
Guide to the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection

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California State Parks Photographic Archives
McClellan, California 95652

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection

Dates: 1860-2015

Bulk Dates: 1951-1960, 1969, 1978-1985, 1997, 2008-2015

Collection number: Consult repository

Creator: California State Parks

Collector: California State Parks

Collection Size: 779 images

Repository: Photographic Archives.

California State Parks

McClellan, CA 92262

Abstract: The Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection contains 779 cataloged images that date from 1860 through 2015. Images depict the property as a ranch, a historic landmark, and as a state park.

Physical location: For current information on the physical location of these materials, please consult the Guide to the California State Parks Photographic Archives, available online.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

Collection is open for research by appointment.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item including photographer and date when available], Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection, [Catalog number], California State Parks Photographic Archives, McClellan, California

Acquisition Information

Images donated by private parties, generated by California State Parks staff, and transferred from Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park at various dates.

Accruals

Further accruals are expected.

Park History

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park contains roughly 41 acres of cultural and historical resources. Located in Sonoma County, the park sits at the intersection of Old Adobe and Casa Grande roads in the city of Petaluma. The park is accessible by car via Old Adobe Road.

Prior to European and American settlement there, the Petaluma River Valley hosted the Coast Miwok for thousands of years. Settling along local fresh waterways, the Coast Miwok subsisted on the area's abundant natural resources: rabbits,

quail, and deer provided meat, fur, and tools; acorns, buckeye, fruits, and kelp supplied year-round nourishment; and tule rushes provided building materials. The establishment of nearby missions in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century—including San Francisco de Asís in 1776, San José in 1797, San Rafael in 1817, and San Francisco Solano in 1823—severely curtailed the Coast Miwok’s traditional lifeways as Spanish missionaries removed scores of native peoples from their villages, subjecting them to the disease, deprivation, and mass death of the mission system.

Following Mexico’s successful separation from Spain in 1821, the Mexican government undertook a comprehensive program to secularize all church properties contained in the mission system over the next two decades. Dividing and selling church holdings as land grants, in 1834 Governor José Figueroa ordered Lieutenant Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo to secularize Mission San Francisco Solano and establish a pueblo at Sonoma. Promoted to Commandant General, Vallejo ultimately received in two installments a 66,000-acre land grant, which he named Rancho de Petaluma.

Construction began in 1836 and continued through 1844. Enlisting indigenous menial laborers, skilled Spanish colonists, imported Hawaiian wood-hewers, and American immigrants, Vallejo, whose administrative duties demanded his presence elsewhere, entrusted onsite management of the project to his brother Salvador. As built, the two-story, Monterey Colonial-style building has a U-shaped footprint, forming three sides of a quadrangle measuring 200-by-145 feet in size. A two-story veranda runs along the interior and exterior of the complex. A fourth wing was planned to enclose the central courtyard, but this building project was never completed. The roof, originally thatched, was replaced with wood shingles in the 1840s.

During Vallejo’s brief tenure, Rancho de Petaluma proved to be a productive enterprise. Under Salvador Vallejo’s direction, Indian laborers cultivated grains, herded sheep and cattle, processed hides and tallow, and also engaged in wool-spinning, weaving, candle-making, and leather tooling. But the building ultimately fell into decline with the onset of the Anglo-American conquest of California. In 1846, Bear Flag revolutionaries sacked the estate, driving off horses and cattle and destroying grain fields. With his own fortune waning, Vallejo leased large and small parcels of the rancho beginning in 1850, before selling the adobe house and 1,600 acres to American rancher William Whiteside in 1857. Finding the property unmanageable himself, Whiteside deeded it two years later to Petaluma attorney William D. Bliss.

The adobe building continued to deteriorate over the latter half of the nineteenth century. Retained by Bliss and his descendants, the crumbling property and seven acres were finally purchased by the Petaluma Chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1910. With an eye toward establishing a public park and historic monument, the Native Sons initiated a basic preservation program to slow the building’s decay. Financially unable to restore the property, in 1951 the Native Sons deeded it to the State of California, which began physically restoring it the following year. Designated a California Historic Landmark in 1932, the property was named and classified “Petaluma Adobe State Historic Monument” in 1963. Seven years later, the park was reclassified a state historic park, designated a National historic Landmark, and added to the National Register of Historic Places.

California State Parks, coordinating with the Sonoma/Petaluma State Historic Parks Association, preserves and interprets historical and cultural resources at Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park. In addition to providing guided and self-guided tours of the restored adobe building the park-unit also includes a visitor center with a museum and day-use picnic areas. Closed on Mondays and holidays, the park hosts various living history events throughout the year.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection spans the years circa 1860-2015. While nearly 20 percent of the collection is undated, the bulk of the remainder covers the years 1951-1960, 1969, 1978-1985, 1997, and 2008-2015. There are a total of 779 cataloged images, including 362 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 172 35mm slides, and 245 born-digital images. Photographs originated primarily from California State Parks staff.

The collection mainly depicts the park’s historic built environment. Images document both the historic, pre-restoration-era Monterey-Colonial adobe building as well as the building in the contemporary, post-restoration era. Exterior features include the courtyard, with oven, ox cart, tallow pots, hitching post, blacksmith shop, drying cowhide, and landscaped cacti, and the second-story veranda. Images of the property’s fully restored interior spaces depict the kitchen, bedrooms, dining room, parlor, the Fandango Room, Majordomo’s Room, the carpentry shop, weaving room, saddle room, hides room, soldier’s quarters, and workshop with all attendant period furnishings.

Beyond the architectural confines of the building, the collection depicts other built features of the park unit. Images include surrounding meadows with corrals and livestock, the nearby Adobe Creek footbridge, day-use picnic areas, the adjacent visitor’s center, and a bronze bust of General Mariano Vallejo, originally donated by the Old Adobe Fiesta Association.

The collection also documents several events at the park. Construction activities include the rancho restoration in the 1950s and 1960s, which included adobe-brickmaking, roof and window reconstruction, and foundation excavation, and the construction of the visitor’s center in the 1970s. Other documented events include the Petaluma Fiesta held in 1962 and numerous Environmental Living Programs (or “living history” programs) conducted from 1976 through 2008. Images

depicting Environmental Living Programs feature docents leading visitors in wool-spinning, loom-weaving, adobe-brickmaking, campfire-cooking, animal-tending, candle-making, woodcarving, leather-tanning, basket-making, and carpentry activities.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

California. Department of Parks and Recreation

Cultural resources

Historic preservation--California.

Historic house museums

National Historic Landmarks Program (U.S.)

National Register of Historic Places

Native Sons of the Golden West

Petaluma (Calif.)

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park (Petaluma, Calif.)

Sonoma County (Calif.)

Vallejo, Mariano Guadalupe, 1808-1890

Related Material at California State Parks

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Collection

Vallejo Family Papers

Related Material at Other Repositories

Adobes of Northern and Southern California Photographs, Huntington Library: Photo Archives

California Mission Records Collection, Huntington Library: Manuscripts Department

Mission Era: California Under Spain and Mexico and Reminiscences, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

San Francisco Solano: *Libros de Misión* Manuscript, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

Sonoma County, California Views, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

Transcripts of Documents Submitted as Evidence in Case 250: *M.G. Vallejo vs. the United States*, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

Vallejo Family Papers, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library

[Guide to the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park Photographic Collection with Images and Catalog Subject Search Terms](#)
