

Open for Viewing . . .

Casa Soberanes

“The House of the Blue Gate”

KATHERINE GREENBERG

“Monterey, as far as my observation goes, is decidedly the pleasantest and most civilized-looking place in California. . . . The soil is as rich as man could wish, climate as good as any in the world, water abundant, and situation extremely beautiful.”

Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*

As a child, I was enchanted with Auntie Mayo’s old adobe house in Monterey and its delightful garden. The luster of shell and the sheen of bottle glass caught my eye when I played in the garden. On closer examination, I discovered rows of abalone shells, old wine bottles, and whale bones—remnants of Monterey’s past—that were used to border paths. This was a wondrous place, enclosed by a tall cypress hedge with a blue gate, where time seemed to have stopped in an earlier age.

My great-aunt, Mayo Hayes O’Donnell, was the last owner of Casa Soberanes, also known as “The House of the Blue Gate,” before it became a state historical monument. Her legacy was to preserve the historic house and garden for future Californians. The property has a long and fascinating history going back to the days when the Spanish flag flew over the presidio of Monterey.

On a visit to Monterey in 1835, Richard Henry Dana wrote, “The town lay directly before us, making a very pretty appearance; its houses being of whitewashed adobe. The houses—about a hundred in number—were



Casa Soberanes—“House of the Blue Gate.”
Author’s photograph

