

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Other Early Ranches

Rincon de la Puente del Monte means the corner of the wood or hill. The rancho by that name and on which the town of Gonzales now is located, was granted to Teodora Gonzales in 1836 when he became the owner of 15,218 acres. This ranch extends from the Salinas River to the mountains eastward and takes in all that section in and around the town.

San Vicente Rancho is another well-known land grant in southern Monterey County. It contains 19,979 acres and was granted to F. Soto and S. Munras in 1835. The state highway from Gonzales to the Soledad bridge passes down the center of this grant, which extends almost to Metz. The Salinas River is a boundary on the west and the mountains on the east. This large ranch is still in the hands of the descendants of the original owners. The ranch is named after St. Vincent.

Jose T. Castro was granted the Sausal, 10,241 acres in 1834. The name means willow grove. The proper spelling would be Sauzal, so some authors declare. This large grant lies northeast of Salinas and extends along the edge of the town from the Catholic cemetery and thence to the Gabilan mountains. The ranch house is situated about a mile from the county hospital and was one of the finest types of old California architecture hereabouts. Today it is almost a complete ruin. The old gate with its peep hole to see who stands without the portal is no longer in place, the old bar for locking the gate at night against intruders was there a couple of years ago but now seem to have disappeared. On our former visit the original tiles were still on the building and the hair was still on the rawhide which bound the roof in order to hold the handmade tile, but today these too are hard to find in the ruins.

The long wooden ranch table and two benches of corresponding length from this Sausal ranch, also known as the Sherwood ranch, are interesting additions to the furnishing of the Stevenson House in Monterey.

The United States patent to this ranch was confirmed to Jacob P. Leese, one of the outstanding Americans who settled in California. Leese figured in the civil and political history of the state. He was a native of Ohio and came to California as a trader in 1836. He built the first house in San Francisco on Grant avenue between

Washington and Jackson streets, now in Chinatown. The Daughters of the American Revolution placed a marker at the location a number of years ago.

Leese married Rosalie Vallejo. Their daughter Rosalie was the first American child born in Yerba Buena. Upon her death a few years later she was buried in the Catholic cemetery in Monterey. They had two sons, Jacob and David, both of whom were well known in Monterey County.

Las Salinas, 4413 acres, was granted to G. Espinosa in 1836. It is situated across the Salinas River from Blanco and extends to the sand dunes on Monterey Bay. The name was given to it because it bordered for a long distance on the Salinas River, or salt marshes.

Rincon de la Salinas numbering 2,220 acres was granted to Christina Delgado in 1833. This ranch extended along the Salinas River from the Twin bridges or Neponset, near Castroville, to the ocean and includes all the rich land on the river bottom. Rincon means a corner and in this case, the ocean and the river form the corner whereby it gets its name, literally the corner of the salt marshes.

In another old clipping we have found this notation: "Miss Ellen Fink, (then County Librarian, now retired and living in Pacific Grove) has discovered that Neponset is the name of a coast village in Massachusetts, but how did the name get to this Indian village near the mouth of the Salinas River?"

Los Coches, 8,794 acres, was granted to Maria J. Soberanes in 1841. After crossing the Salinas River at Soledad on the road to King City one passes through Los Coches Rancho. The old adobe ranch house still stands at the fork of the road where the main highway leads south and the other up the Arroyo Seco River. For years this was the stage station and post office until the railroad reached Soledad. The name means "the pig."

Another Soberanes rancho was the Los Ojitos which consisted of 8,900 acres in 1842 when it was granted to M. Soberanes. This ranch extends along the San Antonio River near Jolon. In 1846 Soberanes took an active part in the battle of Salinas on November 16 and as a result when Fremont and his men marched south to Los Angeles they stopped long enough at Los Ojitos rancho to pillage the place and wreck the buildings. After Soberanes put in a claim for \$40,000 damages done and after many years of court fighting he was awarded \$42.

The name Los Ojitos actually means “little eyes” but in this case it means “little springs.”