



THE HOTEL TARDE'

Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Ron McPherson

Steeped in history and romance, picturesque old Tarde' Hotel is mentioned in at least four period books on early Texas. Now the private residence of Ron and Suzanne McPherson, the Alsatian style structure was a favorite hotel from 1852 until 1894.

In his book, "A Journey Through Texas," Fredrick Law Olmstead wrote of his April 1853 arrival at Castroville: "Upon the banks of the Medina River stands Castroville, a village containing a colony of Alsatians, who are proud to call themselves Germans, but who speak French or a mixture of French and German. The cottages are scattered prettily, and there are two churches. The whole aspect being as far from Texas as possible. Perhaps the most remarkable thing is the hotel by M. Tarde', a two-story house with double galleries, and the best inn we saw in the state. How delighted and astonished many a traveler must have been, on arriving from the plains at this first village, to find not only his dreams of white bread, sweet meats, and potatoes realized, but napkins, silver forks, radishes, French servants, French neatness, French furniture, delicious French beds, and the *Courrier des Etats Unis*; and more, the lively and entertaining bourgeoisie."

The original owner and builder of this structure was Victor Tarde', born in France in 1792 and a member of the famous Young Guard of Napoleon Bonaparte. Following Waterloo, young Tarde' embarked in merchandising in Lyons, France, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and New Orleans, La. Following many years of success, a luckless venture bankrupted him and in 1849 he came to San Antonio and there met old friend Henri Castro who induced him in 1850 to come to Castroville. Here he built his hotel, famous throughout the state, and entertained a host of famous men and officers; Gen. Robert E. Lee, J.B. Hood, Earl Van Dorn, MacKenzie, Ord and Scofield were not only his patrons but were personal friends. Amelia Castro lived at the Tarde' for several years following her husband's death. Victor Tarde' and first wife Clarisse entertained quite lavishly, dining in full evening dress. Her carved mahogany furniture, her jewels, his decorations to display and her charm of manner seem to have made her the grande dame of the village. Clarisse died in 1863 and Victor died at the ripe old age of 95 in 1886, leaving his second wife a widow at about 50 years of age.

Tarde' Hotel consisted then of four large bedrooms and hall upstairs with a large dining room, two parlors, and a central hall downstairs. A separate two-story structure housed the kitchen, with a large cooking fireplace with beehive ovens, and a sleeping loft for the servants.

The house has had several owners since the Tarde's. U.S. Marshal Hal Gosling who was killed by members of the Cave Robbers Gang in a famous shootout and J.W. Smith, a state Senator and well-known politician from San Antonio, were former owners. Dr. John T. FitzSimon purchased the house in 1898 for his growing family; and began his practice of medicine in Castroville. The house remained in the FitzSimon family until January of 1990, when the McPhersons purchased it and began extensive restorations.

The home has the Pioneer Castroville Home Marker. It is to be featured on the Castro Garden Club Sesquicentennial Home Tour on September 3, 1994.