

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Cooper Adobe

The Cooper - Molera Adobe at the intersection of Polk, Munras and Alvarado street is very historic contrary to a statement recently made by a councilman at a meeting of the Monterey City Council. It is certainly worth making every effort to keep the adobe and to preserve it for future generations to enjoy, not only because it is historic, but for its unique architectural significance and its location near the heart of downtown Monterey, it also faces the old Monterey plaza, which should be restored as soon as possible.

The Cooper or Molera Adobe is one of the largest and most readily identified of the Monterey adobes. It is a two-story, balconied structure and is in a good state of preservation. With the exception of one shop, the entire structure is devoted to a home.

In addition to the main building, there is a large reinforced barn and an adobe-walled enclosed garden. The barbecue oven and old well are visible. A charming, ancient looking gate provides the only entrance to the garden from the east, on the Munras avenue side of the property.

Capt. John B. Cooper, also (known as Don Juan Bautista Cooper, trader, and skipper, who arrived in Monterey in 1822, built the house in 1829 for his bride, Dona Encarnacion Vallejo. It is now the property of Miss Frances Molera, the granddaughter of Capt. Cooper.

John Bautista Cooper was a native of Alderney Island, in the English Channel, where he was born in 1792. He came to the United States when a small boy with his mother and they settled in Massachusetts; By a second marriage, the former Mrs. Cooper became the mother of Thomas Oliver Larkin, first and only American consul to Monterey.

Cooper's arrival on the West Coast in 1822 was as the master of his own vessel the "Rover". Although he later sold the ship to Gov. Arguello, he continued to command her until 1826, making trips to China and elsewhere. That same year he became a resident of Monterey, and the following year, 1837, he was baptized and married Dona Encarnacion Vallejo, a sister of Gen. Vallejo. Six children were born to the Coopers.

Cooper became a rival to Hartnell and Co. in the hide and tallow trade and became quite wealthy. He was

naturalized in 1830 and in 1832 was a member of the *compania extranjera* (military organization of foreigners) headed by W.E.P. Hartnell.

In 1834 and 1835, Cooper was regidor of Monterey. He resumed his seafaring life in 1839, when he became Water of the government schooner "California", making many trips to the Mexican coast and the islands until 1844. From 1850 until sometime in the 1860's he resided with his family in Monterey and at his El Sur rancho, a large grant which he acquired by purchase. In 1851 he was appointed harbormaster of Monterey, a position which he held for many years.

The Copper family moved to San Francisco sometime after 1860, where Cooper died in 1872, in his 80th year.

We hope that this information has proved that the building, the Cooper - Molera Adobe is historic and that its builder played a part in the early history of Monterey and that his descendants have appreciated its historic value and kept it in the family for these many years.