

JOSÉ EUSEBIO BORONDA ADOBE

The Changing Face of an Early Californio Rancho at Rincón del Sanjón, 1840-2021

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Introduction

The 6,700-acre *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* was established under a Mexican land grant procured by José Eusebio Boronda of Monterey.¹ Today, the last remaining vestiges of the original rancho (situated on the western outskirts of the city of Salinas, California) consist of a five-acre parcel and historic adobe managed by the Monterey County Historical Society.² The Boronda Adobe History Center’s prime mission is that of maintaining and preserving one of the few remaining Mexican period residential adobes of the region, that of the Boronda Adobe of 1846 (MCHS n.d.). Construction of the Salinas area adobe, the second such adobe residence built by Boronda at the *Rincón del Sanjón* between 1844 and 1848, is the subject of this architectural and social history. It is this latter adobe identified with the *Rancho* that has survived to the present day, and has weathered the tumultuous history of the Salinas Valley. As such, it ultimately saw its fortunes reduced to that of a dilapidated three-room home occupied through 1929 by the last Boronda family resident.

Acquired by the Monterey County Historical Society in 1972, the property was deemed a State Historic Landmark (No. 870) based on the local level of significance, and subsequently listed to the National Register of Historic Places on March 20, 1973 (MCHS n.d.; NRHP 73000413). In 1976, the largely intact historic adobe was rehabilitated and restored in the guise of an historic house museum (MCHS n.d.). As fate would have it, the adobe was severely damaged by the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989, and subsequently retrofitted and repaired with the support of the Monterey Chapter of the Colonial Dames of California (MCHS n.d.). Today, the Boronda Adobe serves as the sole remaining intact and largely pristine Mexican era residential structure, and furnished historic house museum, in the Salinas Valley.

About the Authors

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Figure 1 (top). New Boronda Adobe, 1887.

Figure 2 (bottom). New Boronda Adobe, 2020, main/east elevation.



Figure 3 (top). New Boronda Adobe, 2020, north elevation.
Figure 4 (bottom). New Boronda Adobe, 2020, west elevation.

An Architectural History of the Monterey Colonial Style

In order to advance an architectural history of the Boronda Adobe of *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón*, it is first necessary to identify the stylistic characteristics of the adobe building under study. While the Boronda Adobe is clearly hybrid insofar as the amalgamation of traditional Spanish and Mexican architectural features, construction methods, overall plan, and craftsmanship, it nevertheless boasts several characteristics identified with the Monterey Colonial style.

Origin of the Monterey Colonial Style

What then constitutes the Monterey Colonial style? And, which specific features of the Boronda Adobe reflect the style so noted? According to the *Agricultural Resources Evaluation Handbook, Monterey County, California*, Americano immigrant Thomas Oliver Larkin's 1835 two-story adobe home was the first of its kind in Monterey County (McAlester 2020: 537; Past Consultants 2011: 42). Moreover, the Larkin Adobe is deemed the primary influence for the "Monterey Colonial" architectural style that spread throughout the city of Monterey, and the state (Past Consultants 2011: 42).

Harold Kirker (1960) more generally delineated the essential elements of the Monterey Colonial Style deemed a hybrid development of 1830s and 40s Mexican era California. This he predicated on the unique architectural details of the Larkin House of Monterey, built by Larkin in 1835 (Kirker 1960, 1984: 250). Kirker further described the Monterey Colonial Style as the result of "a significant compromise between the materially weak Spanish-Mexican population and the increasingly dominant Yankee trading" (1984: 250). The alleged "weak" material in question was the use of adobe in the construction of buildings (Kirker 1984: 251). Kirker claimed that this is due to adobe's impermanence and susceptibility to weathering (1984: 251). Despite this Eurocentric critique, the hybrid building design and material of the Monterey Colonial Style became an "exceptional instance in California of an important compromise between competing colonial cultures" (Kirker 1984: 251). This, in turn, led to Larkin's incorporation of one of "the most prominent

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Rizzoli's *The California Missions* (2018) and Nazraeli's *Mission San Miguel Arcángel* (2019) with photographer Melba Levick. His 2021 Rizzoli book, titled *The Spanish Style House: From Enchanted Andalusia to the California Dream* explores the Andalusian architectural heritage of California with Melba Levick. *The Santa Fe Style* is the subject of Mendoza's latest Rizzoli book project with Melba Levick, and is slated for spring 2023 release. Another forthcoming book, co-edited with Dr. Linda Hansen, is under contract with Springer International, and addresses the topic of *Ritual Human Sacrifice in Mesoamerica: Recent Discoveries and Current Perspectives*.

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Figure 5. The Larkin House, Monterey.



features of the [Monterey Colonial] style... the horizontal mass achieved by a low, sloping roof, a long double verandah, or rarely, a cantilevered balcony, the timber frame combined with adobe shell, and the shingle roof” (McAlester 2020: 537; Dillon 1976: 2; Kirker 1984: 251).

As with the Larkin House of 1835, the Boronda Adobe is distinctive in that it boasts a 6 to 7 ft.-wide veranda or portico, and features a wood-shingled and hipped roof, and small-pane sash windows. Moreover, as with Larkin’s adoption of the adobe features of the Mexican era, both exterior and interior adobe walls were whitewashed. Moreover, though virtually all earlier Spanish mission and domestic buildings and structures featured adobe and masonry fireplace features or hearths, Dillon (1976: 2) contends that “The interior chimney of the Larkin House is probably the first of its kind in California.” Though the fireplace mantles framing each of the two fireplace features configured at each end of New Boronda Adobe resonate with the New England style, these may well have constituted later additions installed after the partitioning of the room block in 1849.

California and the Monterey Colonial Style

In addition to the origin of the Monterey Colonial Style, its spread throughout California during the mid-19th century is equally significant. Kirker (1984) noted how the role of *Californio* family relationships and kinships contributed to the style’s development into a regional architectural type. Kirker traced Larkin’s kinship with the Vallejo family and found that Larkin was connected to the Vallejo family via his half-brother, John Bautista Rogers Cooper’s marriage to Maria Jerónima de la Encarnación Vallejo, one of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo’s sisters (1984: 253). If the Larkin House is construed as the Monterey Colonial Style prototype, then General Vallejo’s Petaluma Adobe (in Petaluma) is the next in the Californio architectural lineage (Kirker 1984: 253). Construction of the Petaluma Adobe began in circa 1836, shortly after the Larkin House (Kirker 1984: 253, 256).



Figure 6. New Boronda Adobe bedroom fireplace mantle.

Vallejo family kinship ties ultimately reified the adoption and variations inherent in the Monterey Colonial Style as manifest in the homes of Vallejo family members and descendants. Kinship ties similarly defined preferences in the maintenance of traditional forms, or variations thereof, identified with other *Californio* families from the late 1830s through early 1850s. Kirker (1984: 253-254) cites some California examples, including the following adobes: 1) Alpheus Thompson Adobe (1836) in Santa Barbara for Alpheus B. Thompson and Francisca Carrillo; 2) Casa Alvarado Adobe (circa 1830s) in Monterey for Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado and Martina Castro; 3) Salvador Vallejo Adobe (1840) in Sonoma for Captain Salvador Vallejo and María de Carrillo; 4) Casa Soberanes (1841) in Monterey for José Rafael Estrada and family; 5) the Lugo Adobe (1844) for Vicente Lugo in Los Angeles; 6) Los Cerritos Ranch House (1844) in Long Beach for Juan (Jonathan) Temple and Rafaela Cota; 7) Dana Adobe (completed between 1837 and 1850) in Nipomo for William Goodwin Dana and Maria Josefa Petra del Carmela Carrillo (Kirker 1984: 254; National Archives Catalog 123861458); and 8) Casa Amesti (remodel of the earlier adobe completed circa 1853) in Monterey for Prudenciana Vallejo (Elkinton 1968: 3; Kirker 1984: 253).

Boronda Family History

The construction of the first Boronda Adobe of Monterey County is identified with the Boronda patriarch, Corporal José Manuel Boronda. Manuel was born and baptized in Xéres (“Gerez” in burial record), Bishopric of Guadalajara, Jalisco, New Spain in circa 1750 (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 18, 21, 24; ECPP 2006: SCL 05419, SC 02562, SC 00413; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16). A host of secondary sources claim that Manuel traveled with Father Junípero Serra on his second expedition to Alta California in 1769 (Barratt 2018: 1; Johnston 1974: 1; McGlynn 1983: 1). However, the earliest documentation of his presence in California dates to 31 December 1785 -- shortly after the death of Serra -- in a list of employees in the Department of San Blas associated with Santa Barbara (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17). At the time he was identified as a 35-year-old bachelor. Manuel soon enlisted in the military and was then later stationed at the Presidio de San Francisco as a *soldado de cuera* (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17).

Figure 7. Don José Manuel Boronda.



Forming a Frontier Family

When Manuel was approximately forty years of age, he married the thirteen-year-old María Gertrudis Higuera on 23 January 1790 at Mission Santa Clara (ECPP 2006: SCL 00189; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16). Gertrudis was construed as an *hija del país* because she was born at the Royal Presidio of Monterey, Alta California, New Spain on 28 June 1776 to Manuel Higuera and María Antonia Redonda of Sinaloa (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 18, 21, 24; ECPP 2006: SCL 05419, SC 02562, SC 00413; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16). Gertrudis was then baptized at Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Río Carmelo on 30 June 1776 (ECPP 2006: SCL 05419, SC 02562, SC 00413; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16).

While at the Presidio of San Francisco, Manuel was assigned to an instructional position as per the 1 December 1794 decree by Alta California Governor Diego de Borica (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17). The governor's decree mandated that "primary schools be started wherever possible" (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 17). To that end, Manuel taught the subjects of catechism, reading, and writing to the children of settler-colonists (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 17). In a progress report written on 13 December 1796 to Governor Borica, Manuel listed his scholastic "assessment" of eight boys at the Presidio of San Francisco (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 20). In addition to his instructional and military role, Manuel also labored as a master carpenter and smithy (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17). Each of these talents were central to Manuel's contributions when he later relocated to the Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey.

Gertrudis gave birth to José Eusebio Boronda on 4 March 1808 (ECPP 2006: SCL 05419). Eusebio was the third of thirteen children born to the Boronda family, of which only eight survived to maturity (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 21; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17). As Corporal José Manuel Boronda was stationed at the Presidio of San Francisco at that time, and married to María Gertrudis Higuera at Mission Santa Clara in 1790, Eusebio was baptized at Mission Santa Clara by Father Magin Catalá, OFM, on 9 March 1808 (ECPP 2006: SCL 05419).

Life in Colonial Monterey

Around 1814, the Boronda family relocated to the *Presidio Real de San Carlos de Monterey* (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 24; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 18). Manuel is cited as one of the first persons to construct an adobe house outside of the Royal Presidio of Monterey quadrangle circa 1817 (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 15; Fink 1978: 58; Johnston 1974; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 18). The land allotment was likely associated with Manuel's completion of at least ten years in the military as stipulated in the Royal Regulation of 1772 (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965:35; Lucido

2014a: 97-98). This Boronda Adobe (presently known as “Casa Boronda”) is located on La Mesa Road, Monterey. Manuel continued his teaching duties to the male children attached to the Presidio and served as a sacristan at the Royal Presidio Chapel (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 24; ECPP 2006: SC 02989, SC 02929; Johnston 1974: 1; Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 18). Presumably Eusebio was one of his father’s pupils as well as a classmate of the future Governor of California, Juan Bautista Alvarado (Johnston 1974).

On 5 September 1831, Eusebio married María Josefa Ramona Buelna, daughter of Joaquín Buelna and María Guadalupe Rodríguez (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 30; ECPP 2006: SC 03030). The Buelnas were a neighboring family to the Borondas in Monterey and maintained a close relationship (Johnston 1974: 2). Furthermore, Josefa’s grandparents José Antonio Buelna and



Figure 8. Casa Boronda, main/east elevation.



Figure 9. Casa Boronda, south elevation.

Antonia Tapia Buelna, were Eusebio's godparents (ECPP 2006: SCL 05419). Like that of Manuel, Josefa's future father-in-law, Antonio served as both a soldier and school instructor to children (Burton-Carvajal 2004: 20; Johnston 1974: 2-3). It is unclear where Eusebio and Josefa resided during the first few years of their marriage.

In the *Año de 1836 Padrón General que manifestó el numero de Habitantes que residen en la Ciudad de Monterey* (i.e., 1836 City of Monterey census), Eusebio and Josefa were listed as residents of the *Rancho los Vergeles* (MCGS 2000: 41; Johnston 1974: 2-3). The rancho consisted of some 8,760-acres and was owned by José Joaquín Gómez (Hoffman 1862; Digital Commons @ CSUMB 2016c). In addition, two of Eusebio and Josefa's children are listed in the census, including the three-year-old José de los Santos Boronda and seven-month-old infant, Maria del Carmen Boronda (MCGS 2000: 41). It was at this time that Eusebio and Josefa would have been exposed to the advent of the so-called Monterey Colonial style of construction first introduced by the US Consul to Mexican California, Thomas Oliver Larkin. On 6 January 1837, José de los Santos died and was subsequently buried in the Royal Presidio Chapel of Monterey (ECPP 2006: SC 02938; Kimbro 1999: 2).

Following the death of their firstborn, Eusebio and his family relocated to *Rancho El Tucho*, a smaller area adjacent to *Rancho Las Salinas* (Digital Commons @ CSUMB 2016a, 2016b; Johnston 1974: 3). In 1838, *El Tucho* consisted of approximately 500 varas on the east bank of the *Río de Monterey* (aka: Salinas River) (Digital Commons @ CSUMB 2016a; Johnston 1974: 3). It was there at *El Tucho* that José Eusebio Boronda and his family first contemplated a land grant claim to lands east of the Salinas River (Digital Commons @ CSUMB 2016a). As of this writing, no information pertaining to the types of structures erected at *El Tucho* was identified, although the earliest such structures generally consisted of indigenous *jacales*, or pole, thatch, and mud dwellings. Soon thereafter, the Borondas relocated to a tract of land identified as *San José* in 1839 (Johnston 1974: 4).³ In that same year, the Boronda family applied for the Mexican land grant identified with the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*. In the meantime, the Boronda family continued to expand and the couple ultimately produced ten surviving children (Johnston 1974).³

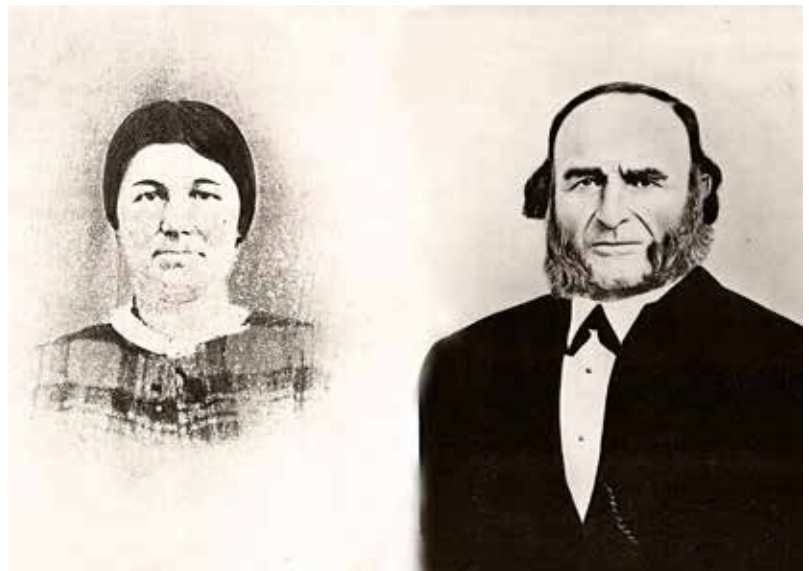


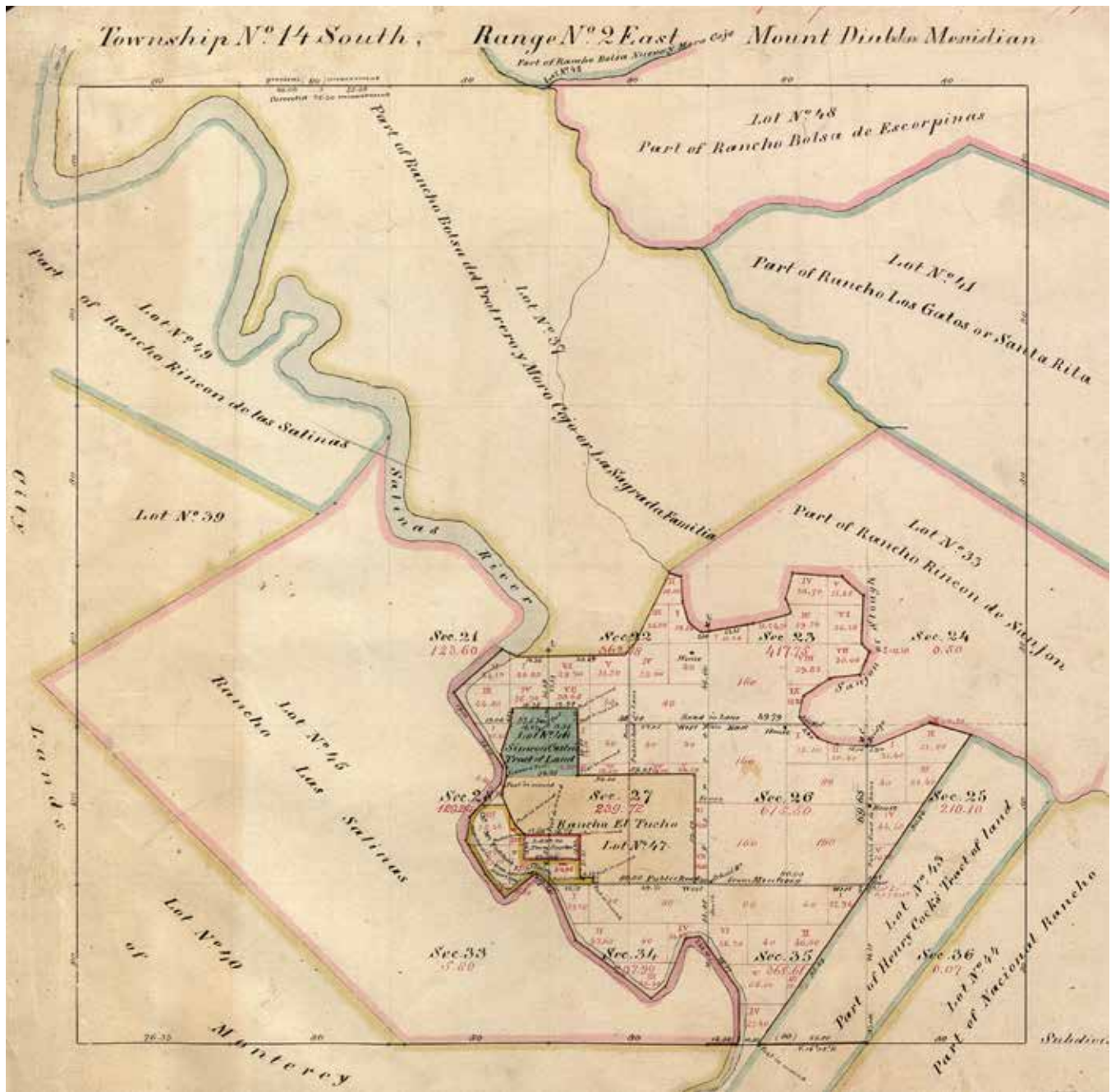
Figure 10. María Josefa Ramona Buelna and José Eusebio Boronda, 1860s.



Figure 11. Mexican sombrero belonging to Don Jose Eusebio Boronda, 1860s.



Figure 12. Horse hair flyswatter attributed to Don Jose Eusebio Boronda, 1870s.



Constructing Space and Power

Figure 13. El Tucho map plan.

Returning to the Boronda Adobe, scholars have noted how architecture plays an important role that not only contains and delimits social life and activities, but also is itself the embodiment of social relationships (Hornbeck 1978; Kirker 1984; Mendoza 2014a, 2014b; Lucido 2015; Stanley 1999; Voss 2008: 201). These relationships evolve as buildings that undergo change in function, maintenance, abandonment, and reuse (Kirker 1984; Mendoza 2014a, 2014b; Lucido 2015; Stanley 1999). This represents the complex processes that create the built environment of a given place and time, such as the decision to include or exclude

different architectural forms (Stanley 1999: 2; Voss 2008: 173). These in turn influence movement and social interaction within the defined space (Stanley 1999: 2; Voss 2008: 173).

Primitivist Perspectives

In her study of the Presidio of San Francisco, Barbara Voss (2008: 191) observes that the first few decades of the Presidio quadrangle's construction and maintenance relied on natural materials and indigenous Californian architectural practices. As a result, buildings located both within and beyond the quadrangle perimeter proper were heterogeneous in appearance (Voss 2008: 190). Moreover, quadrangle construction materials departed from those requirements mandated in the Royal Regulation of 1772 (Brinkerhoff and Faulk 1965: 6-7, 49, 63; Voss 2008: 190). Even so, it was not until 1815 that the Presidio quadrangle completely transitioned to adobe construction and thereby manifested a more homogenous and uniform character (Voss 2008: 191). This "distinctly colonial" architectural shift to adobe aligned the Presidio with extant Spanish colonial structures elsewhere on the frontier, such as those of the nearby Spanish and Indian missions (Voss 2008: 191).

Voss misconstrues this as a sort of a "colonial folly" (2008: 191), as she contends that mud-brick or adobe (period) construction was not sustainable in the environs of the San Francisco Bay, and that despite the contemporary survival of centuries-old historic adobes throughout the region (2008: 191). She attributes this to the proclivity of adobe to weather more readily, or crumble on exposure to the Bay area conditions (Voss 2008: 191), an observation apparently based on period concerns by Hermenegildo Sal (1775-1800), who stated that "adobe is bad in itself because of the dampness it crumbles." Such characterizations regarding the "inferiority" of Amerindian, Arabic, and Hispanic construction materials and techniques echoes Kirker's critique of the use of adobe in Monterey Colonial Style residential construction. Such commentaries only serve to promulgate the implied inferiority of the traditions in question.

Hybrid Building Traditions

Adobe construction practices are the stuff of millennia-old cultural traditions whose origins in the ancient world span the Middle East, Africa, Eurasia, and the American hemisphere (McAlester and McAlester 1984:



Figure 14. Boronda freight wagon, ca 1860s.



Figure 15. Boronda family cattle brands, ca 1890s.

10; McAlester 2020: 12). Clearly, a major consideration in the deployment of adobe construction was that it constituted an inexpensive, and readily available, indigenous material; and its thermal qualities have long been recognized in both arid and humid climates (McAlester and McAlester 1984: 129; McAlester 2020: 190). When roofs and walls are properly maintained so as to curtail salt erosion through the regular application of lime stucco, or other breathable surface textures, adobe is amenable to centuries of weathering (McAlester and McAlester 1984: 132; McAlester 2020: 198). Such ethnocentric or derogatory characterizations of adobe as a built environment, necessarily disregards the “Green Revolution” inherent in the introduction of such sustainable and renewable technologies. According to Jarrell Jackman, the former Director of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, adobe “is a vital part of the story of brown being green,” as in the deployment of environmentally sustainable and renewable architecture.⁴

Strikingly, despite the universality and antiquity of adobe architecture in Amerindian, African, and Eurasian contexts, Voss nevertheless claims that the Spanish colonial “decision” to default to adobe construction in the context of the Presidio of San Francisco “may have been one of the ways that the military settlers asserted their status as colonizers during this critical period in the emergence of Californio identity” (2008: 191). Therefore, Voss contends that adobe buildings in San Francisco provided the physical representation of this status, but also the display of power over the indigenous peoples who assisted in their construction and maintenance (Schuetz-Miller n.d.: 16-17; Voss 2008: 192, 201-202). We find this latter observation to be particularly problematic in efforts to demean the utility and availability of adobe for residential construction for peoples from all walks of life, regardless of their indigeneity or station.

Ultimately, the adoption of adobe as the material par excellence for the construction of presidios, and other military installations, was mandated by the Royal Regulation of 1772. Even so, the nominal costs identified with the use of adobe bricks, the declining fortunes of the Spanish Empire in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the normative character of adobe construction from throughout the American hemisphere at that time was to be anticipated (Brinkerhoff and Faulk 1965: 6-7, 49, 63; Lucido 2015; McAlester and McAlester 1984; Past Consultants 2011: 35-36). Moreover, adobe buildings constructed at Spanish mission sites, such as those of Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, housed soldiers, settlers, and indigenous people alike, and were intended as the initial iteration of most such buildings and urban planning (Mendoza and Lucido 2014; Mendoza 2014a, 2014b; Mendoza and Levick 2019; Past Consultants 2011: 35-36; Schuetz-Miller 1994).

For instance, at each Spanish and Indian mission settlement, the cultural histories and architectural trajectories span the construction of *jacales*, *jacalones*, *palisadas*, *adobes*, and wood and masonry buildings and structures (Mendoza 2014a, 2014b; Mendoza and Levick 2018). More often than not, the pairing of both *jacal* construction with adobe architecture was a mainstay of the frontier traditions so noted, as attested to by way of archaeological investigations by Mendoza (2014a, 2014b). That being so, Voss' argument that adobe in and of itself functioned as an indication of social status and separation from colonial settlers and indigenous populations consequently ignores this well-established Latin American architectural tradition (Voss 2008: 191).

Land Tenure and Adobe Construction

The multiple adobe residences of the multigenerational Boronda family constitute complex social histories that extend well beyond their walls. Manuel's tenure at the Presidio of San Francisco, particularly insofar as concerns his dual role as soldier and carpenter, witnessed the architectural transformation of the Presidio quadrangle. Moreover, Manuel would have been exposed to the use of adobe construction as a primary building material. The Boronda family's arrival at the Royal Presidio of Monterey coincided with its fourth construction phase, which utilized adobe blocks situated atop newly formed stone foundation footings (Mendoza 2013). Such materials were deployed to expand upon the extant stockade or palisade that formed the largely dilapidated quadrangle (Mendoza 2013; Mendoza and Lucido 2014; Lucido 2015: 108-109). Therefore, the Boronda Adobe of Monterey and associated acreage represent Manuel's attempt to establish, and thereby identify, his family with the extended colonial settlement of Monterey, and this he did to grand effect.

Development of the Mexican Cultural Landscape

Following Mexican Independence in 1821, the land tenure process was dramatically transformed. Under the Mexican government, the Supplemental Regulations of 1828 were instituted (Hornbeck 1978; Lucido 2014b: 142). These new regulations required that individuals petition for land grants using *diseños* or sketch maps to demarcate proposed boundaries for ranchos or other land use (Hornbeck 1978; Lucido 2014b: 142). In addition, *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* mapped out topographic features, natural resources, and any extant buildings, structures, or roads within or adjacent to the land requested (Hornbeck 1978; Lucido 2014b: 142). The *diseño* was then submitted to a land grant petition process that required the governor of California's formal evaluation and approval (Hornbeck 1978; Lucido 2014b: 142-143; Hornbeck, Mendoza, and Lucido 2020). If approved, the applicant

became the grantee of the land title or grant and was required to build a dwelling (i.e., adobe) within one year of occupation (Hornbeck 1978; Lucido 2014b: 143; Past Consultants 2011: 41). It was in the 1840s that adobe construction saw its heyday on the California Central Coast (Past Consultants 2011: 42). Therefore, it was as a consequence of this new process that Eusebio embarked on a sustained effort to acquire a Mexican land grant, and this by way of building a new life for himself and his family on the vast lands of the *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón*.

California Land Settlement Act of 1851

In the wake of the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, California statehood ushered in a host of new challenges for the *Californios*. Accordingly, the United States government imposed new land conveyances and subdivisions through the implementation of the California Land Settlement Act (Land Act) of 1851, and these effectively shifted the dynamics of land tenure across the Mexican cultural and political landscape. Under this new act, land grantees were afforded only two years to validate their respective Mexican land titles before the United States Land Commission. If grantees did not file claims within the allotted time, the affected properties were automatically claimed as Federal land. Furthermore, the exorbitant legal defense fees, and the protracted ten to seventeen-year process required to adjudicate claims resulted in the foreclosure of many such properties. Many such *Californio* families were left with little alternative but to gradually liquidate their holdings in order to defend their respective land titles. In effect, this battle of attrition often culminated in crippling attorney's fees and other liabilities; with said lands often co-opted as collateral by attorneys, unscrupulous speculators and developers, or taken outright by squatters. Consequently, countless Mexican grantees lost their often-vast holdings on prime lands to the vagaries of the Land Act; and the Boronda family of *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón* was no exception.

As noted in the foregoing commentary on primitivist perspectives, there has been a longstanding tendency in the American documentary histories of the region to deprecate the skill sets and contributions of the *Californios* of the mid-19th century or American conquest era, and this despite the fact that the heritage, pedigree, craft and technological traditions of the Boronda family were exemplary (i.e., Johnston



Figure 16. Diseño Mapa Plan for Rincon del Sanjón, 1842-43.

1974; Kirker 1960, 1984). As previously mentioned, Don Manuel was a soldier, craftsman, carpenter, builder, and established the very first grade school for boys on the Monterey Peninsula. Given that Eusebio was schooled in his father's classrooms, in company with fellow students such as Juan Bautista Alvarado, and other prominent Californio families of the era, his exposure to Californio, and thereby Spanish and Mexican, craftsmanship was borne of tradition and observation. For instance, Johnston (1974: 4), whose report regarding the "New Adobe House" is replete with a host of errors, omissions, and both ethnocentric and ad hominem commentaries, notes that "Eusebio's economic progress was much slower and inferior to that of William Garner. When Eusebio Boronda made his first small purchase at Larkin's store in 1836, he was required to submit the name of his brother-in-law, George Allen, as security." By 1839 the industrious character of José Eusebio Boronda and his family was soon tested with those grant applications that resulted in the certification of a Mexican land grant at the *Rincón del Sanjon*.

Rancho Rincón del Sanjón

Soon after Eusebio and his family settled on the *San José* land tract in 1839, he applied for a Mexican land grant of 1.5 leagues, or 6,700 acres, on 1 February 1840 (MCHS n.d.). The grant was approved by the Mexican government in late 1840, and juridical possession was conveyed on 16 November 1842 (MCHS n.d.). Certification and conveyance of the grant was at that time contingent on the improvement of the lands, and this generally entailed the introduction of residential buildings and other works. Where the Rincón was concerned, this was achieved by way of the construction of the First Boronda Adobe of 1841.

That portion of the newly certified *Rancho Rincón del Sanjon* identified with the construction of the First Boronda Adobe was skirted by a slough (*Rincón del Sanjón*) situated to the southwest where marshes abound. An interloper assigned to the American occupation force, one Lieutenant William Tecumseh Sherman (ca. 1847-49), described the area as ideal for hunting duck and geese (Church 1972: 2). According to Warren Church (1972: 2), "Until about 1900 the area was netted by marshes, lakes, sloughs, and interlocking bogs, an ideal setting for boating and duck hunting." It was here that Eusebio built the first of two residential adobes, for a total of five adobe structures of various types identified with the ranch lands of the Boronda family of the region.

The Boronda Adobes

The Boronda Adobes constitute two separate but related architectural styles built during the late Mexican period (Church 1973; Johnston

1974; McAlester and McAlester 1984; MCHS n.d.). The First Boronda Adobe manifests the hallmarks of the Spanish Colonial and Mexican era architectural traditions, replete with adobe bricks and terracotta roof tiles, while the Second or “New” Boronda Adobe reflects an amalgamation or hybrid of both Mexican adobe and Anglo-American stylistic developments (McAlester and McAlester 1984). Ultimately, each of the Boronda Adobes serve to showcase Eusebio’s craftsmanship, and his apparent ability to adapt to the rapidly changing cultural landscapes of California (Johnston 1974; Kirker 1960, 1984).

The First Boronda Adobe

Situated just north/northeast of the historic Graves School District along CA-183N, and to the west of the New Boronda Adobe now identified with the Monterey County Historical Society, the First Boronda Adobe was constructed in 1841, just prior to the official conveyance of the Mexican land grant on 16 November 1842 (MCHS n.d.). While preliminary approval for the establishment of the 6,700-acre, or 1.5 league, *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón* was granted in 1840, its tangible identification with the rancho tradition only comes to fruition with the construction of the First Boronda Adobe. Having established the family at the First Adobe in 1841, Eusebio was already at work surveying the region for another more suitable location for the family homestead. Given its relative proximity to the arroyo or stream bed just west of

Figure 17. The First Boronda Adobe, Main Elevation, ca 1890.



the First Adobe, seasonal flooding of the floodplain at that location may have prompted Eusebio to move his family further inland.

Within three years, Eusebio initiated work directed to the excavation of the foundation footings for the New Boronda Adobe in 1844. Located 2.2 kilometers, or 1.37 miles, to the east, the new site was situated on higher ground. Reduced to rubble in the 1906 Cali-



Figure 18. The First Boronda Adobe, rear elevation, ca 1890.

fornia earthquake, the ruins of the First Boronda Adobe are no longer visible, as the site was plowed under years ago to accommodate the agricultural development of the region. Even so, a collection of circa 1880-90s photographs of the First Boronda Adobe housed at the Monterey County Historical Society provide revelations permitting one to distinguish each of the Boronda sites.

Whereas much has been made of the Monterey Colonial Style of the Second or New Boronda Adobe of 1844-46, the First Boronda Adobe articulated the traditional design of the Mexican adobes of the era. The essential elements of the First Adobe included a) adobe block construction situated atop a stone foundation, b) a simple rectangular footprint, c) a low-pitched gabled roof with extruded ridge pole, d) terracotta roof tiles, e) a covered wooden veranda or portico extending across the length of the main elevation, f) deep-set and splayed door and window wells, g) wood plank doors and window shutters, subsequently replaced with glass panes circa 1870-80, and h) an adobe or mixed masonry fireplace and chimney flue. As with all such buildings, the changing stylistic and utilitarian innovations of the late 19th century are in evidence in the form of the glass-pane window inserts and shake shingle-covered lean-to structures for the storage of firewood. Given José Eusebio Boronda's long-time employment in the logging industry of the Monterey Bay, the deployment of the lean-to shed and the use of shake shingles reflects his hand in these latter additions to the original Mexican era adobe.

The New or Second Adobe

The New Boronda Adobe of *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* is identified with the Monterey Colonial style so noted. According to Church (1973: 2),

“There are several features of the so-called ‘Monterey Colonial’ style initiated by Larkin in this ‘new adobe house’ built by José Eusebio Boronda. Window and door framing patterns as well as the fireplaces and other features suggest that immigrant carpenters from New England built this house as was the case for many other Mexican adobes in California.” Accordingly, Johnston (1974: 6) intimates that “Some of the men who could very well have helped Eusebio plan and build his “new adobe house” were William R. Garner, George Allen, Thomas Doak, William Anderson, David Littlejohn and Thomas Blanco...[as]... they all worked for Thomas O. Larkin during the 1830’s and 1840’s.” At the same time, Johnston (1974: 5) acknowledged that:

In 1841, Eusebio became a minor public official, juez aux, or deputy Justice of the Peace. Perhaps earlier, but certainly in this same year, he was employed by William Garner to haul lumber from the redwood sawpits to Monterey.

At least through 1842 Eusebio was hauling lumber in considerable quantities and taking his payment in goods. As late as 1847-1848, Eusebio and his wife Josefa bartered sheep, barley, and packed butter for goods at Larkin’s store. Since the store was in Larkin’s house, Eusebio had a firsthand opportunity to become acquainted with the architectural style introduced in this unusual home and with his builders.

Despite Eusebio’s long experience with the milling and hauling of lumber for Garner and Larkin (ala the Spanish and Mexican practice of deploying the use of wedges and jacks, hand-saws, frame saws, pit saws, cross-cut saws, and other two-handed long saws deployed by both *Californio* and indigenous laborers), Johnston (1974: 5) nevertheless minimizes Eusebio’s skill-sets with respect to his ability to build adobe and wood-frame structures. Given Don Manuel’s vocation as a carpenter, it strikes us as unusual that Johnston (1974) would underestimate the likelihood that Eusebio had the necessary skills to build his own home, and that despite the benefit of his years of exposure to the Monterey Colonial style then popular in Monterey in the 1840s.⁵

Figure 19. The New Boronda Adobe, main/east elevation, ca 1973.



Don José Eusebio Boronda's skill sets with respect to adobe construction methods were amply demonstrated in his construction of the First Boronda Adobe, where all of the essential or traditional Mexican architectural features or elements are in evidence. The principal features that distinguish the First Boronda Adobe from that of the New Boronda Adobe are those specific to the Monterey Colonial Style then popular in Monterey proper. Ultimately, the often-generous addition of wooden features and elements was largely what distinguished the traditional

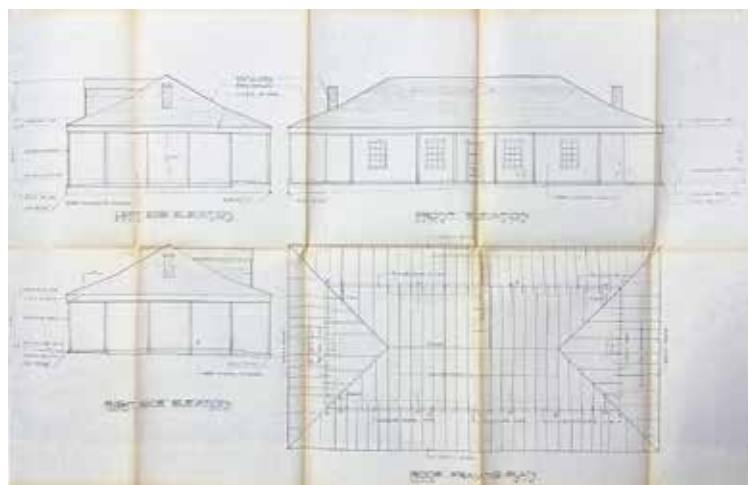
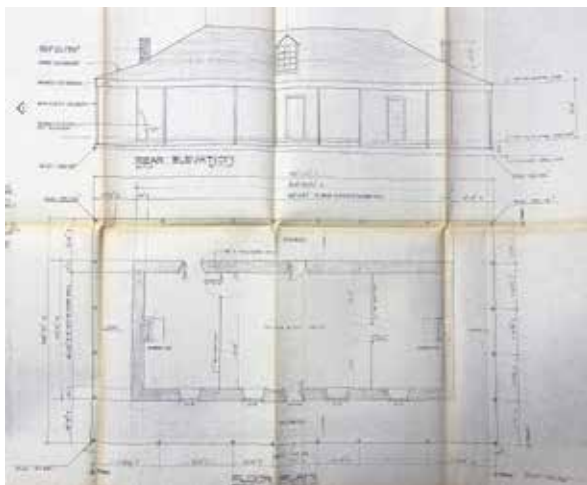
Mexican adobe from that of the Monterey Colonial Style adobes of the era. The latter included to one extent or the other the introduction of a) shake shingles, b) hipped roofing systems, c) gabled dormers, d) triangular door and window pediments, e) fired brick or mixed masonry fireplaces and flues, and f) full-facade or wrapped verandas or porticos. All of those features so noted were deployed in the elaboration of the New Boronda Adobe of 1844-46. Even so, the Monterey Colonial Style evident in the architectural elaboration of the New Boronda Adobe was essentially and largely dependent on the primordial form, function, and geometry of the Mexican adobes of the era. The mastery of craftsmanship necessary to build the New Boronda Adobe was already clearly articulated in the First Boronda Adobe, and those architectural forebears identified with the Casa Boronda of Monterey (c. 1817), and that of the circa 1840s *Rancho Los Laureles* adobe of the Carmel Valley.



Figure 20. The New Boronda Adobe, west elevation, ca 1933.

Figure 21 (below, left). Boronda Adobe floor plan, 1972.

Figure 22 (below, right). Boronda Adobe front elevation, 1972.



An Architectural and Social History

In an edition of the *Sacramento Daily Union* published on 2 November 1854, Eusebio is listed in a column titled “Board of U.S. Land Commissioners.” He is therein identified as confirmed land claimant Number 532 for the “*Rinconada del Sanjon*” (CDNC 1854). The name was subsequently changed to *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* after US Patent certification on 13 July 1860 (Digital Commons 2016d; MCHS n.d.). At that time, the original 1.5 league, or 6,700-acre rancho, was reduced to one third of its original size, or 0.5 leagues, or 2,229.70 acres (Digital Commons 2016d; MCHS n.d.). Since that time the Boronda family homestead, originally identified with the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*,⁶ has come to be identified as the Boronda District.

Whereas the 13 July 1860 US Patent certification of the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón* secured the Boronda family’s ranching legacy for the moment, a host of trials and tribulations befell the family such that the rancho was gradually reduced to a mere shadow of its original expanse. Nevertheless, the Boronda family legacy, and the fate of the New Boronda Adobe has since been secured through the dedicated, determined, and tireless efforts of the Monterey County Historical Society and its longstanding commitment to preserving this invaluable vestige of those traditions identified with the Spanish, Mexican or *Californio*, and early American residents and ranchers identified with the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*.

The Boronda Timeline

We here close with a recap of the architectural and social history of the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*, based on a compilation of key dates drawn from the topical and subject files resident in the collections of the Monterey County Historical Society (Mendoza and Lucido 2021). The thematic timeline presented below necessarily serves to define the transformation of the rancho from a 6,700-acre Mexican era land grant into a paltry five-acre parcel. Today, the remaining five-acre parcel was conveyed to the Monterey County Historical Society by area benefactor Marguerite Mary Wilson. Marguerite’s conveyance of the parcel permitted the creation of the Boronda Adobe History Center, replete with the Jensen Agricultural Museum, the Lagunita



Figure 23. Boronda Adobe east elevation veranda, 1973.

Figure 24. New Boronda Adobe MCHS Board Conservation Team, 1973.



School House, and a host of other buildings centered on the restored New Boronda Adobe. In effect, the primary themes inherent in the consideration of the architectural and social history of the Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón may be subsumed under a) the Mexican land grant era, b) the US Patent process, c) Changing landscapes, d), Shakers and movers, and e) the Historic house museum.



The Mexican Land Grant Era

- 1839 - José Eusebio Boronda registers a Mexican land grant petition for the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*.
- 1840 - Mexican land grant consisting of 6,700 acres receives a preliminary approval for the *Rinconada del Sanjón*.
- 1841 - First Boronda Adobe with traditional Mexican features built on the lands of the *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón*.
- 1842 - *Rancho Rinconada del Sanjón* officially certified in 1842, and *diseño* mappings registered in 1843.
- 1844 - Second Boronda adobe construction initiated with excavation of trenches for masonry or rock foundation footings.
- 1846-48 - Second Boronda Adobe completed.
- 1849 - Interior wooden wall partitions installed, thereby creating a three-room layout.

Figure 25. New Boronda Adobe Conservation Team, 1973-74.

The US Patent Process

- 1850s - The US Patent land process requires that the Boronda family document its land claims within a two-year window, thereby launching a decades long legal battle over the original Mexican era land claims.
- 1860 - The US Patent land claims process ultimately certifies the validity of the *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* land grant, but only does so by virtue of reducing the claim to a third of its original size.

- 1864 - Maria dies, and the deed to *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* is left in limbo. Family disputes over the claim ensue.
- 1868 - Surveyor General's plat mapping of *Rancho El Tucho* registered on 1 May 1868 as per land dispute entered by Charles McFadden, and approved under an act of Congress on 23 July 1866.
- 1868 - Typhus epidemic decimates Salinas and the communities of the California central coast.
- 1870s - Chinese laborers recruited to drain the sloughs and marshes in the wake of the completion of the railroad through the region.

Changing Landscapes

- 1880 - Glass windows added to the New Boronda Adobe (c. 1870-80).
- 1900 - Lean-to kitchen and back porch enclosed (boarded in) as workshop areas for leather, metal, woodwork.
- 1906 - First Boronda adobe on Rancho Sanjon destroyed in earthquake (built north of Graves school on Highway 183, or due northwest of the 2nd Boronda adobe).
- 1920s - Last of the Borondas to reside in the adobe was Ygnacio Boronda.
- 1929 - Boronda Adobe acquired by Charles Brooks, President of the Salinas Valley Grower's / Shipper's Association. Brooks subsequently builds his family residence immediately behind or southwest of the Boronda Adobe.

Movers and Shakers

- 1933 - Monterey County Historical Society founded in December. Patrons in Salinas, one of the wealthiest California towns per capita, funded the startup.
- 1942-45 - The Monterey County Historical Society calls a hiatus on all Society activity so as to redirect all energies to the war effort.
- 1972 - Boronda Adobe acquired by Monterey County Historical Society.
- 1973 - Boronda Adobe restoration initiated, and area architects commissioned to prepare a comprehensive plan of any and all architectural features of the New Boronda Adobe.
- 1973 - The Boronda Adobe nominated by the California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee to the National Register

of Historic Places “based on both architectural and historical significance,” on 20 March 1973.

- 1974 - The California Office of Historic Preservation in cooperation with the Monterey County Historical Society, Inc., and the Monterey Bay Chapter AIA, installs a plaque at the Boronda Adobe designating the site as State Historic Landmark No. 870. Dedicated 18 May 1974.
- 1976 - Boronda Adobe completely restored and dedicated as a museum.
- 1980 - MCHS Board of Directors recruited Greg Robbins to serve as Society’s first Executive Director.
- 1980 - MCHS Archival Vault 1 created for the long-term curation of Monterey County historical records, maps, and photographs.
- 1989 - The William H. Weeks House, an 1898 Queen Anne building, conveyed to the Boronda Adobe History Center.
- 1989 - Boronda Adobe damaged by Loma Prieta earthquake - repaired by Monterey Chapter of the Colonial Dames of California.
- 1989-92 - Boronda Adobe closed for repairs and a seismic retrofit. Society engages the services of a structural engineer.

The Historic House Museum

- 1993-2005 - The large warehouse building identified with the future Albert & Pearl Jensen Agricultural Museum is completed in stages spanning the period from 1993 through 1995, and from 1995 through 2005. All funds for the build were the product of membership donations and private donors.
- 1994-98 - Museum planning collaborative with the Monterey Peninsula Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Redesign of all interior exhibits to reflect domestic life in the 1850s.
- 2012 - The MCHS Archaeological Repository, aka: the Breschini-Haversat Archaeological Repository, installed within the northeast corner of the Albert & Pearl Jensen Agricultural Museum.
- 2016 - MCHS Archival Vault 2, consisting of a retrofitted heritage seed vault, installed immediately adjacent to Archival Vault 1 within the building housing the Albert & Pearl Jensen Agricultural Museum.

- 2019 - Installation of state-of-the-art security systems replete with high resolution/infrared night vision and motion-detected security cameras across the whole of the Boronda Adobe History Center campus. Subsequently, Mission Protection Systems deployed a host of security system upgrades, and installed a state of the art fire alarm and monitoring system in 2021. Pro-bono security and fire alarm systems installation made courtesy of Lawrence “Larry” Tracy of Mission Protection Systems of Oroville, California.
- 2021 - Architectural design plans advanced for the construction of the Castro-Gumper Library. Funding courtesy Robert Baillie, MCHS President; and an endowment by the Williams Family. Phase 1 construction of the Victorian era Library slated to begin in fall 2021.

Concluding Remarks

The José Eusebio Boronda Adobe not only constitutes an historic property that yields the potential for untold revelations deemed critical to the interpretation of the cultural and historical legacy of the California central coast, today it serves as a site that offers active learning experiences and opportunities geared to serving the predominantly Mexican-origin populations of Salinas and the Salinas Valley. To that end, the Boronda Adobe History Center continues to expand public access for the conduct of historical research in its primary document collections and archaeological repository, while at the same time maintaining an active campaign of fundraising geared to the historic preservation and conservation of the Boronda Adobe and its material culture. Notably, the Monterey County Historical Society, Inc.,⁷ has long maintained its efforts to provide the public with access to primary documents, including Spanish colonial and Mexican Republic era maps and documents spanning the period from 1771 through 1850. Its collections include early California newspapers, vintage maps and aerial photographs, genealogical records and data, land titles and registries, and other available materials for supporting historical research in Monterey and San Benito counties. Moreover, the Monterey County Historical Society maintains a schedule of community programs and public events there at the Boronda Adobe History Center, including vintage car shows, fundraising auctions, annual fiestas, and public school and visitor tours conducted on a weekly basis throughout the year.

Figure 26. MCHS California Historical Landmark Ceremony, 1974.



The Monterey County Historical Society has partnered with the Service Learning Institute of the California State University, Monterey Bay via a host of archaeology and history offerings of the School of Social, Behavioral, and Global Studies. As an Institute of Service Learning community partner, our students have conducted primary research, developed community programs, digitized primary document collections, photographed artifacts and historic furnishings, and prepared maps and site plans on behalf of the Boronda Adobe History Center. During the 2020-2021 academic year, SBS 326S (Museums in the Public Sphere) and SBS 360S (Mission Archaeology) community service-learning students have facilitated a host of contributions under the guidance and supervision of MCHS Executive Director James Perry, President Robert Baillie, Vice President Rubén G. Mendoza, and Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty member Jennifer A. Lucido. In the final analysis, the Monterey County Historical Society continues to afford the communities of the California central coast, and the California State University, Monterey Bay, in particular, exceptional opportunities for community service-learning students to have a leading role in generating public awareness of the largely untold story of the early families and underrepresented communities of Salinas and the California central coast. In this and many other ways, the Boronda Adobe History Center has proven itself an exceptional venue and forum for actively engaging the community, and its many stakeholders, in a mission to foster collaborative, community-based, heritage management and public education.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Board of Directors and Membership of the Monterey County Historical Society, Inc., and its Executive Director James Perry, MA, President Robert Baillie, and the private donors, benefactors, student service learners, and community volunteers who, in one way or another, have contributed to the preservation and conservation of the Boronda Adobe History Center and its invaluable archival and historical collections. Among these, we would especially like to acknowledge Lawrence “Larry” Tracy of Mission Protection Systems for his ongoing contributions to protecting and monitoring the Boronda Adobe History Center; and MCHS President Robert Baillie and the Williams Family for underwriting the construction of the new Victorian era-styled Castro-Gumper Library of the Boronda Adobe History Center. We would each like to acknowledge and thank Social and Behavioral Sciences Archaeology Program student, and Monterey County Historical Society Photo Collections Intern Jesse Flores for his exceptionally dedicated service to the digitization of the vast photographic collections of the Monterey County Historical Society. Jesse’s efforts proved instrumental to the

identification of those historic photographs bearing on this study. MCHS Intern and CSU Monterey Bay alumnus Leslie Mosqueda in turn worked to catalog photographic content used herein. We thank Lori Lazzarini, proprietor of the Casa Boronda of Monterey for permission to reproduce the painting of Don Manuel Boronda featured herein. We gratefully acknowledge the use of historic photographs courtesy of the Archives of the Monterey County Historical Society. These include Figures 1, 10, 14, 17, 18, and 19-26. Figures 13 and 16 are courtesy the CSU Monterey Bay Digital Commons Hornbeck Collection. All other photographs are courtesy of photographer and Professor Rubén G. Mendoza, Archives & Archaeology 2020-2021. Accordingly, we gratefully acknowledge the host of SBS 326S (Museums in the Public Sphere) and SBS 360S (Mission Archaeology) community service-learning students who have already contributed so much to an emerging understanding of the Boronda family, the Boronda Adobe, the Boronda Adobe History Center, and the communities of the Salinas Valley more generally. Finally, we thank our respective families for their support and understanding in all such project undertakings.

Endnotes

1. *Rincon del Sanjón* translates as “Corner of the Great Slough,” with *zanjon* or *sanjón* used interchangeably throughout the documentary record specific to the Boronda family ranch.
2. MCHS Boronda Adobe History Center, 333 Boronda Road, Salinas, CA 93907.
3. While Johnston (1974: 4) identifies San José as a “tract of land,” said tract in fact constituted the *Rancho San José y Sur Chiquito*, an 8,876-acre Mexican land grant (1835) located just south of present-day Big Sur, California. This was the Boronda family’s likely destination in 1839.
4. Cited from Jarrell Jackman (2021) Presidio Research, Archaeology Key to Understanding Santa Barbara’s Historic Roots. *Noozhawk*, Santa Barbara, April 4, 2021, Accessed June 14, 2021. https://www.noozhawk.com/article/jarrell_jackman_santa_barbara_presidio_research_center_archaeology_20210404.
5. James Perry discovered the Boronda cattle brand under the floorboards of the south end of the adobe proper (Personal Communication, James Perry to Rubén G. Mendoza, October 2020). Johnston (1974: 4) acknowledges that, “A cattle brand and earmark would have been required for anyone seeking a large grant of land. Eusebio, no doubt, had one, for he registered it with Monterey County on the 10th of January 1852. However, the design for his and several others were lost when the corner of the Brand Book was torn off many years ago.”
6. Interestingly, the *Rincón* is not included within the *Agricultural Resources Evaluation Handbook*, Monterey County, California (2011), prepared by PAST Consultants, LLC. The *Handbook* notes the significance of adobe construction, including Monterey Colonial Style as well as a listing of ranchos in Monterey County and the associated grantees from 1822 to 1846 (Past Consultants 2011: 41, 45). With respect to the Salinas Valley, only four adobe residences are identified, all affiliated with the Soberanes family’s ranches (Past Consultants 2011: 41). However, the presence of the Boronda Adobe and the *Rancho Rincón del Sanjón* are omitted.

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