

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Casa Serrano's Serrano

A house lives through the lives of the people who dwell in it, so let us look for a few moments at the young couple who first called Casa Serrano home - Florencio Serrano and his bride, Rita de la Torre.

We are most interested in this family and the adobe home on Pacific street today for the reason that the Monterey History and Art Assn. are now the owners of the historic adobe and are in process of restoring it and making it their headquarters. Since 1930 the Association has been collecting furniture and other historical, appropriate items to place in an old Monterey adobe which the membership might call their own. That time has now arrived.

When Florencio first met Rita de la Torre we do not know, but the charming young senorita became a favorite companion at once. The bride was the younger daughter of a prominent family in Monterey. Her father was Joaquin de la Torre who had been born in Ruenes, in the mountains of Santander, Spain, and was sent to Mexico as a Spanish cadet in the army. He came to California in 1801, and two years later married Maria de los Angeles Cota in Monterey's San Carlos Church. Maria was related to many prominent families in California; the Vallejos, the Carrillos, the Lugas, etc.

In 1821 Joaquin petitioned the governor for a rancho, stating that he had served the nation 21 years, and had a large family with seven male children, and being almost an invalid needed the land on which to retire and raise his family. He was granted Bolsa del Potero Rancho by Gov. Pablo Sola in June 1822, consisting of 6,915 acres.

The de la Torre family maintained a home in Monterey in the old adobe at the corner of Pierce and Jefferson streets. Rita's godparents were W. E. P. Hartnell and his wife, and in Monterey she was raised to womanhood.

After Florencio courted and won the daughter of Don Joaquin de la Torre, he bought the property on Calle Estrada (now Pacific street) from a foreigner who had started but not finished a house there. Calling a workman - Florencio had strong floors laid, windows and doors put in, and prepared a home for his bride-to-be. They were married in July 1845, and in the old adobe they raised a family of sons and daughters. There

Florencio had his school and brought education to Monterey and there he died.

What better judgment of a man can we find than the words of Hubert Howe Bancroft, the great American historian. "A man of pure European blood, of fair education, and good repute, he was somewhat superior to his associates. Before his death he dictated his 'Apuntes para la Historia de California,' in which he gives a full statement of his life, and recollection of California affairs, throwing light upon many important topics, in excellent language and entertaining style. The manuscript is a voluminous one, and I look upon it as one of the most valuable in my collection."