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THE MONTALVO HOUSE
BY
Molly J. Schroeder
(Mrs. J.R.)

The Montalvo House is located on Lot #15, Block 27 in the Brackett subdivision of Brackettville, Texas. The Montalvo property included lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 14 and 15, bounded by Ann Street, Rufus Alley, Thomas Street, and El Paso Street. The house stands on Thomas Street

The growth of Brackettville parallels that of Fort Clark. The Fort was established in 1852 for the protection of the early settlers and travellers.

The property was originally issued by a Bounty Warrant, #1602, (payment for military service) by James G. Gillette, Adjutant General, to Francisco Salinas on May 15, 1854.¹ It contained 160² acres and was noted as Survey #285, section 13, on June 13, 1855.

Francisco Salinas transferred this property in its ~~entirety~~ to Sam S. Smith on November 21, 1854, and the State of Texas issued a patent to Mr. Smith, assignee of Francisco Salinas on June 23, 1855.³ Mr. Smith acquired a great deal of land in this manner during the early years of Brackettville.

Survey #285 was platted into blocks in the City of Brackett in 1870⁴, and Block 27 was on the northernmost limits of the city. In 1873 a subdivision of the Survey was recorded showing blocks with numbered lots extending two more blocks to the North.⁵

Sam S. Smith died on June 8, 1881, willing all of his property to his widow, Sarah B. Smith.⁶ While his will is recorded in the Courthouse, no death certificate is of record. *[Death certificates were rarely issued in this era.]* Sarah B. Smith in turn sold Lots 14 and 15, Block 27, as part of 131 lots, to J. W. Jones for a total price of \$312.00 on Dec. 26, 1885.⁷

Mr. Jones transferred the two lots to Fred Bitter for a price of \$25.00 on February 12, 1886.⁸

Fred Bitter sold the property to Ildefonso Bela for \$60.00 on May 10, 1887.⁹

Said Ildefonso Bela was also known as Yldefonso Montalvo, Ydeifonso Woods, Obed Woods, and Obed Montalvo as sworn in an affidavit by his daughter, Guadalupe.¹⁰

Ydelfonso Montalvo died February 17, 1941, leaving his property to his widow and eight surviving children.¹¹ Much litigation ensued, encompassing a period from 1941 until 1953, disputing control and distribution of the estate.

On March 19, 1963 the property was transferred to Lucy Fritter in the sale of nine lots for \$1,900.00 by the Estate of Ydelfonso Montalvo.¹² This property adjoined the Fritter property on Lots 16 and 17.

Lucy Fritter sold Lots 14 and 15, Block 27 to Boultinghouse & Sheedy Dec 2, 1971, for a recorded fee of \$10.00.¹³

Jack Boultinghouse transferred ^{his share of} the property to John Sheedy III in an affidavit on July 6, 1978.¹⁴

The present owners, Jesse R. and Molly J. Schroeder purchased the house and Lots 12, 13, 14, and 15, Block 27, from John Sheedy III on July 10, 1978.¹⁵

THE HOUSE

The house as it stands today was built sometime between June 10, 1867 and 1868, after Yldefonso Bela purchased the land and before the first child was born to him and his wife, Guadalupe.¹ Mr. Bela was most generally known as Obed Woods, but his wife and children used the name Montalvo. I was told that Montalvo is the Spanish for Woods, so perhaps that helps explain it.

Obed Woods built the house himself from materials from his ranch.¹⁷ It was of picket, lathe and caliche plaster construction, the pickets being cedar posts and the rock and caliche from the area. Many of the old houses in Brackettville were built in this manner as this was the most readily available material. The outside was whitewashed and the roof was of handsplit cedar shingles.

Its architecture can best be described as "Early Texas" The house was originally two large rooms with a wide center hallway, a porch in front and a screened-in porch on the back.

The room to the right of the entry has a fireplace built of rock from the ranch. The wide center hallway was used ^{as} a parlor after the arrival of nine children.

Originally all cooking was done in the "cook house", adjacent to the house. There was also an outdoor oven for the bread baked fresh daily, and a stone well which still has water in it. There were two carriage barns and many other outbuildings for chickens, guinea hens, turkeys, horses, pigs and cows. It was a regular little farm with gardens and many fruit trees.¹³

An interesting and unique innovation was ^a coke-vat cistern used to heat water. The water was pumped from the well by a windmill into a cistern. The cistern was encircled by a coke vat, and when the coal was ignited, the water was heated.

The kitchen was later moved to the back porch, where an old ranch-type cook stove was used. The ice box stood in the hallway. About half of the porch was enclosed for the cooking and eating area.

The whitewashed exterior of the house was stuccoed in the 1930's and remains the same today. A fire in 1935 destroyed the back porch and kitchen, also damaging the roof and one corner of the house.

Boultinghouse and Sheedy repaired the building so it could be used ^{as} an office. They plastered the inside walls, which were originally covered with newspapers and painted canvas. Windows were replaced to match the original multi-paned where needed. The roof was replaced with brown asbestos shingles on the main part, but the original shingles are still on the front porch.

Since we have purchased it, we have replaced the back porch deck with old lumber salvaged from a 100-year-old home, and replastered the back wall, which was damaged in the fire. We have replaced the missing "gingerbread" trim on the front porch where needed, so that the exterior remains the same.

Our plans are to use the building as an Art Gallery, Antique and gift shop. We hope to eventually replace the back porch and the cedar shingle roof.

Mr. Montalvo, more commonly known as Obed Woods, was born Jan. 23, 1850¹⁸⁵⁰ in Eagle Pass, Texas. His mother was Eleanor Smith, an Englishwoman from Colorado. His father was Apolonario Montalvo of Mexico.¹⁴ Where the name Bela he used in purchasing the property came from remains a mystery, even to his living relatives.

He was married to Guadalupe Reschman (1868-1953) of Eagle Pass in a civil ceremony in 1880, according to a marriage convalidation by the Catholic Church in 1933.²⁰ Her father was John Reschman from Alsace Lorraine, and he reputedly spoke seven different languages. Her mother was Vicenta Ramirez of Texas.

According to his grandsons, Idelfonso received his education in Canada, even going to college there. He was well versed in the classics and philosophy and shared his knowledge with many young men in Brackett.²¹

His mother purchased property in Brackett as early as 1877²² so we might assume his family was there at that time. His death certificate lists his occupation as a rancher, but he was also a bookkeeper and "jack of all trades" at Peterson & Co., "the largest and most complete stock of general merchandise in Brackett and Kinney County." He was also a civilian employee at Fort Clark in the Paymaster Department,²³ where he developed a method of quickly counting the gold coins which were used in place of our present paper money.

He and his wife had nine children, eight of whom were still living at the time of his death in 1941. None survive today.

The irony of this family is that the children of the educated and versatile gentleman were not allowed to go to the public schools because there was supposedly some black blood in the family, so they were tutored by Miss Bessie Wilson in their home.²⁴

Wm J R Schneider

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FOOTNOTES

1. Vol A 1-317 Deed Records Kinney County
2. Ibid.
3. Vol A 4-543 " " " "
4. Vol A 1-299 " " " "
5. Vol A 2-443 " " " "
6. Vol B 2-183 Probate " " "
7. Vol A 6-103 Deed " " "
8. Vol A 8-623 " " " "
9. Vol A 6-493 " " " "
10. Vol B 22-204 " " " "
11. Vol 4-37 Probate Records #332 Kinney County
12. Vol A 42-370 Deed Records Kinney County
13. Vol A 44-32 " " " "
14. Vol A 42-32 " " " "
15. Vol A 52-845 " " " "
16. Senovia Montalvo, daughter-in-law of Ildefonso Montalvo and her mother, Mrs. Terrazas, both still living in Brackettville
17. Eloy Montalvo, grandson who grew up in the house and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.
18. Eloy, Frank, Maurice Jr. Montalvo, grandsons
19. Death Records Kinney County Courthouse
20. Marriage Records Page 130 St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church Brackettville
21. J. Lee Ballantyne, widow of C. B. Ballantyne who worked at Peterson & Co. with Obed Woods
22. Vol A 5-392 Deed Records Kinney County
23. George Wyrick, Brackettville, stationed at Fort Clark in the 30's
24. Agnes Vondy, niece of Bessie Wilson and daughter of Mrs. Fritter Brackettville.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Deed Records: Kinney County
 Field Notes: Kinney County
 Miscellaneous Records: Kinney County
 Probate Minutes: Kinney County
 Death Records: Kinney County
 Marriage Records: St. Mary Magdalen Church, Brackettville
 Montalvo Family History compiled by Mrs. Eloy Montalvo
 Kinney County History by Kinney County Historical Society

ALLEY RUFUS

