

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Castro Adobe

The Pajaro Valley adobes that still remain are interesting reminders of the days of the Dons of California. Nothing is left but bits of the foundation of the ancient home of Sebastian Rodriguez, on who's valuable Bolsa del Pajaro rancho the City of Watsonville was built. His successful struggle to hold the property against all comers during the regime of one governor after another, And from the land hungry American squatters, forms one of the most absorbing chapters in the history of land-grant litigation in the state.

The San Andres rancho home of Don Joaquin Castro, father of Rafael Castro of Aptos fame, is the largest and best preserved of the adobes in Pajaro Valley. This grant was to Joaquin Castro in 1833, although he seems to have occupied the lands for ten years before that date. Married to Maria Amador, and for his second wife, Rosario Briones, he was the father of a large family which later became prominently identified with the Monterey Bay district.

The official order provided that Castro was to have the property with the accompanying right to the common lands of Villa Branciforte and stipulated that neither the grantee nor his heirs should divide or alienate the title in any way "except for that sorrowful cause given by death."

The first home built by Joaquin Castro was close to the bay, near where the railroad now runs. Trouble with the Indians, however, resulted in frequent attacks on the place, made it necessary to select a new location. Consequently, the big adobe, said to have cost \$30,000, a fortune in that day, was erected inland on one of the hills overlooking the beautiful Pajaro Valley, according to the Motorland story of 1935.

The structure is 30 by 100 feet. In the second story is the large ballroom of the mansion, 25 by 50 feet, its floor worn thin by the dancing feet of three generations. Vines of the Mission grape extend the whole length of the structure in front and soften the lines of the old house.

This lovely old adobe, still in excellent condition, stands on a hillside on the San Andres Rancho, three miles from Watsonville, and commands a view of the beautiful Pajaro Valley. We have visited this old adobe

dwelling a number of times and under the ownership of a number of different residents and have always found it to be delightful and a joy to those who were occupying it at the time. They in turn have returned our call and have studied of methods in Monterey of restoration, preservation and furnishing of an historic adobe building.

The settlers of the large ranchos of the Pajaro Valley were government officers. They were in touch with Monterey and with the political movements and social life of the Old Capitol - Monterey. Some of them maintained pretentious homes at Monterey, a number of which are still standing; but none have survived the gnawing teeth of the changes that time has brought with progress, better than the old adobe residence of Juan Josquin Castro on the San Andres rancho near Watsonville.

The Hipilito or Pope adobe was built about 1822 by Ignacio Vallejo, or by his son. Jose, on another part of the San Cayetano Ranch about four miles from Watsonville. In 1906 it was removed, brick by brick and tile by tile, by the late Dr. Saxton T. Pope, and restored along the original lines except that it now has but one story. The children of Dr. and Mrs. Pope were delighted, for the adobe was in their garden and had been put there as a playhouse for their particular use. A Spanish wall, tiled on top, typical of the Spanish period, surrounds the adobe house and the whole assemblage bears no hint of the four-mile journey the Hipilito residence had made in order to be reconstructed on Blackburn street, some 200 feet from the Chittenden highway entrance to Watsonville and within two blocks. of the entrance to the city via the Hecker Pass road over ML Madonna.

Shortly after Dr. Pope's death, Mrs. Pope sold the home and the adobe playhouse and came to make her home in the Mission Tract in Carmel, where she still lives. She is a devoted member of the Monterey History and Art Association and still interested in gardening although she is no longer able to attend the meetings.

In our next issue of the Diary we will write of the history of the "Glass House" or Casa Materna of the Vallejo family.