

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Casa Matema-Glass House

The Monterey County Historical Society learned about the Glass House, historically known as Casa Matema of the Vallejo family, at the last meeting of the group held in the school house at Moss Landing. Although the old adobe dwelling is in Monterey County, and not Santa Cruz, the members of the Pajaro Valley Historical Society are particularly interested in its restoration and preservation.

The ruins of this building stand on a bluff opposite the golf course, about two and one-half miles south of Watsonville, on Highway No. 1. The building is approximately 40x26 feet, and of two-story construction. The first floor was of hard, clean-swept earth, with a fireplace and stairway at the southern end of the structure, or toward the highway. The second floor was used as a dance hall, and the floor of rough boards was still quite intact as late as the early part of 1947, in spite of the dilapidated condition of one end of the building, according to the information received through research from the State Park Commission and the California State Chamber of Commerce. The site now bears No. 387 in the State landmark registration.

In the house the rafters and beams were all hand-hewn, and on an outside wall to the east can be seen, or rather could have been seen in years gone by, some of the original decoration and color.

The building and the grant of the Bolsa de San Cayetano are in Monterey County, while Watsonville is across the river in Santa Cruz County, to clarify the location.

The ancestry of the Vallejo family for several centuries supplied distinguished names in the history of Spain. One of the family was a Cortez in the conquest of Mexico, and became governor of the Province of Panuco. Another, Don Alonzo Vallejo, commanded troops on board the vessel in which the royal commissioner Bobadillo came over to take Columbus a prisoner to Spain.

The branch that emigrated to America was of the Jesuit order, and its genealogical record was filed in the Spanish archives of California in 1806.

The California branch of the family settled in Mexico in the early 1700's, where Don Ignacio Vicente Ferrar Vallejo was born in 1748 at Guadalajara. He was educated for the church, but upon coming of age turned to a military career. Led by the spirit of adventure, he came to California with Father Serra in 1769. Continuing north with the famous Padre, he was employed for a number of years as military commissioner and engineer of planning, and he superintended the building of fortifications, laying out towns, and directing the construction of irrigation canals, and waterworks. Indeed, he was California's first civil engineer!

His military life proved to be brilliant:

1774 – He arrived in San Diego with Lt. Ortega,

1776 – Leave of absence from military service,

1781 – Employed at San Carlos, having much skill and energy in directing agriculture and irrigation work,

1785 – Appointed commissionada of San Jose – reinstated in '87 for 10 years in a Monterey camp,

1789 – Made Corporal,

1793 and '95 – Corporal of the escolta at Soledad – returned to San Jose as superintendent of flax culture,

1795-96 – Corporal of the guards,

1799 – Commissionada at Branciforto (Santa Cruz) for several years,

1805 – Sergeant,

1807 – Sargento distinguido on account of his certificate of gentle blood,

1824 – Sent to San Luis Obispo in connection with Indian revolt; asked same year for retirement from military service, which apparently was not granted, although he obtained a grant of the San Cayetano rancho on which he had cattle for some years.

(To Be Continued)