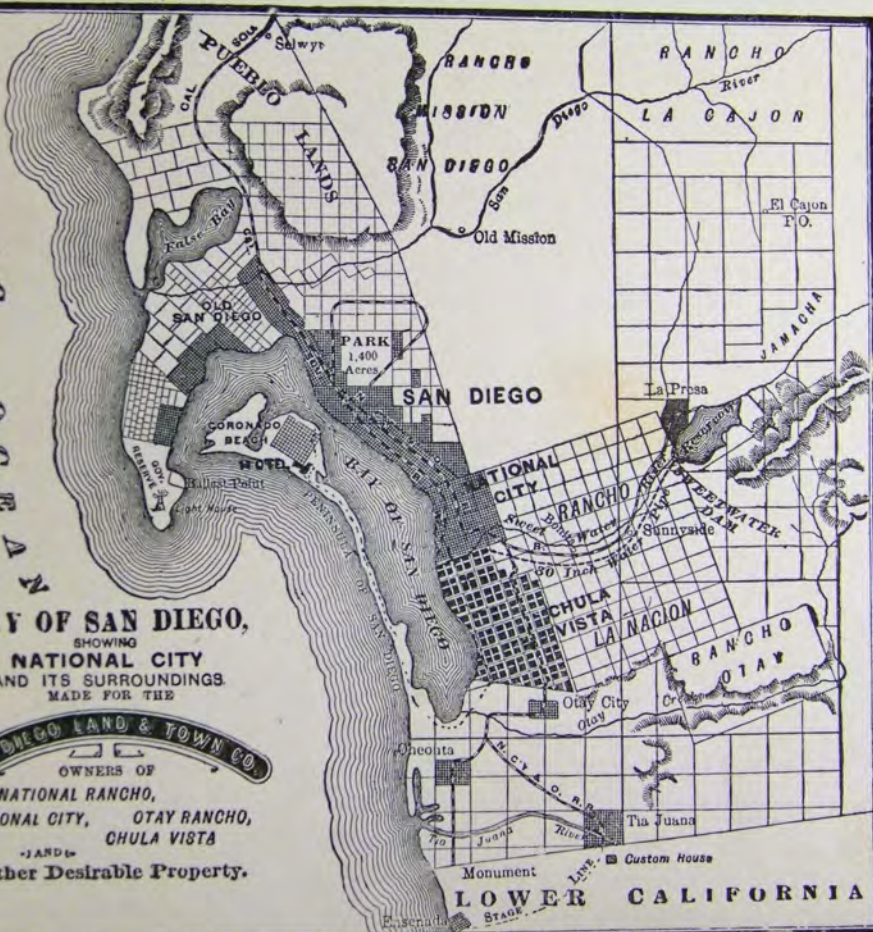


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The Otay Ranch land and project: Where it came from, where it's going

A SPECIAL REPORT TO THE
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY POST
BY TOM DAVIS

The Old

Dona Magdalena Estudillo, Jose Maria Echeandia. Exotic sounding names; historic names, but essentially unknown today. One hundred and seventy-six years ago, in 1820, Dona Estudillo received a grant of land from the Spanish Governor of Mexico, Jose Echeandia, for 6657.98 acres of land on a dry, arid mesa in the middle of the New World Spanish territory of Mexico. She called the grant of land Rancho Otay. Included in the grant was the Indian village of Otay. Water was not available for farming or large-scale cattle ranching, and there were no significant mineral deposits known.

It appears that the only use that Dona Estudillo ever made of Rancho Otay was for grazing a few horses. No buildings were constructed on the property, so far as is known. In 1821, the year after the grant was given, Mexico gained independence from Spain and Dona and her brother, Don Jose Antonio Estudillo, who had received an adjoining land grant of 4436 acres, were required to reaffirm their grants with the new Mexican government, a process that was not completed until 1846.

California history assists in understanding why this and numerous other land grants were made at this particular time. In the first part of the 19th century, there was an attempt by the Spanish, and then the Mexican, government to secularize the California missions. The missions had become powerful enough to challenge the authority of the central government, a practice decidedly not popular in Mexico City. A plan was developed to sell significant portions of mission land holdings, thereby weakening the wealth and power of the missions. It appears that the Otay Rancho land grant was part of this maneuver.

No sooner had the Mexican government re-

pany, bought the property, and seven years later, in 1893, filed a subdivision map for the old Rancho, but nothing more transpired.

In 1900 the property was sold to John D. Spreckles, who amassed a fortune in sugar and was instrumental in the building of the Hotel del Coronado. Spreckles immediately sold Rancho Otay to the man who actually built the Hotel Del, Elisa Spurr Babcock. Babcock also acquired the Otay Water Company in 1893 and had James Schuyler build the Lower Otay Dam on property adjoining the Otay Rancho in 1897 and the upper Otay Dam in 1904. The upper dam was built when Schuyler recalculated the strength of the lower dam and warned that massive flooding in Otay Valley might cause the dam to fail.

Both dams and the contained reservoirs were sold to the City of San Diego in 1906, the owners to this day. In 1916, during flooding caused by rare torrential winter rains, the lower dam did fail (as well as the Sweetwater Dam, see ICP, June, 1996) in spite of the upper dam. The resulting flood down

band, continued to operate the ranch until she died. In 1988 the majority of the Patrick's Otay Ranch land was sold to the Baldwin Company for a reported 150 million dollars.

Now

The original 6658 acres of the Rancho Otay, the adjoining 4436 acres of Rancho Jamal, and all of Steven Birch's additions have now become pieces of the giant Otay Ranch project, proposed by the Baldwin Company. What happens to the old Spanish land-grants and the additional thousands of surrounding acres, will profoundly affect the future of Bonita, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, South San Diego, and the region. Every resident that lives, or will live, hereabouts are in some way going to be affected by this giant land development project.

United Enterprises, Inc., (originally established by Steven Birch and inherited by his daughter, Mary Birch Patrick) began the Otay Ranch land development process in 1984 by requesting autho-




affirmed the Estudillo land grants than in June, 1846, citizens of the United States, who had come to California to hunt, farm and trade, revolted against Mexico in what was known as the Bear Flag Revolt, an all but forgotten event. A symbol of the revolt, a grizzly bear, was carried over from the uprising and appears on the modern California state flag. Of course, students of history know that the War with Mexico was fought over Texas, not California. The Bear Flag Revolt began a month before war with Mexico was declared and was not directly related to events in Texas.

In July, 1846, Commodore John D. Sloat, claimed California for the United States by simply raising the flag over the then capital in Monterey without opposition. Commodore Robert F. Stockton, General Steven Watts Kearney, and a relatively small band of US soldiers conquered the rest of California in rapid order. The Mexican government, having done poorly fighting US forces in Texas and northern Mexico, opted for peace. California and Texas were officially transferred to the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. All parties were unaware that gold had been discovered on the South Fork of the American River at a saw mill owned by John Sutter one month before — good news-bad news, depending on which signer you happened to be on the treaty. California became the 31st state on September 9, 1850 as a non-slave state.

After California became a state, landholders were required to once again prove ownership of their property by the Land Act of 1851. For the Rancho Otay and Dona Magdalena Estudillo, the process began in the early 1860s and lasted ten years. On February 2, 1872, the US Land Commission confirmed Dona's claim to the Otay Rancho land. Immediately after ownership was reaffirmed, Dona Estudillo sold the property and disappeared from the records and her association with the Rancho.

Solon S. Sandborn bought the property from Dona Estudillo in 1872 and sold it the same year to Captain Matthew Sherman, a veteran of the Civil War. In 1883 the San Diego Land and Town Company, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railroad Com-



stream almost completely wiped out the town of Otay, then a community of about 400. The present lower dam was rebuilt in 1919.

Elisha Babcock passed away in 1922, and his Otay Ranch property was acquired in an estate sale by Rube Harrison and a partner the next year. Harrison and his partner, Henry V. Adams, did not get on well. Adams eventually sued Harrison, ending the partnership, but not before Harrison sold the Otay Ranch to a gent who had made his fortune mining copper in Alaska, Steven Birch, in 1936.

Steven Birch and his wife, the former Mary Cline Rand, settled on the property, built an estate complex on eleven acres and raised a family there. During the 1930s Birch added vast holdings to the original Otay Rancho's 6658 acres, eventually acquiring a staggering 29,000 acres. Steven Birch converted the property into a working farm and ranch which he called Rancho del Otay. The Birches raised two children: Mary, born in 1917, and Steven Jr., born in 1918.

The elder Birch first formed the Aleutian Development Company to cover the operations of the ranch. The name changed to the Otay Agricultural Corporation to oversee the vast holdings and to manage the farming business. In a third name-change the company became United Enterprises, Incorporated, with the son, Steven Jr., as President and daughter, Mary, as Vice President. The Rancho del Otay became a profitable agricultural business supervised by Dorace Edgar Scarby. The ranch produced lima beans, hay, grain and, to a lesser extent, cattle. Steven Jr. raised orchids and game birds as a hobby.

In 1940 Steven Birch passed away, and soon after his son, Steven, Jr., and Mary Birch inherited the ranch. In 1955, at thirty-eight, Mary married Patrick R. Patrick, a retired RAF officer and official of the English Austin Automobile Company. Mary Birch Patrick, who survived her hus-

band, was instrumental in the process of re-zoning from San Diego County to amend the County's General Development Plan governing the Otay Ranch property. The Board of Supervisors agreed to begin an informal cooperative planning process with United Enterprises, but no substantial progress was made on the General Development Plan modification until after the Otay Ranch Property was sold to Baldwin Company of Newport Beach, California in 1988.

Beginning in 1989, Baldwin Company started the long process that is required to get a development project from concept to construction. Step one was to tell the City of Chula Vista the company intended to present the city with a development agreement...not an easy thing to do. The problem was that, at the time, just about all of the project Baldwin was proposing was not within the city limits, so Baldwin had to get San Diego County into the picture. The next step was a Memorandum of Intention filed with the City of Chula Vista and San Diego County to establish a joint committee to thrash out problems between the city and the county.

An Interjurisdictional Task Force, reduced to the acronym IJTF, was formed of Chula Vista and County officials to work out and negotiate an agreement between Baldwin, Chula Vista and the County that would establish the relationships between the three, the scope of the project, and general planning process to be used in developing detailed characteristics of the Baldwin proposal. Very, very complicated, but real problems still lay ahead.

The IJTF met dozens of times and generated thousands of pages of reports and studies, including the compiled input from citizen study groups. The product of this task force were documents called the Environmental Impact Report (EIR), and a General Development Plan (GDP). The EIR and the GDP are the keystone documents that the

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Otay Ranch project is founded upon. With these documents in hand, actual construction moved a giant step forward. Included in the GDP is a thing called a phasing plan—simply a schedule for building the various parts of the project.

On Tuesday, June 10, 1996, the Chula Vista City Council approved the Specific Planning Area 1 (SPA 1) for Villages 1 and 5 of the first phase of the Otay Ranch Project. Other parts will follow for the next twenty five to forty years. To reach this point the process has cost the Baldwin Company approximately \$20 million dollars.

Files In The Ointment

The Otay Ranch project as proposed by Baldwin Company has had enormous momentum from the beginning in 1988. The lengthy process that has consumed nearly eight years and tens of thousands of city, county and company man-hours of effort is, in reality, an invention of bureaucrats who have created a thicket of steps, studies, surveys, hearings, meetings, and agreements. Baldwin has persisted in driving the project forward, despite the tortured road and obstacles. But there have been more than bureaucratic procedural waters to navigate.

The Otay Ranch project technically lies almost entirely within the jurisdiction of San Diego County, just as parts of Bonita not annexed by Chula Vista are within County jurisdiction. Chula Vista has no authority over this unincorporated territory. There are, however, some advantages associated with municipal services, such as police and fire protection and sewage disposal, i.e., infrastructure, that are considered by developers to be more advantageous than those available from the County. The question of city or county control—the county has it, the city wants it—is not just playing a childish game of king-of-the-castle. It boils down to Revenue, with a capital R, because Revenue is what the County and the City subsist upon.

The County Supervisors and staff didn't fall off the turnip truck yesterday morning, and so will not lightly give up control over unincorporated land to cities like Chula Vista without a deal on the R-word. When giving up unincorporated land the usual deal is for the County to take about

There is also a question of financial stability that has arisen to plague one of the business entities that operates under the ubiquitous corporate Baldwin umbrellas. Baldwin Company, owned by brothers James and Alfred Baldwin, has two major components of about six corporate sub-elements. Baldwin Builders and Village Development, the major corporate elements involved in the Otay Ranch project, operate to take undeveloped land, work through the maze of governmental approval and planning, then undertake construction of residential buildings on the approved lots. Village Development generally handles the approval and planning tasks, and Baldwin Builders takes over and builds homes on the approved land, allowing the company to make money for their efforts. Baldwin Builders is the corporate part that filed for bankruptcy relief in 1993, the only part of the company so affected.

The details and legal niceties of the Baldwin Builders financial difficulties does not seem to be entirely associated with the Otay Ranch project, but the general downturn that has affected residential construction in the region and the state since the early 1990s. The residential building slide has played a part in undermining the corporate financial well being; aggravated by the cost of acquiring the Otay Ranch property for \$150 million. In a complex series of financial arrangements, Foothill Capital arranged to finance the Otay Ranch land purchase. An organization called G. E. Capital supplied the necessary line of credit for general company operations and projects. The nose-dive in residential sales disturbed the delicate financial balance of the Baldwin Company.

In 1995 G.E. Capital terminated a substantial line of Baldwin operating credit and moved to fore-close on Baldwin Builders. The immediate consequence of the financial crisis was the inability of Baldwin to pay the cost of borrowing money, and to pay a long list of other creditors, including a number of subcontractors who build the houses that make money for the company. The City of Chula Vista was also owed a considerable sum for processing fees. In January, 1996 the Santa Barbara bankruptcy court dealing with Baldwin Builders authorized a New York group of lenders to supply Baldwin with a fresh line of credit, replacing G.E. Capital as a debtor.

The bankruptcy court proceedings have done more than realign the Baldwin Company debt. In

Otay Ranch - Big In Every Way

- The Otay Ranch project consists of 22,899 acres.
- 27,000 residential units will be built on 7,000 acres of the property.
- 207 acres will be turned into parks, and an additional 108 acres will be set aside for community facilities.
- There are 280 acres set aside for schools. School construction costs will rely on the creation of Mello-Roos special assessment districts which will be supported by the project's property owners.
- Almost 14,000 acres will be designated as Open Space land and Limited Development Areas. Open Space land is to have no dwellings on it. Limited Development Areas may have access roads and utility lines built across it, but no landscaping or large-scale removal of native vegetation will be permitted.
- The population of the Otay Ranch project when it is completed is projected to be about 79,000.
- Approximately 90 million yards of earth will be moved in connection with the project, and will be moved at an average of 50,000 yards of earth per day. Based on these figures, earth moving for the project should require seven years to complete, assuming a five-day work week.
- 15 Villages are planned for the project with four additional special planning areas for low density rural estate areas in the far eastern sections of the project in the vicinity of Jamul.
- When the project development reaches the upper and lower Otay Reservoirs, the road will be rerouted away from the water and behind the high ground at the northeast of the lower reservoir. A resort and a golf course will be built facing the reservoir. The San Diego Air Sports Center will be required to decamp for some other location.
- The completed Otay Ranch project will require approximately 37 million gallons of water a day from the Otay Water District. The OWD says that not only can this demand be met, but that there will never again be a water shortage in their district because of actions taken by the County Water authority and the Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District, believe it, or not. The price

The County Supervisors and staff didn't pull off the turnout truck yesterday morning, and so will not likely give up control over unincorporated land to cities like Chula Vista without a deal on the R-word. When giving up unincorporated land the usual deal is for the County to take about 60% of future property tax revenue. The County/City Revenue split as finally negotiated on the first phase of the Otay Ranch project is nearer 53%-47%. Buried deep in the Otay Ranch Service Revenue Plan are computer model generated tables that, if one were to believe them, will generate multi-millions of dollars in annual revenue for San Diego County and the City of Chula Vista. This very important negotiation was not concluded until the first week in June, 1996, but clears the way for at least the annexation of the land upon which the first two villages will be built, probably sometime in July, 1996.

There is another wrinkle in the space-time continuum that involves the only serious anti-project objection lodged against the Otay Ranch project. In November, 1993, a month after the Otay Ranch EIR was accepted by the Interjurisdictional Task Force, a group calling themselves Chaparral Greens and Daniel Ford Tarr filed suit in Superior Court, alleging that the Otay Ranch project EIR was not properly done, and, therefore, was not valid. Since the EIR is one of the linchpins of this, or any, project, the suit represented a measurable threat to the continuation of the project.

The Chaparral Greens suit contended that there would be a disruption of the habitat of the project area not permitted by the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), and raised numerous other points of contention. After more than 18 months of finely ground legal proceedings, the Superior Court Judge handling the case ruled against Chaparral Greens, indicating that the Otay Ranch EIR did comply with the CEQA requirements, finding no significant faults in the document, a major achievement judging from other cases involving EIRs for projects not nearly as large. The ruling has been appealed by Chaparral Greens. If the appeal is rejected, the Otay Ranch project will roll ahead unperturbed. If Chaparral Greens wins the appeal there will be a chorus of low, anguished cries arise from the County building, City Hall and Baldwin offices, for portions of the EIR will have to be redone, resulting in more delays and expense.

processing fees. In January, 1996 the Santa Barbara bankruptcy court dealing with Baldwin Builders authorized a New York group of lenders to supply Baldwin with a fresh line of credit, replacing G.E. Capital as a debtor.

The bankruptcy court proceedings have done more than realign the Baldwin Company debt. In the world of finance there is an inseparable relationship between money and managers. If, in the view of those supplying capital, the managers of a company are generating acceptable return on investment, that is good and the managers are thought to be good also. If investment capital is not being protected and return is not forthcoming, the first casualty in the financial business are the managers and changes usually follow apace. This is a situation in which the management finds itself as a result of the debt crisis and the Baldwin Builders bankruptcy.

In the future it seems apparent that direct control of the Otay Ranch land and management decisions concerning the property will not be entirely in the hands of Baldwin Company. There is an undercurrent that involves names, some familiar, some new, that have asserted control of some parts of the property. United Enterprises has gained a more important role in decisions related to the land. The way the land is being used as collateral to secure credit sources appears to affect outright control of the property and the project.

The local effect of the bankruptcy court decision was to allow many outstanding bills to be paid. The companies constructing houses for Baldwin have been receiving payment, and the Special Planning Projects Manager for the City of Chula Vista, Jerry Jamriska, said that as of June 12, 1996, Baldwin "owed the city nothing" in building fees. While the immediate financial crisis has passed there are still cautions ahead in this complicated realm.

The Long, Hard Road From Here to There

Because of the time that has been devoted to getting the Otay Ranch project nearly to the construction stage, it seems natural to wonder why it has taken eight years and so much effort. The question, put to various individuals associated with the project, produced some interesting answers.

For the most part, the maze of procedures, steps, studies, and so forth, are the result of requirements that the City of Chula Vista and San Diego County have imposed on the approval pro-

cess. Some of the requirements are associated with the usual responsibilities local government has to assure that construction projects conform to zoning requirement and that proposed construction meets building code standards.

- Many of the existing roads will be widened and numerous new roads will be built. A sampling indicates the following roads will be widened to six lanes: H Street, Hilltop to I-805, Orange Ave. to Brandywine; Telegraph Canyon Rd., Medical Center Rd. to Paseo Ladera. Some of the roads that will be widened to four lanes are: Palomar St., Hilltop Dr. to Oleander; Sweetwater Rd., Willow to SR-54; Bonita Rd., Otay Lakes Rd. to Central.
- If SR-125 is not built, or is long delayed, a four-lane surface street will probably be built on the right-of-way

cess. Some of the requirements are associated with the usual responsibilities local government has to assure that construction projects conform to zoning requirement and that proposed construction meets building code standards.

Making sure that a host of federal and state mandated requirements for just about everything — air quality, noise standards, water availability and standards, traffic congestion, school and library availability, are met literally takes years of effort. Negotiating the necessary agreements between the County and the City of Chula Vista for the division of tax revenues and the method of transferring control of the Otay Ranch property from County to Chula Vista City has also taken time and effort. These are difficult matters, no doubt, but why it should take years to complete is not easy to answer.

The Chula Vista City Manager, John Goss, says that the Otay Ranch project, and other large land development projects, are so exhaustive and time consuming in order to protect the citizens of the city, a view also reflected by County officials. From what are the citizens being protected? From piecemeal development of large blocks of land, Goss says; from unscrupulous developers who would not comply with all of the environmental and construction requirements, he says; from

Continued on Pg. 10

"Otay Ranch," continued from Pg. 9

projects that would deprive the residents of the city of a decent life. With these thoughts in mind, one is virtually compelled to ask how it is that the city administration knows from what the residents wish to be protected.

Speak Now, or Forever Hold Your Peace

The Otay Ranch planning effort between the public entities and Baldwin has been continuous from the late 1980s. Project planning has involved city, county and Baldwin representatives in frequent, if not daily contact with each other. This association tends to make the public officials and the company employees colleagues. This closeness contrasts vividly with the poorly informed, contentious, disorganized and the inherently repetitious input of the public.

When the Otay Ranch project was proposed, a group of some 130 select citizens were given an overview of the proposal, then were formed into a committee to examine the proposed project and to suggest ways to make it better and more suitable to the region. This group never undertook the task of deciding if the residents wanted, or did not want, to accept the changes such a large development would have on the community. Emphasis was always on getting the public to understand the nature and scope of the project, and then to decide on improvements to the project that suit their fancy. This has produced a plan for Baldwin that boasts of citizen involvement.

Public hearings have been held at every stage of the Otay Ranch approval process. Public officials considered that these hearings were adequate and proper opportunities for the public to comment on, or express opinions about, the project. There have been perhaps a hundred meetings or workshop sessions when the public was offered the opportunity to say what was on their minds. In addition to the specific Otay Ranch workshops, briefings, and hearings, there were numerous meetings of the Interjurisdictional Task Force and their subcommittees; the joint Chula Vista and County planning commissions; as well as a host of meetings of various Chula Vista standing and ad hoc committees and commissions that made inputs to various parts of the plan. Because of the unique

"Town Hall," continued from Pg. 1

By the end of July, the old T.V. Repair building located there should be demolished and cleared away. This area will provide the ingress to a "staging area".



Dir. of Public Works Dave Solomon explains the Central Avenue Mini-Bridge golf cart and pedestrian lanes

"It will look like a parking lot really...for equestrians to bring their trailers down there and for hikers to park their cars," explained Lovewell. "There'll be some shade trees, water and perhaps some picnic tables...the idea is just now in the concept stage and...it will be a staging area rather than another day use park. It's so far away from the other amenities that are developed that we really don't want it to become a place for the wrong element to congregate."

A member from the audience stated that the trails located in that area were "pretty much impassable" and asked where the trails would lead from this "staging area".

"We have no funding to do trail maintenance on our own, we know a trail system exists and we've been trying to work with equestrian groups here to establish a maintenance committee and a trails patrol. That's really the only way the trails are going to get improved at this time because we don't

"Otay Ranch," continued

have the staffing or the funding to do it," responded Lovewell. "We need the help of the community...we'd be happy to reintroduce our contact with the equestrian communities to make that volunteer patrol and maintenance committee a reality," he added.

The audience was audibly pleased when Lovewell also reported, "We're going to be planting trees all along Bonita Road there and in front of the driving range to provide for more beauty."

Otay Park To Open

Otay Park, located at the southern end of Wueste Road, will replace park land lost to the CalTrans mitigation site for Highway 54, located along the Sweetwater River upstream of Central Ave. and downstream of the Bonita Rd. (Sunnyside) Bridge.

"When CalTrans did the mitigation site, they had to provide park land to replace the land they put the mitigation site on...there wasn't any land in the Bonita area. We asked if it was possible if they (CalTrans) would help us acquire it from the city (of Chula Vista)," said Lovewell. "By golly, it looks like its going to work. We're just at the final stages of CalTrans buying it...then they'll deed it over to us."

"It looks like there will be about \$100,000 to \$125,000 left to refurbish the park and then reopen it as a day-use park...it's going to take pressure off Rohr Park because a lot of the people that went to Otay (Park) started to go to Rohr Park (when Otay Park closed)," added Lovewell. "Eventually, we want to get it opened up as a campground, as it was before, but we've got to completely refurbish all the leachfields and everything. It's been closed since Labor Day 1991."

SCVA Elections Results

Immediately following the meeting, the Sweetwater Valley Civic Association held elections for officers and directors for the new term. Those elected to serve as officers for the new year are: Dave Gillespie as President, Ernie Schepf as Vice President, Jim Burley as Treasurer and Josie Calderon as Secretary. ☺

to various parts of the city of Chula Vista has in the annexation process, the Council has conducted additional public hearings on the Otay Ranch project. Officials associated with the Otay Ranch project feel that everyone has gone out-of-the-way to accommodate public comment.

There can be no argument that there have been innumerable opportunities for the public to address their questions and concerns about the Otay Ranch project to a wide array of officials at public hearings. The question is: what effect does public commentary have in the decision making process?

To watch the public in action at a public hearing, and interpret the impact this type of testimony has in the decision-making process, is a study in contrasts. To appreciate how much difference there is between the inputs of the developer, in constant communication and association with public officials, and the public, a brief look at the public input process is necessary.

Every public hearing, information gathering process or workshop associated with the lengthy Otay Ranch planning process adhered to a set of rules that prescribed what the public could say and how much time could be used. The basic rules were delivered repeatedly before public input. "The public is limited to two (three or five) minutes for each speaker, fifteen minutes for speakers representing groups. Do not repeat previous information already given." This procedural dogma was employed to prevent endless repetition and make efficient use of the time set aside for public testimony. However, the effect acts to limit involvement of the public in this type of major decision because of the inherent unfocused nature of public participation when sweeping issues are involved.

The Chula Vista city administration, the City Council, the San Diego administration and the County Board of Supervisors has no mechanism that works directly to tell them what the residents think about projects like the Baldwin's Otay Ranch other than the cranky public hearing formula. Not once, since the project was first presented to the city and county back in 1988, has there been an attempt made to poll public opinion about the

matter of increasing the population of Chula Vista from about 140,000 to 250,000, with all the baggage a major population increase carries with it. But perhaps, in the final analysis, this may be of only academic concern.

The Project, As It Stands

The Otay Ranch project is one of the most exhaustively examined development projects that has been done in the region. The planning necessary to turn the concept into reality has been extensive and detailed. Barring some major financial disaster or undiscovered conceptual fault, the project will go forward, beginning with Villages 1 and 5 in the thousand acres south of Telegraph Canyon Road and centered on the Otay Lakes Road intersection. The jingle voiced by Jerry Jamriska, the Chula Vista Special Planning Projects Manager, that there will be "sticks in 96" on the Otay Ranch property might likely come true.

There are a number of steps still ahead before "sticks" can be put up in the first of the Otay Ranch villages. Presently, there are no specific plans approved for the units to be constructed there, only lot layouts. The City of Chula Vista will be involved in this process and the speed that this process goes forward will be directly related to the how quickly the city bureaucracy handles the required procedures.

Baldwin is also involved in a selection process that is related to actual construction of the residential units in the two villages. The company is soliciting other builders to help construct some of the Village 1 and 5 units, an accepted industry practice. Builders participating in 'the construction phase will be selected for their demonstrated ability to adhere to the approved plans and materials specified, thereby assuring that quality and design are uniformly maintained.

Kim Kilkenny, the project manager for the Otay Ranch project and Baldwin Village Development Vice President, indicates an unshakable commitment to the City of Chula Vista and the region. The Baldwin effort has so far cost \$20 million, an expense that is justified in the company view to produce a quality project. As it grows to-

ward completion, Kilkenny considers public acceptance of the Otay Ranch project as an absolute necessity. Baldwin, he says, wants Baldwin Company to be a good neighbor, sensitive to the community and involved in the life of the region.

How the Otay Ranch project will finally influence Chula Vista, Bonita, National City, Imperial Beach and South San Diego and the region is still in the future; the changes the project will inevitably bring, are, for the most part, conjecture. The historic message that can be distilled from the last 100 or so years is that change will reshape the face of the land and the people living on it. The Baldwin Company pledges that they will make every effort to facilitate the evolution of the communities surrounding the vast project, and so it may be. Still, in a fog shrouded morning tramping over to rolling hills of the old Rancho Otay, the wind carrying the warbling note of a distant coyote, one wonders at the price wrought by change. ☞

CV gives BEST awards to firms

The City of Chula Vista recently presented awards to businesses for beautification and helping the environment, the first annual BEST (Businesses for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow) awards at a ceremony June 6.

Chula Vista Elementary School District was awarded the CO₂ Reduction/Energy Efficiency award.

Dr. Ken Daugherty, president of the Christian Emergency Relief Teams (CERT) International was awarded the Trip Reduction award.

Teacher John Wyllie and Bonita Vista High School won the Waste Reduction award. Wyllie took over the school's recycling program three years ago and with students with severe mental and physical challenges, recycled tons of reusable materials.

Jerry Schlegel, president of InterBridge Services won the award for Toxic Use Reduction.

Old Clay Rancho NOW A Big Modern Farm

Modern "Caterpillar" tractors have played a big part in the development of Clay Rancho from a Mexican land grant to a big up-to-the-minute business institution. Ten of these powerful machines do most of the heavy work at Clay, whose history is detailed by **Clayard D. Crane, president and general manager of the San Diego Tractor & Equipment Co., Inc.**, located in San Diego. Crane did 1934-35 work at Clay's Lima bean fields, and **Thomas R. Newbery**, who is superintendent for the last seven years, has been active in maintaining this historic property.

A hundred years ago, San Diego county had 25 Mexican land grants, which were eventually recognized by the courts. El Cajon Rancho, known since 1820 as the 19th Mexican and many of the others were long ago broken up into city subdivisions and farms; the largest of all, Santa Margarita, Clay Rancho, which the distinction not only of being intact, but of being a successful 19th Century ranch, conducted along the most approved modern lines, and yet controlling an average far larger than the original Mexican land grant.

Clay Rancho, along with Jermal and Jeral, attracted the attention of some of California's prominent citizens in the early years of the eighteen hundreds, and while Jermal was chosen by the Wiley Pío Pico as one of his several homesteads, Jeral and Clay appear to have been favored by the Estallido family, who were then the lower first citizens.

All three ranches lay east of the great city of Chula Vista, between the Sweetwater valley and the Mexican boundary, and Clay adjoins the Southern western boundary of the very Rancho Santa Margarita, which the early developers of San Diego county covered National City and Chula Vista.

When the first white people came to Southern California, a large Indian village or village was found in the hills a few miles east of the mouth of San Diego Bay, but if the southern river had any real claim to the land, it had little effect on the Spanish settlers, for Clay property was granted to Dona Magdalena Estallido by Gov. Juan María Estallido (the second Mexican Governor) August 18th, while the present Don Jose Antonio Estallido, was co-owner of Clay Rancho when Pío Pico became, in 1846, and was giving to the vast sparsely settled lands of Southern California with a lavish hand, he again granted to Dona Estallido, but not until many years later—Jan. 25, 1872—was the grant finally confirmed by the United States Land Commission. According to Insurance & Trust Co., the original grant was a rectangular strip of

6,857 acres, and so it remains at this date—1944.

The Estallido family name appears in California history for many years. Jose Maria Estallido (father of Magdalena) having been an army officer at Monterey, Santa Barbara and San Diego prior to the turn of the century, according to the historian H. Bancroft. Jose Antonio Estallido, (Magdalena's brother), was Alcalde for Mayor of San Diego from 1836 to 1838, and some years later became County Treasurer. To him was granted a homestead in Old Town in 1837, and on this was erected Casa de Estallido, now preserved as Rancho's Marriage Place, one of the best known old Mexican landmarks of Southern California.

Apparently the Estallidos made their home in Old Town, their Clay being without doubt one of the largest and finest in this section of the country, and no large part of that home was ever built by them; instead a small adobe building between Upper and Lower Clay Lakes now remains, which it is said bears no resemblance to its original form, and is supposed to have been erected by the Estallidos at an early date, and may have been used by them as a hunting lodge or work and storage place. It was in the original homestead of Jermal Rancho, and is known today as the Babcock Place, because for years it was owned by F. S. Babcock, who built the dam at Upper and Lower Clay Lakes. However unimportant it may have been in the past, it serves as a connecting link between the dusty days of the past and the active present of Clay.

The Estallidos appear to have transferred their interest in both Jermal and Clay to Don J. Morgan, bank associates and from them the property came into the hands of John D. Spreckels, then to E. S. Babcock and to Hub R. Newbery, who is probably best remembered as an energetic land dealer of several decades ago.

Then into the picture came Stephen Babcock, connected with the great Genesist Copper Company. Mr. Babcock's family name is well known in California first as a winter visitor who soon became so esteemed with the climate that he commenced a series of large investments in California real estate. He bought the old Estallido home on Babcock

place) near the Clay Lakes at the Rancho del Valle, where Mr. Babcock's home was built, and in 1908 he bought a game farm of 1500 acres in San Diego county, near Vista. In 1910 he bought the Clay Rancho from Hub R. Newbery, and with that purchase he commenced redeveloping, buying numerous farm lands throughout the East, south and west.

Seven years ago, Thomas R. Newbery became his superintendent, in charge of land purchases and farm development, and five partners of the Clay Agricultural Corporation (which in the present acquisition of the old ranch) were increased to 25,000 acres, in addition to which some 4,000 acres are farmed under lease.

Mr. Birch passed on in 1940, but the property is owned by his heirs, who reside in and near Jersey City, N. J., but make frequent trips to Clay—still maintaining direct control of the land operations. The President of the company is Stephen Birch, Jr., Vice-president, Mary R. Birch and Secretary, Robert Raywell. Charles Baker, Treasurer, Phil Baker and Frank Shaw, are veteran employees of Clay.

Under the management of Mr. Newbery the rancho as developed into a great bean and grain ranch, and has been stocked with the best available stock, including Hereford cattle. A scientific feeding program is followed, and the best available cattle, in an effort to determine the effect of feeding and grain feeding on land such as Clay. The company has also cooperated with various state fairs and federal department of agriculture exhibits in seeking and developing the best Lima bean strains for this soil and climate.

At present, their 2150 acres at Lima has the best quality of beans, and have replaced older, less productive varieties. Lima beans are now producing experiments on a Ventura-Paris type that give a great premium producing a still more superior Lima bean. The company has also cooperated with officials and others in studies on the treatment of seed and the use of chemicals to overcome the mormingling pest. Interesting experiments with soil and fertilizer on farm equipment, including the use of a test of several thousand dollars of one of the first beans, a gigantic machine which can be operated easily by six men compared with a normal outfit of 60 required to handle operations on a large scale.

The headquarters of the Clay Agricultural Corporation is at the village of homes for the 30 v. 100-

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CLAY RANCHO

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OTAY RANCHO, originally 6,657 acres, has grown to 20,000, and leases additional acreage for its farming activities. Janal Rancho,

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Otay And Janal Ranchos As Brother And Sister G

This is the last in a series of articles on the Days of the Dons.

By CECIL C. MOYER

Janal and Otay were adjoining ranchos granted in 1829 to a brother and sister of the prominent Estudillo family.

Don Jose Antonio Estudillo, who built Casa de Estudillo (later better known as Ranfa's Marriage Place) in Old Town, received the 4,436-acre Janal Rancho by grant from Gov. Jose Maria Echeandia; Dona Magdalena Estudillo was given Otay Rancho, which totaled 6,657 acres.

Don Jose had held several official positions in early-day San Diego, including alcalde (mayor), juez de paz (justice of the peace) and later, county treasurer and assessor. He had eight children.

That Janal and Otay ranchos were jointly operated for many years (although their cattle carried different brands) is indicated by the fact that many old maps mark both with the name Otay. Later maps marked Janal with the name Otay Dominguez, and still later ones carried only the name Janal. Don Jose was married to Dona Maria Victoria, daughter of Don Cristobal Dominguez, grantee of the large San Pedro Rancho near Los Angeles,

but there is nothing to indicate Don Cristobal had any financial interest in the Janal.

There is no evidence now of any early-day ranch house on either the Janal or Otay. Both ranchos have changed hands several times during the years and the boundaries of both have changed as parcels of land have been bought or sold.

Today the Janal has lost its original identity and much of its size; its remaining acreage totals about 3,500, its cattle are gone and its rolling hills and valleys are now devoted to growing barley. It is called the Fenton Ranch and is owned by Emily Fenton Hunte,

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—Photo by Ed Nell

CUTTING A SWATH: Manuel Alvarez drives windrower that cuts out hay, piling it in neat rows

for hay boiler on Otay Ranch. In background is part of 100-acre field of tomatoes also grown on ranch

OTAY RANCHES

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Rancho,

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—Staff Photo by Gene Hahn

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wife of Rear Adm. Louis H. Hunte, USN, ret.

Otay Ranch today is Otay Ranch and its acreage has grown to 20,000. About 500 cattle—polled Herefords, Black Angus and Santa Gertrudis—still graze on the rancho lands, and they carry the same brand used by Dona Magdalena Estudillo more than a century ago.

Otay Ranch is owned by United Enterprises, Inc., a family corporation consisting of the heirs of Stephen Birch, a New Jersey capitalist who bought the ranch in 1936. Birch's daughter, Mary, is the wife of Patrick R. Patrick, a former wing commander in the Royal Air Force. The Patricks live at Rancho del Otay, once a part of the Janal grant but now in the Otay holdings.

All of Upper Otay Reservoir and most of Lower Otay, owned by the City of San Diego, are within the original boundaries of Janal Rancho.

Many of the rancheros a century ago had difficulty proving their rights to the huge land grants given by the lavish hands of Mexican governors before the American conquest of California. Richard F. Pourade, in his book "The Silver Dons," tells of their difficulties:

"The grand Don of San Diego, Jose Antonio Estudillo, died in 1852 at the age of 47. With him passed much of the Spanish flavor that had lingered ever since the revolution in Mexico. The grace and ease of the pastoral days were gone. His home had been a fortress in time of trouble and its chapel had kept flickering the flame of Catholic faith.

"He and his family held the adjoining ranchos of Janal and Otay, and his son, Jose G. Estudillo, went before the United States Land Commission, as did all of the Dons, to fight for the lands which had been granted to them which they thought had been guaranteed by the American invaders.

"The Land Act of 1851 made it necessary for all claimants to present their petitions for verification within two years or forfeit their rights, and as the burden of proof was placed on the Dons, they often were hard-pressed to locate the carelessly drawn titles and maps of by-gone days. Friends testified for each other as to bound-



—Photo from Historical Collection, Times Insurance & Trust Co.

OWNER: Don Jose Guadalupe Estudillo received U.S. patent to Janal grant in 1872.



HENRY G. FENTON
Also owned Janal.



—Photo by Ed Neff

they bailer on Otay Ranch. In background is part 100-acre field of tomatoes also grown on ranch.

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OTAY RANCHO

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by use and claims of squatters. The Land Commission hearings went on for 10 years, and court hearings followed upon them, until lawyer fees and court costs had eaten up much of the wealth that the land had represented."

Don Jose Gundaluppe Estudillo received a U.S. patent to the Janal grant in 1872, and in the same year his grant in Otay Rancho. Janal is pronounced Janal and is an Indian word meaning spongy ground. Otay is pronounced O-tie; it is an Indian word that means brushy.

In another of Pourade's book series, (Continued on Page G-2, Col. 1)



—Photo by Ed Neil

Alvarez drives it in neat rows

for hay boiler on Otay Ranch. In background is part of 100-acre field of tomatoes also grown on ranch.



—Photo by Ed Neil
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OTAY RANCHO



Old Otay Rancho NOW *Calif. Rained* A Big Modern Farm

Modern "Caterpillar" tractors have played a big part in the development of Otay Rancho from a Mexican land grant to a big up-to-the-minute business institution. Ten of these powerful machines do most of the heavy work at Otay, whose history is sketched by Gustav T. Gunn, president and general manager of the San Diego Tractor & Equipment Co. Inc., local "Caterpillar" distributors. The pictures show a few of these tractors as intended for the last seven years, has been active in modernizing this historic property.

A hundred years ago, San Diego county had 29 Mexican land grants, which were eventually recognized by the courts. El Cajon Rancho, Beuna Vista, Rincon del Diablo, Nacional and many of the others were long ago broken up into city subdivisions and farms; the largest of all, Santa Margarita, is now Camp Joseph Pendleton. Otay Rancho enjoys the distinction not only of being intact, but of being a successful 20th Century ranch, conducted along the most approved modern lines, and now controlling an acreage far larger than the original Mexican land grant.

Otay Rancho, along with Janal and Janal, attracted the attention of some of California's "prominent citizens" in the early years of the eighteenth century, and while Janal was chosen by the wiley Pio Pico as one of his several homesteads, Janal and Otay appear to have been favored by the Estudillo family, who were then among San Diego's first citizens. All three ranchos lie east of the present city of Guila Vista, between the Sweetwater valley and the Mexican boundary, and Otay adjoins the southwestern boundary of the vast Rancho de la Nacion, from which the early developers of San Diego county carved National City and Chula Vista.

When the first white people came to Southern California, a large Indian rancharia or village was found in the hills a few miles east of the south end of San Diego Bay, but if the aborigines ever had any legal claim to the land, it had little effect on the Spanish settlers, for Otay apparently was granted to Dona Magdalena Estudillo by Gov. Jose Maria Echeandria (the second Mexican Governor) about 1829, while her brother, Don Jose Antonio Estudillo, was concurrently granted the smaller adjoining Janal Rancho. When Pio Pico became the last of the Mexican governors in 1846, and was giving away the vast sparsely settled lands of Southern California with a lavish hand, he again granted Otay to Dona Estudillo, but not until many years later—Jan. 29, 1872—was the grant finally confirmed by the United States Land Commission. According to the records of the Union Title Insurance & Trust Co., the original grant was a rectangular tract of

6,657 acres, and so it remains at this date—1944.

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Apparently the Estudillos made their home in Old Town, their Casa being without doubt one of the largest and finest in this section of the country, and no large permanent home was ever built by them at Otay or at Janal. There is a small adobe building between Upper and Lower Otay Lakes (now modernized so that it bears no resemblance to its original state) which is supposed to have been erected by the Estudillos at an early date, and may have been used by them as a hunting lodge or week-end stopping place. It is within the original boundaries of Janal Rancho, and is known locally as the Babcock Place, because for years it was owned by E. S. Babcock, who built the dams at Upper and Lower Otay Lakes. However unimportant it may have been as a ranch house, it serves as a connecting link between the dusty pages of the past, and the active present of Otay.

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Mr. Birch and his family came to California first as winter visitors, who soon became so charmed with the climate that he commenced a series of large investments in California real estate. He bought the old Estudillo house (or Babcock

place) near the Otay Lake which he purchased a home there. He then became a game farm little consequent to his first trip to San Diego county where in 1836 he bought the Otay from Ruben Harrison, and with a nucleus he commenced spreading out, buying numerous farms throughout the East south-by-west. Seven years ago Mr. R. Newbery became his superintendent, in charge of land purchase, farm development, and the E. C. of the Otay Agricultural Co. (which is the present leg of the old ranch) were more 20,000 acres, in addition to some 4,000 acres are farmed lease.

Mr. Birch passed on in 1915 the property is owned by his wife and her son, Mr. J. N. Birch, but make frequent trips to Otay—still maintaining the Otay as their western home. President of the company is Mr. Birch, Jr., Vice-president, is Mr. Birch and Secretary, is Mr. Baker and Charles Baker, systems Baker and Frank Shane are employees of Otay.

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The headquarters of the Agricultural Corp., comprise a village of homes for the 30

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regular employees, a large mess hall, offices, mill and extensive shops where all kinds of repair work is done on their numerous pieces of farm equipment. All the heavy tractor work on the ranch is done by a fleet of ten "Caterpillar" tractors—all but three of which are Diesel models, which have given many hours of splendid service, with a minimum of upkeep expense and exceedingly low operating cost. Maintaining and operating the best equipment available is in line with the successful modernization of this ancient land grant.

Not to be confused with the Otay Rancho is the village of Otay a few miles west of the Rancho on the Chula Vista-Tijuana road, which was one of San Diego county's boom towns of the 80s, and once threatened to rival San Diego itself as a spot on the map. It boasted a large population, with a post office established in 1870, and at one time had a bank, newspaper, winery, several stores, a large hotel and two physicians, with a watch factory under construction which promised to employ 600 persons. When the boom of the 80s collapsed, Otay was deflated along with the rest of San Diego county's brilliant hopes. Many of its houses were moved up the Bay on flatboats to Coronado and San Diego, and others, including the hotel and watch factory were torn down. The flood of 1916 completed the wrecking process, and what remains of the village today is but a ghost of its old prowess.

Just south of the Otay Rancho is the Otay Mesa, and while some of its lands are now farmed by the Otay Agricultural Corpo., the Mesa never was part of any confirmed Mexican grant. Its chief interest today lies in the fact that here are raised most of the garbanzos grown in the United States. On the western edge of this Mesa, also, John J. Montgomery, a 28 year old San Diego youth, in 1883 or 1884 is said to have made the first successful glider flight in history.



Otay And Janal Ranchos Begin As Brother And Sister Grants

This is the last in a series of articles on the Dons of the Dons.

By CECIL C. MOYER

Janal and Otay were adjoining ranchos granted in 1829 to a brother and sister of the prominent Estudillo family.

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That Janal and Otay ranchos were jointly operated for many years (although their cattle carried different brands) is indicated by the fact that many old maps mark both with the name Otay. Later maps marked Janal with the name Otay Dominguez, and still later ones carried only the name Janal. Don Jose was married to Doña Maria Victoria, daughter of Don Cristobal Dominguez, grantee of the large San Pedro Rancho near Los Angeles,

but there is nothing to indicate Don Cristobal had any financial interest in the Janal.

There is no evidence now of any early-day ranch house on either the Janal or Otay. Both ranchos have changed hands several times during the years and the boundaries of both have changed as parcels of land have been bought or sold.

Today the Janal has lost its original identity and much of its size; its remaining acreage totals about 3,500, its cattle are gone, and its rolling hills and valleys are now devoted to growing barley. It is called the Fenton Ranch and is owned by Emily Fenton Hunte,



—Photo by Ed Hall

CUTTING A SWATH: Manuel Alvarez drives windrower that cuts out hay, piling it in neat rows

for hay bailer on Otay Ranch. In background is part of 100-acre field of tomatoes also grown on ranch.

wife of Rear Adm. Louis H. Hunt, USN, ret.

Otay Rancho today is Otay Ranch and its acreage has grown to 20,000. About 500 cattle—pooled Herefords, Black Angus and Santa Gertrudis—still graze on the rancho lands, and they carry the same brand used by Doña Magdalena Estudillo more than a century ago.

Otay Ranch is owned by United Enterprises, Inc., a family corporation consisting of the heirs of Stephen Birch, a New Jersey capitalist who bought the rancho in 1936. Birch's daughter, Mary, is the wife of Patrick R. Patrick, a former wing commander in the Royal Air Force. The Patricks live at Rancho del Otay, once a part of the Janal grant but now in the Otay holdings.

All of Upper Otay Reservoir and most of Lower Otay, owned by the City of San Diego, are within the original boundaries of Janal Rancho.

Many of the rancheros a century ago had difficulty proving their rights to the huge land grants given by the lavish hands of Mexican governors before the American conquest of California. Richard F. Pourade, in his book "The Silver Dons," tells of their difficulties.

"The grand Don of San Diego, Jose Antonio Estudillo, died in 1832 at the age of 47. With him passed much of the Spanish flavor that had lingered ever since the revolution in Mexico. The grace and ease of the pastoral days were gone. His home had been a fortress in time of trouble and its chapel had kept flickering the flame of Catholic faith.

"He and his family held the adjoining ranchos of Janal and Otay, and his son, Jose G. Estudillo, went before the United States Land Commission, as did all of the Dons, to fight for the lands which had been granted to them which they thought had been guaranteed by the American invaders.

"The Land Act of 1851 made it necessary for all claimants to present their petitions for verification within two years or forfeit their rights, and as the burden of proof was placed on the Dons, they often were hard-pressed to locate the carelessly drawn titles and maps of by-gone days. Friends testified for each other as to boundaries that were both vague and altered by use and claims of squatters. The Land Commission hearings went on for 10 years, and court hearings followed upon them, until lawyer fees and court costs had eaten up much of the wealth



—Photo from International Collection, The Insurance & Trust Co.

OWNER: Don Jose Guadalupe Estudillo received U.S. patent to Janal grant in 1872.

OTAY RANCHO