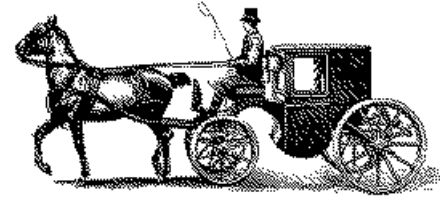


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A Brief History of Southern Monterey County

By Robert B. Johnston

What is Southern Monterey County? For some it could be all of the area south of the urban limits of the City of Salinas. However, in this presentation it will be bounded on the north by an imaginary line extending to the northeast from Lucia, near Lopez Point on the coast, through Junipero Serra Peak (5,862 feet), in the Santa Lucia Mountains, to the juncture of Reliz Canyon and the Arroyo Seco; continuing across the Salinas Valley to the mouth of Topo Creek, the line runs eastward to Santa Rita Peak (5,165 feet) in the Diablo Range overlooking the San Joaquin Valley. The land area enclosed between this line and the head waters of the Salinas River in northern San Luis Obispo County comprise the territory of the Salinan stock of the California Indians when the Spanish arrived in 1769-70.

All of this country is noted for its rugged and mountainous terrain. Along the coast the cliffs rise sheer from the water to a considerable height. For several miles inland the coastal lands are heavily wooded with various species of oak, and redwoods near the ocean. Small streams flow along the bottom of narrow, steeped sided canyons which present what seems to be an unending and impassable maze. Portolá in 1769 wrote in his journal after struggling up several steep ridges, that the range "extends in all four directions, without an end to be seen...."

Somewhat further inland, the Nacimiento and San Antonio Rivers run almost parallel and generally to the southeast through narrow valleys, turning northeast at

the last, to join their waters with the Salinas. Before the building of modern dams on these streams they were usually dry in summer but rushing torrents in the rainy season. Much of the Salinas Valley in this part of the county is almost as narrow as those of its principal tributaries, closed in by hills and bordered by oaks and sycamores.

The tributaries of the Salinas River which flow from the mountains to the east are more numerous but relatively short and deliver their lesser volumes through more direct water courses. An interesting exception is the San Lorenzo Creek with its tributary, Lewis Creek. Forming a kind of counterpoint to the pattern of the San Antonio and Nacimiento, these two creeks flow generally parallel toward the northwest for a considerable distance before they converge and turn to the southwest to put their winter floods into the Salinas near present-day King City.

Pedro Fages of the Portolá expedition reported on the fauna,

There are...bears, deer, antelope, wild sheep, rabbits, hares, squirrels, etc. Of the vermin and poisonous animals there are vipers (rattlesnakes), tarantulas, and scorpions, larger than usual...Among the birds no species is lacking..., and besides these, quail and very blue ring-doves and turtle doves, swallows and calendar-larks are seen here. Of fish in fresh water there are large trout...

Indians

The principal Indian groups of Monterey County were the Costanoan, Esselen, and Salinan. Except for the very small Esselen group located in the upper Carmel Valley and along the Big Sur coast, the county was divided between the two other groups. The Costanoans lived in

Note

This essay was written in approximately 1971 and donated to the Society with Robert B. Johnston's research collection.

the lower Salinas and San Benito Valleys. None of the above names refers to a tribe. In fact, the tribe as a political unit did not exist in California. The village, or more rarely a small group of villages constituting a "tribelet," was the usual basis for political organization. Designations as used above refer to groupings of peoples according to the language similarities in many dialects spoken.

Before the coming of the Spaniards and in the earliest years of historic times, there were three subdivisions of the Salinan stock: Antonio and Miguelino, after the missions where the dialects were spoken, and Playano, the people of the beach. There were twenty villages (called *rancherías* by the Spanish) within a twenty mile radius of Mission San Antonio. In all there were probably two to three thousand Salinan Indians in 1769. Portolá and his men found the Indians "very docile" and "gentle." The natives were described as of medium height and "well proportioned."

The Costanoan Indians who became affiliated with the Soledad Mission were the greatest enemies of the Salinans. However, the Salinan Indians were on friendly terms with the Yokuts peoples of the Tulare lakes to the east and exchanged frequent visits with them.

At the Stone-Age level of culture, the Salinan Indians were food gatherers: from the shore, stream, field, and forest they found a wide variety of plants and animals, though vegetable food supplied the greater part of the diet. Six species of acorns provided the principal staple. Acorn flour was always leached of its poison in a loosely woven basket through which the water percolated. Buckeyes were also gathered and treated in a similar fashion. In addition, there were seeds from the pine, the madrone, the sage, and other small shrubs and many grasses; elderberries, blackberries, strawberries, gooseberries, Indian potatoes, wild grapes, and prickly-pear cactus. Sugar and molasses were made from the sap of a reed grass and a tall leafy shrub. The flesh of most animals, fish and fowl, including reptiles and insects were eaten. A variety of shellfish as well as seaweed gathered at the coast were eaten after heating, probably savored for the salt flavor. Salmon and trout were speared or trapped in the Salinas River and smaller streams. Meat or fish, not roasted over the flames for immediate consumption, was dried in the open air or "jerked." Acorn or buckeye flour and other vegetables were prepared for eating in a cooking basket by a method known as stone boiling. Fire was made by twirling a drill of poison oak wood upon a hearth of willow.

Houses of the Salinans were of different kinds, but a common type was rectangular in shape, about ten feet square. A framework consisted of four corner posts and one in the center. Roof poles connected the corners with the center. Across these poles bundles of thatch made from tules and rye-grass were lashed in place with strips of bark so as to leave a smoke hole in the center. The walls were also made of tule.



Sweat-houses known as *temescals* were ordinarily small and circular in form, built of brush placed around a shallow excavation, arching over to meet at the top and partially covered with earth. A fire in the center of the house provided a kind of sauna bath in the heat and smoke. Both men and women among the Salinans frequented the *temescal*. Occasionally they made a larger sweat-house as a place to hold dances and ceremonies.

According to J. Alden Mason, who studied the Salinan Indians in 1912:

The pre-eminence of basketry making among the aboriginal arts of the Californian natives is well exemplified by the...fact that it is the sole surviving representative of Salinan-aboriginal manufacture. Yet, the number...preserved is very few, and probably all...[are] of quite recent manufacture. Some of the ranchers...of Jolon possess a few of these...and several other may be in the possession of collectors. The University of California (has) thirteen specimens, constituting probably the majority of the Salinan baskets now in existence. So far as is known, all of the basketry is the product of one woman, Perfecta Encinales, the oldest woman of the Salinan stock, and of her several daughters.

Portolá's Expedition, 1769

During the second half of the Eighteenth Century, Spanish authorities, alarmed at the ambitious moves of the Russians and English in the North Pacific area, selected Don Gaspar de Portolá and Padre Junípero Serra to lead an expedition designed to occupy "the Port of Monterey" and form a chain of missions along the Upper California coast. After great difficulties the expedition assembled at the site of San Diego from where Portolá set out overland on July 14, 1769 with a force of sixty-three to sixty-four men, included in the command were Portolá, Captain Rivera, Lieutenant Pedro Fages, Engineer Miguel Costansó, Fathers Juan Crespi, and Francisco Gomez, and the great scout, Sergeant José Ortega. Among the soldiers were an Alvarado, a Boronda, and a Soberanes, founders of important families in the Monterey area.

A little more than two months after leaving San Diego, Portolá and his men entered the present Monterey County near Wagner Creek, south of the Los Burros district, where the expedition encountered its most difficult traveling in the midst of the rugged Santa Lucia Mountains.

Portolá's camping sites in Southern Monterey County between September 17th and the 27th, 1769 were as follows:

- **September 17, Sunday—Wagner Creek**
Here they "came upon a village of heathen" of about "sixty souls, ...very gentle and friendly." They "called this spot la Hoya (valley) de la Sierra de Santa Lucia." Through the 19th most of the men worked at cutting a road for the next march.
- **September 20, Wednesday—Los Burros Creek:**
After traveling five hours on this day the expedition covered a little more than five miles. Discouraged and worn out by climbing many steep ridges, the men, some sick with scurvy, stopped in a "little valley, exceedingly narrow, ...scarcely room to form the camp." Because they met three villages of "heathen" harvesting pine nuts, they named the camp "El Real de los Pinones."
- **September 21, Thursday—Nacimiento River:**
Father Crespi observed that the river was "very much boxed in, and has a good growth of love oaks, alders, and cottonwoods." There were two villages of natives nearby who gave the Spaniard pinole and pine nuts and received in exchange beads, "which pleased them very much." Most of the men rested at this camp through the 23rd while the animals recuperated. The scouts advanced to the edge of the fogged in Salinas Valley which deceived them into believ-

ing that it was the Carmel River and that they had reached the ocean.

- **September 24, Sunday—San Antonio River near Jolon:**

Again, they traveled only about five miles but were impressed by the great white oaks and live oaks which covered the valley floor much like the "finest parks of Europe."

- **September 25, Monday—Upper Jolon Valley**
- **September 26, Tuesday—Salinas River near present-day King City:**

The banks of the Salinas River, named by Crespi as "El Rio de San Elziario," were full of willows, cottonwoods, love oaks and other trees." Descending from the slopes through Kent Canyon to the valley they found a village of two hundred natives "camped beneath a fallen live oak." Again pine nuts were exchanged for beads. They traveled another three leagues to their camp site at the River. Perhaps the brownish soil or muddy water reminded the men of a refreshment not too often enjoyed for they dubbed the camping place "El Real del Chocolate." Crespi wrote, "The whole plain is very verdant and the earth is soft and mellow, producing a variety of fragrant plants, ...rosemary, sage, and Castilian rose bushes...loaded with roses."

- **September 27, Wednesday—East of Salinas River near Metz:**

The camp was close to a cottonwood (sycamore) tree; therefore, "El Real del Alamo." Crespi's diary reads, "...saw this day's march two bands of antelope." Many fish, some of considerable size, were seen in the large pools of the River.

Within the next few days, Portolá and his men reached the mouth of the Salinas River but failed to recognize "The Port of Monterey" because they could not reconcile what they saw with the glowing accounts written by Vizcaíno one hundred sixty-seven years earlier. The party moved on northward to accidentally discover San Francisco Bay and return discouraged to San Diego. However, Portolá led his men over the same route in April of 1771 to the Bay of Monterey where he met Father Serra. Together they founded the Mission San Carlos Borromeo and the Presidio of Monterey on June 3, 1770.

Mission San Antonio de Padua

Four of the chain of twenty-one missions finally established by the Franciscan fathers in California, 1769-1822, were in the area which became Monterey County.

While preparing to move the Mission San Carlos from Monterey to Carmel Valley, Father Serra accompa-

nied by two other Franciscans, led a small pack train into the Santa Lucia Mountains some twenty miles southwest of present-day King City. Here he hung a bell from one of the many oaks near the river which he named El Rio de San Antonio and shouted, "Oh ye gentiles come, come to the holy church!" At this site on July 14, 1771, Father Serra dedicated California's third mission, San Antonio de Padua. The mission was moved further up the Los Robles Valley in 1773 to its present location.

One of the padres, left in charge of the new mission by Father Serra, was Buenaventura Sitjar who served San Antonio for thirty-seven years (1771-1808).

He constructed an elaborate water system of dams, aqueducts and reservoirs to bring water for turning a gristmill, for bathing and for irrigation. The mission grew rapidly. Within two years, one hundred fifty eight converts had been made and by the decade following 1820 there said to be no more gentiles within seventy-five miles. The number of Indian neophytes reached a maximum of 1,100-1,300 in 1805 and then gradually declined.

There were ten ranchos attached to San Antonio de Padua by 1835; San Carpofo, San Bartolomé, or El Pleito, El Tule, San Lucas, San Benito, San Bernabé. San Miguelito, Los Ojitos, San Timoteo, and San Lorenzo. The Padres reported in 1827 that the livestock of the mission included: cattle, 7,362; sheep, 11,00; mares and colts, 500; and tamed horses, 300. With secularization in 1834, the mission entered a long period of neglect and decay. Father Doroteo Ambris, a Mexican Indian, raised, educated and ordained at Santa Barbara, tended his scattered flock and "humbly guarded the ruins until his death in 1882." He was buried in the sanctuary beside the Franciscans—Pujo, Sitjar, Sancho and Sarria. According to J. Alden Mason writing in 1912:

While the Salinan (area) was not one of the great mining centers..., it is probable the natives suffered greatly through the diseases and demoralizing influences (in this) time (1850-1870) of their greatest numerical losses.

After "careful inquiry," Mason found the names of forty-one full blooded Salinans (thirteen Miguelino and twenty eight Antonino). Stock raising provided employment for most of them though several raised fruit and vegetables.

Restoration of the church, originally dedicated in 1813 began in 1903 sponsored by the California Historic Landmarks League and the Native sons of the Golden



San Antonio Mission ruins. [#89.12.92]

West under the leadership of Joseph R. Knowland. The first efforts were destroyed in the earthquake of 1906, but work was resumed and completed in 1907. In 1948, a comprehensive restoration under the supervision of Harry J. Downie was undertaken, financed by funds from the Hearst Foundation and the Franciscan Fathers of California.

Ranchos Under Mexican Rule

In April, 1822, the officers of the Presidio and the padres of the missions of the Monterey area swore allegiance to the new Mexican nation. The green, white, and red flag with an eagle in the center was raised atop the Presidio of Monterey replacing the red and gold banner of Imperial Spain. More significant for California was the decline and official end of the missions with secularization in the mid-1830s. The rancho, carved from the pasture lands and fields once used by the herds and flocks of the mission became the dominant social and economic institution of the new regime.

Under Spanish rule not outright grants of land were made to private individuals in California. Land not needed by the missions could be granted as provisional concessions. The first concession was issued to Manuel Butron, a soldier who had married Margarita Maria, an Indian neophyte at the Mission San Carlos. Of six other concessions issued in the Monterey area, twenty years later, only two became the basis of actual grants under Mexican rule after 1822. Altogether seventy-nine grants, later confirmed by the United States Government, were made in the area of the original Monterey County (including present-day San Benito County). More than half of these grants bore the signature of Juan Bautista Alvarado and other governors of California in the last ten

MEXICAN LAND GRANTS OF SOUTHERN MONTEREY COUNTY

Name Original Size	English Translation	Date	Grantee Granted by	Patented to Acreage / date
Poza de Los Ositos 4 leagues	Waterhole of the little bears	May 16, 1839	Carlos C. Espinosa Gov. Alvarado	Grantee 16,938.98 acres June 29, 1865
San Lorenzo (Topo) 11 leagues	St. Lawrence	Feb. 18, 1846	Rafael Sanchez Gov. Pio Pico	Grantee 45,286 acres Dec. 22, 1870
San Lorenzo (Coburn) 5 leagues	St lawrence	Aug. 9, 1841	Feliciano Soberanes Gov. Alvarado	Grantee 21,884.38 acres July 28, 1866
San Lorenzo (Peach Tree) 5 leagues	St Lawrence	Nov. 16, 1842	Francisco Rico Gov. Alvarado	Heirs of Andrew Randall 22,264.47 acres June 4, 1870
San Bernabé 3 leagues	St. Barnabas (named for Cañada de San Bernabé, mentioned by Padre Font, Apr. 15, 1776)	Mar. 10, 1841 Apr. 6, 1842	Jesus Molina Petronillo Rios Gov. Alvarado	Henry Cocks 13,296.38 acres Mar. 27, 1873
San Benito 1.5 leagues	St. Benedict	Mar. 11, 1842	Francisco Garcia Gov. Alvarado	James Watson 6,671 acres Sept. 6, 1869
San Lucas 2 leagues	St. Luke	May 9, 1842	Rafael Estrada Gov. Alvarado	James McKinley 8,874.72 acres Feb. 23, 1872
San Bernardo 3 leagues	St. Bernard (San Bernardino)	June 16, 1841	Mariano & Juan Soberanes Gov. Alvarado	Mariano Soberanes 13,345.65 acres Mar. 9, 1874
Milpitas 3 leagues	Little gardens or little cornfields	May 5, 1838	Ignacio Pastor Indian Neophyte of Mission San Antonio Gov. Alvarado	Grantee 43,280.90 acres Feb. 18, 1875
Los Ojitos 2 leagues	Little springs	Apr. 4-5, 1842	Mariano Soberanes Gov. Alvarado	Grantee 8,900 acres Apr. 18, 1871
Pleyto (Pleito) 3 leagues	Spanish for “dispute” or “lawsuit”	July 18, 1845	José Antonio Chaves Gov. Pio Pico	W.S. Johnson P.K. Woodside 13,299.27 acres Mar. 7, 1872
San Miguelito 5 leagues	Little St Michael of the Trinity	July 24, 1841	José Rafael Gonzales Gov. Alvarado	Mariano Gonzales 22,135.89 acres Aug. 8, 1876
El Piojo 3 leagues	The louse	Aug. 20, 1842	Joaquin Soto Gov. Alvarado	Heirs of grantee 13,329.28 acres Apr. 30, 1866
Cholame 6 leagues	Named for a Salinan Indian Village	Feb. 5, 1844	Maurico (Mariano) Gonzales Gov. Micheltorena	Ellen E. White 26,2622 acres divided between Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties. Ranch house in Monterey County Apr. 1, 1865

years before American occupation in 1846. The typical grant was for two square leagues or almost nine thousand acres. Because of the plentiful supply of land, the description of grants almost always contained the expression *mas o menos* (more or less), since a few hundred acres usually mattered very little.

The fourteen ranchos of southern Monterey County were not typical, all but three were for more than 13,000 acres. Governor Alvarado signed his name to all but three between 1833 and 1842. None of the grants appear to have been based on a concession made in the Spanish regime before 1822. Two grants bore the signature of Pico Pico, the last Mexican governor, within one year (one within five months) of the American flag raising at Monterey, July 7, 1846. More than half of them had been operated as mission ranches by the Franciscan padres of San Antonio de Padua. Mariano Soberanes, his brother Feliciano and their families received three of the fourteen grants, Los Ojitos, San Lorenzo and San Bernardo.

The Soberanes men were the greatest landholders of Monterey County. Feliciano became administrator of Mission Soledad lands and received the major portion of them as a grant from Governor Alvarado, who also made him the owner of five square league Rancho San Lorenzo. For many years several bachelor sons of Feliciano lived on the San Lorenzo with Panfilo in charge. A member of Fremont's California Battalion stopped at the ranch in February of 1847 and observed:

Large herds of cattle and horses...grazing upon the luxuriant grasses of the plain, and several extensive enclosures sowed in wheat which presented all the indications of an abundant harvest. But with all these natural resources surrounding him, the elder brother told us that he had nothing to eat in the house but fresh beef.

Choice pieces of beef were roasted for the guests. Feliciano's son apologized profusely for the "rude style of living." As of 1850 the livestock of the ranch included 400 head of cattle, 9 yoke of oxen, 27 horses, 200 sheep and an adobe house valued at \$1,500.00. The house was later destroyed by a Salinas River flood.

Mariano Soberanes, brother of Feliciano, received the grant of Los Ojitos for two square leagues (about 9,000 acres), also from the hand of Governor Alvarado. Two adobes may have been built before 1800 as ranch houses for this rancho, the long narrow tract of fertile bottom land lying along the San Antonio River near Jolon. The large adobe measured seventy-five feet in length with walls three feet thick. Both of the adobes, located on Camp Hunter Liggett, became nothing more than a mass of rubble during World War II as the army used them for targets in gun practice.

On all of the ranchos of the Santa Lucias, there were Indians, often whole families. The men worked as vaqueros and the women helped at household duties. Some of

the Indian families lived on small plots along the creeks, others remained close by the Mission and Padre Ambris until his death in 1882. The most noted of the Indians was the family of Eusebio and Perfecta, given the name Encinales by William Earl who identified them with the live oaks. Encinal means place of the live oak. At the head of the San Antonio Valley, Eusebio worked 500 acres where he irrigated a vineyard and orchard and raised sheep, hogs, and cattle.

Change came to the southern ranchos, often with heartbreaking results, but something of the old lingered on in the San Antonio Valley. Families, whether Indian, Spanish, or Anglo-American, were drawn to the mission during Holy Week, at the Feast of St. Anthony on June 13, and the Mexican Independence Day, September 16. It served them spiritually, but there was also the opportunity for barbecues, games, riding and fancy roping, singing, dancing, love-making, and the telling of tall tales. Vaqueros, driving cattle over the route behind the mission leading through Reliz Canyon and down to the Salinas Valley, stopped for prayers or a celebration of the Mass.

The pattern of living changed more slowly in Southern Monterey County than elsewhere in the county. Perhaps this can be explained in part by the geographic setting; remote mountain valleys, drought or near drought a constant presence, more extreme differences between hot summers and cold winters, relative absence of broad flat fertile plains suited to large scale use of mechanical techniques in agriculture, and long delays in the improvement or availability of transportation facilities. (These conditions continued into the twentieth century).

It may be due to the above influences that the Indian and the pastoral way of life associated with rancho have persisted into the recent past. During the brief Mexican regime, less than ten years in the south county, there was little opportunity for the *ranchero* to spend much time enjoying the comparative excitement of *fandangos*, and other social events in the sleepy port town of Monterey. The dreary, lonely life of the cattle ranch with its adobe headquarters, often standing alone, desolate, unrelieved by gardens or shade, its epitomized in the scene of the bachelor sons of Feliciano Soberanes receiving an American traveler in 1847, and wistfully suggesting that, if he could send them American women for wives, they would provide the gracious niceties of a more civilized life. This belies the stereotyped, romantic version of the *ranchero* riding a richly caparisoned horse over his estate during the day and returning at sunset to the hacienda, there to join his wife in greeting the guests for an evening of polite conversation and dancing to the music of expertly strummed guitars. And yet the mountains and valleys of the south were more Spanish or Mexican than the rest of the Monterey area. Not one of the original land grants were made to an Englishman or American. No names like Hartnell, Spence or Cooper appeared in the list of grantees.

Cattle Ranching in the Early American Years

Between the years 1846 and 1865 great events marked significant changes in California and the nation. The raising of the flag over the Monterey Custom House on July 7, 1846 was made permanent by treaty in 1848; in the latter year the discovery of gold set off a great population migration which hastened the coming of statehood for California in 1850. But the coast from Monterey to the Mexican border felt little of the revolutionary effects of the gold rush and other events of the period. They "...brought hardly any increase in population, built neither city nor village [and]...left [the] life and customs of the Spanish Californians almost undisturbed."

During the war with Mexico, in December 1846, John C. Fremont and his California Battalion passed through the Rancho Los Ojitos enroute to Los Angeles. Because Mariano Soberanes and his sons had participated in the "Battle of Natividad" against the American forces in November, the ranch buildings were set on fire and the men were taken as prisoners. Don Mariano filed a claim for \$19,930.00 with the United States Government of which only \$423.00 was paid. Again in 1847 and 1849, American authorities at Monterey accused Don Mariano of pillaging the Mission San Antonio and appropriating tiles from the buildings for his own use. No doubt because of this treatment, the Soberanes on Los Ojitos were less than cordial to Americans for some years afterward.

J. Ross Browne, Special Agent of the Post Office Department commissioned in the Summer of 1849 "to establish a line of Post Offices and Post Routes as far south as San Diego," discovered the wild nature of the Salinas Valley, especially its southern portion. On his "Dangerous Journey" he encountered bands of wild cattle and became the unwilling spectator at an unscheduled

bull and bear fight viewed from his perch in a convenient tree after being thrown from his mule. One evening shortly after sunset, he was temporarily detained in the camp of a party of "Sonorians" whom he suspected of being bandits. A little later he passed San Miguel where the murder of the Reed family living there was a fresh but tragic memory. Small wonder he decided to turn back without accomplishing his task after attending a *fandango* at San Luis Obispo.

Even before California became a state, the California Legislature assembled at San Jose under the Constitution of 1849. One of its important acts in February 1850 was the creation of twenty-seven counties, including Monterey. Originally, the county borders encompassed present-day San Benito County. A portion of the southern section was then in San Luis Obispo County. The boundary was defined as running from the coast,

due east to the source of the [Nacimiento River] thence down the middle of said river to its confluence with Monterey [Salinas] River; thence up...the middle of the Monterey River to the parallel of thirty-six degrees..., thence due east, ...to the summit of the Coast Range.

Monterey County usually tied with Santa Barbara, after Los Angeles, for second place in number of cattle. Large landholdings as under Mexican rule were required. Methods of raising cattle changed very little. These conclusions certainly applied to the southern section of Monterey County. The already large herds of cattle in the county continued to increase through the 1850s until the figure of 98,700 head was reported in 1860. Two years later the county had the distinction of being "...one of the poorest...in grain and fruit, and one of the riches in cattle and sheep."

Before 1848 a person might kill a head of beef for food if he skinned it and left the hide for the owner. But the gold rush changed that. Prices increased dramatically, even for the wild, rangy, black Spanish cattle, until about



1857. By that time several factors foreshadowed the declining and collapse of the black cattle industry: 1) supply was catching up with demand, 2) legal fees for defending the land grant claims was forcing the transfer of property to new owners, 3) improved American breeds of livestock began appearing and 4) the recurring cycles of drought and flood took their toll.

For most of the 1850s drovers used the coast as the favorite route for driving cattle and other livestock from the southern ranges to the northern markets. W.S. Johnson at Natividad reported that in the year 1856 over 36,000 head of stock and beef cattle, more than 26,000 sheep, almost 2,500 horses and mules, and 1,345 hogs passed that place from the south. The cattle and sheep originated from as far away as Texans and the mid-western states as well as in the southern California counties. Virtually all of the stock passed through the San Antonio and Salinas Valleys where they were joined by hundreds of others. Johnson observed in February 1857 that, "no business is doing here in stock sales, stock are very poor, and many have died in the last four or five months...the loss in this county alone has been from two to three thousand head." In May of the previous year he noted that

...not more than half of the beef cattle were in marketable condition. [Pasturage was good at Natividad] and for 10-15 miles south, [beyond], "no."

During the years 1861-1865, California experienced two years of extreme drought following a winter of great floods. These disastrous years marked the shift from raising wild Spanish cattle on the unfenced ranges of the ranchos to greater emphasis on the cultivation of the soil.

Some of the developments are illustrated in the short histories of selected rancho of southern Monterey Count:

Milpitas

According to a guide to historic spots in California counties, Ignacio Pastor, a neophyte of Mission San Antonio de Padua received the grant of the Rancho Milpitas from Governor Alvarado on May 5, 1838, filed his claim in the early 1850s and obtained a patent for 43,280.90 acres on February 18, 1875. Actually, the Indian, Pastor, did not get anything. Beatrice (Tid) Casey sums it up:

This grant...purported to have been signed by Governor Alvarado at...San Antonio—which is obviously impossible not only because [he] was not constitutional governor at [the] time but because he was far away in the south when the signature was affixed. Worse yet, the survey [was] located without reference to original boundaries.

The grant had been for three square leagues, about 13,300 acres, but it grew by final confirmation to 43,289.90 acres. Further, the major portion of the grant

passed through several owners between 1838 and 1875. Juan M. Luco, a Chilean who came to California in 1847 acquired it from Pastor and filed the claim. Then in 1859, Hiram Rush of Philadelphia purchased the grant, stocked it with quality Durham cattle and placed his brother-in-law, William Earl, a young Englishman, in charge on a share basis. The droughts of '63 and '64 killed thousands of cattle and caused the Earls to lose the Milpitas to Faxon D. Atherton who used his financial resources to press for confirmation of the grant for about ten square leagues. Many families, who believed they possessed legitimate homesteads on public lands, found themselves labeled as squatters and evicted from their homes. Some Indian families were transferred to a colony northwest of the Mission, referred to as "the Reservation." The other non-Indian families were settled on government land south of Jolon. This was dubbed as "Poor Man's Flats." Attempts were made to obtain justice from Atherton in the courts.

San Bernabé

Anne B. Fisher dramatized and perhaps overplayed the story of the fate of Rancho San Bernabé. The grant was made by Governor Alvarado for a total of three square leagues in two parts to Jesus Molina and Petronillo Rios in 1841 and 1842. Henry Cocks, an English marine on the *U.S.S. Dale* settled in Monterey after 1848 and married a daughter of Francisco Garcia, thereby gaining an interest in the San Bernabé. In the mid-1850s, after a brief but colorful career as a "fighting Justice of the Peace" in Alisal Township, successfully tracking cattle thieves, he moved to the south county ranch and set up what became known as Cocks' Station on the stage road leading from the Salinas Valley up over the grade to Mission San Antonio. Cocks also acquired a patent on a large piece of land in the lower Salinas Valley near Blanco. Details of the actual events are vague, but apparently in 1866, about two years after the great drought, he sold out and joined the telegraph expedition to Alaska and Siberia and engaged in other adventurous pursuits until 1875. According to Marno Dutton Thompson, his grave site is near San Lucas.

Meantime, Anne Fisher had Garcia "crazy" over the effects of the drought in 1863. His fine herd of cattle were "only bags of bones," dying before his very eyes. He "raised his weather-beaten face to the sky" begging for rain while his wife "lighted tapers to the Blessed Mother and prayed." When a stranger rode up on a horse and offered to buy the San Bernabé for \$5,000.00, he agreed in order to get feed for the cattle. It is not clear where this feed would have come from as very little hay or grain was grown in the entire county. When the stranger returned later with the legal papers, Garcia signed without noting the \$5,000.00 had been altered to \$500.00. "As the American mounted his horse to leave, Garcia found his tongue 'and when will you give the



rest.' You get no more!" was the reply. So the rancho went for less than \$.04 per acre. Presumably the American was an agent for Captain J.B.R. Cooper who purchased the grant and placed David Leese, a nephew of his wife, in charge. Leese while managing the ranch lived in an adobe, the ruins of which can still be seen, standing to the left of the road to Jolon about two miles from the bridge at King City.

According to the Monterey County Assessor's records of 1859, Captain Cooper led all others in the quality and diversification of his livestock holding and farm equipment. His 2,661 head of cattle included 61 American bulls, 590 half breed yearling calves, and, numbered among his 240 horse, 4 American stallions valued at \$300.00 each.

San Miguelito de la Trinidad

The droughts of '63 and '64 killed more than 5,000 head of cattle on the Rancho San Miguelito of Don Mariano Gonzales, according to Beatrice Casey. The family of José Maria Gil who operated the ranch were forced to move to a 112 acres place northwest of Jolon.

Charles Polemas of New Jersey purchased Rancho San Miguelito in 1869 and introduced improved breeds of Durham and Jersey cattle. He also acquired El Piojo where he raised the first race horses in the area. A new and unusual product of the ranchos was turkeys. Mariano Gil, who worked for Polemas until 1872, drove them down like cattle through the Salinas Valley, past Natividad and San Juan Bautista, to the markets in San Jose.

San Benito

South of Rancho San Bernabé, the Rancho San Ben-

ito extended along both sides of the Salinas River. One and a half leagues were granted to Francisco Garcia by Governor Alvarado, March 11, 1842. Patent for 6,671 acres went to the deceased claimant, James Watson, on September 6, 1869. Watson was an English trader at Monterey who married Mariana Escamilla. He was very successful financially and purchased the San Benito about 1850. However, he was "wiped out" by the drought of '63 and died the same year. His descendants still live in the county. His son Tomas, born in 1835, served as sheriff of Monterey County. Alberto Trescony eventually added this rancho to his large San Lucas holdings.

San Lucas

Rafael Estrada, whose misfortunes are too complicated for this sketch, received the grant of the San Lucas for two leagues in 1842, but James McKinley became the owner and claimant to whom the patent for 8,875 acres was issued February 22, 1872. James McKinley, a Scottish sailor arrived at Monterey very early in the Mexican regime and became a successful trader. He served as an agent for both Thomas Oliver Larkin and his half brother, Captain J.B.R. Cooper, who as noted above became the owner of the San Bernabé. However, the Rancho San Lucas was purchased from McKinley in 1862 for \$3,000 by Alberto Trescony. Trescony, born in the Piedmont section of Italy, traveled to New York and New Orleans and came to Monterey from the west coast of Mexico in the early 1840s. He may have brought a small amount of capital with him, proceeds of a sheep drive from Texas into Central Mexico. He accumulated a sizeable amount of money from manufacturing gold pans for the miners. Capitalizing on his experiences in New Orleans, he built



Dutton hotel, store and stage stop, about 1888.

the Washington Hotel in Monterey during early 1849. In 1846, he had received his own cattle brand from California's last Mexican governor. Trescony patterned the brand after the design used by Mission San Antonio de Padua. It is the oldest brand of California in continuous use to the present day and much prized by Alberto's grandson, Julius G. Trescony.

The elder Trescony had his greatest success in agriculture. He began with cattle ranching and family records reveal the purchases of American cattle on the Salinas Plain in the 1850s. By purchase of 4,400 acres of the San Bernardo and 6,700 from the San Benito, he consolidated his San Lucas holdings into a ranch of about 20,000 acres. His ranch was stocked with sheep and the flocks numbered 25,000 by 1876. To care for his sheep, Trescony brought in Basque shepherders whose descendants have contributed to the mixed ethnic origins of southern Monterey County.

Two successive years of drought, in 1871-1872, killed large numbers of the livestock of Monterey County including many sheep from the flocks of Alberto Trescony. He managed to prevent the situation from becoming a complete financial disaster by slaughtering the sheep and storing the hides in the ruins of the Soledad Mission which he rented from the Soberanes family. However, Trescony sold his remaining flocks in 1876,

moved to Santa Cruz, and turned over the management of his ranching operations to his son, Julius A. Although both cattle and sheep continued to be raised on the ranch, Alberto's son began to cultivate barley and wheat and encouraged its production on portions of the property rented for cash or on shares "...barley culture at San Lucas was so successful that "Trescony Barley" soon was selling at a premium on world malt markets, particularly that of Liverpool, England..." The Salinas Board of Trade in 1889 in a publication boasting the "Resources, Advantages and Prospects of Monterey County" explained that "...here as elsewhere the railroad [arriving in 1886] has changed the condition of things, and advanced the hand on the dial of civilization."

Salsipuedes

The former mule ranch of Mission San Antonio de Padua passed to a new owner in the 1860s. Vicente Avila came from his ranch at San Miguel during the drought in 1864 seeking pasturage for his cattle. He headed for the coastal area, the most probable site of good feed. In the way he stopped at El Potrero, where he met José Maria Gil who operated the ranch and lived in a small three-room adobe built by the Mission fathers. Beatrice Casey continues the story:

Liking the place, Avila proposed buying it.

The deal was speedily consummated, Gil asking only whatever Avila chanced to have in his pocket. Thirteen dollars! Avila renamed the ranch 'Salsipuedes' (get out if you can) which was appropriated for, ... [the] tortuous trail over which he had come."

San Lorenzo (Soberanes)

Eugene Sherwood is said to have brought "a bit of old England [to] the wild and woolly plains of Salinas." This distinguished Englishman graduated from Eton, was admitted to the bar, served as a British Army captain in the Crimean War. Upon his return, he joined a group of capitalists in a plan for raising sheep in California. When he landed in San Francisco in 1856 he is supposed to have formulated a plan similar to that of Miller and Lux for a chain of ranchos to extend from Southern Monterey County to San Francisco," ... where sheering was to be done...near a shipping point." Sherwood purchased the Rancho San Lorenzo (Soberanes) and sent for his wife and three young children to join him.

When a group of Salinan Indians passed the ranch house one day, Mrs. Sherwood, though unfamiliar with firearms, was prepared to defend her family from attack by the wild savages. However, she was somewhat disappointed to discover that they were peacefully on their way to a "sing" after a successful fishing expedition. Meantime, Mr. Sherwood stoked the ranch with sheep, but the floods of 1861-62 washed away the ranch house and other improvements, as well as a large flock of sheep. He began shifting his attention to the Rancho Sausal on the lower Salinas plain which he had purchased from Ja-

cob P. Leese in 1860.

Stagecoaches and Post Offices

California before the gold rush relied on the "usual Mexican system of mule-train," the squeaking ox-driven corretas, irregular supply or trading vessels and couriers to meet their communication needs. After the American acquisition of California, the first five post offices established in the original Monterey County were: Monterey 1848; San Juan Bautista, 1851; Salinas, 1854; Natividad, 1855; and San Antonio, December 16, 1858.

According to information furnished to Mrs. Walter Gillett of Lockwood, San Antonio Post Office, first in the south county, was originally founded at the San Antonio River near the headquarters of Los Ojitos Rancho. Francis Sylvester was appointed first postmaster. However, the exact location or locations is in doubt. The following observations are pertinent but not conclusive. Post office sites were frequently changed with official permission though continuing to bear the same name. It seems unlikely that San Antonio Post Office would have continued at its original site after the founding of Jolon in January 1872. Advertisements for the Coast Line Stage Company showed San Antonio to be located between Lowe's and Jolon. Some pioneer residents of southern Monterey County believe San Antonio Post Office was located in Quinado Canyon, near Lowe's. When San Antonio Post Office was merged with King City, September 27, 1887, it seems rather odd that Jolon was "hopped over" in the process.

Although one writer has claimed that direct stage coach and mail service via the coast route began in 1855,

San Antonio School





the postal and other records seem to disagree. The first successful bid for carrying the mail between Monterey and Los Angeles went to John Caldwell who carried it horseback, once in every two weeks, beginning October 1851 through 1854, for an annual fee of \$7,242.00. Bids were solicited in 1859 for continuing his type of service but none appear to have been accepted, for in 1859 the Overland Mail Company acquired a half interest in Charles McLaughlin's operations on the California coast. McLaughlin had become the contractor for most of the mail routes out of San Francisco when the California Stage Company sold its coast lines to him in 1856. The coast road had been little more than a trail until 1859 when Santa Barbara County expended \$40,000.00 to begin improving it, south to Los Angeles and north to San Luis Obispo. Many records are destroyed or widely scattered for this period and some of the details are therefore not available. Apparently, McLaughlin extended service on the coast south from Monterey to Los Angeles between 1858 and 1859. It is clear that in 1862 bids were advertised for service three times a week between San Juan and San Diego, 523 miles. Charles McLaughlin became the contractor for an annual fee of a little less than \$40,000.00. The Los Angeles to San Diego portion continued to be by horseback.

In 1866 Overland Mail Company sold its stage line from Sacramento eastward to Wells Fargo company and divested itself of the California operations. It was then that William E. Lovett of San Juan Bautista, brother-in-law of Lewellyn Bixby, became the new contractor for the route to Los Angeles. He called his operation "Coast Line San Juan and Los Angeles U.S. Mail Company." Daily service became available to patrons of the San Antonio post office in 1867. The year before in 1866,

Cock's Station had changed hands and became known as Lowe's, after its new owner James Lowe.

Flint, Bixby and Company, leading sheep producers of the San Benito Valley, purchased the Coast Line Stage from E. Lovett in January 1868. The inventory of stock and equipment listed a house, stable, a granary, grain and hay at Lowe's Station, designated as "Last Chance." At Jolon, not yet an official post office, the company owned a house, granary, hay and grain.

As the railroad tracks were laid from San Francisco, the stage line began at the railhead, which became Gilroy, in October 1869. The railroad ran its first trains in to Salinas in the early fall of 1872, and almost without stopping the construction crews continued to lay tracks to the new community of Soledad, where they arrived and stopped in 1873. From this point the stagecoaches departed for Southern California during the next thirteen years.

Beginning in 1865 grain and dairy farming increased rapidly in the valleys of Monterey County as illustrated by the following:

	<u>1862</u>	<u>1875</u>
Acres Cultivated	19,765	130,475
Acres in Wheat	5,300	99,650
Cattle	90,450	41,847

Miners left the gold fields to join a flood of immigrants seeking land. When they found it, they built "square, unpainted, unplanned redwood" box-like houses. Soon a barn was raised; and redwood stakes, nailed together by a row of boards along the top, enclosed a field of barley or wheat. Many of the new immigrants moved into southern Monterey County, among them the Wefer-

lings, Heinsens, Martinus, Arfsten, Bushnells, Paulsens, Wollesens, Meyers, Valdez, Diaz, and Nance, as well as George Dutton and Captain T.T. Tidball.

Antonio Ramirez built the one story adobe in 1850 which became the Dutton Hotel when Captain George Dutton purchased it in 1876. John Lee, an earlier owner of the adobe, was appointed as the first postmaster of Jolon on January 18, 1872. Jolon had been an important stop on the Coast Line Stage route in the 1860s. Dutton and his friend Captain T.T. Tidball established a store in the adobe and later kept the post office there. A second floor was added to the adobe in 1886. Another store was established by Senor and Senora Mendoza on the road to Pleito. "...Jolon, with its two hotels, three stores, one saloon, eight residences and two blacksmith shops [was] becoming a lively center." In 1883, the Rt. Rev. Wm. Kip, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, established a mission church at Jolon.

Continuing down the San Antonio Valley there were two more stage stops, "Pleito" and "Nacimiento." Pleito became an official post office, December 14, 1870. The community consisted of a school, a dance hall, hotel, store, blacksmith shop and a saloon. William Pinkerton and his co-owner of a large portion of the Rancho Pleito made arrangements with a promoter to lay out ambitious plans for subdividing the ranch into small farms. The area was advertised as possessing "some of the finest wheat growing sections in California." A town was planned where lots would be available for settlers. A flour mill was promised for the town within the year. But one of the most important posts was that of the blacksmith responsible for shodding the stage coach horses. J.T. Betts held this position for many years. His sister managed the hotel. Mr. H. Gimball operated the store at Pleito in 1887.

An advertisement of the Coast Line Stage company appeared in the *Salinas Index* for July 17, 1873 which read in part:

leave Salinas daily 4:00 p.m. (on arrival of cars leaving San Francisco at 8:00 a.m.) for Soledad, Lowe's, San Antonio, Jolon, Pleito, Nacimiento, San Maguel [sic], Passa Robles [sic], Hot Springs, San Luis Obispo, Ballards, Santa Barbara, San Buenaventura, and Los Angeles. Arriving in Los Angeles in sixty hours!

Coaches lv Salinas daily at 4:00 p.m. from Monterey, New Republic and Natividad.

William Buckley, Supt.

One should note that San Antonio Post Office appears on the route between Lowe's and Jolon.

William Buckley, one a division superintendent on the Butterfield Overland Mail Stage company in the 185's, moved to the Pacific Coast and became the Superintendent of the Coast Line Stage under the ownership

of William E. Lovett followed by Flint, Bixby and Company.

In 1878 William H. Taylor and Buckley purchased the Coast Line Stage Company and began operations January 1, 1879. Jesse D. Carr of Salinas, very successful in obtaining mail contracts, became a partner in 1882. The new firm continued to run the line from Soledad to Santa Barbara until about 1886 when the railroad extended its tracks southward to Santa Margarita. Records of the firm make frequent mention of Wm. Jeffery, W. Pinkerton, H.J. Laughlin, A.F. Childs, R.G. Flint, Thos. Cashin, P.W. Murphy, J.L. Ward, J. Lynch, George Sweeney, D.D. Patterson, A. Warren, A.M. Freeman, P. Fancher, A.S. Pigott, J. Lowe, H. Gimball, W. Dumphy, J.A. Hackett, R. Broughton, F. Sylvester, T.T. Tidball, and J.M. Bolton as passengers or shippers. The stage carried such items as: a kegs of beer, keg of nails, sack of potatoes, rope, lard, boxes of butter, trunks, and on one occasion four sheep.

When the railroad extended its lines southward to include Bradley, there was a contest over the name and location of the post office for the area. Nacimiento on the El Camino Real near the San Luis Obispo line became a post office December 3, 1887, but was merged with Veratina within less than a year. Veratina lost out to Bradley in 1895. Pleito and the southern most section of the San Antonio Valley received its mail by stage from Bradley which began in 1887.

Lair Patterson was appointed first Postmaster of Lockwood south of Jolon, July 23, 1888. Patterson named his post office for a woman named Lockwood who announced her candidacy for President of the United States at the time. Mail for this community seems to have arrived from King City via Jolon.

Industrial and Agricultural Expansion (1884-1900)

During the 1880s and 1840s, Monterey County experienced a series of economic developments which changed the character of its agriculture, created new towns, established new industries, increased its population, and gave the area railroad transportation to Los Angeles and Southern California. Three principal factors contributed to the economic developments: (1) the Southern Pacific Railroad made heavy investments in the county and decided to extend its coast route southward; (2) individuals with imagination and capital discovered new resources or introduced new crops and methods; (3) large scale irrigation projects were begun.

For almost thirteen years the railroad which reached Soledad in 1873 made no further advance. But in 1884, Charles H. King, Sr., millionaire lumberman, purchased the 13,000 acre Rancho San Lorenzo and planted 6,000 acres of wheat, Contrary to predictions, it proved to be a great success and influenced the decision of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company to push southward from

Soledad to Paso Robles. King City began when the Southern Pacific Railroad puffed into the station of "Kings" in the midst of the Rancho San Lorenzo, July 1886. J. Ernest Steinbeck, father of the famous author, was appointed agent for the S.P. Milling Company.

The new town became an official post office, February 18, 1887, and served as the stage and freight station for Jolon, the ranches and grain farms of the San Antonio Valley to the southwest and the Los Burros gold mining district beyond. A post office known as Mansfield was established September 14, 1889. Mixed grain farming and stock raising prevailed on the ranches of Southern Monterey County. In the San Antonio Valley several of the large Mexican land grants were virtually intact. However, when the area had been opened to homesteaders in the 1870s, many of the newcomers became relatively small grain farmers. A series of dry years climaxed by the great drought of 1898 brought destitution and near starvation to this section of the county and stimulated the further development of large scale irrigation projects already begun in the Salinas Valley.

The earliest large scale irrigation project in Southern Monterey County was that of Brandenstein and Godchaux, owners of the Rancho San Bernardo. In 1884, they organized the San Bernardo and Salinas Valley Canal and Irrigation Company. A fifty-foot canal was dug to carry three feet of water from the Salinas River to the ranch. The company constructed a system of dams and diverging ditches from the canal intending to irrigate five to six thousand acres of land. Floods and other problems

hindered the complete success of the scheme. Another large step for irrigation in the Salinas Valley came when the Spreckels Sugar Company built steam powered plants in 1897 to pump water from the River on to its ranches near King City and Soledad.

When the Southern Pacific Railroad pushed south through King City, it soon reached Santa Margarita; but here it stopped again. C.P. Huntington resisted the pressures to proceed with the costly tunneling through the Santa Lucia Mountains. From the moment the road had passed King City, communities along the line contested for advantages. San Lucas complained that there was not even a drygoods box for women to use in stepping off and onto the trains. This was soon remedied; San Lucas became a post office January 4, 1887 and could boast of two hotels, a newspaper, and the largest grain warehouse south of Salinas. The story was repeated as the railroad continued through San Ardo (November 13, 1886) and Bradley, (December 16, 1886). Wagon roads were built into the mountain valleys within wagon hauling distance of the railroad. Stage lines carried mail and passengers over the same roads to Priest Valley (December 14, 1882), Metz (March 12, 1888), and Parkfield (January 29, 1884). Peach Tree (January 20, 1873) and Imusdale (September 22, 1875) received mail by way of the San Benito Valley route from San Juan Bautista. Coal, oil, and other mineral resources were discovered and exploited in the southern part of the county, largely due to the coming of the railroad.

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THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you to Joyce McBride and Marie Cominos for all of their time donated to the Robert B. Johnston Archival Vault helping to process and organize donated items.

A special thank you to Charles Young who has tirelessly worked to maintain the grounds at the Boronda History Center. During the spring it is quite a chore. The weeds grow mercilessly and their are hours upon hours on the good old weed eater. He almost has everything under control and it is looking good!

WEBSITE

If you haven't visited the Society's Website lately, please do so. Gary Breschini continues to upgrade, add new material and thus far since February 25, 1997 we have had over 188,000 visitors. The site has generated researchers, new members and many donations of artifacts for our archival vault.

We have added the *Newsletters* from 2000 and 2001 to the website (pdf format). We will add future *Newsletters* to the website a few months after they are mailed to our members.

The website address is:

<http://www.dedot.com/mchs>

IN HONOR OF

Joyce McBride for all of her hard work for the SocietyPaula Robinson

MUSEUM

Phase I on the museum is near completion. The front is enclosed, painted, fire sprinklers and alarm are in place. Phase II will be the expansion of the vault. Plans need to be developed, and then we are on our way to Phase III.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Pat Bauer Susan J. Vindhurst
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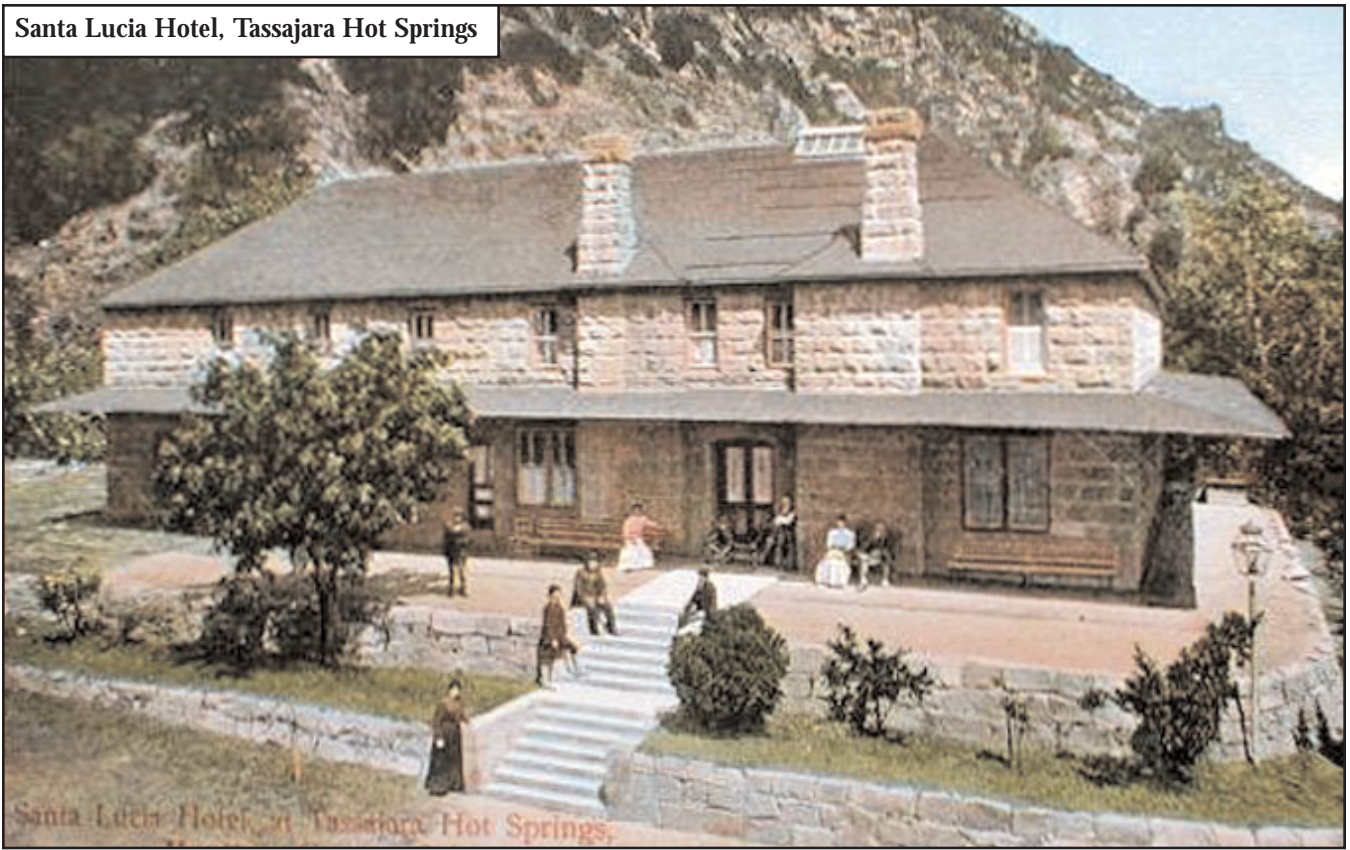
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