

# ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

ON THE

## PERALTA FAMILY TREE

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An invitation

Please add your stories—and questions—to this history.

with thanks to Alex Saragoza and Mary Jo Wainwright for  
"complicating the picture."

Holly Alonso

*Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, 2009*

*". . . that is the way with stories; we make them what we will. It's a way of explaining the universe while leaving the universe unexplained, it's a way of keeping it all alive, not boxing it into time. Everyone who tells a story tells it differently, just to remind us that everybody sees it differently.*

*People like to separate storytelling which is not fact from history which is fact. They do this so that they know what to believe and what not to believe...Knowing what to believe had its advantages. It built an empire and kept people where they belonged, in the bright realm of the wallet . . .*

*And when I look at a history book and think of the imaginative effort it has taken to squeeze this oozing world between two boards and typeset, I am astonished.... And so when someone tells me what they heard or saw, I believe them, and I believe their friend who also saw, but not in the same way, and I can put these accounts together and I will not have a seamless wonder but a sandwich laced with mustard of my own.*

*Here is some advice. If you want to keep your own teeth, make your own sandwiches.*

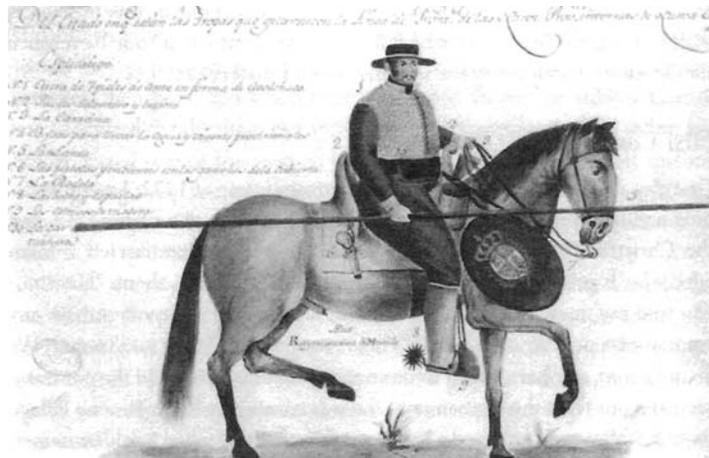
Jeannette Winterson, 2003

## What did Luís Peralta look like?

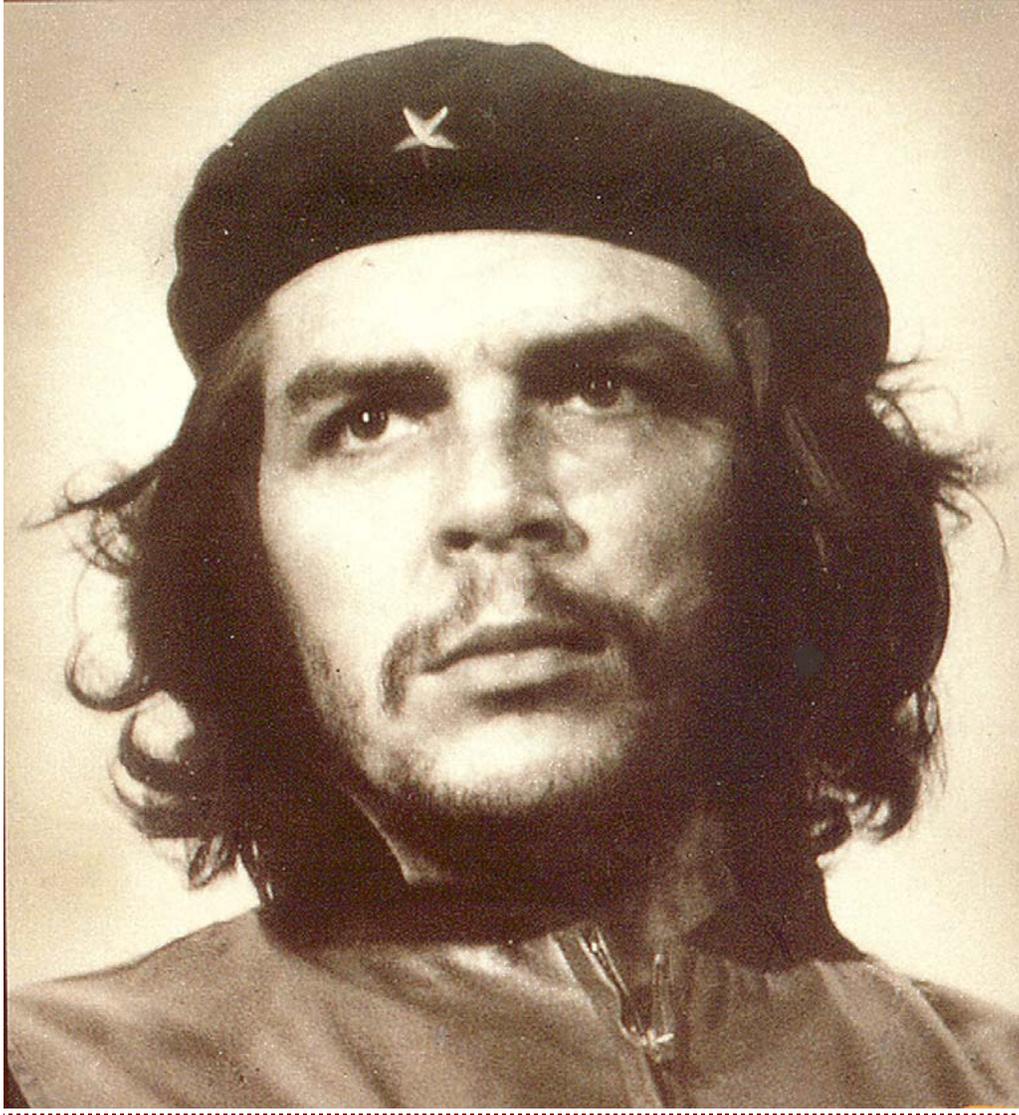


“The way a California soldier and his daughter are dressed” (Ignacio Tirsch, National Library, Czech Republic.)

No known image exists of Luís Peralta or his wife María Loreto Alviso. These images of Spanish soldiers do tell us about the clothes he wore.



## What am I doing on the Peralta family tree?



Che Guevara, revolutionary leader, is Luís Peralta's great-great-great-grandson. The line from Luís to Che started when one of Luís Peralta's daughters, María Luisa Fermina Peralta, married Don Guillermo Castro, which you can see on the main family tree. See the connection from Luís to Che on the following page.

## *Luís to Che*

### **Luís María Peralta**

birth: Tubac Garrison, New Spain, 1759

marriage: María Loreto Alviso

death: San Jose, California, United States of America

### ♀ **María Fermina Luisa (their daughter)**

birth: b. 1804, Mission Dolores, San Francisco, Alta California, New Spain

marriage: Don Guillermo Castro

death: 1873, Santa Clara, California, United States of America

### ♀ **Encarnación Castro Peralta (their daughter)**

birth: 1828, Santa Barbara, Alta California, México

marriage: ♂ Juan Antonio Guevara , California, U.S.A.

### ♂ **Roberto Guevara Castro (their son)**

birth: 1860, Hayward, California, USA

marriage: ♀ # Ana Isabel Lynch y Ortiz , Buenos Aires, Argentina

death: July 1919, Buenos Aires, Argentina

### ♂ **Ernesto Rafael Guevara Lynch (their son)**

birth: 1900, Argentina

marriage: ♀ Celia de la Serna y Llosa , Buenos Aires, Argentina

### ♂ **Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna (their son)**

birth: 14 June 1928, Rosario, Argentina

marriage: ♀ Hilda Gadea Acosta , Мексика

divorce: ♀ Hilda Gadea Acosta, Гавана, Куба

marriage: ♀ Aleida March Torres, La Habana, Cuba

death: 9 October 1967, La Higuera, Bolivia

burial: 17 October 1997, Che Guevara Mausoleum, Santa Clara, Cuba

## Where are our stories?



Californio Women: a Lost History



Young women of the Peralta family, ca 1855. Courtesy of the Peter Palmquist collection, Yale University

No pictures of Luís Peralta's wife, *María Loreto Alviso*, or Antonio Peralta's first wife, *María Antonia Galindo*, survive, nor do writings by or about them exist. But this photo shows us some of the daughters. Mary Jo Wainwright, project historian, has pieced together their likely identities, left to right: Inez, Rosa, *María Dolores Archuleta*, Rosa Valencia (wife of Lorenzo Fernando Antonio) and Paula.

**MARIA ROSA ANTONIA, (1836-1911)**

María Rosa Antonia, born May 16, 1836, at Santa Clara, married José R. Mendizabal December 14, 1855, at Mission San José. Second husband was Leonard Bontan. She died July 18, 1911.

**MARIA ANTONIA INEZ PERALTA (1840-1913)**

María Antonia Inez, baptized March 30, 1840, Mission Santa Clara, married Francisco Galindo on August 31, 1869, at Old St. Mary's, Oakland. She died January 13, 1913.

**PAULA ANTONIA PERALTA (1842-1912)**

Paula Antonia, born circa 1842, married Frank L. Galindo on February 23, 1881, Oakland. She died March 6, 1912.

Rosa and Paula lived with their father in this house until he died in 1879. Inez Peralta never lived in the Peralta House; she married before it was built and moved to North Oakland where her husband, Francisco Galindo built a beautiful Victorian house on Telegraph Avenue.

**MARIA ANTONIO GALINDO (b. ca. 1809, Mission Santa Clara, d. 1850, Fruitvale)**

Galindo Street, just one block from the park, is named after Antonio's first wife's family, the Galindos, who also came to Alta California on the Anza expedition. Many Peraltas and Galindos got married through the generations, as you can see on the family tree.

Just the bare facts are known of María Antonia Galindo's life: In 1828, she was living at Mission Santa Clara with her family. She married Antonio María Peralta that year, and they both came to live in the small first adobe house that once stood at today's park site. Nine of the 11 children she bore over the next fifteen years survived infancy. She died in 1850 and is buried at Mission San José in Fremont.

I was frustrated with the lack of information about the Peralta women, especially María Antonio Galindo, when I wrote the following, imagining her ghost thinking about Peralta Hacienda Historical Park.....

***María Antonia Galindo***

Your research shows little trace of me,  
my life pressed faintly on this map of time.  
Padre and commander – Font and Anza –  
wrote my in-laws' names  
on the list of settlers for the edge of empire, Alta California:

María Loreto Alviso and Luís María Peralta,  
she, five years old, he, seventeen.

Imagine how they walked six months  
1,000 miles with 1,000 animals to start our herds,  
and 100 other children from Mexico-Sonora-Tubac,  
measuring beaches, hills, meadows and deserts: Indian land.  
They did not know that they would marry later  
and their son would marry me.

When was I born, and where?  
My childhood passed as missions and pueblos were laid down,  
without leaving a whisper in the registers,  
the pronunciamientos, the decrees,  
my games and chores, gone from the record.  
No one remembered what they were,  
in all the testimonios of our time  
sleeping in your libraries,  
nor how my mother-in-law suffered  
the death of eight children, the birth of seventeen.

How old was I when Antonio María Peralta married me?

All that's left of me are questions.  
Antonio's second wife will raise my children when I die, you've said.

María Antonia and Antonio María.  
Can you know more than our mirror names?

When you found my grave in 1984,  
at Mission San José, 20 minutes down the freeway,  
I stretched out my hand to the present,  
became more real.  
But still, you don't know what caused my death.

Died, 1850.

That fact is all there is of me.

Except another list--of 11 children, born in 15 years.  
And 7 lived.

(My great great grandchildren, now in Walnut Creek,  
my shadow in time.)

Our two houses made of clay – now outlined in your park—have disappeared.  
 You know the dates we made the bricks and stacked them up.

Our first six living children were born  
 in the small house there:  
 When the oldest was eleven and the youngest, one,  
 we moved to the bigger house right here.  
 Then one more lived, and one more died:  
 My last did not survive.

A merchant bought our cowskins and bags of fat,  
 (hides and tallow, in your words)  
 danced here seven days and wrote about us in a book.  
 We built ramadas for shade  
 and there we spun and kicked and stamped our feet.  
 How beautiful were the dances, how long we danced, how generous we were!

No book tells you, Do I love to dance?  
 All of us sang and played--was it guitar and violin?  
 And perhaps a piano that came around the Horn?

The Indians, were we close to them,  
 or did we keep our distance, scold and flog?  
 Your research doesn't tell how I treated them,  
 or how our children might have played.  
 We knew them as we knew ourselves, each had his place  
 each woman had her place  
 each child his place, her place.

The travelers tell how handsome Antonio is, tall and fair,  
 and Domingo short and stocky,  
 like his son Ramón (they wrote)  
 and my father in law Luís, ramrod straight.  
 Was I tall, stocky, ramrod straight? Not a word.  
 Did I really live?  
 Look for old letters telling how I looked!  
 Find a picture in a family trunk!

Sound of bull and bear fights, the growling, cheering,  
 in the ring across the creek.  
 Smell of tallow, carcasses rotting,  
 always in my ears and nose and eyes,  
 unless I walked into the hills.  
 Chocolate, beef on the fire, herbs we used for every illness.  
 Seasoning from our garden near the house.  
 See the hills, the land still there beneath your cities?  
 This land we share, you and I, now and then.  
 Poppies, alders, redwoods:  
 you find them in the hills, exactly as they were,  
 but fewer now.

And earth and water, which gave us cabbages to sell the traders,  
 and pears for ourselves,  
 and flowers, grapes and olives, cactus and beans,

wheat for tortillas every meal.  
You can taste, as the fire burns hot, all our food.

We lived together here for thirty, fifty, sixty years.  
 But what manuscript tells you what I saw, what I thought?  
 And the Indians, what did they see and think,  
 as they came to us after the Missions closed and sold?  
 Christian Indians were vaqueros, rode as well or better  
 – this is known –  
 helped with children, washing, cooking,  
 themselves often sick and dying.

Was this once our workers' land,  
 or did soldiers lead them in from far away?  
 Did they know the spirits of this stream, this hill?  
 (I knew, know, all the answers.  
 They are buried with me under mission stones.)

Many went back to the hills, raided from the San Joaquin,  
 stole hundreds of our horses, at the height of our prosperity.  
 My father-in-law's reports tell how he chased and questioned  
 the Indians Crico, Ojencio and Constantín. . .  
 So when we built the house, we built the wall  
 nine feet tall, and three feet thick--  
 see, the line of red bricks now?

Twenty rooms leaned up against the wall,  
 workshops for leather, tallow,  
 rooms for guests, servants, friends--  
 Castros, Alvisos, Pachecos, and Galindos. . .  
 Juana Briones, landowner and healer, was our frequent guest  
 half black, half Spanish, like many of us Californios.  
 Did I feel her healing hands, did she birth my children?

I had never thought, not once, that I would be remembered.  
 I can't write – what good would it have done me then?  
 So I leave no trace. Will you still look for me?  
 From where I am, I can't tell you more.

Oh to reach across, to live!  
 If I had known that I might not be forgotten. . .  
 that for you, my life would be a story,  
 a part of history.

If I had known how the fields and trees would disappear,  
 and the Indians,  
 and our families,  
 and all this in its place,  
 I would have tried to tell you more. . .  
 to leave my footprints on this map of time . . .

a story in the voice of María Antonia Galindo, wife of Antonio Peralta, taken from what we know of her life

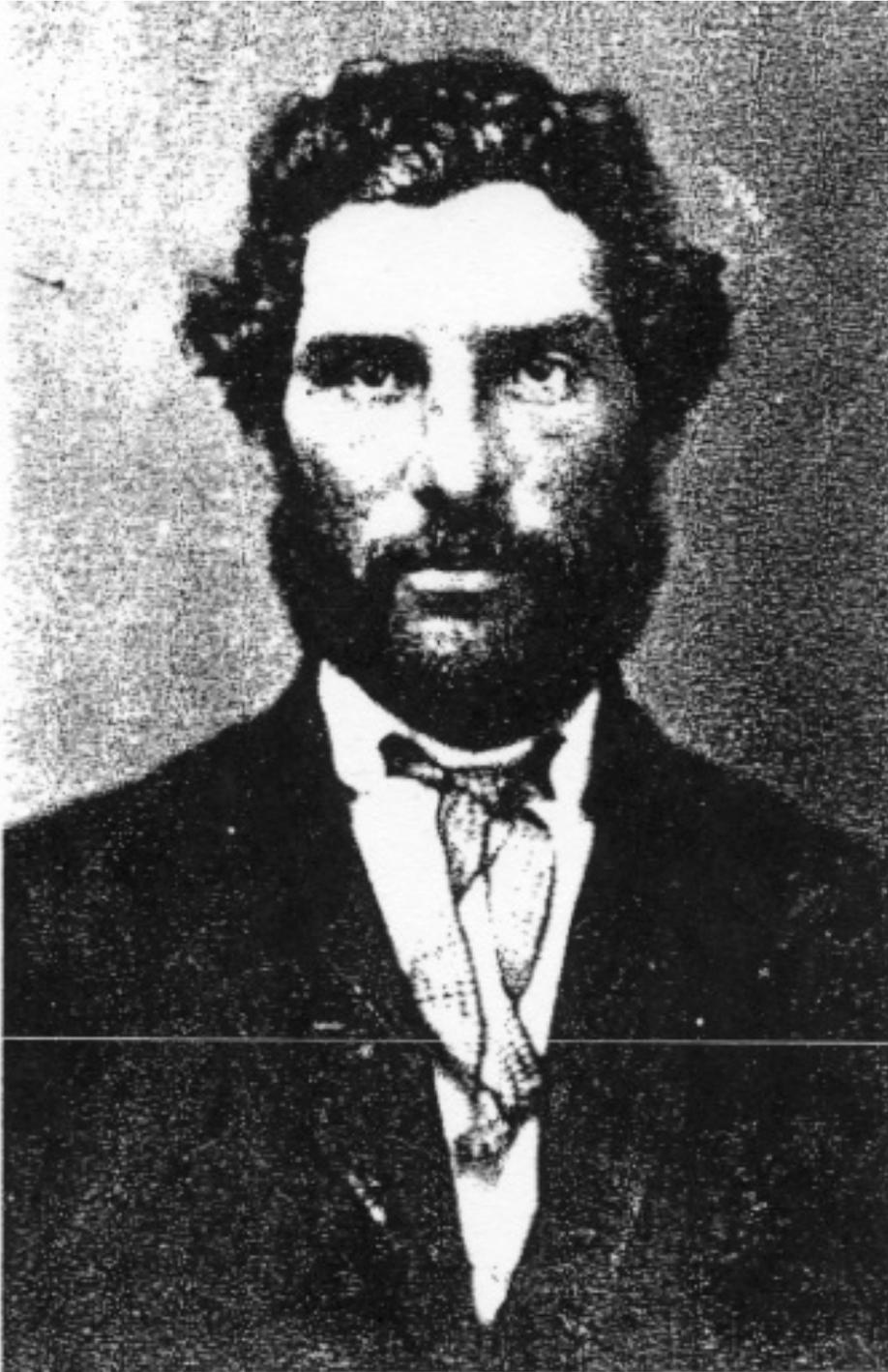
by Holly Alonso

## How many children did we adopt?



Lovers of children, including the six they either legally or informally adopted, Vicente and Encarnación Peralta grieved when their only child by birth, José Loreto Guadalupe (b. 1834) died in infancy.

## Was I a *bandido*?



**Ramón Peralta, Domingo's son, was known in the late 1800s as an outlaw.**

**Even before the American takeover, some landless Mexican Californians and previous Mission Indians survived by preying on vulnerable travelers and raids on ranchos. In the 20 years following the Gold Rush, some Californios, such as those whose families had lost their land, or whose status had lessened within the new dominant American/European population, also turned to a life of crime. Lack of law**

**enforcement in Gold Rush California contributed to an increase in**

roving gangs and rising crime against miners and settlers. The term "*bandido*" came to be associated with these gangs and a stereotype was born, even though many members of these gangs were English-speaking U.S. citizens. As the Californios lost more power, land and status, the myth and legend of the avenging heroes grew in California folklore.

Tiburcio Vasquez, famous *californio* outlaw, was pursued throughout the state before his hanging in San José in 1875. This 1874 quote is ascribed to him:

*My career grew out of the circumstances by which I was surrounded as I grew to manhood. I was in the habit of attending balls and parties given by the native Californians, into which the Americans, then beginning to be more numerous, would force themselves and shove the native-born men aside, monopolizing the dances and the women. This was about 1852.*

*A spirit of hatred and revenge took possession of me. I had numerous fights in defense of what I believed to be my rights and those of my countrymen. The officers were continually in pursuit of me. I believed that we were unjustly and wrongfully deprived of the social rights which belonged to us.*

*I went to my mother and told her I intended to commence a different life. I asked for and obtained her blessing, and at once commenced the career of a robber.*

V. J. M. 71.

Mi querido y estimado hijo por Domingo,  
 Cuando Dios me conceda el bente yo he dime  
 la causa por q. Yadeser tanto sin embargo de  
 q. tu nolo quierar cosa, ya no puedo escribir  
 por eso no soy mas largo, no tengo mas fuerza  
 q. para deserte q. te balle a tus Godamitos q.  
 Dios y tu Padre te concedieron, Ino como ser buen  
 Cristiano y heamorable con los tuos y con todo el  
 mundo q. Dios te a Mudara, ten mucho cuidado  
 de q. Ramon no se quede sin saber leer y escribir  
 memoria a edubise y demas familia y amada  
 a tu Padre q. te estima y bente desea

Sin Peralta

hijo de mi Corason ya no puedo escribir

Luís Peralta, near the end of his life, is anxious about Ramón, his grandson. He writes to his son, Domingo (Ramón's father) about Ramón in this letter.

"...tengo mucho cuidado de que Ramon no se queda sin saber leer y escribir." (I am very concerned that Ramón isn't learning to read and write.)

He ends the letter poignantly: "Son of my heart, I can't write any longer."

~~On the~~ *Escape of Prisoners.*—On the morning of the 5th inst., four of the six prisoners, confined in the jail of this County broke jail and made their escape, and up to the time we go to press no traces of them have been discovered. They got out by sawing off two bars of one of the windows on the north side of the prison. It is supposed they left about one o'clock. The two that remained are Chinamen, these refused positively to go with the others, and one of them tried to raise an alarm, but was beaten into silence. After the four were gone this fellow crept out of the hole they made, went over to the sheriff's house and tried to get him up, but the sheriff supposed him to be some drunken brawler, and paid no attention to him, after vainly trying to arouse others in the town the Chinaman returned to his cell through the hole he came out at.

The names of the four that escaped are: Ramon Peralta, Augustin Abela, Wm. Ward and John Hauler. The sheriff has offered \$200 reward for their capture, or for information that will lead to their capture.

The rascals selected a most favorable opportunity to effect their purpose. During the day all the officials were away celebrating the fourth in different directions. The sheriff went to the city with his company and did not return until about midnight, and then immediately retired without going to the prison. Mr. Boren under sheriff spent the day at San Lorenzo, and went from there with some friends to Centerville, and did not return till next morning. Mr. Josselyn, who usually sleeps in the Court House, remained in the city that night, so that there was no one about the Court House during that day and night to disturb the scoundrels in their operations. On this occasion they were not locked in their cells at night as usual, which enabled them to get together, and prosecute their work unitedly, and make one hole do for the exit of the party.

They left a note to the sheriff stating that they were satisfied with their usage heretofore, but didn't relish their Fourth of July dinner, and so they thought they would leave.

In this 1865 article in the Daily Alta Californian, Ramón Peralta escapes from jail as Lawman Harry Morse\* parties on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.



Lawman Harry Morse,  
Alameda County's first sheriff, 1870.

Text of the article (excerpt) reads:

—> *Escape of Prisoners.*—On the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, four of the six prisoners, confined in the jail of this County, broke jail and made their escape, and up to the time we go to press no traces of them have been discovered. They got out by sawing off two bars of one of the windows on the north side of the prison...The two that remained were Chinamen, they refused positively to go with the others, and one of them tried to raise an alarm, but was beaten into silence. After the four were gone this fellow crept out of the hole they made, went over to the sheriff's house and tried to get him up, but the sheriff supposed him to be some drunken brawler, and paid no attention to him, after vainly trying to arouse [sic] others in the town the Chinaman returned to his cell through the hole he came out at.

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## Peraltas in Hollywood? Movies in Fruitvale?



It is ironic and poetic that Antonio Peralta's great granddaughter, Inez Seabury, played the part of the Native American servant in a Hollywood film, "Girl of the Golden West," in 1938. The movie tells the story of a romance between a Californio played by Nelson Eddie and an American settler played by Jeannette MacDonald. Stills from the movie are on this page, and you can watch it on the TV monitor.

The film, made long after the Californios and Native Americans had lost their land, when

their cultural and political influence was non-existent, presents negative stereotypes of Californios and Native Americans.

It was likely shown at the movie theater at the corner of Foothill and 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue when it came out. Claudia Albano, who grew up in a house that was removed to create the park, remembers the theaters in Fruitvale where her parents probably saw the movie in 1938: "One theater was at 35th and Foothill next to the Midas muffler, across from Our Lady's Home. My parents went to every one. It is now senior housing. Ron Guidi from the Oakland Ballet used to have a community theater there in the early 1960's, too, after it closed as a movie house. The second was on



International at about 37th Avenue. It was called the Fruitvale Theater. It is now a housing complex. We got permission to have it torn down since it had had a bad fire."

## What centuries and places did our lives span?



Antonio María Severo was born in 1829, just one year after his parents moved to the rancho at today's park site. "Antonio Jr." grew up in the 1821 adobe and the 1840 adobes along with his eight brothers and sisters, the family growing as the cattle herds expanded.

Antonio María Severo Peralta married María Higuera in 1863. They left for Baja after the Gold Rush, but Antonio María Severo insisted on returning to Oakland for the birth of each of his children. Family legend has it that the Spanish trunk on display in the front left room, a gift of Alice Scalberg, was used on all the trips back and forth to Baja California for the baptisms.

This photo, taken about 1889 in San Francisco, shows Antonio Peralta's first son, Antonio María Severo Peralta, with his own sons, Nelson and Vincent.

The two children in the photo returned to the U.S. when they grew up, both living into the 1950s, Nelson in Martinez and Vincent in Oakland.

## What were my abilities and my disabilities?



### *Toñita*

María Antonia Peralta, granddaughter of Antonio María Peralta.

b. 1877,  
Baja,  
California.  
d. 1954

Toñita Peralta, even though she was deaf and partially blind, earned her living as a seamstress.

She met her husband Conrad Lehman, also deaf, at the Deaf and Blind School in Berkeley. They married in 1906, in Oakland, and had two children. Their daughter, Emily Lehman, married Henry Talken, whose grandson, Arthur Talken, and great-grandsons, Ken and Glen, live in the East Bay today. *Read Ken's story in this binder.* Toñita was the daughter of Antonio María Severo Peralta (a.k.a. "Antonio Jr.," pictured above with his sons) and María Higuera, the daughter of another *californio* family who had come on the Anza expedition. They had 9 children in 13 years, between 1863 and 1877. Toñita was the last child, born in 1877.



**In these photos Toñita models her clothes, starting from a dress-up kimono when she was a teenager.**



Toñita Peralta, granddaughter of Antonio Peralta, a gifted seamstress and designer, in an amazing dress.

## What was my international career?



### Vincent Peralta

One of the two little boys in the photo with their father became a painter.

He traveled around the United States and Europe painting murals, wagons and signs for the traveling circus and carnivals. He left his first wife, Lillian Cone and their two children, divorcing in 1909, and married

Joseph Vincent with Lillian Cone

two more times. He eventually returned to live in Oakland and died here in 1953. Upon his return to Oakland, he did not contact his own children or the other Peralta relatives. Upon his death, his last wife, Julia Seror, donated seventeen of his paintings to the Oakland Museum which exhibited them at the Peralta Hospital in 1971.

**Find the image on bark in this room of an outdoor spit.  
Vincent painted it!**

## Where are the Peraltas today?

**Many Peraltas still live in the Bay Area.  
If you are one of them, please add your story to this binder!**



Glen, Arthur and Ken Talken

**My name is Ken Talken, and I am an Oakland community member. I work as an administrator for Special Education for the Contra Costa School District.**

**I am the great great-great grandson of the Antonio Peralta who lived in this house. My grandmother was Toñita Peralta, whose productive and happy life is inspiring to people with, and without, disabilities.**

**I struggled with the idea that I am a descendent of people who were instruments of Spanish colonization. While the lifestyle of the Californios is sometimes romanticized, the clash of cultures that this colonization produced brought about results that were not always good and often horrible for the people who lived here before the Spanish arrived.**

**I reflected on this. And what excites me about this place is that it helps us understand that context, the relationships between the people that lived before us and the significance of those relationships for us today. In doing so, the Peralta Hacienda Historical Park project brings hope because it brings with it the intention of offering everyone in our community a place to learn:**

**A place to learn about ourselves,**

**A place to learn about our common history,**

**A place to learn about our community,**

**A place to learn about our environment, and**

**A place to learn about living together amongst diversity.**

## Were the Peraltas Spanish?

**What does it mean**, to say that California was once "Spanish" or "Mexican"?

In 1820, when the land grant was given to the Peraltas, it was still part of the Spanish empire, so they were officially Spanish.

So what did it mean that the Peraltas were "Spanish"? Spain was thousands of miles of away, and it took months to get there from here in "Alta California." Rancho San Antonio was far from the nearest big city, Mexico City, or the center of the Spanish empire, Madrid.

What is comparable in U.S. History?

**The 13 British colonies** on the East Coast became part of the United States of America in 1776. Before the independence of the U.S., the people of the 13 colonies were "British" or "English" subjects. But those same people after 1776 became "Americans."

What changed? What did it mean to be "American" and not "English"? And who was included in the definition of "American" and who was left out?

**Being Spanish** was based on many things: family background, language usage, religion, and how a person dressed.

*Place of Birth:*

One very important part of being considered "Spanish" was family background, if one parent in the family tree was a person born in Spain. By the 1800s, most people in Alta California were *mestizos*, people with both Spanish and Indian ancestors. The encounter between Europeans and indigenous people of the Americas already went back 300 years, so fewer and fewer could find their Spanish ancestors.

*Ancestry:*

To be considered Spanish a person would emphasize Spanish background and not his or her Indian ancestry. So to be Spanish not only meant what you were, but what you were not. Spanish authorities tried to classify people using a person's racial or ethnic background to determine social standing.

People of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry, for example, were named *mestizos*, Spanish for *mixed*. A person could be named a *lobo*, *coyote*, *zambo*, as you see in the *vargueño* (inlaid desk) in this room. This classification system was known as the *casta* system.

Spaniards born in Spain were called *españoles* or *gachupines*, meaning spurs. People born in the Americas, of parents born in Spain were *criollos*; People native to the Americas were Indians, *indios*, and Africans, *negros*, who in most cases had been brought over as slaves.

Over time, the classification system broke down, as all different types of people mixed with one another. Over time, color, the complexion of the person, become an important social marker.

But one's family background was but aspect of being considered Spanish.

*Religion:*

To be considered Spanish also meant being Catholic, observing rituals such as going to church and celebrating the religious holidays.



*Dress:*

To be Spanish meant dressing in European-style attire, especially in public. Men, for example, were expected to wear a hat, a shirt, pants and boots.

The bolero jacket, Saltillo serape and *manga*, shown below, were the elegant coverings of californio men:





Women were expected, especially in public, to wear a long skirt or dress with a modest top or blouse, to cover one's head with a scarf or shawl, and to have shoes.

*Language:*

To be Spanish meant that you spoke Castilian. Spain is composed of different regions with specific dialects or language. The name Peralta was originally a Basque name, and there is a town in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa called Peralta. No Peralta family member has been able to trace the name to specific Spanish ancestors. Those Peralta roots are buried in the mists of time.