

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Ruined Adobes Restored

General Vallejo's old homestead, the adobe dwelling near Petaluma, with almost five acres of land, was deeded on Nov. 28, 1910 to the trustees of Petaluma Parlor No. 27 of the Native Sons of the Golden West. It was given with the understanding that the property was to be forever held by the Petaluma Parlor and serve as a memorial to William D. Bliss who had purchased the property in 1896. The Petaluma Parlor maintained a museum with a caretaker for some years at the Old Adobe where interested visitors were welcome.

After the State Park system was established to care for areas of scenic, recreational and historic significance, Doge Young of Petaluma contacted the State Park officials and on behalf of Petaluma Parlor offered the ancient adobe building and adjoining 4.9 acres to the state. It was found that the restricted clauses of the gift of William D Bliss heirs had clouded the title. This had to be cleared before the state would accept the old adobe. The work of clearing the title was accepted by Lafayette Carpenter of Petaluma.

When the necessary quit claim deeds were received, the state of California acquired the title to the Petaluma adobe and the surrounding land which had been owned by Vallejo since the early 1800's. This was on August 15, 1950, and when the deed was filed Jan. 2, 1951, Vallejo's old Petaluma adobe home became a part of the California State Park system.

The first restoration work by the state involved raising and resetting a 300-ton wall which had shifted during the years. The walls are now being reinforced with stove-pipes filled with steel and concrete and inserted into the interior of the wall. The walls vary in height, from 20 to 23 feet. Adobe bricks are also being used, remodeled in pioneer fashion from the ancient crumbled bricks and from neighboring soil.

One of the most interesting features of the old adobe is the fireplace, one of the earliest in California. It was built of the larger adobe bricks with a large hearth stone in back of the chimney.

There is still much restoration to be done but when it is finished there will be yet one more place for visitors and home-folk of California to visit and become better acquainted with California's great history.

The Division of Beaches and Parks' request for \$70,000 for the Vallejo adobe near Petaluma for the 1956-57 fiscal year was approved. Newton B. Drury, the chief of the division, said that \$50,000 would be used for additional land to develop a proper setting, \$10,000 for a water system and \$10,000 for additional restoration work. That is the kind of money which the division has been spending in Monterey for the last number of years and like sums will be spent in future years. So let's give a vote of thanks to the division and its chief, Newton B. Drury, and to the members of the park commission.

The old Petaluma adobe, the house with a past under the care of the State of California, is destined to be a house with a future. It is a landmark of time; a milestone in California's and industrial past and an interesting relic and fitting memorial to two men: one, Henry Bliss, pioneer lawyer and one time owner of the house, and the other, General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the builder not only of the house but of an empire, which he saw happily become a part of the United State of America.

William D. Bliss purchased the Vallejo adobe for \$30,000. Mr. Bliss mother had been the wife of the historian George Bancroft.

While the old adobe was still the property of Bliss and the land of the original Petaluma Rancho was assessed for not less than three million dollars, it was visited by its builder. At that time, the spring of 1880, Vallejo wrote his son, Dr. Platon Vallejo who lived in Vallejo: "The other day I went to Petaluma and I ordered a picture-taken of what was my old house which I had not visited for some 30 years and though almost in ruins, it nevertheless doesn't fail to show what it was in those times. It is a sad memory but one bows to that which says that "all is perishable in this world." I compare this old relic with myself and the comparison is an exact one, ruins and dilapidation. What a difference between then and now. Then youth, strength and riches, now age and poverty."