

March 26, 1965

Capitular Hall

Capitular Hall adobe, the home of Mrs. Addie La Vallee on the corner of Franklin and Pacific streets, has been sold. We now await the results of that sale, hoping the little old adobe will not be destroyed. Originally the house was a one-story adobe, until a second story frame addition was added.

A verbatim quote from a copy of the original document, in which John Freeman Fling was granted the property on Feb. 19, 1834, follows: "Capitular Hall: Having produced in evidence the license which the petitioner obtained to enter upon the land, as was required of him, the lot he applies for, which is 25 varas frontage by as many in depth, fronting the house of (the foreigner) Felipe Santiago and in the line with the house of (the other foreigner) John B. Bonifacio . . . Signed by Manuel Jimeno Cesarin."

Fling sold the property for \$50 to John Donelly, teamster of Company F, 3rd U.S. Artillery, on June 26, 1848. The soldier did not keep the property long, for the records show that on Aug. 18, 1848, Thomas O. Larkin purchased the place.

Donelly was described as "teamster in Co. F, stationed in Monterey, Redoubt, in the vicinity of the Town of Monterey, Upper California, in consideration of the amount of three ounces of gold (uncoined) he agreed to sell the property."

The transaction was signed by Walter Colton, alcalde. The description of the lot varied little from the earlier one, reading, "Twenty-five varas in front by as many in the rear opposite the house of the foreigner, Philip James, and in line with the house of D. Bonifacio."

Larkin in turn disposed of the property to Jerardo Higuera. In the deed of sale, the name is also spelled as Helgers, and as Gerald Gerado Hilgers. Higuera shortly after sold it to James Gleason. Other owners were James Watson, Jose Abrego, Juan E. Gomez, J. W. Gregg and Charles Carr. In 1921 Esther Freeman Steadman was shown as the owner, and on Nov. 4 of that year G. R. Carpenter became the new owner.

John. Freeman Fling, who erected Capitular Hall adobe, arrived for the first time at Monterey in 1826. He traveled to the Sandwich Islands in 1831, after which he

returned to Monterey to settle permanently at the age of 34.

He succeeded in securing a carta from Governor Victoria, and in 1832 joined a *compania extranjara*, which was organized Jan. 24 of that year for the defense of Monterey. The company was not to be required to leave town under any circumstances. Such men as had to leave their work for military duty were to receive 50 cents a day. W.E.P. Hartnell was elected their leader. From that date on Fling's name appears on Larkin's books and records.

Fling worked at his trade as blacksmith in Monterey, and in 1836 he was living at Buena Vista Rancho, being then only 26 years old, according to this *padron* (godfather). In 1840 he had a blacksmith shop in Natividad and was credited by tradition with having refused to remove irons from the legs of the foreign exiles when they were taken from prison and loaded on ships.

He later lived in Sonora for some years and then went to Napa about 1850 where he died in 1870 at the age of 80 years.

In the early days Capitular Hall was known by that name, which according to Appleton's new Spanish-English Dictionary, means "to conclude an agreement; draw up the articles of a contract; compound; sing prayers of divine service; to capitulate (law); to impeach." Therefore, it is believed it was the town hall of the day.

Some alteration and modern features have been added to the old building, but otherwise it remains much as it was in early history. Mrs. Addie La Vallee has told me that the entrance was formerly on Pacific Street where a bay window is now.

Information for this article has been taken from extracts from the "Severance Block Book," Monterey County Abstract Co., Salinas; "Solares de Monterey," Monterey County Recorder's office, Salinas;