

August 1, 1968

First Frame House

Early in 1847, William Bushton, a carpenter, arrived in Monterey from Australia with his wife and sick daughter, thinking the climate would restore the girl's health. The intention had been to land in San Francisco, but the captain, who was a New Bedford trader, had been traveling all over the world for more than 5 years, never reporting to his owners. He was afraid to land in San Francisco, as he realized he was liable to arrest as a pirate.

After seeing the Golden Gate he turned back, saying he would have to go to Mexico in order to make a safe landing. But he had not reckoned with his passengers and crew; the unanimous wish was to stop in California. The next day, the captain was seized, put in irons and the mutineers brought the ship to Monterey. The captain's hard-luck continued, for officers arrested him and he was scheduled for trial in federal court. His ship was also declared confiscated.

In the hold of the ship, which had taken nine months to make the voyage from Australia, Bushton had shipped boards, cut and matched perfectly, for the erection of a comfortable residence for his family. Since nails were scarce, every joint in the entire structure was mortised.

Bushton purchased land on the corner of Munras avenue and Webster street, and it was not long before the 12-room house was completed. Each room is said to have contained a large open fireplace. The two-story section of the building fronted on Munras, while the long, rambling one-story portion faced Webster street.

Soon after the house was finished, Bushton died. His widow married Thomas E. Allen. There were two sons by this union, Edward Allen, who later resided on Pacific street (Calle Estrada), and who served as city councilman, and Thomas Allen, who was a police officer here for nearly a quarter of a century.

When Thomas E. Allen passed on, Mrs. Allen found it necessary to increase her income, so rented the south wing of the building to a group of Australians. During their occupancy, the Custom House was robbed of some \$30,800. The crime was laid to a man named King, then collector of the port. King was liberated for lack of evidence and soon after left the country.

Mrs. Bushton, however, became suspicious of her Australian tenants and reported their strange behavior. When officers arrived with a warrant, no objection was made to the search, but it was noticed that one of the women sat firmly on the third step of the narrow staircase leading to the second floor. One of the officers called for an axe, chopped a portion of the stairway down and found \$30,000 in gold, divided into smaller sums and placed in boxes under the stair. The floor was also torn up and \$800 in silver was unearthed under the table. A long prison term resulted for the culprits.

A large oil portrait of Mrs. Allen is hanging in the small parlor at Casa Serrano, and a small picture of Mrs. Allen sitting in a rocking chair beside the stairway is beside the portrait. It is framed in a bit of the wood from the "First Frame House in California."

Mrs. Allen married a third time; she became the wife of Jacob Krampner. The couple had one daughter, Rebecca, who later married Judge David Wallace of Salinas. Thomas Allen Jr. and his family lived in the house until it was torn down in 1924. Here children of the fifth generation of the Allen family were born, the last being a great-great grandson, Robert Winslow.