

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Wolter Adobe

In 1846 the United States government established its first headquarters at Monterey in a 12-room adobe residence on Del Monte avenue. The government rented the building from the owner, Charles Wolter, who also owned the entire block of land surrounding it. A portion of this land still remains in the possession of the Wolter heirs. The old adobe was torn down in 1910 and the present three-story brick Federal Hotel ejected on the site.

The adobe was built in 1834 by Charles Wolter, a German by birth. He arrived at Monterey in December 1833, as master of a Mexican ship, and obtained his certificate of Mexican citizenship, having been a resident of Peru for two years. He continued his seafaring activities for some years, being master of the "Leonor," 1836-38, and of the "Clara" or "Clarita," 1840-45.

Captain Wolter married Josefa Antonia Estrada, who was the niece of Jose Antonio Arguello, Spanish governor of California, 1814 -15. Arguello's daughter, Concepcion, captured the heart of the Russian Count, M. de Resanof. The tragic romance of Count Resanof and Dona Concepcion Arguello is one of the best-known historical stories bearing on the Monterey Peninsula.

Shortly after the marriage of Captain Wolter and Dona Estrada, they established a home on El Toro Rancho, for which Wolter was a successful claimant. It is related that when Wolter and his bride first moved to the rancho their presence was resented by the Indians to such an extent that they were forced to endure much hardship. Later the Indians took a great fancy to Louis Wolter, one of the sons, whom they desired Captain Wolter to give them as a peace offering. They wished to teach the child the tribal language, songs, and customs, so that he could become an interpreter for them with the new settlers. Eventually the boy was turned over to the Indians living near the rancho; growing up among them he was able to bring about peaceful relations, not only between the Wolters and the tribesmen, but extending to all settlers in the district.

After the government moved its headquarters; the old adobe was put to various uses. A newspaper of the past, "The Monterey Cypress," published by William

Kay, came into existence in the lower floor of the old house. When the "Cypress" moved across the street, the adobe was again turned into a residence. Upon the death of Mrs. Charles Wolter, the property came into the possession of her daughter, Carlotta Fitton, who rented out the upper story for housekeeping rooms. Later on, the first floor was leased to The Capitol Club, a businessmen's headquarters, which also had an option to buy the building.

In 1910, the property was sold to Robert Johnson, mayor of Monterey, who in turn sold it to William Furlong. A short time later it was sold to the late Arthur Metz, a local realtor, who razed the adobe and erected the present structure, the Federal Hotel.

From the assessment records the old adobe is recorded as assessed to Charles Wolter in 1851 for \$1,000; in 1855 the assessment was raised to \$2,500.

Charles Wolter died in Monterey in 1855 at the age of 65 years.

These records of one of the lost adobes in Monterey came from Hubert Howe Bancroft's "History of California," records of the City of Monterey assessor's office, and Mrs. Ethel Wolter Hyde, descendent of Charles Wolter.