

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 4, 1966

Battle of Natividad

A bronze marker imbedded in a five-ton block of dolomite is acting as a permanent reminder of the Battle of Natividad, Nov. 16, 1846. It was dedicated on Sunday, Nov. 15, 1958.

The stone is backed most appropriately by an age-old stake fence that has stood decades of weather. Behind is a monumental Sugar Loaf, mentioned in the battle's account.

The dolomite slab came from the Gabilan range of Permanente. The plaque was placed through combined efforts of individuals, city, county and state offices and is registered as "California Historical Landmark No. 651."

The monument stands at the intersection with the Old San Juan road and Crazy Horse Canyon.

Los Vergeles Rancho was granted to Jose J. Gomez with 8,759.32 acres in 1835.

Lying at the foot of the old San Juan grade, the ranch house with its green roof still stands on the right as one begins to climb the grade.

Gomez left his family in Mexico and settled on this land. It was he who brought the first melon seeds to this section, and like the former "Johnny Appleseed", he generously distributed, not apples, but melon seed to the many who traveled through after the discovery of gold. Gomez was a most hospitable man and writers of those early days speak often of his kindness.

He had two daughters by his first wife. They came to live with him in 1846. They were fine musicians and accomplished dancers and were among the artists who appeared on the program which was presented at Colton Hall in honor of the delegates after the adoption of the Constitution of California in 1850. They also appeared at the opening performance of the First Theater.

November, 1846, the American Consul Thomas Oliver Larkin, while enroute to San Francisco, spent the night at the Gomez place. The Californians captured him and held him at Pilarcitos.

During the battle next day on the Salinas plains, the Californians attempted to force Larkin to persuade the Americans to surrender.

After the fight ended, Fremont arrived on the scene, having come from Monterey. He promptly took charge of affairs and threatened to capture a few and "string them up."

The Californians were alarmed, and Larkin released. The battle was the only fight in Northern California during the Mexican War. Captain Burroughs, Captain Thorne, and two other Americans, were killed in the battle and were buried on the hill above the Gomez adobe.

Los Vergeles is a Spanish word meaning "The Garden". This grant was rejected and then confirmed in 1855 to James Stokes.

Much of this information was received from Bancroft History of California, Vol. III; Monterey County Land and Titles – Chapter X of J.M. Guinn's History of California.