

RESTORING EL RANCHITO, HOME OF FORMER GOVERNOR PIO PICO



IN THE PATIO - ON THE DAY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S CELEBRATION

EL RANCHITO AS IT IS TO-DAY

A WING NOW RESTORED

PHOTO BY RAMSEY QUINN, 1907

By Alfred Dezendorf

HARD by the little city of Whittier, in southern California, stands the old home of Don Pio Pico, California's last governor under Mexican rule. The weather beaten facade of this old adobe, which, in its palmy days, was known as the largest residence in the state, looks into the waters of Mission creek, a little stream which hurries across the ancient highway, El Camino real, scarcely a hundred feet away. The oldest part of this mansion of the pastoral days, remarkable as the first two story adobe residence to be erected in California, was built in 1826. The property became Don Pio's in 1822, and although it was said of him that his lands were so vast that he could travel the length of the state and stop each night at his own hacienda, El Ranchito, as he fondly named this home, was throughout his later years his favorite, notwithstanding the fact that its acres, which numbered eight thousand in 1870, were the smallest of the governor's princely possessions. It was not far from this rancho, at the new San Gabriel mission, that Don Pio was born, in 1801, of French and Mexican parentage. Both he and his brother, Don Andres Pico, were types of Californians of the pastoral period, influential members of the early social and political life of the state, extending hospitality of the

lavish type of the dons who left dishes filled with silver coin on the dressing tables of their guests that they might not want during their stay at the casa; kindly generous to a fault, fond of the races and the gaming table, and living like veritable princes on their vast estates in Santa Barbara, San Diego and Los Angeles counties. Even during his political life Don Pio took a chance, for many of his countrymen are fond of saying that during his gubernatorial career he corralled all the lands he could, perhaps by fair means, perhaps otherwise, in many cases only to bestow the domains upon his friends, who often afterward found themselves in litigation over their possessions. Don Pio Pico first became governor of upper California under Mexican rule in 1832, taking the oath on January 26 of that year at the old Mission church on the plaza, at the hands of General Vallejo. In the same year Don Pio became the owner of El Ranchito. In those days the house, with its long vistas of deep windowed rooms opening on a central patio, was resplendent with life, and as late as 1870 there were still to be counted 33 rooms. Shading the patio, which was then surrounded by boxes of rare flowering plants, stood a giant black fig tree, the special pride of Don Pio. The court was paved with red brick, and at one side there was a deep well. An

old mill and a great Dutch oven, a part of every casa of importance in those days, were there too, but both have long since crumbled into the past. To the north and west of the house was a large parklike acreage, covered with ornamental trees and vines, and, across the road, facing the Camino real, stood the family chapel with elaborately frescoed walls. In 1834 at the old Carrillo house in Los Angeles was celebrated the sumptuous wedding feast that marked the nuptials of Don Pio Pico and Donna Maria Ignacio Alvarado. The aristocracy and all the retainers of the two houses represented, from San Diego to Monterey, gathered to do honor to the event. Eight days were spent in continuous feasting and dancing. There were no children born of this union, and Donna Maria Pico died many years ago. Don Pio in 1870 built upon the site of the house wherein was held his wedding feast the Pico house, in Los Angeles, still standing opposite the plaza. At first the house had rather a hilarious history through unfortunate leases made by the owner, but later it was leased to one Senor Cuyas, who started it on the career which made it for some years the best hotel in southern California. It has fallen mightily since, but in gazing on its time stained facade one can realize that it was regarded as a pretentious building in earlier days. In 1841 Don Pio received the grants of his immense ranchos—Santa Margarita in San Diego county, where he spent much of his time, and the Rancho Los Flores. He seldom made a long consecutive residence at El Ranchito, two of his sisters doing the honors of the hacienda for him. Pico's first term

as governor ended in 1833, but later, at the close of the bloodless conflict in Caluenga pass, which ended in the expulsion of Micheltorena, Pico, as president of the assembly, became temporary governor of California, on February 22, 1845. He was confirmed by the Mexican government, and his authority as governor was recognized until the American occupation in 1846. On August 15 of that year Don Pio Pico and General Castro abandoned the city of Los Angeles a short time before its occupation by Commodore Stockton. Pico made his way through San Diego county into lower California, crossed the gulf and landed in Sonora. Efforts were made to capture both him and Castro, but the two were successful in making their escape. At the end of the war in 1848 Pico returned and went to the home of his brother, General Andres Pico, in San Fernando. Much of his time in the '50s and '60s was spent at El Ranchito, and more at Santa Margarita. Gertrude Atherton, in her book, "The Splendid Idle Forties," introduces as a character Don Pio Pico, and pictures him as hung with chains and ropes of gold and jewels. While Pico was not entirely a promising subject for decoration, being noted for almost anything but beauty, the description is right in line with the picture his countrymen who remember him are fond of giving in the period following his gubernatorial days. This picture portrays him as spending most of his time in riding about on a handsome blooded steed, his saddle and bridle jingling with wonderful decorations of silver. He always had his pockets filled with \$50 gold pieces, which he spent right liberally. Was there a Sunday afternoon cock fight or horse race above the San Gabriel mission, Don Pio was always first in the fray, bringing his fleetest horses from Santa Margarita. Some-

times the moon looked down upon a fandango at El Ranchito, and the music of the stream that ran by the doorway mingled with that of the guitars, and senoritas' voices were heard in the great broad doored salon. At these functions Don Pio and his brother, Don Andres, were noted for their graceful dancing. But such lavish living could not last forever, and there were those who were waiting to buy land or to get it by any other means, from courteous dons who know better how to spend \$50 pieces than how to speak the English language. With these dons money was absolutely of no consequence while it lasted, which idea forms a good recipe for making riches take wings. So it was with Don Pio Pico. His vast possessions, which, it has been said, would now represent \$50,000,000, began, by hook or by crook, to pass away from him. Finally the day came when three gringos in Los Angeles saw him sign a blanket mortgage and trust deed to them for a loan of \$95,000, covering property which included his favorite place, El Ranchito. It was never his again, for when the loan came due the trust deed was construed by the lenders as an absolute deed, and Don Pio with his imperfect knowledge of English, was powerless to prevent a decision of the court which took from him his prized hacienda. It remains an open question as to who was the greatest rascal in the transaction. From the eighties the Pico star began to descend, and the possessions of the one time powerful governor went to money lenders, until at the date of his death at the age of 83 years, September 11, 1884, the house that sheltered him in Los Angeles was the gift of an American friend. Meantime, El Ranchito, one of the

state's historic landmarks, under its new owners, was suffered to go to pieces at a rapid rate, until about 10 years ago, when the fine chapel of the place was demolished and its ruins used to repair the road that ran past it. Later the historic house was to share a like fate. Mrs. E. W. R. Strong and other women of Whittier took up the matter with Charles Lummis and the Landmarks club. This finally led to the formation of the Pio Pico historical society, composed of Whittier women, whose purpose as stated in its incorporation papers, "is to acquire, restore and preserve the old home of former governor Don Pio Pico—La Hacienda del Rancho Paso del Bartolo Viejo; to collect articles of value, historic and prehistoric; to restore old names and preserve old landmarks in our community and state," etc. The society, with Mrs. H. W. R. Strong as president, began its work of restoring the old place in 1907. It now has a 50 years' lease on the property from the city of Whittier, to which the former owners sold the house and six acres of land as water bearing lands. Although hampered by the lack of sufficient funds the society, by the expenditure of about \$1,000 to date, has put the old house into such shape that something of its ancient beauty can be seen. Walls and roof have been braced, gables that it seemed impossible to keep together have been restored, and about 200 feet of cement foundation protection placed outside the walls. The court has been restored and repaved partly, but there is yet much to be done. There must be windows and doors, more new floors, more new roof and much general repairing. The walls inside and out require plastering, and the grounds must be made entirely over, that the old house may again stand in the midst of a beautiful

park. The only funds available to preserve this relic of the romance period of the state are those which may be received from interested ones and from members of the historical society. The drawing room of the mansion is to be turned into a museum, where will be many objects of value, furniture, etc., owned by the Pico family, also the safe which held the state papers when Governor Pico was at his head. Twenty-five dollars makes one a life member of the historical society. On March 19, 1909, El Ranchito held within its court the first large gathering in the last 40 years, when the Pio historical society held a triumphant celebration in honor of work so far done in the process of restoration. More than 1,000 people were on the grounds during the day, and an old time Spanish barbecue was the entertaining feature, especially for the eastern visitors. Joe Romero, known throughout the state as a famous old time chef, cooked the ox a la Mexicana, and it was perfection. The crowd consumed 550 pounds of beef, 50 gallons of Spanish beans and five of red chile sauce. Four hundred quarts of coffee washed down the hundreds of enchiladas and Spanish tamales that were disposed of. The dinner was served in the court under the old ash tree planted by Don Pio, and here also was stationed a Spanish orchestra composed of members of the Ramirez family, themselves Spaniards of the bluest blood, who were often entertained at El Ranchito in the days when it was the last home of the old governor. A number of old friends of Don Pio Pico delivered addresses containing interesting data concerning him, telling of his generosity alike to friend and foe; of his ardent and patriotic love for Spain and of his loyalty after California had become the property of the United States, to America and her laws.

THE FASCINATION OF TROUSERS FOR ACTRESSES

Why do Women Love to Play Male Roles

TO the actress the lure of the trousers is ever potent. Hardly has she stage any leading actress but who has either played or aspires to play masculine roles. The number constantly increases. In the old days women after succeeding in delineating roles of their own sex attempted the classical parts usually assigned to men. Thus there are records of many successful Hamlets and Iagos to the credit of women. But in such performances the essential skill to read the sublime lines of the greatest of poets would have gained toleration, even if the spark of dramatic genius burned very low. But to play the male roles in modern dramas seems in some respects a still more remarkable ambition, for the modern public, grown indifferent to the serious aims of dramatic art, insists on being entertained, and it takes a pretty clever woman to shift from her own natural garb to that of the other sex and still make good. The greatest of all actresses, the mighty Bernhardt, has often crossed the line, and as in the case of everything she does, has been eminently successful. Not less than half a dozen male roles have gone to the credit of the French genius. She was seen in this country in three, being a superb Hamlet, a pathetic duke de Reichstadt, and a clever hero in "Le Peasant." It is related of Bernhardt that when she was trained for her appearance in Rostand's "L'Aiglon" she wore nothing but men's clothes for many months so as to get herself thoroughly habituated to them, and those who saw the graceful ease with which she wore the coat, trousers and boots of the unfortunate son of the great Napoleon can readily believe the story. In Paris Bernhardt has enacted the title role in De Musset's "Lorenzaccio." But this by no means exhausts her ambition. She is anxious to play the role of Romeo just as soon as a great actress can be obtained to play Juliet in French. For a long time Bernhardt has been anxious to try her talents in the role of Mephistopheles, and only the difficulty in getting the kind of arrangement of the play she wanted has deterred this curious experiment.



JULIA MARLOWE IN A MASCULINE ROLE
 MAUDE ADAMS AS "PETER PAN"
 ANNIE RUSSELL AS "PUCK"
 SARAH BERNHART AS "HAMLET"
 VESTA TILLEY AS "JOHNNIE"

A whole row of Rosalinds and Violas may explain how to some extent women get the ambition to wear the masculine clothing. These roles were naturally in the repertoire of every serious actress of a generation ago, and they survive today among the favorites of actresses who still retain a preference for the classics. They are not strictly speaking masculine roles, for the principal figure is a woman masquerading as a man, and the audience knows at all times that it is not out of the secret of the real sex of the performer. But an experience in these parts nearly always has the effect of inspiring the brilliant and intellectual actress to further efforts in the same line. It was so with Julia Marlowe. She succeeded as Viola and Rosalind and immediately began directing her energies to finding a suitable role in which she could play a man's part all through. Just about this time came "L'Aiglon." Marlowe was wildly enthusiastic to play the part. But Charles Frohman gave it to Maude Adams, with the result that he and Miss Marlowe parted company. Miss Adams made a great success in the part. It started her on the way to success in parts calling for other than skirts. Her Peter Pan was not only a great success, but it was probably the crowning artistic achievement of a most sweet and talented little woman. After this she played the role of the Jester. But Miss Marlowe demonstrated that she also had the talent that leads to success in masculine roles, for she gave a most artistic performance of the little play, "Chatterton."

Annie Russell, an actress somewhat on the same lines as Maude Adams, tried her talent as Puck in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and was very successful. So, too, Ethel Barrymore, another actress given to the delineation of the sugary type of girl, tried what she could do in the way of presenting the opposite sex in "Carrots," and the public greatly liked the novelty. A host of comic operas with women playing male roles might be mentioned, except that in this line of work there never has been an interruption to the feminine fondness for male attire. But in comic opera the answer is easy. There fights are far more potent than skirts, and the best way to permit

a doffing of the long skirt and get into public view that which is calculated to draw the crowd is to have the leading lady play the part of a man, preferably the part of some dashing swash-buckler with brilliant uniform. Of well remembered portrayals of men's roles on the operatic stage nothing much finer can be recalled than what Jesse Bartlett Davis used to do as Alan Dale in "Robin Hood." Not only did she look the part ideally and sing it flawlessly, but she was so finished in her bearing that she maintained the illusion perfectly. The same tendency is to be found on the grand opera stage. Women there are also anxious to bid brief adieu to

their skirts. Mary Garden thus appeared in the role of Jean in the famous Massenet opera, "The Juggler of Notre Dame," and is credited with winning success for a work that was only mildly considered when the leading role was intrusted to man. Old records of the stage show many women playing Hamlet. It is now not far short of a century ago that both Mrs. Bartley and Mrs. Campbell made successful appearances in this part. Charlotte Barnes, Mrs. Shaw, Fanny Wallack, Mrs. Brougham, Mrs. Dennis, Mrs. F. B. Conway, Julia Seaman and Adele Belgrand used to make regular appearances in the role of the hapless prince of Denmark and reviews from current publications show that they not only were treated with great respect, but actually seemed able to give genuine pleasure to their audiences. Mrs. Daniel Bandman was another "Hamlet" of some repute, and that most excellent actress, Mrs. Emma Waller, who had the gift of doing almost anything, played the role of Iago to the Othello of her husband, and contributed her share to a thrilling performance. The two great rivals of a score of years ago, Janauschka and Medeska, both appeared on numerous occasions in masculine roles, the great voice and ponderous personality of the former especially suiting her to this line of work.

Marie Prescott was perhaps the last of the feminine Iagos that have been seen in this country. Excepting Bernhardt, no one has attempted "Hamlet" lately, though Helene Mora, the once popular contralto, noted for the depth of her voice, once gave an act of "Hamlet" as a feature of her vaudeville performance, and was well received. Only lately Marie Brema, well remembered as one of the best dramatic singers heard in this country in recent years, figured in a revival of the famous old time opera by Gluck, "Orpheus," which was put on to indulge her desire to sing the masculine role of the noted poet of the classics. Vaudeville has a host of performers like Vesta Tilley, Elsie Janis and Ethel Levy, who can don the masculine attire without showing any awkwardness. There is something very appealing to the average theater-goer in the effort of women to play male roles. Particularly are women interested in the experiment. Deep down in every woman's heart is the conviction that when the universe was planned man got a little the better of things. To have a chance to wear for a time the habiliments of this superior creature is something that never fails to attract the actress herself and the feminine part of her audiences.