

Don Luís Peralta and His Family

Luís Peralta was born in the Pimaria Alta in 1759. The Pimaria Alta was in the northernmost part of the Kingdom of New Spain. Don Luís grew up there with his mother and father Francisca and Gabriel; and his brothers Juan and Pedro; and their baby sister María. Today the Pimaria Alta (upper lands of the Pima people) is called southern Arizona (USA) and northern Sonora (Mexico).

In 1775 the Peraltas joined Juan Anza who was recruiting settlers to come start a new Spanish colony in Alta California. Anza brought around 240 to 300 new settlers to Alta California, the biggest group the King of Spain would ever send here.

Luís and his family helped to build the Presidio de San Francisco. Even though Luís and Pedro were just teenagers and María was only 11, they became founders of Spain's first pueblo, or town, in Alta California – San Jose de Guadalupe. Luís would grow up to be the longest lasting and most respected leader of San Jose, the pueblo at the end of an empire.

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In 1784 Luís Peralta married María Loreto Alviso, who was only 13 years old. Her family also walked across the deserts and over snowcapped mountains with Juan Anza, just like the Peraltas. Luís and María had 17 children. Only nine lived to be grownups. The other eight died, mostly as babies. Life on the Spanish frontier could be very hard.

Luís Peralta came from a family of soldiers and he also became a soldier. He rose to the rank of Sergeant, a very important position. Spanish sergeants could be put in charge of whole towns. Luís was made the comisionado (royal military governor) of San Jose in 1807; that meant he was the boss.

There were many comisionados before Luís Peralta; none of them lasted very long. One comisionado was so unpopular that the people burned his house down. Don Luís lasted for 15 years and he only lost his job because his king lost California.

Don Luís did such a good job of running San Jose that the last Spanish governor, Sola, gave him one of the largest land grants in either Spanish Colonial or Mexican Territorial days. In 1820 Sola gave

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Peralta nearly 45,000 acres. Peralta named it Rancho San Antonio and today we call it “the East Bay”. Our cities of Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Alameda, Piedmont, and part of San Leandro are all on Don Luís’ land.

Luís Peralta had lots of land but he liked living in his little adobe in San Jose. He divided Rancho San Antonio in four parts and gave one to each of his sons, Ignacio, Domingo, Antonio, and Vicente. He told them to work together and use the land to help their family, especially their sisters.

Don Luís died in 1851. He walked here and became a founder of Spanish Alta California. He died a rich man in American California.