

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Alvarado Adobe

We have often been asked the history of the old adobe at the corner of Alvarado and Pearl streets, known now as the La Porte building. After some research and tallying some personal knowledge, we have been able to construct a reasonable amount of authentic information concerning the structure.

Since very recent alterations have taken place there is little of the old historic building left to claim early Monterey history. The adobe front facing Alvarado street has been completely torn away and even the large bronze marker on the front of the building, placed there in 1949 by the Native Sons of the Golden West and the California Centennial Commission is missing. We hope it will be replaced in as prominent a place as it was honored in the centennial year.

The assessor's records of 1855 show the building as being assessed to Gov. Alvarado for the value of \$6,000. In 1874, La Porte brothers purchased the building, and added a frame second story, naming it La Porte Hall.

Originally the structure was a one-story adobe with a lean-to. A small addition on the second floor, some historians relate, was used as the office of Don Juan Bautista Alvarado, the first native-born governor of California under Mexican rule from 1836 to 1842. On the lower floor a flourishing saloon and gambling business was carried on by Mauricio Gonzales.

There was a high adobe wall surrounding the lots in the rear of the building and here was staged, it is written, Mexican acrobatic and gymnastic acts the audience being seated on crude board tiers somewhat resembling the circus seats of the present day.

Gov. Alvarado was born in Monterey on St. Valentine's Day, 1809, the son of Gen. Don Francisco Alvarado, and grandson of Gen. Limon, renowned Conqueror of Lower California. He was tutored by Pablo de Sola, the cultured governor of Alta, California at the time of the transition from Spanish to Mexican rule.

Alvarado's mother was Josefa Vallejo, sister of Gen. Mariano G. Vallejo, one of the most distinguished and influential men of Mexican California.

When Alvarado became governor of California the total population numbered less than 150, including such

well-known citizens as W.E.P. Hartnell, Thomas Oliver Larkin, Alfred Robinson, James Alexander Forbes, Abel Stearns, Jacob Leese, and later John Bidwell, John A. Sutter and W. D. M. Howard.

About 1845 Alvarado was chosen by a great majority as representative to the Mexican congress from California for the ensuing war, with its blockade of ports, he was prevented from appearing at his new post.

Juan Alvarado was governor of California for six years. After the American occupation he retired to his country home at San Pablo, where he resided quietly for many years. He died July 13, 1882.

On June 1, 1954, it was officially announced that the Alvarado adobe house in San Pablo, a historic monument and one of the four oldest structures in the bay area, was being torn down to make way for the expansion of a nearby motel.

The building was constructed in the 1820s. The news reports of that year carried the statement that the only buildings in the bay area, of greater age were Mission Dolores, The Presidio Officers club at the San Francisco Presidio, and Mission San Jose de Guadalupe near Niles. And now we have little left of "our Alvarado Adobe."