

November 3, 2025

To: City of Santa Clara Historical and Landmarks Commission  
From: Lorie Garcia, City of Santa Clara, City Historian

**RE: HLC Meeting, November 6, 2025: General Business, Item 3., 25-1558 Potential Landmark Designation for Tiburcio Vásquez Gravesite.**

Dear Chair Leung and HLC Commissioners,

I am writing you to express my complete support for a Historic Resource Inventory designation for the gravesite of Tiburcio Vásquez in the Santa Clara Mission Cemetery.

As the place where he is interred, his gravesite is obviously historically relevant to the history of California. In fact, during the years, I would lead Mary Lou Lyons' De Anza College California history class on their historic walking tours of Santa Clara, this was always a site at the top of their list to visit. It is interesting to note that multiple colleges, Historical Societies, and museums have collections focused on his life and that Vasquez Rocks Natural Area Park, a National Register of Historic Places site, in Southern California, is named after him.

For those of you who might not know his importance as an historical figure, the following is some information about him.

A descendant of one the members of the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition of 1776, which brought the first group of settlers to California, Tiburcio Vásquez was born in Monterey on April 11, 1835 into an upper middle-class family where he spent time on the family ranchos and in Monterey's social life. Well educated, he became proficient in both Spanish and English. When he was only 11-years-old, he was witness to the illegal invasion of his country by the Americans. Two years later, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Alta California became a United States territory and then in 1850 an American State. It has been written that "Vásquez would later claim that his (eventual) crimes were retribution for discrimination by the settlers and white *norteamericanos* ('North Americans'), insisting that he was a defender of Mexican-American rights."

Well-liked in the Californio community, he was literate and charming, an excellent dancer and good looking. A man who enjoyed reading romantic novels and writing poetry, many women found him attractive. However, he was not a man who settled into family life--even though he died knowing he had a one-year-old son--Rudolfo (last name and mother unknown with any certainty). On the other hand, he was also a bandit, accused of being a murderer, and a man who, due to the multiplicity of his activities in Southern California and the Central Valley, had a \$15,000 reward for his capture placed on his head by the Governor of California. Suffice to say that in 1873, he gained statewide, and then nationwide, notoriety due to his actions. Captured in Los Angeles late May 1874 and then transferred to San Francisco, in January 1875 he stood trial in San Jose, where he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hung. The information in the Santa Clara County Booking Journal shows that when he was hung in the San Jose jail yard on March 19, 1875, he was a little less than a month shy of his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Multiple publications have been written about Tiburcio Vásquez, going into detail about his criminal life, so this communication is not going to detail that, or state a conclusion as to whether he was good or bad or somewhere in between, as that determination has no bearing on a person's historical significance.

Based on the recognition he received both during and following his lifetime, it cannot be denied that Tiburcio Vásquez played an important role in the period of early California history following the conquest of California by the Americans and even by the middle of the twentieth century, still represented an example of discrimination to many people.

Any site with a relevant connection to an historically significant person is a historically significant site. In the case of Tiburcio Vásquez, his gravesite, his final resting place, definitely has a relevant connection to a recognized historically significant person. As a result of who he was, many continue to visit and pay respects to Tiburcio Vásquez's grave today.

In my opinion, the Tiburcio Vásquez gravesite definitely qualifies for designation as a City of Santa Clara Landmark and as City Historian I fully support this action.

Sincerely,

Lorie Garcia,  
City of Santa Clara, City Historian  
Historical Advisor to the Historical and Landmarks Commission

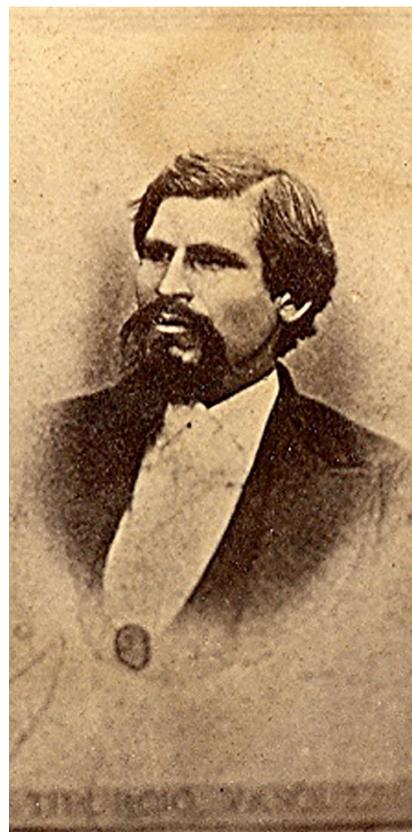
Attachments:

1874 photo of Tiburcio Vásquez  
1875 Santa Clara County Booking Journal – Tiburcio Vásquez  
Poem *A La Señorita E. G.* by Tiburcio Vásquez

## Attachments



**Left:** Santa Clara County  
Booking Journal  
(Lorie Garcia Historical Collection)



**Right:** Tiburcio Vásquez, 1874  
(Lorie Garcia Historical Collection)

A La Senorita E.G.

With a sincere love, I worship you  
When, beauty at my side, I had you  
With a sincere love, I pledge my adoration  
I worship, I adore you, with my soul

Separated from you, alone, lost  
Sad and meditating, I pass the time  
Alone, remembering an idolized love  
In my solitude, alone contemplate

I call to you and ask that you help me  
I remember my grief and bitterness  
I know heaven hears me  
In those moments; what madness!

Although the two of us find ourselves far apart  
Always my heart beats for you  
And I send you my outstretched hand  
Angel of my heart that is, fulonita

Tiburcio Vasquez  
Y Basquez