Business-General

'Best Tamale Parlor'— Steeped In River Street Lore

By Margaret Koch
Sentinel Staff Writer

River street, an ancient tamale recipe, "treasure" and a headless ghost—all have figured in the interesting lives of Mr. and Mrs. Albert P. Stubendorff.

The Stubendorffs have lived most of their lives on—or near—River street. For more than 30 years they were widely known as the manufacturers of the best tamales for miles around.

Today they still live on River street, at 1013, in the building which for so many years was combined home, factory and "The Best Tamale Parlor."

Stubendorff, with his German name, is actually a native Santa Cruzan and a descendant of such prominent early-California families as the Castros, Sanchez and Valencias.

Mrs. Stubendorff, from whose non-Spanish family came the famed tamale recipe, was Miss Ora Emma Rhoades, born in Geyserville, Sonoma county. The couple started their business almost by chance. Stubendorff had been employed in early-day lumbering operations; he also worked at the California Powder mill (now Paradise Park), and he worked at Kron's Tannery (now A. K. Salz) just across the street from their home. During World War I he fell ill and was unable to work for a time. Mrs. Stubendorff spent the family's last $5 for tamale makings—and was in business. Friends and neighbors always had made a big to-do over her tamales.

The business developed from basket-peddling to an over-the-counter operation and in 1925 they opened the tamale parlor in the front portion of their home.

By 1930, they were wholesaling tamales and enchiladas. The home was enlarged and remodeled several times and the business continued to develop. In 1957 they turned it over to a son who ran it for several years.

In 1937 Stubendorff's uncle, John B. Morales, died at his home at 41 Coral street, just off River street. The old Spaniard, 72 when he died, had made Stubendorff his heir. But not a paper could be found to prove it, so quite a "treasure" hunt developed.

The search ranged over Morales' half acre of land, and through his home and the many barns and sheds on the property. Old Morales had inherited the Spanish love of mystery and intrigue. When alive he liked to recount "buried treasure" stories which had been told to him by his greatgrandfather Domingo Oliveras, who settled in Santa Cruz when it was a handful of huts.

And so, likely looking spots of earth were dug into, corners were poked into, barn lofts were examined and relatives hopefully joined forces to spade up almost the entire half-acre.

They found old iron, old tools, a few family pictures. But no papers.

Then one day Mrs. Stubendorff discovered Morales' improvised strong box. She first dug up four lengths of pipe, plugged at both ends and buried four feet deep in the earthen floor of a locked shed on the property. Beneath the pipes was a huge concrete block which encased a length of terra cotta pipe and a half-gallon Mason jar. In the jar were the papers naming her husband as insurance beneficiary and heir of Morales, the old man's homestead documents and deeds. So they finally possessed the land they had dug.

How the ancient Spaniard would have enjoyed the busy search for his "buried treasure."

The ghost was seen by Stubendorff's mother, Mrs. Marie (Sanchez) Stubendorff, who claimed the authenticity of the sight as long as she lived.

The senior Stubendorff home then stood in the triangular piece of land where the Electric Supply of Salinas is located today in the former Farmer's Cooperative building. Mrs. Marie Stubendorff left her home to go up Potrero street on an errand. It was early evening. Near the corner of Potrero and Arnot streets she was confronted by a headless woman.

"She had no head at all!" Mrs. Stubendorff was heard to declare forever after, when telling about it.

Her daughter-in-law today recalls that this incident must have taken place near the site where Indians had murdered Father Andres Quintana in 1812. They lured the mission priest out alone at night on a pretext of visiting a "sick Indian" in the orchard below the mission.

For many years a venerable pear tree stood nearby and was always pointed out as the "hanging tree." Finally it was cut down.

Today, few of the old Spanish-Californians remain in the River street area.

And the old tales are fast disappearing too.

Their lives have revolved around 1013 River street and their tamale factory, where Mr. and Mrs. Al Stubendorff still live today.

"The Best Tamale Parlor" and its assorted relatives who worked there during the years.

John B. Morales . . . he liked mysteries.

Recreation Calendar

TODAY

1:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.—Recreational swimming, Harvey West pool; DeLaveaga pistol and small bore range open.

MONDAY

8:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.—Swim team practice, Harvey West pool.
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Learn to swim classes, Harvey West pool.
10:00 a.m.- 12:00 —Baseball school, Harvey West park; tennis instruction, high school courts.
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.—Day camp, Harvey West park.
10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.—Summer playgrounds open at Bay View, Branciforte Jr., Gault, Garfield Park, Grant, Laurel, Mission Hill and Westlake

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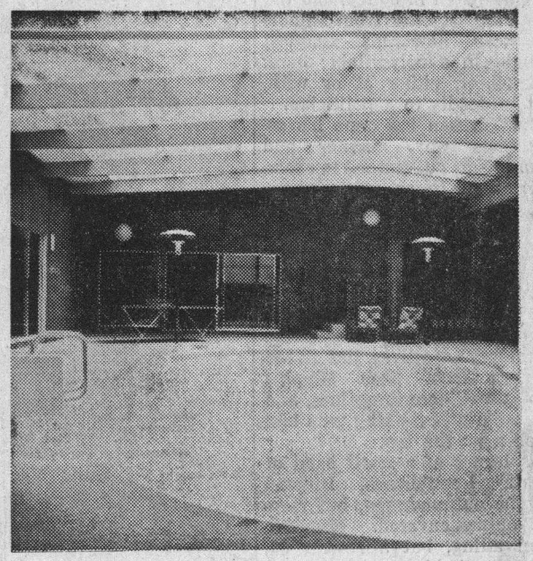

Magnificently built pool located in center of home, for complete privacy. Even the roof folds back to enjoy the sun. Kitchen is well planned, equipped with 2 burn-off

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NOTICE OF VEHICLE LIEN SALE
(Under Provisions of Section 3072 Civil Code)

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

The Board of Education of Santa Cruz City Schools will accept bids for