

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Largest Adobe

We feel that we are not writing about a foreigner when we write of General Mariano Vallejo and members of his family because of their connection historically with all of California and especially Monterey. The News and Views, published monthly by the Division of Beaches and Parks and a news story in a San Francisco newspaper a short time ago, reveal interesting information about Vallejo, his vineyards, about Casa Grande at Petaluma and his Sonoma home, now all State Historical Monuments.

The news story from Sonoma reveals the news that the vineyards which a century ago produced the grapes used in making wine for the General may be re-established.

Vallejo was the last Mexican military commandant of California. Around his home near Sonoma flourished one of the fine vineyards in Sonoma Valley. The valley is now one of California's choice table wine areas.

Plans for the restoration of the vineyards have been disclosed by Dr. Aubrey Neasham, historian for the State Division of Beaches and Parks. The Vallejo home - Lachryma Montis - now is a State Historical Monument. Neasham said the State would like to replant a 25-acre tract on either side of the lane leading to the old mansion.

"It is the hope of the division of beaches and parks that grape varieties used for winemaking by the general; such as the mission grape, can be re-established as well as some of the finer varieties brought to the Sonoma valley from Europe in the middle 1800s," Neasham said.

Another Vallejo vineyard, in the town of Sonoma, also might be restored. This one would be on land to the rear of the adobe barracks built originally to house the general's troops. The barracks was purchased recently by the state.

On this property also stands an adobe building used by Vallejo as a winery. Neasham expressed hope that a Sonoma valley museum could be established in the former winery.

Within the year we visited Casa Grande, a Vallejo-built adobe near Petaluma, so we were doubly interested in a story in the "News and Views" pertaining to new

discoveries there. Archaeologists have uncovered foundations which change the size and appearance of the old adobe at Petaluma State Historical Landmark.

The scientific detective work has revealed the base of walls which connected with the present Casa Grande, doubling its size and roughly duplicating the architecture of the standing adobe. What we saw appeared to us to be immense - the largest adobe we ever could hope to see or might have been built in those early days when California was comparatively new.

The foundations, according to the report in "News and Views", at one spot extend under the fence into adjoining property, show that General Vallejo had ambitious plans for his ranch headquarters. Completed, it would have been an imposing four-sided structure with an inner courtyard, plus two jutting wings - enough building certainly to discourage the Russians from moving in closer.

The discovery changes the first thought of the original plans and leaves no doubt that the Vallejo house and workshop was the largest adobe in California. The archaeological exploration was carried on under direction of the division of beaches and parks. The Petaluma State Historical Monument was acquired in 1950 when the long-term task of restoration began.

We would advise motorists with leisure time who are driving north through Sonoma County to visit this immense adobe building quite near the main highway. The outside plan, the plan of the rooms, and the beautiful view from both the lower and upper balconies are worth a few moments of any one's time for study.