

Asistencia built near Rockville

By Jerry Bowen

Sunday, October 29, 2006

In my last column we followed Friar Altamira in 1824 during his expedition to establish the last mission to be built in California.

At the time, he pretty much had his mind made up to place the final mission at today's Sonoma. But he continued on, to check out the Napa area and Suisun Valley near today's Rockville. He rejected both as the final and only mission site to be established under Mexican rule.

Napa was rejected even though it had many of the same assets as the Sonoma area, but not as much available water and he rejected Suisun Valley because of a lack of timber that could be used for building and the excessive distance from the Presidio of San Francisco.

Building of the Sonoma Mission was begun in the spring of 1824 and 602 Christian Indians from the older missions had been moved there by the end of that year. The first new convert at the mission was an Ululato from the Vacaville area, baptized on April 4, 1824.

By the end of the year, Altamira also decided to establish a Rancho near Rockville about a quarter mile south of today's Stonedene Mansion. The site probably had been part of the original Suisun Indian village that extended to the site where the Stonedene Mansion stands today. Even though it didn't have the qualities for a full mission, it was considered an ideal area for raising horses and cattle.

Along with the Rancho, he also built a small sub-mission known as an Asistencia, naming it Santa Eulalia. It included a temporary house for the neophyte Indian Alcalde (mayor), probably Jesus Molino of the original Suisun Village, and a horse corral that was run by the alcalde and his family. An adobe house was built for the use of visiting padres.

According to San Francisco Mission records, an infant that had been born at Santa Eulalia was baptized on August 14, 1827.

In the following year a Christian Tolena woman, Olimpia Nauayac, died at Santa Eulalia. She was the mother of Hipolito Guilac who had been baptized at the Mission Dolores at San Francisco.

Hipolito died at the Santa Eulalia ranch four years later. The records stated, "The first day of February, 1832, I gave Holy Burial to the body of the neophyte Hipolito, former nurse, former cook, interpreter of the three languages that predominate at this mission, that is to say, four, Kacunda, Petaluma, Suysun, and Huiluc, and most recently the catechist and baptizer of the sick and the babies of the non-Christians that live at the Rancho of Santa Eulalia in the locality or land of Suysun ... He had been baptized at the Mission of Our Patron San Francisco on January 26, 1812.' (signed Friar Fortune)

During those years from 1824 to 1832, the Christian Indians grew crops and ran livestock around the site and probably lived in wattle houses between the adjacent hills and the present day Suisun Valley Road area. They also worked to convert non-Christians from Hill Patwin and Valley Patwin tribes to the north.

The Suisun Indian, Sino, was baptized at Mission Delores at San Francisco Solano and given the name Francisco Solano on July 24, 1810, shortly after the battle between Moraga and the Suisun Indians. He was among the Indians that were sent to the Mission San Francisco Solano at Sonoma in 1824 at the age of about 25, and by 1826 he was one of the alcaldes (missionary-controlled Indian headmen) of the Sonoma Mission. Note, the name "Sem-Yet-To" was not applied to him nor was there yet any indication as to being a chief of the Suisuns.

With that, I'll have to leave you hanging again and will continue in my next column.

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