

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Underwood Adobe

There is a small, old adobe building incorporated in the Few Memorial buildings in Monterey's Civic Center that few people realized is there unless they remember what that portion of Madison street looked like prior to 1926.

The City of Monterey acquired the adobe in 1926, almost 23 years after the death of Charles Underwood, who had expressed a wish that the property should pass into the hands of the city.

For several years after the acquisition the old building was known by various names as the "Brown House" and the "American Legion Headquarters." In 1927, City Manager Dorton announced that thereafter the little house would be known as the Charles Underwood Adobe.

On April 25, 1948, the members of Junipero Parlor Native Daughters of the Golden West, dedicated a bronze plaque on the Madison street side of the building in memory of Margaret Underwood Brown, a loyal Native Daughter.

The building, together with its grounds, rounded out the city's holdings in Colton Hall Park and its acquisition made possible a rose garden at the rear corner of Dutra and Madison, under the supervision of the late Francis Lester. Later, when the Few Memorial building was built, the Underwood adobe was made a part of the civic center as it now stands.

The land on which the adobe is situated was included in the original Monterey city lands, which totaled more than 27,000 acres granted by the Mexican government and later patented to the city by the United States government.

It was in 1843 that the site of the Charles Underwood adobe was deeded by alcalde of Monterey to on Santiago Stokes who put up the older portion of the building. Three-foot adobe walls constructed by Stokes are still intact and good for many years of use.

Later the same year, Stokes sold the property to Jose Maria Sanchez. The deed under which the residence was transferred is a very interesting document. It describes how Stokes took Sanchez through the place while the new owner opened doors, pounded on the walls, scattered handfuls of dirt about the rear garden

and by other ceremonies indicated his ownership. Stokes watched these ceremonies without objection and Sanchez' title to the property was established without question.

Sanchez died in 1853 and the adobe passed to his heirs. At a public auction held during the next year, the residence was bid in for \$700 by William Roach, the sheriff of Monterey County. At this time both Monterey and San Benito counties were one, Monterey was the county seat and Colton Hall was the seat of the government.

W.S. Johnson, county clerk, purchased the property from the sheriff for the price of \$750 shortly afterward, and Johnson maintained the title until 1866 when he sold to Charles Underwood for \$650. From this date until the property passed to the City of Monterey in 1926 it was in Underwood family. It is now the office of city manager.