



Las Noticias del Rancho Monserate

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF RANCHO MONSERATE

It is a privilege in this issue of Las Noticias to have permission to quote the following short historical sketch and poem, called RANCHO MONSERATE*, written in 1966 by Mr. Tom Hudson of Elsinore, California. The history is authentic, the poem is charming and one that many of us would like to have in our library of special things.

"RANCHO MONSERATE, one of the old Mexican land grants, was located on the San Luis Rey River in California a few miles above the Franciscan Mission of San Luis Rey. The three-league grant was made in 1846 by California's last Mexican governor, Pio Pico, to Isidro Maria Alvarado, who built an adobe house for his family facing the river and in the morning shadow of Monserate Mountain, a huge pile of granite boulders.

"Don Isidro, with twenty others to whom Monserate was home, died in 1862 when a smallpox epidemic swept up the San Luis Rey Valley.

"A warning had been issued by Cave Couts, then in control of Mission San Luis Rey, that none who had died of smallpox could be buried in the mission's cemetery. Members of the Alvarado family, however, were determined that Don Isidro's remains should find their final resting place at "La Misión."

"On a rainy night they took the body down the river trail to the mission. After the grave had been opened and the coffin lowered, a shot rang out, fired by a sentinel sent to guard the cemetery. A member of the funeral party fell dead and the family left immediately.

"Tomás and Lugardo, son and daughter of Isidro, lived on at the rancho for many years. In 1882 a heavy snowstorm visited the valley. Unaccustomed to cold and snow, Indian herders abandoned their flocks and six thousand sheep were frozen or suffocated as they huddled together for warmth."

*Monserate Mountain was named in 1795 by a Spanish soldier who accompanied Padre Juan Mariner on an expedition in search of sites for new missions. The 1557-foot mountain reminded the soldier, who had come from Spain, of Montserrat (in English, serrated mountain), a 4054-foot craggy mountain in the province of Caledonia. The Spanish mountain is famous for its monastery, its printing shop dating from 1499, and its vast library.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RANCHO MONSERATE

Four years ago there appeared in Las Noticias a historical sketch about Rancho Monserrate, dating from the year 1846. And, since our complex here is now practically complete, requests have been received to run this article again. It follows.

us

Many of us know the historical background of this area of California, but many of us who came from other states know little of the beginnings in this area where we now live; therefore, this article will give you a few of the pertinent facts about North San Diego County, particularly the part we now call home - Rancho Monserrate Mobilehome Country Club.

The name - Monserrate - supposedly was taken from an ancient monastery on another continent. Originally Monserrate Rancho was granted to Don Ysidro Maria Alvarado by Governor Pio Pico in 1846 in the closing days of Mexican rule in California. Don Ysidro built a small adobe ranchhouse on the North side of the San Luis Rey River, where he lived simply with his family - raising a few cattle and horses. In 1862-3 a smallpox epidemic swept the area, taking the lives of many Indians and some members of the rancho's families. Don Ysidro and his wife, who had helped care for those stricken, finally became ill with the disease and died also.

Don Ysidro was not too successful as a rancho. In 1860, just before the smallpox epidemic, his land was appraised at \$3,000, his personal property at \$7,000, and this appraisal included 180 steers, 20 cows, 100 sheep and 50 horses.

Don Ysidro's son survived the epidemic and inherited Monserrate Rancho. He and his wife, Maria Ignacio Morena, built a new ranchhouse and several other buildings on the South side of the river, including a chapel close to the ranchhouse. The son's name was Don Tomas, and he and his wife had five girls and one boy. He proved to be a better businessman than his father, and a few years later his herds had grown to 300 cattle, 13,000 sheep and 300 horses. The original Monserrate Rancho, when it belonged to the Alvarados consisted of 13,322 acres of land hereabouts, extending to Bonsall and almost to Fallbrook as we see it today. The thousands of cattle and horses grazed all this unfenced land we now view from our windows. The stock was herded by Mexican and Indian vaqueros. Many servants cared for the house - did the cooking and washing and tended the vegetable garden.

If you haven't ever really examined the inside of the old Hacienda and the building we now call the Chapel, be sure to do it. The house has nine rooms and is built in a "U" shape. The walls are three feet thick. The patio in the middle is where the Alvarado children played.

Don Tomas prospered and as he did he acquired more expensive tastes. His daughters were sent away to school and he and his wife spent large sums on furnishing the adobe home. They entertained extensively and traveled considerably.

Through the following years Monserrate Rancho was broken up into many parcels of land, and cattle grazing was largely given up in favor of general farming. Many acres were devoted to dairying and commercial flower raising, and there were a number of citrus and avocado groves of various sizes.

In the late 1870's Henry H. Gird purchased 5,500 acres of Monserrate Rancho from one of the Alvarado daughters, and his son - Will E. Gird - purchased an additional 4,500 acres from another of the heirs. The father and son raised cattle and horses on this land.

Later all ranching activities ceased. In 1968 Edgar S. Dulin had the largest single parcel remaining of the Monserrate grant - 2,000 acres. He farmed 850 acres and grew avocados, lemons and oranges. About 200 acres were leased for the growing of gladiolus bulbs. Dulin grazed a herd of Hereford cattle on the remaining acreage.

It is interesting to note also that within the original boundaries of the grant we now see a large residential development called Pala Mesa Village and the Pala Mesa Golf Club, Inn and Lodge, as well as this lovely Rancho Monserate Mobilehome Country Club.

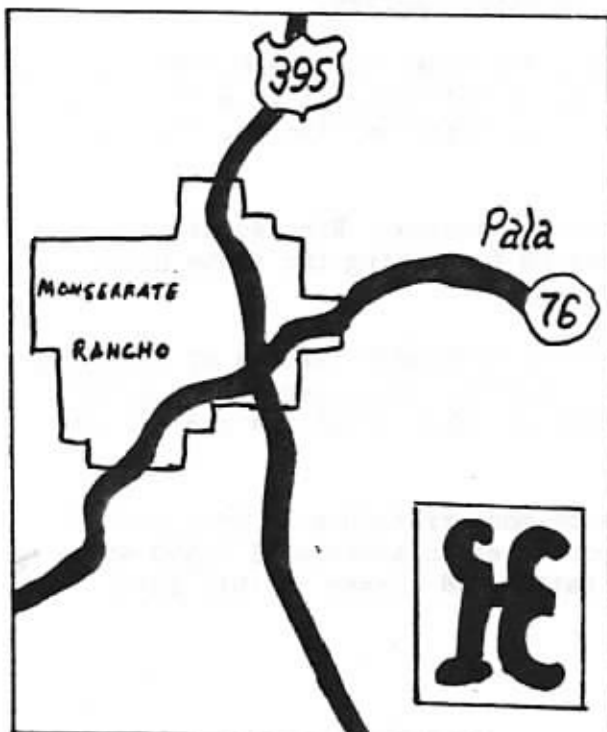
Several other old land grants nearby will be recognizable to you by name:

Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores (where camp Pendleton is now)
 Guajome Rancho (along Route 76 toward Pendleton)
 Pauma Rancho (Pauma Village)
 Buena Vista Rancho (Vista)
 Los Vallecitos de San Marcos (San Marcos)
 El Rincon Del Diablo Rancho (Escondido)
 San Bernardo Rancho (Rancho Bernardo)
 Las Encinitas Rancho (Encinitas)
 Los Penasquitos Rancho (Penasquitos)
 El Cajon Rancho (El Cajon)

Most recently in this bit of history, many of you will recall that the Pollock family developed this Country Club originally, and it is interesting to know that the names of our streets were inspired by the names of various members of this family.

Now take another look out your windows at that lovely view we all treasure. Isn't it more interesting?

In Las Noticias, dated August 1, 1976 (Vol. 22, Pages 1-5) appeared a short historical sketch and a lovely poem written in 1966 by Mr. Tom Hudson of Elsinor, California, who has lived in this area of California for many years. This back issue of Las Noticias can be found in the Library binder containing all issues of same. Do look it up!



The brand, shown with this map, is called a "picture" brand. It has a meaning, perhaps known only to the owner. The Dons, or owners, branded their stock on the left hip; when sold, the new owner placed his brand on the left shoulder. Horses were often marked on the neck with a smaller iron so the mane would cover this scar.



RANCHO MONSERATE

A story in poetry of
life, love and tragedy
at an old California
rancho as written by

T O M H U D S O N

Where once a sparkling river sang
 As it approached the sea
A house looks out on vast expanse
 of dry and dusty lea.
Two vacant wings embrace a court
 where time has left its blight;
Two pepper trees, their gnarled trunks crossed
 Stand guard by day and night.

Each year the rains beat roof and walls;
 Each year the fogs enshroud;
 Each year the summer skies refuse
 To yield a humid cloud.
 A palm, once lush and proud and green,
 Holds high its starving head;
 Gaunt skeletons of blue-gum trees
 Stand stark by river bed.

A wire fence sags where rotting posts
 Have fallen to the ground;
 Rank weeds encroach upon the realm
 Of laughter there once found.
 Across the silence of the hills
 Coyotes wail laments;
 From off the brush-grown river bed
 Winds murmur through the fence.

O'er Monserate's granite peak
 A full moon, floating high,
 Benignly casts the same soft light
 It shed in years gone by.
 Except where man has turned the sward,
 And stemmed the river's flow,
 The earth, the stars, the moon remain
 The same as long ago.

Within the house the rotted floors
 Tell tales of footsteps past
 When Don Isidro ruled the realm
 Of Monserate's caste,
 And grandees with their ladies rode
 From ranchos far and wide
 To visit Don Isidro and
 His lovely, dark-eyed bride.

The thick adobe walls converse
 In whispered, ghostly voice
 Of happiness and love that once
 Were Monserate's choice
 When fat herds roamed the hills then lush
 With grass from fertile sod
 As mission bells called all to bow
 Their heads in praise to God.

Then death, enrobed in shrouds of black,
 Stole up the river trail
 And with a plague sent twenty souls
 To seek the Holy Grail.
 A box was hewn. The grandee had
 Fulfilled his final day;
 In soil forbade his clay was laid
 At old San Luis Rey.

But ere the clods could seal the grave
 A fatal shot rang out!
 A mourner fell! The eerie night
 Was punctured by a shout!,
 Into darkness of the trail
 The cortege felt its way;
 Into the hearts of mourners crept
 Stark fear of plague and fray.

'Twas then Tomás assumed the role
 As master of the house.
 Full twenty years of peace were his
 With serfs, and priest, and spouse.
 Vaqueros rode through hills and vales
 As shepherds watched his flocks;
 The old house mellowed with the years
 By Monserate's rocks.

Peace without end on Mother Earth
 Has never been decreed
 To man or beast, to tree or house,
 By covenant or deed. . . .
 Down from the mountains' hoary crest
 An icy, wintry blast
 Laid cold in death six thousand sheep.
 Tomás's reign was past.

Now all is changed. The grave has claimed
 All love, all hope, all life
 In Monserate's pageantry
 Of time, and peace, and strife.
 Two vacant wings embrace a court
 Where padres knelt to pray;
 Two pepper trees, their gnarled trunks crossed,
 Stand guard by night and day.

* * * * *

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The beautiful little illustrated book that presents Mr. Hudson's poem and historical sketch is done in sepia and fastened with a leather thong. In our correspondence he has advised that he has some copies still available. The price is \$2.25, including tax, and Mr. Hudson's address is in care of Laguna House, P. O. Box 371, Elsinore, California - 92330.

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