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COVARRUBIAS ADOBE - SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

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by

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COVARRUBIAS ADOBE

Close to the very center of Santa Barbara, only a block from the Plaza and Paseo de la Guerra, standing a little back from the street line, sheltered, modest, and almost retiring at 715 Santa Barbara Street, huddles a four-room adobe dwelling. More than a century ago, before the gringo came, there were no paved streets, no rectangular city blocks squared off in geometric perfection; only horse and foot trails connected it with neighboring houses. During summer these paths were dust-laden, in winter, sodden and wet. Less than two blocks to the west was the presidio with fort, barracks, church, and commandant's home arranged so as to form a great square. Within the distance of a few hundred yards, mostly to the west and south, were a few score other adobe homes. Some of them, like the De la Guerra, Arellanes, Carlos Carrillo, Aguirre, and Burton dwellings, were mansions in proportion to the less pretentious house now numbered 715 Santa Barbara. Probably about 1838 the adobe became the home of Jose Maria Covarrubias who, with his descendants, occupied it for more than fifty years. On July 12, 1939, the building was designated State Landmark Number 308.

Not by virtue of itself would the house merit the distinction of being set aside as a historical structure

worthy of being preserved and pointed out, as it is no larger or more elaborate than hundreds of other adobes of middle class Mexican-Californians. However, it is one of the very oldest houses of California, intact, and beautifully preserved. It also was the home of a sturdy pioneer who distinguished himself under both the Mexican and, later, the American regimes. After his death it continued to shelter a son prominent in the political life of his country and the social circles of the state.

Don Jose was born in France,[1] about 1808. At an early age the adventurous youth sailed for Mexico, where he remained long enough to acquire citizenship and a fluent knowledge of Spanish. Little is known about his childhood and early manhood, but his education was superior to that given the officialdom of that period. This fact is attested to by all who knew him and recognized by state officials who sought his services as secretary and for diplomatic missions in which the knowledge of foreign languages was essential. He spoke English, as well as Spanish and his native French.[2]

When he was about twenty-six, Covarrubias set out for California with a company of colonists being sent to that region from Mexico under the leadership of Hijar and Padres.[3]

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1. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, II, 770; Walter Colton, Three Years in California, 11.
2. Helen Elliott Bandini, "Our Spanish American Families," Overland Monthly, XXVI (July 1895), 22.
3. Bancroft, op. cit., II, 770.

Each member of the group was listed as to his capabilities, experience, and the vocation he expected to follow in California. Don Jose had indicated that he desired to teach school. Reaching his destination in 1834, he spent some time in Los Angeles and San Diego, and finally went to Santa Barbara, which continued to be his home for the major portion of his life.

The pueblo of Santa Barbara, at that time, was the home of some of California's wealthiest families, aristocratic, proud, and still often arrogantly loyal to the Spanish throne, although California had been a part of the Mexican Republic since 1822. There the extreme republicanism of the Hijar colonists was considered sacrilegious, in fact tantamount to infidelism.[4] To say the least, they were unpopular.

Covarrubias, so far as can be determined, never taught school in California. The pay of a schoolteacher on the west coast during the 1830's was meager and the tenure short. Either he failed to secure a teaching job or found other activities more promising. Unlike Hijar and Padres, he succeeded in avoiding friction with the civil government and was accepted by the same prominent people who were implacable enemies of the other newcomers. Just why he was so fortunate

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4. Fr. Zephyrin Engelhardt, Missions and Missionaries of California, III, 253.

is not explained, but perhaps his personality, and doubtless his education had much to do with his good fortune. Ever after, this convivial man was able to accommodate himself to the many political and social changes which transpired with kaleidoscopic swiftness in California, and always found himself accepted and well placed.[5] At Santa Barbara, Covarrubias soon became a follower of the Carrillo faction, which plotted and occasionally revolted against the Mexican appointed governors of the province and almost as often against the Northern faction led by Alvarado, Vallejo, and Castro.[6] This was a wise choice, because many of the Carrillos had married into such influential families as the Ortegas, Sepulvedas, Picos, and the De la Guerras, who were the brains of the civil, military, and religious organizations of the region. In 1838 Senor Covarrubias married Maria, daughter of Domingo Carrillo and niece of Pio Pico, thus further cementing his social and political position among the elite of Southern California.[7] Jose's linguistic

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5. In California, Don Jose was variously known as "Cabarrubias," "Cobarrubias," and "Coubarrouges," as well as "Covarrubias," which was the spelling adopted by Don Jose himself. J. Ross Browne, Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on the Formation of the State Constitution, September and October 1849, 7, 22, 26; also A. P. Nasatir, "The French Consulate in California, 1845-1856," California Historical Society Quarterly, XI (December 1932), 342.
6. Bancroft, History of California, II, 770.
7. Ibid.

ability caused him to be in great demand by officials who were not so fortunate. A Carrillo, a Castro, or a Pico signed many a government report, bando (proclamation), and communication which were composed and written by Don Jose, who had much confidence in himself without being overbearing. His manners with his friends were faultless without being too formal. He enjoyed great exuberance of energy, a characteristic which made him a boon companion of the Carrillo boys, who were ever ready to dance, ride a spirited horse, engage a bear on foot with nothing but a sword, or, if needs be, fight a duel. On the other hand, this naturalized Frenchman possessed the keen mind of a shrewd negotiator, coupled with the suave manners of a professional diplomat, which fact caused him to be chosen on many occasions to represent his province on missions to Mexico, as well as in dealings with foreign powers during the trying times when California knew itself to be the object of the covetous eyes of the United States, Russia, England, and France.

By 1838, just four years after arriving in California, this tremendously energetic man of thirty was taking an important part in the affairs of the province. Juan Alvarado, after expelling the Mexican governor Gutierrez, assumed the office. In the meantime Carlos Carrillo had secured the official appointment to the governorship, but he was without sufficient power to unseat Alvarado. Covarrubias actively

supported the "pretender" Carrillo, until Jose de la Guerra y Noriega got the factions together and recognized Alvarado, who then procured the approval of the Mexican government. However, this was not accomplished until Covarrubias, Carlos Carrillo, Pico, and other prominent intransigents had been imprisoned by General M. G. Vallejo. They were kept prisoners for a time on the schooner California, commanded by Captain Robbins.[7] The internment was short, and the reconciliation sudden and seemingly permanent.[8] Covarrubias won the good will of his erstwhile enemies, and in quick succession he was partido elector (party delegate or elector) from Santa Barbara and secretary to the prefect (district executive) at Monterey. But preceding this by almost two years, his local friends of the south, in order to give him an income, had made him commisionado of Mission Santa Ines. But the revenue from this office was not sufficient, and General Jose Castro of the northern faction, prefect of the Monterey district in 1839, appointed Don Jose his secretary at the then munificent salary of $2,000 a year. "General" Covarrubias, as he was usually addressed, was finally established.[9]

In 1840 many foreigners, some of whom were typified by such men as Isaac Graham, by no means a credit to the

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7. Bancroft, History of California, III, 575-590.
8. Ibid., 662-663.
9. Ibid., 675.

United States, were rounded up and arrested on the charge of plotting revolution.[10] Whether this accusation was true or not is a disputed point, but that many of those arrested were lawless characters is certain.[11] On the other hand, there were also many law-abiding and innocent men arrested in the round-up. General Castro sent Covarrubias to San Jose to take charge of a group of the prisoners. James W. Weeks, one of the arrested Americans later described Don Jose's actions on this occasion as follows:[12]

> Covarrubias came putting on airs worse than the devil, and looked me up as if I had been Walker or some other 'gran filibusterer.' At S. Jose he had the satisfaction to see a pack of Christians and people of reason overhauling my writing-desk and pillaging every little thing that satisfied their gluttenous eyes . . . said they were looking for documents to prove conspiracy.

On the side of the Hispanic-Californians it can be justly said that many of the prisoners were horse and cattle thieves, and that in the light of subsequent events the fear of conspiracy and conquest was justified.

After a searching examination of the foreigners in California had been made, about fifty were ordered deported. General Jose Castro chose Covarrubias to accompany him in

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10. Bancroft, History of California, IV, 11.
11. Ibid., 23.
12. Ibid., 23, footnote 35.

escorting the prisoners to Mexico. Most of the deportees, however, were returned to California after strong representations had been made by consular and diplomatic representatives of the United States and England. Evidently Covarrubias again distinguished himself, because the Mexican government, in 1840, decorated Jose Maria for his services in Mexico City during the political disturbances of that year.[13]

When Manuel Micheltorena succeeded Alvarado as governor, Covarrubias won his favor to the extent that he was granted the Rancho Castac in what is now Kern County.[14] This grant of five square leagues, 22,178 acres, was approved in 1843. When Castro joined the Carrillos to expel Micheltorena and his 400 Mexican convict soldiers, Covarrubias actively supported the revolutionists. In 1845 the new governor, Pio Pico, rewarded him for his services by granting him Catalina Island, then called Rancho San Carlos de Jonato and embracing something more than 26,000 acres.[15] During this same year, his official friends permitted him and Joaquin Carrillo to contract for the purchase of Mission Santa Ines for $7,000. Engelhardt says that while they took possession of the mission

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13. Bancroft, History of California, II, 770.
14. Rose Hollenbaugh Avina, Spanish and American Land Grants in California, 100.
15. Ibid., 110.

buildings, livestock, and land, they never "paid anything" on account.[16] Both ranches were confirmed to Covarrubias by the United States Land Commission and courts, but title to the mission was denied to him.

By 1845 there were definite indications that war would break out between the United States and Mexico. Fremont again came to the west coast on one of those errands which caused anxiety in the minds of the Mexican-Californians. British and American warships hovered in California waters. Governor Pico first chose Juan Bandini as his secretary, but soon displaced him with the more cosmopolitan Jose Maria Covarrubias. The governor, although intelligent, was limited educationally and linguistically. The new secretary really became a sort of minister of foreign affairs, a secretary of state to Pico. Until late 1845 the Californians could not know which of the three powers, United States, France, or England was the greatest threat to their sovereignty. The declaration of the United States-Mexican War, coupled with Fremont's ill-concealed enmity and the Bear Flag raid in June of 1846, made it clear that California was to be conquered by the United States. Pio Pico sought military support to resist the invasion.

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16. Engelhardt, Mission Santa Ines and Its Ecclesiastical Seminary, 90.

Covarrubias was dispatched to Mexico for aid. He, of course, failed, as the Republic was much too occupied with its own troubles to send help to its most northern province. In desperation, Pico sent Covarrubias to Admiral Seymour of the British fleet and also to the French consul, frantically calling for aid against the conquering gringo. Both the French and British representatives sadly told him it was too late to stem the Yankee invasion. Until Pico fled to Mexico before the victorious American forces, Don Jose composed and wrote many of the governor's communications, orders, and proclamations.[17]

The American regime threatened to end the promising career of Covarrubias as completely as it did those of ex-governors Alvarado, Pico, and many others. But not for long. The old families of Santa Barbara reorganized their forces and built a political machine in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties that was unbeatable for almost twenty years. Don Jose was a part of this political group. When California called for the election of delegates to a convention, to be held in Monterey during September 1849, for the purpose of

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17. Bancroft, History of California, V, 32; Nasatir, "The French Consulate in California 1843-1856," California Historical Society Quarterly, XII (December 1932), 342; Ernest A. Wiltsee, "The British Vice-Consul in California 1843-1856," Ibid., X (June 1931), 117.

Santa Barb[illegible]
not seat him as representing two
credited from San Luis Obispo.[18]

During the deliberations Don Jose, Pablo de la Guerra, and General Vallejo were the leaders of the Mexican-California delegates. Southern California was still predominately Hispanic while, due to the gold rush, the northern end was overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon. For that reason the delegates of the South wished to create a separate state in order to protect their Latin culture. Carrillo, De la Guerra, and Covarrubias proposed that California be divided into two states, the dividing line to be drawn from east to west just north of San Luis Obispo.[19] Failing in this, Don Jose remained vigilantly on guard to protect the interests of the native Californians faced with the certainty of becoming a small minority in their home country. The report of the convention gives a favorable impression of General Covarrubias. He diligently fought for the rights of the Indians.[20] Not yet having learned, as he later did, that

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18. Browne, Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on Formation of the State Constitution, September and October 1849, 26.
19. Ibid., 22.
20. Ibid., 305-307.

politics and political office were just as commercial as business, he shocked the "American" delegates by introducing a resolution providing that the delegates should "serve" their country "gratuitously," and that "the delegates of this convention shall receive no compensation whatever for their services."[21] The outraged delegates voted down the resolution thirty-two to ten. At another time he proved his knowledge of the geography and history of California by correcting the native-born Vallejo on the exact longitude and latitude of California's eastern boundary.[22] Altogether Don Jose proved himself a very sincere and superior citizen at the convention.

He was elected a member of the assembly of the first legislature, serving in all, four terms. In 1852 he was chosen to carry California's Democratic electoral vote, to be cast for Franklin Pierce, to Washington D. C. In 1861 he was elected county judge of Santa Barbara. He was reelected three times to this office.[23]

The same energy which had earned place and position for him under two regimes was exercised on horseback, in bear fights, on the dance floor, and at stag dinners.

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21. Browne, Report of the Debates in the Convention of California on the Formation of the State Constitution, September and October 1849, 22.
22. Ibid., 451.
23. Bancroft, History of California, II, 770.

He appeared to enjoy the uninhibited exuberance of the early fifties, in California exemplified by the '49ers in their periodic "busts." Yet his figure and impeccable manners graced and honored the most exclusive social circles. He had a vast capacity to live and enjoy life. Major Bell, who knew him intimately, says he was a magnificent man,[24]

> . . . an out-and-out representative of chivalry . . . Elegant in his manners and appearance; speaking English and French as well as Spanish, a thorough politician withal, he became a power in the land . . . A great man was General Covarrubias.

He was at home in work or play with the Carrillos, to whom he was related by marriage; to keep pace with them one had to ride, dance, and fight well. To them, it was only a pleasure jaunt to ride from Los Angeles to San Diego, nearly a hundred miles, in a single day. On one such trip, Covarrubias, Ramon Carrillo, and a small party of men were galloping from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles, when suddenly the cavalcade stampeded a bear on the trail. With yells, swinging lariats, and madly racing horses it was only a matter of seconds to corral the fear-crazed bear within a circle of prancing horses. True, it was Ramon Carrillo who leaped from his mount, and on foot, with only a slender rapier, fought with the savage bruin which he dispatched after a purposely

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24. Horace Bell, Reminiscences of a Ranger, 73, 74, 77.

extended combat. But from each of the other men the situation demanded courage and skill in order to sit a horse terrorized by the bear which charged and threatened in an effort to break through the imprisoning circle. With a laugh the party continued the journey, the incident counted as good sport - a pleasant break in the monotony of a long ride. Arriving at Los Angeles that night, they were fresh and ready to dance till morning.[25]

The gold discovery brought tens of thousands of young men to California, so that for years they far outnumbered the women, a situation which gave rise to forms of relaxation and codes of behaviour thoroughly masculine. California became a man's world, free and generous, boisterous, and convivial. In this crowd, too, Don Jose thrived and even excelled. Bell, a typical example of the period, who often resorted to an exaggerated style of telling tall tales, would not be so extensively quoted here if the following events were not well authenticated elsewhere.[26] The incidents are so joyously told that it would be a literary crime to change a single word:[27]

> General Cobarrubias was the eminent character who bore the California electoral vote of 1852 to our country's capital

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25. Bell, On the Old West Coast, 106.
26. John R. Southworth, Historic Adobes of Santa Barbara, California, 5.
27. Bell, Reminiscences of a Ranger, 73-77; Southworth, op. cit., 5, says the first check was paid by Tammany Hall.

to be cast for Franklin Pierce as president of the United States.

It was a very pretty and delicate compliment in appointing a native of California and a Mexican to cast our first electoral vote. There was chivalry in the act; and why not! Was not California then the double-distilled quintessene of chivalry? General Cobarrubias was an out-and-out representative of the chivalry of the times . . .

The general was convivial in the fullest sense of the word. Yes, he was bibulous. He could drink an English lord under the table at any time, place, or under any circumstances whatever. Many is the bout he had with Ned McGowan, John McDougall, Elkin Heydenfeldt, Ipsydoodle Fergusen and their friends, the most eminent drinkers of the day, all of whom fell before his remarkable powers of absorption, unless, perchance, the ubiquitous McGowan . . .

The pomp and circumstance of the Democratic politicians of San Francisco escorted the general to the steamer, saw him safely quartered in the finest stateroom on board, where a deluge of wine was turned on, and continued to flow until the steamer was brought to and overhauled off Meigg's Wharf, where the escort left the steamer, which majestically and like a thing of life swept past the Golden Gate, bearing Caesar and his fortunes.

The general had the seat of honor at the ship's table, and wined every man and woman at the table who would be wined, and my memory faileth me in my attempt to remember a single soul in '52 who would refuse to be wined.

The General dispensed a bibulous hospitality in his stateroom, gave private wine suppers in the ship's cabin at late hours. The consequence was that when the steamer reached Panama the ship's storekeeper presented the general with a bill of $3,000 for wine on the fortnight's voyage. Oh! genius, where dost thou dwell, and where is the place of thy nativity? Paris?

Berlin? London? or the other capitals of the old world? New York? Boston? or Washington, with the superlative dead-head Beau Hickman? Yes! all of you have given birth to men of genius who have electrified the world, all of whom have been pigmies as compared with this magnificent Barbareno, whose genius cropped out and made itself manifest as a native quartz ledge, for, when this Brobdignagian liquor bill was spread out before the general he only cast his eye upon the following figures, to-wit, $3,000, when coolly and without a word he drew his check for the amount on the National Democratic Committee, pocketed the bill, said, "Esta bueno," [fair enough] invited the storekeeper and purser to his stateroom to finish up a few bottles, then, entering a boat, the general landed at Darien to pass over the same road marked out by his illustrious countryman, Nunez de Balboa. On the Atlantic side the same game was played with about the same result. When the steamer came to off Sandy Hook the news went flying to New York that General Cobarrubias, a Mexican Grandee of unlimited wealth, was on board, bearing the electoral vote of California. The result was when the steamer drew alongside her wharf, all Tammany was on hand to receive, do honor to, and escort the general to quarters prepared for him at the Astor House. The New York Democracy had a lion for a guest, and they showed him around. His reception was equal to those given to General Grant on his voyage around the world.

What! a former Mexican general, a California Grandee! New York went wild over him, and Tammany appointed a committee to escort him to the capital, and he was not permitted to spend a dollar while in the land of Knickerbocker or on his way to and from the capital. Discharging his duties at the Electoral College by presenting the vote of California in a grandiloquent speech, in which he pledged his State to the Democracy for all time, and after lionizing

in Washington, the Californian returned with his Tammany escort to Manhattan, and, being wined, dined and lionized a second time, was duly shipped off to his native State.

Drawing his check on the Committee at the Isthmus for wine bill, which for the last time he repeated at San Francisco. His wine checks were duly honored by the National Committee, to the tune of about $10,000. And why not? Notwithstanding the general's acres were very wide, and his purse it was quite narrow, still he was a general, a California Grandee, and the National Democracy felt honored in having such an eminent person cast the virgin vote of the young State.

California's democratic politicians and Don Jose's friends, awed by the pomp and heraldry lavished on the General, perhaps a little perplexed by it, decided they too had better celebrate his newly discovered greatness. Shortly after returning to Santa Barbara, Covarrubias decided to pay Los Angeles a visit. There he was the honored guest at a public dinner given by the leading Democrats at the Cafe Barriere.

Among the guests present were those renowned bon vivants, Myron Norton, Ezra Drown, Charles Edward Carr, Ogier and Brent, who, being aware of the general's wonderful powers of endurance, resolved to mix his wine with brandy and place him hors du combat.

The festive board was spread and the guests were seated at 8 o'clock sharp, and the bibulous battle began in good earnest. At midnight many who were active at the opening of the festive artillery began to retire. Norton was top heavy; Drown was half-seas-over; Carr was waterlogged, and Ogier was in search of soundings whereon to cast his anchor. The general was as cool and level-headed

as was Farragut while running the forts of the Mississippi. At 3 o'clock Madame Barriere and her corps of waiters retired from the field, leaving level-headed Cobarrubias engaged in drawing the cork from a fresh bottle, and smilingly contemplating the maudlin antics of his befuddled entertainers. Daylight came, and the Madame heard the bell ringing in the dining-room, and repaired thither, what a sight met her astonished gaze. General Cobarrubias was sitting in his place at the head of the table, smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper, and the flower of American chivalry were laying around, promiscuously, and under the table. 'Madame,' said the hero, gracefully waving his hand toward his fallen comrades, 'what queer people these Americans are. They fight valiantly, but always fall early in action. They have no bottom. You may bring me a bottle of cognac, after drinking which I can stand three soft-boiled eggs and a cup of coffee.'

Let not the reader draw a false conclusion from this story. Covarrubias was a part of that period in California, and like the rest of the men who worked and built it, he, on occasion, celebrated in wild abandon. He was exceptional, however, in that these excesses had little effect on him and did not defeat his objective or wreck his life, as they did to so many of his contemporaries.

The major closes his chapter on the doughty Don Jose with a sincere eulogy:[28]

> The great man is long since dead. The mantle of magnificence which enveloped

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28. Bell, Reminiscences of a Ranger, 77.

> the graceful form of the father has descended in diminished grandeur, and rests on the shoulders of a worthy son, a small chip of the old block, and the name of Cobarrubias is still weighty consequences in this consequentially great country.

Don Jose is reported to have died in 1870 at the age of sixty-nine.[29] Rev. Colton, however, says Covarrubias was forty-one in 1849, which statement, if accurate, would place Don Jose's birth in 1808.[30]

Only Nicolas, affectionately called "Nick," eldest son of Don Jose, seems to be found on the printed pages of contemporary history.[31] A personality in his own right, he earned an enviable position in his own time, yet his glory must be secondary to that of his pioneering father. He, also, became a politician. He served several terms as sheriff of Santa Barbara County and one term as United States Marshal.[32]

Nicolas was born in the old adobe in Santa Barbara, and except for a short time spent in Los Angeles, lived most of his life in the city of his birth. There, he was one of the leading socialites; his reputation for courtly grace spread to the rest of California, causing him to be in great demand at both social and ceremonial functions. Society page editors and magazine writers repeatedly referred to him

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29. Bancroft, History of California, II, 770.
30. Colton, Three Years in California, 11.
31. Bancroft, op. cit., II, 770.
32. Ibid.

as a perfect example of the old Spanish-Californian caballero. Photographs of Nick show him with a Cervantes beard, a high forehead, square shoulders, and the confident posture of a person "to the manor born."

He was a good judge and lover of horses.[33] They must have been a passion with him, for he is never mentioned without an allusion to his riding ability, his stables, his methods of judging a horse, or except to describe him as a beautifully mounted grand marshal at some celebration.[34] He was a superb rider, and mounted on a spirited horse, dressed with the trappings and color of 18th Century Spain, he might well have been taken for a knight of old.

In October 1909, when San Francisco staged the resplendent Portola Festival, the officials in charge decided that he was the one man in California eminently suited for and capable of impersonating the great Spanish explorer, Gaspar de Portola.[35]

Major Frederick Burnham, Indian fighter and chief scout for Lord Roberts during the Boer War, says that a

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33. Frederick R. Burnham, "The Remarks of Major Burnham," Historical Society of Southern California Publications, XIII (1927), 344.
34. Harris Newmark, "Sixty Years in California," 592; Boyle Workman, The City That Grew, 261; Southworth, Historic Adobes of Santa Barbara, 10; H. L. Rixford, "The Portola Discovery," Overland Monthly, LIV (2nd series) (October 1909), 337.
35. Maurice Anderson, "San Francisco Discovers Portola," The World Today, XVII (December 1909), 1320-1323.

mutual interest in horses was responsible for his first meeting with Nick Covarrubias. When he was a poor lad, young Burnham acquired a nondescript pony and a dilapidated saddle which was a torture to straddle, and so roughly made that it galled the horse. Juan Carrillo took pity on the eager but humble boy, and gave him a fine saddle from his own stable.[36] About the same time Nick noticed him, and kindly invited him to visit his "stable or corral," treating him as if he were an equal.[37]

> 'Sonny, let me show you how to pick a horse. Don't look at the points of a horse like a veterinarian does, but look at him as if he were a man. Read his face. Look in his eyes. There you can tell the strength, courage and ability he may have.'

Covarrubias took the boy from horse to horse, and illustrated his points in each animal, what to look for and what to avoid in a good mount. This meeting made a lasting impression on the grateful youth, and he used the advice to good advantage on two continents, when, later in life, the knowledge of a horse's endurance and courage spelled the difference between life and death.

For almost a half century three generations of this distinguished family lived in the venerable adobe. During

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36. Burnham, "The Remarks of Major Burnham," Historical Society of Southern California Publications, XIII (1927), 345.
37. Ibid., 344.

the hectic years of the California conquest by the United States, its mission tile roof sheltered frantic Mexican-Californian officials who vainly plotted and planned means to stem the gringo tide. For a time, it served as an unofficial capitol for the last Mexican governor, Pio Pico, and within its walls the last session of the provincial congress was held.[38] There too, after American occupancy, much of the political strategy was planned which elected to county and state offices its owner and also his friends and relatives. In its large sala (living room) many a gay event was celebrated.

The house, a fine example of California architecture, was built by Domingo Antonio Ignacio Carrillo, son of Jose Raimundo Carrillo who helped found Santa Barbara in 1769.[39] The date of construction has not been definitely established. Southworth places it in 1817, Rensch in 1837,[40] and others in varying years between the two. The confusion does not end there, some writers insisting that the home was built by Joaquin Carrillo. Most authorities agree with Bancroft, that Domingo built the adobe and that later it became the property of his daughter and his son-in-law,

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38. Southworth, Historic Adobes of Santa Barbara, California, 5.
39. Bancroft, History of California, II, 744.
40. Southworth, op. cit. Hero Eugene Rensch, Historic Spots in California; the Southern Counties, 217.

Covarrubias. No picture of the rectangular house shows any later addition of wings or lean-to. Evidently it still stands as originally constructed, excepting for dormer windows which were subsequently placed in the roof and which doubtless preserved the life of the timbers and adobes by permitting proper ventilation.[41] If the house was built as early as 1817, quite probably its first roof was of thatch, later replaced with red mission tile. The interior was distinguished by its 55-foot sala, sufficiently large to entertain friends at banquet table or with dancing, but the house lacked bedrooms for overnight guests.

In the 1920's the house was repaired, but the beautiful tile had to be replaced with shingles. However the plates, beams, and most of the original rafters were in such good condition that they were retained. John R. Southworth became owner of the house, and it owes much to him for its present state of preservation. The building passed through the 1925 earthquake without damage, and it stands today one of the most cherished relics of the Mexican period in this community which maintains an intelligent regard for its romantic past.[42]

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41. Rensch, Historic Spots in California; the Southern Counties, 217.
42. Southworth, Historic Adobes in Santa Barbara, California, 5-7; Bell, On the Old West Coast, 318, note 1.

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