

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Jamboree Held on Old Land Grant**

Now that the attention of the Boy Scouts and their families is focused upon the 1953 jamboree at the Irvine Ranch at Santa Ana in Southern California, we thought it might be of interest to write a bit today of the history of that colorful early California land grant.

The large Irvine Ranch of Orange County stretches across Southern California's past and present as it spans the reaches of this vast state. It is one of the few large land-holdings of Southern California that has survived the vicissitudes and revolutionary changes of the passing generations. The ranch owed its origin to the old land-grant system of the Spanish-Mexican regime. It has now been in the possession of a single family for over 80 years and thus enjoys a continuity of ownership rare indeed in this particular portion of the state. It still retains substantially the area and boundaries established by its founder. Its written records, though not complete, are voluminous and accessible.

Dr. Robert Glass Cleland, a member of the research staff of the Huntington Library at San Marino, has written a story of the ranch from 1810 to 1950, which was published by the library last year. Dr. Cleland was brought to California as a child, reared in an old adobe, has been a student of California history for half a century, and a traveler of the state from end to end as sportsman and historian, so he is well qualified to write of this – the Irvine Ranch.

We must note first the reason for the naming of the Santa Ana Ranch. As Don Gaspar de Portola and his company of friars left San Diego to search for Monterey, they camped on the banks of a tree-lined stream, and there they experienced four horrifying earthquakes in a single day, so it seemed appropriate to Father Juan Crespi, one of the friars, to call the shallow water course the River of the Sweet Name of Jesus of the Earthquakes. Out of respect for St. Anne, the Mother of the Virgin, however, the hard beaten soldiers, named the stream El Rio de Santa Anna, and by that name it is still known.

The valley of Santa Ana, between the mountains which bear the same name, and the sea, is one of the richest agricultural regions in California, and is also the site of the great landed estate, known for more than eighty

years, as the Santa Ana Ranch. It is 22 miles long by nine miles wide and includes in excess of a hundred thousand acres.

Dr. Cleland writes that at the time of the Spanish occupation in California, there were approximately 250,000 Indians living in the province, a figure that represents about a fourth of the entire population of what is now continental United States when Columbus discovered the new world.

As early as 1801, Jose Antonio Yorba, a Catalan volunteer in the Portola expedition of 1769, and his father-in-law, Juan Pablo Grijalva, an Anza colonist of 1776, began to pasture their livestock on the land later included in the Santa Ana grant, without seeking formal permission from the governor for the privilege. Grijalva died in 1806. Three years later, Yorba addressed a communication to the provincial governor, Jose de Joaquin Arrillaga, requesting confirmation of the grant, for which, he said, Grijalva had applied prior to his death.

Governor Arrillaga approved Yorba's request, July 1, 1810, and ordered Yorba and his nephew given possession of the land.