



**DON PIO PICO**

“In 1891 Don Pio passed through the portals of El Ranchito  
for the last time . . .”

IN PURSUIT OF VANISHED DAYS  
Visits to the Extant Historic Adobe Houses  
of Los Angeles County

Part II\*

By MARION PARKS

RANCHO SAN JOSE

In one of the early years of the 1830's, Don Ygnácio Palomares and Don Ricardo Vejar, two California caballeros of good Spanish blood, rode out on the morning of May 19, which is the day of the festival of San José, to the place we call Pomona. They went to survey, after the manner of their time—a procedure involving the use of no tripods or steel tape—a rancho which they had received permission to lay off in the valley east of El Monte and west of the arroyo which runs south from San Antonio Cañon. The party had started out from Misión San Gabriel that morning and were accompanied by Father Zalvidea. Under a great old oak on the land that they had chosen, the missionary conducted a service of thanksgiving and benediction, and gave to the new rancho the name of San José.

Under a grant from Governor Alvarado, dated April 15, 1837, the vast tract was held jointly by the two friends. Don Ygnácio's was the northern portion, and was called San José de Arriba, or Upper San José; that of Don Ricardo was San José de Abajo, or San José Below.

The two original ranch houses they built are both gone, but five other old adobe homes still stand among the orange groves that have succeeded the herds of grazing cattle on Rancho San José.

*La Casa de Don Ygnácio Palomares*

Don Ygnácio himself built at least three adobe houses at Upper San José, two of which are extant. The delightful adobe at 1569 N. Park Avenue was the second home of Don Ygnácio, built after 1837. His first home stood not far southwest of this, and some of the bricks of the old house went into the construction of the new. It consists of five rooms in a

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\* Part I appeared in the 1928 publication of the Historical Society of Southern California.



Second home of Don Ygnácio Palomares—it stands at 1569 North Park Avenue, Pomona.

row, with a *corredor* along the front and one side, supported by slender posts of roughly sawed lumber.

*La Casa de Don Ygnácio Alvarado*

Don Ygnácio Palomares and Don Ricardo Vejar must have been generous-hearted and hospitable men, and besides, there were many unfriendly Indians in the neighborhood, so that friends and relatives were encouraged to join them and receive house sites on the huge estate. At the invitation of Don Ygnácio Palomares, his intimate friend, Don Ygnácio Alvarado, came to San José and built the adobe which stands today next-door-neighbor to the Palomares place, at 1475 N. Park Avenue.

It is said that Don Ygnácio Palomares' invitation was limited by but a single condition—that the new house should contain a chapel. At any rate, the front room of the Alvarado adobe was long used on the mornings of Holy Days for services conducted by itinerant fathers from the Mission, while in the evening the same room would be gay with dancing in celebration of the fiesta.



Third home of Don Ygnácio Palomares. Built in 1850, it stands at the corner of Cucamonga Road and Orange Grove, North Pomona.

The house seems originally to have been of the L-plan type, but the rooms of the rear wing have been destroyed. It was built about 1840.

Both of these places, which are absolutely unique among ranch houses for their neighborly nearness to one another, are now private residences, appreciated and well-cared for by Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Nichols, the owners.

*The Casa Palomares on the Camino Real*

At the corner of the present Cucamonga Road and Orange Grove, in North Pomona, stands the third home of Don Ygnácio Palomares, probably built before 1850. Don Ygnácio gave the old home (on Park Avenue) to his son Francisco when he moved to this newer place on the road to Chino and San Bernardino. Of it he says in his will,

. . . the other house which is on the Camino Real of the same Ranch (San José de Arriba) and the remaining property shall be respected as belonging to my wife.

Don Ygnácio died there November 2, 1864.

Today untended rose vines and wisteria clamber over the walls and the sagging roof of the old *corredor*. There used

to be a lateral wing extending toward the rear, forming the familiar L-plan, with a *corredor* facing the patio along both wings, as well as across the front of the house. Crumbling walls, exposed when another room was torn down, also attest to a small extension at the west end of the front. In the old days there came to be much travel along this road, between Los Angeles and San Bernardino, and daily, at the last, the picturesque stage coach passed by this old door. In later times the adobe was used as a sort of tavern, and in one room a big fireplace, apparently an addition of later days, seems silently to tell of crackling fires, guests coming in out of the chill night, and stamping horses left outside.

Today this adobe seems to be occupied by the men who tend the orange grove that surrounds it. I have never found any one at home there, so I confess my observations have been made by peering shamelessly through the windows, with my face pressed against the dusty glass. Followed by a mewling and bewildered house cat I have clambered through the rose briars to enter the tall open window of an abandoned room. After my twenty-fifth adobe the heat of the quest, so innocently begun with the expectation of seeing them all in a day or so, knew no obstacles, although I was met by police dogs at some gates, mistaken for peddler and what not at others. When you are explaining yourself on adobe hunting, the introductory speech is sometimes difficult, even when standing politely on the doorstep. You may be mistaken for almost anything—a detective or a prohibition officer, especially if the family come home and find you longingly contemplating their front *corredor*, or counting the pomegranate trees in the yard. And once as I waited in the kitchen of an old-time home, while my obliging host sought a newspaper clipping in regions above, a huge, burly man, a dark and ominous descendant of a one-time seafaring Angeleno, whom he undoubtedly favored, came down the back stairs, leaning heavily on a cane and a crutch. Half way down he saw me, a stranger, idling in his back porch and grunted, "What do you want?" "I am looking for the old adobe houses of Los Angeles County," said I. "What's the matter with you?" said unromantic he, as he reached the last step, and went on and through a door,

not waiting to hear the answer my startled faculties were trying to devise. So it is not alone the unappreciative gringo who has permitted the passing of our adobe days.

*Adobe de Saturnino Carrión—Mountain Meadows Road,  
San Dimas*

Loud-voiced turkeys and peeping chickens make their home in this adobe, which boasts one of the finest sites among



Adobe de Saturnino Carrión. One of the most attractive and best preserved adobes in Southern California.

all Southern California landmarks, while their owner lives in a commonplace ready-cut house in back of it, cut off from if not unconscious of the beauty of the pristine California landscape which lies before it.

Standing upon a slight elevation, with another higher rise of land to the west of it, the adobe of Saturnino Carrión looks down toward Puddinstone Dam from Mountain Meadows Road where that pleasant highway sweeps swiftly through a broad unpopulated plain bounded by low hills. Here the natural flora has remained undisturbed. Sage-brush and aromatic schmizl cover the plain, out of which rises a tall tuna

cactus and a silver-limbed sycamore or two. The adobe itself is sheltered by a magnificent eucalyptus, doubtless planted by Don Saturnino himself.

It is an L-style adobe, a story-and-a-half in height, with a low-ceiled attic under the gabled roof, to which no stairway can now be found. *Corredores* extend along both front and patio elevations, of which the latter faces toward the new boulevard and the exquisite scene to the south.

Exceptionally attractive from every standpoint, still in good condition, this adobe offers an opportunity for someone of sentiment and good taste to develop out of it a country home of unusual charm. Some effort at restoration has been made, but fortunately was given up before it had proceeded far, since it consisted of rounding off wall angles that originally were pleasing because of their neat precision, and patching wall surfaces of fine texture with coarse cement, smeared on.

There are many details of interest in the building, among them being a window equipped with a grille of small wooden bars, with the original home-made wooden-pegged shutters still in place. In one room there is an amusing hole-in-the-wall fireplace. It has no mantel, and cannot be of any great usefulness.

The abundant river or cobble stones of this country were not used to any great extent by the early California builders, but in this house they have been employed in foundations and to form the floors of the *corredores*, and lend attractiveness and finish to the building.

An accurate history of this casa de Saturnino Carrión has been given by his daughter, Louisa Carrión.

"In 1843 Saturnino Carrión received as a gift from his uncle and aunt, Sr. Ygnácio Palomares and Concepción López de Palomares,<sup>1</sup> a portion of Rancho San José de Arriba containing 380 acres, located two miles southeast of San Dimas on Mountain Meadows Road."<sup>2</sup>

According to the census of 1850, Saturnino was a little boy 11 years old at that time, living with his parents, Casiano

1. Concepción López was a sister of Francisco "Chico" López, and Saturnino's mother, Josefa López de Carrión.

2. San Dimas Press Mid-winter number, 1929. Told by Louisa Carrión to Mrs. Harry E. Walker.

and Josefa Carrión at Paredón Blanco, in Los Angeles. Near this family lived Cayetano Varelas, Tomás Rúbio, and Francisco López, with their families.

“For twenty years after receiving the gift of land from his uncle, Saturnino Carrión continued to live near Los Angeles, the pueblo, in the district where Boyle Heights now is. In the springtime of 1863 (the year of drouth) livestock owners had to seek richer and better grazing land in the surrounding country. It was then that Saturnino Carrión finding his acreage rich and fertile, and an ideal place for grazing, decided to bring his herds to the Rancho San José. Shacks were built for his two vaqueros, José Navarro and Francisco Lugo, who brought the large herd and had full charge of it and Sr. Carrión returned to Los Angeles.

“Carrión saw such possibilities in his land that (the following year) he decided to build a home upon it and bring his family to the rancho. He at once hired a noted Italian architect and started plans for the construction of the adobe house. Building material, doors, windows and such had to be brought from Los Angeles, 30 miles to the west. It was brought on pack animals and in carretas drawn by oxen, so it was not until the year 1868 that the structure was completed and Carrión moved his family from their former home at Paredón Blanco.

“The family at that time consisted of his wife, Dolores Navarro de Carrión, and three sons, Ramón, Julian and Francisco. Later five daughters were born in the adobe home. [The 1850 census discloses that when Saturnino was a boy of 11 receiving from his uncle Don Ygnácio the splendid gift of land where he and Dolores Navarro were to make their home and rear their family, she was a baby of two, also living at Paredón Blanco, where her father, Teodoro Navarro, had his home not far from that of the Carrión family.]

“Saturnino Carrión farmed his level land and let his cattle graze upon the hills, raising abundant crops, while his herds of cattle and horses continued to increase in number. So accustomed was Carrión to his own way of farming that more modern methods did not interest him, all his work being done with oxen, even after some of the more modern in-



habitants were using horses and wagons. At one time while working with his oxen and cart hauling a load of hay, his cousin, Francisco Palomares, made the remark, 'Why don't you buy a wagon and use horses?' 'Oh,' said he, 'when wagons come down to one dollar each, then I shall buy one.' Later there was a drawing, the lucky number winning a wagon, each chance selling for a dollar. Carrión bought a chance and won the wagon. So he really did get his first wagon for one dollar.

"Ramón, the eldest son, married Ricarda Alvarado, a near descendant of Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado of California. Rosa married Ramón Vejar, a grandson of Don Ricardo of Rancho San José de Abajo."<sup>1</sup>

This eldest son of Don Saturnino is declared to have been a great horse trader, and when his sisters drove out of a Sunday afternoon from their father's adobe home, to jaunt among the San José hills, it was always behind the finest horses of the valley.

#### *La Casa de Don Ricardo Vejar*

A few miles south and west of Pomona, on the old Rancho San José de Abajo, stands the imposing adobe hacienda of Don Ricardo Vejar, one of the finest two-story adobes in all California.

Beautifully situated on a little knoll, looking out toward the rolling hills to the north, with the rugged, piebald form of the Rocky Hills as its background, Don Ricardo's house stands far to the right-hand of the road, as one goes eastward on Valley Boulevard, on the grounds of the Diamond Bar Ranch. It is spared and protected, though not occupied, by the present owner. More than any other of the old ranch houses this one has the air as of a castle, surveying from a well-chosen eminence the vast domain of its old-time builder.

This house is a splendid example of the Southern California adobe *mansión*, the two-story adobe ranch house of the Mexican era. Its walls are two and one-half feet thick, reinforced, so they say, by iron rods laid lengthwise between the layers of adobe brick. The ground plan forms an elon-

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1. Ibid.



La Casa de Ricardo Vejar.—“A splendid example of the Southern California adobe *mansión*, the two-story adobe ranch house of the Mexican era.”

gated rectangle, divided into two rooms on each floor. At the rear an outside stairway is sheltered under the wide two-story *corredor* which surrounds the house on three sides. A circle of pepper trees outlines the crown of the knoll behind the house, where a service ell of later wooden construction has been added. It is said that formerly this ell was of adobe, and in support of this statement it may be noted that the original stone foundation extends without a perceptible break from the adobe structure back under the frame addition.

This foundation is noteworthy, being constructed of slabs of the natural yellow rock available in the vicinity. Built on the hillside, the front of the adobe is supported upon a high sturdy platform of this material, which contributes both to the impression of height and dignity that the house conveys, and to the interest and effectiveness of its architectural detail.

Home-made doors, bearing the marks of careful planing by hand, a charmingly decorative wooden railing around the *corredor*, well-finished door and window headers, show that this house was built by a conscientious and skillful craftsman who possessed also fine taste.

In 1850 the *mansión* was built for Don Ricardo Vejar, but it is usually identified with his son Ramón, who as he grew to manhood was perhaps the outstanding member of the family. Symbolic of the change that it has witnessed, the misfortunes that wrested it from the possession of the Vejars, as other ranchos passed from the ownership of their California friends and relatives during their first unhappy years as American citizens, the old name of Rancho San José de Abajo is almost forgotten in the valley. But in the presence of the venerable *mansión* the old days live again. One can picture the scene . . . the Vejars at home . . . Judge Hayes driving out through the valley, dust of the unpaved road rolling away under the spinning buggy wheels, and we know the meaning of his notes—

“. . . the valley of San José, full of agreeable people, fond of festivity, industrious withal . . . The feast of San José . . . Ricardo Vejar and 100 in family, Palomares. My heart would be cold to forget the faces of old I was ever happy to see in this smiling valley. Alvarados, Vejars, Ybararas, their fortunes have changed since 1852, and threaten yet a greater change as the spirit of speculation begins to brood over and close around them. Longer here perhaps than elsewhere have lingered the ancient California customs, the elegance of manners, natural hospitality, courtesy, mirth. Home of *jarabe* and *son*, of Trust as well.”<sup>1</sup>

#### RANCHO LA PUENTE

Rancho La Puente in early times was one of the widespread cattle ranges possessed by Misi6n San Gabriel, stocked with Mission herds, inhabited only by the Indians of scattered rancherías.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1841 the men whose names were to become enduringly associated with this jewel of ranchos, came across the weary plains to Los Angeles from New Mexico, where they had been living for more than a decade previously. They were the partners John Rowland and William Workman.

1. Pioneer Notes, The Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, ed. by Marjorie Tisdale Wolcott, p. 217.

2. “In 1828 there are named as Mission ranchos, La Puente, Santa Ana, Jurupa, San Bernardino, San Timoteo, San Gorg6nio, four sitios on the R6o San Gabriel.”—Bancroft, Vol. XIX—p. 568n.

"I claim," reminisced Albert G. Toomes, a member of one of the two companies which arrived in California that November, "[that] we were the first regular emigrants who ever started from the States to California, as those who arrived in the country before us dropped in by mere chance, as old trappers, whale men, and sailors from the islands and Boston ships."<sup>1</sup>

Toomes considered the 1841 arrivals as of one party, although they were divided into two companies, the first coming via Salt Lake into the northern country, while the second, to which he belonged,<sup>2</sup> headed by Rowland and Workman, came over the southern route into Los Angeles. As the Rowland-Workman party originated in New Mexico, it is to be supposed that one division of the group with which Toomes started from Independence on May 6, 1841, joined them after reaching Santa Fe or at the final rendezvous in western New Mexico from which they set out for California the first week in September, 1841.

Anyway, the southern route party certainly came with the intention of settling in the new country. That is, all except Don Benito Wilson, who wanted to go to China but finally gave that up when after three trips to San Francisco he couldn't find a boat by which he might.

Rumors of Texan plans for invasion and annexation of New Mexico, which led to violent demonstrations against foreign residents, provided the specific urge for the formation of the Rowland-Workman emigrant train, in which B. D. Wilson, who became Don Benito in California, William Gordon, and William Knight (later of "Knight's Ferry" fame up on the Sacramento), also were leading figures.

After a trip free from accidents or unusual events, the party arrived in Los Angeles on November 5, 1841. Workman and Rowland evidently began at once to look about for a permanent home. By the spring of 1842 they were petitioning for Rancho La Puente, and John Rowland, armed with certificates from the priest at San Gabriel and from the Prefect of the Second District stating that there was no objection to granting the land, since it would not be prejudicial

1. *The California Scrap Book*, Oscar T. Schuck, p. 181.

2. Bancroft, Vol. XXI—p. 278.

to the neophytes, went north to Monterey to talk it over with Governor Alvarado.<sup>1</sup> They were entitled to the privilege under Mexican law, since they were married to New Mexican women, and had applied for Mexican citizenship.

Unrestricted by fence or barrier, the mingled herds of Rowland and Workman roamed the broad, hilly reaches of Rancho La Puente where 150,000 fertile acres had become theirs by Alvarado's grant. The two new citizens of California had selected for their homes one of the loveliest valleys in all the country. Having seen them, who can forget the green hills of Puente, rolling up smoothly, in dulcet curves, against the blue of a rain-washed sky?

Evidently John Rowland took the leadership in obtaining the grant. Anyway, with their families they established themselves as neighbors, a quarter of a mile apart, each one erecting an adobe house in the style of the country of their adoption.

Later on, the rancho was formally partitioned between the two men, John Rowland holding the south and Workman taking the north half of the vast holding.

#### *The Workman Homestead—Puente*

The adobe house that William Workman built stands firm and sturdy to this day, beautifully situated upon a little rise of ground from which the homestead acres descend gradually all around to the fertile level of the wide valley. The old house faces far-off hills to the north, and its background is glorified by another mountainous guardian circle. It was very soon after Workman and Rowland obtained the grant of La Puente, probably in 1843 or '44, that this house was built by Don Julian. So he was called by the Californians, whose vocabulary did not include the name William.

Originally the structure was of the typical California style, shaped like a U, with parallel wings 75 feet in length extending to the rear and joined on the extremities by an adobe wall which shut in the fourth side of the patio. The flat roofs were covered with tar from the not-distant Cañon de la Brea, still known by the same name today.

1. Narrative of Benjamin D. Wilson, in *Pathfinders*, Robert G. Clelland, Series California, Appendix, p. 383.



The old William Workman adobe at Puente.  
“. . . firm and sturdy to this day. . .”

Thinking of the house as it was in those times, we reconstruct in imagination a typical ranch house of pastoral California, built of what materials the land offered, adapted to the needs of a life quite baronial, in its isolation as managerial center of a veritable little principality.

This house was built by a man born to the traditions of another clime and another country. Unlike most early California adobes, it had a cellar, or rather, a series of cellars. Two were wine cellars, into one of which the great casks, filled with the delicious product of Don Julian's vineyards and winery, were rolled upon a runway of planks. Next to this a cellar apartment to which the worn stairway of wood, with creaking unsteady treads, descends from the rear veranda, was the kitchen. A small, ill-lighted place, paved with brick—a queer kitchen. One cannot help but attempt a hazy computation of the trips made over those steps, by Indian feet, down and up, up and down the stairs, carrying the steaming dishes, returning with emptied plates from the dining room

in the central portion of the house between the two rear extensions, although doubtless in the earlier days much of the food was prepared out-of-doors in the patio. There Workman had a grape arbor, and some orange trees.

The long adobe wings extending rearward and enclosing the patio housed the major domestic and managerial activities of the great rancho. In its early days the La Puente home of Workman seems to have been very similar to Don Juan Temple's beautiful Los Cerritos. McGroarty tells us that, sheltered under the roofs of the parallel wings, were a butcher shop, a blacksmith shop, where bridles, bits, spurs, branding irons, etc., were made and general repairing for the ranch was done, and the commissary, where clothing, boots, shoes, hats, blankets, and all the things normally needed by the 50 "hands" and vaqueros employed on the ranch could be supplied. There was a storage room where were kept saddles, saddle trees, and all the picturesque but useful things that pertain to a vaquero's outfit, as well as storage rooms for grain.

There was also a well room. In the heyday of the rancho's prosperity Don Julian installed a large English pump for drawing the water, with a handle four or five feet long, and a ball at the end weighing about 10 pounds. Among the La Puente retainers was a most ancient Indian. He was nearly blind. All he could do, and all he did, in peaceful and philosophic leisure at his strokes, day after day, was to provide man power for this pump.

Many details of this original building were suggestive of fortification. The massive walls—in a single structure housing and by storage and manufacture providing for the rancho, his family and his chief retainers—the enclosed courtyard, the well within the walls.

Although an elaborate dovecote surmounting the gate that pierced the wall gestured peace, this protective postern, wide enough to admit stock and *carretas*, was equipped with a massive iron lock and key.<sup>1</sup>

1. Such were used in California of those days on every outer door that bothered with a lock. This hardware was directly descended from forms devised at Mission smithys, but made in later, busier times rarely showed the artistic touches in pierced work or turning that were lavished upon primitive models. The keys were of iron or brass, usually six or eight inches in length, with hafts terminating in big loops and notched bits that fitted into square ward locks correspondingly immense.

And there was a tunnel. No California mystery is quite complete without a tunnel and buried treasure, although few adobes in the entire land ever possessed either. Treasure was sometimes buried at Rancho La Puente, but only to be dug up again the first time it became convenient to carry it into Los Angeles to leave it with some merchant in exchange for purchases or on deposit. What the purpose of the tunnel at Don Julian's place was is conjectural. It is blocked up now, but those who know could still find the entrance in the cellar wall. It led from under the east wing of the house out to the vicinity of the family cemetery, several hundred feet west of the house. In New Mexico Don Julian had experienced the swiftly kindled hate of a native population aroused against foreigners, and had come to California to escape destruction as a result of it. Perhaps he had not forgotten that, and in a land where the manner of life was feudal in all except its peacefulness, could imagine himself beleaguered and defensive within his adobe castle.

Don Julian is known to have sent servants through the tunnel on unnamed errands. Emerging ghostlike from the ground they gave rise to hushed gossip of witches, among the Indians.

Of course the greater part of the labor on the rancho was performed by these "Inditos," as the Californians affectionately called their aboriginal liegemen. Here at La Puente they had not been disturbed from their hereditary rancherias, but lived in tule and cornstalk huts grouped into a village just east of the little cemetery, on the border of the San José Creek which coursed not far from the homestead, parallel with the hills to southward, and still is faintly traced against the landscape.

On this creek Don Julian Workman and John Rowland each established a grist mill, in which they used millstones said to have been transported from Santa Fe. Some of these millstones, made of coarse, porous rock, are still extant at the Workman homestead, used to form a unique centerpiece for the fountain in the patio of the handsome modern adobe home erected in recent years just across the drive from the original family home by Walter P. Temple, present owner.



The farming population that began to settle in the vicinity of Rancho La Puente in the fifties and sixties patronized the two mills regularly<sup>1</sup> and they are still remembered in the name of a modern boulevard—the “Norwalk and Puente Mills Road.”

At Workman’s and Rowland’s many way-weary overland travelers on their way to the mines paused and rested, or secured supplies. Aid of every description was meted out to them by the taciturn yet generous William Workman.

He was a hard-eyed, weather-beaten mountaineer, with a cold, thin-lipped face, almost fierce in expression. Born an Englishman and proud of it, on his office door at La Puente a little placque which read:

WILLIAM WORKMAN  
Rancho La Puente  
Arrived in California on  
Guy Fawkes Day  
Nov. 5, 1841

gave due recognition to the simultaneous arrival of himself and a famous British holiday in Southern California. Contemporary references to Workman are not voluble. Possibly the traditional reserve of his nativity came across the plains with him and into his California life. He lived quietly and industriously on his rancho, little concerned with goings-on in hot-headed Los Angeles.

But on September 30, 1845, Don Julian accepted into his home a son-in-law, Francis P. F. Temple, in whom he placed an affection and confidence that belied his hard face and calculating eye.

Francisco Temple had come around the Horn from Reading, Massachusetts, in 1841, at the age of 19 years, to join his half-brother, Jonathan, who as “Don Juan” had already achieved much material success in California, during his long residence here. John was the eldest, “Pliny Fisk” (the Christian name Francisco was added when he was baptized into the Catholic Church in California) was the youngest of the numerous children of the Temple family. Francisco’s youth,

1. Visiting Rowland at Rancho La Puente on January 31, 1850, Judge Benjamin Hayes noted in his journal, “Several wagons are camped here, getting wheat ground at Mr. R’s mill.”—Pioneer Notes, Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes.

as compared with his well-known brother, his quiet manner and exceptional modesty, his brief stature and slender figure, inspired the friendly California nickname "Templito"<sup>1</sup> by which he was known from the beginning of his California life.

Templito proved to be ambitious and able, and in his own right soon acquired a fortune. After Don Juan's death, in 1866, he purchased the famous old "court house" in Los Angeles, built by the elder Temple in 1858, and the balance of the large lot on which it stood.<sup>2</sup> A few years later Templito added to it what became the middle section of the famous Temple Block. This was between 1866 and 1870, for in the latter year the last, or northern section, of Temple Block was erected to house the Bank that was to cost the unfortunate Templito his entire fortune.

As Don Julian observed the then splendid new structure brought into being by Templito's imported architect, he succumbed to the titillations of fashion. He engaged the same architect to remodel the venerable adobe mansion at La Puente. Then in brick and adobe was recorded the silent passing of one California era and the complacent beginning of another, as the old adobe was metamorphosed out of its unaffected pastoral simplicity and into the urbane conventionalism of the mid-Victorian English-speaking world.

Comparatively little of the original house remains. The two long wings were pulled down. Slight rearward extensions were suffered to remain, and similar front extensions with brick walls were added, producing a ground plan formed like an H. Across front and rear of the dwelling, spacious, vine-shadowed verandas connected these extensions.

An emphatically gabled roof completed utterly the alteration of the appearance of the old-time structure, and provided upstairs two pairs of smallish high perched rooms connected by a vast unlighted hallway over the *sala* and dining room on the first floor. A pleasing inside stairway with prettily turned balustrade, of redwood painted smoothly white,

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1. Literally, "little Temple."

2. His purchase "included the portion of Temple Block then built (nearest to the court house) and the balance of the lot. . ."—H. D. Barrows, Historical Society of Southern California, Vol. III, Pt. ii, p. 40.

ascends to this floor, but the second story rooms have never been more than partially finished inside.

By the time all these changes were made the wants and habits of Rancho La Puente had been greatly altered. Communication with the growing town of Los Angeles, and of that embryonic center with the outside world in turn, was easier and more frequent. It was no longer imperative for each rancho to constitute in itself an establishment adequate for a principality. Large-scale stock raising had disappeared perforce during the drouth of 1864, when Don Julian at last had had to station himself at the corral gate, and (to prevent their dying of starvation on the range) shoot his own cattle, one by one, as the vaqueros drove them before him, by the hundreds. Now the rancho was becoming a farm. Wheat fields and expansive vineyards covered the former cattle range.

Don Julian's family was not large. However, he liked to be surrounded by his grandchildren, and several of them grew up and received their early education in this home.

One of the west rooms, which had a separate entrance to the front veranda, was Don Julian's office or sitting room, where he received those who came to do business with him. It was on the outside door of this room that his name plate was fastened. Next to this room was the schoolroom, set apart for the grandchildren and the resident tutor he provided for them.

The interior of the old house was altered as completely as the exterior, woodwork and all. Heating facilities were scant, but the mantle-pieces, evidently dating from the remodelling, are quaint. They are executed in white marble, with a round arch and keystone motif elaborated into a floral gesture, demarking the opening. Fronting extremely shallow openings in the walls, these mantels patently were intended merely as elegant backgrounds for the cast-iron stoves which had lately become the rage. Amusing evidence of the close association between this distant country house and developments at the Temple Block in the city is found in one of the east rooms, where lacking other exit, a stovepipe was projected outdoors through a pane in the glass of a fastened door. The same device that was employed when stoves were

installed in Don Juan Temple's old block when it became the county court house, and stovepipes emerged from nearly every window.

Similarity of architectural design in the new Temple Block, that is, the middle section of the famous building, and Don Julian's remodeled country home is very striking. Ornate, yet not without good lines and a certain attractiveness, the "block" and the home just escaped the orgy of architectural grimcracks with which the eighties were afflicted. In both rustication was applied at every opportunity, and every window was arched, with the inevitable stone header and superimposed keystone motif recurrent all over Europe and America throughout the architecture of the period. Similar cornice motives were used in both structures, and the new plaster laid up on the old adobe walls of the home was marked off after the custom of the period, to simulate dressed stone.

It is not without its charm, this metamorphosed adobe. There is a restful quaintness about it now that makes it as attractive as its striking newness and ambitious elegance doubtless made it then.

"The astute and far-seeing Templito," as Don Francisco was referred to in an ad of Don Mateo Kellar's in the old Los Angeles Star, saw about the same time that Alvinza Hayward and J. G. Downey did, that Los Angeles offered a great opportunity for the banking business. Backed by his own and Don Julian's fortunes, enjoying such friendship and high regard among the Angelenos as even subsequent failure did not destroy, in 1870 Don Francisco built the third portion of the Temple Block and opened therein on November 23, 1871, "The Bank," of Temple and Workman. His kindly heart was his undoing. Loaning funds over-generously to friends who soon began to impose on him, the Bank went under when panic and recession fever swept over California following the spectacular crash of the California Bank in San Francisco in 1875.

Templito went to San Francisco, seeking assistance. He at last obtained a loan of some \$200,000 from E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin, who had lately made a fortune in the Comstock Lode of Nevada, and who now founded a vaster one in the south-

land by exacting from Templito a blanket mortgage on all of his ranches and downtown property as well as the ranches of his father-in-law and his intimate friend, J. M. Sanchez. Rehabilitation of the Bank was impossible, even with the funds secured from Baldwin. Endeavoring desperately to prevent the ruin of himself and Don Julian, even with public faith undiminished, he yet saw all the fruits of his life's work vanish into nothing. He had not even a roof-tree left of his own, but sheltered his family and lived the few remaining years of his life on his wife's property at Rancho La Merced.

How Rancho La Puente, the old homestead where he had lived now for 34 years, could be involved in the holocaust shocked and bewildered the aging Workman, who had scarcely visited the Bank in which he was a partner. On May 17, 1876, he ended his life by suicide at the homestead where he had lived his best and happiest years.

The homestead reserve of 75 acres which escaped the general ruin passed into the hands of Don Julian's grandchildren; Francis, Jr., and William and John Harrison Temple becoming successive owners. John Harrison bought William's interest in the Homestead about 1889. Then at last the old homestead itself was lost on a mortgage.

In 1919 prosperity returned to the remainder of Don Julian's family. Walter P. Temple, youngest son of Templito, a baby of five when his father and grandfather died, was enabled to carry out a long-cherished dream. He bought back the old homestead and restored to his sons the heritage of their proud old English great-grandfather, and their well-beloved grandfather "Templito."

#### RANCHO LA MERCED

The unstrained quality of Juan Matías Sanchez' friendship for William Workman and his son-in-law, which led him to risk and lose his whole earthly possession in an effort to sustain their honor, evidently dated back to early days at Rancho La Puente. The census of 1850 reveals that Sanchez was resident there then and majordomo of the Rancho.

About a year before this Francisco P. F. Temple and his wife Doña Antónia Margarita Workman de Temple, had

established a home of their own at the place called Misión Vieja, on Rancho La Merced, westernmost portion of the La Puente. "Old Mission" today is one of the world's richest oil fields, the Montebello, bisected by San Gabriel Boulevard where it strikes eastward across the Río Hondo bridge.

The rich bottom lands of the old river attracted the Mission fathers long before Temple's time, and there, less than a mile from his home, still stood in his day the ruins of the first Misión San Gabriel. For this reason the place was, and still is, known to the natives as "Misión Vieja." And the river was called instead of Río Hondo, "Río San Gabriel Viejo" (old San Gabriel River) or "Río de los Dos Temblores" (River of the two Earthquakes). It was earthquakes experienced when the Mission was established at this site that gave it its popular name of "Temblores," and led to the use of a T for the Mission brand.

Across the river from the wells a little settlement called "Temple's Corners," dilapidated and forgotten-looking, marks the site of Francisco Temple's homestead, but ill recalls its former beauty. Only a palm tree on the south side of the road near a great modern oil tank remains to mark the site of Templito's home, which must have been one of the show places of early days. The spacious U-shaped adobe dwelling was surrounded by gardens and vineyards that were famous for miles around.

Juan Temple, the elder brother, became thoroughly Californian, but Francisco was among the newcomers who were always remembering things from Back East. Only a Yankee in California would have spent \$40,000 for a wooden fence around his vineyard as F. P. F. Temple did, especially where one could grow a live fence in any direction by merely sticking occasional willow twigs into the ground.

Around the adobe house and partially enclosed by the high fence, Don Francisco planted 20 acres of fruit trees and 50 acres of vines. North from Misión Vieja approximately along the present San Gabriel Blvd. ran the Potrero Chico and next to it the Potrero de Felipe Lugo. Upon these pastures and the Merced Hills to the west Don Francisco and Don Juan Matías Sanchez herded their cattle and horses.

About the time that the Workman homestead was being re-built Templito added a frame second-story to his adobe hacienda and next door to it had constructed a handsome brick residence in the best Victorian manner. The solitary palm tree that waves above the oil tanks today is the last remnant of the garden that occupied the little space between the two buildings. They were destroyed by fire some years ago. It was here, not many years after he had built the splendid new home, and made his rancho famous for magnificent, high-priced racing stock as well as agricultural productivity, that the unfortunate Templito died, broken-hearted and in poverty, on April 27, 1877.

Nevertheless "Temple had done more toward developing the resources and advancing the prosperity of Los Angeles city and county than any other person. He had used his wealth to establish many new industries and to forward the interests of a number of new enterprises. He had spent thousands of dollars in developing the gold mines of Catalina Island, in carrying out the Cerro Gordo Water Works System, in carving the granite bed of the San Jacinto wagon road, in building the San Emida (sic) sawmills, and in erecting the flouring mill near the San Sabine River, besides building dozens of houses in the City of Los Angeles itself. Sincere regret over his misfortune was expressed by business associates and friends."<sup>1</sup>

A portion of Rancho La Merced on the east side of the river belonged to Doña Antónia Margarita in her own right, and thus escaped the grasp of Lucky Baldwin, when at last the Workman, Temple and Sanchez estates were bid in to satisfy his claims.

Upon this little patrimony she managed to sustain her family and her aged mother. Thus the name Temple remained identified with Misión Vieja throughout the years. But "Temple's Corners" never became a flourishing community. When Lucky Baldwin took over Rancho La Merced it seemed of little value, consisting mostly of bottom lands covered with willow brakes and a river which annually threatened to overflow the whole region, and westward, acres of rough hill land fit only for sheep grazing.

Then in the spring of 1912 the grandson of F. P. F. Temple, Thomas Workman Temple, then nine years of age, made the great discovery. Gathering wild flowers on the hillside he saw a tiny pool of rain-water basined in the rocks. Its surface was bubbling and he smelled gas. He hurried home

1. Financing an Empire, History of Banking in California, Ira B. Cross—p. 554.

and brought his father, Walter P. Temple, back to the spot. They struck a match and ignited a jet of natural gas.

Convinced that oil sands must lie beneath this place, where the Temples returned many times to amuse themselves and their friends by frying eggs over the natural gas-jet, Temple sold the remnant of his mother's 50-acre La Merced homestead, and acquired a 60-acre tract just across the river where the discovery had been made. It became the means of restoring to affluence the family of Templito. Operations on the first Temple Lease well were begun by the Standard Oil Company in April, 1917. It was the beginning of oil production from one of the country's richest fields.

#### *La Casita de Rafael Bayse—Misión Vieja*

When Walter P. Temple moved across the Río Hondo onto his new holding at Misión Vieja, he installed his family in an adobe house that was scarred and pockmarked with the tribulations of many years.

It had been a store, and then it had become a saloon. Temple made extensive repairs, and converted it into a pleasant adobe home, nestled down by the river, with a *corredor* on one side and a lean-to kitchen along the other. There it stands yet, aged 61 years, denuded of the vines which used to clamber over it, its walls echoing no longer to the voices of roistering soldiers, Indians and traders nor to the softer sounds of family life, but to the constant rhythm of the great wells, the beating of the pumps; in the dooryard, in front of it, and beyond it as far as you can see down the river bed, derricks rising out of the willows.

The adobe was built in 1869 for a store, by Jesus Andrade and Rafael Bayse. So declares Jesus Andrade himself, who is still living, in a little frame house by the side of a walnut grove half-a-mile up the river from the wells.

It was on Juan Matías Sanchez' part of Rancho La Merced that they built the little store, Rafael Bayse being a nephew of Sanchez, and having come to California from New Mexico to work on the ranch of his uncle. María Bayse, his wife, is said to be living yet, in El Monte.





La Casita de Rafael Bayse. "There it stands . . . its walls echoing no longer the voices of roistering soldiers, Indians and traders. . ."

During Temple's reconstruction of the old store, two antiquated rifles, with the stocks rotted away, came to light from the cranny where they had been tucked away on top of the adobe wall under the beams, and long since forgotten. They were cap and ball models, with very short barrels, one of English and one of French make. But the mystery aroused no spark in Jesus Andrade when he was told of it. "They might have been traded in by soldiers," he said, "there were lots of soldiers around here then—*quien sabe?*"

While in outline the Bayse adobe is not greatly changed from what it was in 1869, it cannot be taken for an example of construction in that period, since nearly all the woodwork in the building is new as well as the stucco finish on the outer walls. The windows are small compared with those of other adobe buildings, but perhaps they were not dispensing merchandise that required much light in the old mercantile days of Rafael Bayse and Jesus Andrade.

*Mansión de Juan Matías Sanchez—  
Lincoln Boulevard, Montebello*

In possession of 2,200 acres of the best land around Misión Vieja as well as the Potrero Grande and the Potrero de Felipe Lugo, and many lucrative bands of sheep, Juan Matías Sanchez found himself very comfortably well-to-do in the two decades that followed the change of flags over California.

Upon the crown of one of the most sightly hills overlooking the Río Hondo, about two miles southwest of the hacienda of his friend Templito, Don Juan erected a handsome adobe dwelling.

It is still there. Modern "improvements" have rendered the interior of the old house gorgeously elaborate but quite out of character, but the exterior restoration, while slightly over-perfect, is good. It is an L-plan building, with one wing curiously angled off from the other, suggesting that possibly at the beginning two buildings, since made into one, topped the low hill. Occasionally such an arrangement is found in old California places.

Dispossessed of his fair lands, too old to make a new struggle, Juan Matías Sanchez lived out his life in poverty. Oil wells on the very acres surrounding the hacienda have enriched subsequent owners and made possible the present lavish preservation of his adobe home.

RANCHO PASO DE BARTOLO VIEJO

So completely is the Rancho Paso de Bartolo identified with Governor Don Pío Pico, that it is almost a surprise to discover that he was not the original grantee of this choice and beloved small estate, exceptional both for its native beauty and its extraordinary fertility.

Once part of Misión San Gabriel's lands, Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo, later best known by the nickname of "Ranchito" which Don Pío gave it, was granted by Governor José Figueroa to Juan Crispín Pérez in the year of the secularization, June 12, 1835.

Previously, Pérez had been one of the little group of families who had formed a settlement on the vast Rancho

Santa Gertrudes, and had served there as *alcalde auxiliar* during 1831-1836.<sup>1</sup> Later, he held the office of majordomo under padre Esténege at the declining Mission whose land he now possessed. Esténege complained of his mismanagement, and Pérez complained of the padre's distrust, and the Prefect decided the Majordomo had been at fault.<sup>2</sup> These were years when the unfortunate padres witnessed helplessly the rapid decay of the institutions they had erected and cherished. One cannot wonder that they were driven to bickering and complaint. Juan Pérez continued as majordomo through 1842 and again in 1845; "but there was no semblance of prosperity," and finally even the cook and vaquero were discharged because of the poverty of the mission.

By the time the land commission met to hear claims in 1852, Juan Crispín Pérez did not file claim alone as master of Rancho Paso de Bartolo. Pío Pico, Joaquina Sepúlveda and Bernardo Guirado appeared as claimants with him to the now venerable tract. The original grant of Paso de Bartolo Viejo, as it was termed in the petition, comprised two leagues of land. Of this Bernardino Guirado received patent from the United States to 875 acres in 1867, Joaquina Sepúlveda to 217 acres, and Don Pío to 8,891 acres, in 1881.

How this tract came into possession of Don Pío does not appear. He was not born to wealth, but his fortune was founded on his own efforts. "My father did not leave me a mule, nor a vara of ground," he once said, "I worked for the fathers of the old San Gabriel Mission when I was a boy."<sup>3</sup> It was at this Mission that Don Pío was born, May 5, 1801, and spent his boyhood.

But later, as the owner of Las Flores and Santa Margarita, ranchos measured not in acres but by leagues, to say nothing of other properties of consequence, Don Pío Pico could well call his 8,000-acre rancho of Paso de Bartolo by the diminutive "Ranchito."

And besides, he seemed always to hold the place in an affectionate regard. Certain it is that he loved to be there, and to entertain his friends there. And at Ranchito he found

1. Pérez is identified as a part owner of Santa Gertrudes, 1821-30. Bancroft, Vol. XX, p. 635 footnote.

2. Bancroft XXI—p. 637.

3. *Southern California*—Harper's Magazine, December, 1882.

repose from the busier life of expanding Los Angeles where he was making a valiant and rather pathetic endeavor to take up the life of an American citizen and business man. Don Pío was a real "*hijo del país*" in all that the term Native Son meant to the old Californians. In his efforts to continue as a leader, after his return to California from Mexico, whence he had retreated before Stockton, under the bewildering new conditions that had taken sway over his beloved Los Angeles, there seems a kind of patriotic pride that is touching. For of course he failed, as unscrupulous gringos preyed upon his ignorance of American customs and his inability to speak English. From his former prestige as one of the wealthiest men of California Don Pío descended to a pauper's grave, dependent in his last years upon the kindness of his old friend and *ahijado*, J. J. Warner. El Ranchito was his last possession in Los Angeles County.

*La Mansión de Don Pío—Whittier Boulevard near Whittier*

In its heyday the adobe mansion at El Ranchito was one of the most pretentious and one of the loveliest of the country homes of California.

Henry D. Barrows visited there in the sixties. "I have been," he said, "in the memorable adobe house of Governor Pico at Ranchito, when it was his home, but I know very little of its history. I only know that at that period, the house was white and neat and the gardens around it and the beautiful ranchito or hacienda of which they were a part, were well worthy of being the country seat or home of an honored Governor of primitive California."<sup>1</sup>

Much of romancing about the old house has been done. Years ago in the publications of the Historical Society the accurate Barrows refuted many of the claims popularly made for it, but the tale still goes on that "the timbers were carried on the backs of Indians from San Pedro Harbor, twenty miles away," although Barrows avers that this is incorrect. He points out also, that El Ranchito is often referred to popularly as a Spanish land grant, and discounts both this and the romantic wedding journey story told of it, with one stroke, showing that Pico did not own the rancho at the date of his

1. Historic Facts and Fancies—pamphlet, California Federation of Women's Clubs.



La Mansión de Don Pío—"On the east the old patio remains, a pleasant, reposeful place."

marriage to María Ygnácia Alvarado in 1834, as it then belonged to Misión San Gabriel.

We do not know just when this fine old adobe mansion where Don Pío entertained with lavish hospitality when he was rich, and still with courteous grace when he was poor, the noblest and best of the Californians, was built. It has been asserted repeatedly that the original portion of the house was erected in 1826, but this seems very unlikely. In fact, I have not been able to find any hint of verification at all for this date. If any portion of this adobe were built as early as 1826, Don Pío did not build it, and our evidence points strongly to the fact that that portion has disappeared. The natural conclusion that it might have been built at an early date by Juan Pérez is damaged by the fact that by the time the patent maps of this district were drawn, in 1866, the house of Juan Pérez had become a ruin, and was so indicated on several maps by Hancock's surveyors.

It is invariably insisted also that formerly the great ram-



The west side of Pfo Pico's home where the flood of 1866 swept away a portion of the old adobe.

bling structure contained 30 or 40 rooms. This is quite possible, although today there are but 17, and lacking two on the west side, the ground plan seems complete. If there were more rooms, they may have stood to the rear of the present building, although this seems somewhat illogical, or they may have extended westward and been swept entirely away by the flood, as one version of the story has it.

But there still remain many rooms and enough of charm about the old place to satisfy anybody's romantic yearning, without embroidering the facts.

The capacious house presents a ground plan of unusual interest and adaptability. Its main longitudinal section runs north and south, formerly boasting a *corredor* and patio on either side, framed by short projecting wings which gave the whole ground plan the form of an asymmetrical H. Ruinous remains of these extensions still cling to the west wall, where a pair of double doors and several windows gape baldly upon

what used to be the patio, but became in one wild night of 1866 a part of the river bed.

In the old days this dreamy verandah looked out across a wide plain famed for its prodigious fertility,<sup>1</sup> toward the Río San Gabriel, a mile distant. Then El Ranchito experienced the rumbling scourge of a California flood, such as they knew in the old days of the erratic San Gabriel river, with its treacherous vacillation in the choice of a permanent bed. An item in the Los Angeles Star of March 20, 1852, suggests the former wild winter force of the river that looks so peaceable today—"On Wednesday a Frenchman named Francis Premart was drowned while attempting to cross the San Gabriel river, in the vicinity of the Mission." This was not far above El Ranchito. And in 1868 the unruly river did not stop with drowning temerarious Frenchmen. It rose to a great height and then changed its course from one channel into two, carving out of the rich valley soil a deep new bed and forming the new San Gabriel in addition to the river we know today as the Río Hondo or "deep river." The flood cut away the soil to the very wall of Don Pío's mansion, weakening the foundations of the west side until the two end rooms collapsed and the *corredor* roof fell in.

On the east front, the old patio remains, a pleasant, reposeful place, but suggesting perhaps, more of the activities of later occupants than of the customs of Don Pío's day. This patio is paved with brick and in its center is a well, near which there grew, it is said, a fig tree which yielded Don Pío's favorite fruit.

Neither the brick paving nor the well were installed there by Don Pío, but their story is even more interesting as a revelation of the courtly old Californian's character. In the sixties Charles Lyman Strong bought a portion of El Ranchito from Don Pío. There was no house on this property for him to live in, so until he could develop his land and erect one, Don Pío, in a gesture typically Californian and typical of his own generous nature and courteous manner, *lent* the purchaser his own ranch home to live in. During his occupancy

1. "The Paso de Bartolo was one of the most productive pieces of property in Los Angeles County. In the old days, it was devoted almost entirely to growing of corn." J. A. Graves, *My Seventy Years in California*, p. 156.

of the aging adobe, Strong discharged the obligation he felt, but was in no way expected to assume, by paving the east patio and sinking the convenient well in the middle of it. The lattice work of *corredores* surrounding this patio also is of later American origin.

But that California life was still pastoral, and that Don Pío and his guests rode horseback up to the very door of the house long after this day is shown by the portion of original brick paving still left (the middle section has been re-laid) before the entrance to the south wing. There it is chipped and scarred, marked deeply by the iron-shod animals who like their picturesque riders have disappeared forever from California life except when they are recalled on fiesta days, in ghost-like pageantry.

It was Mrs. H. W. R. Strong, wife of Don Pío's "tenant," whose timely efforts in behalf of the mansion alone saved it from destruction, and preserved it among our few protected landmarks.

This happened nearly 30 years ago, when a new bridge was being extended across the Río Hondo. Looking around for handy material with which to build approaches to the span, the road master saw the adobe mansion of Don Pío and the little family chapel which stood nearby among the clustered adobes of his retainers, across the present boulevard from the house. There also was the mill, whose crude stones may still be seen at the hacienda. With permission of the Whittier City authorities, (the city had acquired Ranchito as water-bearing land) he began demolishing the old buildings and hauling away the adobe bricks. Thus the small houses and the mill and the chapel, said to have been a beautiful little place, quaintly decorated inside with hand-painted frescoes, were wantonly destroyed long before age had weakened or greatly altered them.

Miss Harriet Strong heard of this vandalism by chance while traveling. She took the news to her mother and Mrs. Strong went into action immediately. She succeeded in staying destruction of the old house, which she knew so well, and in which she had once lived, then initiated vigorous measures to secure its permanent preservation.



Under the leadership of Mrs. Strong, a great number of historically-minded Californians gave effort and money to save the adobe of Don Pío. Several organizations contributed to the endeavor, notably the Governor Pico Museum and Historical Society, of Whittier, and the Landmarks Club, then flourishing under the leadership of the irresistible Charles F. Lummis. The Whittier Museum and Historical Society leased the Hacienda from the City of Whittier, put a new roof on it and made sorely needed repairs that gave it a hundred years' lease on life, and subsequently turned it over to the State of California. It is now administered by the State and to a degree is protected. But as a landmark, for many reasons worthy of preservation, it should receive more attention and better care. In fact, until protests were made to the Governor a year or two ago, the old house and grounds were carelessly tended and falling into deplorable condition. The last year has seen improvements made, but it is to be hoped that public interest in this fine old hacienda may be increased and strengthened to the point of achieving for El Ranchito a permanent appropriation for improvement and upkeep.

Not that El Ranchito should be built over. It has already been unfortunately mutilated by well meant but inaccurate restoration.

Especially unfortunate was the use of stucco in refinishing the wall of the north elevation, and the equally inappropriate pseudo-Mission false front. In spite of the fact that this work was done with the most commendable intention and at cost of praiseworthy effort and sacrifice, these features are none the less completely incorrect, and puzzle even the casual observer.

Actually this false front is a nonconformist member that has grown upon the house by a series of careless accretions. It is my personal conclusion that originally the house was not a mansion, but was only one story in height, built on approximately its present lines, otherwise. Across this north elevation extended a broad *corredor*, part of which still remains to one side of the front. There are many structural



“But the popular tradition that Don Pío was accustomed to stand upon this upstairs balcony and deliver addresses and proclamations to his people seems farfetched indeed.”

evidences indicating that the gabled roof and half-story loft it shelters upstairs were added by Don Pío at a late period. And it is the recollection of Miss Strong that this north extension was built subsequent to the time her family lived there.

The rooms that lie behind this inharmonious front are of adobe construction, and probably were added by Don Pío in the early seventies. The outer doors are amusing and old, one of them is equipped with a small cat hole. But the popular tradition that Don Pío was accustomed to stand upon this upstairs balcony and deliver addresses and proclamations to his people seems far-fetched indeed. According to Miss Strong's recollection, the upstairs balcony was a window flower box before the “restoration,” and anyway it is not likely that the second story appeared upon the building until long after Don Pío had ceased to hold public office, if it were even conceivable that he made public addresses at any time

at El Ranchito—so far out in the country and distant from the centers of political and oratorical activity.

It seems that at the time of restoration this false front was of wood, and had been given a kind of country store effect by occupants after Pico. While doubtless an improvement over this situation, the patently 20th century "Missionesque" curves added at the top have nothing whatever to do with Don Pío.

Upstairs under the gabled roof there is a long attic apartment with unfinished walls, which tradition holds to have been the grand ballroom.

The walls of the building are all at least two feet thick, in some places nearly three, and often rise up to the roof with a nonchalant disregard of being or not being "plumb." *Corredores* are broad, ceilings high, but none of the many rooms are of large size. Most of the doors, and the shutters on the west outer wall, are handmade, and worthy of attention.

There is indication of a former inside stairway leading up from one of the rooms in the north wing. Leading up from the east *corredor* is an outside stairway with a *sala* window peering out from under it. It appears to have been an afterthought.

Iron grilles are found at windows of two rooms at the south end of the mansion. The present caretaker states that he has found these iron rods to actually be primitive iron pipe, about one inch in diameter. Iron pipe was not used in California before the American period.

The front rooms of the north section are declared to have been built and set aside for Don Pío's personal use. In two of them certain sections in the broad floor planks could once have been lifted out, but whether they really gave access to hidden treasure boxes or not, one does not know. On the north wing also a big wine cellar with sturdy primitive beams for supporting the casks, provided an integral part of Don Pío's hospitality.

For the most part, the interior of Don Pío's mansion as it stands today, suggests with fair accuracy the background against which his elaborate household furnishings were installed in the day of his wealth and happiness. But cover

your eyes with your hand if you would not be shocked by the interior finish of what used to be the grand *sala*. There red wall-paper of 1901 vintage and woodwork "grained" to simulate golden oak give pain to the eye and reveal the handiwork of such folk as those who thought Don Pío's mansion would make a good approach to a bridge.

Sufficient appreciation for the work of Mrs. Strong and her associates in rescuing the hacienda from destruction can scarcely be expressed. It is meet that we should preserve this charming old home of Don Pío, not alone because he was the last Mexican governor of California, but because his memory remains among us as a symbolic, though tragic, figure of some of the most interesting years—as all transitional periods are—in the life of Los Angeles.

"Don Pío"—wrote a visitor of the eighties<sup>1</sup>—"is one of the picturesque sights of Los Angeles. Above eighty now, with his stocky figure, square head and bright eye, contrasting with his bronzed skin and close-cropped hair and beard, he has a certain resemblance to Victor Hugo. He has a rather florid taste in jewelry, and carries himself about town, in his short overcoat with velvet collar and cuffs, with a bearing still erect and stately. . ."

And a resident of today recalls him—"I knew him forty-nine years ago, a fine courtly distinguished gentleman of the old ante-bellum school . . . deep wrinkles coursed through his brow with leonine depressions that made his face stand out with full physical and mental strength.

"He was so courteous, especially to the ladies—to see him bow and gallantly kiss the feminine extended hand was to me an epic.

"He spoke French fluently, and very little English.

"He was despoiled of his possessions— . . . what a pathetic epilogue to the drama of moral obliquity!"<sup>2</sup>

In 1891 Don Pío passed through the portals of El Rancho for the last time, and went to Los Angeles to live out his few remaining years in poverty. Yet "all who came into social or business relations with the venerable ex-Governor

1. *Southern California*, Harper's Magazine, December 1882.

2. In a letter to L. L. Hill from Arthur J. Herrmann, M. D.

spontaneously bear witness to the kindness of his heart, to his uniform courtesy, and to his entire lack of malice or ill-will toward any human being."<sup>3</sup>

When Don Pío addressed the last session of the California Mexican legislature he said, "What that astonishing people (the Americans) will next undertake I cannot say, but on whatever enterprise they embark they will be sure to be successful."

One can at least hope that they may some day embark upon a more perfect completion of the enterprise so splendidly initiated by Harriet W. R. Strong.

#### RANCHO SANTA GERTRUDES

Fitting the historical puzzle together is perennially a fascination, but so often some of the pieces are lacking. This has proven especially true in my efforts to identify the two adobe houses that still remain within the former limits of Rancho Santa Gertrudes, which lay southeast of Don Pío Pico's Ranchito.

In very early times Los Nietos, the enormous grant of which Santa Gertrudes was a part, became the residence of "several men who with their families and servants formed quite a little settlement ruled by an *alcalde auxiliar*." José Nieto, Bernardo Higuera, and Juan Pérez, subsequently grantee of Rancho Paso de Bartolo, were mentioned in connection with this settlement.

These several establishments at "Ranchito" and Rancho Santa Gertrudes or Los Nietos were closely associated in popular thought. In the Los Angeles Star of March 6, 1852, the Tax Assessor announced the schedule of places where he would be stationed, mentioning "at the rancho de Los Nietos, house of Don Pío Pico, on the first of April."

In fact, before the days when clearing of land titles under the new government required surveys, the boundaries of these various holdings were indefinite, although unquestioned among the several owners.

The major part of Los Nietos remained, of course, in

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3. Quoted by Mary Mendenhall Perkins, in *The Los Angeles Times, Illustrated Magazine*, April 27, 1924.

possession of that family, and when the fabulous grant was divided among the heirs of Don Manuel, Ant3nio Maria Nieto received the part designated as Rancho Santa Gertrudes—17,602 acres in extent. Later the rancho was conveyed to Lemuel Carpenter, “who prospered under Mexico but failed under the United States.” On November 14, 1859, the Rancho was sold by the Sheriff, and bid in for \$60,000 by John G. Downey and James P. McFarland. It was a splendid piece of



Casa Ramirez—“Forgotten it seems to be, and in tremendous contrast to the vast activities of the present. . .”

farming land, and one of the first of the ranchos to be subdivided. Out of it sprang the town of Downey; then years later, the wells of dark riches at Santa F3 Springs and neighboring oil fields.

*Casa Ramirez—Santa F3 Springs*

Among the maze of oil derricks of Santa F3 Springs stands an abandoned, yet well-preserved adobe which was identified for me by neighbors as “the Ramirez place.”

On July 14, 1855, Lemuel Carpenter and his wife, María de Los Angeles Dominguez de Carpenter, conveyed to José M. Ramirez a portion of Rancho Santa Gertrudes, which became known on the records as the Ramirez Tract.

Very similar in appearance to every other one-story adobe, yet like every other one, it still has distinctive features of its own. Its thick walls form a bulky rectangle, comprising four generously-proportioned rooms and a wide hallway. A shingled roof is prolonged at either side to cover the *corredores* which extend the length of the building on its east and west elevations. A group of beautiful pepper trees still keep it company, and sway in unison with the untended geraniums and rose vines that still clamber and fling bright flowers about supports of the old *corredores*.

Forgotten, it seems to be, and in tremendous contrast to the vast activities of the present with which it is surrounded. Still greater contrast its presence suggests, when one thinks back to the days when it stood among fields of corn and wheat, with only cattle and horses or sheep in sight upon the neighboring hillsides. Then the Ramirez had communication with the distant town of Los Angeles solely by means of the single road which passed through the rancho going "into Los Angeles by the ranchito of Don Pío Pico" and over which the San Diego stage travelled through the sand and dust, toward Santa Ana.

"It is said," wrote Leonard Porter Ayers in 1873<sup>1</sup> "that the Sonoranian Ramirez, who had quite a ranch beyond Pío Pico's farm at Ranchito, was the only one in the country who raised wheat in any quantity."

Beyond this distinction I have found no reference to José M. Ramirez. On February 1, 1875, he sold his land to Ex-governor Downey.

*"Governor Downey's Home"—Norwalk and Puente  
Mills Road, Los Nietos*

The modernized adobe at the little ranch known to old-timers of the region as the "Colonel Swain place," is said by its owners one time to have been the summer home of

1. Gold and Sunshine, by Leonard Porter Ayres.



Governor John G. Downey. Downey was connected with Rancho Santa Gertrudes both by land purchase and marriage into the Guirado family.

Governor Downey. However, working back through the records, I cannot find that the California Governor ever owned this property, although he may, of course, have lived there.

The house stands on a portion of Rancho Santa Gertrudes—the northernmost, bordering on Rancho Paso de Bartolo—which was occupied by Tomás Sanchez Colima, ranchero and sometime *juez de campo*, from 1841, and to which he received patent from the United States Government. It was designated in later times as the Colima Tract of Rancho Santa



Gertrudes. To Ant3nio Poyoreno (or Polloreno) on February 5, 1876, Andrea S. Colima conveyed one-fourth of the Colima vineyard. Twenty-six years later, on February 23, 1893, Eduardo Poyoreno sold this property and the water on it, with the adobe house thrown in, to Colonel Peter T. Swain in consideration of \$13,800.00.

It is the tradition that this house was built about the same time that Don Pío's mansion was erected, and that it belonged to some of the Los Nietos grandchildren, later becoming Governor Downey's country residence, all of which is quite possible.

Not only was Downey connected with Rancho Santa Gertrudes through his purchase of Lemuel Carpenter's holdings, but through his marriage to María Jesus Guirado, in 1852. Bernardo Guirado, her father, as we have seen, was claimant for part of rancho Paso de Bartolo. And we find in a later record, "Lying to east of the Santa Gertrudes lands (sic) is the settlement of Los Nietos, about 2 miles square, embracing some 40 or 50 families, who, year after year, raise their 100 bushels of corn to the acre, and take the world easy. Mr. B. Guirado [probably the first Bernardo's son] keeps a store there which supplies the immediate wants of the community." And incidentally, this report also offers comment of some interest on the neighboring Ranchito—"In the same neighborhood is the Pico Ranch settlement, consisting of 20 or 30 families. Concerning this last I wrote last year, 'one tract upon it has been cultivated for 100 years and turns out 100 bushels to the acre with systematic regularity.' Both of these settlements seem to have escaped the general rush of progress. . ."<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Swain, an Army officer who had served on the plains through eventful days of the Indian Wars, bought this rancho when he came down to Los Angeles on leave of absence to visit a son. The adobe was in partial disrepair by then, and he built a new frame house beside it. This he intended for a ranch house, but became so enamored of the beautiful country place that when he retired he went there to live, enlarging it for his permanent home. In that time the

1. From an undated clipping in the Bowman Scrapbooks, No. 2, L. A. Public Library.

old adobe was used for packing walnuts. It was most convenient. The trucks could drive right up to its three pairs of double doors with thresholds but slightly above the ground level.

Then later, a married son of the Colonel's made over the adobe and adapted it for his home. While beautiful, as it stands today, it reveals in its exterior only the inspiration of a distinctly modern architect, and has lost every characteristic feature of its original design. The *corredor* along the front remains, but arches have replaced the former wooden columns that supported its roof.

Thirty-seven years ago, when Colonel Swain first came to live there, the aging adobe stood in the midst of flourishing vineyards that extended over all the countryside. In the spring, to go to El Ranchito, one drove through yellow seas of mustard, so tall that the disturbed blossoms would fall into the buggy seat.

Volunteer grapevines still spring up each season about the adobe house. And in the back yard an ancient pear tree annually bears fruit that makes the family reminiscent of a primitive ranch-life story. This tree, they say, was planted by accident years ago when some child of the Californios who used to live there was naughty and ran away out of the house. His pursuing mother snatched a persuasive switch from a pear tree as she ran after him, and then when the culprit was caught and returned to the parental adobe, she dropped her switch into a handy gopher hole. There it took root and grew into the gnarled and weathered tree of today.

Formerly, they say, there was an adobe ell extending eastward from the extant building. This, considered to be the older portion, disappeared some years ago. That any part of the storied house will long remain is uncertain. Progress may levy upon it too, as part of the price of extending Slauson Boulevard eastward through the valley of Los Nietos.

#### RANCHO CIENEGA O PASO DE LA TIJERA

Rancho Ciénega was so far out in the country in 1843 when it was granted to Vicente Sanchez, *alcalde* and *comisionado de zanjas* of the pueblo of Los Angeles, that he did not



Club house of the Sunset Golf Course which incorporates the hacienda of Don Vicente Sanchez.

make his home there during his office-holding periods, which were frequent and prolonged, but resided in town, in a house whose site is now suggested in the name Sanchez Street, which runs south from the Plaza for a block between Los Angeles and Main. The rancho was merely used as a cattle range.

Today the rancho is a part of the city that was then so far away. Lying in the center of a busy and well-populated district, at Vernon Avenue and Angeles Mesa Drive, Don Vicente's hacienda has become the scene of activities that would have been incomprehensible except as a subject for extreme mirth to any sane Californian of his day, being now a public golf course.

Granted to Vicente Sanchez by Governor Manuel Micheltona, the rancho became the property of Tomás A. Sanchez, his grandson, about 1850, when Don Vicente's holdings were partitioned among his heirs.

"Gradually the Rancho increased in value. In 1875 Sanchez sold a half interest for \$60,000, later he sold a fourth and finally another Sheriff sold the remainder. E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin became the owner. Baldwin found this rancho something of a white elephant. Sheep ranching became unprofitable and the land was not adapted to orange groves and he knew nothing of the oil beneath it. But he held the property and when he died in 1909 his estate listed Rancho Ciénega o Paso de La



“Part of these buildings at least were probably erected by Don Vicente Sanchez in the days when Rancho Paso de la Tijera was his cattle range.”

Tijera as one of its most valuable possessions. Seemingly no matter how fast this old rancho has been subdivided (and the growth of Angeles Mesa has been phenomenal) the remaining unsubdivided part grows in value . . . directly contrary to its diminishing size.”<sup>1</sup>

The double name of the rancho is derived from natural phenomena of its topography. “Las Ciénegas,” by which it was popularly and generally known, refers to the swamps which swept away from the hills near which the ranch house stood, down a long gentle slope northeastward toward the town of Los Angeles. Migratory waterfowl of every description congregated by thousands in the marsh where the smooth green sweep of the golf course lies today.

What the Americans call Baldwin Hills, the poetic Californians were inspired to call Paso de la Tijera, because of the conformation of the hills, where a pass between two valleys suggested the outline of a pair of opened scissors.

Ploughing and excavating for improvements instituted by the present owners have turned up reminders of habitation of the rancho even before the days of Don Vicente Sanchez. Nu-

1. Romance of the Ranchos, E. Palmer Conner, pub. by L. A. Title Insurance & Trust Co., p. 22.

merous Indian metates and manos and pestles, and one handsome boat-shaped sandstone bowl, have come to light in this way, as well as several arrowheads of good workmanship. One ancient Spanish cannonball, three inches in diameter, was turned up in grading the links.

*Casa de Rancho Ciénega—Sunset Golf Course—Angeles  
Mesa Drive and Vernon Avenue—Los Angeles*

With unusual appreciation and restraint, Charles W. Cross and R. E. Heath, of the Sunset Golf Corporation, who pioneered this club, have retained the old adobe buildings that were still standing when they took over the decaying rancho, and converted them into a highly acceptable clubhouse. A gratifying discovery, after I had seen other so-called "restorations" that left me despairing over the misguided improvements whereby modern owners have converted California adobes into Italian villas, or caused them to express the best ideas of young prize winners in "small house" contests.

Several adobe structures were reared during the long period that Rancho Ciénega was occupied as a rancho. By the time the Sunset Golf Corporation took it over a few years ago some of these had fallen into irreparable ruin, and the others, including the old home itself, were used as dairy buildings.

Facing the long stretch of plain toward the then invisible Los Angeles, this cluster of ranch buildings was situated upon a slightly eminence. Behind them rose the treeless and neatly rounded tops of the "Baldwin Hills." Nearest the hills stood a one-story L-shaped adobe. Both ells were of very respectable length, evidently equipped with shingled roofs from the time of their original construction, since the adobe walls are built up to the peak of the gable, while commonly, when gabled roofs replaced flat ones, it was the custom to fill in the triangle under the gable on either exposed end of the building with a siding of planks.

The rear wing of the building nearest the hills fell into decay and collapsed in some rainsoaked winter a decade or two ago, but the present owners have taken the trouble to lay out their new clubhouse on lines recreating the plan of the



"Several adobe structures were reared during the long period that Rancho Ciénega was occupied as a rancho."

original ranch buildings. The remaining portion of the south wing has been repaired and developed into a dressing room.

The front building, facing the *ciénega* and Los Angeles, had a two-story facade and a long single-story wing extending to the rear. When the place was taken over by the Sunset Golf Corporation this building was in use as a milk house. My impression is that this may originally have been a one-story L-shaped building similar to the one just described, and that some time a part of the front wing was destroyed and then this second story added. Upstairs, here, unlike the windows of any other early adobe buildings I have seen, and even in the downstairs section of this same house, the window lights are installed on the inner side of the deep adobe wall, with sills angled away and projecting outward, instead of forming a window seat on the inside of the room.

In developing the old ranch house as a club, the two-story section has been allowed to remain just as it stood, and is incorporated into a long rambling building, simply designed, with a broad *corredor* running the entire front of the building.

Everything in the old place was whitewashed when they took it over. Underneath a very thick and flinty coating of whitewash on ceilings in the front section, which is now used as administrative quarters for the Club, was found an original coating of green-blue paint, which has been carefully preserved. The ceilings in this house are of hand-sawed lumber, grooved by hand. In these big beams, and the old wood floors, hand-cut iron nails were used.

Part of these buildings at least, were probably erected by Don Vicente Sanchez, in the days when Rancho Paso de la Tijera was his cattle range. But Don Vicente was too much interested and involved in public life to spend much time as a *ranchero*. He served as *elector* and *alcalde*, and member of the *Diputación*. "In 1829-32, as *diputado alcalde* and citizen he was involved in a complicated series of troubles, being deposed and imprisoned and in turn imprisoning others."<sup>1</sup> In fact, he was always in trouble, over one political situation or another.

Tomás, his grandson, to whom the rancho came after his death, sometime about 1850, was destined for public life in the pueblo of Los Angeles too, but from it he emerged with greater public approval than did his grandfather.

Don Tomás' lasting fame was based upon unquestioned prowess as an officer of the law in crucial times. Evidently he had earned some reputation and tried his strength long before 1860, when he became sheriff, for Horace Bell speaks of him as "Don Tomás Sanchez, a true son of chivalry, who had wielded a good lance at San Pasqual."

And some years before, he had asserted himself in favor of law and order at a critical moment. Sheriff Barton and a party of twelve men going toward San Juan in pursuit of certain outlaws were caught in ambush and shot down by Juan Flores' followers. "When the news reached Los Angeles it produced a profound sensation. Brave men looked at each other in blank terror and asked, 'Where will this end?' There was some fear as to how the native Californians would act in the matter." Don Andrés Pico and Don Tomás Sanchez were the first to call for volunteers to put down the disturb-

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1. Bancroft, Vol. III, p. 41-2.

ance and punish the assassins. And according to Bell, "The feeling of gratitude on the part of the gringo population to those noble heroes Andrés Pico and Tomás Sanchez was such that Don Andrés was soon thereafter appointed brigadier-general of the National Guard, and Don Tomás was made sheriff of Los Angeles County, and was permitted to hold office for nearly ten years."<sup>2</sup>

Don Tomás, like most of the other rancheros of prominence in old Los Angeles, maintained a home in town as well as at the rancho. Evidently the city home was "his usual place of abode on June 1, 1850," as he is listed in the Los Angeles census of that year in dwelling house number 272. According to the same document, he was then 26 years of age.

Don Tomás married María, a daughter of Rafaela Verdugo and Fernando Sepúlveda. As recounted in a Los Angeles Express article of February 17, 1905, she received 50 acres as her portion of the great Rancho San Rafael. Don Tomás sold Rancho Las Ciénegas and built a country home on Doña María's property. This was built in 1876 on the site of the original home adobe and later became the famous Casa Verdugo Inn in Glendale. Today no trace of this famous building remains, except the old trees that surrounded it.

#### RANCHO LA BREA

The story of Rancho La Brea is replete with personalities and events of historic interest, from the time of its granting for a cattle range to António José Rocha in 1828, down to its present days as a great oil-producing area, crisscrossed by major boulevards, its air heavy with the hum of traffic and the smell of gasoline.

The 4444.4-acre tract was claimed by the pueblo of Los Angeles as part of the pueblo lands, and the grant was originally assigned to Don António José by José António Carrillo, *alcalde* and outstanding citizen, brother-in-law of Don Pío Pico. Later this grant was confirmed by Governor Echeandía.

António José Rocha was a Portuguese, and, according to Barrows, a blacksmith and one of Los Angeles' most re-

2. Reminiscences of a Ranger, Major Horace Bell, p. 80.



spected and substantial citizens. He had come to California in 1815 on board the *Columbia*. It is stated also by H. D. Barrows,<sup>1</sup> that this same Rocha built for the padres of San Gabriel the famous mill which subsequently became the home of Col. Kewen.

Free right to use of the natural asphalt or *brea* springs for which the Rancho was named had always been held by the *pobladores* of Los Angeles as a matter of course, and many a *carreta* load had been carted away and applied to the flat roofs of the pueblo buildings. Now when on January 6, 1828, the Rancho was officially granted to Rocha the right to use the *brea* was reserved to the citizens of Los Angeles.

Later on, when La Brea had passed into the hands of José Gorge Rocha, we find that in consideration of \$500, to Ant6nio María Valdez, José Gorge Rocha deeded an absolute right "to enter upon, and possess with free privilege to build houses, use the water and timber, and introduce all his animals on Rancho La Brea," and to Carlos Barric he donated 400 varas square in the Ojo de la Brea (the *brea* spring), but with the understanding that the latter could not prevent the inhabitants from freely taking the asphaltum, "as they have up to this date for the roofs of their homes."

Then on November 16, 1860, José Gorge Rocha deeded to John Hancock all his right and interest in Rancho La Brea. Eight years later John Hancock deeded to James Thompson certain lands of La Brea (the north portion of the rancho), Thompson having "located certain school warrants" and also holding a pre-emption on the Rancho. Thompson's acquisition amounted to 480 acres.

Among the Californians James Thompson was known as Don Santiago. To the Americans he was Sheriff Jim Thompson, picturesque and flourishing. He was a hardy frontiersman, well-liked in Los Angeles, whence he had come, according to Ranger Horace Bell, from the Texas *llanos*. "The veteran Thompson gave evidence of a capacity to command that was an honor to the school wherein he learned to ride,

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1. Pub. Historical Society So. Calif. III—iv, p. 20.

and proved that his training on the frontier of Texas had well fitted him for the honors thrust upon him."<sup>1</sup>

These thrusted honors comprised the very hazardous job of being sheriff of Los Angeles County in the desperate fifties. "Desperadoes set all law at defiance, . . . and at one time the office of sheriff, then worth \$10,000 a year, went a-begging . . . until Jim Thompson threw himself into the breach as it were, and became Sheriff of Los Angeles County."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps a bit highly colored for emphasis' sake, Bell's statement refers to the time when Sheriff Barton was killed by the Juan Flores gang, and Jim Thompson consented to succeed him in the office from which he had been removed in such violent and discouraging circumstances.

Particularly in these spirited accounts by Horace Bell, Sheriff Jim Thompson is shown as a man of action and ability, and the story of his faithful attendance on the mountaineer Andy Sublette and his dog Old Buck after their last stand together against a grizzly at Elizabeth Lake, reveals him "with his great good heart, watching day and night by the bedside of the two heroes."

Sheriff Jim Thompson's cattle had grazed on Rancho La Brea for many years before the recorded land transaction with Henry Hancock took place, for on June 21, 1852, Don António José Rocha had agreed to rent to him for five years an undivided half interest in Rancho La Brea.

*La Hacienda de Rancho La Brea—Gilmore Tract,  
Third and Fairfax Avenues, Los Angeles*

It is quite possible that the adobe which still stands on Rancho La Brea is the one Rocha erected there 102 years ago. Originally there was a cluster of several adobe buildings here, but this one alone has withstood the devastating years, a fact that lends weight to the belief that it has always been the home building, which would naturally receive better care than others.

Standing at the terminus of a long drive bordered by tall eucalyptus trees which probably date back to Jim Thompson's time, in the heart of a great oil field, this building is owned

1. Reminiscences of a Ranger, Major Horace Bell, p. 14.

2. Ibid, p. 14.



La Hacienda de Rancho La Brea. ". . . but this one alone has withstood the devastating years."

today by Earl C. Gilmore, oil magnate, whose birthplace it was. Not only has he preserved the old home but restored it and surrounded it with lovely gardens. His father, Arthur F. Gilmore, acquired the Rancho from Sheriff Jim Thompson in the early seventies. He bought it for a dairy ranch, not dreaming of the wealth quiescent under its unproductive soil.

The south and west wings of the L-plan house are the original portion, the north wing having been added by Mr. Gilmore. The tile roof is also a new addition. With the entire main source of supply of Los Angeles' best roofing material so close at hand, the flat-topped house must originally have had a particularly good *brea* roof. A. F. Gilmore replaced it anyway, with a roof of shakes, and increased the height of the front wing with a half-story apartment under the gabled roof.

In restoration, a lofty, spacious effect has been achieved in the interior by removing the beams and original ceiling and leaving the room open to the big brown rafters under the high roof. Along with the worm-eaten beams and ceiling other early woodwork in the house was removed at the time of restoration. The rough weathered wood used by Mr.

Gilmore and his architect in the re-building is interesting and not inappropriate, although even as early as 1828 Don Antonio Rocha probably obtained sawed but unplaned lumber for his building, tediously trundling it in an ox cart across the eight miles of unfenced countryside that lay then between Rancho La Brea and Los Angeles. But, anyway, the restoration window headers, etc., are so well done, being left unstained, and not hacked at like so many current sham antiques, that they might easily be taken for examples of extremely early and primitive construction, were it not for the candor of its owner.

#### RANCHO RINCON DE LOS BUEYES

Rancho Rincón de los Bueyes—its meaning is “the corner of the oxen”—was a cattle range that lay southwest of Rancho La Brea. But one league square, it was not a large tract as grants went in those days, but today a thousand people live within its boundaries where once there was only the home of a single family.

It dated among the earliest of the Mexican grants, being assigned by Don José de la Guerra y Noriega to Bernardo Higuera on December 7, 1821, and confirmed by Manuel Micheltona on July 10, 1843. With Francisco<sup>1</sup> and Secundino Higuera, Bernardo's sons, as claimants, patent was granted by the United States in 1862. Ten years later, on November 8, 1872, Francisco Higuera conveyed to Don Antonio José Rocha all of this rancho except 100 acres.

This Antonio José was the son of the highly respected Antonio José I, who had raised so many cattle at old Rancho La Brea. Antonio José II was born in Los Angeles about 1825. He married Ventura Lopez of the San Fernando family.

While many partitions of the rancho have been made since 1872, Antonio José Rocha's descendants have retained a portion of Rincón de los Bueyes down to the present. Without moving their place of residence they have progressed from country into city life. They have seen the range lands around

1. Francisco was the man of fame of this family, having achieved considerable recognition among the Californians for his bravery in fighting against El Comodoro Mervine, U. S. Navy, when the latter advanced on Los Angeles in 1846. Bancroft states that Gillespie was lanced and unhorsed by this Francisco Higuera, or “el Güero,” and records Stephen C. Foster's declaration that “Higuera would have killed Gillespie had he not been in so much of a hurry to get away with his saddle and bridle. He later offered to return the articles but Gillespie declined to receive them as their loss and saved his life.” Bancroft XXII—p. 352, f. n.



La Casa de Ant3nio Jos3 Rocha. "It is an ample, pleasant place, with a big square ground plan and a gringo stairway inside."

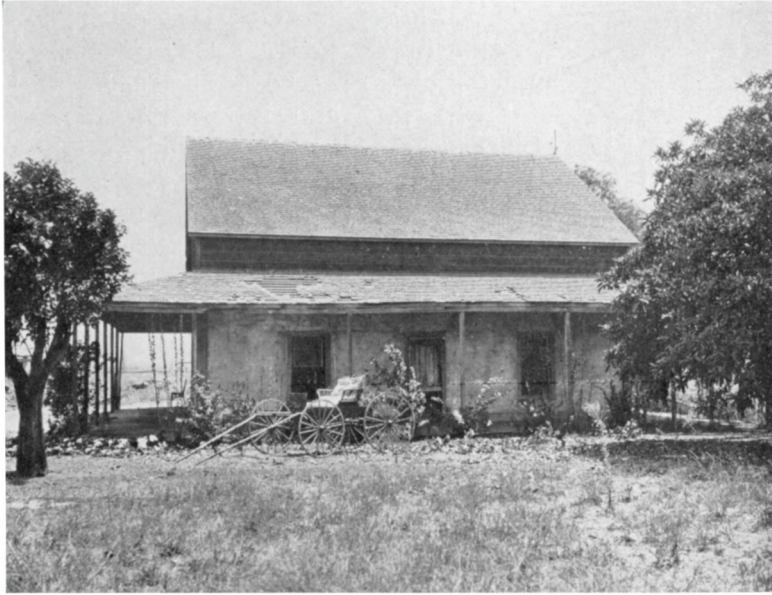
them sprout oil derricks and they have seen Robertson and Wilshire and Beverly Boulevards cut through their former beanfields. They have watched the town gradually come out from fifteen miles away and swallow up the corrals and the farmyards and the dairies, the windmills and isolated old houses of the distinctly country life they knew, after all only a few years ago.

*La Casa de Ant3nio Jos3 Rocha—  
Cadillac and Shenandoah Streets, Los Angeles*

All this they have observed going on from under the shadowed *corredor* of the adobe house their father, Ant3nio Jos3 II, erected early in his life as *ranchero* at Rinc3n de los Bueyes.

The adobe of the Rochas has a particular and indefinable charm. It is situated near the intersection of new subdivision streets with the inappropriate names of Cadillac and Shenandoah.

It is an ample, pleasant place, with a big square ground plan and a gringo stairway inside. It seems as though its second story might have been an afterthought, but this does not seem to be the case, as the redwood shipsiding with which



"Somehow this ancient vehicle, weather-blistered and peeling, standing before the adobe seemed a last symbol of a country life now almost forgotten."

it is constructed is of early vintage. This wood sheathing is superimposed on the outer adobe wall, so that on the upstairs interior a thick dado of adobe runs around the unfinished chamber. All around the house, with roof projecting from the bottom of the shipsiding superstructure, runs a wide *corredor*.

Years of abandonment have left their mark upon the old adobe. The plaster of the outside walls is chipped and gouged. Here and there a few shingles have blown off. Deliberate black hens flap their horny feet upon the wood floor of the *corredor*, squeezing themselves painstakingly through the spokes of an ancient "buggy" that has found shelter there. Somehow this ancient vehicle, weather-blistered and peeling, standing before the adobe, seemed a last symbol of country life now almost forgotten, but such as one saw not many years ago, all about the byways at the edges of our towns. A dusty life, not far from town yet remote, with a pleasant family living comfortably in an old house, surrounded

by a bit of garden and much dry grass, with chickens freely wandering, and always out in the yard a buggy or unsteady, aged carry-all weathering away as the auto took its place. There was the fresh fruit, in boxes and baskets, the corn stacked up under the *corredor*. The orange or bunch of grapes freely proffered to every visitor. And the dripping olla, relic of primitive Californian times, suspended from a tree limb in the shade, swathed in wet gunny sack. A life that has disappeared with the coming of rapid transit and roadside markets, was suggested, almost nostalgically, in this old Rocha home, as it appeared a month or two ago.

But it will not long remain as I have described it. Coming into its own again as a home, when Mrs. Zenaida Rocha de Guzman, daughter of the second Ant3nio Jos3 Rocha, returns to the friendly shelter of its roof it will soon be changed, and adapted to modern life.

#### RANCHO AGUAJE DEL CENTINELA

Precious springs in a dry country inspired the name of the rancho which formerly occupied the land where Inglewood is today. The rancho named for the "watering place of the sentinel" was granted on September 14, 1844, by Governor Manuel Micheltoarena to Ygn3cio Machado.

#### *Hacienda del Rancho Aguaje del Centinela—Inglewood*

While tradition has it that the very fine adobe dwelling still standing and occupied on Rancho del Centinela was built in 1786, the same year that Mis3n Santa Barbara was erected, I have not been able to find any evidence confirming this belief. It seems more likely that the house was built about the time that Don Ygn3cio obtained the grant. But few ranches were occupied in 1786, most of the settlers preferring to live in town, or if connected with the Missions, occasionally were established on outlying mission ranchos. Aguaje del Centinela was never a mission rancho, although of course, the Machados may have had their cattle grazing there prior to 1844. On the other hand, by that year, building of ranch houses received impetus from a Mexican colonization law requiring, where a rancho was granted, that the grantee erect a dwelling on the property within one year, and that



"Few adobes, of whatever age, can lay claim to a more gallant or colorful history than does the hacienda of Rancho del Centinela, and few can surpass it in beauty and excellence of preservation."

he occupy this dwelling as a residence during at least a part of each year, in addition to stocking the rancho with cattle and horses.

The number of years that a landmark can lay claim to is after all not of the greatest historic consequence. The story of the place, the personalities and events associated with its annals are the items that count. Few adobes, of whatever age, can lay claim to a more gallant or colorful history than does the hacienda of Rancho del Centinela, and few can surpass it in beauty and excellence of preservation.

From the days of Don Ygnácio Machado this house served as headquarters not only of Rancho Aguaje del Centinela, but of the two neighboring tracts, Rancho Sausal Redondo, and what later was known as the Stuart Tract. Under its roof it has sheltered at one time or another all of the brave figures who have played their parts in the history of the Rancho.



On April 7, 1845, the rancho was deeded by Don Ygnácio Machado to Bruno Avila. These two names, Machado and Avila, are interwoven closely with the early history of this entire coastal region southwest of Los Angeles. The two families unquestionably were the first to occupy the district with their herds, and thus by right of tenure, established claim to it at an early time. Agustín Machado became the grantee of the neighboring Rancho La Ballona, and to António Ygnácio Avila, a brother of Bruno, was assigned the Sausal Redondo in 1822, while Francisco, another brother, held the rancho known as Las Ciénegas. These Avilas were sons of Cornélio, founder of the notable family, who came to Los Angeles from Sonora in 1783.

In the deed of 1845 Ygnácio Machado assigned to Bruno Avila all his rights and interests in the property called Aguaje del Centinela, which was described as consisting of "a house and a piece of land enclosed in a live fence and a vineyard, which has corrals . . . and is free of every lien." And in addition it is provided that "Machado will also deliver to Abila two barrels of Aguardiente." In exchange for the aguardiente and 2,219 acres of grazing land, Don Ygnácio received of Bruno Avila a little adobe house and lot and small vineyard, fenced, in the suburbs of Los Angeles.

After 1846, the familiar California tragedy wrested Rancho del Centinela from Bruno Avila and his wife María. They had borrowed \$900 at current Los Angeles rates of interest—6% per month, or 72% per year! Sold at public auction, the rancho was bid in for \$2,000 by Hilliard P. Dorsey, April 9, 1856.

About this time one Joseph Lancaster Brent had become interested in Rancho Sausal Redondo. It was without water, while the *aguaje* or great spring for which Rancho del Centinela was named, might provide enough for both. Brent secured the Centinela in 1859. He was an ardent Southerner, and when, soon after his purchase was made, war between the States seemed imminent, he hastened to sell his rancho and departed from California to serve the South. He was the last Confederate General to lay down his sword.

"The conveyance by Brent was made for a consideration

of \$3,000 to Sir Robert Burnett, a Baronet of Scotland, who on a visit to California had fallen in love with the natural charm of the Rancho Centilena and purchased both it and its neighbor, the Rancho Sausal Redondo."

Sir Robert and Lady Matilda Josephine Burnett made their home at the Rancho, and much of the present beauty of the rancho may be traced to the cultured taste of these two. To the old adobe construction was added certain brickwork which indubitably was laid by an artist in his craft. Two well-designed fireplaces in red brick were installed, and in the old kitchen appears a most quaint oven of the same material, with an iron door, built in a style that never had its origin in Spain or California, but throws back distinctly to kitchens of Georgian mansions and the kitchens they inspired in the American colonies 150 years ago.

Out-of-doors, the garden, now venerable and hoary, even more clearly commemorates the baronet and his wife, recalling in the surroundings of their new far western home the accustomed traditions of their former one. There is the exquisite brick work, in a walk which curves suavely and enticingly, around the rectangle of the house, and then leads one down a cypress walk through the center of an old-fashioned garden. It is enchanting and romantic.

The house itself is long and low, well-built, and neatly whitewashed. Most admirable of its attributes is the choice of sites. Stationed upon a long high ridge, half a mile west of the city of Inglewood, the house looks toward the town. In front of it the knoll on which it stands slopes abruptly down to a meadow where, with seasonal blossoming and wizened fruit, a few old fruit trees bear testimony to former harvests.

Having brought the hacienda to this charming state of development, Sir Robert leased the rancho, together with Sausal Redondo and the Stuart Tract, on April 19, 1873, to Catherine Grace Higginson Freeman. Mrs. Freeman must have been an extraordinary woman for her time, for rare indeed in the seventies were business transactions of the magnitude of this one, carried out as hers was, by a woman without even a scratch of her husband's pen put to the papers. She took a five-year lease on the rancho at the expiration of

which she was to have the privilege of purchase for \$150,000. Mrs. Freeman stocked the land with many sheep, and leased part of it to José Dolores Machado.

A little more than a year later, she died, there at Centinela. She was then just 32 years old, and left two small sons and a daughter. Her will specifically directed her husband, the Canadian, Daniel Freeman, who became a prominent citizen of the Southland, to complete the purchase of the rancho.

The charm of present-day Inglewood in large measure is owing to certain stipulations in the agreement made after Mrs. Freeman's death between her husband and Sir Robert, on April 29, 1878. Under this lease Freeman was required to plant 1,500 gum and pepper trees to protect the young fruit orchards from the wind, before January 1, 1880. A supplementary condition was that Freeman should retain one Joseph Sacaze as manager of the fruit orchards, at a salary of \$50.00 per month, and keep the ditches in good repair.

In 1882 the purchase from Burnett was consummated by Daniel Freeman for \$140,000. This price covered just the Rancho Aguaje del Centinela. In a year or two the quiet rancho was swept into the madness of the boom, out of which the present city of Inglewood took its origin, and subdivision of the rancho began.

Today the old house seems itself like a sentinel. The quiet acres of the rarely beautiful old homestead seem to keep guard over the traditions, the spirit of the past. Nearby, on acres once part of the rancho, go forward daily the immense activities of Mines Field Airport. Over the tops of the trees, over the roof of the ancient house, over the *corredores* where linger shadowy memories of Spanish-Californian vaqueros, of American sheepmen, of the Scotch Baronet and his lady, thrum the great aircraft. Lindbergh coursed his triumphal return over it, and from its garden was seen the mystic flight of the Graf zeppelin across the sky directly above it.

The hacienda is now owned by the Los Angeles Extension Company. Near to Mines Field, in an area awaiting subdivision, the remaining portion of Rancho del Centinela may

soon become an industrial district. But the acres that surround the house itself and extend on toward the town of Inglewood are ideally adapted for some sympathetic modern use to which it could well be put—a clubhouse, say. Rancho del Centinela is a gem among landmarks. It will be no minor tragedy if the people of Inglewood do not preserve it.<sup>1</sup>

#### RANCHO EL ENCINO

So desirable a site was Rancho El Encino that a few years after Governor Fages had provisionally granted it to Alcalde Francisco Reyes of Los Angeles, he was summarily dispossessed of it in order that it might be used by Misión San Fernando Rey. This was in 1797. Reyes had a house there and kept his livestock as well as that of Cornélio Avila there. The padres took over his house and Rancho El Encino became the first home of Misión San Fernando.

There was no hard feeling about it, apparently. Historians consider the action as merely illustrative of the importance of the missions and the casual system of land tenure in early days.

In time Rancho El Encino was restored to private ownership. Originally assigned before the Mission grant was made, the 4,460-acre Rancho El Encino was entirely surrounded by Mission lands.

It was named, of course, for the gorgeous native live oak grove that inspired Father Crespí, who was among the first party of white visitors to see it—the 1769 Portola expedition—to name the place “El Valle de Santa Catalina de Bonónia de los Encinos”—the valley of Santa Catalina de Bonónia of the oaks.

In 1845 Rancho El Encino was granted to the Indians Ramon, Francisco y Roque. But the name of Don Vicente de La Ossa is the name that is indelibly associated with Rancho El Encino. In 1851 he formally acquired from the Indian grantees all of their interest in the rancho.

1. For the historical information and records in this sketch, I am indebted to the courtesy of Mrs. C. M. Crawford, the present occupant of Rancho del Centinela, to Mrs. Oscar S. Elvrum and to E. Palmer Connor, Chief Searcher, Title Insurance and Trust Company of Los Angeles, who has kindly made available for my study much of the information included in this article.

*Casa de Don Vicente de La Ossa—Ventura  
Boulevard at Encino*

The house of Don Vicente has witnessed the goings and comings of many generations along the highway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. It stands just a few hundred yards north of the present Ventura Boulevard, which follows the course of the old road of Don Vicente's day. Near his house too, and traversing his rancho north and south ran the road to San Fernando. These ancient arteries of travel are shown on the patent map of 1868, as well as the "ranch house originally occupied by Don Vicente de La Ossa."

Recounting the great gringo pursuit of Indians who had run off Don Benito Wilson's horses from Rancho San José de Buenos Ayres, southwest of El Encino, in 1852, Horace Bell describes the volunteer company drawing up in military array "before the hospitable castle of the lordly Don Vicente de la Osa, the baronial proprietor of Rancho del Encino, who cordially invited them to dismount, stake their jaded *mustangs* and refresh the inner man . . ." And when he heard the doleful tinkling of their empty canteens "the jovial old Don Vicente said, '*Que le hace? Aquí hay bastante,*'"<sup>1</sup> and like the true California gentleman-host he was, provided the means of filling them up again, along with ample quantities of the *tortillas* and *carne seca* of the country.

The long, low adobe house of Don Vicente has been greatly altered since his day, and shows unmistakable signs of extensive repair and improvement during the seventies or early eighties. To the north of it stands a quaint two-story house of stone and adobe construction, erected by a later rancho.

On March 6, 1867, Rita de La Ossa conveyed to James Thompson—the same "Don Santiago" of Rancho La Brea—all of her interest and all interest of Vicente de La Ossa in the rancho. Two years later the property was acquired from Don Santiago by Eugene Garnier.

This latter was one of those sturdy and hard-working French Basques who began to appear in the southland during the sixties and who amassed fortunes in the sheep industry. Under the Garniers, Rancho El Encino became a sheep ranch of note.

1. Reminiscences of a Ranger—Horace Bell, p. 117.



Casa de Don Vicente de la Osa—" . . . has witnessed the goings and comings of many generations along the highway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara."

The Austrian writer of "Eine Blume aus dem Goldenen Lande," the first tourist writer of Southern California, observed;

"Garnier raises sheep on a large scale. In the past year (1877), he spent \$18,000 for French Merinos and \$700 for a single ram. At the State Fair of 1867 he bought four French Merino rams for \$1,600 and four Spanish rams for \$800. Mr. Garnier keeps 20 men busy on this ranch. During the season each man shears an average of 35 sheep per day, although some of them shear 50 sheep a day. He has the reputation of producing the best wool in the country. There is a two-story boarding and lodging house for the help. There is also a well which furnishes water for the livestock."

It was the thrifty Garnier who built this big two-story house, and who, back in 1867 or '68, constructed the wide pool or reservoir which still may be seen in front of the single-story adobe residence.

Garnier, recalls an old-timer, was a "nice old gentleman." He must have been very able, too, but he did not succeed in holding the magnificent El Encino. In 1878 it passed into the hands of the Frenchman, Gaston Oxarat. Afterward it belonged to Juan Bernard, and in 1888 it was acquired by the picturesque and frugal Domingo Amestoy.

It is my understanding that the handsome property, with its attractive old buildings, set against a background of great eucalyptus trees, and even though surrounded by modern high-

ways and developments, still giving an impression of the roomy spaciousness of a typical old-time ranch headquarters, now belongs to heirs of Amestoy. Its career during late years has been checkered. Not long ago it was used as a road house, but now the place is closed and silent. Signs and fences warn trespassers away. What the future of the old ranch buildings may be, one cannot say.

#### CAÑON DEL BUQUE

When the first United States surveying parties, under Beale and Ord and Hancock, inscribed old place names on the fresh paper of new maps, and resorted to imagination in the matter of spelling where they did not know their Spanish, there was some excuse, for of the entire population of Los Angeles County in 1850, only 616 out of 1734 adults could read and write.

But curious perversions with less warrant have occurred in the making of more recent maps. One of them survives in the well-known name of "Bouquet Cañon." Its story was told me by José Jesus Lopez of Rancho El Tejon.

In days when the Rancho of Chico Lopez was at its height, the handsome rancho pastured his horses there, and the cañon was known as "El Potrero" (the pasture) for short, or "El Potrero de Chico Lopez," when one wanted to be explicit. By and by, when homesteaders and settlers began sifting in, not by twos and threes now, but in numbers, after the new railroad across the continent made travel easy, Don Chico could foresee what was coming. He realized that even the range was no longer free for a man's stock to roam upon. He went to one of his men, Francisco Chari. "Francisco," he said, "*no quieres un rancho?* You ought to take up some land before the settlers come in and claim everything. Locate on the Potrero, then if you don't wish to keep it, I will buy it back from you later."

Thus the Potrero became the rancho of this second Francisco. He was a Frenchman, a sailor who had settled in California and turned vaquero. In the evenings around the camp fire he was forever harking back to his sailor days, telling endless yarns of adventure on the seas, and tales of his *buque*,

or ship, how he managed this *buque*, where he sailed in that one, until the Californios nicknamed him with the recurrent theme of his talk, "El Buque." So everyone knew the cañon where he settled under the patronage of Don Chico, who later became his father-in-law, as "El Rancho del Buque." Out of this some map-maker managed to contrive the meaningless "Bouquet!"

There was no road through the cañon in those times, just a little-traveled trail, for all regular traffic between Los Angeles and points north passed through the more direct, though steeper, San Francisquito Cañon to the west.

Martin Ruiz, a Spaniard of light complexion who used to live in San Fernando, was the first to locate on the good grazing land at the outlet of San Francisquito and "Bouquet" Cañons, where they emerge in the vicinity of present-day Saugus. At the mouth of the old San Francisquito road he settled, in a place which was then known as "El Cañon de los Muertos," or "Dead Man's Cañon," by those who spoke English. Long before, it had been called "La Cañada del Agua Dulce." It became Cañon de los Muertos in the days of Don Ygnácio Del Valle, who was nicknamed Pacacho, because of his small stature, when a battle took place there from which at least one rustler had not emerged alive. Retreating to the little side cañon with a band of horses stolen from the Del Valle's Rancho San Francisco, the bandits were pursued by Pacacho at the head of a motley company. Pacacho was armed with a rifle. A vaquero had a shotgun, some one had a pistol, and there were a few Indian retainers, armed with California lances, or lacking these, bows and arrows. The pursuit was determined, for at the Rancho a little boy mourned for his big old white horse, which had been driven off by the rustlers. This little boy grew up to be Senator Reginaldo del Valle. His uncle Pacacho restored his horse that day.

Ruiz had a numerous family, and his sons established other adobe homes in the neighborhood. Quite a group of buildings were erected at the little settlement past which ran the stage and hauling road through San Francisquito Cañon. No less than seven of these buildings were swept away like so many toy houses in the Gargantuan flood released by the



collapse of the St. Francis Dam half a century afterwards.

*Casa de Martin Ruiz*

At least one house that Martin Ruiz erected is still standing, however, a mile or two up "El Cañon del Buque," facing west, at a point where the cañon widens out into a little desert valley, hemmed in by low hills. It is a long, rambling building, with rough brown walls of adobe brick that have never been plastered. The east wall of the cañon ascends rather abruptly behind it, still wild, covered with sagebrush and greasewood and manzanita, out of which rises grotesquely the angular and unpoetic form of a modern frame house which looks down disdainfully from across the road upon the abandoned adobe.

Westward the adobe looks out across a wide flat, on which it is situated, toward low, rolling hills. The modern road runs between the two houses, scarcely ten feet from the back door of the adobe, and elevated upon an embankment level with its broken old eaves.

Dust dry, after a protracted series of dry years have insidiously sucked out the moisture from everything in the cañon, it is hard to believe that the family who have owned the house since Martin Ruiz sold it to them in 1874, were forced to move out a few years ago because of periodical rising of the winter stream, flooding the field and the house and weakening its walls.

It is a one-story adobe, generously proportioned, with adobe bricks built up nearly to the peak of its gabled roof. The hand-split shakes on it are original. All the lumber in the building came from Acton, and was hauled into the cañon with teams. Formerly a little ell extended to the rear at the north end of the house and was used as a kitchen. A shapeless pile and bit of crumbling wall mark this place, where stood the only fireplace in the house. Over it, built into the wall, was the oven. Once a *corredor* shaded the west front from the afternoon sun, but it has now quite disappeared. The walls are weathering badly, as the roof gradually decays and the eaves no longer afford adequate protection, so that the days of Martin Ruiz's adobe, last of its kind in romantic Cañon del Buque, seem inescapably numbered. Built in the



“. . . the days of Martin Ruiz's adobe, last of its kind in romantic Cañon del Buque, seem inescapably numbered.”

later adobe period, the walls of this house are not as thick and sturdy as those of earlier structures.

In 1874 Martin Ruiz sold the adobe and part of his rancho to the founder of an Italian family by whom it has been occupied ever since.

Batista Suraco was a Genoan. Lured by dreams of California gold, he came here in 1859, when he was just 20 years of age. First trying his luck at Placerita Cañon, a few miles below “Bouquet” in '74 he bought the Ruiz adobe with the ambition of mining in Cañon del Buque. Fondly for 15 years he held to his dream of going home to Italy rich with gold taken out of those hills. Then he gave it up, turned to sheep ranching, and lived out his life in the adobe of Martin Ruiz.

There J. Antonio Suraco, his son, was born, in 1876. Vivid are his recollections of his boyhood in Cañon del Buque. “There were so few people here then,” he says. “We never saw anybody. Once a year maybe some one would come on horseback. My little sister and I would be afraid of the strange people, and we would run and hide under the bed. No matter what time they stopped my mother would cook for them.

“During my early years the bandit Vasquez used to go by here. He had a spring up above in the mountains where

he used to hide, and sometimes he camped under the big sycamore that stood not far from the adobe.

"They used to steal cattle and drive them by here. We would hear them in the night, being herded north into the Sierras de Chico Lopez, as we used to call the hills. Now they are called Sierra Pelona, which means bald. The bandits never bothered my mother. Probably she fed many of them when they stopped at our house in the day time. There was a dug well here, with a windlass, and people who went by stopped for water.

"But when my father was away, my mother was afraid. All the windows of our adobe had wooden shutters that locked from the inside. Every night when Father was gone she got us all inside and locked every one of them, at six o'clock, when darkness began to fall. Sometimes she would hear people outside in the night, stopping clandestinely to draw water up from the well. But then she would never let them in.

"My father was a Genoan. They call them the Jews of Italy. He could not speak English very well, and at the age of fifteen I did all his business in town and with the banks. The Italians are sometimes afraid of a bank, and keep their money hidden at home. A friend of mine found \$200 hidden in his father's old adobe in San Francisquito Cañon, behind one of the bricks.

"In the old days there were many bears here. When my father first came he saw numerous trails that they had worn through the hills. Now the deer still come down to the reservoir to drink, more than ever of late years, since the dry seasons have dried up the springs in the mountains."

Time and weather-worn as the old adobe is, with its sagging ridge pole and drooping roof, its empty rooms and shutterless windows, its decrepit walls, yielding under the heavy hand of age, there is a harmony between it and the surrounding landscape such as its nearby frame neighbor never can achieve, however many coats of fresh paint it may acquire, whatever geometric elegance it may possess.

I could picture it at night, in those days when Vasquez was the terror of the state, out there in the desolate cañon, quite alone under the dark sky, with perhaps the lonesome

small light of a candle gleaming at a shutter's edge, and a coyote wailing in the black hills.

#### LA LAGUNA DE CHICO LOPEZ

The old trail south from Fort Tejon circuted the Ridge traversed by the modern highway, following along its north wall to Elizabeth Lake, and thence down into San Francisco Cañon.

Pursuit of straying cattle and untamed aborigines had made this mountainous region and the incomparable Antelope Valley beyond, familiar to the mayordomos and retainers of Misión San Fernando since early days.

It was Mayordomo Pedro López who first showed these trails and cañons to his nephew Francisco, who while exploring in them afterwards, discovered gold in Placeritas Cañon. Another López penetrated through the mountain wall and in the rich little valley where Elizabeth Lake lies established his *sítio de ganado mayor*, or stock range. This was the handsome Francisco, known to everyone in the Southland as Don Chico López. His cattle ranged Antelope Valley where Lancaster and Palmdale are now, and the whole region was identified among the Californios by his name. What we call Elizabeth Lake was to them la Laguna de Chico López, and the hills surrounding it were las montañas de Chico López.

Don Francisco López, the discoverer of gold, was Don Chico's uncle. Chico was living at Paredón Blanco in Los Angeles, and had his cattle at Rancho Rosa de Castilla. About 1850 his uncle took him into the mountains and showed him the laguna and the attractive land around it, advising him to go in there with his stock. This he did soon thereafter. He found a little spring, and near it built his adobe ranch house.<sup>1</sup>

Obtaining title to the land, Don Chico prospered at la Laguna. In the seasons of the rodeo he would bring his family of lovely gay daughters to the rancho, and they were happy there. Then in a few years all was sadly changed. The rancho was taken away from him, by one misfortune after another.

It became necessary for him to live most of the time in

1. Interviews kindly granted by Mrs. Francisca López de Bilderrain, Mrs. Frank Talamantes, and José Jesús López of Bakersfield have supplied the historical data for this sketch and for that of Rancho La Liebre, following.

Los Angeles, and during his absence, under the careless guardianship of his mayordomo, his herds dwindled mysteriously. He had 800 head of horses in the vicinity of Lancaster, and 4,000 head of cattle in what is known today as Leona Valley. In the end he realized on the sale of only 800 out of his 4,000 cattle. His band of 40 mules vanished also. At last the rancho itself went from him on a mortgage into the hands of Miguel Leonis. As a final blow during one of his absences, his ranch house, his barns, and corrals and implements were set fire to and deliberately burned by those who wished him ill.

From the name of Leonis, who then acquired the property, comes the modern "Leona" Valley, now being subdivided into beautiful small farms.

At la Laguna de Chico López a little settlement was growing up during this period on the stage road from Fort Tejon.

#### *Casa de Miguel Ortiz—Elizabeth Lake*

A long one-story adobe facing northwest, at the left of the old road as you go toward Fort Tejon, is said to be the first building erected at Laguna de Chico López.

Details of unusual interest in the house are a big fireplace constructed principally of adobe and a diverting barrel-shaped chimney rising from the low roof.

Miguel Ortiz, they say, was an *arriero*, or muleteer, who used to pack for General Beale. In early days also he packed from Los Angeles to Clear Crick and Havila, to and from the mines. He possessed 40 mules and all equipment, and Beale contracted for his services on the 35th parallel survey. When his work with the Surveyor-General was completed, the mules were sold in Texas, Miguel Ortiz returned to California, and on land given to him by General Beale built this adobe. It is still occupied as a home.

#### *Casa de Pedro Andrada—Elizabeth Lake*

Not far from the adobe of Miguel Ortiz, Pedro Andrada established a stage station, where a stop was regularly made, just where the old road enters the cañon southeastward from the lake.



Casa de Miguel Ortiz—" . . . is said to be the first building erected at Laguna de Chico López."

Andrada came to California from Sonora in 1858. The house which still remains, and is occupied by his granddaughter, Mrs. Frank Talamantes, is the second one he built there at Laguna de Chico López. It is 45 years old. Don Pedro's first house had not been entirely a success, because moisture from the water-filled ground—water drained into the lake more plentifully in those days—persisted in finding its way up through the floor, sometimes in a veritable stream. So when Don Pedro built his second house he took such care to prevent a repetition of this annoyance that the abundant rocks he put into the foundation used frequently to be exposed to the discomfort of the housewife, as the earthen floor was worn down with her sweeping.

Today the old floor and foundation are concealed beneath a wooden floor, and outside, the *corredor* has become a screened porch, but nevertheless, within this adobe still reigns the hospitable friendliness of the old times.



The last adobe remaining in San Francisquito Cañon. It was Major Gorman's stage post.

#### RANCHO LA LIEBRE

The rancho of the hare or jack-rabbit was the southernmost of a great quartette of mountain ranchos founded by General E. F. Beale, with headquarters at El Tejon—the rancho of the badger—during the vigorous campaigner's life in California.

La Liebre had been granted in 1846 to José María Flores, commanding officer in the last stand of the Californians against Stockton and Kearney at La Mesa. From him it was conveyed to Beale. In the day of that energetic military administrator 25,000 cattle roamed the four great ranchos, Castaic, Los Alamos, El Tejon and La Liebre. And when Beale was in partnership with Colonel Baker the number of sheep on the rancho is said to have exceeded 100,000.

In those days feed was more plentiful on the range, which extended unbroken, up the great San Joaquin Valley all the way to San Francisco. Without a fence to stay them, the cattle were driven periodically to the north and sold. Ac-

According to the recollection of J. J. Lopez, mayordomo of the Beale ranches for fifty years, it was just at the close of one of these long drives that the partnership of Beale with Colonel Baker began. Beale had sold 6,000 cattle from Rancho La Liebre to Henry Miller. He was preparing to stock the ranch again when he met Colonel Baker, probably at Fort Tejon. Baker had brought his sheep over the mountains in an effort to save them during the drouth of 1864. Their meeting resulted in a partnership whereby the two men raised sheep together there for seven years. In 1870 they divided the flocks between them, Beale remaining with his portion at the mountain ranchos, while Baker drove his flocks back out of the mountains, across San Fernando Valley and the ranches where Hollywood and Beverly are today, to Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica, on the coast.

#### *La Casa del Rancho La Liebre*

Tucked away in a little cañon where Antelope Valley meets "the Ridge," on the valley floor just off the dirt road which runs between the Ridge Route and Elizabeth Lake, stands the adobe built by General Beale to serve as headquarters for the ranch of the jack rabbit, back in the very early sixties.

On the patent map of 1862 the house is shown, and the little cañon ascending into the rugged mountains behind it is called "Cañon de las Osas"—the cañon of the she-bears. Near it also is indicated a "fine spring," while at the top of the cañon a "large spring" is shown as well.

Many years ago Vasquez' trail led through these mountains, and he often camped near these splendid natural springs, one of which may still be seen near the old house, with the clear water boiling endlessly up out of white gravel.

The adobe house is commodious, well designed and strongly built, suggesting the efficient management and thoroughness which characterized Beale. It is said that the General lived there himself for two or three years while he was Surveyor-General.

About 1874, Beale gave Rómolo Pico permission to bring his cattle and horses to La Liebre to range. Thus the brands of both Rómolo and Andrés Pico were seen in these hills for



several years, and the rancho and the adobe house became identified with Don Rómulo.

W. W. Hudson was Beale's first superintendent at Rancho La Liebre, and Francisco Acuña, whose body lies in a lonely grave at the head of the garden at Rancho El Tejon headquarters, was the first cattle mayordomo of the four ranchos. Then in 1876 came Don José Jesús López, who now looks back upon fifty eventful years as mayordomo, for General Beale, then for his son Truxton, and twelve years more for the El Tejon Rancho Company, present owners. His story is most interesting, vivid and crowded with memories of many years and tremendous changes.

"When I was about seven," he tells, "my father (Gerónimo Lopez) moved from Paredón Blanco to San Fernando. In those old days there were only two roads from Paredón, one to Los Nietos, and one out to the Lugo's.

"I went to school at St. Vincent's College in 1866. Then my father sent me to a Spanish military school at Los Angeles. I went one year. It was Silva's Escuela Normal.

"When I was twenty-one, I was working in a store in San Fernando. My uncle, Chico López, had a band of 1,500 sheep at his rancho then. One day he said to me, 'You'll never make anything of yourself there. Come up here to the rancho and I'll give you this band of sheep on shares. I want you to work for yourself.'

"Then my father objected. He said, 'I have given you a good education. Now do you think I want you to go herd sheep?' But Tío Chico persuaded me. He got me credit with General Beale's house at El Tejon, although I never made use of it, and he gave me three years to pay for the sheep. He helped me to make a man of myself, and if I have anything today I owe it to him.

"So I came up into this country when I was twenty-one years old.

"Black bears were numerous in the mountains then, and antelope were seen on the plains. There would be bands of two or three hundred—no, more than that—a thousand! They roamed the desert, and looked like herds of cattle or horses in the distance. We would see them coming down for water.

I saw many of them in 1875 and '76, and they were there until about 1880. But then they began to disappear. I don't know what happened to them. It doesn't seem as though they all could have been shot. On La Liebre the plain used to be full of them, and up to three years ago there was still a band of some fourteen there. For years and years there was a little band of eight near the Grape Vine cañon, but the settlers, of course, have shot them.

"We were not bothered with coyotes, although there were plenty of them. Once in a while a coyote might kill a lamb, but they preyed mostly on the ground squirrels.

"There was plenty of feed and no fences, in those days. One time I drove 7,000 wethers to Los Baños. I was 40 days on the road."

*A Decaying Adobe on "The Ridge"*

Out of the monotonous though fascinating scenery of the Ridge Route the broken form of this wistful and forgotten place has often challenged my attention, as I have looked down upon it from the highway where it passes Bailey's Ranch. When I asked him, Don José Jesús remembered it and laughed.

"I used to own it," he said. "The first locator in that cañon was a man named Bartolo Delcid, a Mexican. That was way back in 1879; he was mining there. He was living in Bakersfield later, and one day about 1884 or 1885 he came to me and said, 'Mr. López, my family has grown so large I haven't room enough for them. I would like to make an adobe house, and I want to borrow \$500.' I told him his land wasn't worth that, and he said, 'Well, how much can you lend?' I told him \$200, and he gave me a mortgage on that land on the Ridge.

"He was building that house for a long time. And after he had it all completed his family wouldn't stay there. The girls had all grown up, and they wanted to live in town. That family never remained in the adobe one day. So he came back to me, and he said, 'Mr. López, I can't pay you that money. You better take the ranch. My family won't stay.'"

So ends the saga of another adobe. The date is in the 1880's. Adobe days are passing, and even the native daughters have begun to pine for millwork and turrets.