

## Crystal Cove State Park - "An Island in Time"

by Joan Irvine Smith

When one hikes over the ridges and bluffs, and walks along the beaches, breathing the brisk salt air of Crystal Cove State Park, they see and experience the land and the ocean just as the people who first populated North America did, over 10,000 years ago. In 1542, the Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed these waters, charting the California coast. Two hundred and fifty years later, the Mission San Juan Capistrano grazed herds of cattle here, tended by Juanefio Indians. In 1837, the land was granted to Don Jose Andres Sepulveda, who combined it with a second grant and formed the Rancho San Joaquin, which was one of the three ranchos that eventually made up the Irvine Ranch. Today, this pristine Arcadia exists in profound contrast to surrounding growing urbanization, truly an "Island in Time."

### People of the Oaks, the Indians of California

It is almost universally agreed that human beings entered North America from Asia over a land bridge that was exposed across the present day Bering Strait during a period of glaciation over 10,000 years ago. Southern California's cultural traditions are not well defined for most of Orange County nor for the area of Crystal Cove State Park before 5,000 B.C. However, by that time, it appears that a relatively uniform cultural complex known as the Encinitas Tradition existed on the coast from Santa Barbara south to San Diego.

The Encinitas Tradition is identified, in part, by large projectile points, the use of milling stones (mano/metate) and a largely uniform chip stone tool assemblage. This tradition continued until 500 to 700 A.D. along the Orange and San Diego Counties coast, when it was replaced by a cultural complex designated by archeologist as the Shoshonean/Yuman Tradition. Archeological evidence indicates that these Shoshonean speaking people replaced an earlier population about 5,000 B.C. Thereafter, permanent villages appeared in fertile lowlands and settled areas along the coast.

The Shoshonean cultural complex has two tool phases. The early phase is marked by the introduction of small, triangular projectile points, addition of the mortar and pestle to the milling assemblage, shell beads, shell fish hooks, varied bone tools, and the so-called "doughnut" stones and "cog" stones, use of which is not positively known, and a much broader array of ornamentation than the earlier Encinitas Tradition. The principal late phase Shoshonean artifact addition is the manufacture and use of pottery. Both Shoshonean Tradition phases continue up to Hispanic contact in the latter part of the 17th and early part of the 18th centuries.

The Indians of California lived in harmony with the land and the natural environment provided all the necessities of life. In fact, the environment was so abundant and diverse that it supported a native population far greater than any equal area in the United States.

Their life was, for the most part, a peaceful existence. However, as was the case throughout the United States, California Indians occasionally practiced war and attacked neighboring villages, killed their enemies, took scalps, and captured women and children as slaves. In view of the natural bounty that surrounded them, these limited conflicts were not waged to conquer territory but most often to avenge a personal wrong, such as the theft of an object or an affront to an ancestor.

Everyday life was built around village and family, and time was occupied by the ageless tasks of food gathering, hunting and fishing. As only those tribes in the southeastern portion of California practiced agriculture, other Indians were dependent on food sources that conformed to a seasonal cycle, such as when a particular tree would give seeds, fruits or nuts. They migrated to the hills and valleys, to gather acorns, nuts, berries, roots and seeds, and to the coast, where they would catch fish and gather shellfish. In this sense only, they were "nomadic," always staying within traditionally defined areas.

Of the 135 or more small tribes or tribelets of Indians in California, nearly all lived in villages or small communities. Like every other Indian group in the United States, California Indians had no knowledge of the wheel, no metal tools, no system of writing and subsisted in a level of development equivalent to the late Stone Age. Pottery is absent in northern and central California, with the notable exception of tribes in southern and desert areas. In San Diego County, for instance, pottery vessels were an essential part of Indian material culture.

In the greater part of California the basic container was made of basketry. The justly famous California Indian basket exhibits a wide range of shapes and purposes, including cooking and storing water. As for beauty and refinement, California basketry was and remains to this day, superior to all other regions of the United States. In addition, California Indians were experts at chipping stone and the items they made: points, blades and scrapers, often made of obsidian, are among the most beautiful stone tools known.

Most California Indians lived in villages from 12 to 15 to as many as 50 to 60 families. A tribe or tribelet took the form of several villages occupying a defined area. Members of a tribelet stayed on their own land and respected the territory of other tribelets. The chief lived in the principal village of the tribelet. He did not have power of life and death over the community and he served only as long as he kept the trust of the rest of the group.

Houses were simple dwellings usually made of brush and reeds, gathered in the immediate area, or of wood obtained from fallen trees. What these houses looked like, and how they were built was essentially determined by the region and climate.

In the central part of California and toward the northwest, houses were built onto partly dug round pits, with sides and roof of heavy wooden planks. Having the house partly underground helped keep it warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Houses of this type were built by the Coast Miwok people, who inhabited the coast and hilly region north of San Francisco. In the

mission period, the Coast Miwoks were forced to relocate into the Mission San Rafael.

Another group of Miwoks lived in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. There, they faced a climate with particularly cold winters. These Miwoks built warm houses of wood with layers of bark as insulation against the frigid weather.

In the southern part of the state, in present-day Orange and San Diego Counties, the climate was relatively mild and Indians were generally unconcerned with very cold winters. Most of the year, they lived in a lean-to structure, made with branches, reeds and brush piled up to protect against the wind. In the winter, however, they built a distinctive semi-circular structure called a *kiitka* in the Acagchemem or Juaneño language of San Juan Capistrano, using a framework of bendable branches, arranged around a shallow pit dug about 18 inches in the ground, and covered with thatched reeds or deer weed, tied by strands of yucca. Generally, houses were not built for permanent occupation, as many southern California Indian groups continually moved from summer areas to winter areas in search of food.

Each village had a *temescal*, or sweat house, where the men would meet on a daily basis for a ritual steam bath. This special lodge differed in appearance from one tribe to another but all were built around a pile of stones that were heated and doused with water to produce steam. Following their steam bath, the men would run out of the *temescal* and jump into a cold stream or pond.

In addition to gathering food from the large variety of plants in their environment, California Indians were skillful hunters of the myriad of game in their habitat. Deer, antelope and mountain sheep were the largest game hunted by California Indians. Although they would be hunted year around, all three were very difficult to bring down. Usually, most hunting was restricted to small animals and birds, using bows and stone-tipped arrows, throwing-sticks, or by trapping small animals in snares and nets. Rabbits, squirrels, field mice, rats, snakes and even coyotes were killed and eaten.

Many California tribes had specific food taboos. As a rule, bear and mountain lion were not hunted as they were believed to be inhabited by powerful spirits and were to be carefully avoided.

Ducks, geese and other waterfowl were hunted using decoys to lure the prey, whereupon they were taken with a net or a bow and arrow. Other times, the birds were taken alive and kept for eggs. Mallards and Canada geese were the most desirable egg layers. The Chumash made basketry decoys with a duck head attached. Wearing these on their head, they would wade into the water and slowly approach the birds in order to catch them. Another method employed by the Indians was to float a number of wild gourds downstream, past where ducks were feeding. When the birds no longer paid attention, an Indian would float down with his head in a gourd and grab one by the feet, pulling it under water in order not to frighten the other ducks.

The California quail and band-tailed pigeons were also important food resources. The Pomo Indians caught these using long, tubular basketry traps, similar to those used to catch fish. Tribes in the Sierra Nevada Mountains laid noose snares made of human hair. Quail would be driven into a series of these snares, set in bushes and low-lying shrubs.

Miguel Costanso, the engineer and cosmographer on the ship San Carlos of the Portola expedition of 1769, observed a group of San Diego Indians hunting near the bay. He described their weapons as follows:

“Their quivers, which they stick between the belt and the body, are made of the skins of the wildcat, coyote, wolf or deer, and their bows are two yards long. In addition to these arms, they use a sort of throwing-stick of very hard wood, similar in form to a short curved saber, which they throw edge-wise, cutting the air with great force. They throw it farther than a stone, and never go into the surrounding country without it. When they see a snake or other noxious animal, they throw the throwing-stick at it, and generally cut the animal in two.

Costanso also noted that they were adept fishermen. This is what he wrote:

“Fish constitutes the principal food of the Indians who inhabit this port, and they consume much shell-fish because of the greater ease they have in procuring them. They use rafts made of reeds, which they manage dexterously by means of a paddle or double-bladed oar. Their harpoons are several yards long, and the point is a very sharp bone inserted in the wood; they are so adroit in throwing this weapon that they very seldom miss their mark.

Prior to Spanish colonization, the most common native craft on inland waterways was the reed boat, made by lashing bundles of tules or reeds in the form of a low, open canoe. This type of craft was found throughout California and was paddled or poled in rivers and lakes. The Spanish called these boats balsas, as they shared a remarkable similarity to native boats they had previously seen on Lake Titicaca, in South America.

Coastal Indians, such as the Chumash of the Santa Barbara area, made excellent sea-going boats and canoes. One type of canoe, called a tomol in the Chumash language, or ti'at in Gabrielino, was made of wooden planks lashed together with rope and made watertight with a natural tar or asphaltum that washes up on the beach in southern California. Tomols and ti'ats were quite seaworthy and were used to navigate between the mainland and the Channel Islands. These canoes were often noted by early explorers along the Channel Islands.

Of the several types of trees that are native to California, the oak, of which there are eighteen species that make up thirty distinct varieties, was the most important to native populations. The acorn, the seed of the oak tree, was the basic vegetable food for most California Indians. Nearly every tribe living west of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, or more than three-fourths of all native Californians, harvested acorns. Each group used specialized methods, handed down from one generation to the next, to gather, prepare and cook acorns.

When picked from an oak tree, or gathered on the ground, acorns are naturally bitter and could not be readily eaten. First, the acorns had to be hulled, then parched in the sun, then ground to a powder. The acorn meal was then leached to remove the poisonous tannic acid. Once safe, the meal was cooked, either by boiling or roasting, and then consumed on the spot. More often, acorns were stored in baskets for later use.

Modern studies have demonstrated that acorn meal is an excellent source of nutrition. Some species of oak produce acorns that are up to 18% fat, 6% protein, and 68% carbohydrates. By comparison, modern wheat and corn, which require intensive cultivation, are 2% fat, 10% protein, and 75% carbohydrates.

In areas where more than one species of oak was available, Indians developed preferences for those that were tastier or easier to prepare. In the north coastal areas, the Hupa and Yurok looked for tanbark acorns, which in fact is not a true oak but an acorn-bearing variety of the beech family.

Tanoaks grow well among the redwoods and evergreens.

In southern California, the Juanefios and Luisefios of Orange and San Diego Counties derived nearly half their diet from six species of oaks, favoring the black oak and live oak. Less desirable were acorns from canyon oaks, whose hulls are hard and the nutmeat difficult to grind. As a last resort, they would gather acorns from scrub oaks, a low-lying variety that often takes the form of a dense, low-spreading shrub.

The dependence on acorns as the primary source of food is unique with California Indians. In parts of California where the oak is sparse or absent, as in the desert regions along the Colorado

River, the traditional pre-Hispanic trio of corn, beans and squash were cultivated to meet the needs of basic nutrition and people made great use of mesquite, yucca and agave, which occur naturally.

Of the forty-six native language groups recognized in the United States, twenty-two, or

nearly one-half, were found in California, and of those, only six extended beyond the present day borders. Dialects of the Chumash language group, for example, were spoken by people from San Luis Obispo Bay south to Malibu, including the islands of Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel, as well as the Santa Maria, Santa Ines and Santa Clara Valleys, to the eastern slopes of the coast range. Within the large, heavily populated area, there were at least seven distinct dialects spoken and another one yet was so different that it may be considered a separate language by itself.

Immediately adjacent to the southern Chumash area, people spoke dialects of the Shoshonean, or Uto-Aztecan language group. This large group included the Kizh or Tobikhar (later called Gabrielino, after missionization) dialect and several dialects that overlapped outside California into Arizona, including Piute, Ute, Comanche and Pima, as well as related dialects from present-day Mexico, such as Yaqui and Taramari, spoken in Baja California, and Nahuatl, spoken by the Aztecs in Central Mexico. Gabrielino territory included the Santa Monica-Santa Ana plain and the three adjacent valleys around present-day Los Angeles: San Fernando, San Gabriel and San Bernardino.

Other southern California languages which were distinct dialects of Shoshonean/Uto-Azteca and closely related to Gabrielino were Kechi (later called Luisefi.o) and Acagchemem (later called Juaneiiio), which included the areas of present-day Orange County and the northern part of San Diego County; Cahuilla or Kawia, spoken along the eastern slopes of the San Jacinto Mountains and the Salton Sea; Panakhil, spoken in inland parts of San Diego County; and Serrano, from the San Bernardino Mountains and the Mojave River Valley.

California Indians were generally open in demeanor and gregarious by nature. They welcomed the first Spanish explorers with food and gifts. Early contacts between Indians and Spanish were marked by dancing and chanting that went far into the night, so much so that the Europeans complained of little opportunity to sleep.

Dancing and chanting was an important part of life for California Indians. Moreover, many of their rituals and ceremonies were expressed in dances. There were dances to welcome visiting Indians; to mark the birth of a child; to prepare for war and to celebrate peace. There were dances to mark seasonal hunting and food-gathering: a first-salmon dance with tribes of the northwest, others had a first-eel dance and a first-acorn dance. Some of these “first” dances have a function similar to the Thanksgiving Feast of the Puritans in New England.

As was the case in pre-Hispanic cultures, the religious system of California’s Indians was rich and complex. Most of what survives of their oral literature was recorded by people of the same outside cultures that tried to destroy it. Much of it survives in the memories of descendants of tribelets and thus avoided complete extinction.

Like other native peoples of the New World, California Indians believed that all of nature was interconnected and possessed a sacred power. People were to respect that power by following a set of carefully prescribed guidelines for every aspect of daily activity. Hunting down and killing an animal, drinking from a spring, or entering a cave required a ritual act in advance, however simple, as a sign of respect and affirmation. As Native American historian Edward D. Castillo, of the Cahuilla Luiseño tribe, wrote:

“The religious beliefs and traditions of the Indians of California teach that the blessings of a rich land and a mild climate are gifts from the Creator. The Indians show their love and respect for the Creator - and for all of creation - by carefully managing the land for future generations and by living in harmony with the natural environment. “

The spiritual leader of the village was the shaman, or healer. The shaman was usually a man, but among the Indians of northwest California, it was occasionally a woman. The shaman would heal by means of elaborate rituals, with chanting and use of natural remedies. Sometimes, the shaman would cure an illness by going into a trance and then “pulling out the disease.”

The following is a narrative told by a shaman of the Yuma Indians, explaining his power to cure:

“Sometimes I feel quite different about it, I don’t get any good feeling and though I do my best, I do not often cure (in these circumstances)... And when I go away from the sick man I don’t want to return to him. I feel heavy and tired and very sleepy that night. I cannot keep my mind on the sick man. I know it is really no good me trying to help him, even if I have had a dream for his sickness.”

In the southern part of the state, shamans made use of the highly poisonous Toloache plant or jimsonweed (*Datura meteloides*) to make a powerful drug. When taken for ceremonial purposes, *Datura* induced a hallucinogenic trance. Shamans used the drug to enhance their powers and it was also administered as part of the juvenile initiation ritual. Boys who took this drug were rendered unconscious for several hours and were expected to have visions and thus gain “power” of some kind, perhaps in hunting or other useful skills. *Datura* is a very dangerous drug and on occasion, boys would die from being given too large a dose.

The use of *Datura* was related to the cult of Chinigchinich, the Creator Deity of the Gabrielinos and the Juanefios. The Chinigchinich religion was an elaborate belief system with complex rituals. It was a highly moralistic faith, and daily life for all its followers was governed by a strict code of behavior.

The physical appearance of the California Indians varied in different regions. Although some whites had found other North American natives to be noble and admirable in appearance, many were critical of California’s Indians. When writers described other Indians of North America, they noted their skin as red, or bronze colored. In California, writers tell of people with dark brown and black colored skin. A miner in 1849 wrote in a letter home to his relatives, saying that the term “redskin” did not apply in California, as the Indians were more of a “dark chocolate-brown.”

Later writers referred to the California natives

as “digger Indians,” probably because of the time spent digging for roots, a considerable part of their diet. But the term “digger” had many adverse connotations, as it reinforced the widely held notion that Indians lived in dirt. Moreover, their diet included foods thought to be repulsive, such as snails, caterpillars, crickets, grasshoppers, worms and grubs, all of which sickened non-Indian sensibilities.

From ancient times, the California Indians did more than arrive at a harmonious adjustment to that idyllic environment, they flourished. Any criticism regarding their failure to develop agriculture fades away when seen as a consequence of the abundance of natural resources, most of all oak trees, the source of their staple food, the acorn.

Furthermore, when one considers the extreme culture shock of rapidly coming from a virtual Garden of Eden to near slavery at the hands of the Spanish, it is remarkable that Indians of the mission system were able to quickly learn the Spanish language and to become proficient at properly speaking it. Similarly, mission Indians were compelled to acquire and practice Roman Catholicism, a complex religious system not unlike their own Chinigchinich religion.

“I had my dreams first when I was quite young, but I did not try to cure until I was an old man. I remembered them quite clearly always and never forgot anything in them.

If I hear of a sick person, something tells me whether his illness is one I would be good for.

This may happen even if I have not had a dream and power especially for his sickness. If I feel right, I know I will be able to cure the man. When I have a good feeling, I am very strong inside... The patient and the relations know too, for I seem to draw the sick man to me... When I work on the patient, it does not tire me at all and it makes me very happy.”

Nonetheless, California Indians have survived in the general community and on over 105 reservations, more than in any other state. They have consciously preserved many aspects

of their traditional cultures and are working to restore knowledge of their languages. As traditions and customs are passed from one generation to another, the ancient cultures of the California Indians survive.

Unlike previous Spanish conquests in the New World, as in Mexico and Peru, where the natives were subjugated by the military before being turned over to the church, the mission system in California replaced the military as the way of subduing the natives. Here, the missionaries generally accompanied the military whenever Spanish presence was extended into a new region.

The principal object of the missions was to convert and civilize the native inhabitants. This was supposed to take ten years and then the missionaries would move on to new frontier areas. In a more strategic way, the mission system assisted the military by keeping the local Indians peaceful and under subjugation. This accomplishment made it easier for Spain to control large amounts of territory with as few soldiers as possible, a cost-effective benefit that did not go unnoticed by the royal administrators.

When the Spanish entered a territory, the missionaries would begin by attracting native inhabitants into the mission on a voluntary basis, by offering gifts as inducements. Once baptized and in the mission system, the Indians were no longer free to leave and the duration of their stay was determined by the time necessary to become “civilized.” Indians who were reluctant to enter the system voluntarily were forced into mission villages called reducci6ns.

Areas that had once contained a number of native villages were essentially deserted as their populations had been herded into mission villages. The few individuals that eluded the round-ups were forced into hiding in outlying areas, out of reach of the missionaries. To lessen the chance of escape, walls were built around the missions and Indians were locked-in at night. The ones that escaped were hunted down and brought back.

Not only were entire villages missionized, but subsequently entire regions. In what is now Santa Barbara County, there were over one hundred identifiable Chumash villages that were destroyed when their residents were brought into that mission. The mission system also tried to eliminate all original native group names or tribelet designations. Thereafter, Indians were referred to by only one cultural group, named for the mission in that particular region. Indians in the jurisdiction of the Mission San Diego were now called “Dieguefios.” Those attached to the Mission San Gabriel were “Gabrielinos,” and the Mission San Juan Capistrano, “Juanefios,” no matter what they may have originally called themselves.

Although California was perhaps the most densely populated region of the United States prior to European contact, there was no effective resistance to the nearly complete destruction of Indian life. California Indians had no way of withstanding the overwhelming variety of diseases and epidemics brought by the Spanish in the late 1700s. Neither could they counter Mexican institutional policies and later, the large number of Americans and other Europeans who came for the Gold Rush. Independent by nature, the many small groups of Indians had no organization for alliances and confederacies, as was the case in the plains and eastern woodlands. Thus, the process of dispossession of the California Indians and the destruction of their way of life happened relatively quickly.

Under Spain and Mexico, native population in California dropped from an estimated 300,000 in 1769 to less than 100,000 at the time of American occupation of California, in 1846. Tragically, the coming of hundreds of thousands of Americans after 1850 greatly accelerated the decline of Indian population, to less than 30,000 in 1870, and then only about 15,000 by 1900. The largest cause of death among Indians was disease, to which they had no resistance, accounting for nearly 60% of Indian deaths. The next leading cause of death was starvation and malnutrition, which took a toll of approximately 30%. Finally, physical assault such as military and civilian

shootings accounted for about 10% of the decline in Indian population.

In the end, the root cause of the destruction of some of the most vibrant and flourishing Indian cultures of North America may have been, indirectly, their serene isolation and their success at natural adaptation to their environment. Theirs was a gentle, peaceful life that was in harmonious balance with the environment. It required no centralized organization, no warfare, and no suspicion of strangers, whom they welcomed openly, and it flourished for thousands of years before the Spanish came in the late 1700s and changed it forever.

The ethnographic population of Crystal Cove State Park was recognized by A. L. Kroeber as Juanefio in 1925. However, in 1978, Lowell Bean identified the local people as part of the large Gabrielino group, which occupied all of the Los Angeles Basin, the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, and most of the valleys, estuaries and uplands of Orange County.

As with other California Indians, both body painting and tattooing were popular among the Juanefio and Gabrielino peoples. Men and women wore their hair long, except when singed or cut short as a mourning sacrifice. Men and children reportedly went naked throughout most of the year. However, the accuracy of this statement is in doubt, as examination of the diaries of Spanish explorers indicates that they classed everyone not wearing “pantalones” as naked. It is probable that men and possibly boys wore a loincloth part or all of the time. Women wore the characteristic double apron affected by most Native Americans. Everyone wore deerskin, fur, or bird-skin capes when weather was inclement.

Most Juanefio material culture was quite perishable and little has survived that can be identified. Early accounts extol the high degree of artisanship these people lavished on even everyday-use items, which are said to have been elaborately decorated with shell and stone inlay. They made a variety of steatite (soapstone) artifacts, mortars, metates, manos, wooden

utensils, bark baskets and trays, pottery, wooden bowls, bone tools, shell tools, chipped-stone tools, and a large variety of weapons for both hunting and war.

Juaneño subsistence was as complex as most of their neighbors. Large and small terrestrial and marine animals were hunted by the men with spears, bows, nets, and a wide variety of traps and snares. Marine hunting also included hook and line, and was often carried out from a plank boat of the type most closely associated with the Chumash. The Juanefio and Gabrielino people were heavily involved in the exchange of both goods and ideas, and may have been surpassed in these endeavors in California only by the Yokuts of the San Joaquin Valley.

Although not as serious about warfare as the Yuman peoples of the desert along the Colorado River, the Juanefio had reed-armor breastplates and war clubs designed only for use on other humans. Most conflict between groups were family feuds, which often lasted for generations. The hostilities were ritualized into the singing of obscene songs to opponents for sometimes as long as a week. It appears that these song fests rarely resulted in personal violence.

At least 30 extensive Native American archeological sites have been identified at various elevations in Crystal Cove State Park. They are of three types: occupation sites, areas where people lived for some time, either returning seasonally or remaining in residence throughout the year; task sites, areas that were used only for performing specific tasks, such as shell-fish gathering and processing; and rock shelters, some of which represent certain aspects of occupation sites while others have certain aspects of task sites. Most of these shelters were used as temporary occupation sites at various times of the year. The most important ancient site here is six acres in size and is located in Moro Canyon. It dates back over 5,000 years and is considered one of the most significant sites on the California coast.

## Spanish Exploration of California

In time, the people of what is now called the New World spread south and populated the entire Western Hemisphere, establishing remarkable advanced civilizations in Mesoamerica and on the Andean Plateau. Permanent European presence in the New World began, of course, after 1492, the year that Christopher Columbus became the European discoverer of North America. Thereafter, Spanish military expeditions were driven by the incentive of finding new sources of wealth, but at the same time, they were justified by what was believed to be a sacred duty to systematically convert the native inhabitants to Christianity.

The first significant European entry in the North American mainland occurred in 1519, when Hernando Cortez set out to conquer the Aztec Empire in what is now Mexico. Thereafter, driven by tales of fantastic wealth in the American Southwest, one expedition after the other went in search of gold and jewels.

Several expeditions were sent to explore the Pacific coast of the New World. In 1535, Cortez himself led an expedition to the southern tip of Baja California and founded a settlement near the present-day city of La Paz.

From their earliest voyages along the Pacific coast, Spanish explorers believed Baja California to be the southern tip of a large island, an island they called "California;" after a mythical land described in a novel written in 1510, by Garcilaso de la Vega. This story, *Las Sergas de Esplandian* (The Exploits of Esplandian) gained wide popularity, especially among soldiers and sailors who were seduced by the adventure and romance in the tale. One of the most interesting characters in Montalvo's book was a beautiful black Amazon queen named Calafia, who ruled a kingdom "on the right-hand side of the Indies... an island named California, which was very close to the earthly Paradise." According to the book, Calafia and her female warriors were experts with the long bow. Furthermore, they wore armor of gold and jewels as her kingdom was immensely wealthy, especially with pearls. It is

not surprising that the legend of Calafia and her enormous wealth stirred the imagination of many adventurers who sailed for the New World.

With little or no accurate information regarding the Pacific coast of North America, people had no reason to doubt the existence of Queen Calafia. As Baja California, a place reputed to be rich with pearls, appeared to be the southern tip of a large island, and on their maps it was on the right hand side of the Indies, therefore, those early explorers believed, they had found “California.” As a place name, “California” appears in documents as early as 1542, and although it was in general use by explorers and navigators for many years, it would not be officially adopted until the early part of the 1600s.

In 1542, the explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed north from Baja California to explore the coast of California. On September 27, after 3 months at sea and many of his crew starving or dying of scurvy, Cabrillo became the discoverer of California when he reached, according to his journal “... a port, closed and very good, which (we) named San Miguel (now called San Diego Bay.)” The next day, Cabrillo landed and became the first European to set foot in California.

Cabrillo’s journal continues, “Having cast anchor in (the bay) (we) went ashore where there were people. Three of them waited, but the rest fled. To these three (we) gave some presents and they said by signs (sign language) that in the interior, men like the Spaniards had passed... that they were bearded and clothed and armed like (us)...(with) crossbows and swords... and they (the Indians) ran around as if they were on horseback.” The accounts and descriptions given by the San Diego natives (of the Kumeyaay or Diegueño group) were clearly of the Coronado Expedition which two years earlier had ventured to the Colorado River.

Cabrillo charted the California coast northward as far as Cape Mendocino, which he named after his patron, Viceroy Mendoza. He came upon numerous Indian villages in his travels along the coast. Near present-day Santa Barbara, he encountered a group of Chumash Indians, noting

that “they were dressed in skins, and wore their hair very long and tied up with long strings interwoven with the hair, there being attached to the strings many trinkets of flint, bone and wood.” Friendly and open to strangers, the Chumash came to greet the ships in tomols, or ti’ats, ocean-worthy, wood plank canoes, ranging from 10 to 30 feet long. In his log, Cabrillo wrote of seeing many “.. fine canoes each holding twelve or thirteen Indians... always there were many canoes because all the coast is heavily inhabited, and there came many Indians to the ships.” Of the many villages he encountered, he found no evidence of great wealth.

In October, on the return trip, he explored an island which he named after his flagship, “San Salvador” (now called Santa Catalina.) As he looked across a large bay, he could see columns of smoke from numerous Indian campfires, floating motionless in thin spirals in the air. This unique phenomenon caused by the natural inversion layer, led him to call it the Bay of Smokes (Santa Monica Bay).

Continuing his exploration of the Channel Islands, Cabrillo landed on an island he named La Posesión (now called San Miguel Island) where he was seriously hurt in a fall. The wound became infected and three months later, Cabrillo died on January 3, 1543. His crew buried him on San Miguel and renamed the island La Isla de Juan Rodriguez.

Following Cabrillo, the only Spanish activity in California was the traffic of the Manila Galleons, treasure ships from the Philippines that stopped in California en route to Mexico. Because these richly laden ships were constantly under threat of attack by English and Dutch vessels’ Sebastian Vizcaino was dispatched to find safe harbors for them.

In 1682, Vizcaino charted San Diego Bay, a place that Cabrillo had visited earlier and named San Miguel. He also explored and named San Clemente Island, Santa Catalina Island, Santa Barbara, Carmel and Monterey. Although Cabrillo had visited and given other names to some of these places, Vizcaino’s voyage received great

public interest when it was published in 1606 and the place names he ascribed became permanent notations on Spanish maps. One of the names that Vizcaino used on his maps and thus recorded for posterity was "California."

It was not until 1769, by edict of King Carlos III, that Spain established permanent colonies in California. The catalyst for this abrupt change of course was apprehension that England and the Russian Empire were expanding into California from colonies in Canada and the Pacific Northwest. The task of setting up a chain of missions in California fell to Father Junipero Serra and the series of presidios (forts) that would protect them became the responsibility of Gaspar de Portola.

Captain Portola had been appointed Governor of Baja California in 1767. When the order came to colonize the north, he relished the adventure. His expedition's task was to scout, identify and map potential sites for the construction of the missions and presidios. The Portola expedition set out from San Diego and charted a series of locations throughout California, going as far north as present day San Francisco, where he was forced to turn back due to the poor health of several members of his group and his inability to cross the estuary now called the Golden Gate. In his journey, he and his chief scout, Sergeant Jose Francisco Ortega, were the first Europeans to set foot in what are now the major cities of California.

### **Mission San Juan Capistrano**

The California Missions came into existence with the founding of a presidio and a mission in San Diego, in 1769. The second mission, and indeed the headquarters of the entire system, was founded in Carmel, in 1770. On November 1, 1776, Father Serra founded the Mission San Juan Capistrano, the seventh in a series of twenty-one missions that would reach as far north as Sonoma.

In order to get supplies to start the new mission, Father Serra traveled to the Mission San Gabriel, founded in 1771 and the nearest mission to San Juan Capistrano. On the way, Serra and several

of his companions, who were riding ahead of the pack train, were suddenly confronted by a group of hostile Indians. Their lives were spared only because a neophyte Indian told the marauders that a troop of soldiers was just a short distance behind.

When the caravan returned from San Gabriel, it brought nine milk cows, a breed bull, a team of oxen, three saddle mules, three broken horses, two mares, one colt, a male and female pig, a few chickens, saddles and bridles, twelve hoes, two axes, six large machetes, six new knives, a branding iron, articles for the church and some food for the workers, to get Capistrano started. As was to be the case for all future missions, the first animals, grain, seed and cuttings came from the neighboring Russians.

Mission San Gabriel was a large and fully self-supporting institution. The earliest recorded use of local water supplies in southern California was at the Mission San Gabriel in 1771. Located in the San Gabriel Basin, its water came from groundwater springs and cienegas (marshes). As the mission had full jurisdiction over the San Gabriel and Santa Ana rivers, the mission fathers and their converts diverted these waters to cultivate food for the settlement. Water conduits were made from tile manufactured at the mission. Large tracts of moist land along streams and rivers were cultivated while other lands were used for dry farming. Eventually, the local water supplies irrigated as many as 6,000 acres of mission lands.

The Mission San Juan Capistrano had a relatively easy time attracting Indians for conversion, while other missions experienced more difficulty. According to Father Palou, "Unlike the Indians at other missions, who would molest the missionaries by begging for eatables and other presents, these of San Juan Capistrano molested the missionaries with petitions for baptism." By 1786, ten years after the mission's founding, there were 544 Indian neophytes and ten years after that there were 1,649 baptized Indians residing at Capistrano.

On October 4, 1778, all work was abandoned

as Mission Capistrano was moved to insure a constant supply of fresh water for the growing community. In the Annual Report of the Mission San Juan Capistrano for the year 1782, the move was explained as follows: "This mission was founded Nov. 1, 1776, but because of water failure at the place where it was first founded, the site was transferred to that which it occupies today, where we have the advantage of secure water. It is located about three-fourths of a league (about two miles) distant from the original site. This transfer was made on October 4, 1778."

The new site was located between two streams, now called San Juan Creek and Trabuco Creek. In a letter to Father Serra, Father Mugartegui states that among the first structures built at the new mission site was a small church, which was located outside the quadrangle. This little church was used until the adobe structure now called the Serra Chapel could be completed, sometime about 1782. In addition, living quarters and a shelter for the calves were also erected. The first crops planted at the new site were vineyards and a vegetable garden.

According to historian Leland L. Estes, the new mission took in some 300,000 acres, which extended from the Santa Ana River south to San Mateo Creek, just below present-day San Clemente, and from the Pacific Ocean inland to the top of the Santa Ana Mountains. The acreage, most of which was grazing land, included the present day site of Crystal Cove State Park.

Periodically, a mission supply ship would arrive from San Diego at the cove in Capistrano Bay. Although the trip covered a distance of only fifty miles, the voyage was against continuous headwinds and often took ten days to complete.

Mission Indians met the ship and unloaded the cargo of manufactured goods. As the anchorage at Capistrano Bay served as the official embarcadero or port for both Mission San Juan Capistrano and Mission San Gabriel, some supplies were hauled about three miles on wooden ox carts to Capistrano and some over fifty miles on El Camino Real to San Gabriel.

The padres at Capistrano, working with local Indians, built a new church and a cluster of buildings around a large square courtyard. The herds were relocated to the new site and field crops, vineyards and orchards were planted. When all these things were done, a series of small adobe houses were built outside the mission quadrangle to house the Indian neophytes.

The mission complex was to become vast in design, including granaries, a winery and brandy distillery, tallow vats, hide tanning pits, harness and shoe making, weaving, dying, candle and soap making shops, and forty adobes, where the neophytes were housed. Moreover, the Mission San Juan Capistrano had the only known foundry and iron forge in Alta California.

Eventually, the mission maintained vast herds of cattle and sheep, which covered the bluff tops of Capistrano Bay, on its open-range grazing lands that stretched for miles along the coast. It was the Indian converts' job to tend the mission herds. The Spanish rule that neophytes must not learn to ride was ignored, and the Indians who had never seen horses or cattle, were taught to be cowboys. The Indians were also taught to scrape and tan hides and to fashion leather into harnesses and shoes. They learned to render fat into tallow, which they used to make soap and candles. They were taught to shear sheep from the mission flocks and to process the wool and then to dye and weave the yarn into rough cloth. Much of the instruction was done outside the mission quadrangle.

In 1797, the cornerstone was laid for the greatest and most ambitious building at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, the Great Stone Church. This edifice, to be made of sandstone quarried from a local site, would be the largest structure in California. The large labor force needed for the construction would be comprised of Juanefio Indians, as the soldiers found any type of heavy labor unacceptable. A master stone-mason was brought in from Mexico to supervise construction.

For the next six years, the Mission San Juan Capistrano had the largest and grandest church

in California. It could be seen along the entire Capistrano Valley and its bells heard at least ten miles out to sea.

The mission thrived with activity. More than 1,200 people lived and worked there. Because of the mild climate, fertile soil and good water supply, agricultural production flourished. In 1811, the mission records show a harvest of 500,000 pounds of wheat, 190,000 pounds of barley, 202,000 pounds of corn, 20,600 pounds of beans, 14,000 cattle, 16,000 sheep and 740 horses. Thriving vineyards produced wine and brandy, and olives from the orchards were pressed for valuable oil.

Pomegranates and figs were also important produce from the mission orchards. Because of this abundance, ships frequently stopped at Capistrano Bay to conduct trade.

Some ships came to purchase supplies for their voyage, such as grain, wine, olive oil and hemp rope, while others came bearing manufactured goods and exotic items to trade for mission hides and tallow. Among the most desirable items these ships offered to the mission were books, bells, special utensils and ornaments for the church, and long awaited news from the rest of the world.

Tragically, on a summer-like morning of December 8, 1812, a severe earthquake shook the region just as Indian converts were in the church celebrating Mass. Walls swayed, the domes fell in and the bell tower collapsed on the main part of the church, killing 40 people. Adequate resources would never again be gathered to rebuild the church. What had been the most imposing edifice of its time had become California's most beautiful ruin. Religious services were once again held in the old adobe church known as the Serra Chapel.

### **Secularization Of The Missions**

In 1821 Mexico won its independence from Spain. The provinces of California (Alta and Baja) and New Mexico (made up of the present day states of Arizona and New Mexico) were claimed by the new nation of Mexico. Twelve years later Mexico passed a general secularization law.

All mission lands, livestock, tools and supplies were confiscated and divided, half to resident Indians and the other half to be administered "for the public good." By law, the missions were to become Indian pueblos but in reality, the most desirable tracts of former mission lands ended up in the hands of Californio administrators and their families. By 1834, all friars were reduced to simply curates, and the civic power which they had once exercised was abolished.

According to historian Robert Glass Cleland, the Secularization Act was "designed to benefit the Indians and make them a self-sustaining people. Actually, it led to the rapid disintegration of the mission-controlled communities, scattered the partly civilized neophytes like sheep without a shepherd, ushered in a half century's tragic aftermath of wretchedness and poverty, brought about the virtual extinction of the mission system in California, and by throwing open millions of acres to private denouncement, revolutionized the departmental land system and made the rancho the dominant economic and social institution of California."

In his book, *The Resources of California*, published in 1869, John Hittell states: "Public land was granted not by the acre, as in the American states, but by the square league (about 4,600 acres). The government granted away its land willingly, and without compensation; no pay was required; the only condition of the grant was that the grantee should occupy the land, build a house on it, and put several hundred head of cattle on it. It was a grand Mexican homestead law; and the chief complaint about it by the government, was that the number of applicants for grants was not greater."

A grant applicant had to meet certain requirements: he had to be a Mexican citizen, either native-born or naturalized, had to present a description of the desired tract, and certify that the land was indeed vacant, that is, not already included in an existing rancho. In addition, applicants had to promise to build a house, plant trees and stock the land with the required number of cattle and horses. Failure to carry out these requirements within a certain time limit

would void the grant. Inasmuch as native-born Mexican citizens received preference by law and foreigners were barred from owning land in proximity to the coast, the prime coastal lands that once belonged to the missions were almost always given to the native-born.

The grant request, which required a *diseño* (map) of the land in question, was sent to the governor and if he approved, the request was then sent to the local district official who ordered a “survey” to make certain the tract was in the public domain. This official survey was performed almost in a casual manner, with no serious attempts of accuracy so characteristic of modern land surveying and liberal use of the Spanish phrase *mas o menos*, meaning more or less. Since there were no fences and all livestock was allowed free range over the countryside, there was no need for accurate determination of property lines, as it was customary in California to view range lands belonging to various *rancheros* as common pasture.

Two surveyors and an assortment of witnesses went to the site and prepared the *diseño*. The surveyors rode the periphery of the grant and measured the distances by using a long rawhide rope, or *reata*, the ends of which were tied to stakes. As one remained stationary, the other rode at a fast gallop along the proposed boundary line for the full length of the *reata*. Then, he in turn would remain still as the first rider galloped past him to the end of his length of line, and so on. As they rode along, the witnesses counted the number of *reata* lengths between recognizable landmarks, such as a hill, a large tree, a boulder, a patch of cactus, a coyote den, or even a pile of rocks, and determined the length of each boundary. Where there were no recognizable landmarks, large wooden posts were driven in the ground and the prospective owner’s cattle brand was burned into the posts. The information and measurements were noted and used to make the *diseño*.

According to historian Cleland, the boundary markers of the 45,000 acre Rancho San Juan or Rancho Cajon de Santa Ana, in present-day Orange County, was officially recorded as “

beginning at the River Santa Ana and running out on to the hills where there is a oak, near the Valley of the Elders, which line is contiguous to the property of Bemardo Yorba, from the oak to a stone which is permanent and another resting upon it. From the stone to the Pillar which is now fallen, from the Pillar to the Sycamore tree, from the Sycamore to the Lake and from there to the river. “

### **California’s Golden Age - The Ranchos**

The Golden Age of California began with secularization of the missions, in 1834, and lasted until the start of the American Conquest, in 1846. “It was,” states Cleland, “the ‘Day of the Dons,’ the era of the private ranchos, the idyllic interlude during which a people of simple wants, untroubled either by poverty or by the ambition for great wealth, gave themselves over, wholeheartedly and successfully, to ‘the grand and primary business of the enjoyment of life.’”

The dependence on cattle ranching has led scholars to call the Californio Rancho period one of the largest non-nomadic pastoral societies the world has ever known. Even after the U.S. Land Act of 1851 became law, which led to Americans acquiring most of the great ranchos, southern

California remained a typical cattle frontier. The daily lives of the people retained the color, customs and traditions of the Mexican era, many of which have been passed on to us even to the present day.

During the Golden Age, the province’s sole industry was cattle ranching and its only exports were hides, horn and tallow. This was the only source of income and it became the basis for all international trade. The small herd of 200 cattle brought by Portola’s expedition and the few animals that came with de Anza’s party of colonists in 1774 were the ancestors of the vast herds, numbering in the tens of thousands that grazed on hillsides in southern California during the rancho period.

The great herds of cattle and horses that were pastured on rancho lands were tended by *vaqueros*, who were superb horsemen, having

spent most of their life in the saddle. All vaqueros took great pride in their ability to ride and nearly every chore of their calling was an opportunity to demonstrate their prowess in the saddle.

La reata, (from where we get the word “lariat”) was the vaquero’s favorite tool, both at work and at play. The finest reatas, made of woven rawhide, were highly prized objects. They were usually forty to eighty feet long, although some were as long as one hundred feet. An expert vaquero could rope a horse or cow up to sixty feet away. Visitors to California ranchos in the 1830s and 1840s often requested a show of the vaquero’s ability with the lariat.

Every year, each rancho held at least one round-up, or rodeo, for the purposes of segregating the cattle belonging to different owners, and branding the calves. The event sometimes involved thousands of cattle, in a swirling mass a half-mile wide or more. As there were no fences, every rancho was required to have three registered brands to identify his stock: the fierro, or branding iron; the seial, or ear mark; and the venta, or sale brand.

According to Cleland, “Tally sticks, on which each notch represented ten animals, were used to record the number of cattle branded in a rodeo. The size of a herd was roughly estimated at three or four times the number of the branded calves. Mavericks, including calves without mother or brand, were called ‘orejanos’ by the Californians and became the property of the rancho holding the rodeo. “

After separating the herds, each rancho branded his calves and after all the animals were counted, determined how many cattle could be slaughtered during the corning year. Roundups were always presided over by one or more Jueces del Campo, or Judges of the Plain, who settled disagreements involving the ownership of cattle, interpreted rules and customs, and among other things had the authority to arrest cattle thieves.

In the days of the great ranchos, the rodeo was always an exciting and colorful event.

The occasion called for traditional hospitality. Neighboring landowners and their retainers, as well as friends and relatives of the rancho, often traveled great distances to participate in the days and nights of dancing, gambling, horse racing, cock fighting and occasional bear and bull baiting.

Cattle were killed for food as needed. However, when the specified time arrived to harvest the hides, horn and tallow, the vaqueros would carry out the matanza, or wholesale slaughtering.

“At the killing season,” states William Heath Davis, in his book *Seventy-Five Years in California*, “cattle were driven from the rodeo ground to a particular spot on the rancho, near a brook and forest. It was usual to slaughter from fifty to one hundred at a time, generally steers three years old and upward; the cows being kept for breeding purposes. The fattest would be selected for slaughter, and about two days would be occupied in killing fifty cattle, trying out the tallow, stretching the hides, and curing the small portion of meat that was preserved.”

The fat of slaughtered animals was rendered in large iron kettles, usually obtained from whaling ships where they were used to process whale blubber, and poured into rawhide bags or botas, holding upwards of a thousand pounds. Some of the beef was cut into strips and dried in the sun to become carne seca, which was the most essential article in the provincial diet. The remainder was available at no cost to anyone who wanted it. But as there was no commercial market for the meat, most of the carcasses ended up left to rot in the field.

Every California rancho kept a herd of carefully trained horses called a caballada. In their way, these animals showed as much skill in rounding up, roping or cutting out cattle as the vaqueros themselves. Like the Mexican horses from which they sprang, they were partly of Moorish or Arab blood, small, finely formed, agile, and capable of almost incredible endurance. The caballada was acquired from the tremendous herds of wild or unbroken horses, which also grazed on the ranchos. At times, these horses became

so numerous that hundreds were slaughtered to save the pasturage for cattle. A round-up of horses was generally called a recogida.

All trade in California was done by bartering. The Californios provided hides, tallow and horn and the Americans supplied a large variety of manufactured goods. The value of one cattle hide varied between one and three dollars. Tallow was traded by weight, at \$2 per arroba (a unit of 25 lbs.). A bota of tallow could easily weigh eight arrobas, or 200 lbs., and would be valued at \$16.

But no money was exchanged, instead hides, called "California bank notes," were used in all transactions.

The best description of the hide and tallow trade in Mexican California is provided by Richard Henry Dana's book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, published in 1840. Dana (1815-1882), who was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, into a family of prominent jurists, was a student at Harvard University when a serious case of measles affected his eyesight and compelled him to take a leave from his studies. Wanting to go to sea, he declined the chance to travel as a passenger and instead chose to sign-on as an ordinary seaman on the brig *Pilgrim*, which sailed from Boston in August 1834, destined for California by way of Cape Horn, around the southern tip of South America. He spent nearly two years on the voyage, loading a full cargo of hides and tallow, and returned to Boston in September, 1836. He reentered Harvard and graduated in 1837 and went on to earn a law degree. In his career as a lawyer, Dana specialized in cases brought by seamen against cruel and oppressive treatment on board merchant ships.

The arrival of a trading ship was cause for feasting and celebration. After waiting on the shore, groups of eager Californios, including wives and children of wealthy rancheros, would be rowed out to the ship. Once on board, they proceeded down below decks where they found row upon row of merchandise. For the ladies, there was fine cotton fabric, silk, lace, shawls from the orient, jewelry, perfumes, shoes and porcelain dishes. The men could handle guns,

knives, iron tools, boots and saddles made from the very same leather secured on previous voyages. The "floating department stores" also stocked furniture, musical instruments, books, toys, window glass, and as Richard Henry Dana relates, they had "everything under the sun, in fact everything that can be imagined, from Chinese fireworks to English cart wheels, of which we had a dozen pairs with their iron tires on."

Prices for these highly desirable goods were all marked in hides. A pair of shoes might be priced at two hides; a fancy dress at three hides; a bolt of silk imported from China could cost fifteen hides; a fine saddle perhaps as much as one hundred and fifty hides.

All transactions were noted down and when the client finished shopping, the goods were off loaded and a bill was presented. If the buyer had brought hides, the exchange was made on shore and the hides were taken on board. If hides were not available, credit was extended to the buyer.

In every aspect of Californio life, and business was no exception, honor was paramount, and as cattle were killed only during the slaughtering season, long-term credit was an essential element of the hide and tallow trade. William Heath Davis, a resident merchant in California, wrote that "merchants sold to rancheros whatever goods they wanted... and gave them credit from one killing season to another. I have never known of a single instance in which a note or other written obligation was required of them. At the time of purchase, they were furnished with bills of the goods, which were charged in the account books, and in all my intercourse and experience in trade with them, extending over many years, I never knew of a case of dishonesty on their part. They always kept their business engagements (and) paid their bills promptly at the proper time in hides and tallow. They regarded their verbal promise as binding and sacred, relied upon their honor, and were always faithful.

According to Dana, after slaughtering the cattle, the hides were prepared for sale by stretching them on stakes and drying them in the sun. After

that, they were scraped to remove any small traces of fat and meat and then beaten with sticks to shake off insects and dust. Thereafter, the hides, which had the weight and consistency of flat, wooden boards, were stacked for storage, either at the mission or rancho, or if near a port city, taken to a central warehouse for storage until the arrival of a merchant ship.

Once the merchant ship arrived, the hides and tallow were taken from the warehouses to the docks and loaded aboard. To pick up cargo from outlying missions and ranchos, ships would frequently stop in small bays along the coast.

Here, Dana tells how the American droghers picked-up hides in San Juan Capistrano, a place that had no docks. At the mission, the dried cattle hides were loaded by Indian labor on carretas, ox carts with solid wooden wheels made from log slices, and taken to a cliff just above the harbor at Port San Juan (now called Dana Point.) There, the droghers unloaded the carettas and from the cliff, the hides were tossed like frisbees to the beach below, where they were gathered, put in small boats and rowed to the ship. Inevitably, some hides would not reach the beach and instead land partway down the cliff. Then, Dana explained, the American sailors would have the hazardous task of dangling by ropes down the side of the cliffs to retrieve the stranded hides. Of the perils of this assignment, Dana recalled, "I could see nothing below me but the sea and the rocks upon which it broke, and a few gulls flying in mid-air."

The greatest care was taken to make sure the hides did not get wet. The tallow, which had been melted and poured into botas was floated out to the waiting ship.

Once on board, the hides were salted to keep them dry and stored in layers upon layers in the hold. When the holds were full, bulkheads were closed and caulked down. When fully loaded, each ship carried a cargo of approximately 40,000 hides.

The number of hides exported during the rancho period was extremely large, perhaps upwards

of one million or more. The largest number went to Boston, the center of New England shoe manufacturing. As depicted in Dana's book, a typical voyage from Boston might last two years, with frequent stops along the California coast to unload goods and pick-up hides.

In addition the hides, the tallow and horn were also valuable commodities . Tallow was used in the production of soap and, above all, candles, an important necessity in the days before kerosene lamps and electric lights. Horn was used much like our modern plastics, for shoe buttons and small utensils.

During the Golden Age, the sport of horse racing was unmatched in the huge amounts of money that wealthy rancheros bet on special races. No figure in California history approached Jose Andres Sepulveda in his love and daring of the sport.

Jose Andres Sepulveda was the son of Francisco Sepulveda, owner of the Rancho San Vicente, that occupied what is now most of the western part of the City of Los Angeles. In 1837, young Jose Andres was granted a large tract of former Mission San Juan Capistrano land called Cerrito de las Ranas (Hill of the Frogs) which was comprised of the coastline from the present-day city of Newport Beach to the city of Laguna Beach, and inland to the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains. The coastal acreage included the present day site of Crystal Cove State Park.

In 1842 , Sepulveda was granted a second, adjoining tract of land known as the Bolsa de San Joaquin. He combined the new grant with his existing one, the Cerrito de las Ranas, and formed the Rancho San Joaquin, which he made into his home rancho. He built a large adobe house for his family, developed a large part of the tract into fields and gardens and used the remainder for grazing his horses and cattle.

In time, Jose Andres Sepulveda became one of the most picturesque figures in southern California, known for his great landholdings, fast race horses, reckless wagers, openhanded hospitality, and the elegance of his costumes. His extravagant lifestyle soon put Sepulveda into

a slough of debt from which he never escaped. Ultimately he was forced to sell the Rancho San Joaquin, which was one of the three ranchos that eventually made up the Irvine Ranch.

### **The Irvine Ranch**

My great-grandfather, James Irvine I, was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1827, of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian descent. In 1846, at the age of nineteen, he and his younger brother, William, immigrated to the United States.

For two years, my great-grandfather worked in a paper mill in New York, until he caught gold fever and joined the stampede to California in 1849. He booked passage on a boat sailing to Chagres, on the east coast of Central America, and crossed the Isthmus of Panama by canoe, mule and on foot. In Panama City, on the west coast, he obtained passage to San Francisco on the Dutch sailing ship Alexander Rumbolt. During the voyage, which took one hundred and one days, he and his fellow passengers consumed "hard beans and hardtack, mahogany beef and bilge water daily." Among his companions were Colis P. Huntington and Dr. Benjamin Flint. The latter association eventually led to the creation of the Irvine Ranch.

Upon his arrival in California, my great-grandfather struck-out for the gold fields, where for a time he filled the dual role of merchant and miner. In 1854, he bought an interest in a San Francisco commission house on Front Street. As profits from the business were large, he invested in income producing San Francisco real estate. Only a few years later, many of the large rancho holdings were devastated by the Great Drought of 1863-64.

In 1864, my great-grandfather joined with Thomas and Benjamin Flint and their cousin, Llewellyn Bixby, to purchase three Mexican land grants in Los Angeles County, the Rancho San Joaquin, the Rancho Lomas de Santiago, and a portion of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, which was originally a Spanish land concession. Covering roughly 115,000 acres and reaching from the ocean to the San Bernardino County line, twenty-

three miles long and eight miles wide, these three tracts of land, known then as Rancho San Joaquin, were eventually to become the Irvine Ranch, comprising one-fifth of what is today Orange County.

Because of the disruption of the cotton industry in the South caused by the Civil War, wool was in great demand. Consequently, my great-grandfather and his three partners brought in 20,000 sheep from Iowa and imported 25 Merino rams from the Sandwich Islands, now known as the Hawaiian Islands, to stock their newly acquired ranchos. In addition to raising sheep, the Rancho San Joaquin also ran a substantial number of cattle. These were the descendants of the vast herds that grazed there during both the mission and rancho periods.

In the summer of 1867, my great-grandfather visited the properties and returned to San Francisco more enthusiastic than ever. "We rode about a good deal," he wrote, "sometimes coming home in the evening after a thirty or forty miles ride, pretty thoroughly tired out, but we had to do it in order to see much of the ranch and the flock. We have been making further purchases of land adjoining ours. Now our tract contains about 101-115,000 acres. On one side, the line is nearly 23 miles long and the average width is nearly eight miles. So you can see there is considerable riding to be done, if one is to see much of it."

In order to have a suitable place to stay and conduct business when he visited the Rancho San Joaquin, my great-grandfather commissioned a house to be built in 1868. The two-story frame house, which was also intended to house the ranch superintendent, cost \$1,300 and was constructed near the old Sepulveda compound. It was the first wooden house to be erected between Anaheim and San Diego.

As early as 1865, the 105-ton stem-wheeled river steamer Vaquero, paid regular visits to San Joaquin Bay, known today as Newport Bay, mainly to collect hides, meat and tallow from the nearby ranchos. In 1868, the partners shipped their wool to San Francisco, and then on to New York or Boston.

In 1869, the San Joaquin Ranch produced 70,000 pounds of wool that brought around 30 cents a pound in Boston and New York. But in spite of these satisfactory returns, my great grandfather found the property a constant source of minor irritations. Squatters began moving in on to the ranges and the controversies between the landowner and the intruders became increasingly bitter with the quarrels often leading to violence and bloodshed. Wages and ranch costs were rising; taxes on some of the property were getting out of hand; a trusted employee had taken to whiskey and gambling; and the business of the ranch “was being greatly neglected. “

In May 1870, a young man named Charles E. French from Boston, was persuaded to take the position of ranch superintendent at Rancho San Joaquin. He arrived there during an extended drought, when the landscape was desolate and not a blade of grass could be seen anywhere. In a letter to his wife, who had remained in Boston, he described the ranch as “a Godforsaken land with coyotes barking, wildcats screaming, and not a light to be seen anywhere in the darkness of the night.”

Added to French’s other problems was the most constant annoyance of all - the fleas. The ranch house was situated at the main sheep camp, and the sheep were covered with fleas. Before his wife and daughter arrived from Boston a few months later, French “flooded the floors and plastered walls to get rid of these pests. At night, after undressing, a person jumped into bed as quickly as possible in order not to get them in the bed.”

When my great-grandfather came from San Francisco, he stayed in the San Joaquin ranch house with the Frenches. In the evening, he read poetry aloud to Mrs. French, a welcome break in the monotony of her isolation.

In 1876, my great-grandfather acquired his partners’ interest in the Rancho San Joaquin for \$150,000. No sooner had he secured full ownership of the ranch than the historic drought of 1876 and 1877 dried up the ranges and devastated the grazing industry, destroying the

sheep of southern California almost as effectively as the similar drought of the mid-1860s had destroyed the range cattle industry.

That same year, my great-grandfather instructed French to find a more suitable location for a ranch headquarters, which was closer to civilization. The location decided upon was near Tustin City and the stage depot. Construction soon began on the country-style Georgian frame house that would serve as both the Irvine family home and the ranch office on Rancho San Joaquin.

By the mid 1880s, the semi-frontier conditions were rapidly giving way in the Santa Ana Valley, as elsewhere in southern California, to a more advanced social and economic order. The completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad to Los Angeles in 1876, and the coming of the Santa Fe Railway nine years later, changed the agricultural outlook for the Los Angeles-Santa Ana Basin, brought about a large influx of population, stimulated the sub-division of many large land holdings, and ushered in the great boom of 1886-88. But my great-grandfather, founder of the Irvine Ranch, was not permitted to participate to any degree in these new developments, as he died in San Francisco on March 15, 1886.

Under the provisions of his father’s will, my grandfather, James Irvine II, who was then eighteen years of age, had to be twenty-five to claim his inheritance. In 1887, the Trustees of the estate put the Irvine Ranch up for public auction. On April 16, 1887, the Trustees “offered and agreed to sell” at least 100,000 acres of the Irvine Ranch in Los Angeles County at public auction. The bidding began at \$1,300,000 and had reached \$1,385,000 when the time keeper became confused as to which of the two bidders had made the final bid. When the decision was challenged in court, the judge ruled that neither bidder was entitled to the land. Though the Trustees refused either offer, they soon renewed their efforts to sell the property, either as a whole or in separate parcels.

Under the Irvine-Flint-Bixby Partnership, the property had been used almost entirely for the pasturage of sheep, but by 1878, a small amount

of the land had begun to be devoted to tenant farming. Although sheep raising continued as an important business long after the death of James I, the large flocks of earlier years had dwindled and had been replaced by a substantial number of cattle. Much of the range land was leased to outsiders and the Irvine Ranch was fast undergoing a radical transition from a grazing and pastoral stage to a farming economy that characterized the general agricultural development of most of southern California.

At the close of 1888, more than 5,000 acres of the Irvine property had been leased in relatively small tracts for raising hay and grain. In addition to grain farming, more and more land was being put under cultivation. A small vineyard was set out, chiefly for home use, and the Trustees made a strong effort to establish the olive industry as one of the major interests of the ranch, without success. A walnut orchard, irrigated at first by tank wagon, was also set out and over 11,000 eucalyptus or "gum trees" were planted for both wood and wind-breaks, and a few orange trees were also set out but used only for home consumption.

On August 1, 1889, the citizens of the Santa Ana Valley, after several attempts, broke-off from Los Angeles County and created the County of Orange. The Trustees continued their efforts to sell the ranch but negotiations dragged on and time ran out. In 1893, my grandfather James Irvine II, came into full possession of the property and was to retain complete control and direction over the ranch until his death well over a half a century later on August 24, 1947.

On June 4, 1894, James Irvine II incorporated his holdings as The Irvine Company under the laws of the State of West Virginia. Astute, but shy, my grandfather who within 15 years diversified his father's pastures into the most productive agricultural empire in the state, always described himself as "just a farmer."

Reflecting his Scottish heritage, my grandfather's frugality was legendary. Less well-known was his great love of nature, a sentiment uncommon to most of his contemporaries. If an oak tree

intruded upon a projected road widening, he would re-route the road rather than remove the tree. Not surprisingly, a beautifully wooded parcel of land in Santiago Canyon, which early settlers had called the "Picnic Grounds," became the pride of his great ranch. It was the personal retreat of both my grandfather and my grandmother Anita Plum, and the private playground of their two eldest children, my father James Irvine Jr., known as "Jase," and my aunt Katherine. Their youngest child, my uncle Myford, was not born until 1898.

Knowing my grandfather's fondness for the site, charges that he was selfish pale in the light of what became known as "The Gift Munificent." In April, 1897, he gave Orange County 160 acres in Santiago Canyon, containing the "Picnic Grounds" for a public park. The new park, now called Irvine Regional Park and totaling 477 acres, was the first county park in California, and became the envy of the state.

The gift came with only a few conditions: a road which had bisected the grove was to be relocated on the north side, thus becoming the park's first entrance; the grounds were to be fenced and an "inspector" to be appointed, to keep out sheep herders and wood choppers; no intoxicating liquors were to be sold on the premises; admission was to be free; and, above all, my grandfather stipulated that the trees should receive good care and that the grounds should be kept as natural as possible.

Dogs are still welcome in the park, and this would certainly please my grandfather as he was particularly fond of them. An avid bird shooter, he kept over a dozen Irish Setters and English Pointers for hunting the vast number of quail and dove that populated the ranch and the swarms of ducks and geese that migrated through the property each fall on their way south. My grandfather even kept a large aviary behind the ranch house in Tustin, where injured game birds were kept until they had recovered and could be released into the wild.

From the time he was a child, my father would accompany my grandfather when he went

hunting. He loved the ranch just as his father did, and had been groomed from childhood to take over the management of The Irvine Company.

After the earthquake and fire occurred in San Francisco, on April 19, 1906, my grandfather and his family moved their residence to the new San Joaquin Ranch house, which had been built in Tustin. Three years later, my grandmother died, leaving a deep and abiding hurt in my grandfather's life. Something went out of him forever and he became more and more involved in hunting and fishing, and less and less dependent upon the society and companionship of others.

The Irvine Company, nevertheless, continued to prosper and expand in both the magnitude and variety of its operations. During the first ten years of my grandfather's administration, the ranch had continued to evolve from a pastoral to a farming operation, but its development had been limited to field crops such as beans and barley, rather than garden vegetables or orchards. Eventually however, he would transform the property into one of the great agricultural empires in the world.

My father suffered from tuberculosis, which he had contracted as a child from exposure to an infected housekeeper. When he was in the service, in World War I, he experienced the first severe effects of the disease. With treatment, however, the illness came under control and as he knew every aspect of the ranch operations, he soon became vice-president of The Irvine Company.

As my grandfather's primary interest was the agricultural development in the great central taxes. According to Cleland, "The Townsend-Dayman Investment Company of Long Beach bought 400 acres at Newport for \$200 an acre, and 1,280 acres less favorably situated at \$100 an acre. The purchase included 20 acres of water-bearing land. In 1904, George E. Hart acquired the site now known as Corona del Mar."

In 1906, my grandfather sold 148.6 acres with a fine beach, sometimes called "Green Bay" and now called "Emerald Bay," north of Laguna,

to William Miles and his partner Harry Callender for \$26,000, about \$175 an acre. Included in the sale was one windmill and a watering trough, located in what is today Swanson Park. Miles built a house on a bluff overlooking the beach and a beach cabana at the foot of the bluff. The new owner also built a road to Laguna to get supplies, and my grandfather gave him permission to dig for water up Niguel Canyon, now called Emerald Canyon. In those days, the acreage was bare of trees, but cactus, poison oak, white and blue elderberries and wild roses grew in abundance. The following year Miles planted thousands of eucalyptus trees which had to be watered by hand during the summer and fenced in the property to keep my grandfather's cattle from returning to the watering trough in Swanson Park.

In 1907, my grandfather even considered selling from "a mile to a mile-and-a-half" on the ocean front, between Newport and Laguna Beach for \$200 an acre. Although the perennial problem of squatters had subsided since my great-grandfather's time, people would still come and camp on the beaches along the coast, such as Crystal Cove and Moro Cove, located north of Abalone Point.

From the 1880s to the 1920s, Laguna Beach was a Mecca for Plein-Air artists from the United States and Europe because of the unique California light, which was like that of Giverny, in France. Crystal Cove and the Irvine Coast have been a favorite location for these artists for over a century, including Guy Rose, William Wendt, Edgar Payne, Jack Wilkinson Smith, Frank Cuprien, Raymond Nott, Hanson Puthuff, Donna Schuster, Granville Redmond, Joseph Kleitsch and many others.

During the late teens and early twenties, Crystal Cove, as well as the area between Corona Del Mar and Laguna Beach, attracted the attention of the booming silent film industry. Good weather and sandy beaches provided a tropical South Seas backdrop for many early movies. Small cottages were built and thatched with palm fronds, which gave the cove the exotic appearance of Hawaii and Tahiti. Palm trees and thatched huts are shown in photographs as early as

1917 and a “Paradise of the South Seas” was created for the benefit of film makers. The early versions of “Rain,” starring Gloria Swanson and Lionel Barrymore, and “Treasure Island” were supposedly shot at this location, as were “Half a Bride,” starring Esther Ralston and Gary Cooper, “White Shadows of the South Seas” and “Return to Bora Bora”. “The Seal Wolf” was filmed there in 1920 and “Storm Tossed” in 1921 at Table Rock located at the southern most end of the cove. For years, the cottages built at the cove kept their palm thatch, because the needs of the movie makers were considered foremost.

The coastal shelf above the beach was leased out by The Irvine Company for agricultural purposes and there were many citizens of Japanese origin engaged in truck farming there. Growing conditions were ideal and the farmers produced peas, corn, tomatoes and other vegetables. Strawberries were grown in abundance. The surrounding open land was used for cattle grazing and retained the character of early California.

Because of the numbers of persons involved in the farming operation, the company built a school house for the Japanese children on the bluffs above Crystal Cove. When World War II started in December, 1941, the Japanese tenants were put off the land and sent to internment camps.

Thereafter, the Marines took over the school and stationed guards there.

The community of Crystal Cove developed over a number of years. The first residents were squatters. However, eventually, my grandfather encouraged his employees and friends to build shelters and cottages along the beach. In 1927, Elizabeth Wood, an early resident, named it Crystal Cove, “because it was such a beautiful place.”

Early photographs of Crystal Cove show a summer community of small, one-room cottages thatched with palm fronds, and built close to the creek that flowed from Los Trancos Canyon. Tents were pitched on the beach and automobiles parked at the foot of the canyon. Sometime in the

1920s, a lumber ship capsized and much wood suitable for construction of more cottages drifted to shore.

Cottages began to be built up against the bluff, towards Corona del Mar, where there was no room for automobiles and provisions had to be carried in along the beach until a narrow boardwalk was built.

Irvine Cove, located south of Abalone Point, was where my grandfather and his family enjoyed the beach and entertained their friends. My father wanted to build a home there, but because of the tuberculosis, he was not sure that he could tolerate the constant dampness of the beach environment. Nevertheless, he had two small tenant houses that stood across the old coast road, moved to the cove. They were placed at right angles on top of a bluff, above the beach, and the base of the cliff, near the ocean, was a building which housed a large kitchen with a bath house above.

My father and mother, Athalie Richardson Irvine Clarke, loved the little green house at the cove, but unfortunately found that my father could not tolerate the damp coastal air. But they still enjoyed going there during the summer months, and my mother would often tell stories about the Fourth of July parties at the cove, which my grandfather particularly enjoyed. She said that during Prohibition rum-runners moored their boats off Crystal Cove at night, while their cargoes were smuggled ashore. Sometimes, she accompanied my father when he would assist the Sheriff as he intercepted and arrested the bootleggers and confiscated their contraband.

When road building bond acts were passed in the 1920s, the Pacific Coast Highway continued southward from Los Angeles. In 1924, The Irvine Company deeded the right-of-way of its old coast road between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach to the State Highway Department. My father, James Irvine, Jr., laid out the first paved road along the Irvine Coast. It had been his dream to create a public park on the ocean side of the highway, between Corona del Mar and Abalone Point. The Coast Highway was officially opened in

1926, when Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks tied two ribbons, uniting the beach communities of Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach.

In 1927, Robert Windolph, who provided propane to the coastal farmers, had secured a lease from The Irvine Company and established Tyron's Camp on the beach at Moro Cove, where he added a restroom and opened a market that offered fresh abalone to campers. Tent camping grew in popularity on the beaches of California during the 1930's and Tyron's Camp eventually was renamed El Moro Camp after the beach it represented. Trailers and RV's replaced tent camping in the 1940's and parking spaces were made available for trailers on the beach as well as on the inland side of the Coast Highway. In 1954 the facility was renamed El Morro Trailer Park.

In May of 1931, my father and mother went to Washington D.C., as my grandfather had asked him to confer with the legal counsel representing The Irvine Company in a case before the Board of Tax Appeals. On June 11, the case was decided in the company's favor when my father reached a compromise by agreeing to make the land which extended from Coronado del Mar to Crystal Cove a federal park.

My father never saw his vision of a park on the Irvine Coast become a reality as he died on June 23, 1935, at forty-two years of age. His death was a great blow to my grandfather, not only because of the close relationship that existed between them but also for the reason that my grandfather had depended upon my father for the management of the Irvine Ranch and had expected my father would succeed him as president of The Irvine Company. Two years later, my grandfather created the James Irvine Foundation.

I was two years of age when my father died in 1935, and my mother and I lived in Los Angeles with her parents. One of my most vivid childhood memories is driving with my mother and grandparents to San Juan Capistrano, to visit the mission, where I loved to feed the great flock of white pigeons that fluttered about the fountain in

the courtyard and along the garden paths.

Occasionally, one of the birds would fly high above my head into the sky, and my mother would tell me that was where my father had gone. Even to the present day, when I walk through the mission grounds, my recollections reach me at a deep and personal level, far beyond that of just a beautiful and historic monument.

During the summer, my mother and I stayed in the little green house at Irvine Cove that my father had moved to the site in the 1920s. I spent hours exploring the tide pools and caves, looking for shells and other sea life, and searched the sage-covered bluffs for Indian relics. At other times during the year, I visited my grandfather, James Irvine, at the ranch house in Tustin, where I spent my days playing with the dogs, or accompanying him when he inspected his wells, irrigation ditches and lakes, and field crops, orchards, and packing houses.

I often rode with the cowhands, when they moved cattle through the majestic oaks and sycamores in the San Joaquin Hills and the Santa Ana Mountains. Every spring, my grandfather held a round-up on the ranch to brand the calves, which was reminiscent of those held a century before on the early ranchos. As a child, I had the unique opportunity to see the land as Portola must have seen it, over two centuries ago, and loved it as my grandfather did.

Throughout the 1930s, more cottages were added at Crystal Cove and cottages that started with one room were often expanded to include additional rooms. Eventually, many of the cottages lost their thatched palm covers, appearing as they do today. The Irvine Company told the owners to either move their cottages elsewhere or to relinquish ownership to the company. In response, several cottages were moved to Laguna. The last house toward Corona del Mar, situated on a perfect site and backed by the bluff, was the subject of much discussion. The plan, which was not carried out, was that the house be placed on a raft and towed to Laguna. The short-term leasing system instituted by The Irvine Company served

to preserve Crystal Cove in its original form. Moreover, because of the company policy that no dimensional changes could be made on the cottages, the area appears much as it did in the 1920s, except for the absence of the tents on the beach.

After my father's death, nothing was ever done with respect to his commitment to make any portion of the Irvine Coast a federal park. In 1946, my grandfather gave the City of Newport Beach three-tenths of a mile of bay front property for a city park. It was designated for park and recreation purposes. Several years after his death in 1947, the City of Newport Beach leased its "public park" to real estate developers who built the Balboa Bay Club there - which was anything but "public." My uncle, Myford Irvine, who succeeded his father as president of The Irvine Company, never attended one single event at the club because he was so incensed at what Newport Beach did with that property.

After my uncle Myford's death in 1959, the James Irvine Foundation gained absolute domination and control over The Irvine Company. In 1972, under Governor Ronald Reagan's administration, the California Coastal Act was approved. The following year, The Irvine Company management attempted to sell 1,800 acres of coastal land between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach to the State of California for \$7,500,000, or approximately \$4,000 an acre, for park and recreation purposes. Fearing a reoccurrence of what had happened to my grandfather's gift of park land to the City of Newport Beach, my mother and I filed suit to enjoin the sale. During the course of the litigation, it was discovered that under the Reagan administration, State Parks had purchased two and one-half acres just north of the pier at Huntington Beach for over \$600,000, or \$250,000 an acre. That property eventually became a private gated condominium project known as the "Huntington Pacific."

About that time, a close friend of my mother's, who was a well-known real estate developer, visited my mother at her home in Coronado del Mar. He told her that if she and I would just drop our suit blocking the sale of the Irvine coastal

land to State Parks, that he would give her the finest condominium that he intended to build on that property. When my mother related the conversation to me, she said, "You know dear, I believe they really do intend to develop the park!" The litigation was resolved in 1979, under Governor Jerry Brown's administration, when The Irvine Company agreed to sell about 2,300 acres of coastal land to the State of California for \$32,600,000, or about \$14,000 per acre.

On a number of occasions, before my mother died in 1993, she and I would drive along Newport Coast Road, overlooking Crystal Cove State Park, and she would say, "Your grandfather and your father wanted this land to be a park, I want it to be a park, and you must see that it remains a park for the people forever."

Today, Crystal Cove State Park contains some of the last remaining undeveloped coastal property in Southern California, as well as scenic upland canyons and ridges, coastal bench lands and bluffs, excellent swimming beaches, and significant offshore marine features, including the Crystal Cove Underwater Park and Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge. The park also contains several important Native American sites, a variety of natural resources, including some rare and endangered species of plants and animals, such as coastal sage scrub and the California gnatcatcher, and is one of the birthing sites of the bottlenose dolphin on the California coast.

The Crystal Cove State Park Historic District is made up of 46 of the original cottages built between 1921 and 1940. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, insuring that these buildings and grounds will be preserved and maintained in accordance with federal standards for such historic properties.

This pristine Arcadia retains the character of early California as well as both natural and cultural resources which cannot be replaced. It is indeed, "an island in time" that must be preserved for future generations to enjoy forever.

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