora Maria Antonia Lopez, the ruins of which could for many years be seen on the Mesa near the adobe of Senora Llarra Carmen Baretto. These ruins have now almost entirely disappeared and can only be located after the most minute search.

The Baretto home has passed through many hands since it was owned by Senora Llarra. It was formerly owned by Senora Llarra. It was formerly owned by the late Miss Sarah Parke; then Mrs. Harry Toulmin who sold it to Mrs. Robinson. It was recently purchased by the George Harts of Pebble Beach, who are in the process of making extensive alterations.

No longer can the ruined walls of the Alvitre adobe be seen from Fremont Street across from the cemetery. At the rear of this adobe we have been told, there was on the hill a chalk rock house. There is no trace of this home left.

The home of Frank Work was another of these family groups of adobes. It was built by the family of Avilas, later willed to Stephen Castro, and eventually fell into the hands of Mrs. Diaz-Tucker from whom Gouverneur Morris acquired it.

Then there was the group of Boronda adobes. One of these is the present home of Dr. and Mrs. Mast Wolfson. Another adobe built a little later than the first one more than 125 years ago, was torn down about 50 years ago to make room for a modern frame building. Just below these old casas, on the flat near El Estero, was the site of the original Presidio of Monterey.

The present Wolfson home is one of the earliest adobes in this group of family dwellings. It was built by Don Manuel de Boronda in 1817, and is still intact on Boronda Lane, a short street branching off of Sherman Lane, which in turn leads off of Fremont Street.

Don Manuel had come to Monterey as a corporal in the Spanish army during the early days of the Spanish colonization movement. He became the first

schoolmaster in San Francisco in 1796. He taught without remuneration from May, 1796, to June, 1797, when he moved to Monterey.

For many years Boronda was kept exceedingly busy with his activities as carpenter, schoolteacher, and soldier, in and around Monterey. When he finally retired from the Spanish service, Boronda took up 12 to 14 acres, located directly back of the San Carlos church, so "his women folk would not have far to walk to church." Here, with the aid of friends, and Indians, he built what is now known as the Boronda Adobe. The original building consisted of one small room in the center with two large rooms on either side. The beams were axe-hewn and some are twisted. The building, which is 87 feet long by 20 feet wide, follows the slope of the land.

Boronda was one of four retired soldiers who built the first adobe dwellings outside the San Carlos Presidio Church walls. As the other three adobes are no longer standing, the Casa de Boronda is probably the oldest adobe residence in Monterey.

In 1817, Gen. Soto appointed Manuel de Boronda to conduct the first school for boys in Monterey. This school was held in Casa Boronda, and was supported for the most part by Soto's money.