

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Mariano Vallejo**

The Solano County Historical Society has invited the Monterey History and Art Assn. to assist it in a proposal for a commemorative postage stamp to focus attention on Mariano G. Vallejo, for whom the city of Vallejo was named.

Our association assisted the society last summer in urging President Johnson to name the latest Polaris submarine to be built at Mare Island the "Mariano Vallejo."

Submarine SSBN 658, now under construction, is to be named the U.S.S. Mariano G. Vallejo. It is expected that this vessel will be commissioned in the summer of 1966.

Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo played a significant and many sided role in the affairs of Northern California during the 83 years of his busy and rewarding life.

Born in Monterey, July 4, 1807, he was the son of Ignacio Ferrer Vallejo, a native of Spain who in his youth came to Guadalajara, Mexico. In 1774 the elder Vallejo was a member of the expedition of Capt. Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, which explored much of Northern California.

A good student and avid reader, Mariano Vallejo became a cadet in the Monterey company of the Mexican army and secretary of Gov. Luis Arguello at the age of 16. In 1831, while only 24, he was placed in charge of the Presidio of San Francisco and in the next five years helped organize the first town government for San Francisco.

The presence of the Russian colony at Fort Ross posed a threat to Mexico's role in California. In 1835 Gov. Jose Figueroa selected young Lt. Vallejo to command a group of soldiers at Sonoma as a buffer against the Russians to the north.

Vallejo held the joint title of military commander and director of colonization on the northern frontier. He laid out the largest plaza in all California and made this the center of the town of Sonoma.

His orders directed him to preside over the secularization of San Francisco de Solano Mission, the only one of California's missions established under Mexican rule.

In this latter assignment he attempted to be as humane as possible. He allotted portions of the mission lands and cattle to the Indian neophytes and launched them as independent ranchers.

A section of Solano County, Rancho Soscol, was granted to him by the government in 1834. Between then and 1844 he built a large adobe house, Rancho Petaluma, where on 66,000 acres he constructed a vast operation involving the growing of fruits and vegetables and raising cattle.

Vallejo's first home in Sonoma, Casa Grande, faced the plaza. In 1851 he completed Lachryma Montis, a larger residence a few blocks away. The Latin means "Mountain Tears"; it was chosen for springs of hot and cold water on the 250 acre estate. There he lived for 40 years and upon his death in 1890 he was buried on an eminence overlooking the estate.

Although Vallejo was loyal to his Mexican superiors, he was beset by dissenters who wanted to get a foothold in California. On the morning of June 14, 1846, 33 Americans seized Vallejo at Casa Grande, 10 weeks after he had advocated annexation by the United States.

He was held at Sutter's Fort during the brief life of the Bear Flag Republic. With the raising of the American flag on July 9, 1846, U.S. troops replaced those of Vallejo in the Sonoma Barracks. He was freed in August 1846.

Vallejo gladly embraced the cause of the United States. He served as one of the eight California members of the Constitutional Convention in Monterey in September, 1849, and was the first state senator from Sonoma County. Through his efforts the state Capital was located from 1851 to 1853 in Vallejo, a city named for him.

Strikingly handsome even in his advancing years, he was tall with erect carriage of one disciplined to bear arms; gracious in manner, he was a brilliant conversationalist and an eloquent speaker.