

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park



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The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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Discover the many states of California.™

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park

3325 Adobe Road

Petaluma, CA 94954

(707) 762-4871

www.petalumaadobe.com

*When the heavy ranch work
was done in the fall,
rancheros, their workers and
their families celebrated with a
fandango—a lively gathering
with music and dancing.*



On a hill overlooking Petaluma Valley

stands the Petaluma Adobe, an impressive two-story adobe building encircled by a veranda. This structure is all that remains of Commandant General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's vast Rancho de Petaluma, once the largest and most prosperous private rancho in Mexican northern California.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

The Coast Miwok lived in the resource-rich Petaluma River Valley centuries before European incursions. Village communities sheltered in places near fresh water. The abundant tule rushes along waterways provided ample materials for constructing dwellings and boats. Wildlife, including rabbits, quail and deer, kept the Coast Miwok supplied with meat, fur and tools. Seasonally the women harvested acorns, buckeye, fruits and kelp. The ocean provided the Coast Miwok with a year-round food supply. They used nets, hooks and traps to catch freshwater and marine fish, and the women gathered crabs, clams, oysters, abalone and mussels in the tidal zones. Craftsmen transformed the cleaned



Some hides were used for saddles.

shells into beautiful ornaments and into strings of beads (dentalium) used as major trade items.

European Contact

The establishment of missions San Francisco de Asís in 1776, San José in 1797, San Rafael in 1817, and San Francisco Solano in 1823 quickly disrupted the traditional life ways of the Coast Miwok. Villages emptied as the natives were brought into the missions to work as laborers and craftspeople.

Following its separation from Spain, the Mexican government began to secularize the missions into parish churches. The vast mission holdings were divided and sold as land grants. In 1834 Governor José Figueroa ordered Lieutenant Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, commandant of the San Francisco presidio, to secularize Mission San Francisco Solano and to start a pueblo at Sonoma north of San Francisco Bay. Mexico increased its presence in northern California to address the threat posed by the Russian outpost at Fort Ross. Vallejo was promoted to Commandant General and received a land grant of 44,000 acres (later supplemented with another 22,000 acres), which he named Rancho de Petaluma.

Rancho de Petaluma

Vallejo selected a site on a knoll adjacent to Adobe Creek, with an excellent water supply, gentle climate and rich soil. In April 1836 building construction began, using adobe bricks and hand-hewn redwood planks. Some walls were plastered and whitewashed; the wide, covered second-story veranda protected the adobe walls from the weather.

The eastern wing of the complex was never fully completed. The portion of the building remaining today was part of a larger complex forming a quadrangle around a central courtyard. The adobe complex housed a variety of processing and manufacturing operations with storage and living space for



West face of historic adobe

visiting members of the Vallejo family. Ranch managers lived on the second floor.

General Vallejo relied on goods and crops produced at the rancho to help support his military command. The rancho's main income came from the hide and tallow (rendered fat) trade. Cowhides were so common an exchange item that they were called "California bank notes." Hides were a valuable source for leather goods and machinery belting, while tallow was used to make soap, candles, leather dressing and lubricants. Rancheros traded the tallow and hides with merchant ships plying the coast of California in exchange for manufactured goods not available in California.

Rancho de Petaluma needed a large workforce to tend the vast herds of livestock, to labor in the fields, and to manufacture

goods. Vallejo employed hundreds of Indian laborers who lived on the rancho and worked at the trades learned at Mission San Francisco Solano. Harvested crops of grains and vegetables were stockpiled in large storerooms for food and trade. Blankets and carpets were loomed out of coarse wool. The blacksmith supplied tools and metal items necessary for ranch and military operations.

The Bear Flag Revolt

An American group effort to seize control of Mexican California during the “Bear Flag Revolt” ended Rancho de Petaluma’s prosperity. In June 1846 Vallejo was arrested at his home and taken to the Sacramento compound of Swiss immigrant John A. Sutter. During Vallejo’s imprisonment, John C. Frémont and his soldiers stripped the rancho of all valuables. When the political turmoil had subsided and his legal title to the rancho had been accepted by the U.S. Government, Vallejo leased it to a group of French colonists. Financial and legal problems, as well as squatters on his land, finally forced General Vallejo to sell Rancho de Petaluma, also known as Petaluma Adobe, in 1857. As it passed through the hands of succeeding owners, the adobe complex fell into disrepair.

Petaluma Adobe Today

In 1910 the Petaluma Chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West purchased the portion of the Petaluma Adobe that had not succumbed to neglect and the forces of nature. In 1951 the State



Bear Flag Revolt

of California acquired the property. Archaeological excavations and research have unearthed details on construction of the rancho buildings and daily life as well as the Miwok, Wappo, Wintun, Pomo, Spanish and Mexican inhabitants.

Learn their stories in the restored and furnished rooms of Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park.

School Programs

Petaluma Adobe SHP helps students learn about rancho life in Mexican California. Teachers may make school tour arrangements by calling ReserveAmerica toll-free at (866) 240-4655 at least two weeks in advance.

In a hands-on Environmental Living Program, fourth-grade students can take an overnight trip back in time to early Mexican California in the 1840s. Students assume the roles of people living in the area during this time, preparing period meals in large adobe hornos (ovens), making candles and adobe bricks, weaving baskets, working leather and wood, and spinning.

For more information, call the park at (707) 762-4871.



ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- The adobe is a historic structure with some slightly narrow doors, high thresholds and somewhat uneven dirt floors.
- Some dirt paths of travel are usable in dry weather. A 750-foot-long path leads from parking to the exhibits.
- An audiovisual program is available. Accessible parking and a no-flush restroom are available.
- For more accessibility information, call the park or see <http://access.parks.ca.gov/>.

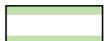
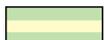
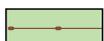
PLEASE REMEMBER

- Daily operating hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days.
- Docent-led tours are available most weekends from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Weather can be changeable; layered clothing is recommended.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Sonoma State Historic Park, in Sonoma (707) 938-9560
- Sonoma Coast State Park, 17 miles of beaches along Highway 1 north from Bodega Head to Vista Trail, 4 miles north of Jenner (707) 875-3483
- Annadel State Park, east of Santa Rosa and south of Highway 12 on Channel Drive via Montgomery Drive (707) 539-3911
- Jack London State Historic Park, 20 minutes north of Sonoma (707) 938-5216
- Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, 7 miles east of Santa Rosa on Hwy 12 (707) 833-5712

Legend

-  Paved Road/Path
-  Unpaved Path
-  Fence
-  Park Building
-  Accessible Site
-  Gate
-  Parking
-  Picnic Area
-  Restrooms

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