

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 31, 1958

### **Monterey's Casa Buelna**

The Buelna adobe home on the Monterey mesa is to have a much belated historic marker. The directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn. voted that privilege to Mr. & Mrs. Leo Ross at the January meeting.

Casa Buelna was built during the years 1881-1821 by Antonio Buelna, Mexican soldier turned school teacher. It is a two-story dwelling which is one of the oldest in Monterey. Buelna first settled in San Francisco. In 1801 he owned a rancho near Monterey. He taught school here and in San Jose and conducted a select school for girls in Casa Buelna part of the time.

The names of Buelna and Boronda are often linked together in the activities of that day as they were great friends and neighbors.

On the map of 1848, the house is described as on a "hill beyond the church." In 1851 it was assessed to Elario On Wilner (Buelna) \$20. In 1855, it was assessed to the same for \$100.

A son of Buelna, Antonio, was a soldier and later Alcalde of Monterey in 1831.

The building has been entirely restored and is now the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. Ross. Additional property has been added and a well-kept and extensive garden has been added. Each Christmas a huge tree has been lighted with hundreds of colored lights which may be seen and admired from many parts of the city.

Mrs. Willis Abbey of Pacific Grove, once told me the story of her mother's early childhood in the Carmel Valley, and in Monterey. Senora Maria de Los Angeles Boronda de Pombert, the mother of Mrs. Abbey, was a child of 12 years when she and her sister came to Monterey from their adobe home on the Laureles Rancho in the Carmel Valley, to attend school at Casa Buelna.

At the time the old adobe was owned and occupied by Senora Hillaria Buelna, who was the teacher. She was an intellectual lady of 60 odd years, and was fondly called Senora Llaría, because of her unselfishness, her wonderful character, and loving nature, and also to give her the dignity of a teacher, so it was said.

The home of Senora Llaría, so Mrs. Abbey recalled from many conversations with her mother, was frequented

by the elite and prominent residents of those times, all of whom loved her devotedly. She conducted her school for girls, many of them attending at the age of 9 years. They were taught reading, sewing, cooking and general housekeeping, and the cultural fineness of a real Spanish lady.

Many of the children attending the school were from families of the Pueblo of Monterey, and boarded by the day; but Marina and her sister spent the week there, returning to their valley home for weekends.

The Buelna home, where Senora Pombert went to school, was built true to type, "L shaped." A large sitting room was flanked at each end by a smaller bedroom, while the kitchen formed the bottom the "L". Apart from the house proper, but adjoining the kitchen were the chambers used by visiting relatives of Senora Llaría, so an early day newspaper clipping relates. A specious corridor ran around the outside, connecting all these rooms.

Another of Senora Llaría's means of support were the sheep which grazed on the mesa in rear of Casa Buelna. Yearly the sheep were shorn, and the wool sold. Several of the old mattresses made from this wool are still being used in households of members of the families.

When Senora Pombert died several years ago in her Pacific Grove home, she was 90 years of age. She had taken her first communion in Carmel Mission and was said to have been one of the first Caucasian children to be baptized in the Mission church. As a bride she had gone to Castroville where her husband Don Juan Pombert, operated a hotel for half a century. He was the son of Don Louis Pombert, sole survivor of an expedition from Canada to Monterey in the early part of the century.