

# The Early History of The Rancho San Pedro

By C. C. Baker

**N**O tract of land in Southern California can claim association with more interesting events than the old Rancho San Pedro, on a portion of which Torrance is situated, nor can any other claim a more unique history.

**O**NLY 50 years elapsed between Columbus' great discovery and the time when a white man first looked on the rancho. In 1542 the famous Spanish navigator Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, sailed into the present San Pedro harbor and named it the "Bay of Smokes and Fires." The name San Pedro was given the harbor due to the fact that a later Spanish explorer, Viscaino, arrived there on St. Peter's day, Nov. 26, 1602, and from the harbor the rancho took its name.

**A**MONG those soldiers in the royal Spanish army who came in the 1700's to serve in the garrisons maintained at several new points in California, were Juan Jose Dominguez and his nephew Cristobal. As is usual even to the present day, Juan Jose liked the new country and wished to make it his home. When his military service ended he petitioned the departmental government of California for a permit to settle on a tract of land that he might raise cattle. Under Spanish law, all fee title to land was in the king, and settlers were given only permits for its use and occupancy. In 1784 the fourth Spanish governor of California, Don Pedro Fages, issued such a permit to Juan Jose and he settled on the San Pedro. Though there is some uncertainty on the point, it is generally conceded that the San Pedro is the second oldest grant in California. The Dominguez family settled on the rancho five years before Washington took the oath as first president of the United States, and in the 140 years of their occupancy have given loyalty to four governments, Spain, the Empire of Mexico, the Republic of Mexico, and the United States.

DIES IN 1800

**A**BOUT 1800, Juan Jose Dominguez died, childless, and his nephew Cristobal inherited his rights in the San Pedro. In 1822 Iturbide proclaimed himself Emperor Augustin I of Mexico, and the Californians quietly accepted him in place of King Ferdinand of Spain. Californians were too far from the seat of government in Mexico City to become feverish over national politics. They exhibited the same complaisance when, in 1823, Mexico was proclaimed a republic and Iturbide was banished. Mexican law permitted land title to vest in the settler, and in 1822, Cristobal Dominguez received from Governor Pablo Vicente de Sola a grant of the San Pedro. Cristobal died about 1825. His children found the rancho large enough for all to live on amicably. In fact, Mexican law at this time made the sale of granted lands difficult, if not impossible.

**S**AN PEDRO harbor was visited by most of the ships that touched on the California coast in these days. On one of these ships, in 1835, came Richard Henry Dana, who described the people and the country in his famous book, "Two Years Before the Mast." In 1839 but four voters were on the Rancho San Pedro. As this was but 86 years ago, it appears that some enterprising statistician on California's growth has overlooked the opportunity to compile some comparative statistics on the vote of 1839 and 1925. In 1842 the famous English traveller, Sir George Simpson, visited California, and described Los Angeles as a "den of thieves". Since Sir George did not visit Los Angeles his remarks probably have the same classification as regards veracity as some criticisms of the present day emanating from without the state.

**O**N August 6th, 1846, Commodore Robert F. Stockton sailed into San Pedro harbor aboard the famous frigate Congress, landed marines, and raised the United States flag on the rancho for the first time in this district. Commissioners came from Los Angeles to treat with him, but no agreement being reached, Stockton proceeded to Los Angeles and Governor Pio Pico fled. Stockton's route was across the San Pedro for more than a day. It is related that the second night his force was kept under arms for two hours due to an alarm created by the cries of coyotes. As nearly as can be determined, this occurred in what is now the city of Vernon. Stockton occupied Los Angeles August 13th; on the 17th a United States war vessel arrived at the harbor bringing news of the declaration of war on Mexico by the United States.

## THE RANCH HOUSE BATTLE

**I**N September and October, 1846, came the rising of the Americans and the expulsion from Los Angeles of the Americans under Gillespie, who had been placed in command by Stockton when he left the city. Gillespie marched to the harbor, embarked, and sailed north, but was met by reinforcements, and returned. On October 7th the combined force landed again at the harbor, marched north, and that night occupied the old Dominguez Ranch House, near the present Dominguez Junction on the Pacific Electric. Early the morning of the 8th the Americans marched north, and after they had proceeded two or three miles they were attacked by the Californians and what is called the Battle of Dominguez Rancho followed. The Californians had but one cannon. To this they tied their reatas, or lariats, fastening the other ends to their saddle horns. They would whirl this cannon into range of the Americans, fire, and whirl it away out of range to reload. This was quite effective as, according to varying reports, from six to thirteen Americans were killed and several wounded. There were no mounted Americans to engage the Californians and the situation was considered hopeless. The Americans withdrew, re-embarked, and sailed north, not knowing that the last shot from this cannon had consumed the last of the Californians' powder. The events leading up to the reoccupation of Los Angeles by the Americans, January 10th, 1847, were without event to the rancho.

**W**ITH the close of the Mexican War and the acquisition of California by the United States, the owners of the old grants were much concerned over the recognition of their title by the United States. To determine these titles Congress passed in 1851 an "Act to Ascertain and Settle the Private Land Grants in the State of California." This act created a "Board of Land Commissioners" before whom, as a court, all claims for

grants must be presented for approval, the United States being a party to each case. From the Board's decision either party could appeal, first to the United States District Court and finally to the Supreme Court. It was a costly procedure for the claimants, and many of them lost their lands either from the expense of litigation or the refusal of the courts to recognize what had been valid titles before United States occupancy. In this procedure the fortune of the Dominguez heirs was most happy. Their claim was filed in 1852, was approved by the Board and the District Court, and no appeal being taken their title was confirmed in 1857. This was one of the shortest cases in the land grant litigation, some cases occupying thirty years. The rancho was surveyed and mapped by a United States surveyor in December, 1857, and in 1858 the patent was issued. The general boundaries under the patent were the ocean on the west, the Palos Verdes hills and the harbor on the south, the Los Angeles river on the east, and on the north an irregular line from Redondo, south of Compton, to the Los Angeles river. The rancho's greatest length, from east to west, was ten and one half miles; its greatest breadth, from north to south, was ten miles, and its area was 43,119 acres.

## PARCEL OUT LAND

**I**N 1855 the rancho was partitioned under a court decree among the heirs of Cristobal Dominguez, Manuel, his son, receiving two thirds of the rancho. Manuel Dominguez was a member of the Constitutional Convention which met in Monterey in 1849 and framed the constitution under which California was admitted to the Union. He was long a prominent man, dying in 1882. His portion of the rancho was in 1885 divided among his six daughters in the well known Case 3284 in the Superior Court, cited in so many land descriptions in this district. Susana, Guadalupe, (now Post Avenue) and Marcelina avenues in Torrance were named for three of these daughters, Carson Street bears the married surname of one, and Manuel street bears their father's name.

**I**N this partition the referees made no division of lands in Wilmington south of the present Anaheim Road, specifically stating that these were "salt flats" and "valueless." One of these referees, Henry D. Barrows, who died in 1914, lived to see the first freighter through the Panama Canal discharging cargo at docks lining great transit sheds built on this same "valueless" land. Another example the rancho can give of man's inability to foresee future values is shown in the sale in 1850 by Pedro, son of Cristobal Dominguez, of an interest in the rancho amounting to 3593 acres for \$4392. But the point that most intrigues one's imagination is the estimate of the present value of the royal Spanish permit and the imperial Mexican gift. On the original grant lie at present the cities of Torrance, Wilmington, Lomita and Clifton, parts of San Pedro, Long Beach and Redondo, the Torrance and Dominguez oil fields, and the harbor industrial district. If the Dominguez family owned at present all the value on the original grant, the world would boast few richer families.

NO. OF BANK—665  
REPORT OF THE CONDITION OF THE  
STATE BANK OF LOMITAAT LOMITA, CALIFORNIA  
AS OF THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON THE 6TH DAY OF APRIL, 1925

RESOURCES	Commercial	Savings	Combined
1 & 2. Loans and Discounts (Including Rediscounts)	\$174,860.11	\$76,245.07	\$251,105.18
3a. Bankers' Acceptances (Including Rediscounts)			
3b. Notes, Drafts or Bills of Exchange (Including Rediscounts)			
4. Overdrafts	12.93		12.93
5a. Customers' Liability Account Acceptances			
5b. Liability of Foreign Banks and Bankers' Account of Acceptances			
6. United States Securities Owned			
7. All Other Bonds, Warrants and Securities (including Premium thereon, less all offsetting Bond Adjustment Accounts)	58,623.05		58,623.05
8. Bank Premises, Furniture and Fixtures and Safe Deposit Vaults	18,244.76		18,244.76
9. Other Real Estate Owned			
10. Due from Federal Reserve Bank			
11. Due from Other Banks	26,859.40		26,859.40
12. Actual Cash on Hand	24,544.34	8,044.89	32,589.23
13. Exchanges for Clearing House			
14. Checks and Other Cash Items	675.90		675.90
15. Items with Federal Reserve Bank in Process of Collection			
17. Other Resources, Suspense account	110.00		110.00
TOTAL	\$303,930.49	\$84,289.96	\$388,220.45
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
18. Capital Paid in	\$40,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$50,000.00
19. Surplus	6,500.00		6,500.00
21. All Undivided Profits (less Expenses, Interest and Taxes Paid)	3,587.75	1,328.15	4,915.90
22. Bills Payable with Federal Reserve Bank (other than Rediscounts)			
23. Bills Payable other than with Federal Reserve Bank, including all Obligations Representing Money Borrowed (other than Rediscounts)	10,000.00		10,000.00
24. Liabilities for Rediscounts with Federal Reserve Bank			
25. Liabilities for Rediscount other than with Federal Reserve Bank			
26. Deposits Due to Banks			
27a. Dividends Unpaid			
27b. Individual Deposits Subject to Check	170,355.47	170,355.47	
27c. Savings Deposits	72,961.81	72,961.81	
27d. Demand Certificates of Deposit			
27e. Time Certificates of Deposit	17,350.00	17,350.00	
27f. Certified Checks	1,300.00	1,300.00	
27g. Cashier's Checks	3,227.67		3,227.67
28. State, County and Municipal Deposits	50,000.00		50,000.00
29. United States and Postal Savings Deposits			
30. Letters of Credit and Travelers' Checks Sold for Cash and now Outstanding			
31a. Acceptances Executed by or for Account of or Under Guarantees of this Bank (except those held by this Bank)			
31b. Liability Account Acceptances Executed to Furnish Dollar Exchange			
34. Other Liabilities	1,609.60		1,609.60
TOTAL	\$303,930.49	\$84,289.96	\$388,220.45
Interest Earned but not Collected (not included in Resources or Liabilities)	\$1,575.49	983.50	2,558.99

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, County of Los Angeles—ss.  
F. S. Arewood, President, and Barron J. Beckham, Cashier of the State Bank of Lomita, being duly sworn, each for himself, say he has a personal knowledge of the matters contained in the foregoing report of condition and that every allegation, statement, matter and thing therein contained, is true to the best of his knowledge and belief.F. S. AREWOOD,  
President.  
BARRON J. BECKHAM,  
Cashier.Severally subscribed and sworn to before me by both deponents, the 14th day of April, 1925.  
(Seal)BERTHA W. WILCOX,  
Notary Public in and for said County of  
Los Angeles, State of California.Girl Wins Honor  
In Engineering

Lots of folks take no precaution to protect themselves against mosquito bites—that's why they make guinine capsules.

The cistern breeds the skeeters.  
The garbage breeds the flies  
That walk upon the ceiling  
And buzz around the pies.

Alkali dust, without an abundance of rest in bed, meat, milk and eggs, isn't sufficient to arrest tuberculosis of the lungs.

When there's plague we rat-proof; when there's smallpox we vaccinate; when the horse has been stolen we lock the barn.

And the greatest of curses  
Of the baby who nurses  
Is a bottle that's doubtfully clean;

If he can't nurse his mother  
And there isn't another,

He'll be a hard baby to wean.

And another good way to keep your wife from collecting your insurance is to adopt the annual physical examination policy.

Those who have babies that are about to reach the end of their first year will find it profitable to remain in the protective environment of their respective homes during the coming hot months.

## WISE OLD BIRD

The city motorist was indignant. "How do you know I was exceeding the speed limit when you haven't a watch or anything?" he demanded. "Wal, ye seen that yellor dog a-chasin' ye, didn't ye?" inquired the rural constable. "When that dog can't keep up with a feller I know that feller's goin' more'n thirty miles an hour, b'gosh!"

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## Torrance City Bowling League

## PRIZES

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\$1.00 for each Game won

\$10.00 for High Series

\$5.00 for High Game

High Series and Game Cannot Be Claimed in Same Match

## Individual Prizes

To bowler with least blows, whose average is 170 or under.

## 1 Mineralite Bowling Ball

High Average	1 DOZEN PHOTOS By LaPlante's Studio
2nd High Average	1000 CAMELS By R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
3rd "	\$5.00 IN TRADE AT AMERICAN By Torrance Herald
4th "	MEAL TICKET By Smith's Cafe
5th "	5 POUND FRUIT CAKE By Torrance Bakery
6th "	1 PAIR BOWLING SHOES By McClellan's Bootery
7th "	50 CYANA CIGARS By Kaminsky Cigar Co.
8th "	HAND SEWN BILL FOLD By House of Parr Values
9th "	1 BOX CIGARS By Henry & Nash
10th "	3 POUNDS FANCY CHOCOLATES By E. A. Hoffman Candy Co.
11th "	ASSORTED GROCERIES By Daley's
12th "	BELT BUCKLE AND CHAIN By McCaffery-Torrance Dairy
13th "	50 BLACKSTONE PERFECTOS By Polaski Cigar Co.</td