

Alviso Family History in Pleasanton

Wander a Timeline from 2008 A.D. Back to 3240 B.C.

By Patrick M. Lofft

Pleasanton's recently opened Alviso Adobe Community Park contains three buildings, the adobe (one of the oldest structures in the city), the "milking barn," and the "bunkhouse." The interpretive park sits on seven acres of land surrounded by centuries-old oak trees, along Foothill Road, overlooking the city. The adobe house was constructed in 1854 by Francisco Alviso for his wife, Isabelle, and 10 children as listed on the 1860 census (indexed as Francis Alvess). It is a rare surviving example of an early American adobe that was continuously in use until 1969. Census records indicate that the Alviso family continued to live there until the 1880s.

Visitors enter the park from a 30-space parking lot at 3461 Old Foothill Road, 1.1 mile south from Foothill High School and 0.4 mile north from Bernal Avenue. The Alviso Adobe is listed on the California State Register of Historic Places (Site 510) as a unique location that demonstrates an exceptional intersection of culture and history.

The tour starts at a Spanish-style arch entryway, stepping over pavement marked "2008 Alviso Adobe Community Park Opens." Near the entrance is a small amphitheater with a fire pit bordered by

boulders from Montana as seats. Like a portal to a different time, the path continues through other points of historical significance—such as the closing of the Meadowlark Dairy in 1969—and it leads through a grove of original and new trees and onto a footbridge over the seasonal creek, ending atop the hill marked "3240 B.C. Native American Occupation." The footbridge was made with wood from Brazil, which is said to be denser than oak and won't need maintenance over its long lifespan. On the north side of the property is a small orchard of plum trees, the hard-to-find type that was originally grown there.

The Alviso Adobe Community Park interprets three distinct periods of history by revealing or recreating artifacts and architecture from the site.

1. Native American bedrock mortar, as well as other Native American artifacts, is made accessible and interpreted by signage and museum-style display boards. Within the park sit boulders with distinctive markings made by Ohlone Indians. The boulders were used to grind acorns into flour and may have had other ceremonial uses, according to an archaeological firm hired by the city.

2. In addition, the Californians period is presented in the form of the fully and accurately restored Alviso Adobe, complete with period furnishing. In the early 1900s the adobe still had a dirt floor and burlap ceiling. Surrounding it were fields of sugar beets and grain, farmed by Chinese workers.

3. Recreating the historic milking barn and bunkhouse highlights the adobe's dairy period. It appears that by 1860 the Alvisos were running a dairy on the property, perhaps one of the first in the area. Dairying became big business in the Amador Valley by the mid-1900s. There were six dairies totaling 1,250 head of



The Francisco Alviso adobe, built in 1854, now surrounded by a beautiful new park in Pleasanton. The park contains many authentic interpretive exhibits to delight local-history buffs.

milk cows in 1949 according to historical records.

The historical occupation of the adobe spans three eras from 1854 to 1969:

1. Spanish occupation and development during the early American period;
2. tenant farming associated with and during an intense period of water rights and acquisition and development during the late 1800s and early 1900s;
3. and a period of major development and increasing regulation in the dairy industry.

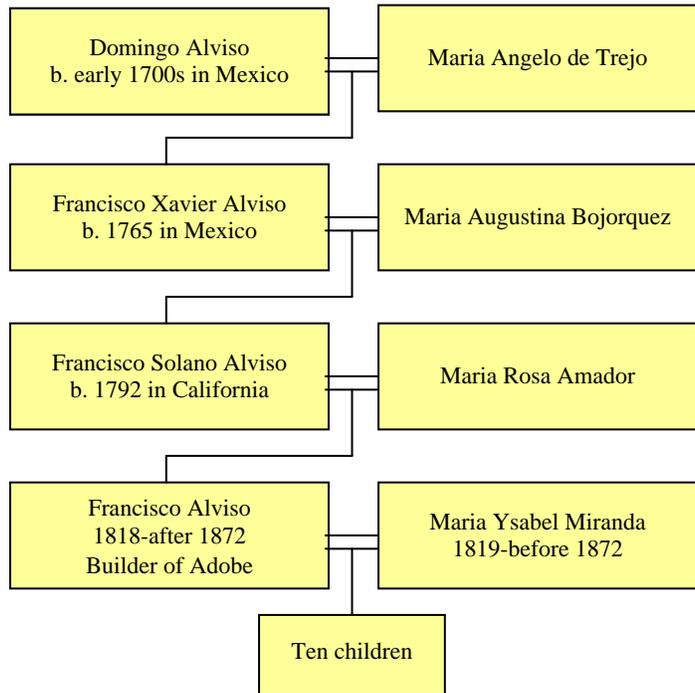
TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

- 3240 B.C - Native American Occupation
- 1797 - Mission San Jose Established
- 1839 - Santa Rita Rancho Land Grant
- 1854 - Alviso Adobe Built
- 1881 - Water Company Ownership, Tenant Farmers
- 1906 - San Francisco earthquake
- 1919 - Meadowlark Dairy Opens
- 1969 - Meadowlark Dairy Closes
- 1993 - City of Pleasanton Acquires Land
- 2008 - Alviso Adobe Community Park Opens

The adobe tells the story of the immense ranches established during the Spanish colonial and Mexican land-grant periods. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake damaged the building, leaving large cracks in the walls and chimney; the cracks have been mended. Walkways around the boulders used to grind acorns into flour allow public access to them while protecting them from harm.

The Francisco Alviso adobe is located on lands that were once a portion of the two-league Rancho Santa Rita, first petitioned for by Jose Dolores Pacheco in June 1834. On April 10, 1839, Governor Juan B. Alvarado officially granted Rancho Santa Rita, originally part of and known as Rancho Valle de San Jose, to Dolores Pacheco. Pacheco claimed to

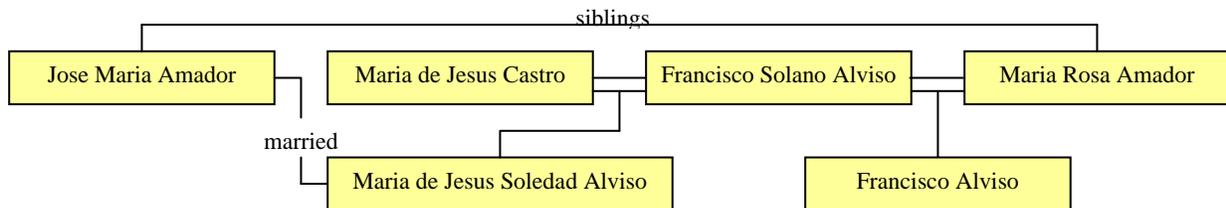
Pedigree of Francisco Alviso



have actually acquired the rancho in 1830. The rancho was bounded on the north by Rancho San Ramon, owned by Jose Maria Amador, Francisco’s uncle, and on the east and south by Rancho Valle de San Jose, owned by Juan and Augustin Bernal and their brother-in-law Antonio Sunol.

Family

The Amador and Alviso families were closely intermarried. Francisco Alviso, born in 1818, was the son of Francisco Solano Alviso (1792-) and Rosa Amador (1797-1825). Rosa was the sister of Jose Maria Amador. Francisco Solano has been identified incorrectly as the owner/builder of the extant Alviso adobe. Amador’s third wife, Maria de Jesus Soledad Alviso, was the daughter of Francisco Solano Alviso and his second wife, Maria de Jesus Castro, making her the half sister of Francisco Alviso. Although Francisco Solano Alviso spent



The tangled kinship ties of Francisco Alviso, typical among the Californios. Francisco’s half-sister was married to his uncle. Note how many person names have been perpetuated in California place names.

some time on Amador's ranch in the early 1840s, he also lived in Branciforte (East Santa Cruz) where he was the alcalde in 1844. He later moved to "the Pinole" on the ranch of Briones or Martinez.

In 1860, an Indian family of four was living in an adjacent house on either Alviso or Bernal lands. Hele, the head of the Indian household, was a blacksmith. The 1860 Agricultural census for Francisco Alviso states that he owned 200 acres that were unimproved, valued at \$1,000. He had seven horses, 30 milch cows, and 100 other cattle, all valued at \$2,000. It appears that the Alvisos were running a dairy on the property, perhaps one of the first in the area.

James and Christian (née Davie) Kirkwood

Family Lore vs. the Documentary Facts: Nothing Was Right

By Mildred Kirkwood

I have searched for years to find the immigration record of James Kirkwood and his wife, Christian Kirkwood, born Davie. (Christian was a common name for women in Scotland at that time.) The family story was that they arrived in Boston in 1820 and that they had to be smuggled aboard ship in England because he was a craftsman—a glassblower. Their son, Joseph (my great-grandfather) was supposedly born during the voyage.

Since Ancestry now has immigration records, I tried to find them on that site, at first without success. Eventually, as new records were added, I did find them on Ancestry.

The actual ship's list shows James Kirkwood, male, age 23, Mechanic; Christie, female, age 20 and Joseph, male, age 1. I think "Christian" must have been pronounced "Christie Ann" and somehow only the first part got on the list. Obviously, Joseph was born some time before they sailed from Liverpool. When I located the typed list, it had the same information except that Christie had become Chester!

The list was signed by Captain P. Morris and says that they arrived in New York harbor (Not Boston) on November 30, 1822 (not 1820) from Liverpool. The ship was listed as the "ship Manchester Packet." (1)

I researched Manchester Packet and found that it was a company with many ships, none of which was named the Manchester, and the company had not been founded until 1823 - a year after James and Christian landed in New York.

Volunteer positions of many kinds are open at the Alviso Adobe Community Park. Docents meeting with the public are invited to wear period costumes. For information, contact Heather Rizzoli at the Museum on Main in Pleasanton, (925) 462-2766 or:

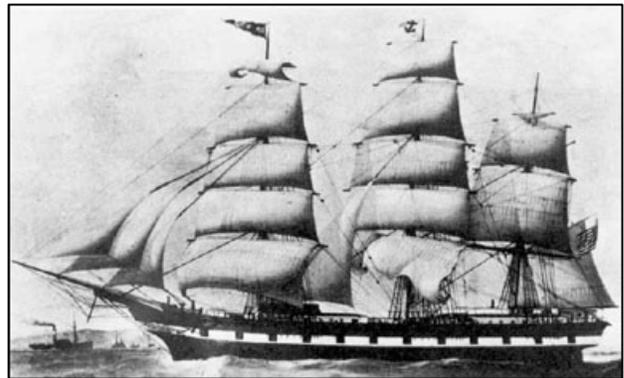
<mailto:volunteers@museumonmain.org>

Sources:

"Cultural Resource Investigations at Alviso Adobe Community Park," available for reading at the Museum on Main, Pleasanton.

U.S. Censuses, various years.

"Some Alta California Pioneers, Volume I," by Dorothy Mutnick, in the Pleasanton Library.



A Packet ship, whose primary mission was carrying mail, but which also carried cargo and passengers.

Further research revealed that the Packet ships were so named because they carried the mail, as well as cargo and passengers. They were two- or three-masted 10 gun brigs.(2) They essentially began in 1691 and continued until 1823, when the British Navy took over the Packet business, replacing the older ships with excess Navy ships. A company was then formed called the Manchester Packet, which had several Packet ships. In 1830, these ships began to be replaced by steamships. The last Packet ship arrived in Falmouth, Cornwall, on April 30, 1851.(3)

1. National Archives Series No. M237, Microfilm Roll M237_3, List Number 590

2. http://www.falmouth.tv/packet_ships.php

3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Packet_ship