

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 12, 1963

Rodriguez Adobe

Life magazine of July 5 has an article that should be of particular interest to everyone who cares about preservation of the old and historic. It is headed "DOOMED." The article cites Nevada City, Calif., which is trying to preserve its image of the gold-fever days, and is threatened with a four lane highway through the town, just another victim of the march to progress to the sound of trumpets and no regard for the public who fights to keep its heritage.

Life has this comment to make: "From east to west, the wrecker's ball and the bulldozer are lords of the land. In the ruthless, if often well-intentioned cause of the progress, the nation's heritage from colonial days onward is being ravaged indiscriminately – for highways, parking lots, new structures of modernized mediocrity. Some 2,000 buildings classified by the government as major landmarks of history and beauty have vanished in the last 25 years ... Unless citizens and officials act to halt the holocaust, the noble, the picturesque and all that is beautiful in America's architectural heritage will be memories and a handful of dust."

We are thinking, for example, of the Rodriguez Adobe especially, a building on Alvarado street just north of Franklin of great historical value, which we hope may be saved from destruction under urban renewal. We understand that it is claimed that the cost of restoration is too high; but does it need complete restoration immediately? The old adobe walls have stood since 1820 - 133 years - and they are not likely to fall down now unless pulled down by the huge iron machine which has been creating vacant lots in the Old Town these past few weeks.

The adobe building known as Casa Rodriguez Osio, was built by Don Jacinto Rodriguez, one of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, one of the signers of that important and historic document. It was a two-story adobe, built originally with a balcony overhanging the sidewalk with much the same appearance as My Attic still standing on upper Alvarado street.

Rodriguez was born in the Pajaro Valley in 1815 and moved to Monterey shortly after the death of his

father, Don Sebastian Rodriguez. He soon became prominent in the affairs of the city. He became a lieutenant under Gov. Alvarado who had married a sister-in-law of Rodriguez. In 1839 he was elected alferes. In 1849 he became alcalde. He died in 1880.

Dona Dolores Osio, the sister-in-law of Rodriguez, lived in the house until her death at the age of 102 years. She was born in Santa Cruz on Jan. 20, 1826. Her maiden name was Dolores Pinto. When she was 7 years old she came to Monterey and lived with her family in an adobe home at the corner of Pacific and Jefferson streets, where the office of Dr. Winton Swingle now stands. She married Charles Osio, an educated young Spanish don and the young people made their home in a very fine old adobe structure which stood where the State Theater now stands. The Bonifacio adobe was next door.

For many years Mrs. Osio treasured the table upon which the California State Constitution was signed. It later came into the possession of the Misses L. M. and V. Jacks, and they presented it to the City of Monterey a number of years later. For a time it found a place in the council chambers. When the city museum board was appointed and Colton Hall was restored, the table was made a feature in the museum on the upper floor.

Mrs. Osio actually witnessed the signing of the Constitution on the table when it occupied a conspicuous place in the sala of the Rodriguez Adobe. Members of the convention went to the Casa Rodriguez to enjoy the hospitality of Rodriguez and were having such a gay time that the constitution was brought to the delegates there to be signed. Dona Osio assisted her sister, Dona Rodriguez, in entertaining the group. She lived under three flags here – Spanish, Mexican and United States.