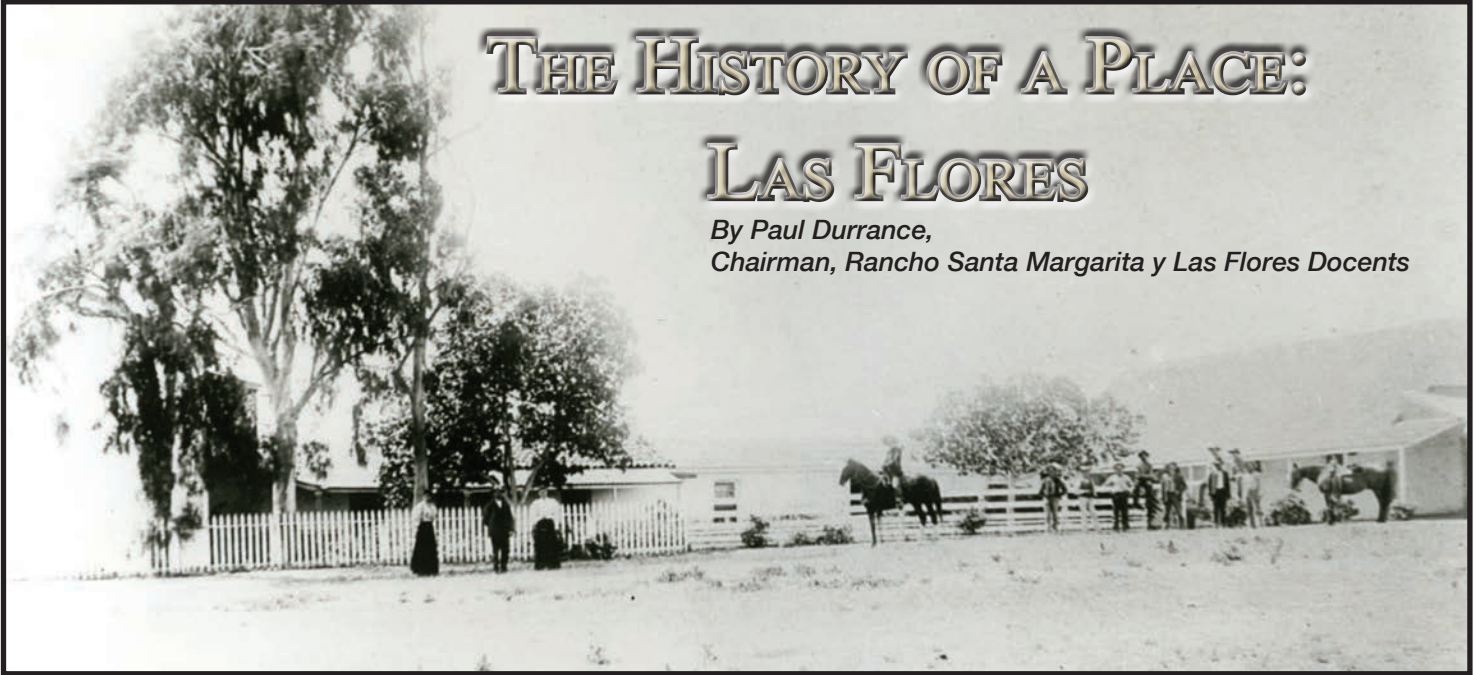




THE HISTORY OF A PLACE: LAS FLORES

*By Paul Durrance,
Chairman, Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents*



Las Flores Adobe, circa 1890s

In the beginning. Captain Gaspar de Portolá y Rovira, technically the first Spanish Governor of Alta California, had an old map made by a cartographer with the Vizcaino Expedition. On July 14, 1769, with map in hand, he, and his small company of persons, or rather skeletons who had been spared by scurvy, hunger, and thirst, proceeded to head north to locate Monterey Bay.

Portolá's traveling party consisted of engineer Miguel Costansó; Lieutenant Pedro Fages (a future Governor of Alta California); six Catalan Soldiers from Portolá's region of Spain; Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada; Juan Francisco Ortega (a stretch of Orange County highway is named after him) with twenty-six of his soldiers, seven muleteers, two servants, fifteen Baja California Indians, and two Catholic priests belonging to the Society of Friars Minor (the Franciscans). Franciscan Friars Juan Crespi and Francisco Gomez were tasked to spread the Christian faith among the heathens. They, soon, would be responsible for the first Christian baptisms in Alta California. These two Franciscan priests were the best educated in the Portolá party. Portolá, Costansó, Fages, and Rivera were educated during battle.

On July 20, 1769, the Portolá party, according to Friar Crespi, "because we arrived at this place on the day of Santa Margarita, we christened it with the name of this holy virgin

and martyr." There was grass and water for the horses and mules according to Portolá's diary.

Friday, July 21, 1769, was overcast when the party headed to the northwest. According to Portolá's diary, "we travelled for two hours over ranging hillocks and halted in a canyon where there was pasture and water. Here there came to our camp three natives with five women." The Indians encountered were at the village of Ushmai.

Miguel Costansó's diary entry of July 21, 1769 is a little more detailed than that of Gaspar Portolá's, "We gave it the name of Canada de Los Rosales, on account of the great number of rose bushes we saw". From Santa Margarita, the party traveled two leagues. (Note: one league equals 2.6 miles)

It is difficult to understand the discrepancy between Miguel Costansó's naming of the area on Friday, July 21, 1769, and that of Friar Juan Crespi's naming of the same area. Juan Crespi, being a friar of the Catholic Church, was the official person with the collection of saints' names and days to celebrate them.

The diary of Friar Crespi, in the same party as Costansó, states, "What we did see was a great deal of water, and that the spot

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Las Flores, Cont.



Watercolor of the Las Flores Adobe, E. S. Fenyes, 1913.

was full of grape vines and innumerable Castilian rose bushes and other flowers. For this reason, it was called "The Valley of Santa Praxedis de Los Rosales." Today the area is called Las Pulgas. The abundance of fragrant, pink wild roses in a valley reminded the Spaniards of the roses of Castile. Nostalgically, they added "de Los Rosales" to the commemorative name Canada de Santa Praxedis. Although the whole title has faded away, and is obscure, it was replaced by Las Flores Canyon, where wild roses still bloom.

The next morning, after leaving their camp and heading North, Friar Crespí used the name Rosales referring to the area left behind. The Portolá Party headed north, and the two Friars would share their destiny baptizing the two dying baby Native American maidens.

From 1769 to 1798, Spanish King Carlos III, using his Catholic Franciscan friars and soldiers, began the Spanish political and military control of Alta California. The natives' way of life, customs, culture, and traditions would be forever changed.

On April 8, 1810, Friar Antonio Peyri found it necessary to complain to Comandante Francisco M. Ruiz of San Diego that troops were occupying the Las Flores and Santa Margarita Rancherías, where the mission grazed its sheep.

Again, on May 10, 1810, Father Peyri and Friar Domingo Carranza jointly complained to Governor Arrillaga that the land around Las Flores was overrun by the horses of the Presidio soldiers. Unfortunately, the soldiers were recruited from the least desirable of Mexican Society.

In 1821, Mexico gains its independence from Spain, after which Spanish mission lands, which were the best lands for ranching, were divided up among the powerful Californio families. Some land was given back to the Native Americans who lived and worked at the missions, as all the land was originally theirs. Not all lands were given back, but some, like Las Flores, was declared Pueblo Libre, or free town. Las Flores became one of four "free villages."



Mission Estancia San Pedro de las Flores in Alta California, drawn by A.M.T. Powell; circa 1849

Friar Peyri founded the Las Flores Estancia in 1823; the Estancia was a part of the mission system serving as part of Mission San Luis Rey de Francia. Las Flores, also referred to as "San Pedro", consisted of a tiled roof adobe, a chapel, a hostel, and ranch buildings. All that remains today are crumbling adobe bricks.

The tiled roof adobe chapel and hostel at Las Flores served from 1823 to the 1840s as Las Flores Estancia to Mission San Luis Rey, providing comfort to travelers on the El Camino Real, or "King's Highway". In his report to the Governor's office on Oct. 7, 1827, Friar Peyri stated, "the mission has the Rancho of San Pedro known as Las Flores; the place has a house, granaries, and a chapel, which buildings form a square or large patio. Holy Mass was offered up in the Chapel. About one league away from the rancho are pastures for the cattle. The locality called Las Pulgas." The Las Pulgas name was used by the Portolá Expedition's soldiers because of the fleas they suffered there. An estancia is a large estate or cattle ranch, whose chapel functions only as such when the padres are present. At one time, Las Flores supported approximately 1,000 Indians.

Thomas O. Larkin, the only American Consular to the United States for Alta California had a Monterey style home built in 1835, which was a combination of New England architecture and the California adobe. His house became identified as the Monterey-type structure now found in the 1868 Las Flores home of Marcus Antonio Forster.

The adobe structure and adjacent corral were the site of the reported April 1838 single cannon shot battle between Juan Bautista Alvarado, Governor in Monterey, and his cousin, Carlos Antonio Carrillo. It is notable that Carlos Carrillo was an ancestor of Leo Carrillo, the actor who portrayed Poncho in the fifties show, "The Cisco Kid." The fight at Las Flores was contesting the provincial Governorship of Alta California; Carrillo nominated by Mexico City. Both sides met at Las Flores in the "Battle of Las Flores." One cannon volley, allegedly, hit a mule and killed the animal. A white flag of truce went up and both sides met to negotiate. After wine and barbeque,



Ruins, Las Flores Estancia; undated

Don Carrillo decided he would give up his right to govern Alta California and was paroled to his wife.

When William Hartnell emancipated the Indians of Las Flores in 1839, he did not really believe that they could manage alone, partly because of the interference from the Picos as noted in William Hartnell's diary entry of May 3, 1839, "Pio Pico, on Feb. 5, 1840, reported to Governor Alvarado that he had turned over to Indian Jose Manuel the property of the pueblo of Las Flores. Along with his brother Andres, Pio took possession of Las Flores and established a residence there, moving young girls from the Native American community and making the place a private seraglio, or brothel." This is a discussion between Francisco Ibarra and Narcisco Duran, recorded on May 7, 1840.

In 1841, Pio and Andres Pico received the largest Mexican land grant in California history from Governor Alvarado. Pio Pico married the governor's niece, Maria Ignacia Alvarado, in 1834. She later died childless on April 21, 1854. Most of the land granted by the governor was part of the mission's original Rancho Santa Margarita lands. The Pico brothers also acquired Las Flores and the Indian lands in 1844, finishing off the Las Flores Pueblo Libre.

With the American period, the United States took control of Southern California. In 1847, Major W. H. Emory camped with his troops under General S. W. Kearny and wrote, "We



Remaining ruins, Las Flores Estancia, 1968

camped near Las Flores, a deserted mission... just below it and near the ocean is an Indian village."

In 1865, Don Juan Forster moved to the new Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores with his family from mission San Juan Capistrano where they had lived for 20 years. Moving only after President Abraham Lincoln signed the presidential declaration on March 18, 1865, restoring the ownership of the missions back to the Catholic church, Don Juan Forster acquired the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores from Pio after Pio buys his brother Andre's half interest in the ranch. The two-story Monterey-style house at Las Flores was built near the mouth of the Las Pulgas canyon as a wedding present for Don Juan Forster's son, Marcus Antonio Forster. It is interesting to note that Marcos Forster was 6'4" and his new bride was 4'11" tall.

When Don Juan Forster died in 1882, his children, Marcos Antonio Forster, and Juan Fernando Forster, sell the Rancho Santa Margarita to James C. Flood and Richard O'Neill for \$450,000. Because the Magee family helped to protect the Santa Margarita cattle from rustlers, Richard O'Neill offers the vacant adobe to Magee's eldest daughter, Jane Magee in 1888. Las Flores would support the Magee family for the next seventy-nine years. The last Magee relative, Ruth Magee, wife of Louis Magee, dies at Las Flores in 1968. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Louis and Ruth Magee in 1942 at the Las Flores Adobe and told them they could stay at Las Flores until the death of the last of Jane's generation. Louis



Jane Magee, the "Lima Bean Queen"



Louis Magee, brother of Jane, who managed Las Flores.



Magee Family Reunion, 1939. Jane Magee (3rd from left) and Louis Magee (2nd from right). Photos courtesy of Camp Pendleton Archives

Las Flores, Cont.

predeceased his wife Ruth in 1962. Jane Magee never married but was a marvelous businessperson; she raised lima beans. She was so successful that she became known as the “Bean Queen” and had three thousand acres planted in lima beans.

The Monterey-style architecture, first created for Thomas Oliver Larkin at Monterey, was incorporated into the initial construction of the adobe home built for Marcos Antonio Forster and his family. The addition of a single Hacienda-style construction has added to the overall unique character of the home. These two styles of architecture can only be found at the Las Flores Adobe. This, I believe, is one reason the Las Flores Adobe was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1968.

Clifford May, a celebrated California designer who created the California Ranch House style which is noted for open indoor spaces, large windows, and outdoor patios, was a Magee nephew who had visited the Las Flores adobe every summer in his youth. This, I am sure, contributed to his passion for design and his future success and fame. I recall a gathering at the barn on the Las Flores property by a few architects celebrating Clifford May with a series of lectures on his legacy as a designer and his influence on architecture.

Las Flores and the surrounding area were touched in so many ways by so many people creating the history and unique circumstances. If flags of Las Flores’ history were flown at this site they would represent the flags of Old Spain, Mexico, and the United States. From the early Native American sites and rancherias to the early explorations of Captain Gaspar de Portolá’s expedition touched and named the land. In their own way, Catholic Franciscan Friars Juan Crespi, Francisco Gomez, and Antonio Peyri all touched the land and made history, with new names and places. Pio and Andres Pico, Juan Alvarado, Carlos Carrillo, Thomas Larkin, John Forster, Richard O’Neill, and James Flood, in their own way, all left their mark on Las Flores. History, a cruel judge, has reached a verdict on each of these individuals now long gone.

The School of Engineering of the University of Vermont, since the early 2000s has been working to stabilize and restore the Las Flores Adobe National Historic Landmark. With the support of grants and donations enthusiastically secured by the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents and Camp Pendleton Historical Society, Las Flores has enjoyed a great renewal. The Camp Pendleton Environmental Security Directorate continues the work

it initially spearheaded and shepherds the University of Vermont in its undertakings at the Las Flores Adobe. These two 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations have joined with the Environmental Security Directorate and Camp Pendleton History and Museum Division to create future events and tours so that generations might learn from and enjoy this important National Historic Landmark.



Doug Porter giving CPHS members an overview of the seismic and structural stabilization of the Adobe. Photo by Deb Hellman



Doug Porter explaining details of the window reconstruction on a tour to CPHS members on Jan. 30, 2016. Photo by Deb Hellman



National Historic Landmark plaque



Louis and Ruth Magee and unidentified guests in the living room of the Las Flores Adobe; undated



West side view, Las Flores Adobe, circa 1915



East side view, Las Flores Adobe, undated



Current western exterior view. Photo by Deb Hellman



Current exterior view of covered walkway. Photo by Deb Hellman



Photo by Cpl Mary R. Jenni

HOLIDAY PARTY INCLUDES CAMP PENDLETON HISTORY

Renee Woodworth, wife of U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Jason Woodworth, the commanding general of Marine Corps Installations West-Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, gives remarks during a Holiday Buffet and Reception at the Pacific Views Center on Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 7, 2023. In her remarks, Renee relayed the story of Sgt. Reckless, the horse who gallantly served with the 5th Marine Regiment during the Korean War; she also noted the handmade Sgt. Reckless ornaments which hung on the Christmas tree at the event.



Photo by Deb Hellman

President's Message

Jay Bullard



Dear Members and Supporters,

As we ready ourselves for the holiday season, I would like to keep you updated on where we sit with the Historical Society.

During our last board meeting, we voted to send out a membership survey. The intent of this survey is to hear back from you about the Historical Society. At first glance, most of us are opposed to surveys. Because it seems like no matter where we go or what we do, we're always getting hit up to provide a review. A survey when you visit the doctor, a survey when you get your car fixed, or a survey when you visit the hardware store. It's never ending and frustrating. I'll be honest, I'm usually the first guy to hit the delete button when I get a survey. Now that I find myself on the other side, I'll ask you up front for your patience and support in providing your input.

As part of our strategy review, we viewed the expansion and sustainment of members being critical to our future. We feel the Historical Society can increase social activities for its members. In other words, we want to look at opportunities for members to meet other members and celebrate our common cause to preserve and promulgate the history of Camp Pendleton. Therefore, please support our membership survey when it hits your inbox next year. Take a few minutes and answer the questions, there are no right or wrong answers. We would just like to hear from you.

Another area of discussion during our November board meeting was the digitization of the Camp Pendleton Scout Newspaper. We continue to look at methods and processes to preserve our history. The base newspaper is one aspect in which we can digitize and make this accessible to the public. Digitizing old paper copies of the base newspaper is a technical and labor-intensive process; however, we're looking into grants and donations to accomplish this task. This provides accurate source documentation to enable collegiate level and high school research projects. As an example, April 2025 represents the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon; Camp Pendleton along with other military bases hosted Vietnamese refugees that were evacuated and subsequently integrated into our society. Many Vietnamese made Southern California their home. By providing digitized documentation, we enable institutions to research and share this history so that it is not forgotten.

As we approach the Holidays, the Historical Society wishes you and your family a very happy holiday season. Thank you for a great year! Our success is your success – please accept our warmest wishes for a truly wonderful holiday. Whatever your plans are, wherever you are going, we wish you happy, peaceful, and safe holidays.

Jay Bullard

JOFEGAN, California

by Bill Parsons

JOFEGAN is not, as previously misidentified, an “abandoned settlement pre-dating the O’Neill Ranch” on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. There are no historic records of a settlement, by that name, on the former Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores or the current military base.

The Rancho was sold by the Forster family circa 1882 after the death of its’ owner, Don Juan Forster; it was bought by Richard O’Neill and James Flood. The Rancho was a working cattle ranch until bought by the United States Government in 1941. The land was dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as MCB Camp Pendleton on Sept. 25, 1942.

There are no records of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) celebrating the settlement “each autumn” with a jamboree type camp out called a “Camperall”. Those records, if they exist, would be with the BSA. However, the Orange County Council of the BSA did lease property on Camp Pendleton, at Las Flores, from 1973 until 1998. During that time, many events were held by the Boy Scouts, any of which could be described as a “Camperall”.

All of this is not to say that JOFEGAN did not exist or was not a part of Camp Pendleton’s storied history. Far from it, JOFEGAN was a very important, very vital part of the Base’s history.

Located on Camp Pendleton near the intersection of Vandegrift Boulevard and Rattlesnake Canyon Road in the “26 Area” very near Bldg. 2612, JOFEGAN was a 1940s era signpost, at a railway stop on the spur of a defunct intercontinental railroad: The California Southern. Today that signpost is on display in Bldg. 2612, Marine Corps Mechanized Museum, at Camp Pendleton. JOFEGAN can also be found on many maps and diagrams of Camp Pendleton, and it has its’ own GPS co-ordinates. JOFEGAN was the one place where virtually every Marine who fought in the Pacific Theater during World War II would be at some point.

JOFEGAN is the shortening of the name of Camp Pendleton’s very first commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph C. Fegan, U.S. Marine Corps. It was the starting point for those going to fight World War II in the Pacific. JOFEGAN was the jumping off point for those returning from the War. Bldg. 2612 and nearby buildings, all part of the Base hospital complex, were used to give continuing care to the injured and transportation to the hospital. The building provided assistance in reconnecting Marines with their units, assign new units or, in some cases, beginning the process of leaving the military and returning to civilian life. Yep, JOFEGAN was extremely important, and vital, to the history of Camp Pendleton.



JOFEGAN signpost

1st Marine Division Headquarters Moves to Camp Margarita

by Bo Hellman

After occupying their former headquarters for 76 years, the Headquarters element of the 1st Marine Division moved from their former building (Bldg. 1133), commonly known as “The White House”, to their new headquarters building (Bldg. 3329) at Camp Margarita (33 Area) aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in November 2023. Prior to the arrival and occupation of Bldg. 1133 by the 1st Marine Division in July 1947, three other Marine Divisions (3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions) used this same building for their headquarters from 1942 until 1947.

Besides the headquarters element in Bldg. 1133, personnel in the various Division staff agencies located in external buildings: Bldg. 1131 (Comptroller), Bldg. 1132 (1st Marine Division Association), Bldg. 1138 (G-1), Bldg. 1413 (Division Annex: G-4, G-7, and SJA), and Bldg. 1594 (G-6) moved out of their facilities, the majority of which were primarily wooden World War II buildings (circa 1942), into the new Division headquarters complex.

Once the Division Marines moved out, Camp Pendleton Public Works personnel and contractors swiftly moved in to begin the process of demolishing the 81+ year old structures. First to be demolished at the end of November 2023 were buildings #1131 and #1132; next was the Division Annex (Bldg. 1413) on 14-15 Dec 2023. The last outlying former Division building, Bldg. 1594, is tentatively scheduled for demolition at the end of December 2023.

Regarding the future of the former Division headquarters building (Bldg. 1133), the base has not yet determined what base staff agency or unit(s) will be assigned to occupy that historic structure.



Above: Bldg. 1132, prior to demolition
Left (Middle): Bldg. 1131, prior to demolition
Left (Bottom): Bldg. 1413, in the process of being demolished
Right (Bottom): Bldg. 1131, after being demolished



Photos courtesy of Bo Hellman



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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome aboard to our newest members who recently joined:

Anita Hanna

Scott Sunell

Many thanks to our loyal members for their recent renewal:

Larry Baber
Elizabeth Bailey

Mike Bray
Carol Childs

Lillian Cross

Rick Darnall

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Col. George Gaumont, USMC (Ret)

Commander's Circle:

Sgt. Maj. Frank Pulley, USMC (Ret)

Michael Ryerson

Scott Sunell

CPHS Events - 2024

The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is planning a number of events throughout the coming year. The following is the currently planned event:

8th Annual "Golf with a Hero" Charity Golf Tournament

Date: Friday, May 10, 2024

Location: Marine Memorial Golf Course, Camp Pendleton

Detailed information for the above event is communicated via the CPHS Facebook page, CPHS web page, Eventbrite, and separate digital communication.

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