

Chapter II – THE BUILDING OF CAPISTRANO

Aguilars, Early and Later

The name of Isidro Aguilar, *el maestro albanil*, is mentioned in a letter dated 13 November 1796 to Governor Borica from Father Vincente Fuster requesting permission to begin building the Great Stone Church at San Juan Capistrano (Schuetz-Miller 1994:51) [original is in Santa Barbara Mission Archives Library]. It was this man from Culiacan who supervised the building of the church from 1796 until his death. "On February 21, 1803, Fr. Lasuen writes to the viceroy and to the College that the Mission of San Juan Capistrano had suffered a mishap in the death of the master mason who had come up from Mexico" (Engelhardt 1922:40). No record of his burial has been found in the records of the Missions San Diego, San Juan Capistrano or San Gabriel. The records of Mission San Luis Rey are lost. Perhaps he was on loan to that Mission to consult about its new construction projects at the time of his death. The magnificent structure in which Isidro played such an important part was completed in 1806 after his death. Because of its grandness and overpowering beauty, it earned Mission San Juan Capistrano the title of "Jewel of the Missions."

The days of this beautiful church were short, however. Disaster struck on 8 December 1812 during the celebration of the first Holy Mass of that day. An earthquake with two violent shocks occurred and the church collapsed. Most of the worshippers died. The great work of Isidro Aguilar had become a ruin.

No attempt was made to rebuild and the sanctuary portion still stands much as it was then. The congregation returned to services in the chapel that had been in use before. This chapel, built in the earliest days of the Mission, is the only one surviving in which Father Serra



Msn San Juan
Capistrano, 1776



Msn San Diego
de Alcalá, 1769



Msn San Luis Rey
de Francia, 1798



Msn San Gabriel
Arcángel, 1771

conducted mass. It is therefore usually known as "Father Serra's Old Church", or just "Father Serra's Church."



Great Stone Church Ruins about 1850 – Mission San Juan Capistrano
(Courtesy of Bancroft Library)

The Aguilar name again appeared permanently in Alta California with a young *soldado de cuera*, Rosario Aguilar of Mission Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, Baja California, which was about 75 miles north of Loreto. He had been born in Baja California about 1786, the son of the renowned *mayordomo* Luis Aguilar and his second wife Loreta Talamantes. (Luis had come with Portolá but returned to Loreto.) Rosario enlisted in the military service of the Presidio of Loreto, the first of the five Presidios of the Californias. (See map, Chap I.)

Rosario Aguilar was recorded as a *padrino* in 1808 at the Mission Santa Rosalía de Mulegé, where Lorenza Morillo was also listed as a *madrina* in 1808. He probably married Lorenza there about this time. This mission was closed about 1810 and the young couple came to the San Diego garrison by 1811. Rosario Aguilar and Lorenza Morillo had nine known children:

Carlota, buried as an infant at the San Diego Presidio 26 November 1811;
Blas, baptized 3 February 1812 Mission San Diego de Alcalá², married first 18 January 1831 Mission San Gabriel Arcángel (de Temblores)³ to Maria Antonia Villa, married second about 1846 probably Mission San Luis Rey de Francia⁴ to Antonia Gutiérrez, buried 28 December 1885 Mission San Juan Capistrano⁵;
María Antonia Inéz, baptized 20 April 1814 San Diego Presidio, married 22 February 1830 San Diego to José Severiano Alipas, son of Juan Nepomuceno and Gertrudis Ybarra, buried 8 December 1862 Capistrano;
María Nieves, born about 1817 San Luis Rey, married José Antonio Serrano, son of Leandro, about 1836, living in 1862;
María Benedicta, baptized 24 March 1819 San Diego Presidio, no further record;
Juan José, baptized 28 November 1821 at San Gabriel, married first Mariana Alvarado about 1858 and second Modesta Yorba on 9 February 1868 Capistrano, buried 2 May 1887 Capistrano;
Anastacia, baptized 22 January 1824 San Diego, married Bernardo Pedro Verdugo, son of Leonardo, about 1846, buried 1 August 1913 Capistrano;
Pilar, born about 1826, was living in 1851 with her sister Nieves, probably married Pedro Valenzuela 14 November 1854 Capistrano, living in 1864; and
Ramón, baptized 29 August 1828 San Diego Presidio and died in 1846 at Rancho Pauma.

Rosario was extremely proud of his eldest son, Blas, only nineteen in 1831 and already showing the talents of a good administrator as well as the attributes of an expert horseman and vaquero. That year would see the handsome young man serving as *mayordomo* for Mission San Diego (Bancroft 1963, XIX-688). Probably in the style of other Californios, Rosario and his eldest son dressed in sartorial splendor. The mode of the day for such *gente de razon* included a broad-brimmed hat, dark colored, with an ornamented band around the

²Mission San Diego de Alcalá, hereafter within the vital listings of the children, will be referred to as "San Diego".

³Mission San Gabriel Arcángel (de Temblores), hereinafter within the vital listings of the children, will be referred to "San Gabriel".

⁴Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, hereinafter within the vital listings of the children, will be referred to as "San Luis Rey".

⁵Mission San Juan Capistrano, hereinafter within the vital listings of the children, will be referred to as "Capistrano".

crown. A short mess-type jacket of print or silk covered a snowy white shirt. Trousers hung straight to the mid-calf and ended in a large flare. Their material usually consisted of fine broadcloth or velveteen. The ever-present red sash performed the triple function of supplying an added dash, support for the trousers and a substitute for pockets. Around the shoulders was the most important item of apparel, a beautiful dark blue or black broadcloth cloak. These cloaks with their rich velvet linings denoted rank and wealth, and therefore their owners placed much value on them.

The small size of the settlements of San Diego, San Luis Rey and Capistrano meant that everyone knew everyone. This culminated in marriages of the Aguilar sons and daughters with many of the other founding families: Serrano, Yorba, Gutiérrez, Verdugo, Alvarado, Villa and Alipas. While the future held official honors for the Aguilars, it also held sadness. Between 1830 and 1844, Rosario lost his wife, Lorenza. He never remarried. He served in San Diego as *juez de paz* in 1841, and at that time he and his son Blas obtained land at San Juan Capistrano. Rosario moved to San Juan Capistrano about then and in 1843 and 1844 served as *juez de paz* for that area (Bancroft 1963, XIX:688).

Blas Aguilar, on the other hand, established his residence at the ranch of Ygancio Palomares, Rancho San José (near the present city of Pomona), where he lived from 1838. Tradition has it that he followed his father to San Juan Capistrano in 1843; certainly he was there in 1846 since the *padron* of that year records his presence. Blas was appointed *alcalde* of San Juan Capistrano in 1848 (Bancroft 1963, XIX:688).

In 1935 Alfonso Yorba reported that the Casa Tejada was the home of Blas Aguilar until his death in 1885. Yorba further stated that Blas had purchased it from Zeferino, the last Indian chanter of the Mission.⁶ Zeferino was one of the few Indians granted houselots in 1841 (Engelhardt 1920:141) and in all probability it was some of the earliest construction, either a soldier's quarters or neophyte housing. The original small structure was greatly expanded, the central wing is long gone, but Casa Tejada formed part of the south wing. In 1935 Manuel Manríquez, grandson of Blas Aguilar, maintained it in its original condition but it has since been demolished. The newer portion, Casa de Esperanza, that was originally the north wing, in 1935 was in the possession of another grandson, Juan Aguilar, and still exists⁷.

Blas married first María Antonia Villa, who had been born about 1816 probably at San Gabriel, the daughter of Francisco Villa and Eulalia Soto. She was buried 9 September 1839 at San Gabriel. Blas and Antonia Villa had two known children but there may have been others who did not survive:

⁶Yorba, Alfonso. 1935, HSSC, Vol. XVII, p. 9.

⁷Ibid; pp. 8-9.

José María, baptized 27 September 1832 San Diego, but whether he survived has not been established; and

Inocencio, born about 1834 San Luis Rey, married first María Francisca Carolina Ramírez 15 October 1868 Capistrano, married second Arcadia Yorba on 5 September 1872 Capistrano, died in Clove Valley, Nevada and buried Capistrano 15 October 1901. His first wife, Francisca Ramírez, was born about 1848, daughter of Vicente and María del Rosario Cañedo. She was buried 29 April 1870 Capistrano, apparently leaving no children. His second wife, Arcadia Yorba, was born in 1850 of Miguel and Josefa Bermudez. She died in Winnemucca, Nevada and was buried 19 April 1893 Capistrano.

The four known children of Inocencio and Arcadia were:

Juana Adelfrida, baptized 23 October 1873 Capistrano, married Ramón Rios 26 March 1894 Capistrano, son of Gregorio, buried 27 December 1898 Capistrano;

Crecencio Blas, baptized 19 April 1875 Capistrano, living in 1884;

María Josefa Gertrudis, baptized 12 November 1877 Capistrano, buried 22 December 1888 Capistrano; and

Miguel Anselmo, baptized 19 November 1878 Capistrano.

Inocencio had, in addition, at least five *hijos naturales* of whom nothing further is known.

Blas Aguilar's second marriage was to Antonia Gutiérrez, the daughter of Tomás Gutiérrez and Antonia Cota. No record of their marriage has been found, but she is listed as his wife in the 1846 padron of Capistrano and their first known child was baptized early in 1847. Blas was buried in San Juan Capistrano 28 December 1885. His widow, María Antonia Gutiérrez de Aguilar survived him by eleven years. Blas Aguilar and Antonia Gutiérrez had eight known children, as follows:

Salvadora Romana, baptized 18 April 1847 Capistrano, married 6 January 1869 Capistrano to José Dolores Yorba, son of José Antonio Yorba and Catalina Manríquez, living in 1887;

María Lorenza Apolinaria, baptized 21 November 1849 Capistrano, married Adolfo Manríquez on 20 February 1875;

(José Supercano de Jesus del) Rosario, baptized 22 March 1851 Capistrano, buried unmarried 28 November 1884 at Capistrano;

José Doroteo, baptized 14 February 1853 Capistrano, of whom there is no further record;

Margarita, baptized 7 April 1855 Capistrano, married Macario Rivera 22 November 1871 Capistrano, buried 7 August 1877 Capistrano. Two of their children, Macario Rivera, baptized 4 May 1874 Capistrano, and María Balveneda, baptized 13 June 1876 Capistrano, were raised by their grandparents Blas and Antonia;

Benjamin Nacario, baptized 3 January 1857 Capistrano, buried 2 February 1890 Capistrano, single;

María Rosa, baptized 10 October 1858 Capistrano, buried 23 December 1862 Capistrano at the height of the smallpox epidemic; and

Jesus, born about 1860, married Balbaneda Ruiz about 1887.

Juan L. Aguilar, born about 1892, son of Jesus, took great interest and pride in the family history and ancestral traditions and had visions of turning the remaining ten rooms of the old Hacienda Aguilar (now known as Casa de Esperanza) into a museum. He filled its rooms with family heirlooms and early California memorabilia⁸. His ambitions, however, were not to be realized. The year 1937 brought the deaths of his father Jesus, his mother Balbaneda, his brother Blas C., and finally Juan himself.

In 1846, a tragic event which had an impact upon the Aguilar family occurred at Rancho Pauma, located in a valley about forty miles east of San Juan Capistrano. Rosario's daughter, Nieves, had become the wife of José Antonio Serrano. They lived at Rancho Pauma, which had been granted in 1843 to her husband José Antonio and her brother Juan José Aguilar by Governor Micheltorena. What happened there between 8 and 12 December 1846 has become known in California history as the "Pauma Massacre." The story as it has been told is:

On the eve of the events which were to ensue, the ranch seemed even better protected than usual. A group of Californians, including Serrano and Aguilar, returned to Rancho Pauma after fighting the Americans at San Pasqual. Shortly after arriving, however, Don José and Don Juan heard rumors of an expected Indian uprising at the Serrano ranch at Pala. Concerned, they left that afternoon for that Indian *asistencia*. Young Jesus Serrano accompanied his father and uncle. In the evening those remaining at Pauma retired.

⁸Ibid, p. 8.

That night a knock was heard at the door and a call heard outside. José María Alvarado recognized the voice as that of Manuelito Cota, chief of the Luiseño Indians of Pauma Valley. Expecting Manuelito to be friendly as usual - perhaps even expecting news of the uprising - José opened the door. In rushed a group of Indians to overpower the sleepy Californians. All were taken to Kupa, known as Aqua Caliente (later Warner's Ranch). With the exception of one who was shot, all the victims met death by lances heated in the Indian council fire followed by savage mutilation. (Saddleback Ancestors 1969:13).

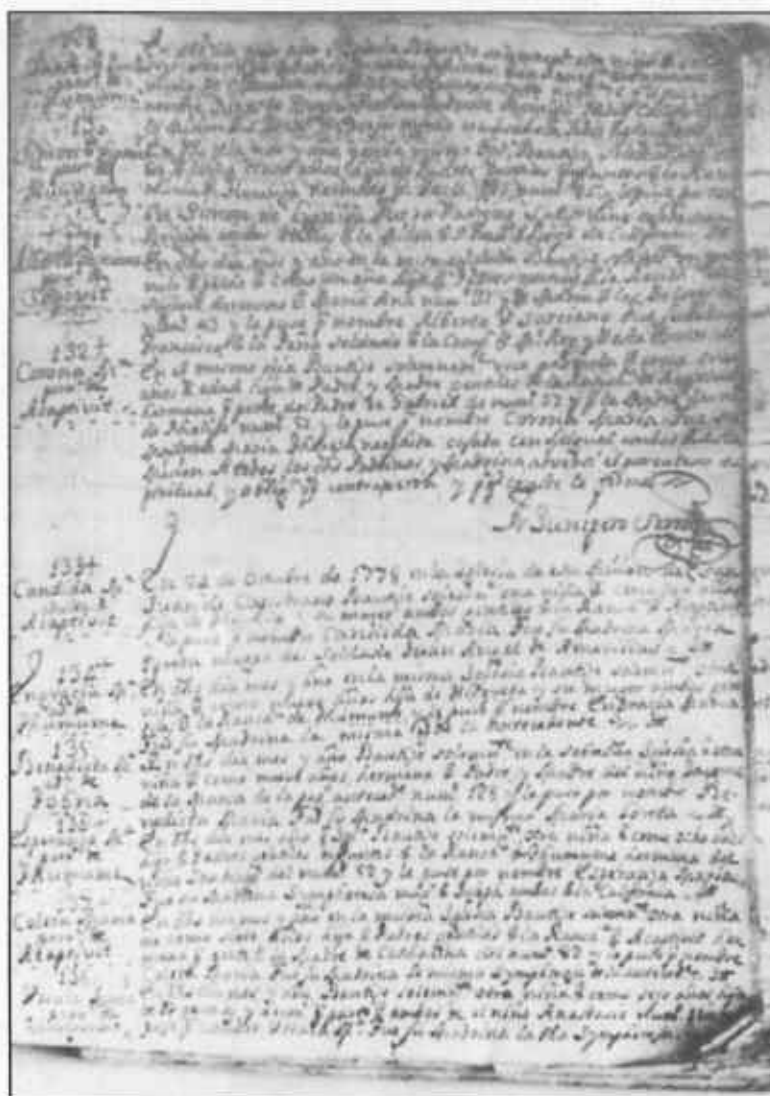
Among the casualties were Manuel Serrano (José Antonio's brother), Santos Alipas (his nephew) and Ramón Aguilar, the youngest child of Rosario Aguilar. At least these are the tales told in later years, and recorded by Marjorie Tisdale Wolcott, when she published the diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes (Wolcott 1929:285-287). Dr. John S. Griffin claimed in his journal for December 1846 that the "Pauma Massacre" was an attempt to conceal the number of casualties that the Californios suffered at the Battle of San Pasqual (Ames 1942:341). One must wonder, if all were killed, who reported that Manuelito knocked at the door and José María Alvarado opened it. Nonetheless this story, provable or not, is part of our folklore of life in Old California.

Wedding Bells for the Gutiérrez' and Montañeros

Gutiérrez, master carpenter, was mentioned as present in 1797 at San Juan Capistrano to make looms. He has been credited with roofing most of the buildings in the mission during the beginning years of the century, although no clear evidence has been found. This is a reference to Manuel Gutiérrez, born about 1743 in Santander, Spain. The earliest record of his presence in Alta California was at Mission Buenaventura in 1787 and by 1804, he resided in Los Angeles. He was buried unmarried in the Los Angeles Plaza Church Cemetery on 29 August 1840 (Schuetz-Miller 1994:74).

The Gutiérrez name did not again appear in San Juan Capistrano until the 1840's. Tomás Gutiérrez had been born about 1783 at the Real de Santa Ana, Baja, the son of José María Gutiérrez and María Tomasa Sasueta. On 7 September 1817 at San Gabriel, Tomás married María Antonia Cota, who had been baptized 10 April 1798 at San Fernando Rey de España⁹, the daughter of Mariano Cota and Ygnacia Rivera of Santa Barbara. Tomás Gutiérrez and Antonia had the following known children:

⁹Mission San Fernando Rey de España, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "San Fernando".



Page from Mission San Juan Capistrano Baptismal Record Book
With Signature of Father Junipero Serra, 1778
(Saddleback Ancestors, 1969)

María Ygnacia Petra, buried 12 July 1818 San Gabriel;
Pedro José María, buried 9 August 1818 San Gabriel (probably twin of above);
Josefa, born about 1819 probably San Gabriel, married about 1834 probably San
Luis Rey to José María Montaña, died between 1846 and 1851;
José María, baptized 21 August 1821 San Gabriel, buried 22 September 1822 San
Gabriel;
Maria Demetria, baptized 24 December 1823 San Gabriel, no further record;
María Antonia, born about 1825, married Blas Aguilar about 1846;
Luis de los Animas, baptized September 1829 Los Angeles Plaza Church¹⁰, living
in 1846;
Maria Ygnacia, born about 1831, married Gregorio Rios about 1857, living in
1871;
Francisco, born about 1835, buried 21 August 1876 Capistrano;
Petra, born about 1838, married Salvador Bermudez 11 April 1853 Capistrano;
Mariana, born about 1840, married Francisco Garcia 22 May 1855 Capistrano,
buried 26 July 1858 Capistrano, in childbirth; and
José Antonio Ramon, baptized 4 March 1844 Plaza, probably buried 27 November
1862 Capistrano.

Josefa, born about 1819, married José María Montaña who had come to California as
a member of the Mazatlán Volunteers. There were three known Montaña children:

Apolonia, born about 1835, probably San Luis Rey, married first Francisco
Cañedo 31 January 1853 Capistrano, married second Juan Pablo Serrano 28
June 1873 Capistrano, married third Isidoro Simard 22 April 1880
Capistrano, buried 2 January 1917 Capistrano;
María de Resurrección, born about 1837, married José de Jesus Godines 24
February 1852 Capistrano, buried 1 January 1863 Capistrano; and
Bruno; born about 1839, living in 1851.

¹⁰Los Angeles Plaza Church will hereinafter be referred to in the listings of the children as "Plaza". Its official name was *La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles, Maria Santissima de Porciuncula* (The Church of Our Lady of the Angels, Holiest Mary of Porciuncula). Porciuncula was the original name of the Los Angeles River and the town was called Porciuncula in the early records. The mother house of the Franciscans in Italy was in the town of Porciuncula.

José María Montaña was buried 7 April 1851, and Josefa probably before then. In any case by 1851, the three Montaña children were living with their grandparents, Tomás Gutiérrez and Antonia Cota.

In her later years Apolonia gave an excellent description of her wedding as related in *Capistrano Nights*, which was, no doubt, typical of the California marriages of the time. It was held in Father Serra's old church on 31 January 1853.

There were many people there at the wedding; they came from far up the province, from Monterey and Santa Barbara and down near San Diego. The marriage took place in the old church, the one back of the mission which you must pass through the *zaguan* to reach - Father Serra's church, you know. In the doorway of the church the padre met us and asked the first questions: "Francisco, wilt thou take Polonia here present for thy lawful wife according to the rite of our Holy Mother, the Church?" Then he asked me the same, and then we went further into the church and joined hands. As soon as we did that the guns and small cannon that the men had got ready just outside the door went off, almost to deafen us, and the smoke came rolling into the church. And then we went up to the altar and mass was said, and we knelt under a large belt of flowers. Over my dress I had a white mantle of very fine silk, which covered my head also and hung down before my face. The only flowers I wore were three white roses in a row on the right side of my head. As we knelt we held large wax candles all covered with flowers. Six girls wearing crowns of white flowers stood with me and six with Francisco. For eight days there was merrymaking and feasting and then all returned to their homes (Saunders 1930:16-17).

Apolonia also related to Father O'Sullivan the following:

Ay, padre, when I was married to Francisco, my first husband, I was very young. Padre Rosales was then at the Mission, and Don Juan Forster and his family lived in it too. Francisco was a servant to Don Juan and lived in the adobe house where Jesus Aguilar lives now. Doña Ysidora, the wife of Don Juan, said to me, "Now, Polonia, when at the ceremony Francisco puts the three *reales* into your hand and says, "I give thee these *reales* as a sign of marriage," and you say, "I receive these *reales* as a sign of marriage," whatever happens be sure you do not let them fall; be sure to hold them tight." Well, during the ceremony, just as he gave them into my hand, Francisco's little brother who was standing near gave my hand a toss with his and I dropped the *reales*! It was an ill sign, padre, for did not poor Francisco die? (Saunders 1930:15-16)

"Francisco" was Francisco Cañedo, baptized at Capistrano 5 January 1830, the son of José María Cañedo and Rosa Rios, and would have been twenty-three, while Apolonia would have been about seventeen. The word for servant in Spanish "*serbiente*" meant much more than we think of as a servant, usually an employee who was a skilled craftsman. Francisco did indeed die. He was buried at Capistrano on 5 December 1870, at the age of forty after nearly seventeen years of marriage. The ill luck was that they had no children. On 28 June 1873 Apolonia married a second time to Juan Pablo Serrano, son of José Antonio, and widower of Brigida Rios. This marriage did not last long as he was buried less than two years later on 11 April 1875. She married a third time on 22 April 1880 to the widower Isidoro Simard from France. He was buried 28 Mar 1912 at Capistrano. Her death is recorded 2 January 1917, aged about ninety under the name Polonia Simard.

It is related among the notes of Father St. John O'Sullivan, who was the resident priest at the Mission in 1910, that Doña Polonia was a ceaseless and tireless worker for the Mission during the time it was without a priest. She was the official midwife of the village and was also "Captain of the Pueblo", meaning that she guided and planned the regimen of the little ones in their duties and responsibilities within the church. She was affectionately known by the villagers as "The Pied Piper of Capistrano," so great was the devotion and love of the children for her.

Apolonia Montaña's younger sister, María de la Resurrección, was married nearly a year before her sister on 24 February 1852 also at Capistrano to José de Jesus Godines. María de la Resurrección was buried at Capistrano 1 January 1863, another victim of the smallpox epidemic. The youngest Montaña child was Bruno, who was living with his grandfather in 1851, but no further record has been found.

Of Tomás Gutiérrez, we know that he was buried 5 July 1855 in the Cemetery of San Juan Capistrano, and that his widow survived him. The "Montanez Adobe", which was the home of Apolonia Montaña, still stands in the historic district of San Juan Capistrano. It is now maintained as a museum. This may have been the house lot granted to her grandfather Tomás Gutiérrez. Unfortunately the name has been corrupted from "Montaña's" to "Montanez", and the story related that Montanez was Apolonia's first husband, not her own maiden name.

La Casa de los Rios

The construction of the Great Stone Church was begun twenty years after the founding of Mission San Juan Capistrano and it lasted only six years after its completion. Two years before beginning the Great Stone Church, the padres undertook a less ambitious construction project, but one that would last much longer, indeed over two hundred years until the present day. The population of converted Indians had been growing steadily, and the padres felt it desirable to provide more substantial housing for their neophyte families close to the mission, rather than the scattered tule huts in various *rancherías*.

In 1794 forty small adobe houses were built in a row, with dirt floors and tule roofs. The plans included the intention to reroof these houses with roof tile as time and labor permitted. Two of these 1794 adobes still stand, the Montanez Adobe as a museum and La Casa de los Rios. The enduringness of this construction is demonstrated by the fact that the Rios Adobe is still a residence.

Who might have first occupied these small adobes? The first baptism recorded at Capistrano was 19 December 1776. A little less than two years later an Indian youth of about 17 years with the native name variously recorded as Uruejanut or Triclonut had taken enough instruction to be baptized on 29 October 1778 with the Christian name of Roqué. Five days later a twenty year old woman, with the Indian name of Anathomel, on 3 November was baptized with the name of Helena. One of the earliest entries in *El Libro de Matrimonios*, #36, records their marriage on 7 January 1779. On 29 May 1784, their son Urbano was baptized. Surely by 1794 Roqué and Helena would have had a high priority on the list of neophyte families for the new housing and probably were granted one.

Local Indian practice was for couples of about the same age to marry in their mid-teens, and the Church did not oppose this custom. Urbano, son of Roqué and Helena, at the age of 17 was married on 23 May 1801 to María Hospicia, a daughter of unconverted Indians, and probably brought his bride to the adobe in which he had lived since he was ten. There was born his namesake Urbano, baptized 29 December 1806.

This younger Urbano was married in 1823 to Magdalena, whose Indian name was Castenseguininam, the daughter of Nicostrato and Crispiniana. Nicostrato had been born about 1767, and was baptized 7 August 1783 and Crispiniana born about 1781, and was baptized 15 March 1793. They were married 4 January 1802; she being buried 9 September 1812 and he on 13 March 1824. The children of Nicostrato and Crispiniana were:

Ignacio, baptized 31 July 1803, buried seven days later;

Dionicia, baptized 10 October 1805, buried 6 February 1806;

Magdalena, baptized 19 April 1808 Capistrano, married Urbano 19 August 1823 Capistrano; and

Dionicio, baptized 12 January 1812, still living in 1840.

Urbano and Magdalena had only one known child before Urbano was buried 6 April 1827. Jacoba was baptized 29 November 1824 at the Mission San Juan Capistrano and there she married on 31 May 1841 Ramón Silvas. He had been baptized 23 October 1814 at the Mission San Diego, son of José Antonio Silvas and Clara Cañedo. Ramón was granted one of the San Juan Capistranoouselots in 1841.

Magdalena never remarried, but established a long standing relationship with Silvério Rios, by whom she had at least seven children in spite of Father Zalvidea's (Engelhardt 1922:125), railings, censure, and attempts at punishment.

In June, 1840, Dionisio, an emancipated Indian of San Juan Capistrano demanded that his sister, Magdalena, who also had been emancipated and who, on account of misdemeanors, had been locked up by Fr. Zalvidea, be set at liberty. On being notified of this demand, by the *Prefect* of Los Angeles, Fr. Zalvidea replied that the woman had been leading a dissolute life; that, since she was a widow, she had had six children; that her youngest child was but two months old; that he had tried in vain to reform her; and that for this reason he had ordered her to be locked up. After reading this report of the missionary, the *prefect* gave orders that Silvério (apparently the fellow with whom Magdalena had consorted) appear before the second Justice of the Peace. The latter reproved him for living with another woman and neglecting his lawful wife and then commanded that he either return to his lawful wife or take a punishment. The woman was not permitted to return to San Juan Capistrano¹¹.

In spite of being forbidden to return, in 1841 the civil authorities granted Magdalena one of theouselots in Capistrano in which to raise her growing Rios family (Engelhardt 1922:141).

Silvério Rios, by whom Magdalena had so many children, was the eldest child of Feliciano Rios and Catarina Garcia-Romero. Catarina, baptized 27 November 1779 at San Diego, was the daughter of Felipe Garcia-Romero and María del Rosario Marquéz. Felipe had been born about 1748 Guadalajara, Jalisco, the son of José Antonio Garcia and Petrona Romero. He had come as a master blacksmith and armorer on the *Santiago* arriving in San Diego on 13 March 1774, bringing his mother with him. As there was another Felipe Garcia there, he variously used the name of Garcia-Romero and just Romero. There he married

¹¹Engelhardt, 1922, Vol. IV pp 524-528, references this as "Santiago Argüello, on July 25, 1840 in Cal. Arch., Dep. St. Pap., Angeles, Decrees, Dispatches, etc."

on 7 November 1778 Rosario Marquéz, daughter of Salvador Marquéz and María de la Luz. Both Felipe and his bride Rosario were mulattoes. Rosario was buried at San Diego 18 December 1813, and Felipe at San Carlos 17 March 1817.

Juan Feliciano Rios had been born about 1768 in Tepic, Nayarit, the son of Juan Luis and María Ygnacia Realá. He appears as a *soldado de cuera* at the San Diego Presidio as early as 1790. There he courted and married María Catarina de San Antonio Garcia-Romero on 15 August 1793. As with so many early Californian marriages, the bride was very young - still three months short of her fourteenth birthday. Feliciano Rios' first seven children were all born and baptized at San Diego between 1794 and 1807. By 1810, he had retired from the military life and moved to the Pueblo of Los Angeles, where their eighth child was born. At the time of his death on 14 January 1813, Feliciano was the *mayordomo* of the San Gabriel Mission. Catarina Garcia-Romero then returned to her home and family in San Diego, where their last son Severino was born posthumously. Catarina married a second time to Anicleto Zabaleta on 2 July 1816. After several children by him, she was buried 14 February 1827 at San Diego. Feliciano's and Catarina's known children were:

- Silverio Antonio Juan, baptized 22 June 1794 San Diego, married Juana Barreras 22 January 1815 San Diego, buried 20 July 1872 Capistrano;
- Juan José de la Cruz, baptized 24 July 1796 San Diego, living in 1812, became a *soldado de cuera*;
- José María Gregorio, baptized 2 December 1798 San Diego, buried 22 July 1810 San Gabriel;
- Soledad, baptized 26 April 1801 San Diego, married first José María López 11 September 1814 San Diego, married second Juan Dolores Rodríguez 16 November 1817 San Diego, buried 3 January 1889 Capistrano;
- José Santiago Sabino, baptized 1 January 1803 San Diego, married Isabel Uribes 11 March 1822 San Gabriel, buried 4 April 1877 Capistrano;
- (José Antonio) Valentín, baptized 22 February 1805 San Diego, married Nieves López 29 November 1826 San Diego, living in 1844 in Capistrano;
- María de la Luz Nestora, baptized 28 February 1807 San Diego, married Rafael Cañedo 11 November 1821 San Diego Presidio, buried 17 August 1860 Plaza;
- Rosa, baptized 9 July 1810 San Gabriel, married José María Cañedo 13 September 1829 Capistrano, living in 1851; and
- Severiano, baptized 29 August 1813 San Diego, married María Primitiva (*neofita*) 7 September 1834 Capistrano, buried 2 January 1853 Capistrano.

The eldest son of Feliciano Rios, Silvério, married Juana Barreras in 1815. She had been baptized at Mission Purísima on 12 September 1794, the daughter of Macedonio Barreras and Nicolasa Olivas. Like his father, Silvério enlisted in the army as a *soldado de cuera* in the Company of the Presidio of San Diego, and seems to have been stationed both there and in Capistrano intermittently. The burial of a child in 1818 is the first record of him in Capistrano. Silvério had risen to the rank of corporal by 1828. Sometime after that Silvério retired from the military and took up residence on the Rancho Santa Ana. The children of Silvério and Juana were:

Juan Bautista, baptized 17 December 1814 at San Diego, buried 26 December 1814 San Diego Presidio;

José Irenio, baptized 7 April 1816 at the San Diego Presidio, buried 14 January 1818 at Capistrano;

Juan, baptized 11 February 1819 San Diego in danger of death;

José Antonio, baptized 3 November 1820 Capistrano, married María Rosario Ruíz in the mid-1850's;

Francisco Xavier, baptized 5 December 1823 San Diego and confirmed at San Gabriel in 1831, but he does not appear in the records again;

María Petra Fulgenia, baptized 29 April 1826 San Diego, living in 1836;

Cipriano Lugardo, baptized 24 September 1828 San Diego, living in 1836;

María (Juana), baptized 25 January 1831 Capistrano, married Domingo Yorba 12 May 1845 San Gabriel, buried 1 October 1896 Capistrano; and

María Ignacia Xista, baptized 1 April 1836 Capistrano, living in 1851.

After the death of Feliciano Rios, Silvério as eldest son assumed the responsibilities of head of the family. Part of his responsibilities would be to host dances. If the dance happened to take place at the same time a trading ship lay anchored in the nearby harbor, or a rodeo was held, or a wedding occurred, not only the local neighbors and relatives would attend, but visitors from the ranchos for miles around. No invitations were issued since all were welcome. With a little imagination, one would hear the sounds of violins and Spanish guitars. Drawing closer, one would see a mass of people of all ages. The very old ladies would be seated in a row, resplendent in their black dresses, so garbed because they were almost perpetually in mourning for some departed loved one. The custom of continually wearing black put the ladies at a disadvantage. Males were more fortunate in their funereal attire. Convention only required them to wear a small, crepe arm-band.

We can imagine what we might have seen if we had been there. No matter the color or style of attire, everyone was having a good time! There was much laughter and clapping

of hands. Our eyes would have been attracted to the forward patio, where people were moving back and making room for a young couple beginning a fandango. The dance was highly stimulating, and its performance was often punctuated by the cries of "*!Mira, Mira!*" and "*!Ole, Ole!*" The most exhaustive part of the dance was executed by the male who spiritedly but gracefully circled his almost motionless partner. She stood very straight, hands at her sides, her eyes cast upon the earth. Her sliding movements were almost totally unnoticed; her face was expressionless. When she raised her head, the dance was at an end. Great was the roar of approval. Then there was general dancing, good food, and drink until the early morning hours when the sleepy children and weary guests began to drift away. Finally, the *baile* was over. Those who lived at any distance were urged to spend the night, always assured of comfortable lodging.

Silvério Rios' second family by Magdalena, all baptized in San Juan Capistrano included:

Gregorio Humiliano, baptized 20 July 1829, married about 1857 Ignacia Gutiérrez, buried 6 November 1900 Capistrano;

José Dolores, baptized 20 October 1832, married on 24 September 1856 Plaza Juana Francisca Marquéz, daughter of Francisco and María Roqué Valenzuela;

Mariano de Jesus, baptized 31 March 1835, married about 1863 to Ramona Sepúlveda, living in 1879;

Juan Bautista, baptized 9 February 1840, married Eloisa Vega 21 August 1876 Capistrano, living in 1881;

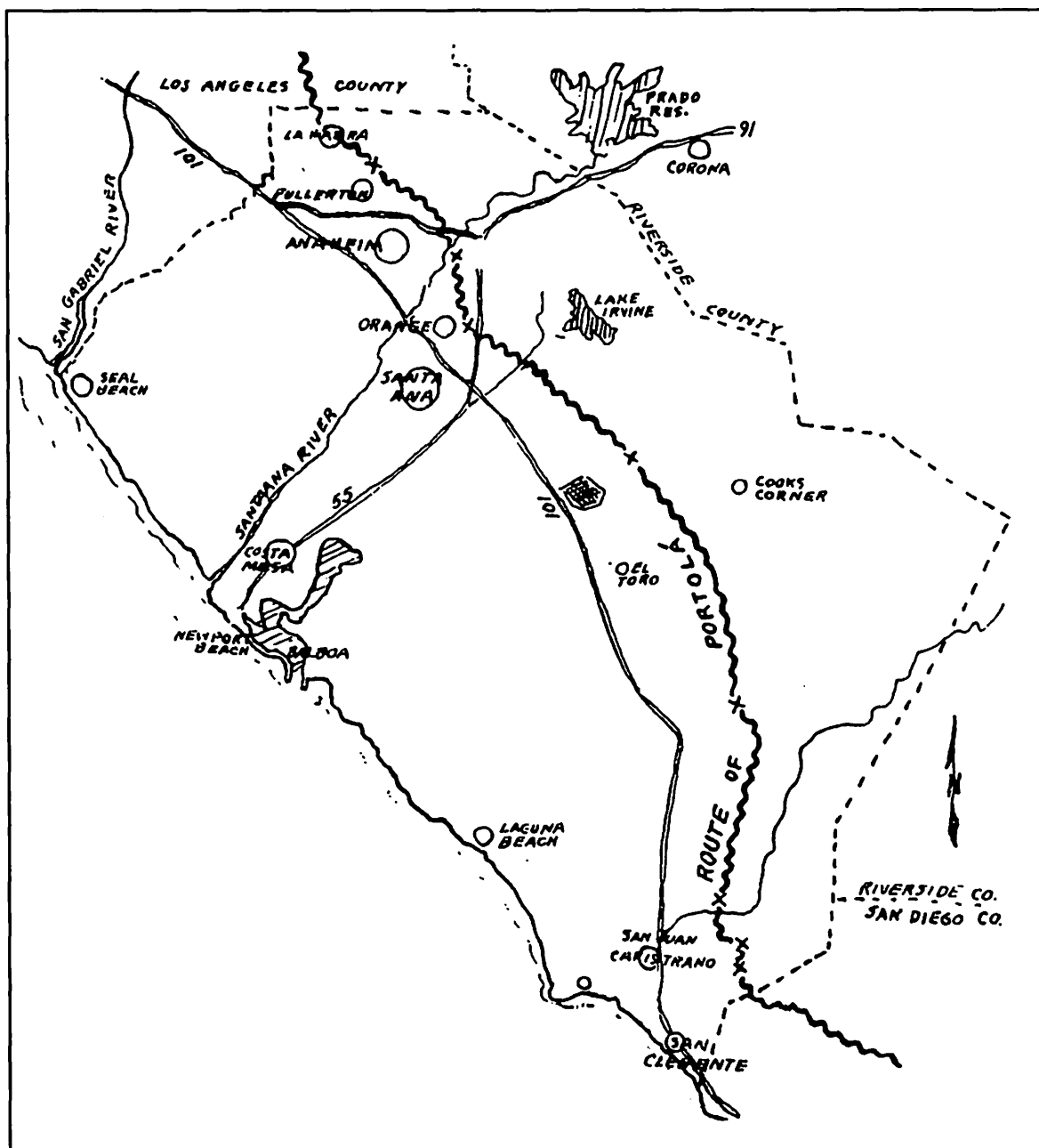
José Macedonio, baptized 12 September 1842, married Josefa Serrano 14 January 1889 Capistrano;

(Matilde) Valeriana, baptized 5 June 1845, perhaps married José Corella about 1866; and

José María, baptized 27 January 1848.

There was also José Avelino, son of Silvério Rios and Magdalena confirmed 2 Aug 1850, San Juan Capistrano, and Guadalupe, child of Magdalena viuda, confirmed Aug. 1850.

All of the above children, except José María, José Avelino and Guadalupe are living with Silvério and his wife Juana Barreras at the time of the 1850 US census. Silvério was buried 20 July 1872 at Capistrano. Magdalena was buried 8 May 1876 at Capistrano under the name of Magdalena Fanador.



Portolá's Route Through Orange County
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About 1857 Magdalena's eldest son, Gregorio, married María Ygnacia Gutiérrez, the daughter of Tomás Gutiérrez of the previous section. Their children, all baptized at Capistrano, included:

María Manuela, baptized 23 April 1858, married Florentino Rangel 12 January 1882 San Gabriel;
María Tomasa Andrea, baptized 30 November 1859, married Ramón Yorba 8 March 1879 Capistrano, buried 14 March 1899 Capistrano;
(José Gregorio Cosme) Damián, baptized 10 October 1861, married Gertrudis Reyna 15 April 1901 Capistrano;
José Antonio, baptized 10 March 1864, married Ignacia Morillo 15 March 1886 Capistrano, who was buried 13 August 1900 Capistrano;
María Eulalia Brigida, baptized 15 March 1866; and
José Ramón Pedro, baptized 19 June 1871, married 26 March 1894 Capistrano Adelfrida Aguilar, daughter of Inocencio, buried 10 September 1897 Capistrano.

Gregorio's son, Damián had at least six children:

Delfina Mauricia, baptized 13 October 1901 Capistrano;
Leonora Leandra, baptized 22 March 1903 Capistrano;
Unceriam Floreneram (recorded in Latin), baptized 25 January 1906 Capistrano;
Margarita Josefa, baptized 24 March 1908 Capistrano;
Daniel Rafael, baptized 6 February 1910 Capistrano, married Alice Virginia Steading; and
Carlos Luciano, baptized 31 January 1915 Capistrano.

It would appear that Daniel and Virginia Steading were the parents of the current occupants of the Casa de los Rios.

Gregorio was a renowned host. For miles around, his home became famous for its hospitality, extending by legend even to those not always welcome in other homes in the area. Almost every old Californio family has its story about Joaquin Murrieta, as did the Rios family. Capistrano "old timers" claim that one of the adobe's bedrooms contained a trap door leading to a secret loft which was furnished with only a table, candle, and a bed with a corn-husk mattress. Here, supposedly, was the sleeping place of the infamous *bandido* Joaquin Murrieta, the "Robin-Hood" of El Dorado, who, on occasional trips to Mexico, would stop at his friend Gregorio's home. Story has it that he would stock up on

food-stuffs, rest a while in the secret room, and be on his way before the first cock crowed in the morning. Sometimes, it is said, a small pouch would be found hanging on a branch of a pepper tree at the back of the house, and in the bag would be several gold coins - compliments of *El Bandido*. As Joaquin Murrieta flourished in the 1850's, this story, if true, would probably relate to his father or one of his uncles.

Santiago Rios, born 1803, the fourth son of Feliciano, as did his elder brother Silvério, became a *soldado de cuera* of the Company of San Diego, being stationed with the *escolta* for Mission San Gabriel much of the time. He married in 1822 Isabel María Uribes, who had been baptized 6 December 1801 at Santa Barbara, daughter of Casimiro Uribes and Marcela Cota. Their children included:

- María de Jesus, baptized 3 January 1823 San Gabriel, buried there 2 March of the same year;
- José Francisco, baptized 1 April 1824 San Diego, confirmed in 1833 San Diego, and no further record;
- Venancio, baptized 21 May 1827 San Gabriel, married first Presentación Yorba 11 April 1853 Capistrano, married second Carmen Morillo 14 January 1868 Capistrano, buried 25 July 1897 Capistrano;
- María Juana Ursula, baptized 21 October 1829 San Gabriel, who apparently died young; and much later
- María Micaela del Refugio, baptized 6 October 1842 Capistrano, died 1 March 1865.

It is apparent that there may have been several more between 1830 and 1840 of whom we have found no record.

Santiago Rios served as *juez de paz* for Capistrano in 1842 and 1843. The grant of land which he received in 1843 from Mexican Governor Micheltorena was reputedly one of the smallest - only 300 *varas* square - ever granted in what was to become Orange County. In 1844 he was employed as a *labrador* on Rancho Los Coyotes, and in 1851 he appears with his wife Isabel and their youngest child María del Refugio as a farmer. Isabel Uribes was buried 16 July 1859 Plaza Cemetery, and Santiago Rios was buried at Capistrano 4 April 1877.

Venancio Rios, the only known surviving son of Santiago, married first María Presentación Yorba in 1853 at Capistrano. She had been baptized 13 September 1839 at Capistrano, the *hija natural* of Teodosio Yorba and Catalina Manríquez (she frequently appeared as Presentación Peralta, using the last name of her stepfather, Rafael Peralta). Their children all baptized in San Juan Capistrano included:

Maria Ester de los Angeles, baptized 7 August 1854;
Maria Epifania Dionicia, baptized 9 May 1856;
Francisco Manuel, baptized 23 June 1859, married Luisa Martinez 26 July 1896
Capistrano, buried 12 December 1911 Capistrano;
Santiago Basilio, baptized 28 July 1860, married Amelia Rodríguez 28 July 1882
Capistrano;
Francisco Xavier, baptized 30 March 1862, married Juana Monreal 12 August
1885 Capistrano; and
(María Salomé) Isabel, baptized 30 October 1864, married José Reyes 1 May
1883 Plaza.

Presentación was buried 14 September 1865 at Capistrano.

Venancio then married in 1868 María Carmen Morillo. She had been born about 1847 the daughter of Brigido Morillo and Antonia Cañedo. There were nine known children all baptized in San Juan Capistrano:

María Refugio Pia, baptized 21 July 1869, married Alberto Palancio 10 October
1889 Capistrano;
Damián, baptized 5 February 1871, confirmed 19 April 1881 Capistrano;
José Venancio, baptized 8 June 1873;
María Ygnacia Antonia, baptized 18 February 1875;
Teresa Lugarda, baptized 10 November 1876;
Ester, baptized 10 July 1878;
Mística Leuteria, baptized 14 September 1879;
María Natividad Betsaida, baptized 23 January 1882; and
Raquel Ruperta, baptized 30 March 1884.

Valentín, the next son of Feliciano, was also a *soldado de cuera*. He married in 1826 María de los Nieves López, who had been born about 1810, daughter of Juan López and Josefa Verdugo. The known children of Valentín and Nieves were:

María Juana, baptized 21 September 1827 San Diego, living in 1844;
Esteban de Jesus, baptized 26 December 1828 San Diego Presidio, and buried 17
March 1830 San Diego;
Matías de San Juan, baptized 27 February 1831 San Diego, living in 1844;
Jacinto, baptized 6 August 1833 San Gabriel, living in 1844; and

María Dolores, baptized 15 May 1835 San Diego, living in 1844.

Nieves perhaps died soon after as there were no more children and there is no further record of her. There were four surviving children by the time Valentín joined his brother to work on the Rancho Santa Ana, where he was living in 1844.

The youngest of the family of Feliciano, Severiano, was also in Capistrano by 7 September 1834 when he married María Primitiva, a neophyte of the Mission San Juan Capistrano. She had been baptized 24 November 1821, the daughter of José de la Cruz and María de Jesus. Their known children were:

Nicolás, baptized 11 December 1835 Capistrano, who probably died young;
Margarita de Jesus, baptized 20 February 1836 Capistrano; and
Manuel Apolonio, baptized 17 February 1840 Plaza, married María del Refugio, neophyte of Capistrano in the 1860's, by whom he had at least five children.

Severiano was buried 2 January 1853 at Capistrano, and Primitiva was buried 2 June 1862 Capistrano at the time of the smallpox epidemic. Severiano was also granted one of the San Juan Capistranoouselots in 1841.

Whether La Casa de los Rios derives from the grant to Magdalena, Ramón Silvas or Severiano Rios is of minor importance. Its inhabitants have a heritage back to the earliest days and original inhabitants of the little adobe. It is a very small property compared to the ranchos of its day. Nonetheless, its thick adobe walls have heard the laughter and watched the dancing belles of San Juan Capistrano for over two hundred years. It has survived while the larger ranchos have been divided and their greater haciendas crumbled into the soil from whence they came.

Gaspari de Portolain

Fr. Junípero Serra

Fr. José María
Preside