

OSUNA ADOBE

2. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

A. General Historical Summary

The exact date of construction of the Osuna Adobe is unknown. It was listed within the original land grant known as the Rancho San Dieguito which was acquired by Juan Maria Osuna in 1836. Prior to Osuna, the adobe was occupied by Librado Silva who received a previous provisional land grant in 1831 and lived on the property for several years prior to Osuna. It is believed that the adobe was built close to the date of the provisional grant to Silva in 1831.

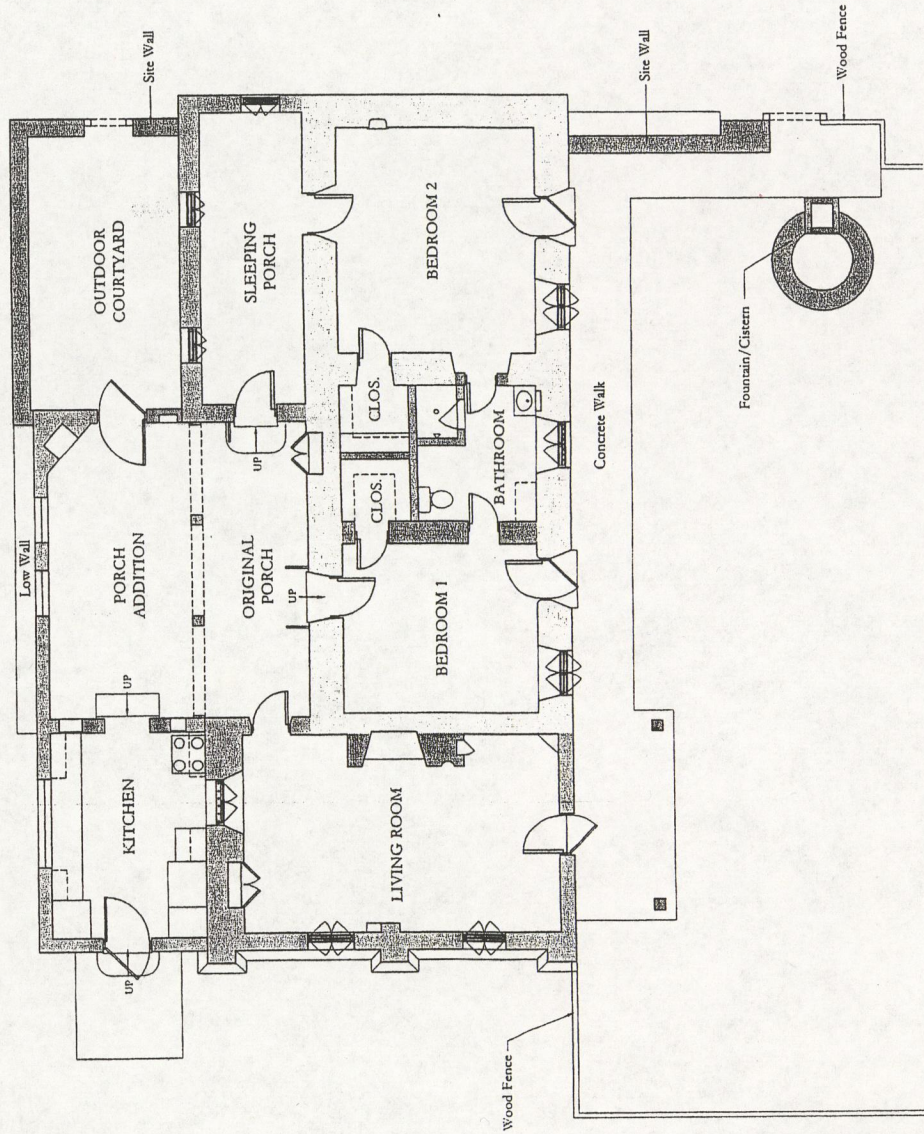
Shortly after Juan Maria Osuna and his wife Maria Juliana Josefa Lopez Osuna established their family at Rancho San Dieguito, they built a larger adobe building to serve as their new home and center of ranch activities. The original adobe became the residence of Leandro Osuna, Juan and Juliana's son. Members of the Osuna family retained ownership of the adobe until 1906 when the last of their property was purchased by the Santa Fe Railroad through its subsidiary, The Santa Fe Land Improvement Company.

The adobe is noted in land transfer agreements in 1853, 1855, and 1865 as a two room structure with a sitting room and one bedroom. This suggests that the existing Living Room and Sleeping Porch were added after 1865. This theory is further substantiated by the existing adobe construction. The adobe walls have at least two distinct thicknesses. The walls of what is believed to be the original c. 1831 adobe are 26-inches thick. The walls of the Living Room and Sleeping Porch are only 14-inches thick (Refer to the plan on page 3 of this section). It was common for adobe buildings from the 19th Century to be expanded in stages as family needs changed and means allowed.

In 1924-1925 the property was developed under the name Rancho Santa Fe. The architectural development and planning of Ranch Santa Fe was carried out by Lilian Rice, an associate of the San Diego architectural firm Requa & Jackson.

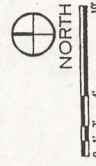
Historic photographs of the adobe taken prior to the Lilian Rice rehabilitation c. 1924 indicate that the Living Room and Sleeping Porch had already been added and were in the same basic state of disrepair as the rest of the building. Although the openings were in the same location, all of the original doors and windows were missing and most of the plaster finish was gone. Photos from this time also show the three buttresses on the west wall were extant. Lilian Rice's 1924-25 rehabilitation included installation of new windows, doors and hardware as well as removal of the original porch along the south elevation, installation of a new smaller porch at the Living Room entrance, replacement of the roof structure, installation of clay tile roofing, and construction of a new fireplace in the Living Room. Her rehabilitation also included installation of a bathroom. The adobe was again remodeled sometime in the 1930s to expand and enclose the porch and add a kitchen. Fixtures and finishes in the existing kitchen and bathroom are contemporary, indicating that the building was remodeled once again post 1970. Refer to the floor plan on page 3 of this section.

- LEGEND**
- Historic Period (c. 1831 - 1925)**
- c. 1831 (original two-room adobe, built by Librado Silva)
 - c. 1865-1906 (It is believed that the Living Room and Sleeping Porch were added by the Osuna family sometime between 1865 and 1906.)
 - 1924-1925 Lillian Rice rehabilitation
- Non-Historic (post-1925)**
- c. 1930s (Finishes and fixtures in the Kitchen and Bathroom are contemporary, indicating these rooms were renovated again in the 1970s or 80s.)



EXISTING FLOOR PLAN

Scale: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$



OSUNA ADOBE

outpost. Furthermore, as the civilian population grew in number, the people hoped for more participation in government.

We have no evidence as to why Juan Osuna decided to enter the political arena, other than that the affairs of government after California became a territory of the Mexican republic were in a state of turmoil. Military authorities exercised great control throughout the territory, with presidio commandants having jurisdiction over the surrounding areas, including management of local affairs.

Juan Osuna's civil involvement began when he became one of the first civilians in San Diego to be given responsibilities that ordinarily had been assigned to a member of the military. On August 22, 1830, he was elected as an *elector de partido* (district elector) to represent San Diego. Two months later he traveled to Monterey where four other *electors* selected a representative to the Mexican Congress and other officials.

The following year Juan Osuna participated in an action related to military and political rule in the territory and the proposed secularization of the missions. He fought in the successful revolt, to defeat the newly appointed governor, Lt. Colonel Manuel Victoria, who was sent from Mexico to halt the process of secularization which was already progressing under Governor Echeandia. This action represented the first major opposition to Mexican authority in California, and ultimately influenced the fate of the missions.

By the early 1830s, the settlement in Old Town exceeded the population at the presidio. However, the citizens were still under the military control of the presidio commandant; at that time Santiago Arguello. Although many of the residents were former soldiers, they were now civilians and wanted civil rule by a duly elected council. Under the existing laws of Mexico, this could only be accomplished by establishment of a Pueblo, which was a unit of local government equivalent to a town. Regulations of local government were based upon provisions of the Spanish constitution of 1812 and the Cortes of 1812 and 1813. The same principles of local government continued after the Mexican Revolution and remained in effect with few changes in the 1830s.

In October of 1833, six residents of the Port of San Diego, including Juan Maria Osuna, sent a petition to Jose Figueroa, the Mexican Governor of Alta California, requesting formation of a Pueblo and establishment of an *ayuntamiento* or town council. The initial paragraph of the petition reads:

We the citizens of the Port of San Diego, with due respect, present ourselves before you, with the object of finding alleviation from the oppression into which the inhabitants of this section of country, up to the present time, have been sunk. We are sir persuaded they ought to enjoy, the privilege of electing their agents, and the duration of the function of the latter, ought to be limited. But if the contrary happens and the civil power is vested in one single individual, who besides this, exercises military authority and holds his office by force, then the tendency of power

OSUNA ADOBE

made within the boundaries of the pueblo of San Diego, the most productive were those of large ranchos scattered throughout the district.

Juan Osuna was the recipient of a land grant in the San Dieguito Valley in 1836 and of a lot in Old Town in 1838. He received an additional grant of land in 1844. Possibly as early as 1834, he took possession of the initial parcel of land in the San Dieguito River valley, twenty miles north of San Diego, that had once been the property of the San Diego Mission. He was allowed to select land for settlement under conditions set forth in the Mexican colonization law of 1824, which permitted provincial governors to grant lands to colonists, families, and individuals.

The land grant system in California began during Spanish rule in an effort to further colonial development beyond that of the presidios, although few grants were given during the Spanish period. Those that were made, carried the primary stipulation that the grantee live on the land. When Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1822, the land grant system was retained. Although new policies actually encouraged, and resulted in, the issuance of a greater number of grants. Definite conditions were imposed on the recipients. The grantee was required to construct and occupy a permanent residence within one year of the grant. The construction of fences was allowed under the condition that access to highways, cross roads and rights of way not be impaired. Additionally, the grantee was to take responsibility for having a local magistrate define the boundaries and mark them with appropriate markers. In the process of determining the boundaries there was to be no infringement or the rights of neighbors, such as those on adjacent grants, or those living on the land, such as the local Indian population.

These are the conditions under which Juan Maria Osuna obtained 8,824 acres of land known as Rancho San Dieguito. The land, obtained under two separate grants included a broad river valley, ideal for cultivation and raising cattle or sheep. The area was not isolated, as the route from the San Diego Mission to Mission San Luis Rey passed through the property and an Indian pueblo had been established nearby. According to Bancroft, the Indian pueblo at San Dieguito was "...perhaps organized in 1833...from the ex-neophytes of San Diego...and in May 1834 they were represented by the governor as in flourishing condition. San Dieguito seems to have had about 15 families at the start; and at the time of Hartnell's visit in 1839 they were complaining that their best lands had been taken away." As noted by Engelhardt:

"At the pueblo of San Dieguito, the Indians presented themselves and complained about Juan Osuna, the alcalde of San Diego, because he had taken from them the land which they had enclosed for their grain, and that he had left them nothing more than salinous soil which did not produce enough for their maintenance."

In addition to the presence of the nearby Indian dwellings, there was an adobe house on the land when Juan Maria obtained the grant. This dwelling, which had previously been the property of Lebrado Silva, served as the first Osuna home on Rancho San Dieguito. At some later date an additional adobe house was constructed, along with several corrals. By this time, the children of Juan and Juliana Osuna had grown up and had families of their

OSUNA ADOBE

Julio, who later became a county judge, was to stand by his mother during the trying times ahead. Added to Juliana's problems was the responsibility to meet previous debts incurred by her husband.

Times were especially difficult in the early 1860s. Where the past fifteen years had been one of prosperity for those with vast tracts of land and large herds of cattle, the early years of the 1860s were just the opposite. Beginning in the winter of 1861, adverse weather conditions in the form of abnormally heavy rainfall and wide-spread flooding created havoc with cattle, sheep and crops. These conditions prevailed for several years, only to be by several more years of extreme drought. Vast herds of cattle died for lack of forage and there was little prospect for successful crops.

During this time, many were forced to sell their land to meet living expenses and mortgages. In some cases, the inability to pay taxes also resulted in the loss property. It is not known to what extent these conditions affected the Osuna family. It appears that they experienced difficulties even before 1860 because on January 19, 1860, Judge Benjamin Hayes, of Old Town, recorded in his diary that he spoke with Juliana Osuna and her son Julio about their troubles at the rancho. He wrote that they claimed an audience with him whenever they came to town and he was present.

Land Acquisition and Use

When the United States gained possession of California much of the choice land in the state, especially that major rivers, was claimed as land grants issued under Spanish and Mexican rule. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided for these early grants which often involved title to thousands of acres of land.

By the treaty of 1848 between Mexico and the United States, all private rights and titles were secured to individuals, and this rendered a valid title under the Mexican government just as valid under United States law.... Some of these lands were merely occupied, others were held by complete titles, and others still were of doubtful ownership.

In 1851, a Land Commission was created to deal with the lack of adequate records and surveys establishing legal title to the lands that created boundary disputes and confusion as to ownership. Legal claims could be established under an Act of Congress, dated March 3, 1851, entitled An Act to Ascertain and Settle the Private Land Claims in the State of California. Persons holding titles under Spanish or Mexican laws were required to present a petition seeking verification of title. Claims were to be filed within two years accompanied with sufficient evidence to prove legal possession of the land. If no petition was made, the owners had to forfeit their rights. Some claims were easily verified and were approved without delay. Others, such as the claim made by Juliana Osuna, required years of litigation and resulted in financial difficulties created in part by legal expenses.

OSUNA ADOBE

occupy the land & he did occupy it until it was granted by Alvarado as before stated. Osuna continued to occupy the land until his decease about the year 1850, since which time it has been occupied by his widow & children.... He had a house on the land before the grant by Alvarado & he lived in it a portion of the time & it was inhabited until the time of his death & to this time. He cultivated the land to a considerable extent, & had some stock on it.

Santiago Arguello also testified that he had personally defined the boundaries of Rancho San Dieguito in 1843 during settlement of a boundary dispute between Andres Ibarra, of Rancho Encinitos, and Juan Osuna. He further proclaimed that the diseno submitted with the petition conformed "to the original which served for the measurement of a league of land in the place of San Dieguito, dated January 24, 1850."

Regarding earlier possession of the land, Jimenos and Hartnell's Indexes of Land Concessions From 1830 to 1846, show Juan Osuna in possession of Rancho San Dieguito in the year of 1836. However, in a document dated January 21, 1854, which discusses validity of the Juliana Osuna's claim, it is stated that:

Upon an examination of the archives in the office of the U.S. Surveyor General a voluminous record was found showing that a grant of the land called San Dieguito was made to Juan M Osuna by Gov. Gutierrez in 1836 but no evidence whatsoever that such a grant was made by Gov. Alvarado in 1840 or at any other time.

Juliana Osuna's claim was rejected by the Board of Commissioners on January 24, 1854. That decision was later reversed by the District and Supreme Courts and the final patent was issued on April 18, 1871. Juliana Osuna succeeded in her task and thereby secured the land for her children. She died on December 22, 1871, eight months after obtaining the patent.

The land that remained, following her death, stayed in the Osuna family until 1906. At that time it was purchased by the Rancho Santa Fe Land Improvement Company, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railroad.

Exactly how many structures, or visible remnants, of Rancho San Dieguito remained at the time of purchase is unknown. The most evident were the two Osuna dwellings: one that existed when Juan Osuna took possession of the land, and the other which was built later by the Osuna family.

OSUNA ADOBE

On November 1, 1852, Juliana Osuna submitted a petition to the California Board of Land Commissioners, which had been established to ascertain and settle private land claims. In the petition, in which she and her eight children claim title to Rancho San Dieguito, she stated:

That in or about the years A.D. 1840 or 1841, Juan B. Alvarado, then governor of California in the name of the Mexican Nation by virtue of the laws in force at that time...granted in full property unto the said Juan M Osuna the tract of land & ranch known by the name of San Dieguito, containing one league of land...

And your petitioner further showeth that on or about the 11th day of August A.D. 1845 Pio Pico, then Governor of California....granted in full property unto the said Juan Ma Osuna a tract of land in addition to the tract of San Dieguito which belonged to him as herein-before set forth & between the boundaries of the same & the ranch of Andres Ybarra which said tract of land last granted as an addition containing one league of land/sitio de ganada major/& is more particularly described in the original papers now in the hands of your petitioner, ready to be produced and proved...

Juliana Osuna's land claim was supported by two witnesses; Abel Stearns and Santiago Arguello. Their testimony, given on November 5, 1852, provided support for establishing the presence of a dwelling on the property and validating the copy of a *diseno*, or map, submitted with the petition. It also provided verification on occupation of the land by Juan Maria Osuna.

In his deposition, Abel Stearns commented on the *diseno* and occupation of the land. He stated:

A map is shown me on which is a certificate signed S. Arguello dated 24 January 1850....

I should think the map represented the land called San Dieguito.... I have frequently been on the land. It had been occupied by Juan M Osuna from the year 1831 up to the time of his death in 1851. He had a house on the land in which he lived or had agents or servants. The land has been considerably cultivated & has been used also for the keeping of stock. It is situated in the County of San Diego, about seven leagues from San Diego in a Northerly direction. The house is about a league & a half from the sea coast.

Similar testimony was provided by Santiago Arguello:

A map is now shown me with my certificate upon it, being a paper annexed to the deposition of Abel Stearns in this case, & marked H. H. No. 4. It is a map of a tract of land called San Dieguito, granted to the late Juan M Osuna, by Juan B. Alvarado, as Governor, I think about the year 1827 or 1828, while I was Military Commandant at San Diego Governor Eachoandea [sic] wrote me permission for said Osuna to

OSUNA ADOBE

own. They retained a close relationship with their parents and some lived at Rancho San Dieguito. It is believed that a son, Leandro, lived in the older adobe with his family.

Don Juan Maria Osuna used the land to full advantage by extensive cultivation and as range land for raising cattle. Although Juan Maria spent more time at his rancho than he had over the past years, he retained his house in Old Town and his interest in the political affairs of San Diego. When the northern and southern regions of California became divided in a fight for control of the territory, in 1838, Osuna became actively involved in the military action. A period of relative peace followed the conflict, which resulted in the northern factions gaining control, assumedly life returned to normal. The Osuna sons, particularly Leandro at this point, provided new energy and leadership.

During the Mexican War, when Mexican and forces fought over control of California, Juan Osuna supported the Mexican cause. He provided shelter and supplies to the "Californios" in their loyal efforts to stand by the Mexican government during the Battle of San Pasqual. Leandro is said to have caused the first casualty in the fight by shooting Capt. Johnson, commander of the first charge against the mounted lancers of the Californios. On the same day he helped save the life of General Andres Pico, who led the fight against General Kearny of the American forces. The Osuna's were on the losing side, for reinforcements were sent to aid Kearny's forces and the Californios fled.

Supposedly, Pico's forces emerged from the battle with no loss of lives. Santiago and Ramon Osuna fought well and survived. However, in the following week, on December 12, 1846, a brother was killed during an uprising by the San Luis Rey Indians, referred to as the Pauma Massacre, that resulted in the death of eleven men, including Santiago Osuna. Bodies of the victims

...except those of Santiago Osuna, youngest son of Juan Maria Osuna, and Alvarado, were secretly buried. The persistence of legend is that the bodies of Osuna and Alvarado were turned over to an old Indian woman, who had been a servant for their families, and she buried them separately, and then walked to San Diego with the sad news.

Santiago had been at a nearby rancho along with others, caring for livestock that had been moved from the path of advancing American forces. Whether or not there was some relationship between the Battle of San Pasqual and the Pauma Massacre has not been fully explored, but it appears possible.

The Osuna family suffered additional setbacks in the years following Don Juan Maria's death on March 5, 1851. On March 3, two days before Juan Osuna died, Congress passed an act which required recipients of Spanish and Mexican land grants to provide proof of title. The burden of this task was left to Juliana Osuna.

To add to her burden was the suicide of her son Leandro in April of 1859. Numerous accounts provide a reason for his action but they lack substantiation. Another son,

OSUNA ADOBE

towards despotism, will be the cause of imposing the heavy yoke of tyranny on the unhappy people.

On August 2, 1834, Governor Figueroa issued an order from Monterey stating: "There shall be a constitutional *Ayuntamiento* in the environs of San Diego, composed of one *Alcalde*, two *Regidores* and one *Sindico Procurador*."

The *alcalde* was instructed by the governor that his political power was not to extend beyond the Presidio settlement, as each mission, when the time came for its secularization, or confiscation was to have its own *Ayuntamiento*, though his administration of justice was to embrace Mission San Luis Rey.

On December 21 of the same year, San Diego held its first election to determine members of the *Ayuntamiento*. Juan Maria Osuna was elected to serve as the first *alcalde* of the newly formed pueblo over his opponent Pio Pico, who from 1845 to 1846 became the last Mexican governor of California. The position of *alcalde* was an important one, as along with the *regidores*, or councilmen, Juan Maria held control of the political and economic affairs in San Diego. Under a law enacted by the Mexican congress of 1837, dealing with land colonization, the "ayuntamientos...will have charge of the police, health, comfort, ornament, order and security of their respective jurisdictions.

In 1837, the population of San Diego declined below that required for continuance of a town council, and the town was placed under the control of a *juez de paz*, or Justice of the Peace. Juan Maria served in that capacity in 1839 and 1840, and 1846.

Juan Maria Osuna also served as an administrator, or *majordomo*, of the San Diego Mission following secularization of the missions in 1833. He was chosen to replace the earlier administrator, Jose Joaquin Ortega, following an inspection of the mission operations. Engelhardt states that

The mission itself had become so poor after six years of administrator rule that, as Fr. Oliva, on May 7, 1841, wrote to the secretary of the governor, there was not enough produce on hand to pay the annual salary of \$140 to majordom Juan Osuna.

Records from this period are few compared to the years when the missions were managed by the Franciscan padres. Actual secularization of the San Diego Mission did not occur until 1835, and by the time Juan Osuna became the civilian administrator, in 1840, the mission barely functioned and many of the buildings were falling into ruins. Osuna served as majordomo through 1843, when it was reported that "...all that was left of the live stock were four cows, five calves, and one bull. In the year 1834, only nine years previously, the mission possessed 3,000 head of cattle, and 10,000 sheep."

Activities involved in the cultivation of fields and raising livestock were taken over by the increasing number of civilians who obtained land grants. Although small grants of land were

OSUNA ADOBE

C. Historical Context

This section is excerpted from "*Survivor from the Past: A History of the First Osuna Adobe on Rancho San Dieguito*" by Roxana L. Phillips, Phillips Research Services. July 1985

Background

Juan Maria Osuna is the principal figure in the history of the family and of Rancho San Dieguito. Born in 1785, he was son of Juan Ismerio Osuna and Maria Ygnacia Alvarado. It is reported that his father first came to San Diego from the Presidio of Loreto, as a member of the 1769 Expedition sent from Mexico to establish the first Spanish outposts in Alta California. This venture by Spain resulted in the establishment of the first presidios and missions in California; the Royal Presidio de San Diego, and Mission San Diego de Alcalá. Dedication of the presidio site was performed by Father Junipero Serra with celebration of a High Mass on July 16, 1769. The presidio served as the primary location for military and religious activities, and provided the only dwellings in the first permanent settlement in California.

Juan Ismerio Osuna remained in San Diego for only a short time where he served as a Soldado de Cuera, or leather-jacket soldier. He returned to Loreto where most of his children were born, including Juan Maria Osuna. At what point the family ventured back to Alta California is unknown, however, a child was born to Juan Ismerio and his wife in May of 1788, and was baptized the day after birth at Mission San Gabriel.

It is known that Juan Maria Osuna followed in his father's footsteps by coming to San Diego and serving at the presidio as a Soldado de Cuero under the Spanish regime, and later under Mexican rule.

At the age of 21, on February 15, 1806, Juan Maria married fifteen year old Maria Juliana Josefa Lopez at the "San Diego Mission Church." It is possible that during this time Juan Maria resided in San Gabriel, because records indicate that in 1807 he was a corporal of the *Escolta* (Guard) at the San Gabriel Mission. Additionally, the couple's first child, Julio, is reported to have been born at that Mission, in September of 1807. Their second child, however, was born in San Diego in May 1809, and was baptized at the San Diego Mission. It appears that Juan Maria and Juliana Osuna became residents of San Diego during this time and that they lived at the presidio, where most of their children were born.

In addition to carrying out duties as a soldier, Juan Maria was allowed time to support an expanding family. This was accomplished by cultivating land, in the area that is now known as Rose Canyon, and raising grain to augment his meager salary. In the mid-1820s, he retired from military service and settled in Old Town, at the foot of the Presidio. Juan Maria continued to farm after retirement. Around 1927, he acquired property in Old Town and built an adobe house, that members of the Osuna family lived in for many years thereafter.

Toward the end of the 1820s, Juan Osuna became actively involved in the affairs of the little settlement that had gradually absorbed residents from the presidio. Needs and desires of the population changed as families began to outgrow the accommodations of the military

OSUNA ADOBE

B. Construction Chronology

- 1769 The first Spanish settlement is established in Alta California.
- 1785 Juan Maria Osuna is born in Loreto, Baja California, Mexico.
- 1806 Juan Maria Osuna and Juliana Josefa Lopez are married at the San Diego Mission.
- 1822 California becomes the property of Mexico.
- 1831 Librado Silva receives a provisional land grant in the San Dieguito Valley.
- c. 1831 The first adobe structure (the Osuna Adobe) is built on Rancho San Dieguito.
- 1835 Juan Maria Osuna becomes the first Acalde (Major) of the Pueblo of San Diego.
- 1836 Juan Maria Osuna receives a provisional land grant of 8,842 acres known as Rancho San Dieguito.
- 1836-1845 Juan Maria Osuna serves as a Justice of the Peace and is administrator of the San Diego Mission.
- 1848 California is annexed by the United States.
- 1850 California becomes the 31st State.
- 1851 Juan Maria Osuna dies. Juliana Osuna and her children claim Rancho San Dieguito in a petition to the Land Commission.
- 1853-65 The Osuna Adobe is mentioned in three different land transfer agreements as a house containing 2 rooms.
- 1871 Rancho San Dieguito is granted to the Osuna family.
- 1906 Several hundred acres of land, all of the rancho property that remains in the possession of the Osuna family, is sold to the Santa Fe Railroad.
- 1922 Plans for the development of Rancho Santa Fe are initiated.
- 1924-1925 The Osuna Adobe is rehabilitated by architect Lilian Rice.
- 1930s The existing porch in the Osuna Adobe is expanded and enclosed and a kitchen is added.
- 2006 The Osuna Adobe and 27 acres of surrounding property are purchased by the Rancho Santa Fe Association.