

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Solano County Adobe

An historical adobe/ home known as the last northern outpost of the Spanish culture in California has been offered to the Solano County Historical Society by two of the county's supervisors who recently purchased the acreage upon which the ancient structure stands. The supervisors, William Goheen of Vallejo and D. A. Mowers of Vacaville, have offered to donate the historic adobe for restoration as a shrine.

The adobe is known as the Casa Pena and has been owned by Miss Anita Lyons, a descendant of the Vaca-Pena families. Most of the land - 59 acres - will remain in the name of the supervisors while a portion, that part on which the adobe building stands, will be a gift to the society.

The crumbling adobe is located on Highway 40, between Fairfield and Vacaville. It was built in 1842 as the home of Juan Felipe Pena, a prominent early landowner. The property was part of Rancho Putos, a land grant by Gov. Pio Pico to Pena and Manuel Cabeza Vaca of ten square leagues - or about 30 square miles. A portion of that rancho has remained in the family through a series of descendants to Miss Lyons.

Members of the historical society have suggested use of the adobe as a county museum and as a roadside stop for travelers on Highway 40. It is regarded as a potential tourist attraction.

The Kern County Historical Society has just dedicated a historical marker near the site of the Mountain House station on The Butterfield Overland Mail route. Kern County has marked all six of its Butterfield stations, all of which were in Tulare County, except Fort Tejon, when the route was in operation. Fort Tejon was a half mile over the line. In Tulare County the Tule River (Porterville) and Visalia stations are marked and registration papers are being prepared for the Fountain Springs station. Highway 65, west of Lindsay, uses part of the old Butterfield route and this has been recognized by the Division of Beaches and Parks as a historic site. When the extension of the highway has been definitely located a marker will be placed.

The Butterfield stage line was prominently connected with the first overland mail service in California, which operated from 1859 to 1861, carrying mail and

passengers from the Missouri River Valley to San Francisco. On August 31 of this year San Diego celebrated the arrival of the first mail pouch of the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line - the "Jackass Mail" - so named because it arrived on mule back. It was just 100 years since the first mounted carrier reached the sleepy little Spanish-Mexican town that was just beginning to be Americanized. This was the first all-southern route - stage or mail - to the coast.

During the Spanish and Mexican periods of California history, there was irregular mail service from Loretto to Monterey, letters being carried by Indian runners or the infrequent trading ships. Most of the mail was either to the Missions or the commanders of the various military organizations. So many of the people were illiterate (except the wealthy families and the padres), that there was little use for any other mail facilities. There were no post offices in California, either under Spanish or Mexican regimes.

An act of Congress approved Aug. 14, 1848 authorized Postmaster General C. Johnson to appoint an agent to establish post offices and name postmasters for California. William Van Voorhies was named agent. One pouch of mail arriving on the old steamer "California" constituted the first mail to arrive for all of California. Voorhies was instructed to establish post offices in San Francisco, Monterey, San Diego, San Pedro, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. The rate of postage was 40 cents for letters not exceeding half an ounce going east and 12 1/2 cents in California.