

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Salvador Vallejo

In a recent issue of the Diary we reported an old recipe for "Tamalon," an early California dish, often served in the home of Salvador Vallejo, one of the state's most prominent citizens during the latter part of the Mexican period and early days of statehood.

We have gone to the Quarterly of the California Historical Society to find an excellent article on the life and work of Salvador Vallejo in California, written by Myrtle M. McKittrick. That part of his life which deals particularly with Monterey, is of interest in this column.

As a young man, Ignacio Vicente Ferrer Vallejo, father of Salvador, arrived in California in September 1774, from Jalisco, Mexico. The arrival of this youth marked the beginning of the family history that has been linked with the history of California for over 180 years.

We read that Vallejo had been schooled for the priesthood but had rebelled at the last moment; in fact, history tells us, that he bolted through the sacristy door to escape, aided by friends, to the port of Compostela where he remained in hiding until the chance came to follow a military career in the obscure outposts of Spain's New World empire.

Vallejo was already 26 years old when he reached California, but he seemed to be in no hurry to assume family obligations. It was in 1776, in San Luis Obispo, he chose as his wife Maria Antonia Lugo on the day of her birth and was content to wait until 1790 when she would be of marriageable age, and he would be 42. Their home was established in Monterey, according to Charles Howard Shinn's "Pioneer Spanish Families" published in Century Magazine in January of 1891.

Most famous of the children of Ignacio and Maria Antonia Vallejo was Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who early won a place of promise in California history as director of colonization, and as defender of the northern frontier when the Russian settlement north of San Francisco Bay threatened the security of Spanish California. But it is with a younger brother, Salvador, that Monterey is concerned.

Jose Manuel Salvador Vallejo was born Jan. 11, 1814, in the capital city of Monterey in the province of Upper California, as it was known in those years. He was the

seventh of 13 children and was named for his maternal grandfather Francisco Salvador Lugo.

When Salvador was four years old, there occurred the attack (Nov. 20 to 27, 1818) upon Monterey by Hippolyte de Bouchard, the former pirate from Buenos Aires.

On his boyhood, Salvador writes that he learned to read and write in a private school with an enrollment of about 60 boys. He reports that it was taught by Jose Pena and Manuel Toca. Bancroft lists Manuel Jose Toca as master of a school in Santa Barbara as early as 1795. He also took music lessons from a talented Indian named Cantor.

Salvador's niece, Guadalupe Vallejo, daughter of Jose de Jesus Vallejo, wrote this about her uncle:

"An educated young gentleman well skilled in many arts and handicrafts, he could ride, of course, as well as the best cowboy of the Southwest, and with more grace; and he could throw the lasso so expertly that I have never heard of any American who was able to equal it. He could also make soap, pottery, and bricks, burn lime, tan hides, cut out and put together a pair of shoes, make candles, roll cigars, and do a great number of things that belong to different trades.", This quotation was taken from Century Magazine of 1890.

When the home was established near the plaza in Sonoma, "Dona Maria Vallejo took from the red leather-covered chest that she had brought with her, religious prints and intricate embroideries to relieve the bareness of the walls." As prosperity came to the Vallejos, imported furniture and objects of art were added, so that visitors frequently commented in surprise. In 1846, Edward Bryant referred to the air of comfort he found in the home of the General: "The parlor was furnished with handsome chairs, sofa, mirrors, and tables of mahogany frame work and a fine piano, the first I had seen in the country. Several paintings and some superior engraving ornamented the walls."

In 1844 Salvador Vallejo was given the title of "Captain de Defensores" and was expected to build up the provincial defenses. But he soon turned his attention to pursuits of peace.

Salvador's oldest sister was Maria Isadora Soberanes. Her daughter, Maria Ignacia Soberanes, married Dr. Edward Turner Bale, an English surgeon who resided for

some time in Monterey. It was Dr. and Mrs. Bale who presented the piano now in the Stevenson House, to the Soberanes family in Monterey.

Salvador Vallejo died at the age of 62 years at the home of his brother, General Vallejo, in Sonoma early in the morning of Feb. 17, 1876. He is buried beside his wife, Maria, in the Tulocay Cemetery near the city of Napa.