

The Novato Historian

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Preserving Novato's History Feature Section

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The Novato Historian

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Gracious Marin Living at Rancho de San Jose 175 years ago

by Florence Donnelly (Part II)

Independent Journal - March 19, 1949

Married at Mission

Ygnacio Pacheco, the man who had outwitted Fremont, was a good businessman and in his third wife he had not only an attractive and cultured companion but a good adviser in financial matters. It was at the Mission San Rafael Arcangel that he and Maria Duarte were married. She was a younger sister of his second wife.

In the office of Frank Burrows, Marin County recorder, is the official record of the marriage signed by John A. Davis, deputy clerk. It says, "In the year 1851, the 16th of September in open church were married, according to the forms prescribed by the Council of Trent, Ygnacio Pacheco, widower, and Maria Loreta Duarte at the Mission of San Rafael, witnesses James Miller, James Black and Mr. Murphy". The latter was Don Timoteo Murphy who owned large portions of land in San Rafael and whose grants, Las Gallinas, San Pedro and Santa Margarita were just to the north of San Jose Rancho. James Miller had a 680 acre ranch opposite St. Vincent's. James Black was acquiring vast lands in the county and in 1852 he bought almost the entire Olompali Rancho from Camilo Ynitia, the grantee, for \$5200.

Young Mrs. Ygnacio Pacheco (she was 24 at the time of her marriage) immediately placed the adobe home in smoothly running order. Indian girls aided her in keeping the house and in caring for her husband's children. Soon after her first son, Gumesindo was born, additions were made to the house and as the family grew so did the home until it became a large and handsome structure. Beautiful gardens surrounded it and the drives were lined by trees.

Large barns were built for the finely bred horses and in the meadows thousands of cattle, bearing the Pacheco brand, roamed.

Six children were born to the Pacheco's - Salvador, Gumesindo, Catalina, Agustin F., Juan F. (John) and Benjamin.

The entertaining done at the Pacheco homes sounds almost fabulous. Guests stayed for months not weeks. There was every delicacy then available and the barbecues which were held at the ranch have become legendary. Sometimes more than a hundred guests would enjoy the Pacheco hospitality at one of these feasts.

Early Day School

One room at the rear of the adobe was a school room and tutors and governesses instructed the Pacheco children and some of the youngsters from the neighboring ranches. Priests came there, too, to give religious instruction. On Sundays, the family would go in carriages to Mass at the chapel at St. Vincent's. And occasional and great events were the shopping trips to San Francisco.



Maria Loreta Duarte Pacheco, wife of Ygnacio, who bore him six children and became the grande dame of North Marin. Maria Loreto Acquired 6,600 acres in Ignacio when her husband died, and later gained 12,000 more acres at Nicasio on the death of her second husband, James Black. The Pacheco ranch was noted, during her reign as mistress, for its lavish entertaining, its fine cattle and horses.

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The Pacheco sons and daughters were expert horsemen and women and the boys were fine shots. Game was close at hand in those days and the larder was always stocked with venison or wild fowl.

Ygnacio Pacheco did not live to see his family grown. He died in 1864 leaving Rancho San Jose to his widow. Two of the children, Theodora and Benjamin, died in their youth. As the boys came to majority each was given a ranch. Soon after Gumesindo was graduated from Santa Clara College, he managed his mother's property. Catalina was very young when she married Francisco Valencia. They and their children made their home with her mother.

Some years after her husband's death, Mrs. Pacheco married James Black, a widower, who had been a witness at her wedding to Ygnacio Pacheco and who had been a friend of the family for years. He had given the Olompali property to his daughter, Mary, when she became the wife of Dr. Galen Burdell. However Black had about 12,000 acres of Land at Nicasio and after his death much of this went to his widow.

It was to one of the Nicasio ranches that Gumesindo took his bride, the former Rose Tanforan, to live. Born at Mission Dolores February 1, 1852, she was a member of a family which also owned vast acreages in California, Tanforan race track was sometime later located on a small part of the property. Rose's younger sister, Julia, was married some years later to Gumesindo's brother, Juan (John) and following his death married Dr. Bodkin. The latter died a few years ago. Mrs. Bodkin, who now resides in San Francisco, because of her marriage to John Pacheco, came into possession of all the land which is now Hamilton Field. John left to his daughter by his first marriage, Frances, much money and property too.

All of the boys were educated at Santa Clara College.

Salvador had large ranch holdings in the vicinity of San Anselmo. Augusto, whose son, the late Gus Pacheco, was county assessor at the time of his death, reared his family in San Rafael.

Gumesindo's home at Nicasio burned and his mother offered him choice of any of the property northerly from St. Vincent's Hill to Ignacio. He chose 75 acres which with the exception of 10 acres taken for government purposes is known today as the Pacheco ranch.

A Mansion Of The '80's

The Gumesindo Pacheco home was and is today an imposing structure. From the time it was completed it has been the setting for elaborate entertaining. The *Marin Journal* reported on September 22, 1881: "G.



JUST MARRIED. Above are shown Mr. and Mrs. Gumesindo Pacheco soon after their marriage, which took place in 1876. They are the parents of Mrs. Abigail Rowland and Thomas Pacheco of Ignacio. Gumesindo was the son of the colorful Marin pioneer, Ygnacio Pacheco, after whom the settlement of Ignacio is named.

Pacheco is building his new residence on Petaluma Road (now the Redwood highway). It will cost about \$3,500 or \$4,000. George W. Bond is the contractor." Actually the house cost \$6,000. That was a high cost in those days. The two-story home with its 12 rooms including six bedrooms, had two baths, a luxury in the 1880's.

Where the Meadow Park School which is in the San Jose school district, is today, was the exercise track for the Pacheco race horses. Gumesindo had as many as 20 horses in his racing stable and the purple and white, the Pacheco colors, were worn by the jockeys at races at the Bay District Track and at Ingleside.

Life changed from rural to semiurban tempo with the building of the San Francisco and North Pacific Coast Railroad. The line commenced in 1869 by Col. Peter Donahue, the president of the

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company, was extended from Petaluma to San Rafael in 1879 and the Union Depot train shed, which was razed a few years ago, was built. In 1882 the railroad was completed to Tiburon. The luxurious accommodations of the ferry "James M. Donahue", with its "red plush seats and grand staircase", which transported the passengers across San Francisco Bay, were extolled by the newspapers and magazines.

Some years after the death of James Black, his widow married Vicente Velasco, a Spaniard. They continued to entertain in the fashion established by Ygnacio Pacheco and the summers at their home were almost times of continuous entertaining.

Many Philanthropies

Mrs. Velasco carried on many philanthropies. She was generous to church and school and gave much financial assistance to the building of the first Catholic Church in Novato. She provided the San Jose school district with its school, leasing the property and the schoolhouse she built on it, in 1884. The district only had to pay \$111 a year for four years, then the building was given to the district.

The winters Mrs. Velasco spent in San Francisco and there death came to her suddenly on December 26, 1891. She was stricken with pneumonia and died four days later. However, she had seen to it that her daughter and sons and her grandchildren were provided for well. To Mrs. Valencia (Catalina) was left a ranch of



Above is a 1903 picture of Marin County Supervisor Gumesindo Pacheco

2,090 acres just beyond Novato, the proviso being that Mrs. Valencia's property should go to her children on her death. With the exception of \$10,000 to Velasco, the remainder of the estate was divided with the daughter and the sons.



Gumesindo was elected supervisor in 1902 and served almost until the time of his death in 1916. His wife died in 1921.

The Pacheco adobe was burned in May, 1923. For several years the ruins stood, and then they too, were gone.

However, the influence of the family which had been sheltered there in the years in which the county was young and has continued through the years and the impress of gracious living has been retained by the descendants of the pioneers.

PLAT of Rancho San Jose finally confirmed to Ygnacio Pacheco. Surveyed under instructions from the U.S. Surveyor General by Robert C. Matthew, July 1858 containing 6659.25 acres.

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Nearly 175 years ago, Ygnacio Pacheco, who received the grant to the Rancho San Jose, built an adobe home at what is now known as Ignacio. Having four large rooms, it was an elaborate structure in those days. Later extensive additions were made to the home as the family grew. Skilled Indians were brought from Mendocino County to make the adobe and build the dwelling. A fire in May 1923 left only the ruins shown above. Later these were removed.

Compiled by Michael Read

Fact or Fiction – The story about Fremont vs. Ignacio Pacheco. *These are some the stories I found in the files at the Novato History Museum.*

An Exceptional Adaptation: Camillo Ynitia, The Last Headman of the Olompalis

by Pamela McGuire Carlson and E. Breck Parkman

... “It was the stopping place, too, for a force of retreating Californios during the Bear Flag Rebellion in 1846. Lieutenant Henry L. Ford's Yankees surprised Captain Joaquin de la Torre and Juan Padilla's troops while they were enjoying breakfast in Camillo's adobe. With the Mexican troops routed, Camillo managed to absolve himself of any connection with the Californios and apparently outwitted John C. Fremont several days later as well.

Don Pedro Pacheco, in recounting Fremont's participation in the Bear Flag Rebellion some forty years after the event, recalled “... But there was one man who succeeded in keeping Fremont from stealing his cattle and that was Carillo (sic) whose ranch was where the Burdells live now.

Carillo drove all his stock away, leaving behind only a couple of old oxen. When Fremont came up as usual he demanded all the cattle...” Camillo successfully convinced him that he had only the two old oxen. Fremont insisted that they be slaughtered for his men's dinner, and so they were. There is no reason to doubt Pacheco's memory [38].” Note 38 - *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 16, 1887.

In the “History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Coast Counties, California” published in 1904. The biographical on Ignacio Pacheco reads as follows:

“Ignacio Pacheco, Distinguished as one of the earliest and most respected pioneer settlers of Marin County.” ... “During the Mexican war, Señor Pacheco was taken prisoner by General Fremont, to compel him to give up all his horses to the United States government, which he did, thus securing his release...”