Galindo-Higuera Adobe at Rancho Higuera Historical Park

Historical Research into the Galindo-Higuera Adobe

The report was generated for a joint project of the Washington Township Historical Society, Mission Peak Heritage Foundation, and the Museum of Local History.

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Artists painting Adobe
Introduction

Sitting in Rancho Higuera Historical Park is an old adobe building, one of the last remaining buildings in Washington Township from the Mexican era of California (1821 - 1848). In 1776, the DeAnza expedition was one of the first group of Europeans to visit the East Bay, traveling through Washington Township, passing by what became Rancho Higuera Historical Park and Mission San Jose.

In June, 1797, Father Fermín Lasuen founded Mission San Jose, making the first permanent residence of Europeans in Washington Township. The Mission controlled the land of Alameda and southern Contra Costa counties, letting large herds of cattle and horses graze the local grasslands. In 1821, Mexico became independent of Spain and gave the lands owned by the Mission to local families in the form of Rancho's.

This paper will cover the history of the adobe and the land around the adobe, which was part of Rancho Agua Caliente, a Mexican land grant. It will also cover the restoration made in 1979 and more recent developments with the park.

This report is part of a joint project of the Washington Township Historical Society, the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation, and the Museum of Local History. The project's goal is two fold:
- Re-roof the adobe
- Restore or replace the information kiosk

The information kiosk for the Rancho Higuera Historical Park is currently empty and in need of repair or replacement. The Museum of Local History has volunteered to take on the task of researching the park and adobe and preparing historical displays for the kiosk. This report will be the primary source for the historical information that will be placed in the kiosk.

Rancho Agua Caliente

Rancho Agua Caliente is a plot of land in what is now Southern Alameda County, covering the Warm Springs area, and the southern end of Washington Township. It is known as Agua Caliente (warm water) because of the hot springs that existed at the base of Mission Peak. The rancho has also been known as Rancho del Agua Caliente, and either form may be used in different references.

The Rancho ran from the hills of Mission Peak, Mt. Alison, and Monument Peak, in the east, to the salt water marshes in the west. It was bordered on the south by Rancho Tularcitos and to the north by lands just south of both Mission San Jose and Irvington. The southern border of the Rancho almost matches the southern border of Washington Township (and hence Alameda County).

Rancho Agua Caliente was originally granted to Antonio Sunol, but no specific date has been found for this grant.

In October 13, 1836, Rancho Agua Caliente was granted to Fulgencio Higuera by Governor Nicolas Gutierrez. The grant was confirmed by Governor Juan B. Alvarado on April 4, 1839. A claim was filed with the United States on February 27, 1852 and confirmed February 14, 1854. An appeal was dismissed on November 24, 1856. The grant was for 9,563.87 acres (15 square miles).

About 7 adobe buildings were built on the Rancho. The Galindo-Higuera adobe was built around the 1840's, but the exact date has not been determined. In 1846, Higuera is said to have had twelve thousand head of cattle and several hundred horses. Grain was also grown on the Rancho.

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In 1977, Stuart A. Guedon wrote his Masters of Geography thesis on the boundaries of Southern Alameda County, including Rancho Agua Caliente. Guedon reviewed land records from the 1850's and 1860's tracing all of the deeds from Fulgencio Higuera to anyone else. From this, Guedon created an overlay map of Rancho Agua Caliente showing what parcels were sold, to whom, and when. In his thesis, this is listed as Map 9. Based on this map, the parcel that the adobe stood could be either parcel 29, 33 or the south end of parcel 4. The map is fairly small, has been reproduced many times, so it is hard to determine the exact location of the adobe on the map. Parcels 29 and 33 were sold to both Joseph McKeown and Eli Emlay in 1865 and 1867, respectively. Parcel 4 was sold to Columbet in 1854. Many sources say it was Clemente Columbet who purchased the land, but Guedons' research found that the first sale of property was to Pedro Columbet on Sept. 5, 1853. It is possible that the two gentlemen are related. Most written histories define Clemente Columbet as owning the land around the adobe. Given the research by Guedon and the size of the parcel map, it is possible that written histories are correct.

Paul Powers wrote a newspaper article in which he states that Fulgencio sold 360 acres of land to John Power, including land around the adobe, in 1852. There is no other reference for this sale, including the research by Guedon. Lionel Goularte, who's family later owned the adobe, said that Powers was referring to a different adobe.

Henry Curtner bought the land around the adobe in 1868. The Curtner family primarily lived in a large farm house on the large property, west of the adobe. A picture from the San Jose Mercury News shows a
close up of the adobe, with "Walter J Curtner" carved into an outside timber, and carving has a date of 1877. Walter was the oldest son of Henry. Arthur D. Curtner inherited the land from his father. Arthur was son of Henry by his second wife, Mary E. Myers. Arthur managed the property from his father's farmhouse.

From 1904 to 1918, Joe Silva leased the adobe property from the Curtners and used it as a dairy farm. The Silvas shipped the milk to market through the Warm Springs depot. The adobe was used for storage when the dairy was in operation. Jim Leach built a farm house and sheds on the north side of the adobe, plus a bunkhouse just to the east of the adobe. A milk barn and hay barns was also built at this time.

Arthur Curtner sold about 50 acres to Jack Goularte in December, 1927. Since Silva still had a lease on the property, the Goulartes oversaw the property and the area around the adobe. Once the lease expired in about 1930, the Goulartes moved into the farm house and started a farming operation on the property. They grew primarily apricots, prunes and walnuts, selling them to the San Jose Apricot & Prune Association. Lionel Goularte, son of Jack, said that because of Agua Fria creek, running nearby, the fruit trees were well watered, and produced large size fruit. The Goulartes also had cattle, seven milk cows, grew hay and corn, along with a fair sized garden for their use. They also had four saddle horses for riding and eight working horses for the buggies, wagons and plowing. The adobe was used for the cutting of apricots, drying of apricots and prunes, and storing the dried fruit and walnuts. The Goulartes sold the property to Dr. Stanley Innes, a chiropractor from San Jose, in 1945.

After the Goulartes moved out, a caretaker resided in the farm house until it was destroyed by fire, sometime between 1948 and 1950.

In 1960, the Historical Resource Commission of Fremont designated the structure as a primary historic resource. Classes from Ohlone College studied the adobe. In 1970, volunteers erected the first of three temporary roofs of canvas and plastic suspended from telephone poles. The condition of the adobe had deteriorated badly. The roof was almost gone and sections of some of the walls were crumbling.

In the early 1970's, Ponderosa Homes bought the area around the adobe for a housing development. Ponderosa Homes donated the land around the adobe to the City of Fremont and donated funds for the
restoration of the adobe. This was part of an arrangement with the City of Fremont to allow the increase in the density of homes in the development.

The Adobe

The adobe is 30 feet wide and 40 feet long, with three rooms on the lower floor and two rooms on the upper. The walls are 23 inches thick. The individual adobe bricks are 22 inches long, 11 inches wide, and 3.5 inches thick. It is cool in summer and warm in winter, the thickness of the walls making excellent insulation. There is no fireplace, as all cooking was done outdoors. Coals were brought into the house for warmth.

An 1860 survey of the lands of Clement Columbet, show a road as "wagon road to Galindo," indicating that Galindo lived at the adobe. Dr. Robert Fisher, founder of the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation and researcher on Washington Township history, noted that there were records, dating as far back as 1842, that Juan Crisostomo Galindo was associated with the Adobe.

Since no reference can be found as to exactly who built the adobe, the fact it was on land owned by Fulgencio Higuera and that records shows an association with Juan Galindo, the adobe has given the name "Galindo-Higuera adobe."

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) surveyed a number of adobe buildings in Alameda County, two of them in the Warm Springs area, in 1940. HABS CAL-1666 is described as the Abelardo Higuera adobe, with a location on Wabana Street. The citation on this adobe is:

"History: Built in the 1840's. Abelardo was one of the second generation of Higuera clan at Rancho Agua Caliente which was granted to Don Fulgencio in 1834. Two and possibly four brothers and their sons occupied portions of the rancho and acquired additional adjoining lands. This adobe was occupied later by Arthur Curtner, son of Henry Curtner, who acquired a portion of the Ranch. Building is now unredeemable ruins"

HABS CA-1665 is described as the Fulgencia Higuera adobe. The citation on this adobe is:

"History: Built in 1832. Rancho Agua Caliente, 2 leagues granted to Don Fulgencio in 1834. Name derived from bountiful warm springs in foothills which was ancient Indian watering place and a popular resort until earthquake of Oct. 21, 1868 wrecked adobe buildings. Acquired by A. A. Cohn who rebuilt most of the buildings now standing but sold to Leland Stanford before occupied."

The citation on both adobes is on a form with a form date of 2/56, so it appears to be much later than the original HABS survey and the photographs.

Reviewing the photographs from the HABS collection available via the Library of Congress website, and when compared to older photos of the Higuera-Galindo adobe, the Higuera-Galindo adobe is the adobe identified as HABS CA-1666. It is possible that the other adobe was the one owned by the Powers family.

Mrs. Minnie Andrade lived next to the adobe about 1899. In an interview, she described what she remembered of the building. On the north side was a single window in the upper story. On the south side, there was a window for the upper story and one for the lower story. There were no stairs to the upper story at this time. She remembered that in the north east room, there was a wooden floor, whereas all others were packed dirt.

When Joe Silva leased the property (1904- 1918), he covered the exterior of the adobe with wood. Photos
View of Adobe from entrance road. The farm house can be just seen on the left side. Circa 1945. Photo from HABS.

View of Adobe from end of entrance road. The farm house can be just seen on the left side and other out buildings on the right. Circa 1945. Photo from HABS.

View of Adobe toward entrance road. Note the orchards heading down hill. Circa 1945. Photo from HABS.
from Mr. Silva showed a large building on the south end of the adobe. Jim Leach built the shed on the north side of the adobe.

The Goularte family remembers that the adobe had a thatched roof under the wood shingles. Later a tin roof was installed, after the Goulartes sold the property. The center room on the east side was excavated by researchers from the University of California at Berkeley, in the 1940's, down to about 8 feet. Access to the upper story was made from a ladder in the main room on the east wall, to a 5x8 foot opening. Lionel Goularte said that the main door was the left opening, and was changed to the middle during restoration. There was no stairway on the exterior.

In 1960, the Historic Resources Commission of Fremont designated the structure a primary resource. The Historic Resources Commission was able to get donations from local companies and groups to try to protect the adobe. A number of telephone poles were placed around the adobe and a protective tarp was suspended from the telephone poles, forming a temporary roof for the adobe. This was to continue for a number of years.

In 1965, Dr. Stanley Innes, a San Jose Chiropractor, still owned the adobe. He said that he was interested in donating the adobe and some land to the City of Fremont, and in return, he would be allowed to develop other parts of the property with a slightly higher density than the normal zoning would allow. Under a special section of the zoning ordinance, higher density is allowed if parkland is deeded to the City.
In 1970, a temporary plastic roof was installed over the adobe, using the older telephone poles for supports. Donations for the project were made by the City Employees Association, PG&E, the telephone company, and the Heritage section of the Washington Township Womens Club. It is unknown exactly when the telephone poles were removed.

In April, 1975, researchers from Ohlone College conducted excavations on the adobe property. In 1977, two walls of the adobe collapsed.

**Restoration of the Adobe**

Ponderosa Homes bought the property to be developed into housing in the early 1970's. Ponderosa Homes gave $144,000 in fees to the City of Fremont and an increase in the density was allowed for the development. These funds were to go to restoration of the Adobe and to improvements on Curtner Road. Ponderosa Homes did not want to spend $110,000 on the restoration, but preferred to spend $68,672 on restoration and $57,790 on Curtner Road. "The best expenditures of the amenities monies is the improvements of Curtner Road and thus any expenditures on the adobe should be kept at a minimum", stated Ponderosa Homes in a letter to the City. In the same letter, Ponderosa Homes implied that possibly only members of the Historical Architectural Review Board were interested in saving the Adobe.

In October, 1977, the City Council voted to spend the "bulk" of the $144,000 for the restoration of the Adobe. Gil Sanchez, an architect that later did the restoration of Mission San Jose, provided a quote of $110,000 for restoration of the adobe. Larry Milnes, Assistant City Manager, said that it might be possible to trim the restoration down to $103,000. Both the Recreation Commission and the Historical Architectural Review Board voted in favor of the restoration. Dr. Robert Fisher, of Mission Peak Heritage Foundation, was quoted as saying, "Now for the first time, there is the opportunity, without direct cost to the city, of preserving or restoring the Galindo-Higuera Adobe. It is the last chance. Without exception all historians, architects, preservationists, and archaeologists agree that this adobe is significant and worth saving. The loss of this irreplaceable resource to future generations is unthinkable."

The historical research for the restoration project was conducted by Dr. Robert B. Fisher and Father William Abeloe. A joint team of Mission Peak Heritage Foundation and the Washington Township Historical Society, managed by Al Box of the Fremont Recreation Department, created authentic furnishings, interpretive graphics, and a docent lead tour.

Before restoration, the adobe had to be carefully cleaned. The team that performed this task was Gil Sanchez, Charles Buckley (the contractor), and three assistants. Items from the cleanup were saved and re-used in the restoration.

Gil Sanchez said that during the restoration, local dirt was used to make additional adobe bricks. All nails were square, the same as the original nails. The original glass was hand blown and was replaced by glass salvaged from other older buildings. The hinges on the front door were hand wrought. Sand Fleas Workshop, a local furniture business, made chairs and tables for the Adobe.

Some of the original adobe bricks had to be removed to make way for structural strengthening, as required by earthquake zoning rules. Two concrete foundations were poured at two corners of the building and steel reinforcement bars placed in the foundations. A total of 7,500 new adobe bricks had to be made to replace ones that were missing. Gil Sanchez had to experiment to get the right mixture of local clay and sandy soil for the adobe bricks. The bricks were made using 4x11x24 inch forms. It took a month for each brick to fully dry.
Diagrams of condition of Adobe before restoration. Notice how much of the walls had deteriorated prior to restoration.
Remains of the walls prior to reconstruction.

Close up of condition of Adobe before restoration.

The Adobe during the process of restoration.
Ceiling joists were made of redwood. A mixture of earth, lime, and water was used to create an "instant aging" paint for the rafters. Other wood items were painted with a different antiquing formula. Whitewash, a mixture of lime and water, was applied to both interior and exterior walls. Parts of the interior walls were left bare to expose the underlying adobe bricks. The floor was made of hard packed dirt, as in the original. Some inauthentic chicken wire was used on the building to prevent pigeons from entering parts of the building. Another modern touch was electricity and telephone wiring.

Mission Peak Heritage Foundation and Washington Township Historical Society worked together to help with the restoration. Once done, the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation was to operate the information kiosk and the Washington Township Historical Society was to provide guided tours of the Adobe.

**Dedication of the Adobe**

On Sunday, September 30, 1979, during Pathfinder Days, a dedication ceremony was held to celebrate the recent restoration of the adobe.

On the program were (in order), Mariachi Band - Larry Lucero, leader; Master of Ceremonies - John Weed, Chairman, Historical Architectural Review Board; Blessing of Adobe - Father William Abeloe, Pastor, St. Joseph's Church; Arrival of Mounted Color Guard - Wicki Sherwood, Advisor, Bayside 4-H Club; Mounted Color Guard - Sundal Sherwood, Brenda Warrell, Carol Spring, Sherry Silvey, and Sherri Schlim; Spanish Land Grant Systems - John S. Sandoval, Historian and Author; Agua Caliente and the Adobe - Father William Abeloe, Historian and Author; Dedication and Transfer of Deed - Gene Rhodes, Mayor of Fremont, Fred Hull, General Manager, Ponderosa Homes; Benediction - Reverend Peter Adgie, Centervill Presbyterian Church; Reception - Weibel Winery Gazebo. Open house before and after the Dedication ceremonies - Hans Larsen, Jean Carpenter, Lionel Goularte.

**Rancho Higuera Historical Park**

The land donated to the City of Fremont, on which the adobe sits, was named the Rancho Higuera Historical Park, and encompassed twenty acres.

In May, 1981, Hans Larsen, Vice President of the Washington Township Historical Society, and Jim McCue, of the Ohlone College Media Center, gave a presentation on the Adobe and park to the Washington Township Historical Society. The presentation was pre-recorded and tied in with 115 35mm slides.

In 1997, plans were made with Tri-City Raices, a Mexican-American group, and the City of Fremont to develop the park. Rogelio Santillia, an instructor at Ohlone College said, "We want to welcome the people by cleaning the house, painting and repairing it. We want to furnish it ... filling the house with the sights, sounds, smells and soul of another era." They also wanted to restore to gardens with native plants and flowers. Also involved was Vivian Larsen, who headed Raices, "We want the city to develop it into a city park."

Between 1995 and 1997, the City of Fremont requested public input on park projects. One of the requests was the develop a neighborhood park at the Rancho Higuera Historical Park. In 1998, a plan was drawn up, earmarking $100,000 to be used for the park in 2001 and 2002. The next planning cycle set aside $350,000 for the park.
Exterior of west end of Adobe, showing stairway to the second floor.

Bayside 4H Club as Color Guard

Mariachi band, with Larry Lucero as leader

Father William Abeloe of St. Joseph's Church giving invocation
In 1998, heavy rain damaged the back wall of the adobe. A tarp was placed over the well to temporarily protect it from the rains. Sometime during the following years, the damage on the back wall was repaired.

In December, 2006, the City of Fremont moved $3.8 million from a fund allocated to Rancho Higuera Historical Park to fund a shortfall in the funding of the new water park, called Aqua Adventure Water Park, being built at Central Park.

**Rancho Higuera Historical Park Today**

Rancho Higuera Historical Park is not currently open to the general public, it is fenced off and used for grazing. An information kiosk sits outside the fence next to the street, but the information displays are currently empty. The kiosk is the only part of the park that is accessible to the public. The Museum of Local History has been giving tours of the Galindo-Higuera Adobe for a number of years.

**Higuera Family**

**Jose Lorento Higuera**

Jose Lorento Higuera arrived in California in 1776 with the Anza Expedition. Jose became majordomo of Mission San Jose in 1822. He lived in a house on Rancho Agua Caliente, which at that time was still owned by the Mission. He was given permission to cultivate crops and raise cattle.

Jose Lorento Higuera was granted Rancho Tolarcitones on October 4, 1821, by P. V. de Sola. The claim was filed with the United States on April 1, 1852, and confirmed November 28, 1854. An appeal was dismissed on December 12, 1856. The grant was for 4,394.35 acres.

Jose Lorento Higuera had three different wives and a number of children with each wife.

Maria del Pilar Sanches - June 2, 1778 - 1811
Married Jan. 15, 1794 at Mission Dolores, San Francisco
Children:
Maria Antonia de Gracia - Oct. 21, 1796 - Jul. 8, 1866
Francisco Fulgencio - Jan. 18, 1799 - 1878
Maria Micaela Dolores - May 10, 1801 - Aug. 1805
Maria Rita Susana - May 23, 1804 - Nov. 1807
Maria Dolores - Sept. 20, 1806
Valentin - Feb. 15, 1809 - after 1870

Maria Ramona Bartola Bernal - Aug. 24, 1794 - 1831
Married Feb. 22, 1813 at Mission Dolores, San Francisco
Children:
Mariano de la Encarnacion - Apr. 25, 1815
Maria Josefa de Jesus - Mar. 25, 1817 - Apr. 1817
Maria Encarnacion
Josefa Antonia del Carmen - Apr. 28, 1824 - 1824
Jose Antonio de los Dolores - Aug. 8, 1826 - Dec. 1826
Maria Francisca Barbara - Dec. 3, 1827 - Dec. 7, 1827
Alexa Romona Garcia - Jul. 17, 1814
Married July 11, 1832 at Mission Santa Clara, Santa Clara

Children:
- Maria Refuio Petronila - 1823
- Jose Ignacio - Feb. 12, 1835
- Florencio Ignacio - Feb. 24, 1836
- Maria Lorento Micaela - Nov. 15, 1837
- Jose Maria Ygnacio de Jesus - Aug. 15, 1839 - Aug. 1839
- Maria Rita Damiana - Sept. 27, 1840
- Maria del Rufugio
- Maria Vicenta Augustina - Feb. 23, 1844

Jose's second daughter by his second wife, Maria Josefa de Jesus, married Robert Livermore on May 5, 1838. Robert, born in 1799 in England, came to California in about 1822. In 1834, he was working on Rancho Las Positas (Pleasanton, California) and eventually was given the grant to that rancho in 1839. The city of Livermore was named after him.

When Fulgencio was granted Rancho Agua Caliente, he was already married. He built his home in the area of the warm springs, where Warm Springs Hotel was later built.

A newspaper article by Paul Power states that brothers of Fulgencio, Valentin and Abelardo built adobe homes on the ranch. The article says that no traces of their adobes remain. The one Higuera genealogy that was found, does list a Valentin but no Abelardo.

**Francisco Fulgencio Higuera**

Francisco Fulgencio was born January 19, 1799 and lived until 1878. He married twice.

- Maria Clara Saturin Pachecho - born Nov. 1800
  Married June, 30, 1820 at Mission Santa Clara, Santa Clara.

- Maria Celia Feliz
  Married August, 24, 1845 at Mission San Jose, Fremont.

**Galindo Family**

Juan Chrisostomo Galindo was born in San Francisco on January 26, 1783. He was the son of Nicolas Galindo, who was born about 1743 in Real de Santa Eulalia, Durango, Mexico. His mother was Maria Teresa Pinto, born in about 1756, at La Villa de Sinoloa, Sinaloa, Mexico. Nicolas and Maria were married at El Fuerte, Mexico, but the wedding was also blessed at Mission Dolores in San Francisco on March 17, 1777.

Nicolas was part of the Anza expedition of 1776, and served in San Francisco as an enlisted man until 1794. On Feb. 11, 1835, Nicolas was granted Rancho Saucelito (Sausalito) by Governor Alvarado.

Juan Chrisostomo married Ana Maria Jacoba Bernal on July 25, 1804 at Mission Dolores. Ana was born July 24, 1789, at Mission Dolores to Josef Joaquin Bernal and Maria Josefa Sanchez.

Juan Chrisostomo and Ana had 15 children:
- Juana Francisca de Gracia - August 26, 1806
- Josef Pablo - March 22, 1811
- Manuela Maria Teodosia - March 1812
- Maria Ana - 1813
- Maria de la Encarnacion - March 26, 1814
- Marta Anastacia - July 29, 1815
- Juana Francisca Josefa Maria - April 20, 1818
- Facundo Jose - November, 27, 1820
- Maria Antonia - unknown
- Maria Manuela - unknown
- Francisco - 1823
- Antonio de Padua - May 21, 1825
- Jose de Jesus - August 29, 1827
- Agustin del Carmen - August 25, 1829
- Juan Chrisostomo Doreteo - August 11, 1852

Juan Chrisostomo passed away in 1877 at the age of 106.

**Curtner Family**

The Curtner family owned the adobe property for many years. Henry purchased the land from the Higuera family and passed it on to his son, Arthur.

**Henry Curtner**

Henry Curtner was born in Indiana on January 17, 1831, and came to California in 1852. He returned to Indiana in 1856, to marry Lydia Kendall. In 1857, the couple moved to California and bought land between Alvarado and Centerville. In 1868, Henry moved to his property on part of Rancho Agua Caliente. After providing Henry with six sons and two daughters, Lydia passed away in about 1878. Henry then married Mary E. Myers, also from Indiana. From this marriage, Albert H. and Arthur D. were born. Mary passed away about the time her oldest son was about 5. Henry then married Lucy Latham of Illinois. Henry passed away, November 1, 1917.

Lydia Kendall - died 1878
Married 1857
Walter J.
Frank S.
William M.
Allen F.
Josephine
Grace
Howard - died 1864
Jacob

Mary Meyers
Married 1884
Albert H.
Arther D. - Jun. 12, 1880 - Sept. 22, 1957

Lucy Latham
Married May 26, 1885

**Arthur Curtner**
Arthur Curtner married Edna Beard and had two daughters.

Edna Beard - Aug. 23, 1879
Margaret
Helen

Galindo-Higuera Adobe Joint Project

In early 2009, the Washington Township Historical Society (WTHS), the Mission Peak Heritage Foundation (MPHF), and the Museum of Local History (MLH), joined forces to look into the Galindo-Higuera Adobe to see what preservation work was needed on the Adobe and to fix up the information kiosk that was empty of any displays.

Team Members:

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