



A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO SONOMA STATE HISTORIC PARK

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by

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May 1989

Typesetting donated by American Computer's **Dp Services**, Sonoma, California.

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PURPOSE

This guide is designed to meet three major goals:

1. To acquaint the teacher with the unique historic resources represented by the structures and locales of Sonoma State Historic Park.
2. To assist the teacher in preparing his/her own program, and
3. To free the teacher from complete dependence on the park staff for a higher quality learning experience.

The Historic Resources

Three distinct eras of California's early development are encompassed in the buildings and sites of Sonoma State Historic Park: The Mission Era, the Mexican Rancho-Pueblo Period; and the early years of American statehood.

Representing California's Spanish mission system is the restored remnant of Mission San Francisco Solano. This mission, the northernmost and last established in California's "Golden Chain" has the added distinction of being the only mission belonging to the beginning years of Mexican sovereignty over California.

Representative of the era when Sonoma was a military outpost on Mexico's northernmost frontier, are the old adobe Barracks ("El Cuartel"), and the adobe servants' wing which is all that remains of General Vallejo's official residence "La Casa Grande." The large Sonoma Plaza which fronts these two sites follows its original 1840 dimensions, when it was laid out as a drill field. In recent years the Barracks has been completely restored and presently contains exhibits dedicated to Native American and Mexican Era histories.

Dating to the early 1850's, following California's admission to the Union, are the Toscano Hotel, built in 1852, located in the space between the Casa Grande and the Barracks. This frame structure with its double galleries is clearly representative of "yankeefied" structures built in the first decade of American statehood.

Just three blocks west of this complex is the early American Era estate of General Vallejo, Lachryma Montis. This Victorian country house and its outbuildings are set out in an attractive garden with fountains and trellised enclosures. The house itself makes

an interesting house museum of period furnishings many of which date from the General's thirty-seven years of residence here.

Location

Sonoma State Historic Park is located on Sonoma's Spain Street running along the north side of the Sonoma Plaza. Lachryma Montis, the Vallejo estate, is located on West Spain Street. Its entrance approach is the northern continuation of West Third Street. It is just three blocks west of the Sonoma Plaza.

These units are all opened for public viewing seven days a week, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For further information and school group reservations contact our:

Department of Parks and Recreation

20 East Spain Street

Sonoma, California 95476

(707) 938-1519

The Teacher

No one knows a class better than its teacher. It is the purpose of this guide therefore, to assist you, the teacher, to provide your class with a quality experience. Unfortunately, there have to be certain constraints...

One of these is the time limitation. In order to accommodate as many tour groups as possible, school groups are limited to an hour at the Mission-Casa Grande areas and one hour at the Vallejo Home. Other opportunities and possible constraints will be discussed in the body of this guide.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

As you know, preparation of your class is essential for a meaningful trip. To assist in this preparation this section of the guide provides:

1. A brief historic sketch of each sub-unit.
2. Some guidelines for your group's behavior.
3. Some suggested pre-visit classroom activities.

A History of the Mission (1823-1834)

Thousands of years before the Franciscan missionaries and Spanish explorers, Sonoma Valley was inhabited by tribes of Pomo, Wintun and Coastal Miwok Indians. It was on the site of a Huchi camp that the mission was built. (The Huchis were a sub-branch of the Coastal Miwoks as were the vanished tribe who called themselves "Sonoma".)

Fra. Jose Altimira a 30 year old native of Barcelona was founder of Mission San Francisco Solano. This mission he named for a 17th century Spanish missionary who had long been known as the patron saint of Peru.

Work on the first mission structure began in 1823, but was halted shortly by an order from the mission authorities. It seemed that the brash, young Father Altimira had undertaken the establishment of this mission without first getting approval from the Fra. Presidente.

It was not until the spring of the following years that Fra. Altimira was allowed to continue with his plans for a mission which he hoped would rival any in the mission chain.

But Altimira was not to see the fulfillment of his dream when in 1825, an uprising of the natives forced him to take refuge in the nearby Mission San Rafael. Realizing that under Mexican rule the days of the missions were numbered, Altimira returned to Spain.

This did not mean the end of the Sonoma establishment, for in that same year the aging Fra. Fortuny left his post at the Mission San Jose to pick up the pieces where Fra. Altimira left off. Fra. Fortuny is known as the "building padre", for during his short period of administration stock and crops were increased and the number of native converts was doubled. All the mud-daubed wood and thatch structures of the original compound were replaced by more permanent structures of adobe and tile. These new structures included a padres' dwelling numbering twenty-six rooms and an adobe church over one hundred fifty feet in length.

The mission was prospering until 1834 when the Mexican Congress enacted the secularization of all mission property. Within the year, five of California's twenty-one missions had become pueblos. The mission at Sonoma was one of the five.

Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the twenty-seven-year-old Commandante of the San Francisco Presidio was the man selected by Mexican Governor Jose Figueroa to undertake the task of secularizing the mission properties and founding the military outpost which would in short order become the Sonoma Pueblo.

Thus, in 1834, ended the mission era in Sonoma. The status of the padre was reduced to that of parish priest while the native converts either returned to their

wilderness existence or found employment at one of the ranches then springing up in the Sonoma Valley.

Today, only a greatly restored remnant of the priest's house and rear courtyard remain from the original mission.

Mexican Pueblo Sites and State Landmarks (1835-1846)

As soon as Commandante Vallejo and his troops were established in the now defunct mission quadrangle, steps were taken to lay out the Sonoma Pueblo. This consisted of the large square plaza (still extant) and the surrounding streets and lots.

Along the plaza's northern perimeter Vallejo erected a walled citadel-like complex which included the Casa Grande, his official dwelling, and to its right a two-story barracks building. His brother Salvador, now captain of the garrison, built a dwelling, or "post commandancia", which flanked the left side of La Casa Grande. These three heavy-walled adobes were two stories high and were joined by eight foot high adobe walls. A watch tower forty feet high was later added to the Casa Grande's western end. By 1837, the Vallejo family were ready to occupy the still incomplete Casa Grande. It would be another four or five years before the barracks even approached completion.

In this house eleven of the sixteen Vallejo children were born and it was here that the Vallejo's, attended by an army of Indian servants dispensed a hospitality that became legendary. It was also from this house that the retired Commandante Vallejo, was removed to Sutter's Fort, a prisoner of the Bear Flaggers.

This highly controversial moment in California history began on June 14, 1846 when a group of American settlers from the Sacramento Valley marched into Sonoma, made Commandante Vallejo their prisoner and proclaimed California a "Bear Flag Republic" independent of Mexican rule. This misguided expression of "manifest destiny" ended three weeks later when the Bear Flaggers, now under Captain Fremont's command, learned that California had been occupied by United States troops and that the American flag now flew over the territory.

Interestingly, it was Robert Todd, a nephew of Mrs. Lincoln, who raised the crude handmade Bear Flag over Sonoma's plaza land. Then Lt. Warren Revere, U.S.N., a grand nephew of Paul Revere, replaced it with an American flag three weeks later.

It took four years for the U.S. Legislature to approve California's admission as the thirty-first state to enter the Union. In that four year interval, known to history as the U.S. Occupation Period, California was governed by military authorities. In that period gold was discovered at Sutter's Fort and a convention met in the former Mexican capital at Monterey to frame a new state constitution. The ever-resilient General Vallejo

became a delegate. With the coming of statehood (September 9th, 1850) he was elected to the State Senate.

It was in that year that Vallejo offered to donate a 150 acre site and \$370,000 worth of buildings to establish a permanent state capital and a city he proposed to call "Eureka", but which soon came to be known as "Vallejo". His grandiose plans for this new capital city fell through when the legislature moved to the neighboring city of Benicia (which the General had also founded and named after his wife). The collapse of this dream, plus the activities of the U.S. Land Claims Courts, led to Vallejo's complete financial ruin, but the story of the General's later years belongs with The American style estate he built known as Lachryma Montis.

Concurrent with the establishment of the Lachryma Montis estate, was the frame building built between the Barracks and the Casa Grande in 1852. Originally known as the Nathanson Store it was converted thirty years later into a laboring man's hotel called "The Toscano."

Lachryma Montis, the M. G. Vallejo Estate (1850-1890)

California was on the verge of becoming the 31st state of the Union when in 1849-50 General Vallejo began purchasing the 500 acre tract which would become the estate known as Lachryma Montis. The Native Americans in this vicinity had called the area "Chiucuyem", meaning "tears of the mountain", when they had the beneficial waters which flowed from underground springs in the area. Because of its plentiful water supply for irrigation, the General selected this spot and gave it the latinized name for mountain tears, "Lachryma Montis."

On the hillside a dam was built to store the waters which would flow, at a rate of 6,000 gallons per hour, into the fertile acres below. It was from this reservoir that General Vallejo began to sell water to the city of Sonoma by the 1870's, transporting it in lengths of redwood pipe.

In 1849-50 the Gold Rush was at its height and it was part of Vallejo's intent to point out to the 49ers that the real gold of California was to be found in the wonderful climate and soil for raising crops. Lachryma Montis was to become a show place in which agriculture as a commercial venture was born in California.

In 1852-54 the main house, a two story frame house of pre-cut and numbered sections, was imported from the New England mills. With a large Gothic window in the master bedroom, carved fretwork under the gabled eaves and dormers its Victorian style became an innovation of prospering Gold Rush towns. Each room had its own marble fireplace (imported from the Hawaiian Islands), crystal chandeliers, lace curtains and elaborate walnut and rosewood furnishings. These things, brought by

sailing ship, filled the ten room house, while in the gardens were ornamental pavilions, trellised fences and cast iron fountains.

Outwardly this delightful estate belies the melancholy fact that the Vallejo's were faced with financial ruin soon after its establishment. For with the demise of the Gold Rush came the advent of the land squatter and the U.S. Land Claims Court. This meant ruinous legal fees and finally total impoverishment.

Gone were the thousands of acres and the cattle which spelled the Vallejo wealth. Remarkably unembittered by this ruin, General Vallejo lived here until 1890, dying of old age at 82. His wife, Francisca Benicia Carrillo de Vallejo, only outlasted him by one year.

The estate, reduced to a mere 20 acres, passed on to Mrs. Maria Cutter and Mrs. Luisa Emparan, General Vallejo's two youngest daughters. Luisa arranged for the sale of the estate to the State of California following the death of her sister Maria in 1932. The California Department of Parks and Recreation (then called the Division of Beaches and Parks) restored the structures and opened Lachryma Montis as a State Historic Park. Luisa remained here for 10 years as a state curator until her death in 1943 at age 87.

Some Rules for School Groups

It is the responsibility of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to acquire unique historic sites and preserve them for future generations. With this goal in mind the following rules have been formulated for visiting our historic units. Emphasis on these requirements is based on three areas: Your safety; enhancement of the experience for all visitors; and protection of our historic resources.

1. Please have an adequate number of responsible adults with your children. (We recommend one adult per five children).
2. Keep noise to a reasonable level. We don't wish to annoy the other visitors.
3. These units are hazardous to children who run. It will be the obligation of teachers and parents at each historic unit to keep the young school groups together and under control.
4. Please be on time and ready for your scheduled tour. That may mean allowing additional time to arrive at the park so that your students can use the facilities without cutting into their tour time. Please be considerate of the fact that other groups have scheduled tour times before or after your group.

5. For large groups please be prepared to split your group into two or more smaller groups if asked by the park staff giving the tour. For example, the house at Vallejo Home cannot accommodate more than 30.
6. No food or drink is permitted inside the historic buildings.

A Few Activities

As you know, an effective field trip depends on classroom preparation. One of the best methods is to plan the trip to coincide with the proper unit in your school curriculum. Suggested projects might include the following:

1. Have your class prepare a timeline showing General Vallejo's life and all the dramatic events in California's history he personally witnessed.
2. After your visit you might ask that the students do a sketch of one of the units from memory.
3. Your students might write a composition describing what they saw and learned on their trip.
4. Food and nutrition units could include a study of authentic Mexican California and Indian dishes.
5. This is an excellent time to bring out the changing architectural styles and living patterns which so clearly mirror California's early development from a primitive frontier to its place in the modern world.

NOW YOU ARE READY

You have worked with your class on pre-visit projects, discussed the rules and made your travel arrangements. Be sure to make your reservation with the park at least 15 days in advance. It may be possible to visit General Vallejo's great adobe ranch house at Petaluma, only ten miles distant. Reservations for this unit may be made by telephoning at the same number that is given in the beginning of your guidebook. Fee waivers are considered only for recognized school groups, K-12, having made these reservations. Tours are not provided for unscheduled visits.

The Tour

Prior to beginning your activity, please give your students the opportunity to use the restrooms and get a drink of water. There is a restroom by the front gate of the Vallejo Home as well as a drinking fountain. At the Mission there are restrooms and a drinking fountain in the rear courtyard. There are restrooms in the courtyard by the Toscano kitchen next to the Barracks.

Before your group enters you might ask a question or two that will encourage them to read the signs. The questions below are merely samples.

Questions for the Mission

1. What building materials were used for the Mission buildings, the Barracks and General Vallejo's Casa Grande?
2. Find the adobe with the cougar print.
3. What is a "fanega?"
4. Who is buried under the floor of the adobe church?
5. Where are the pulpit and choir loft?

Questions for the Casa Grande Site:

1. What was the sole remaining adobe on the Casa Grande site originally used for?
2. Where is the replica of the Bear Flag kept?
3. Who built the Barracks?

Questions for Lachryma Montis:

1. What was the Chalet used for?
2. What does Lachryma Montis mean in Latin?
3. When were the houses at Lachryma Montis built? Before or after American statehood?
4. How many children did the Vallejo's have?
5. Was Lachryma Montis a rancho?

Questionnaires

Through old fashioned trial-and-error we have found that handing out questionnaires after the tour is best. They can be a great aid in helping the students to recall what they have seen while it is still fresh in their minds. This questionnaire can be filled out by each student or answered collectively on a classwide basis. In either case we suggest a discussion by the entire class at the end of the question time. In this way there is a better chance of getting across the relevance of each unit they visit to the people and events which frame California history.

The Guided Tour

Rangers or State Park Guides are provided for the school tours at the Mission, and the Vallejo Home. These tours are arranged by reservations only. If a group is large, you may be asked to split into smaller groups by your tour guide. The average tour allows ample travel time for groups having to travel between the Vallejo Home and Mission for their next tour reservation.

AFTER IT IS OVER

After your class returns to your school, you may want to reinforce what your group has learned. The printed questionnaire has already been mentioned as one way to refresh the classes' memories. The following are some alternatives to a general group discussion.

1. Have each member of the class make a report on what he/she saw. Reports could be in the form of a newspaper article describing some event which took place in Sonoma. A "television interview" with General or Mrs. Vallejo, or with Father Altimira, the founder of the Sonoma Mission. There might be a report on the activities during a day at the Mission.
2. The children might draw a sketch of the Mission, the Barracks, or the Vallejo Home. Each class member could develop his/her own picture postcard with a description on the back. A class project might be a model of one of the historic units.

GLOSSARY

Below is a list of words your group may encounter on its tour:

| | |
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| ADOBE | Refers to sun-baked bricks of mud and straw, or to a structure of that material. It also refers to soils with a high clay content. |
| BLACKSMITH | A person who makes ironwork on a forge. Nowadays, blacksmiths are associated with making horseshoes, only one of their many functions. |
| BOTA | Literally translated, a bag. The original botas were rawhides sewn into bags, (hairside in for waterproofing). And used for transporting tallow which was poured into them from fry-pots. Botas were also leather leggings worn by vaqueros to protect their shins as they rode. |
| CARRETTA | A high two-wheeled cart pulled by oxen. The main method of hauling goods and transportation in old California, it has been described as painfully simple, and simply painful to ride. |
| COMAL | An iron plate used for a grill in cooking. These were imported from Boston. |
| FORGE | A furnace-like structure used by blacksmiths to heat metal for shaping. It has a bellows to heat up the coals contained in a firebox and an anvil for hammering the hot metal into shape. |
| HACIENDA | A tract of land designated for agriculture. |
| HORNO | A hive shaped oven for baking. The oldest kind of oven known to man. |
| MAJORDOMO | The foreman of a ranch. |
| MATANZA | The late spring roundup when all cattle were either branded or slaughtered for their hides. These hides were California's chief means of exchange in the Mexican period. |

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| | exchange in the Mexican period. |
| MOLINO | A grist mill (See Tahona). |
| PRESIDIO | (From the Latin <i>presidium</i>), a permanent military base. There were four Spanish presidios in California. San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Barbara and San Diego. |
| RANCHO | A large tract of land devoted to the raising of cattle. |
| RAWHIDE | An untreated cowhide, sundried for shipment, or used as a basic material in tools like <i>riatas</i> , or as ropes to hold members of a building in place. |
| RIATA | A rope of braided horsehair or of rawhide carried by <i>vaqueros</i> as a lasso or lariat. |
| SECULARIZATION | Refers to a law passed by the Mexican Congress in 1833, which placed all mission property in <i>secular</i> or non-religious hands. Thereafter, the mission churches were to become parish churches, and the vast mission ranches were to be divided up among the natives. |
| SQUATTERS | People generally associated with the post-Gold Rush period who settled on property owned by others, and then claimed it for their own. |
| TAHONA | A stone mill for grinding grain with two circular-horizontal stones between which grain was ground. |
| TALLOW | Animal fat which has been melted to remove membranes and impurities; the basic material for candles and soap, it was also used as a lubricant. |
| TRY-POTS (TRYING OUT) | Large iron cauldrons for heating and melting tallow. |
| VAQUERO | A Spanish cowboy, from <i>Vaca</i> , a cow. |
| ZANJA | An open ditch used to convey water. |

STATE PARKS of the SONOMA AREA

