

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Pajaro Valley

Although the Pajaro Valley was the home of some of the most prominent Spanish families in California, there has never been a very active organized effort to preserve their history and the old adobes which were their dwellings. Of the numerous ancient structures which were recorded as standing at the time of the American occupation, but few remain, at least in their original state.

One of these adobes that goes back to the very beginning of a romantic period in the life of the valley is Casa Materna, or the original home of the Vallejo family. Several years ago, the Pajaro Valley Historical Assn. and the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture planned to restore this historic home, now almost a complete ruin on a hillside across the highway from the Watsonville Country Club. For many years Casa Materna was known as the "Glass House" this designation from the glassed-in veranda which surrounded three sides of the building and visible from Mt. Madonna and a good portion of the Pajaro Valley while it stood. It is located in Monterey County and about two miles south of Watsonville.

Another adobe is the Hipilito house, which was built more than a hundred years ago on Vallejo's San Cayetano rancho about three miles from the original building, The third is the San Andros rancho home of Don Joaquin Castro, father of Rafael Castro of Aptos fame, and Martina Castro, who was probably the first and may have been the only Spanish-California woman to take up a land grant in her own name. Her story is interesting and entertaining. She married Michael Lodge, a native of Ireland who had come to Monterey in 1822, she went to Gov. Jose Figueroa and asked for a grant on Soquel Creek supposed to contain some 1,900 acres, having first obtained permission from Jose Antonio Robles, alcalde of Branciforte, to plant crops and erect a house on the Property.

When Figueroa complied with her request, Martina later asked for and was given Soquel Augmentation of 32,702 acres, in addition to the original grant.

Probably the first permanent settler in the Pajaro Valley was Antonio Maria Castro, who in 1820 applied for and received the Vega del Pajaro rancho. He was a soldier of

1780 who had retired in 1809. In the year that he received his grant he was one of the five electors or their alternates named to choose a "diputacion" for the province. This, notes Bancroft, was the first legislature in California. There is no record to show how long the Antonio Castro adobe stood after the Americans arrived in the valley.

Another name prominently connected with Monterey and the Pajaro Valley was that of Manuel Jimeno. In Monterey the Jimeno home, was on the site now occupied by the San Carlo Hotel. He married Augustias de la Guerra y Noriega. After his death, in Mexico in-1853, so the story goes, she married Dr. James Ord, a surgeon Company F of the Third U. S. Artillery, under contract and not with the regular army.

The elements, treasure hunters and progress, with a big "P," have brought ruin to the Jimeno adobe site of which was the present Curiel ranch near the Chitteneden highway, Jimeno, the grantee of Salsipuedes rancho in 1835, was secretary of state under two governors and acting governor more than once.

Juan Maria Anzar, brother of the well-known friar, was grantee of Aromitas in 1835. He married Maria Antonia Castro, daughter of Gen. Jose Castro. She was the lovely heroine of Richard Walton Tully's "Rose of the Rancho," a one-time Belasco stage success. Another house now stands on the foundation near Aromas of the Rose's adobe home, and pear trees planted by the Anzars were still flourishing the family orchard a short while ago.