

Chapter III – GOD, FATHERLAND AND FAMILY

A New Home for the Avilas

Contracting a marriage was no easy matter in the early years as José de Santa Ana Avila and his fiancée Josefa Osuna found out in 1792. The Council of Trent provided the rules under which members of the Catholic church could be married. The couple had to present themselves to their local padre and take with them at least three unrelated *testigos* or witnesses, for each of the families of the groom and bride, who could testify that all requirements were met. Those requirements included that both were Catholics in good standing with the church, that they were free to marry, and were not too closely related either by "*consanguinidad*", "*afinidad*", or "*espiritual*", i.e. blood, extended family or spiritual relationships. The statements of the *testigos*, combined with any other Church records, were included in the *informaciones*.

The padres at San Gabriel as with other frontier missions had unusual problems in fulfilling those requirements. In the earliest years frequently there were not six other unrelated families at their location. A more serious problem was that families frequently had recently come to Alta California, and the local padre knew little about their earlier years. Josefa Osuna had been born about 1772 at the Presidio of Loreto, the daughter of Juan Hismerio Osuna and Ignacia Alvarado. Her father had been a member of the *escolta* of San Gabriel since the mid 1780's. She had married Gabriel Espinosa there on 9 January, 1790. Gabriel had been killed by Indians near Santa Barbara later in that year, leaving his pregnant young wife to the care of her recently widowed mother. The young *soldado de cuera* José de Santa Ana Avila from



Avila



L. Moulton



Rancho la Cienega
1842



Rancho el Niguel
1833

Loreto reported to the command soon after that, and courted young Josefa. In February 1792, he proposed marriage and was accepted.

José de Santa Ana had been born about 1771 at Pueblo de Bac, near Fuerte, Sinaloa, the eldest son of Cornelio Avila and Isabel Urquidez. His family had also lived in both Loreto and San Ignacio, Baja California. How would the Padre in far off San Gabriel know whether José de Santa Ana had married before? How could José de Santa Ana produce witnesses that knew his family relationships? The Padre knew Josefa Osuna and her family well, but José de Santa Ana Avila needed a complete investigation.

In February 1792 the Padre had to write to Pueblo de Bac to inquire what that parish knew and have the banns read three times. Similar letters went to Loreto where his parents were at that time and to San Ignacio, where his youngest brother had been born. Then came the wait for the letters to reach their destinations, the investigations to be done, the banns to be read, and the answers to travel back to San Gabriel. Josefa had plenty of time to complete her trousseau by the time of their wedding on 3 July 1792.¹²

José de Santa Ana's parents, Cornelio Avila and Isabel Urquidez were probably married in El Fuerte, Sinaloa, where their first eight children were born between 1771 and 1789. Their last child, Bruno Ignacio was baptized in San Ignacio, Baja in 1791, and in 1792 they were living in Loreto. Sometime before 1799, the family moved to the new Pueblo of Los Angeles.

The first record of the name Avila in Alta California is found in the confirmations of José María and Bruno Ygnacio Avila, the two youngest sons of Cornelio Avila, on 22 December 1791 at Santa Barbara. The entire family may have traveled to Santa Barbara at the time of the enlistment of the eldest son José de Santa Ana into the Santa Barbara Company. He was assigned to the *escolta* of the Pueblo of Los Angeles, where he married Josefa Osuna. By the birth of their third child in 1796, they had been transferred back to Santa Barbara.

Perhaps Cornelio was again visiting his eldest son in Santa Barbara, when death overtook him. He was buried there on 23 November 1800, with the notation that he was a resident of the Pueblo of Los Angeles. His wife survived him by only a few months, and was buried on 16 February 1801 at San Gabriel.

Cornelio Avila and Isabel Urquidez amply fulfilled their obligation to King and Church to settle the land. They had at least nine children:

¹²McPherson Collection, Honnold Library, box I (8).

José de Santa Ana, born about 1771 Fuerte Sinaloa, married Josefa Osuna 3 July 1792 San Gabriel, buried 6 November 1806 Santa Barbara;
Francisco, born about 1772 Fuerte, married first María Rosario Verdugo 28 April 1808 San Gabriel, married second María Encarnación Sepúlveda 8 November 1822 San Gabriel, buried 6 April 1832 Plaza;
Anastacio, born about 1774 Fuerte, married Juana María Ballesteros 8 January 1809 San Gabriel, buried 24 July 1850 Plaza;
Agustina, born about 1776 Fuerte, married Carlos Castro 23 September 1792 in San Ignacio, Baja California, living in 1844;
Antonio Ignacio, born about 1778 Fuerte, married Rosa María Ruíz 6 February 1803 Mission Santa Barbara¹³, buried 28 September 1858 Plaza;
Ildefonso, born about 1780 Fuerte, married Felipe Talamantes 30 December 1792 San Ignacio, died between 1844 and 1851;
José María, born about 1787 Fuerte, married first Andrea Yorba 23 January 1823 Capistrano, married second Josefa Palomares 9 February 1830 San Gabriel, buried 7 December 1831 Plaza;
Hilaria, born about 1789 Fuerte, married first Joaquín Armenta 9 April 1804 San Gabriel, married second Cayetano Varelas 22 January 1811 San Gabriel, buried 2 July 1821 San Gabriel;
Bruno Ignacio, baptized 6 October 1791 San Ignacio, married first (*informaciones*) Rosa Serrano 25 October 1823 San Gabriel, married second Alvina Duarte 15 May 1830 San Gabriel, buried 12 January 1861 Plaza.

José de Santa Ana, the first Avila to come to Alta California enlisted as a *soldado de cuera* of the Company of the Santa Barbara Presidio and had become part of the *escolta* of the Pueblo of Los Angeles by February 1792. Between November 1795 and September 1796 José de Santa Ana had been transferred back to Santa Barbara. He became *mayordomo* at his Santa Barbara station and served in that capacity at least from 1801 to 1806. Josefa Osuna was buried 22 June 1801 Santa Barbara. José de Santa Ana Avila, was also buried there on 8 November 1806, aged only about 35 years. Who assumed care for their surviving children has not been established. José de Santa Ana's and María Josefa Osuna's children were:

¹³Mission Santa Barbara, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "Santa Barbara".

María Ignacia Marcia, baptized 7 October 1793 San Gabriel, married first José Dolores Sepúlveda 8 November 1813 San Gabriel, married second Antonio Machado 11 April 1825 San Gabriel, buried 22 October 1858 Plaza;
José Francisco de los Angeles, baptized 3 November 1795 San Gabriel, buried 30 September 1832 at Santa Barbara (single);
Miguel, baptized 9 September 1796 Santa Barbara, probably died young;
Miguel Antonio Nicolás Santa Ana, baptized 11 September 1798 Santa Barbara, married Inocencia Pico 9 September 1826 San Carlos Borromeo del Carmelo¹⁴, buried 26 February 1874 Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa¹⁵; and
Ignacio Rafael Santa Ana, baptized 5 December 1800 Santa Barbara, buried 8 April 1801 Santa Barbara.

Francisco, the second son of Cornelio Avila and Isabel Urquidez, had been born about 1772 near Fuerte, Sinaloa. He married first María del Rosario Verdugo in 1808, and second, María Encarnación Sepúlveda in 1822. María Rosario had been baptized 8 May 1793 at San Gabriel, the daughter of Mariano de la Luz Verdugo and Gregoria Espinosa, and was buried 8 July 1822 at San Gabriel. Encarnación, born about 1805 to Francisco Sepúlveda and Ramona Serrano, was buried 4 March 1855 at the Plaza Church. Francisco Avila was *alcalde* in 1810 and lived on Olvera Street in the Pueblo of Los Angeles. He was buried 6 April 1832 and his body is one of the very few buried within the Plaza Church. 12>Francisco had at least six children. By his first wife, Rosario, there were:

Isabel, baptized 22 June 1808 San Gabriel; married José Miguel Alvarado about 1823, died 20 May 1850 Plaza;
Januario, baptized 20 October 1810 San Gabriel, married first María de los Angeles Serrano 28 April 1838 San Gabriel, married second Dolores Silva 13 November 1858 Plaza, buried 12 April 1872 Plaza; and
María Petronila "Petra", baptized 2 June 1814 San Gabriel, married Juan Ramírez about 1830, buried 22 January 1876 Plaza.

¹⁴Mission San Carlos Borromeo del Carmelo, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "San Carlos".

¹⁵Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "San Luis Obispo".

By his second wife, Encarnación Sepúlveda there were:

Luisa, baptized 26 August 1823 San Gabriel, married Lieutenant Manuel Garfias
23 November 1842 San Gabriel, living in 1851;
María Nemesia, baptized 20 December 1825 San Gabriel, buried 3 July 1831
Plaza; and
(María Marcelina) Francisca, baptized 3 June 1832 Plaza, married Theodoro
Rimpau 23 December 1850 Plaza, died after 1889 Anaheim.

During the early years of his residence in the pueblo, Francisco built *la Casa de los Avilas* on Olvera Street, a project for which he is well-remembered. During the final days of the United States' efforts to capture Los Angeles, *la Casa de los Avilas* was made Union headquarters. Not knowing what to expect from the American troops and having succumbed to the propaganda of Flores, who had left the Los Angeles inhabitants dreading the worst excesses from the conquerors, many Angelenos fled to relatives living in the countryside. The story has been told that the widow of José María Avila left the lovely Avila home on Olvera Street in charge of a young boy with orders to keep the shutters tightly barred. The stirring music of Stockton's band in the *plaza*, however, proved too much of a temptation for his young ears, and when he ran out to see, he left the door open. When some American officers saw the comfortable appointments within, they selected the Avila home as Stockton's Los Angeles Headquarters.

The only son of Francisco Avila, Januario, was a *regidor* of Los Angeles in 1834 to 1839. Many years after his father's death, he received the patent on Rancho Cienegas, to which Francisco had been the grantee in 1823. Januario had no children by his first wife, María de los Angeles Serrano. He married second Dolores Silvas in 1858 and their children may have included:

María Francisca del Refugio, baptized 18 November 1848 Plaza;
José Ygnacio, confirmed 27 December 1855 Plaza;
Juan Bautista, baptized 22 October 1854 Plaza (mother given as Dolores Duarte)
Luis Francisco, baptized 23 October 1855 Plaza;
Marcelino, baptized 11 March 1860 Plaza;
José Francisco Eulogio, baptized 15 June 1862 Plaza; and
Januario Juvencio, baptized 26 April 1867 Plaza.

Running el Pueblo

While military duties or land grants drained Los Angeles of several sons of Cornelio Avila and Isabel Urquidez, others stayed in or near *el Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciúncula*. Anastacio, their third son, married Juana Ballesteros 8 January 1809 at San Gabriel. She had been baptized 20 March 1794 at the Mission San Luis Obispo, the daughter of Juan de Dios Ballesteros and Teresa Sepúlveda.

Anastacio Avila and Juana Ballesteros had sixteen children, most of whom lived to marry. They were:

María Petra, baptized 19 October 1809 San Gabriel; married (*informaciones* 19 January) Antonio Serrano in 1829 San Gabriel, buried 4 August 1878 Capistrano;

Juana María, baptized 1 April 1811 San Gabriel; married (*informaciones* 6 October) Francisco María Alvarado in 1836 San Gabriel, died 28 January 1884 Agua Mansa¹⁶;

María Luisa, baptized 27 August 1812 San Gabriel; married (*informaciones* 4 July) Ignacio María Alvarado in 1832 San Gabriel, living in 1851;

(María Juana) Josefa, baptized 1 April 1814 San Gabriel; married (*informaciones* 27 December) Secundino Valenzuela in 1831 San Gabriel, buried 25 February 1863 Plaza;

Cornelio Pedro Hilarion, baptized 21 October 1815 San Gabriel; was killed by being dragged by a horse, and was buried 24 June 1832 at San Gabriel;

María Micaela Angela, born about 1817; married (*informaciones* 26 October) Isidro Alvarado in 1834 San Gabriel, buried 27 March 1845 San Gabriel;

María Rafaela, born about 1817, married (*informaciones* 7 December) Emigdio Véjar in 1834 San Gabriel, buried 2 July 1852 Capistrano;

Enrique, born about 1819; married first Modesta Rosas 21 October 1854 Plaza; married second Teresa Moreno 14 November 1864 Plaza, buried 13 November 1876 Plaza;

José María Marcelo, baptized 19 February 1821 San Gabriel; reportedly married to Francisca Díaz some time after 1851, living in 1866;

Manuela Lorenza Justiniana, baptized 6 November 1822 San Gabriel; married Isidro Alvarado, widower of her sister Micaela after 1845;

¹⁶The Agua Mansa Cemetery is on Agua Mansa Road near the intersection with Riverside Avenue, in an unincorporated area of San Bernardino County, east of the southern tip of Rialto.

María de la Soledad, baptized 17 July 1824 San Gabriel; married Mariano Alvarado 30 August 1843 at San Gabriel, living in 1859;
Juana de la Cruz, baptized September 1826 Plaza, married Antonio López 17 August 1853 Plaza;
(Crispulo) Antonio, baptized 10 June 1828 Plaza, married Ramona Verdugo 29 November 1856 Plaza;
María Isadora, baptized 19 February 1830 Plaza, married Hermenegildo Aguilar, of Jalapa, 16 June 1854 Plaza, living in 1870;
Felipe Nerio, baptized 27 May 1832 Plaza, married Antonia Prudencia Ruíz 28 August 1858 Plaza, died about 1900;
Cornelio, born about 1834, married first Rufina Ruíz, married second Fedelia Méndez 10 April 1875 Plaza; and
Juan Bautista, born 24 June 1835, married first Faustina Marron 26 April 1869 Plaza; married second Ramona Valdez 3 February 1875 San Gabriel, living in 1920.

So, like his brothers and nephews, Anastacio Avila assumed the responsibilities expected of a man of his background. He served as *regidor* of Los Angeles in 1810 and 1819 and in 1820 moved up to the position of *alcalde*. That the duties were not always easy or popular is attested by an incident involving a future governor of the province. Pío Pico relates that on visiting the town from San Diego he was ordered by *alcalde* Avila to go to work with the citizens on the new aqueduct. He boasts that being on horseback and armed with a musket, he escaped the task and rode home. In his indignation, he referred to the *alcalde* as an ignorant fellow who ruled "*a fuerza de machete*" (by the threat of violence). Undoubtedly, though, handling and supervising such construction must have been extremely difficult with the limited manpower available (Bancroft 1963, XIX:559). At the time, the official census of 1816 showed only ninety-three households in the entire pueblo.

Antonio Ignacio Avila, born about 1778, one of the sons of Cornelio and Isabel, from 1798 to 1802 was a blacksmith at the Presidio of Monterey (Schuetz-Miller 1994:54). He married Rosa María Ruíz in 1803 in Santa Barbara, she had been baptized 4 May 1789, Ventura,¹⁷ daughter of Efigenio and Rosa López.

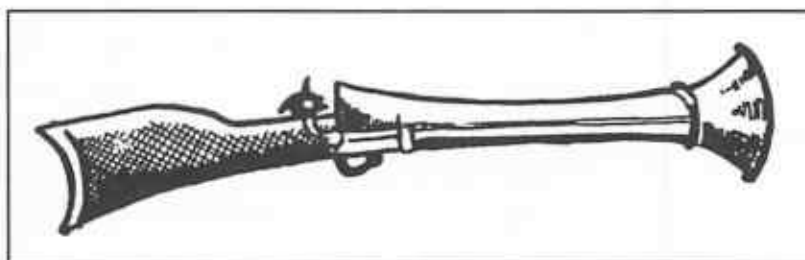
The political upheavals of Spain and Mexico made little stir in this far-off province, although the majority of Californios remained loyal to Spain. The lives of these early settlers were hardly affected by revolutionary movements elsewhere. As late as 1820, when

¹⁷Mission San Buenaventura, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "Ventura".

Don Antonio Ignacio was *regidor* of the pueblo of Los Angeles, the Spanish constitution was reaffirmed by the Angelenos, who continued in the daily tasks connected with mission and presidio, pueblo and rancho. As *mayordomo* on Rancho San Pedro, Ignacio was credited with the steady increase of stock during his stay there. In 1822 and 1837 he became the grantee of Rancho Sausal Redondo, near present day Redondo and by 1846 had registered his own cattle brand. The children of Don Ignacio and Doña Rosa María were:

María, baptized 9 January 1805 San Gabriel, buried 25 March 1805 San Gabriel;
Francisca de Paula, baptized 4 April 1807 San Gabriel, married José (Antonio Andrés) Sepúlveda 24 June 1825 San Gabriel, probably died Caborca, Sonora after 1870;
María de la Asunción (Ascensión), baptized 16 August 1809 San Gabriel, married Pedro Sánchez 24 June 1825 San Gabriel in a double ceremony with her sister Francisca above, buried 11 March 1847 Plaza;
Juan, baptized 9 March 1812 San Gabriel, married (*informaciones* 29 August) to Soledad Yorba in 1832 San Gabriel, buried 25 December 1888 Capistrano;
José (Martín), baptized 1 February 1815 San Gabriel, married first Ignacia Simona Félix 10 November 1838 San Gabriel, married second Pilar Villa about 1841, buried 21 April 1850 Plaza;
Ascensión, born about 1819, married Sebulo Varelas about 1836;
Pedro, baptized 29 June 1821 San Gabriel, married Nepomucena Altamirano 11 November 1841 San Gabriel, buried 24 October 1868 Capistrano;
Pedro Antonio "Pedrito", baptized 20 January 1823 San Gabriel, married María Ballesteros 1 December 1868 Plaza, buried 31 August 1878 Plaza;
María Marta, baptized 29 July 1825 San Gabriel, married Juan Nepomuceno Padilla 14 February 1851 Plaza;
Dionicio del Pilar, baptized 12 October 1829 Plaza, living in 1851; and
Higenio, baptized 5 November 1838 Plaza, probably died before 1844.

Before Ygnacio married Rosa Ruíz, he had a *hija natural* by Matilde Cota, María Antonia, baptized 9 January 1802 San Gabriel. Matilde married Ygnacio Rendon in 1805 and Antonia used the Rendon name thereafter. She married José María Lugo (of Chapter X) 30 November 1820 San Gabriel, and was buried 5 December 1877 Plaza.



The Trabuco (Blunderbuss) Musket - 1769
(Public Domain)

Don Juan Avila, "*El Rico*", Serves

Don Juan Avila, Ignacio's and Rosa Maria's first-born son and apparently the first of the Avilas to settle near Saddleback, lived to see the changed conditions. Flourishing during the rancho period, he saw the increasing foreign influence which culminated in American occupation and acquisition of his native land. While many relatives played hostile roles in the periodic controversies, Don Juan usually pursued the course of conciliator. This was true whether saving his friend, Juan Forster, from the wrath of the outlaw, Flores, or urging fellow Californians to welcome the United States forces. Avila was one of those who brought a flag of truce to Stockton's camp to intercede in behalf of the Angelenos on 10 January 1847.

Situated as his home was along the west side of El Camino Real, he was ideally located to offer respite to weary travelers. His hospitality to Judge Benjamin Hayes is a case in point. Both Don Juan and his wife could provide accommodations which were typically Californian - always spacious and comfortable when the sun was shining and decidedly chilly after dark. In building their adobe, they had followed local building customs. These usually did not allow for fireplaces. In fact, Avila's neighbor, Juan Forster from cold and damp England, is reputed to have had the only fireplace in the area. Judge Hayes tells of traveling through San Juan Capistrano with his young son. On going to Forster's home and finding him away, they continued on to the Avilas', where it was so chilly that he and his son went to bed at eight o'clock to keep warm. On the other hand, on a hot August day Señor Avila's home was Hayes' first choice. The Judge wrote then of his host: "His cordiality made me forget fatigue" (Hayes 1929:113). Among the many other notable Americans entertained by the Avilas were General Stephen A. Kearney and Colonel John C. Fremont of the United States Army.

During the years following the discovery of gold at Sutter's Fort, Don Juan added to his wealth by selling cattle to the northern miners, thus earning the nickname of *El Rico*. He had acquired several ranches, the largest being Rancho Niguel, which was granted to him and his sister, Ascención Arcadia, widow of Pedro Sánchez, by Governor Juan B. Alvarado 21 June 1842. His first home was on this acreage before he built a large residence in the nearby village of San Juan Capistrano. He was still raising sheep and cattle when his grant was finally reconfirmed in 1857 by the U. S. Land Commission.

El Rico's hospitality was sometimes betrayed. On several occasions he, like his father before him, was troubled by horse thieves, necessitating the removal of his herds from their grazing lands near the highway to safer territory in the hills. Old Ignacio had earned a reputation as an Indian fighter and had been commended for valor when, as *regidor* (1820-1821), he had marched against the hostile Diegueños and killed their leader. In addition to horse thieves, in later years Don Juan was bothered by Yankee squatters. There was a limit to even his generous hospitality (Bancroft 1963, XIX:349-351, 353).

Although born into a family of at least twelve children and living in an era of many offspring, Juan Avila and his wife Soledad Yorba apparently had as few as seven:

Soledad, born about 1833;

Rosa María, born about 1835, married Pablo Pryor 14 January 1864 Capistrano;

Manuel Donaciano "Chano", baptized 25 May 1837 San Gabriel, married Delfina

Rodríguez 20 March 1860 Capistrano, buried 12 September 1895 Capistrano;

María Guadalupe, baptized 4 March 1839 Plaza, married Marcos Forster 1

January 1862 Capistrano, buried 28 October 1899 Capistrano;

María Antonia, baptized 1 April 1841 Plaza, probably buried 24 November 1843

San Gabriel;

María Antonia, baptized 20 May 1845 San Gabriel, buried 22 March 1848 San

Gabriel; and

José Teofilo Epifanio, baptized 5 February 1849 Plaza, living in 1851.

Although Don Juan suffered considerable financial losses during the great drought of 1864, which bankrupted many affluent ranchers, he was able to escape ruin. Before the drought he possessed about 8,000 head of cattle; by its end, only 800 head. The severe dry spell was the first in the chain of rapidly unfolding events from which many Spanish and Mexican Californians never did recover.

On 2 October 1867 Doña Soledad Yorba de Avila died after receiving the Holy Sacraments of her Roman Catholic faith. She was nearly 61 years of age at the time. The next day ecclesiastical internment was given, but since the cemetery was unfenced at Mission

San Juan Capistrano, permission was granted for the body to be buried at the back of the Church, until the cemetery would be refenced. Don Juan lived another twenty-one years following his wife's death, but he never remarried.



Juan Avila, "El Rico"

Soledad Yorba de Avila

(Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History)

The fifth generation of Avilas to live in California - and the first of Don Juan's male line to be born following California's admittance to the United States in Capistrano were the children of his eldest son Donaciano "Chano" and Delfina Rodríguez. Delfina had been born about 1845, daughter of Francisco Rodríguez and María Olivares. Chano's and Delfina's children were:

Teofilo Juan Evangelista, baptized 27 December 1860 Capistrano, (the same day as his birth which had been at four o'clock in the morning), buried 4 August 1883 Capistrano;

Ana Magdalena Vicenta, baptized 28 March 1862 Capistrano, married James Doyle 16 April 1891 Capistrano;

Sixto Epifanio, baptized 20 April 1864 Capistrano, buried 17 May 1864 Capistrano;
Juan Raynaldo, baptized 6 December 1866 Yorba Chapel¹⁸;
Manuel Ismael "John", baptized 13 July 1869 Capistrano;
María Soledad, baptized 28 April 1874 Capistrano, buried 29 April 1874 Capistrano;
María Guadalupe, baptized 27 September 1875 Capistrano, buried December 1875 Capistrano;
María Guadalupe Dionicia, baptized 5 February 1877 Capistrano, married José Menenes 16 April 1891 Capistrano;
Floencia Librada, baptized 5 May 1881 Capistrano; and
José Ramón, baptized 19 February 1884 Capistrano.

In his declining years the venerable Don Juan Avila was cared for by his daughter Rosa, who on the death of her husband Pablo Pryor in 1878 came with her small son to live with Don Juan. In the years remaining before his death on 23 December 1888 he continued in his tradition of hospitality, counting among his guests the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, who would include his host's accounts in several of his volumes on California history.

José Martín Avila, the second son of Antonio Ignacio and Rosa Ruíz married twice. His first wife Ignacia Félix died less than two years after their marriage leaving no children. His second wife Pilar Villa was baptized 1 March 1824 San Gabriel, daughter of Francisco Villa and Eulalia Soto. Pilar died in childbirth and was buried 13 August 1847 Plaza. Their children were:

María Francisca Merced, baptized 2 August 1842 San Gabriel, probably died between 1843 and 1844;
José Encarnación, baptized 28 March 1845 Plaza; and
María Pilar Emedia, baptized 31 August 1847 Plaza.

By 1850, both parents were deceased, and who raised any surviving children has not been identified.

¹⁸The Yorba Chapel, which was built by Bernardo Yorba on his land, was named the "San Antonio Church". It was abandoned in the 1930's, but has been rebuilt across the Santa Ana River from the original site. (This is not the "San Antonio Mission" near Jolon.)

José Martín also had a natural son by Josefa Castro, a *neofita* of Monterey, who had been adopted by his aunt and uncle Agustina Avila and Carlos Castro. This child, José del Carmen Avila, baptized 4 January 1833 at San Gabriel, had been taken into his father's home by 1844. José del Carmen married Juliana Bermúdez, who had been born about 1842, daughter of Hermenegildo Bermúdez and Estefana Morillo, in October 1856 at San Juan Capistrano. There they lived a quiet religious life with their fourteen children, as follows:

María Candelaria Estefana, baptized 26 March 1858 Plaza; buried 16 September 1874 Capistrano, unmarried;
José Vicente, baptized 24 October 1859 Capistrano; married María Mendez of Sonora, Mexico 3 January 1887 Capistrano;
José Antonio Feliciano, baptized 1 June 1861 Capistrano;
Rosa Mistica, baptized 10 May 1863 Yorba Chapel;
José del Carmen, baptized 9 June 1866 Yorba Chapel;
María Simeona Modesta, baptized 2 June 1868 Capistrano;
María Balvina Marta, baptized 21 March 1870 Capistrano;
María Josefina Helena, baptized 15 April 1872 Capistrano;
José Hermenegildo Fernando, baptized 12 February 1874 Capistrano;
María Candelaria, baptized 22 May 1877 Capistrano;
Alejandro, baptized 29 June 1879 Capistrano;
María del Carmen Anastacia, baptized 24 April 1881 Capistrano;
Alberto, baptized 9 June 1883 Capistrano; and
Vicenta, baptized 27 October 1887 Capistrano, buried 10 November 1890.

Political Disputes

One of the more important occurrences in California history concerns an incident to which Don Juan had been an eyewitness while still a young man. In 1831, he had been urged by his uncle José María Avila to take no active part in an expected battle near the pueblo of Los Angeles. California's Governor Manuel Victoria had heard at his governmental seat in Monterey that there was a plot to overthrow his regime and set up a government in Los Angeles. He decided to bring a contingent south to quell the force of rebels attempting his ouster. The ensuing encounter was one of a series of uprisings during the next years which would force the resignation or flight of six of California's Mexican appointed governors.

The burning questions of the time; federalism vs. centralism and secular vs. clerical rule. The sentiment of local patriotism was a complicating factor. Under Spanish rule,

territories had been divided into provinces, which were under the direction of a Governor. Local governments had access to the next higher level, at a relatively short distance. Under Mexican rule, almost all power of decision was centered in Mexico City. Even capital offenses such as murder could only be adjudicated in Mexico City. This latter system was termed "centralism", as all power was centralized in Mexico City. The former system was termed "federalism", as various somewhat autonomous territories were united into a federation, centered in Mexico City. This is somewhat similar to our "Federal" government in which states and counties also have independent powers.

Obviously Californian governors and their assistants, appointed by Mexico City and usually from there, strongly supported the centralist point of view. Californian residents resented the imposition of "foreigners" for their government, and felt that people from Mexico City did not understand or even care about local problems. Californians wanted a more local government, manned by local citizens, that is, they were supporters of the federalist point of view. The situation of persons being arrested on serious offenses having to wait as long as five years to be cleared if innocent, or an equal length to be executed if guilty, led to several instances of the release of prisoners or summary executions by vigilance committees [vigilantes] as the local opinion leaned.

Under Spanish rule, much of coastal Alta California had been assigned to the various Missions. A few Spanish "land grants" had been made, and more in the early years of the Mexican rule. At that point there was little really desirable land left. Unemployment was high. Government jobs were granted to people of Mexico City. After Mexican Independence, Mexico withdrew financial support of the Presidios, throwing the responsibility on the local citizenry, which more often organized local unpaid militia. The possibility of a career of soldier or military officer became very limited. Some could become skilled artisans, some could find jobs on the few great ranchos, or in the Missions. For the sons of aristocratic families, there was nothing available. For the sons of lower class families, they had to compete for jobs on ranchos against liberated neophytes, who worked for subsistence. Thus came a demand that the Missions should be secularized, demoting the Mission itself to a parish church, and releasing the vast mission lands for regranting to the civilian population. Needless to say, the Church opposed this. Here the secular versus clerical struggle for power flourished for many years.

The Mexican-appointed Governor had his seat of government in Monterey, where were the only "high society" social events. Those who were not living in Monterey and part of the government were considered "hayseeds". Southern Californians had difficulty traveling to Monterey for every little bit of legal paperwork, and usually found their reception chilly. Today discussions about dividing California into two states, a Northern and a Southern California, are considered, by recently arrived Easterners, a new phenomenon. The earliest

sentiments for such a division occurred within decades of the Portolá Expedition between the Presidios of Monterey and San Diego. This same sentiment was again strong in the 1830's. A little known fact is that California actually passed a resolution for such a division in 1859 and forwarded it to Congress for approval, which was expected to pass with little trouble. The opening of the Civil War put the matter on the back-burner, and it was again forgotten by the end of the war.

In sum, the Angelenos and their rebel comrades were dedicated to instituting secular rule and wresting power from the centralized authority in Mexico City. Many also wanted to set up a separate government for southern California in Los Angeles (Bancroft 1963, III:207-208).

There are numerous variations in the stories as to what happened on that Cahuenga Pass battlefield on the forenoon of 5 December 1831, but the accounts agree at least that José María Avila of Captain Pablo Portilla's rebel forces and Captain Pacheco in the Governor's party were both killed, while Governor Victoria himself was severely wounded.

With his 150 men Portilla had halted on high ground to await Victoria's approach. With only thirty soldiers, Victoria was urged by Captain Pacheco not to risk an attack without re-enforcements and additional preparations. He ignored the counsel. Riding to within speaking distance of the rebel leaders, the governor was ordered to halt. In reply he peremptorily ordered Portilla to come over and support him as the commander and legitimate authority. The command was not obeyed, and some shots were fired. By exactly whom it is disputed. As the men scattered, two or three of the Angelenos charged instead of retreating. José María Avila, at the head of this party, shot Pacheco with a pistol as their two horses passed. As Pacheco fell fatally wounded, Avila rushed at Victoria, managing to inflict severe lance wounds on the governor. After desperate resistance Avila was unhorsed and killed by gunfire. Had it not been for Governor Victoria's wounds, he might have retaken Los Angeles and perhaps even crushed the rebellion. As it was, José María Avila had almost single-handedly deposed the governor of California.

The friends of the rash but popular José María carried his body home to his young widow, Josefa Palomares. Her aged father Cristóbal Palomares was buried 6 December 1831, and her husband José María Avila the next day 7 December 1831. Two months short of her 15th birthday when José María had chosen her as his bride the previous year, Josefa grieved doubly. She and the child that she was expecting the coming spring would have neither the support of her husband nor her father. After the birth of her daughter, Merced, the bright and educated Josefa taught a school during her teenage widowhood. She continued teaching after her second marriage to Luis Arenas in 1837. For many years her pupils included the children on Rancho San José as well as those who came from the surrounding ranchos (Garner 1939:55).

In addition to the unborn child of his second wife, José María left an orphan, Andrea, the only child of his deceased first wife, María Andrea Ignacia Yorba. Andrea's baptism on 24 January 1824 San Gabriel at the age of 2 days records the sad fact that her mother was already deceased. The young orphan was raised by her maternal uncle and godfather the widower José Antonio Yorba and his eldest daughter Soledad, who was her godmother. On reaching maturity, Andrea married Jesús Domínguez 10 January 1841 in Capistrano. María de la Merced Avila, Andrea's younger half-sister, was also baptized after the death of a parent, in this case her father, on 7 June 1832 San Gabriel. She married José Arnaz on 10 September 1847.

Long before engaging in the fatal clash with Governor Victoria and Pacheco, José María Avila had been active in the factional intrigue of local politics. In 1830 he had participated in a plot against Governor Victoria, and along with half a dozen other prominent Angelenos had been thrown into jail on the governor's orders. José María also had difficulties commandeering help for civic improvements when he was *alcalde*. He is said to have even been suspended from office for several months in 1825 on a complaint of José Joaquín Sánchez because he had placed Sánchez in irons for having refused to copy some public documents without pay. Avila asserted in his defense that since no official clerk was provided, it was the duty of any citizen to perform such tasks (Bancroft 1963, XIX:559).

There can be no doubt that the pueblos had many problems not encountered in the presidios or the missions and certainly not on the ranchos. One early account relates that the settlers in the towns gave more trouble than any other class, being free from military discipline and enjoying greater facilities for sinful dissipations. Even the isolated attempts of the officials to impose strong-arm techniques were to no avail. Dispensing justice was particularly difficult when near or distant relatives were involved.

Bruno Ignacio Avila, the youngest of Cornelio Avila's and Isabel Urquidez' children, was the only one not born in El Fuerte. His baptism on 6 October 1791 at the Mission San Ignacio, Baja, however records that his parents were only passing through, and were still considered as residents of El Fuerte. Bruno married twice, both times into old established Alta California families. The exact dates of his marriages are not known. However, Bruno, as his brother José de Santa Ana, and all others in the Hispanic world, had to go through the "*Informaciones*" or "*Diligencias Matrimonial*" process. A record does exist of the date that permission to marry was granted. The wedding ceremony usually followed quickly, sometimes on the same day. Bruno was granted permission on 25 October 1823 to marry Rosa Serrano, who had been born about 1796 San Miguel, Baja, the daughter of Francisco Serrano and María Silvas. Francisco Serrano, a member of the company of the San Diego Presidio, was at that time part of the *escolta* for the Mission San Miguel, Baja. Rosa was buried 3 July 1829 at the Plaza Cemetery. Bruno was granted permission on 15 May 1830

to marry Alvina Duarte. She had been baptized 31 March 1811 San Gabriel, the daughter of Leandro Duarte and María Briones. Bruno's children by Rosa Serrano were:

José de Santa Ana, baptized 20 August 1824 San Gabriel, living in 1844;
Francisco, baptized 6 December 1825 San Gabriel, married Bernabela Martínez
3 October 1849 Mission Santa Clara de Asís¹⁹; and
Felipa, baptized 14 September 1827 Plaza, apparently died soon.

His children by Alvina Duarte were:

José Gabriel, baptized 19 March 1831 Plaza, buried 12 January 1833 Plaza;
José Gorgonio Cornelio, baptized 9 September 1832 Plaza, buried 15 August 1834
Plaza;
María Asunción de Espiritu Santo, baptized 17 May 1834 Plaza, probably died
between 1836 and 1844;
Ramona, baptized 18 November 1836 San Gabriel, married Fernando Cadiergue
4 May 1853 Plaza, buried 5 October 1873 Plaza;
(José Antonio) Patricio, baptized 28 March 1838 Plaza, was living in 1850;
Isaca, baptized 10 June 1840 San Gabriel, married Manuel Cota 22 November
1863 Plaza;
Irenio, born about 1842, living in 1844;
Bruno Ignacio, baptized 28 July 1844 Plaza, buried 1 September 1868 Plaza;
María Loreta Cipriana, baptized 3 January 1847 Plaza, confirmed 1850 Plaza; and
María Concepción, baptized 25 March 1849 Plaza, confirmed 1850 Plaza.

Unable to cope with American law, the new language, or the Yankee taxes and interest rates, losses of homes and lands were frequent and disheartening to the Californios. One of the many victims was Bruno Avila. His Rancho Aguaje de la Centinela was mortgaged at interest of 6% per month for a total of \$1,800. During the foreclosure proceedings, his wife pleaded that the mortgage (written in English) had not been explained to them and that they had supposed the home portion of the ranch exempt — as was ordinarily the case under the older regimes. Her explanation was to no avail. The foreclosure was sustained and they were evicted from their home west of Los Angeles.

¹⁹Mission Santa Clara de Asís, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "Santa Clara".

The Avila family exemplifies the way of life of many Southern Californian families. The Church and its precepts ruled not only when and whom one could marry, and when the children were baptized and with what names; but also the social life was organized around Church festivals, marriages and baptisms. The loyalties of Californians to Spain and the Spanish form of government had lasting effects including the reluctant acceptance of US rule in 1848 to rid themselves of the offensive form of Mexican rule. The abuses of the American government in the 1850's would soon show them their error.

But the family! Indeed, Cornelio Avila had 53 grandchildren by his six sons, not counting the children of his daughters. Although not all of the grandchildren lived to adulthood, Cornelio Avila and his wife Isabel Urquidez had indeed fulfilled their obligation to Church and King to settle and populate Alta California. The family, for good or bad, whether rich or poor, was the center of the hopes and fears of the patriarchs and matriarchs of each generation down to today. This is the true story of our Saddleback Ancestors.