

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Tiburcio Vasquez Began His Life Of Banditry In Monterey

The Vasquez Adobe originally was a one-story home located on Dutra street between Jefferson and Madison streets, directly back of Colton Hall. It has been so enlarged in recent years that it now bears little resemblance to the little one-story adobe, the home of Dolores Vasquez, a sister of the notorious bandit, Tiburcio Vasquez, who was born in Monterey in 1839.

The story has it that Vasquez used to visit his sister in this house, and also that when the pursuit the bandit became too hot, she would hide him on the premises. Vasquez also is reported to have signified his arrival in Monterey by whooping, hollering, and shooting up and down Dutra street, all in the spirit of fun. It is also a legend that Vasquez spent some time in the old Monterey jail, which faces, the Vasquez home.

Dolores Vasquez sold the property to Theodore de la Torre, son of one of the pioneer families of Monterey. Many years later, Louis Hill, son of the famous railroad builder, purchased the property and did considerable remodeling. In recent years, the City of Monterey acquired the property and it is now occupied by municipal offices.

In the collection of old-time photographs owned by the Monterey History and Art Assn. there is a delightful picture of the Vasquez adobe as it looked Dec. 1, 1918, taken by Louis Slevin of Carmel, when it was one story high. Potted plants and hanging baskets decorated the front porch and there was no railing as was the feature of most of the adobes.

The second floor of the building is entirely of wood but has been stuccoed over so that it is difficult to distinguish it from the adobe portion, which is likewise stucco.

Tiburcio Vasquez will stand out on the pages of history of California as the second greatest bandit of California. Joaquin Murietta roamed, robbed and murdered, but in his time there was but little law in California, and the means of arresting and bringing law breakers to justice were scant and inadequate.

Decades had elapsed between the time of Murietta and the years 1873 and 1874, in which Vasquez committed his greatest depredations, and during that time the

complete organization of the counties of the state under the proper authorities of law, police, judges and juries, had taken place.

After a reign of terror throughout the state Vasquez was captured with three of his gang where they were for the moment making their headquarters, the house of Greek George, on the Brea rancho, 10 miles from Los Angeles. He was taken to San Jose and tried for murder. On being found guilty, he was hanged there March 19, 1875.

Vasquez replied to a newspaper reporter's request for the story of his life with the following: "I was born in Monterey County, Calif., Aug. 11, 1835. My parents are both dead. I have three brothers and two sisters. Two of my brothers reside in Monterey County and the other in Los Angeles. My sisters are both married; one of them lives in San Juan Bautista. And the other at New Iberia quicksilver mines.

"I was never married, but I have one child in this county, a year old. I can read and write, having attended school in Monterey. My parents were people in ordinary circumstances, owning a small tract of land and always had enough for their wants.

"My career grew out of the circumstances by which I was surrounded. As I grew up to manhood, I was in the habit of attending balls and parties given by the native Californians, into which the Americans, then becoming numerous, would force themselves and shove the native born men aside, monopolizing the dance and the women. This was about 1852. A spirit of hatred and revenge took possession of me. I had numerous fights of defense of what I believed to be my rights and those of my countrymen.

"I determined to leave the thickly settled portions of the country and so gathered together a small band of cattle and went to Mendocino County, "back to Ukiah, and beyond Falls Valley. I went to my mother and told her that I intended to commence a different life. She gave me her blessing which I asked for, and at once I commenced a career as a robber because the law and officers were continually after me."

The Hollister Free Lance in 1875 had this to say of Vasquez: "In manner he was frank and earnest, with no disposition to make himself a hero. It is said of him that his general demeanor was that of a quiet, inoffensive man, and no one would have taken him for the terrible, Tiburcio Vasquez, the leader of a band of outlaws."