



PHOTOGRAPHER: unidentified
SUBJECT: "Petaluma Adobe, Petaluma, California"
DATE: 1880
FORMAT: photographic reprint
SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY HERITAGE COLLECTION

This important early photograph of the Petaluma Adobe was taken in 1880 and is courtesy of the Sonoma County Library Heritage Collection.

In 1834 Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo was given the Rancho Petaluma Land Grant, and he began constructing the Adobe on this land in 1836. By 1846 the Adobe was the largest, privately owned structure existing in California and is considered one of the finest examples of Monterey Style architecture in the U.S. Vallejo made the adobe the social and economic center of Northern California and claimed that over eighty thousand dollars in labor and materials were invested in the Adobe's construction. Mariano, his wife, Francisca, and their many children lived, worked and entertained at the Petaluma Adobe which served as a cattle ranch, farm and industrial complex.

Vallejo was able to benefit from the wealth produced by the Adobe because its construction and the vast majority of work to run the facility were performed by a labor force of over 2,000 Native Americans. This fact is documented and discussed in detail by Stephen W. Silliman in Lost Laborers in Colonial California. Additionally, in a very telling letter, written in 1889 to Miss N. L. Denman, Vallejo discussed the Adobe in detail, highlighting the role played by the Native Americans. A copy of the book and the letter can be found on the reading table in the center of the gallery.



"Mariano Vallejo Standing With an Elderly Pomo Woman," 1878, Sonoma County Library Heritage Collection

After years of neglect, the Rancho Petaluma Adobe was sold in 1910 to the Native Sons of the Golden West, Petaluma Parlor #27. It was later turned over to the State of California, and in 1970 it was registered as a National Historic Landmark.