

# When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known Author and Journalist.

NO. 52 MARCELLO. THE BUILDER

Marcello, the Indian builder of the Santa Clara Mission, probably lived more of the history of San Jose than did any other person. Marcello was the chief of Ustack Indians. When he died in 1875 he claimed to be 125 years old.

The Cantuas of South San Jose say that their grandfather, one of the earliest California settlers, was a very small child when Marcello and his band marched up from Mexico. The Indians camped near the Volca, the Cantua ranch near Hollister. Marcello was very fond of children, and on his journey into California, then a young man about 25, he played with the Cantua child. Marcello outlived this child, though the child himself died at the age of 75. This would indicate that Marcello did not exaggerate his age. He probably came to Santa Clara very soon after the establishment of the Mission. He was the only one who lived to see its beginning, its glory and its decay.

Mr. Joseph Fenton, manager of the Douair brick yard, as a boy knew Marcello. Often the old Indian frightened him by his wild yell on the Fenton ranch near Alviso where Marcello died. Mr. Fenton says that Marcello was one of a guard of Mexican Indians brought by the early fathers to protect the Mission from the hostile California tribes. He believes that Marcello was a pure Aztec. He says that Marcello was more than six feet tall and a man of great strength and power. When a hundred years of age he performed great feats in lifting.

Marcello's photograph in the Carnegie library in San Jose shows him to have been of a high physical type. He had a handsome, well-shaped head, fine features and eyes shadowed by the melancholy of doom to be seen in the eyes of all Indians. Mrs. Espinosa, daughter of second Secundino Robles, who knew Marcello at the Mission Santa Clara, says that he was fairer than most Indians. He looked as if he had Spanish blood.

Marcello's face and head might have belonged to a great painter. Indeed, he had many of the qualities of an artist.

More than any other person except Father Vlader was he responsible for the Santa Clara Mission. Father Vlader was the architect.

Marcello knew how to use the flame. Father Vlader was he responsible for colored pigment from the New Almaden Clara Mission ceiling. Besides, he learned quickly how to make adobe brick according to the fathers' idea. He was very strong, and like most Indians, he could run with less fatigue than Americans can walk.

After the Mission was destroyed by the earthquake in the early

part of the nineteenth century, Marcello, with a priest and several Indians, went into the Santa Cruz mountains, 15 miles distant, for the redwood, or "everlasting wood." Marcello knew precisely at what season should be cured. Some of the logs cut by the Indians were a hundred feet long. After a log was cut and mounted on the Indians' shoulders the priest blessed it. The Indians were so impressed by the ceremony that they did not rest the log on the ground till they arrived at the Mission. One of these logs still serves as the railing for the sanctuary at the Santa Clara Mission.

Marcello never forgot his skill as a mason, and when repairs were needed at the Santa Clara Mission Ignacio Bernal, who was at the college in the early fifties, told his family that the fathers sent for Marcello to do the work.

In Marcello's youth it is known that he grew restless and resisted with violence the fathers' authority. He and two other Indians attacked Father Vlader. The priest was a strong, virile man. With his own hands he had helped build the Mission. In combat he worsted the Indians by knocking their heads together. After the father quelled Marcello's insurrection the Indian became extremely devout. Time intensified Marcello's love for the Mission. The men who were at Santa Clara College thirty-five years ago recall how often Marcello prayed hours in the Mission.

Mrs. Espinosa, Secundino Robles' daughter, tells me that when her father was mayor domo of the Mission in the forties, Marcello had charge of the Indian girls, while Inygo was superintendent of the men in the field. At that time Marcello was losing his sight. Father Raggio says that Marcello in his last days became nearly blind and deaf. He went his lame way about the Mission, his cane tapping the walk. He spoke in grunts.

After the Mission was secularized Governor Pico in 1846 gave Marcello a league and a half of land near Alviso. It was called the Ustack grant.

The Indians suggested the lowlands. They liked fish. At that time the sturgeon were so plentiful in the bay that one could almost walk on them. Besides the Indians liked to swim and bathe. They were usually called dirty. Their detractors say that they liked the feel of water. Whatever was their reason for bathing, at every opportunity the Indians used to leap into the water.

Marcello as a land owner met the fate of all the land owners in California after the Gringo came. He always claimed that while drunk in San

Jose he was cheated of his land by a man named Hoppe, who in the early fifties was killed when the steamer Jennie Lind exploded while on its way from Alviso to San Francisco. Marcello was bitter over the loss of his property. Later the ranch passed in succession to A. C. Erkson, Messrs. Metcalf and Brokaw and Mr. Fenton. These men felt that Marcello had been unjustly treated, and so, they not only allowed him to live in his rancharia, but they supplied him with food.

Forty or fifty years ago every one in San Jose and Santa Clara knew Marcello. He had the communistic spirit of his race; whenever he found food he took it, but he never begged. He ate well and heartily as his right. The Spaniards did not object. Perhaps they recalled that the Indians were the dispossessed. Or perhaps the Spaniards were haunted by the dread of their own approaching dispossession by a race fitter to survive in a commercial age.

Marcello never mistook his friends. When he needed food he found plenty at certain stores. Mr. Fatjo, the banker at Santa Clara, recalls that when he was a lad many years ago Marcello used to come to the Fatjo store, where he got supplies. In payment for food the Indian gave the merchant's son bows and arrows. The little boy often wondered what there was in his father's store so precious as bows and arrows.

When a very old man Marcello died at his old rancharia. At the time the ranch was owned by Mr. Fenton. Mrs. Fenton wished to pay the funeral expenses, but the fathers at Santa Clara claimed that pleasure. They insisted also that Marcello should rest in the cemetery near the Mission where he had served.

The Fenton ranch is now called the Indian Mound Farm. It is owned by the Mauvais family of San Jose.