

Battle On to Save It From Developers

Old Adobe May Crumble to Dust

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ROWLAND HEIGHTS—For nearly 100 years Francisco Graziade's adobe has overlooked the rolling hills of the La Puente Valley. Now, as housing developments creep closer, the old landmark may soon disappear.

Built in 1875 by Graziade and his bride, Isabel Rowland, the old house has had a long and rich history. Local historians and art lovers hope to preserve the home, but developers want the acres surrounding the structure for a condominium project.

To get their wish, those who want to preserve the place apparently will have to raise a half million dollars.

A 16-year-old sheep herder, Graziade came to the valley with his brother when the large rancheros thrived. He went to work as a hired hand and later married Isabel, a granddaughter of John Row-

land, one of the first Anglos to come to the area.

Isabel's inheritance, some 400 acres, served as the basis of the Graziade Rancho, according to Leonore Rowland, Mrs. Graziade's niece, but other holdings were added later.

The adobe, an eight-room structure, was built on a hill, now bounded by Vidore Drive and Leon Avenue, which overlooked the valley. A large, spring-fed lake was later dug a little distance from the house, and the family often held picnics on the little island in its center.

The rancho was famous during Graziade's lifetime and was often the scene of dinners and parties.

"The place was widely known because it was one of the biggest ranchos at that time," said Miss Rowland, who remembers visiting the adobe as a child. "Mr. Graziade liked to have people come out for dinner."

Some of Graziade's guests were not always of society's upper crust. Bandits, including the famed Joaquin Murrieta, are believed to have visited the rancho on occasion.

"Mr. Graziade was that kind of a man," Miss Rowland said. "He would always give them a meal."

Following Graziade's death in the 1920s the adobe passed on to his son, Francisco. The new generation remodeled the house, turning it into a modern home of that period. A second story was added, and the wooden roof replaced by Spanish tile. A swimming pool and tennis court appeared alongside the structure.

Nearly 20 years later the rancho was sold by the Graziade family, and the land had several owners through the 1940s and 1950's. Among its later owners, was Thomas W. Simmons, president of Hollywood Park, who named the

place "Suzy-Ranch" and raised championship thoroughbreds.

The L. S. Whaley Co. of Long Beach purchased what remained of the rancho, about 20 acres, 10 years ago. For most of that time the old home has stood vacant, inviting vandals and weeds to mar its beauty.

When the Whaley Co. first announced plans to develop the property five years ago, local residents sprang to the old adobe's defense. La Puente Valley Historical Society members wrote letters to county officials and Whaley asking that something be done to preserve the structure.

A representative of the American Institute of Architects visited the house, described it as "an authentic historical monument" and said that it "deserves every effort that can be made to preserve it."

Whaley told county officials

that he would be willing to sell the property but the county later rejected the idea of turning the site into a park.

"They felt it would take too much money to repair the home," said Miss Rowland, a member of the historical society. "That's the chief reason."

A second attempt to save the adobe was made four years later. The Heights Art Association had hopes of turning the home into a combination art and historical museum, but also met with failure.

"We wanted to have it donated very badly," said Mrs. Don Walker, then president of the art association. "We never, did get the opportunity to talk directly to Mr. Whaley, though."

The association, working in conjunction with the newly formed Rowland Height Chamber of Commerce, held an art show at the home in an effort to attract commu-

nity support for the museum idea.

Making use of help from local merchants, association members worked on weekends for four months to repair the adobe and its grounds.

"We completely restored the place," said Mrs. Walker. "When we walked in, it was a mess. The walls were written on and windows broken. We painted every room in the house and scrubbed every window."

L. D. Whaley, vice president of the Whaley Co., says his firm would be willing to sell the house but not donate it. He estimated the house and the 12-acres immediately surrounding it as worth over \$500,000.

"If they were going to do this, they should have done it years ago," he said. "Until about three years ago, the house was in excellent condition, but we just could not keep it up."

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