

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Vallejo Family

The "Glass House" or Casa Matema of the Vallejo family which is in ruins across the highway from the Watsonville golf course, was built in 1820 by Don Ignacio Vallejo. Don Ignacio had married Senorita Maria Antonio Lugo in 1776 in San Luis Obispo. They lived principally in Monterey, but built Casa Matema in Pajaro Valley in Northern Monterey County, where he had thousands of heads of cattle grazing on the "verdant plains" according to Fra Crespi's diary.

The Pajaro Valley Historical Society recently met in the school house at Moss Landing, with members of the Pajaro Valley group as their guests. After a number of talks by various members of both groups, a trip was made to view the piles of old adobe brick left standing on the hillside, all that remains of Casa Matema. The Watsonville society hopes to eventually restore the house and make it a state landmark.

The Vallejo's had 13 children, five sons and eight daughters; Don Jose de Jesus, Don Juan Antonio, Don Mariano Guadalupe (who became prominent in California history) being the best known of the sons.

Among the daughters were: Encarnacion, who married Don J.B.R. Cooper, an Englishman, who arrived in Monterey in 1822; Rosalia, who became the wife of Jacob Leese, the first white man to settle in Yerba Buena, now San Francisco; and Prudenciana who married Jose Amesti, who came early to Monterey and was given a grant of land in Pajaro Valley. Descendants of the latter couple, still living in Pajaro Valley are the Amesti, Aranos and Pinto families, all prominent residents. The Cooper and Leese family also have a number of descendants living in Monterey.

The Bolsa de San Cayetano was granted to J.J. Vallejo on Oct. 25, 1824. In the original petition of Vallejo he had asked for two sites at San Cayetano, stating that his father had put cattle there 11 years before (1813), and that four years later (1817) Don Ignacio (his father) and Dolores Pico had asked for a grant and obtained it; but Pico, by failing to fulfill the conditions imposed, had forfeited his rights, while the petitioners had use for the whole tract.

The Glass House stands on a bluff overlooking the Pajaro Valley. In ruins now, it formerly had a balcony on

three sides overlooking the plains, where Vallejo could see his herds of cattle grazing.

When Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was building his home in Sonoma, he sent to Spain for windows. Upon their arrival they did not fit, so were sent down to the Port of Monterey to be used to enclose the balcony at Casa Matema to shield it from the brisk breezes from Monterey Bay. The sunshine on this windows, incidentally the first glass window panes in Pajaro Valley, it is said, made it look like a ball of fire, therefore the house acquired the name of the "Glass House."

It has long been the aim of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association to restore the Glass House to its original lines and make of it a replica of a California ranch home in the days of the Dons, with appropriate plantings for a Spanish garden.

Mr. A.J. Trafton, the owner of the property, is anxious to see this old relic of pastoral California preserved, with appropriate driveways in and out of the place, in which, we are sure, all historical societies in California would heartily agree.