

STAFF REPORT - SAN MATEO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION - MEETING OF FEBRUARY 23, 1977

APPLICANT: James Wickett

REQUEST: Minor subdivision in the Skyline Scenic Corridor. File SMN 77-69.

LOCATION: West side of Skyline Boulevard, one mile more or less southeast of Kings Mountain Road. APN 67-340-060 & -070.

LAND: General Plan, open space. Zoned RM. Property is now undeveloped except for the placement of a relocated historical adobe building.

BACKGROUND: The historical significance of the Arguello Adobe, the preservation of which is the motivation for this request, is given in a narrative submitted by the applicant and attached to this staff report.

The applicant voluntarily proposes to preserve for public appreciation this historical monument, and seeks to divide off enough land to maintain it, safeguard it, and display it to the public.

APPLICABLE ORDINANCE PROVISIONS: The 12 acres more or less proposed for division constitute one building site under the RM provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Division of this parcel would not be permitted if for the purpose of creating two legal parcels for building sites. The applicant proposes, and imposed conditions would require, that no dwelling unit be created on this parcel, that there be no overnight accommodations, and that this land use limitation be permanently applicable. Division of land for a purpose such as this, not creating a new building site, conforms to the requirements of the RM part of the Zoning Ordinance.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION: After an Initial Study, a Negative Declaration was prepared for this project. The review period ended December 31; no comments were received.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission:

- A. Find that the Negative Declaration for this project is adequate and complete, and in conformance with CEQA and State and County Guidelines.
- B. Approve this minor subdivision with the following conditions:
 1. Note on the parcel map that the one-acre parcel more or less is created solely for the preservation of a historical monument, and does not constitute a new building site.
 2. Submit a parcel map to the Director of Public Works for checking.

Attachments: Location Map
Site Map
Historical Background
Negative Declaration

FW:fc

INTRODUCTION

This report, a supplement to the request being presented to the San Mateo County Planning Commission, is intended to illustrate:

1. That the Wickett Adobe has an irreplaceable historical value to San Mateo County.
2. That its future has been made uncertain by a change in the ownership of the property on which it is located.
3. That the Adobe's safety can be assured by the granting of this request and thereby the continued Wickett ownership of the proposed parcel.

EARLY HISTORY (Construction to 1956)

No one is sure of the exact year the Adobe was constructed, however, Dennis Morton was quoted as saying that it was standing in 1846 when he paced off the adjacent land to locate a place to settle.

The house was constructed as an out building on the vast El Rancho de las Pulgas, owned by California's first native governor, Don Luis Arguello. The Adobe, as first described by American travelers in 1840, was apparently a resting place for cowboys who found themselves too far south on the Alameda de las Pulgas' vast range to get back to Rancho headquarters at Belmont before dark. It was built with some care to be able to withstand the vicissitudes of the years. If it had been made of plain adobe bricks, it probably would have crumbled with the first trembling of the earth.

The Adobe's construction is unique. First a wooden frame was put up, with slats nailed inside and out, and the spaces between were filled with adobe mud. The wood was sawed redwood, apparently cut into conventional American sizes, and it was held together with wrought-iron square headed nails. The outside was plastered completely with adobe mud, but enough of it has fallen off to reveal the interior construction. Very likely the lumber which went into it was supplied by John Coppinger's saw pits at Woodside.

Aside from serving as a sort of hostel for the caballeros of the Rancho de las Pulgas, the Adobe has had a colorful history. It has been used as a warehouse, an apple house, a bootleg saloon, a hospital, and a dwelling. In 1855, it was used as a temporary bank when Isaiah Woods, owner of the Woodside Dairy and a bank official, absconded with \$80,000 of a failing San Francisco bank's funds. Justice prevailed when stagecoach driver Maurice Dooley surprised Woods at the Adobe by putting a loaded six-shooter to Woods' ribs. Dooley ordered him to return the \$80,000, which was the exact sum Dooley had on deposit in that bank!

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY (1956 to the present)

In 1956, the land on which the Adobe was located, 701 Menlo Oaks Drive in Menlo Park, was subdivided. In order to save the Adobe from being bulldozed, John Wickett, then a member of the San Mateo County Historical Association,

moved the fifteen by thirty foot building out of the path of destruction. After the town of Atherton denied Wickett a permit to use the building as a historical museum in Atherton, and after zoning ordinances prevented him from placing it on sites provided by the Peninsula School, the Town and Country Shopping Center, and the East Palo Alto Shopping Center, Wickett, at his own expense, safely transported the Adobe to its final resting place on Skyline Boulevard at Skeggs Point Lookout.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

John Wickett sold the 1,300-acre piece of property on which the Adobe is located to Rancho Canada de Verde two years ago. An arrangement was made stating that the title to the approximate one acre around the Adobe would be returned to the Wickett family if the Wicketts could get County approval for the subdivision.

If this request is granted, the Wickett family intends to continue to preserve and restore the Adobe because we feel that the structure is of significant historical value. It has already been designated a San Mateo County Historical Monument, and its historical importance has been mentioned in many books and articles about the area.