



## RAFAEL CASTRO'S APTOS HOME

(From the Preston Sawyer Collection)

When American days came and sawmills began operating on his 6680 acre Aptos rancho, Rafael Castro had built a two-story frame house with a porch two stories high along all but one end.

The house stood out on "Aptos Point," the high land west of Aptos creek, toward the bay from the old Camino Real, which followed much the same route as today's highway.

Construction was probably in the 50s; fire took it some 20 years later, about the time of Rafael's death in 1878.

Rafael was 47 years old when California became part of the United States in 1850. He had put in a 10-year term in army during Mexican days, serving in the escoltas of the missions in Santa Barbara county, where he had married in 1823 fifteen-year-old Soledad Cota, granddaughter of a soldier who had come to California in the Portola expedition of 1769.

### Could Read and Write

Rafael could read and write and upon his retirement from the army with the rating of "cabo licenciado" he settled at Aptos and began taking part in civil affairs in Branciforte.

In 1836 he got from the Branciforte authorities title to a small tract on the hill west of Santa Cruz mission where he built a town house, an adobe which in American days became the "Boston adobe," boarding house for the Boston tannery and at one time dwelling of the Boston family.

Rafael held various offices in turn, sindaco of the ayuntamiento, juez de campo and juez de paz.

When American days came he retired to his Aptos rancho and his

new two-story residence of sawed lumber. He proved himself a good business man. His concessions of timber and farming privileges on his 6680 acres were always made on a lease basis, with a liberal share of profits coming to him.

### Buried Gold Rumored

Because of unfortunate experiences with Yankee business men Rafael was rumored to have buried his growing wealth in gold coins around his Aptos home. After his death many excavations were made

about the site in efforts to find the hoards.

Rafael, who had been a soldier of Spain and of Mexico, maintained a paternal attitude toward the people living about him. He donated land for a school house, and two acres near it for a cemetery where the Catholic church had a little wood chapel from 1875 to 1935. He built the Aptos wharf, which was later enlarged enough that lumber cargos could be loaded from it to ships that plied the coast and to the Sandwich Islands.

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