

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell Library

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San Jose Early Days

Today we are writing about San Jose. Many of us rush thorough that city on our way to San Francisco by train or motor and do not realized that San Jose, in the heart of the Santa Clara Valley, has a tremendous amount of California history wrapped up in its bustle and enterprise, crowded streets and modern structures, with few genuine reminders of the past. A few historic markers have been placed by the city and the historical society at points of interest, including the home of Gov. Peter Burnett, first governor of the state after the Constitutional Convention held in Monterey in 1849.

Actually San Jose is rich in chronicle. It is the oldest civic settlement in California, El Pueblo San Jose de Guadalupe, founded November 29, 1777, by Don Jose Joaquin de Moraga, commandant of the Presidio of San Francisco. It was situated on the Guadalupe River, three-quarters of a league south of Santa Clara, and was named for St. Joseph, patron of the California establishments.

Fourteen sailors came with their families 66 persons in all. Only a few of their names now remain to recall these first settlers: Ignacio Archuleta, Manuela Gonzales, Tiburcio Vasquez, and probably a woman, Gertrudes Peralta. Four of the nine soldiers were Cpt. Valerio Mesa, Serafino Lugo, Juan Manuel Villeta and Antonio Romero. With place names or memories few of these are honored today!

According to recordings each settler received a lot, a few acres of land and use of the commons. No more than 50 cattle were allowed each colonist; but the settlers were given one mule, and two each of cows, oxen, hens, sheep and goats, besides farm implements—all to be repaid in produce, except the \$10 monthly wages and daily rations.

The first year the Guadalupe River rose and destroyed the crops which these first colonists had painstakingly planted. When the pueblo was little more than 10 years old, Gov. Pedro Fagea permitted the settlers to be moved a mile and a quarter south on higher land surrounding the present City Hall Park, then called "The Plaza."

In December, 1794, California's first school was established in a granary, with Manuel Vargas as the

teacher. Five years later Father Magin Catali, with 200 Indians neophytes, set out the Alameda with three rows of willow tress connecting San Jose with Mission Santa Clara, to encourage he "pleblanos" to attend Mass, by walking or riding in the shade to church at Santa Clara. These trees are fast disappearing to make way for "progress" along this once beautiful street lined with handsome and expensive homes, now being taken over by business houses.

Important building began in San Jose in 1798 with the erection of the "juzgado" or courthouse, which existed until 1850. The pueblo's first church was St. Joseph's built in 1803—the cornerstone was laid on July 12—by Father Jose Viader of Mission Sana Clara, Lieut. Macario Castro and others. In 1822 San Jose built a jail, and prisoners from the community which later became San Francisco were sent there.

We find noted in several of our reference books that the first foreign settler in San Jose was John Gilroy, a Scotsman, who came in 1814. Thomas W. Doak arrived in 1833 and was the first American. In the spring of 1846 Judge Daniels opened the first English school in the courthouse, in which there was also a jail.

The Methodists came to San Jose in November of 1846 when Rev. Elihu Roots camped on the edge of town and preached the first Protestant sermon. He was followed by the Methodist Episcopal, South, group.

They built a church at the corner of Second and San Fernando streets. Mrs. Fremont Older in her book published by the Book Club of California, says that a "first "marriage took place when Alcalde Burton in 1847, united Eliza Williams of the Donner party to Thomas Fulmer, and the records say that the ceremony was performed in the pear orchard of Mission San Jose.

By unanimous vote the Constitutional Convention, meeting here in Monterey in 1849, chose San Jose as California's capital. Monterey had been the capital through the Spanish and Mexican regimes. A half-finished adobe building on South Market street was bought for the capitol. At California's first inaugural ball Governor and Mrs. Burnett and General and Mrs. John C. Fremont received the guests.

The last meeting of the Legislature was held in San Jose in 1851, for the capital was then moved to Vallejo. Three establishments of learning were founded in San Jose that same year: The University of Santa Clara, Notre Dame Academy and the College of the Pacific,

then known as Wesleyan College. Here was given the first instruction in medicine on the Pacific Coast.

It took nine hours and cost \$32 to travel from San Jose to San Francisco on a tri-weekly stage. The first telegraph line connected the two cities in 1852, and the first rail train went through in December of 1864.