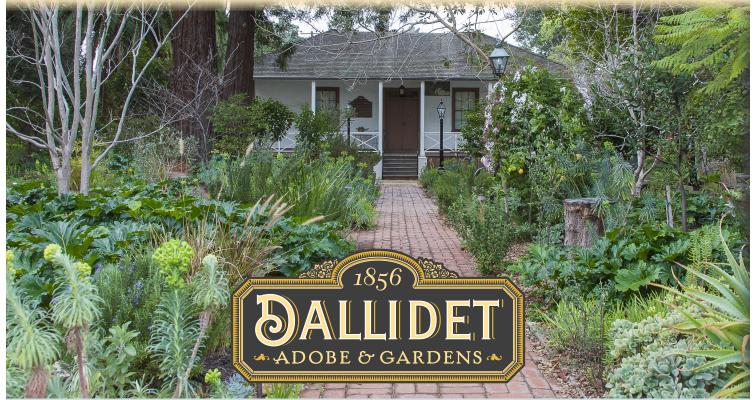
# HISTORY CENTER

San Luis Obispo County

# A Self-Guided Heritage Tour of the DALLIDET ADOBE & GARDENS



### Introduction

photos courtesy of Erick Wand, Graphics by Erick

Nestled under towering Coast redwoods and a 130-year-old avocado tree along the creek in downtown San Luis Obispo, California, the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens offers lush foliage and bountiful gardens with brick patios and walkways on an acre of land.

In 1953, the last surviving member of the Dallidet family, Paul Dallidet, deeded the property to the newly formed San Luis Obispo Historical Society. Among the deed documents is this statement of the donor's intent:

"I am proud to present to the San Luis Obispo Historical Society as a memorial to my father, Pierre Hypolite Dallidet, our old family adobe and grounds, on the understanding that they may be properly maintained and restored as a permanent possession of the County so that all may enjoy this landmark of California's past."

Paul continued to live in the Adobe until his death in 1958. Since then, the Historical Society (now the History Center of San Luis Obispo County) has maintained and improved the property, opening the adobe and gardens to the public in 1960.

The Dallidet Adobe was designated State Historical Landmark #720 in 1970. Today the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens are open to the public on weekend afternoons from April to



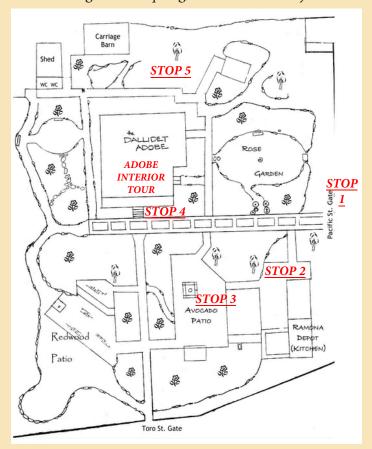
October. The gardens are a popular site for weddings, classes, concerts, as well as birthday parties, graduation celebrations and baby showers.

This Self-Guided Walking Tour will enable visitors to view some of the main attractions of this site and learn more about the unique legacy of the family that developed it, their role in the 19th and 20th Century history of San Luis Obispo, and how the property now serves the people of this community through the careful stewardship of the History Center of San Luis Obispo County. The tour begins at the main entrance gate from the parking lot lying at the north end of Pacific

Street in downtown SLO, between the Dallidet property and the Dallidet Professional Center at 1194 Pacific.

Special sections highlight The Dallidet Family, especially the devotion of Maria Ascension ("Cen") to her artistic endeavors, the sad demise of eldest son Pierre Jr., and the generous gift of the entire property by youngest son Paul.

The tour begins at "Stop 1: The Garden Wall" and continues through the Gardens, ending at the front porch where a History Center docent welcomes visitors to the interior of Adobe for guided tours on weekend afternoons during the late Spring, Summer and early Fall.



# Every Contribution Helps Preserve the Legacy

Ongoing preservation and enhancements to the

# **Dallidet Adobe and Gardens**

are funded in part with contributions through the History Center of San Luis Obispo County.

You are invited to support the Dallidet Gardens by leaving a donation at the Adobe during your visit, or use the "making a donation" link when you point your browser to <a href="https://www.historycenterslo.org/dallidet">www.historycenterslo.org/dallidet</a>



# STOP 1 GATE AND WALL

When it is open to the public or for private events, visitors are welcomed at the wrought-iron gate



through a substantial masonry wall that surrounds the Dallidet Gardens along its frontage on the parking lot on Pacific Street and along Toro Street. This wall and its gates were constructed pursuant to a 1980 agreement with the developers of the Dallidet Professional Center, the three-story building to the left of the parking lot. That agreement also provided various internal improvements for the Dallidet grounds at the developer's expense and guaranteed suitable public and guest parking for the History Center in perpetuity.

A stroll to the right (south) along the interior of the wall will reveal hundreds of ceramic tiles arranged in several arrays, each of which represents individual donors to the History Center for improvements to the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens. You are invited to do the same by leaving a donation at the adobe during your visit.



### STOP 2

# RAMONA DEPOT AND HORSE DRAWN STREETCAR

Just inside the gate and to the left is the relocated Ramona Depot, part of which is a shade structure over an authentic horse drawn streetcar from the short-lived San Luis Street Railway. A historical marker here describes this important part of the site.

The standard-sized track of the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) would not reach San Luis Obispo from the north until 1894, 35 years after the Dallidets had begun construction of their adobe home. By the late 1880s, the entire community were

anxiously anticipating the arrival of the railroad – especially the Dallidets, who owned not only the current property of the Adobe and Gardens but several lots within downtown San Luis Obispo.

Entrepreneurs built the elegant, 4-story Ramona Hotel, a resort destination in what was then the "edge of town," occupying a large parcel of land on Essex Street (now Johnson Avenue) between Marsh and Higuera Streets. That site lies just to the north, across Toro Street and San Luis Obispo Creek, and is now occupied by Smart & Final and adjacent stores. The Ramona hotel had "all the latest amenities" and eventually its own depot for the convenience of rail travelers.

The SPRR tracks were laid within hailing distance of the Ramona Hotel in 1894, and the main San Luis Obispo Depot was opened to great fanfare and celebration a few blocks to the south near its present location.

To better serve the Ramona Hotel and the downtown, visitors would need a horse-drawn streetcar system to transport them to and from the Pacific Coast Railway Depot, the Southern Pacific Depot, the Ramona Hotel/Depot and the business center of town. With unpaved streets, dust and mud were constant problems, depending on the season. On October 17, 1887, the first horse-drawn streetcar made its run in San Luis Obispo



In 1887 riders were transported via the horse-drawn San Luis Street Railway to and from Port San Luis, keeping them off the dusty or muddy streets. The line operated for about 13 years from their depot located at today's Higuera Street and Madonna Road – far from downtown.

along a 3ft. narrow-gauge steel rail system. After the wet winter of 1889-90, bedrock was laid under the tracks to stop muddy delays in service on Monterey, Higuera and Osos Streets.

There were five cars in service, two closed and three open, and a total of nine horses. They were an important transportation link within this community that had high hopes for expansion once the Southern Pacific rail line was completed. The route of the little 3-foot gauge line as mapped in 1894 ran along Higuera Street from the Pacific Coast Railway depot

on Higuera and South Street, then west on Chorro Street to Monterey, along Monterey to Essex (now Johnson), along Essex almost to Pismo, with a line on Marsh street to the Ramona Hotel and up and down Osos Street from Palm to the Southern Pacific depot.

The Southern Pacific Railroad was completed from San Luis Obispo south to Santa Barbara on December 31, 1900. The hotel hosted a great celebration and party when President William McKinley visited San Luis Obispo just a few months later in May, 1901 – only four

months before his assassination in Buffalo, New York.

Sadly, after just another four years, the Ramona Hotel burned down, but the little



Ramona Depot was saved. It was donated to the Historical Society by Robert and Elizabeth Leitcher and moved to its present location around 1960. The History Center now uses the building as a modest kitchen facility for events.

The horse drawn streetcars, already seeing a decline in service, had ceased to operate. By 1908, banker J.P. Andrews was willing to sell the whole system to a Southern Pacific engineer named Herbert H. Bell. His son, George P. Bell of Santa Margarita became the owner

of the last remaining streetcar which is now housed under the shelter of the Ramona Depot at this site.

*The Tribune* has an archived column about the San Luis Street Railway available to their subscribers.

# STOP 3

# AVOCADO PATIO AND THE ROTARY STAGE & TRELLIS



Walk a few feet further into the "Avocado Patio" and take in the serene, shaded beauty of this surprising jewel of a garden, tucked away in downtown San Luis Obispo. Rustic paths and brick walkways wind their way through lush ecosystem of native and naturalized plants. Small, secluded niches invite guests to pause, relax and enjoy the glory of flowering shrubs, bright annual and perennial flowers and flitting hummingbirds.



here were constructed in 2016, replacing an earlier structure that had been deemed unsafe. This project was financed in part by a \$50,000 bequest from Arlene Zanchuck, a long-time supporter of the History Center. The work was completed with help from Charles Crotser, the Rotary Club of San Luis Obispo, and students from the Cal Poly Construction Management

The cedar stage and trellis





# STOP 4 THE ADOBE



The original construction of the Dallidet Adobe was begun in 1859, and enlarged with wood-framed additions thereafter. This adobe has a wine cellar, making it unique in California and perhaps unique in all of the Southwest. The concept of constructing a house with a cellar is European (particularly French) in origin.

Walls of adobe bricks were the best and cheapest material for construction of a house in San Luis Obispo in the 1850s. The harvesting of trees and the development of a lumber industry in California had not yet become a viable alternative in San Luis Obispo. Support beams and floorboards for the adobe were all hand hewn from local trees. The local lumber industry was not established until 1869

with People's Wharf in Avila Beach and the Schwartz, Harford and Company Lumber Company. Pierre Hypolite Dallidet, a carpenter by trade according to early census records, made wood plank additions in the 1870s: A porch was added at the east side of the adobe and a lean-to addition added to the west side. Then

from 1877 to 1882, a full wood frame addition completed the basic floor plan of the residence.

If the History Center staff are available to conduct a tour of the interior during your visit, you may see what is described below on this tour within the home – otherwise, the exterior tour continues with Stop 5 on the rear (west) side of the house.



### THE LIBRARY/PARLOR

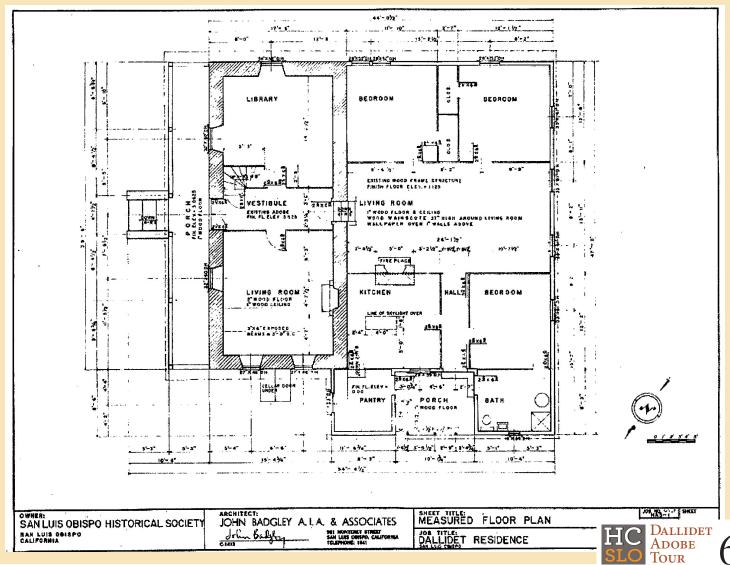
Architectural drawings for the Adobe were made in the 1950s by John Badgley, an architect and Historical Society member. These drawings, together with oral interviews with Paul Dallidet, indicate that the adobe portion of the structure was originally divided into three rooms. A corridor ran from the main entrance on the porch to the opposite doorway, which originally led to the rear yard. After the addition of the wood-frame portion of the residence, this opposite doorway leads to the lower portion of the structure described below.

Immediately to the left of the main doorway is a set of steps leading to the attic, where the boys usually slept. The uses of the various areas obviously changed over time. However, when the Historical Society received the property after Paul Dallidet's death, the partitions and steps to the attic were removed and the entire are became the library and parlor.



Library photo courtesy of David Holmes

The four bookcases are original to the Dallidet family. Other items that are original to the family are the square grand piano (but not the stool), and most of the other furniture found in the room. Note the carved wooden box on the wall and several paintings in the room either signed by or attributed to the eldest



daughter, Maria Ascension "Cen" Dallidet. Many of the books in the library belonged to various family members, but a good portion of the library contains books that were left in San Luis Obispo by Alphonse Pinart, a member of a French archaeological expedition that visited California in 1877-1879.



THE LOWER AREA

The lower area, developed with finished lumber with a wood frame, was added well after the adobe had been completed. An investigation of the structure indicates that many changes were made, and probably some removed in arriving at the current configuration. A Historic Structures Report completed in 2017 for the History Center has established the sequence of construction, and it reveals the various episodes of construction still evident today to a skilled observer.

Most of the furniture is original to the family, except the sideboard and the large plate rack. The corner bedroom set, the large oak table and the large chest of drawers with tear-drop pulls are original to the Dallidet family; note the inset scenes of Tahiti painted by the oldest daughter, Maria Ascension "Cen" Dallidet. The taxidermy specimens on display are also believed to be original to the Dallidet family. It is likely that at least one of the specimens were preserved by Cen but professionally framed in San Francisco.

The Lower Area contains many paintings and drawings by Cen Dallidet, the eldest daughter. These and many others not on display have been cleaned and conserved. Their subject matter helps illuminate the interests and history of the family, making them an important part of the family's story.

The Heritage Tour continues outside, where a visit to the "Farm and Gardens" is encouraged.



Inset scenes of Tahiti were painted on this dresser by Maria Ascension "Cen" Dallidet.





# STOP 5 THE FARM AND GARDENS





Throughout the 1860s, '70s and '80s, Pierre Hypolite Dallidet purchased substantial land from his in-laws. He also bought additional parcels in what is now downtown San Luis Obispo, in many cases from those who had acquired these properties from the Catholic Diocese after title to the Mission lands had been restored to the Catholic Church in 1861.

Almost immediately upon buying these parcels, Pierre began planting vineyards, and by 1871 the property tax rolls listed his occupation as "winemaker." The grapes that Dallidet planted are explicitly specified in the 1883 Diary of Luis Pascal Dallidet and included:

Black Hamburg
Chaibous
Kentucky
Magdelens
Malaga
Muscat of Alexandra
Muscat - small
Rose of Peru
Sweet water
White wine
Mission grapes

Other crops grown at that time were:

Beans (dry)

Beans - Horse

Corn

Peas

Peaches

Pumpkins

Table grapes

Watermelons

Almonds

In the Dallidet Gardens today, you will find many of the same flowers, vegetables, and herbs that the Dallidet family would have grown in the 1860s-1880s. Settlers in California often brought seeds they had collected or traded from across the country. More than two dozen heirloom or heritage vegetables are grown here, including French sorrel, cardoons, fin de Bagnol - French green beans, French breakfast radishes and Hamburg rooted parsley. Hollyhocks and love-in-amist are among our heirloom flowers.



### THE DALLIDET FAMILY

Pierre Hypolite Dallidet was born December 12, 1822 in Canton de Melle, in the department of Deux Sevres in southwestern France. During his youth, France was rocked by political and economic turmoil and rural unemployment soared to 40% or more in the rural province of Deux Sevres. Thus it was that at age 20, he enlisted in the French Army, and drew the enviable assignment of the Royale Corps of Artillerie and sent to serve in Tahiti for four years.

By the time he was discharged in December 1850, Pierre had saved his francs; there was no cash economy in French Polynesia. Learning of the California Gold Rush, and fearful of continued political disruption in his native France, Pierre sailed on a schooner from Tahiti to San Francisco to seek his fortune in the gold-fields of the Sierra Nevada.

Like most '49ers, however, Dallidet did not strike it rich: in 1853 he left the mines and headed south with the intent of journeying all the way to Mexico. He stopped in San Luis Obispo and never left: Pierre became friends with the family of Gabriel Salazar, a successful Californio who had moved to San Luis Obispo many years earlier from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Gabriel had acquired substantial property from a Mexican land grant to his in-laws prior to the cession of California from Mexico to American sovereignty in 1850. Sadly, however,

Gabriel Salazar passed away in 1854 – but Pierre was ready to step into his role by marrying his 15-year old daughter, Ascension Concepcion Salazar, in 1855.

Two years after their marriage, Ascension and Pierre welcomed their first child, Pierre Hypolite Jr. A scant two years later, in January 1859 a second child had arrived – their first daughter, Maria Ascension. Within



Pierre Hypolite Dallidet, Senior



Ascension Concepcion Salazar Dallidet - mother of nine children in her 18 years of marriage and "adult life"

that year, Pierre had built a 3-room adobe – the Dallidet Adobe – at the upper end of Pacific Street, adjacent to the Salazar Adobe.

The Adobe would soon prove to be insufficient to accommodate the growing Dallidet family. Ascension Salazar Dallidet would give birth like clockwork every two years – nine children in all – before she died at the age of 32 from complications of childbirth; that child (Maria) had died at birth, and an earlier daughter Mariana, born in 1869, had survived only one month.

Thus, seven of the children of Pierre and Ascension Concepcion lived to adulthood. Although Pierre Senior would retain his French culture and language throughout his life, Ascension Concepcion would speak primarily Spanish; their children would grow up speaking French, Spanish, and English. All were well educated, most traveled, and interested in the arts and natural sciences. The youngest, Paul, would outlive his siblings but never married and had no children. In fact, the only members of this generation of Dallidets who would marry were Juan Bautitsta, their sixth child – of which more is written below - and Pierre Ir., whose marriage to Dora Oldfield did not last and produced no issue.

Pierre Sr. became a prominent member of the San Luis Obispo community after his arrival in 1853 and his 1855 marriage to Ascension

Concepcion Salazar. He joined and helped to finance the grisly work of the 1858 Committee of Vigilance, and gained American citizenship in 1861. As he developed the Adobe in the 1860s and '70s, Dallidet acquired and managed many properties throughout San Luis Obispo. He tended

extensive vineyards and gardens

surrounding the adobe, as well as mining claims, farm and ranch lands, and rental properties. He is best remembered for founding the first commercial winery and the first brandy distillery on the Central Coast.

Even though life in San Luis Obispo was far removed from cultural centers like Paris, New

York City and San Francisco, the Dallidet family enriched their lives with may multicultural activities including art, music, poetry and literature. They engaged in community life and were often noted in the social pages of daily newspapers in the late 19th and early 20th century, attending parties, concerts, and the theater. The



Dallidet family under the pergola in the garden ca 1890-99

family often welcomed visitors into their adobe home, which by the late 1870s had been expanded with the wood-frame lower portion with a formal dining room, bedrooms and kitchen. Items in the adobe reflect this cosmopolitan influence, filled with paintings, sculptures, and music, while books and magazines in

several languages and on many subjects line the library shelves. Varied collections, reflecting the family's interest in nature and science, decorate the modest home. Scenes from the beautiful island of Tahiti, where Pierre Sr. had served in the French Army, were painted on the bedroom furniture as a reminder of his military days.



Portrait of Pierre Hypolite Dallidet Jr., Louis Dallidet, and John Dallidet



Maria Asencion "Cen" Dallidet, Rose Dallidet and Eliza Dallidet



# ART SCHOOL FOR "CEN" AND EUROPEAN TRAVELS

During the early 1890s, Pierre Hypolite Dallidet provided for his older daughter, Maria Ascension "Cen" to attend the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art located on Nob Hill in San Francisco. That school later became the San Francisco Institute of Fine Art (which closed permanently in July 2022).

The 1906 earthquake and resulting fire destroyed the Institute and the records from the Mark Hopkins Institute, so records of Cen's work there are not available. In any case, Cen returned to San Luis Obispo as her younger sister Eliza lay dying in 1894, and she never resumed her formal training.



Maria Ascension "Cen" Dallidet self portrait

also relocated there and became a writer of children's stories and a garden enthusiast and designer, well known for both talents. There is a book in the Dallidet library, *A Maryland Garden*, was authored by Helen Ashe Hays.

In 1911, Cen Dallidet and her younger sister Rose traveled to England, Scotland and Wales. Some of her drawings depict events from that time period at locations that were later identified. Sadly, Cen died only two years later at the age of 53; Rose would continue to reside in the Adobe with her brother Paul until 1943.

Cen put her artistic skills to good use, sketching and painting many scenes of local landscapes and the gardens around her home here. Some of the paintings and drawings depict scenes from our local area, thus providing visual information helpful in understanding the history of our area.

Two of the watercolor paintings in the History Center collection are attributed to Helen Ashe Hays, a daughter of Dr. W.W. Hays. The Hays family lived in an adobe house close to the History Center, known as the Hays-Latimer Adobe. Cen was apparently very close to Helen, and they often traveled and painted together. Dr. Hays relocated back east in the Maryland area and died there about the turn of the century. Helen Hays

In 1959, when the Dallidet Adobe and the belongings of the family came into the possession of the Historical Society, an all-out effort was made to inventory and catalog all of the items in the Adobe. Among the items was a portfolio of Cen's drawings and paintings. After lying dormant and somewhat neglected for many years, volunteers initiated the process of understanding their history and significance and began their conservation. Some of her restored paintings are normally exhibited within the Adobe and/or at the R.E. Jack House House on Marsh Street in San Luis Obispo. (At this time, Cen's paintings are stored at the History Center, not hanging in the Adobe... though that may change soon.)



English River Scene, ca 1907 by Cen Dallidet



# THE TRAGIC DEMISE OF PIERRE HYPOLITE DALLIDET, JR.

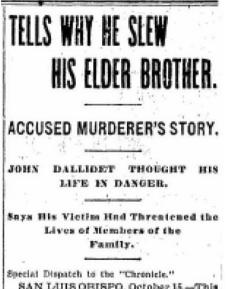
San Luis Obispo enjoyed widespread prosperity in the 1880s and the Dallidet family shared in this bonanza – however the "boom" was followed by a nationwide financial panic in 1893. In spite of the arrival of the Southern Pacific in San Luis Obispo the following year, the value of most real property and many mining claims dropped sharply, forcing the Dallidet family to sell or mortgage much of their holdings as the decade progressed. An entry in Pierre Sr.'s account book, dated 1898, read, "...all real estate now covered by mortgage...".

That year, he paid \$3.00 in taxes on personal property worth \$375. Ten years earlier, this property had been assessed at nearly \$25,000.

To make matters worse, daughter Dolores Eliza died in 1894 at age 33 – about the same age that her mother had attained before her untimely death twenty years earlier.

The economic reversal weighed especially hard on Pierre Jr., who had borrowed heavily from his father to pursue real estate and mining ventures. His financial troubles led to an increasingly fragile temperament, and his despondence had led to one or more suicide attempts. On the afternoon of March 19, 1897, an argument with his father over money matters boiled over, and harsh words were exchanged. Younger brother Juan Bautista (John) apparently overheard his older brother threaten their father and thus provoked, Juan shot Pierre Jr. in front of the Adobe with two blasts of a shotgun.

In his dying breath, Pierre forgave his brother: Dr. Thomas Norton, who treated Pierre at the scene, testified that Pierre had told the doctor that he was going to die, being too badly shot and didn't want



SAN L/UIS OBISPO, October 15 .- This afternoon, on the tenth day of the trial of John B. Dallidet for the murder of his brother, P. H. Dailidet Jr., last March, the defendant was placed on the witness stand and told his story, the drift of which was self-defense. The defendant testified that immediately after lunch on the day of the shooting he picked up a book in the dining-room and retired to his bedroom to read, cocupying a chair near the hed. His brother started in to upbraid his father and sister over financial matters, the father having refused to go on a note for his son. Hot words were used, and finally P. H. Dailidet came to the door of the room occupied by his brother, the defendant, and called out: "All ears, but I have got you." He accused John of influencing his father not to

John of influencing his father not to sign his note as security. Dallidet testified that his brother made an effort as if to reach for a pistol, and defendant Jumped over a bed and grabbed a shotgun. His brother retired just outside on the porch, followed by the defendant with the shotgun. The accused, fearing for his life, fired and then a second shot, the last inflicting fatal injuries. Defendant considered that he was in danger of being killed, as deceased had made threats that he would kill members of the family.

There is a difference of opinion among experts for the prosecution and the defense as to where the shots took effect. The prosecution claims that the shots were fired from behind, while the defense claims the opposite. Coroner Nichols, who claims deceased was shot in the back, says if the prosecution derires he will exhume the body for examination. The case will take another we'lk.

anything done to poor John... "I intended to do it anyhow and it would have been a case of suicide." Based largely on the testimony of the physician, Juan was acquitted by a jury of his peers of first degree murder in the November trial.

After the trial, Juan moved to Mexico, leaving behind his father and the five surviving siblings as well as many friends in San Luis Obispo. He married and became a successful mining engineer in Mexico, but never returned to his home. Today, Juan Dallidet's descendants all reside in Mexico; in 2009, his great-great-great grand-daughter, Alma Dallidet, visited San Luis Obispo and the Dallidet Adobe from her home in Mexico.

Louis Pascal Dallidet continued to search for workable mining sites, sending his last correspondence home from Tuolomne County. He was last recorded as a resident of Tonopah, NV between the years 1901 and 1903. Apparently soon after that, he met with a mysterious end: The Tonopah Bonanza published an article in August 1903 describing how L.P. Dallidet was seriously, but not fatally, injured in a mining accident. This is the last record of him. Louis Pascal Dallidet was never heard from again, and there are no records of his death or burial.

Thus, the turn of the century took a dreadful toll on the Dallidet family: The death of Eliza in

1894, the killing of Pierre Jr. in 1897 and subsequent self-exile of Juan Bautista, and the disappearance of Louis Pascal in 1903. Cen and Rose would continue to live with their father and brother Paul, who continued wine and brandy production until Pierre Sr.'s death in 1909.

## Paul Dallidet's Lasting Gift

During the 1920s, Paul and his sister, Rose Dallidet, sold part of the library and artifacts. Rose lived in the Adobe until her death in 1943. Paul also resided at the home until his death in 1958, at the age of 87.

Five years before he died, Paul Dallidet, the last of Pierre and Ascencion Dallidet's children, bequeathed the Dallidet Adobe and its contents to the San Luis Obispo County Historical Society, now the History Center of San Luis Obispo County. Peter Andre, a local attorney and co-founder of the History Center, facilitated the transition of the Dallidet property to the History Center and helped provide for Paul's well-being for the last years of his life.

Today, the History Center of San Luis Obispo County is committed to maintaining the Dallidet Adobe and Gardens for public access and enjoyment. The Adobe is a museum showcasing the Dallidet family, and the beautiful grounds with many plants and trees planted by the Dallidets, making this an oasis near downtown San Luis Obispo. This historic property will continue to serve the community of San Luis Obispo as the site for special occasions including weddings, concerts and other special events.

# ohoto courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Polytechnic State Univ

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HISTORY CENTER

San Luis Obispo County

For more information, please visit www.historycenterslo.org/walking-tours or call 805/543-0638

696 Monterey Street San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 photo courtesy of Erick Wand, Graphics by Erick

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