

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Father Serra's Birthplace**

The Society of California Pioneers offered recently to make sure that Father Serra's birthplace off the Spanish coast is kept in good repair. John N. Rosekrans, president of the Society, told a committee from the supervisors' finance department of San Francisco that his group would maintain and manage the stone house on the Island of Mallorca as a society project. The city would continue to pay the Spanish property taxes on the home, which amounts to about \$8 a year.

The finance committee recommended that the board accept the society's offer.

Maintenance of the home in the village of Petra became a problem earlier this year when the city of San Francisco received a request for funds to make some repairs.

The birthplace of the padre who established the first line of missions in California became the property of San Francisco in 1932 when the Rotary Club of Petra acquired the old home and presented it to the city. It is estimated that the annual maintenance costs is about \$400. Rosekrans said also the society of pioneers will try to raise \$1,000 to build a covered walk way between the Serra home and a museum that has been built on an adjoining piece of property.

Mrs. Dina Moore Bowden, the city's ambassador without portfolio on the Spanish island of Mallorca, wrote to say that \$384.63 worth of repairs were urgently needed on the building. She also said that a neighbor woman had been cleaning the place for years without charge in gratitude for response to a prayer to Father Serra. Mrs. Bowden said it was only fair that the woman be paid in the future.

A number of years ago Mrs. Bowden, a native Californian and a former resident of San Francisco, made a visit to her native city and to the Peninsula. She arranged an exhibit in Carmel and in Monterey at Colton Hall of interesting items from Mallorca. During her stay she collected historical data here as well as pictures and items from the chain of missions in California for the museum adjoining the little white stone building in Petra which was Father Serra's birthplace.

The State Park Commission, assisted by the Nevada County Historical Society, recently dedicated and unveiled a bronze plaque in commemoration of the camps of Alpha and Omega, four miles east of Washington Junction on Highway 20. The Hon. Joseph R. Knowland, chairman of the Commission, was the principal speaker.

Two songs, "The Last Rose of Summer" and "Home Sweet Home," made popular by the world famous opera singer, Emma Nevada, who was born in Alpha, were sung. The Alpha-Omega plaque, which was received recently from the State Park Commission, has been mounted on a boulder that was hauled from the Omega Diggings by Bill Moranville, a Grass Valley lumber buyer. To stabilize the monument, a masonry base, in which a section of riveted pipe and a hydraulic nozzle were embedded, was constructed around the boulder by C. A. Netz.

The monument is situated on a prominent viewpoint directly adjacent to Highway 20, overlooking the sites of Alpha and Omega, marked today only by hydraulic scars, the town of Washington, and the scenic canyon South Yuba River.

The bronze marker reads: "One mile north of here were the towns of Alpha and Omega, named by gold miners in the early 1850's. The tremendous hydraulic diggings, visible from near this point, engulfed most of the original townsites. Alpha was the birthplace of the famed opera singer Emma Nevada. Mining at Omega continued until 1949; and lumbering operations are carried on there today. California Historical Landmarks Nos. 628-629."