

Francisco Solano becomes a mission alcalde

By Jerry Bowen

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In my last column I introduced you to “Sino” and now I find that I spelled his name wrong. According to a transcript of his baptismal certificate at the Huntington Library his name was spelled “Sina.”

His father’s name was “Sulapy” and there was no record of his mother’s name. He was baptized and given the name Francisco Solano, and would later be designated as “Chief Solano” as we shall see as we continue this series.

We also saw that Father Altimira established Mission San Francisco Solano at Sonoma in 1824 and the surviving Suisun Indians were among the San Francisco Mission Delores groups that he brought north to Sonoma. Francisco Solano, then about 25 years old, was one of those people. By 1826 Francisco Solano was appointed as one of six alcaldes (missionary-controlled Indian headmen) of the mission at Sonoma. On March 3 of that year he shows up as a godparent in the mission’s baptismal register.

The 1836 census shows there were 552 Indians at the new Pueblo of Sonoma. Francisco Solano was still listed as one of the six Indian alcaldes at the pueblo of Sonoma.

By October 1837, Solano was listed as a head-of-family, with an 18-person household including seven women and girls ranging in age from 20 down to 9 years old.

Other records from Mission Delores show some of his marriages as follows: Francisco Solano Sina married Helena Saquenmupi, a Wappo/Coast Miwok-speaking Aloquiomis from Pope Valley at Mission San Francisco Solano in October 1827. She died in 1830. In April of 1833 he married 18-year-old Guida Coulas, a Patwin-speaking Topaytos from today’s Berryessa area. Possibly the last records available show that Francisco Solano married 12-year-old Maria del Rosario Ullumole on Jan. 9, 1839. In 1874, Henry Cerutti, a writer for Hubert Howe Bancroft, interviewed what was claimed to be Francisco Solano’s last and favorite wife, Isidora Filomena, though no official record seems to exist documenting their marriage. A fire in 1896 at the Sonoma Mission may have destroyed the official record of their marriage.

Secularization of the California missions, the process to take the missions away from the church and place them under government rule, was ordered by Governor Jos Figueroa by proclamation in 1834. Under the rules of Secularization, the Indian

neophyte heads of household were to receive parcels of land, "not over 400 nor less than 100 varas square," (one vara equaled a little less than 3 feet).

According to reminiscences of M.G. Vallejo and other Mexican citizens of that time Solano's Indian forces helped him defeat a combination of Sacramento Valley tribes under the leader Zampay. In 1838, Francisco Solano was issued a provisional grant of four leagues of land (approximately 17,000 acres) by Vallejo for his service to the General. The grant, Suisun Grant, included Francisco Solano's original homelands at the asistencia, Santa Eulalia, near Rockville. Apparently, Solano moved back to his original home at the asistencia for the next few years although he remained in contact with General Vallejo.

By 1838 the plague descended on the northern provinces and in two years it was estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000 Indians had died of the disease. By 1839 much of the mission at Sonoma was in ruins and Francisco Solano no longer appeared in the mission's vital registers.

The official title to Rancho Suisun was finally granted to Francisco Solano on January 28, 1842. Vallejo bought the land from Solano just four months later, in May of 1842.

Then in 1846 the Bear Flag Revolt resulted in the arrest and confinement of Vallejo and others at Sutter's Fort. A distraught Francisco Solano disappeared from Solano County for the next four years apparently believing that his good friend Vallejo was dead.

In my next column we will see what happened to Francisco Solano and how he finally received the title "Chief" Solano and look at some recently researched history of Santa Eulalia.

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