

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Need Resources Study

"The history of California is brief in terms of world history, but rich and colorful in its own right. Californians cannot afford to wait until their history 'comes of age' to plan for its preservation". These few lines are quoted from the preface of a publication of the State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Beaches and Parks.

If destruction and loss of outstanding physical remains of our heritage is to be stemmed, a historical resources study of the state is imperative, the division believes. The study should ascertain the extent and distribution of historical resources and recommend a course of action that will adequately provide for cultural enrichment of present and future generations.

As the only state agency presently engaged in historical preservation and interpretation in California, the Division of Beaches and Parks is, and should be, responsible for the study and so it has taken up the job and is doing a tremendous work on this important project. The magnitude of the study will require the guidance and direction of an advisory committee representing a wide range of knowledge and interest. This already has been done.

Following the establishment of a comprehensive inventory of historical sites and structures, and after an initial review and screening by local committees, a long-range prudent action can be formulated. Historical organizations throughout the state stand ready and willing to assist the division in this undertaking. A photograph of the late Hartnell College near Salinas is pictured in the booklet sent out by the Division of Beaches and Parks.

El Colegio de San Jose, the first institution of higher learning in the State of California, is gone. The 129-year-old life span of the college, built in 1833 by William P. Hartnell, was terminated abruptly a few months ago. "It was deliberately torn apart, adobe brick by adobe brick. Four strong hands, some cables, tractor, a few miscellaneous tools and a bulldozer did it. A pile of weather-beaten boards, and a bare scraped field 6 miles from Salinas in the Gabilans is all that was left where the college once stood."

This story began in 1958 when Solano County supervisors bought the Casa de Pena, or Pena Adobe, the only adobe structure on a major highway between San Francisco and Sacramento. The home was built in 1842 by Juan Felipe Pena, one of the first people of European ancestry to settle in Solano County. John C. Fremont once kept Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo prisoner in Pena's hacienda in Vacaville.

D. A. Mowers and William P. Goheen, the supervisors who bought the Casa de Pena, donated the site to the Solano County Historical Society. When restoration was planned the society found that if it were under public ownership, inmates from the California Medical Facility could work on it.

With this in mind, the society initiated the cooperative effort by raising \$10,000 and presenting the money and the deed to the property to the city of Vacaville, with the provision that the project be carried forward. Vacaville contributed another \$10,000, and with another \$10,000 from the Solano County Board of Supervisors, enough money has been accumulated for the three-year project.

Credit for the idea of restoration goes to the Vacaville Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, and other area service groups also have helped sponsor the project.