



GRACIOUS LIFESTYLE—Casa de Adobe, 4605 N. Figueroa St., reflects the happy, carefree and generous hospitality of the old Spanish rancheros of the 1850s. The Casa, built in 1917, will be open to the public free of charge during Highland Park's cultural festival on Saturday, May 19 and Sunday, May 20 from 1 to 5 p.m. The large central patio shown above includes a fountain and covered porch or corredor which includes floor tiles from Tampico, Mexico estimated to be over 200 years old.

Casa de Adobe

Spanish rancheros happy life recalled

(Editor's Note — This is the eighth in a series of articles on local cultural landmarks and organizations to be saluted during Highland Park's cultural festival May 18-20. This week the Casa de Adobe is examined).

The generous hospitality of the old Spanish rancheros, of the carefree, happy life that bloomed within the adobe walls of the homes gracing the acres of pastoral California can, with a little imagination, come to life for the visitor at Casa de Adobe, 4605 N. Figueroa St. in Highland Park.

Time seems to stand still, one is transported back to the 1850s entering the tiled doorway of the Casa. The visitor sees a large central patio with flowers

cascading from the inner roofs and a splashing fountain in the center. One almost expects a "Don" to greet you with those warm words, "Mi Casa Es Su Casa."

Casa de Adobe had its inception in 1914 when an Hispanic Society of California was conceived by the late Henry W. O'Melveny, Mrs. Randolph Huntington Miner and Messrs. John G. Mott and Hector Alliot. A year later the membership with enthusiasm stimulated by a desire to create an enduring picture of the home life of the Spanish settlers of California set out to build a reproduction of an old ranch-house and to furnish it. The building was erected under the leadership of the

above-named members and called the Casa de Adobe. After the outbreak of World War I little could be done in the way of furnishing until after the Casa was presented by the Society to the Southwest Museum in 1925.

PATIO

The patio of the old residence of the Coutts at Guajome in San Diego County was the pattern for the patio of the Casa de Adobe. The house was to represent the home of a young Californian of good family, of some means, who had just been married. It begins practically at the southwest corner, and as his family increased and his wealth increased, additions were made, running first along the southside, then the east side, then the north side, the west side completing the square.

Today, the Casa presents the utensils and decorative arts of that bygone era displayed in a series of rooms facing the inner patio. These rooms include the family chapel, kitchen, dining room, parlor and bedrooms. In a small gallery at the Casa are presented rotating exhibitions of Hispanic art from the Southwest Museum's collection.

The Casa will be open to the public, free of charge Saturday, May 19 and Sunday, May 20 from 1 to 5 p.m. during the Highland Park Cultural Festival.

Among the rooms to viewed is the parlor or "sala" to the right of the main entrance. It is furnished in the old Spanish style such as were found in the missions and in the earlier ranch-houses. A handsome walnut center table originally imported from Spain, Talavera pottery, an unusually fine pair of turned candlesticks and an old Spanish leather chest are examples of the 1850s decor.

FAMILY CHAPEL

The capilla or chapel includes on the altar a Latin missal printed in Madrid, Spain in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The altar decoration was painted by Miss Marion Parks in imitation of the Indian decorations at the missions. The benches are of Spanish Colonial type made by the Indians and brought by Dr. Charles F. Lummis from New Mexico, but the capseaf of the chapel's furnishings is the carved and massive thronlike armchair which Dr. Lummis secured in San Juan Capistrano and which he always believed was used by Father Junipero Serra, himself, founder and president of the California missions, when officiating at that place.

KITCHEN, DINNING ROOM

The kitchen or cocina has a stove which would burn either wood or charcoal, but the latter was favored when obtainable. The samovar and food warmer, brought to California by Russians from Alaska, were given by Rezanov between 1808 and 1812 to the Arguello family, who in turn presented them to the Sepulvedas. The large brass kettle came from a Santa Barbara rancho, the platter from Mexico and various small utensils are displayed that were made by hand. The stool was used in a single family by one Indian woman for 35 years as she sat by the fire and kept it alive with a hawk's-wing fan or a bellows. The Spanish-type baby's high chair is a rare piece.

The dining-room or comedor, which is the first room seen after passing the corner of the patio, like the parlor, carries out the spirit of the early days with its ancient tables and benches and bright Talavera dishes. The dishes were made in Puebla, Mexico, to which city the art was brought from Spain not

long after the Conquest. Today, Talavera ware is still being manufactured by hand and is glazed according to the ancient formula.

The bedroom of the parents, next to the children's room which is connected by a doorway was completely furnished by the late Senora Rudecinda Sepulveda de Dodson. In the main it represents the middle period of Spanish California, for most of the furniture belongs to the Empire period, or slightly later. The Empire-styled bed was imported from Spain for the Diego Sepulveda Rancho on the Palos Verdes in 1826. An interesting old type of sewing machine is also shown.

TILES

Next time you visit the Casa, take a good look at the tiles on the corridor surrounding the patio. They were a gift of Jacob Danziger who had anticipated building a house something of this character and had imported the tiles from Tampico, Mexico. They were reputed to be at least 200 hundred years old when he obtained them in the early 1900s. He had more than he needed and gave the surplus to the Casa to cover the correndor. The floor tiles are the exact pattern of the original floorings of the first chapel at San Juan Capistrano. In the chapel the tiles form darts pointing to the altar.

Standing there in the patio of the Casa de Adobe, the "Golden Age" of California with its community that got more out of life with less trouble, less wear and wickedness as Bancroft the historian wrote, does indeed come alive once again with your imagination.