

The Founder Of Our City

By Ernest D. Wichels

Monday, July 06, 1964

Tuesday, July 4th, marks the 156th anniversary of the birth of the founder of the City of Vallejo. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was born in Monterey, California, on July 7, 1808, the eighth child in a family of thirteen children. The parents were Don Ignacio Vicente Ferrer Vallejo and Senora Marie Antonia Lugo Vallejo.

The father was born in Jalisco, Mexico, near Guadalajara, and was descended from the grandees of Spain. Senora Vallejo was a noted Spanish beauty. Don Vallejo was stationed at Monterey as a sergeant in the Mexican Army.

Mariano Vallejo was an earnest student and early acquired a fund of knowledge that fitted him to take a prominent part in, and to a considerable extent shape, the political affairs of the California territory. Not only was his mind capable of acquiring knowledge quickly, but once acquired it was never forgotten.

At the age of 16 years he took his place in the Mexican Army as a cadet, and at age of 19 he was an officer in Monterey, sometimes acting as commandante.

In a trip to San Diego in 1831 he met Francisca Benicia Carrillo, and the following year they were married at Monterey in a gala ceremony.

COMMANDANTE, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Then began his long military and administrative reign over the northern part of the Californiaterritory. In 1834 he was granted the Petaluma Rancho of 44,000 acres, which was later increased to about 150,000 acres. He was the Mexican official designated to deal officially with John Sutter and with the Russians who were in settlement at Fort Ross.

He founded the City of Sonoma in 1835. He engaged in several difficult Indian campaigns. In 1843 he was granted the Soscol Rancho of some 88,000 acres, which included Southern Napa County and southwest Solano County, embracing the Green Valley and Benicia areas.

Vallejo always possessed an admiration and sincere friendship for the Americans, and received them kindly, even when his superiors demanded the expulsion of the dangerous foreigners. Though his patriotism to Mexico was never doubted, he

counseled annexation to the United States when he saw that Mexico had no government capable of protecting California from the possibility of European intervention.

On June 14, 1846, in Sonoma, he was captured by the Bear Flag party, and under order of Captain Fremont held prisoner in Sutter's Fort for about two months, when he was released by the U.S. authorities.

Later in 1846, in partnership with Robert Semple, and later T.O. Larkin, he devised the plan for building a new city on the Straits of Carquinez, deeding the land therefor. The town was to be named Francisca in honor of Vallejo's wife, though it was later called Benicia, her middle name.

AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN

In 1849 General Vallejo was a member of the Constitutional Convention which framed the first Constitution of California. In 1850 he was elected a member of the first State Senate. A year later he formed a brilliant plan to make the City of Vallejo—which he was then founding—the permanent capital of California.

Unforeseen difficulties arose which frustrated this plan, even though the legislature did meet here, briefly, on two occasions. It was Vallejo who suggested that the new~city be called "Eureka," but the legislators acted otherwise by naming it in the General's honor.

In 1852, after his extensive vineyards were well established, Vallejo began the construction of the house in which he was to spend his last days. It was a mansion, with materials from many parts of the world, located near a hillside spring just outside the town of Sonoma. Because of this spring, he named the home Lachryma Montis, and it is now an important State Historical Monument and is visited by tens of thousands annually.

Here in the midst of luxurious surroundings the 'later years of General Vallejo were passed quietly, although his services were constantly sought in public and welfare measures. Here, on January 18, 1890, at the age of 82, he passed away. Although once a man of great wealth, he died a poor man. His great generosity to his friends and adverse decisions on land grant titles were largely responsible for this decline.

HIS FAMILY

Sixteen children were born to General and Mrs. Vallejo. Six died in infancy. Three grandchildren are alive today. They are, Mrs. Anita Emparan Thomson of Santa Rosa,

Carlos V. Emparan of Oakland, and Richard R. Emparan of Sonoma. They are the children of daughter Louisa, the 15th child. Two of Louisa Emparan's grandchildren reside nearby. Third Vallejo child—daughter Epifania, married General John B. Frisbie, one of our city's real pioneers.

Of this union there are five great grandchildren of General Vallejo residing in Mexico. Seventh child, Platon, was for years a leading Vallejo physician, and the first native-born Californian to receive a license to practice medicine in the new state. Six of Platon's grandchildren survive, most of them living nearby; they bear the name of McGettigan, well-known in medical and legal circles in California.

Daughters Natalie and Jovita married brothers—the Haraszthy's, founders of California's wine grape industry. Granddaughters of Napoleon and Maria Vallejo reside in central California. There are numerous great-grandnieces of the General residing hereabouts, mostly descendants of Vallejo's brother Salvador, including Mrs. Knopf and Miss Adela Gantner of Marin and Mrs. Shegog of Sonoma.

Charles Bailhache, 112 Milita St., is distantly related as his great grandmother was a sister of Mrs. Mariano Vallejo. Another is Dory Vallejo of Crockett, the Mare Island theme girl for this week's keel laying ceremony.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/747>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/747/>