

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Casa Materna**

Undoubtedly the oldest of the several adobe houses in the Pajaro Valley is the Casa Materna of the Vallejos, but it is by far not the best preserved. The motorist traveling from Monterey to Watsonville could easily pass the adobe ruins across the highway from the golf course near Loma Linda, without noticing the pile of brick that remains.

San Cayetano on which the house of Vallejo stood, was settled by Ignacia- Vicente Ferrer Vallejo, a pure-blood Spaniard of Jalisco, Mexico. He was founder of the family and father of the general, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the most prominent native Californian of his time. His first recorded appearance in the province was at San Diego, with Lt. Ortega of Portola fame, in 1774.

In 1824 he was granted Bolsa de San Cayetano, across the river from the present site of Watsonville, although the records state that for several years before he had kept cattle on the property. Among his children who became identified with the Pajaro Valley were Jose, Juan Antonio, Mariano, Prudencia. The adobe is still known as the "Glass House," so named because the veranda of the second story at one time was enclosed in glass, which had been imported from Spain. Old residents remember that it once bore a weathered black and white sign with the letters, "General Vallejo."

Casa Materna was probably built about 1820 and was 18x44 feet and the ceiling of the second story is 18 feet high. The roof-beam, now gone, was in one piece of hewn redwood and in 1933, when Motorland reported on its condition, it was still in excellent condition. All the timbers, including the door and window frames were also in good condition at that time.

But wind, rain, time and vandalism have taken their toll and treasure hunters have long been active there. First the ground floor; of dirt or some cementlike substance, was destroyed by them, one hole, large enough to bury a horse, was evidence of their work. There is no knowledge that hidden wealth has ever been found, but even to this day folks dig there — maybe just for the joy of digging.

The glass house was first damaged by the 1906 earthquake. The adobe stands on the southern rim of the Pajaro Valley proper. From this point one has the

impression of occupying a preferred place from which to take in the panorama of Father Crespi's "verdant and pleasant plain." - the "fresh green of the lettuce field, the strawberry patches, the darker shades of the orchards, the clustered roofs of Watsonville and Pajaro, and the forested Santa Cruz Mountain.

Vallejo arrived in Monterey to be made military commissioner and later held many important positions in early Monterey and the central coastal area; was long the only civil engineer in the province, laying out irrigation works of Missions and pueblos and becoming owner of valuable estates.

Ignacio Vallejo married Francisca Lugo and they were the parents of thirteen children, the most prominent being General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, and Prudenciana, who married Jose Amesti, early Pajaro Valley ranchero; Jose de Jesus Vallejo and his brother Juan Antonio were also early Pajaro Valley ranchers, and another sister, Maria Jospha Vallejo, was the mother of Governor Alvarado one of the early Spanish governors, who resided in Monterey and owned considerable real estate here.

Is our face red! In our Peninsula Diary of a few days ago when we enumerated the old and historic adobes which still exist in Monterey, we failed to include the Casa Amesti, the beautiful residence on Polk street which was formerly the home of the late Mrs. Francis Elkins.

The National Foundation is now the owner through the terms of the will of Mrs. Elkins and now is known as the Old Capital Club, its membership including many prominent men of the Monterey Peninsula.

The building, considered one of the best examples of Monterey-Colonial architecture, is often pictured in national publications and admired by architects and artists alike who visit Monterey. We regret most sincerely that we failed to name Casa Amesti in the list of the 39 adobes still existing in Monterey. Dr. Remsen Bird, a member of the Old Capital club, drew this omission to our attention. but we had already discovered our inexcusable mistake.