

Manuel Leaves Cleared Rancho to 6 Daughters

In this, the seventh of a series of articles on the history of the Rancho San Pedro which comprised much of the area south of the city of Los Angeles at that time, we learn a little more about Manuel Dominguez, who settled the title to the rancho under U. S. laws, and passed it on to his daughters, debt free and consolidated.

By E. C. GILLINGHAM

The outstanding descendant of Cristobal Dominguez was his oldest surviving son, Manuel. Assuming the responsibility of protecting his inheritance soon after coming of age, his record deserves more than passing mention in relating the history of the Rancho San Pedro.

Luis Gonzaga Polcarpo Manuel Antonio y Ferrnando Dominguez, as he was baptized by the Franciscan padre, Josef Barona, was born in San Diego on Jan. 28, 1809. Obviously well named, he rarely used more than one given name, and then only on certain legal documents, most of which were in connection with the acquisition of title to the rancho.

MANUEL DOMINGUEZ received a better education than most of the youth of his day learning to read and write under the direction of an artillery sergeant at the San Diego Presidio. Other than this informal schooling, he was trained in horsemanship and in the handling of cattle on the open range. Later, he broadened his knowledge by extensive reading, and developed an ability to speak English fluently along with his native tongue. This self-training was of inestimable value in his later career, and was in marked contrast with that of his brothers and sisters, who remained almost completely illiterate throughout their lives.

In 1827, Don Manuel married Maria Encarnacion Cota, the daughter of the Prefect of the Los Angeles District. Soon after the wedding, the young couple moved into the rambling adobe house on the easterly side of Dominguez Hill. They lived in this home for more than 55 years. Of this marriage there were 10 children, eight daughters and two sons. Six of the daughters survived their parents, the others dying in early childhood.

THE YEAR 1827 also marked the beginning of an extended political career for Manuel Dominguez. His interest in public affairs was encouraged by his father-in-law, Guillermo Cota. In just two years' residence on the Rancho San Pedro, he had become well enough known to be nominated for "cena por exaltador," or one of three candidates for Auditor of the Pueblo of Los Angeles. He was not successful in this first try for municipal office, but later in the same year was elected "Regidor del Ilustre Ayuntamiento," or a member of the City Council. In 1832, at the age of 29, he was elected "Alcalde" or Mayor, serving again in this same office in 1839 and in 1842.

During the years 1833-39, Don Manuel held other government positions, including service in the provincial legislature at Monterey and San Diego. He represented the Pueblo in regional conferences during this turbulent period of Mexican rule, when California had five governors in eighteen months. In his local judicial district, which included Wilmington and the harbor area, Manuel was the Justice of the Peace for eight years.

IN THE LAST decade of Mexican rule, Manuel Dominguez was active in local defense councils. In 1843, he was made captain of a company of local militia, which was disbanded the following year. During the Mexican War, 1846-48, he took little active part in military operations, even though actual fighting took place near his home. Known since as the Battle of Dominguez Ranch. Being then in middle age, he acted as mediator in the many disputes which arose before law and order was established under the American regime. His previous record of public service commanded the respect of American authorities.

After the formal acquisition of California by the United States, the movement for statehood got under way, given the tremendous impetus by the increased population in the north

after gold was discovered. In 1849, Manuel Dominguez was one of seven delegates from the Los Angeles district to the constitutional convention at Monterey. He attended the sessions throughout, his knowledge of both Spanish and English being of great service in reconciling differences among the delegates.

FOLLOWING THE adoption of the Constitution, Don Manuel was asked by Pueblo officials to become a candidate for governor; a tribute to the esteem in which he was held in the Los Angeles area. This honor he declined. Long with later offers of position in the new state government. However, he held one other office before the close of his political career. In 1854 he was elected a Supervisor of Los Angeles County, serving out this term of four years. Following this service, he retired to private life.

During the entire period when Manuel Dominguez was active in public life, he was faced almost continuously with problems of rancho management, both legal and financial. From 1826 to 1858, he was involved in no less than 22 legal actions affecting the title to the Rancho and his personal rights in the tract. Almost alone among his brothers and sisters, he early realized the strategic location of the Rancho, and determined to hold on to as much of the land as possible. As has been noted, when the patent was obtained in 1838, he owned more than 27,000 acres of the original grant.

THE ACQUISITION and retention of this large estate was not easy. Aside from the usual living expenses and maintenance of rancho equipment, the cost of litigation in some years was greater than the income. Several times, Manuel had to borrow money to meet his obligations. On two of his notes of which there is record, the interest rate was 10 per cent, compounded monthly. Even with these excessive charges, the notes were paid, and without losing the Rancho.



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Chase said that because of the combined meetings of the two leagues an unusually large attendance is expected. Purpose of the meeting is to provide a background for discussion of mutual problems by several hundred management executives of savings and loan associations throughout the United States.

An American automobile with a 21 foot in length has been built in Italy, reports the Automobile Club of Southern California.

common wooden house shingles preparatory to converting them into sleek looking racing craft for entry in the Annual Shingle Boat Regatta at Alondra County Park on Friday, Nov. 28, at 12 noon.

This county-wide event will be the highlight of the Thanksgiving Season recreational program offered by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

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