

Capitola Old Capitola Home To Be Preserved In Development

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Plans are under way to develop an apartment complex on the site of a Capitola landmark — the 95-year-old Lodge House at Capitola Avenue and Highway 1.

City officials said plans are in preliminary stages by developer Stewart Kett of Watsonville to construct 66 garden apartments on the 1.8-acre parcel.

Kett has reported the historic Lodge House will be preserved as a recreation center for his development, and that the architectural design of the apartments will be made to conform with that of the house.

Plans call for the development of the complex in two building clusters of 30 and 36 units.

The property already is zoned for multiple-dwelling unit development since it holds an RM-1000 classification.

The development will bring an end to a Spanish land grant which at one time stretched from Loma Prieta to the sea and from Rodeo Gulch to Borregas Gulch. Of that 35,000 acres, the small parcel occupied by the Lodge House — less than

two acres — is the only land remaining in the hands of direct descendants of the grantee.

Holder of the vast tract of land was Martina Castro Lodge, a grand and wise lady and the granddaughter of Joaquin Isidro Castro. Castro walked to this area at the age of 6 from Sonora, Mexico, with the Anza party in 1776.

Martina was 27 in 1834 when she received formal possession of her rancho from Governor Jose Figueroa. First widowed by the death of Corporal Simon Cota, member of a Santa Barbara family, she had married an Irish sailor, Michael Lodge, in 1831.

Lodge was afflicted with a degree of wanderlust, however, and when gold was discovered in California, he went to the diggings to seek his fortune. Reports are that he was successful and had amassed a great deal of gold before he began his return trip to Soquel.

He vanished on the way, probably the victim of robbers.

Martina eventually married a third time, choosing as her husband a Frenchman, Louis Depeaux. She died in 1890.

Earlier, in the 1850s Martina could see that the Americans, who were arriving in this area in ever increasing numbers, would never allow her to retain so much land. Wisely, she decided to divide the property between herself and her eight children.

Among the children was a girl, Maria Guadalupe Lodge, whose marriage was arranged when she was only about 14. The union was brought about to help Maria, as a minor, retain her large land holding.

Her husband was a Frenchman, Joseph Averon, who owned a hotel in San Jose as well as vineyards and mercury mines.

The match was an equal one, since Averon was a cultivated and cultured man and wealthy in his own right.

In 1877 or 1878 Averon built the main portion of his home, containing some eight rooms. For years the house was known as the Averon Mansion, and only recently has it been called the Lodge House.

In 1892, Averon's holdings were prospering and he decided to add a Victorian wing to the house. The addition contained the home's living room and kitchen.

The main house held a music room where concerts were conducted frequently in the evenings.

The house's extensive gardens were meticulously manicured, and the Averons led a genteel

life. They invariably dressed for dinner.

But the marriage was childless.

Thus, in 1892, after the death of her mother, Lulu Lodge, Maria's niece, came to live at the house and was reared as the Averons' own daughter.

Ultimately, she inherited the house and its lands and lived in it for 78 years, until her death shortly before Christmas in 1970.

After the death of Averon and his wife, Lulu's sister, Julia Lodge, came to live with her at the house. Neither ever married.

Actually, the sisters held so much property they were land poor, gradually selling off parcels to pay taxes on the remainder of the property.

Ultimately, they ended up with only the parcel occupied by the house itself, and in later years existed on extremely modest means.

The house was constructed originally at about the middle of the current Highway 1 freeway. When the freeway was constructed, the building was moved a short distance toward Capitola to its present location.

Julia Lodge lives on in the old house and another sister, Carrie Lodge, now spends much of her time there.

Capitola city officials have expressed pleasure that the developer of the apartment complex has elected to preserve the venerable old house as a portion of his project.



The 95-year-old 'Lodge House' — a final link with history.

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