

## Chapter V – THREE FOUNDING FAMILIES

## San Juan Capistrano and the Argüellos

In the 1810's, there were the first rumblings of the movement for the new world colonies of Spain to throw off the yoke of the Spanish Crown. One of the earlier insurgents was Hipolyto Bouchard from the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata, (now part of Argentina). His landings along the coast of Alta California in 1818 are in many sources recorded as piratical raids, yet his object was to obtain both supplies for his movement and to enlist support for his cause. Bouchard's contacts were unsuccessful on both counts. The Californians, although underpaid and poorly supported by the Spanish Crown, remained loyal. The brush between Bouchard at San Juan Capistrano and Santiago Argüello illustrates the point.

Bouchard had made several landings along the northern California coast in 1818 when Santiago Argüello, as *alferez* of the San Diego Company, was sent north for the defense of the Mission San Juan Capistrano and its village. With warning of a possible attack, the padres and the townspeople carried what valuables they could to the mission-owned Rancho Trabuco to wait in the foothills until the privateers' departure. The *alferez* was determined to make a stand. When finally on 14 December Bouchard sent a message ashore demanding supplies, Argüello "refused the request, very likely in no gentle terms" (Engelhardt 1922:62) (Bancroft 1963, XIX:240).

The following morning a company of men set out from Bouchard's two ships and landed. Piqued by Argüello's response they carried all the firearms and ammunition they could manage. They were harassed at some distance by the defenders on horseback. The tiny militia of thirty men was no match for the forces of Bouchard however, and after a brief exchange of musketfire they soon retreated.

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Msn San Francisco  
de Asís, Dolores, 1776

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Rancho los Coyotes  
1832

3

Reid

MR

Msn San Carlos  
Borromeo de Carmelo  
1770

H

J. Serrano

This gave Bouchard full opportunity to loot and sack at will the mission stores and homes that had been left by the fleeing residents. The invaders reputedly lost only four men who deserted. No mention is made of any losses among the Californios. Little damage was done, possibly a few Indian tule huts burned, the worst loss was the wine and brandy stolen or spilt.

A belief persists that buried treasure was left behind in Trabuco Canyon at the time of the raid. A myth also lingers that three large, hand-wrought keys laced with rawhide, which were subsequently found ingrown in the bark of a tree, belonged to the chests of treasure buried at the time of the evacuation. It is said the keys came into the hands of Carlos Carrillo, who also had a map describing where the treasure was buried. Unfortunately for treasure seekers, the whereabouts of the tree upon which the keys hung - an essential point on the map - was never noted or relocated.

The first Argüello to come to Alta California was José Darío Argüello as a member of the Rivera y Moncada Expedition of 1781 to escort the original *Pobladores* for the projected Pueblo of Nuestra Señora de la Reyna de los Angeles de Porciúncula. He is reputed to have been born about 1753 at Querétaro, Mexico, and married at Altar, Sonora, about 1780, María Ignacia Moraga. She was the niece of Joaquín Moraga, a prominent military figure in the Anza expeditions. The exploits of the Argüello family which spread from the north through San Diego back into their native Mexico were many and varied. José Darío served at three Presidios, rising to the rank of *Capitan*, being *Commandante* at San Francisco, Monterey, and Santa Barbara. He was acting Governor of Alta California in 1814 and 1815, and Governor of Baja California 1815 to 1822. José Darío Argüello and Ignacia Moraga both died in Guadalajara, Mexico, he in 1828, she in 1829. The thirteen children of José Darío Argüello and his wife Ignacia Moraga were:

José Ignacio, baptized 8 June 1782 San Gabriel, died in 1818 near the Rio Yaqui, Mexico;

Luis Antonio, baptized 22 June 1784 Mission Francisco de Asís, Dolores<sup>28</sup>, married first Rafaela Sal 18 October 1806 Santa Clara, married second Soledad Ortega 30 August 1822 Santa Barbara, buried 28 March 1830 Dolores;

Gervasio, baptized 16 July 1786 Santa Barbara, married Encarnación Bernal 31 May 1803 Dolores, died in Jalisco, Mexico after 1852;

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<sup>28</sup>Mission San Francisco de Asís was located on the Dolores Creek and became known as "Mission Dolores". Hereinafter, within the vital listing of children, it will be referred to as "Dolores".

Ana Gertrudis Rudecinda, baptized 5 March 1788 Dolores, married Pedro Pablo de Cañizares 12 September 1803 Dolores, probably returned to Mexico with her husband;

María Isabel Marciala, baptized 2 July 1789 San Carlos, married Mariano Estrada 10 February 1807 Santa Barbara, buried 20 January 1835 San Carlos;

María de la Concepción Marcela, baptized 26 February 1791 Dolores, died 1857 Benicia;

Santiago, baptized 27 July 1792 San Carlos, married Pilar Ortega 30 May 1810 Santa Barbara, died Tijuana, buried 8 November 1862 San Diego;

María Asumpción, baptized 18 August 1793 San Carlos, buried 26 March 1796 San Carlos;

Paula Magdalena, baptized 10 February 1795 San Carlos, married Benito Díaz de la Vega 22 September 1810 Santa Barbara;

Barbara Isabel, baptized 7 November 1796 Dolores;

Francisco Rafael Toribio de Jesús, baptized 17 April 1798 Dolores, possibly married – Obregon in Guadalajara;

Gertrudis, baptized 11 September 1799 San Jose; and

María Dolores Guadalupe, baptized 2 July 1801 Dolores, married about 1822 to Antonio María Osio at San José del Cabo, Baja, while her father served as Governor there, buried 10 November 1827 San Carlos.

The eldest, Ignacio, became the first California born priest. Following his studies and ordination for the priesthood, he chose to work among the Indians on the Rio Yaqui, where he was killed by hostile tribes. Whereas Ignacio chose the religious life, the second-born Luis, decided on a military-political career. He acquired an extensive record as a military man prior to becoming governor, rising from *aspirante* to *capitan*. He promoted the establishment of a legislative group of representative citizens from each town or presidio. This *junta*, as it was called, helped iron out jealousies and differences between northern and southern California. The third son, Gervasio, in 1803 also enlisted in the military, retiring in 1834 as a lieutenant on full pay to Jalisco where he died after 1852.

María de la Concepción Marcela! The very name conjures up grace, beauty, and romance. Concepción is mentioned in every history of California for her tragic romance with a handsome chamberlain of the Czar of Russia. Nicolai Petrovich Rezanov was a Imperial Inspector in 1806 when he journeyed to the Russian outpost in Sitka in Alaska. Conditions were deplorable, food was needed immediately. There was not enough time to go back to Vladivostok and return. Although trade with Spanish California was forbidden, he decided to go to San Francisco for the needed food. There he was entertained in the

home of Don Darío Argüello. Through display and trading of goods with both the padres and the Presidio, he came into their good graces. There he also met Concepción Argüello. It was an unusual, intriguing love affair. For a young Spanish beauty of fifteen to fall in love with a Russian aristocrat caused consternation. It is easy to imagine the wheedling and cajoling to which the young señorita resorted in order to obtain the consent of her father to the betrothal. A more cynical view was expressed by Von Langsdorff, a journalist/naturalist with Rezanov that this was a political, diplomatic maneuver to form an alliance between the two countries.

Whatever the basis for this betrothal, there were obstacles to be overcome. They were of different branches of the Catholic Church, he, Russian Orthodox and she, Roman Catholic. Also as a member of the high aristocracy of Russia, Resanov needed permission of the Czar to marry, particularly a foreign national. He sailed with the needed supplies to Sitka, and promised to pursue permission in Europe for their marriage, both with the respective governments and the two churches.

Leaving his betrothed with her parents, the bridegroom-to-be began his return to Russia. Tragically, Rezanov died as he traveled across Siberia on his way to Moscow. Word was slow to reach his fiancée, who waited for his return in vain. Saddened, she turned to work helping others in need, first in San Francisco. After her father was transferred to Baja California, she lived with the de la Guerras in Santa Barbara and continued her charitable work. When the convent of Santa Catalina at Benicia was organized after 1850 she entered as a teaching nun. There she stayed until her death in 1857.

This was indeed an international romance. Not only was it committed to print as a historical poem by Bret Hart in this county, but it has been retold in the poem "Avos" (*Perhaps*) by the Russian poet



Concepción Argüello  
(Los Angeles County Museum  
of Natural History)

Voznesenski. More recently a Russian folk opera based on the story has become popular.<sup>29</sup>

Romanticists have associated Point Concepcion with the place of her vigil for a sign of his ship returning. Whether she did watch from that Point or not, the name does not come from her. Point Concepcion was originally named by Vizcaíno in 1602, and the name reaffirmed by the Naval portion of the 1769 Expedition as reported by Father Crespi. Nor can Point Argüello be connected to her. Point Argüello was first named thus by Commodore Vancouver in honor of her father José Darío, who was *Commandante* of the Presidio of Monterey at the time of Vancouver's visit in 1792.

### **San Juan Under Santiago Argüello**

But it is Santiago Argüello, the seventh child of José Darío, who was to leave his footprints in the soil of the Saddleback ranchos. After early military service in San Francisco as a cadet, this tall, dark-haired man with fair complexion was transferred in 1806 to Santa Barbara. There he met and in 1810 married Pilar Ortega, who had been baptized at Santa Barbara 12 October 1794, the daughter of José María Ortega and Francisca López.

Santiago Argüello was on loan to San Diego from 1818 and officially transferred to the Company of San Diego in 1827, becoming *comandante* about 1828 and later *alcalde*. In 1829 he was granted Rancho Tijuana, then part of Alta California, but now where the Californian community of San Ysidro and just across the border the Mexican city of Tijuana are located. During his residence in San Diego, Argüello took a stand opposing Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado in one of the California revolts. Unlike many of his compatriots who were urging self-government for California, Captain Argüello sought to preserve loyalty to the Mexican flag. While gaining greater autonomy for California, Alvarado pledged allegiance to Mexico and the revolt died.

Santiago and Pilar are reputed to have had twenty-two children. This is probably a misreading of the complaint of ex-Mission San Juan Capistrano residents, that his household of twenty-two was too many for them to support. Certainly their family was large as fifteen children are known to have been born, however only nine are recorded to have reached adulthood.

On 27 January 1838 Santiago Argüello had been appointed administrator of ex-Mission San Juan Capistrano, succeeding Juan José Rocha, José Antonio Pico, and Francisco

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<sup>29</sup>The editors became aware of this from a Russian archaeologist under whose direction they had dug in Russia.

Sepúlveda. His annual salary of \$1,000 was to be paid by the local Indians. Engelhardt (1920:121-122) in *San Juan Capistrano* states:

On April 8, 1839, José Delfin, an Indian neophyte of the Mission, on behalf of all his fellow neophytes, charged the administrator, Santiago Argüello, with wasting and misapplying the mission effects. . . . Governor Alvarado directed the lately appointed inspector of the missions, William Hartnell, to investigate . . . When Hartnell let the Indians, men and women, see that he had not discovered anything in the conduct of Argüello for which he should be deprived of the office, they loudly declared that, if the administrator were not removed from office, they would leave the Mission, as they were tired of filling so many mouths and of clothing so many people who composed the administrator's family.

Fr. Zalvidea tried to calm them, stating the proposed replacements would be worse. Indeed Engelhardt (1920:121) reports that Santiago Argüello "appears to have been one of the least selfish and greedy." Nonetheless, the request was granted. Considered an able civil servant with powerful influence, Argüello was then made a *subprefect* in Los Angeles.

By 1841, the entire mission was to be dismantled, selling all the remaining mission properties, and organizing the neophytes into a pueblo. It should be noted that in the allocation of theouselots three were granted to Argüellos, i.e. Ramón, Santiago and Santiago Emigdio. Governor Alvarado directed that the new pueblo be named San Juan de Argüello in honor of Don Santiago Argüello and his family. This attempt to create a new saint did not take root, and the name of San Juan Capistrano was soon restored.

On 16 February 1841 Governor Alvarado gave Santiago Argüello a grant of land on the south slope of old Saddleback about five miles north of Mission San Juan Capistrano. Prior to that time it was known as Rancho Trabuco, still a part of the mission holdings. Trabuco Creek skirted one side of the ranch, which comprised 8,000 acres. Portolá and his men had camped there in 1769, and it had been long grazed by the mission herds. By 1841 Rancho Trabuco was all that was left for aged Father Zalvidea to use to provide for "liberated" neophytes, along with what remained in the Pious Fund of the Church.

At the time of Santiago Argüello's occupancy there were corrals and a substantial adobe. He added to the house and carried on ranch operations for two years. However, his heart was not in the ranch. No longer having the satisfaction of public recognition, he apparently longed for his home on the Rancho Tijuana. The outcome was that in 1843 Argüello sold his grant to Juan Forster who afterwards saw further opportunities for expansion and petitioned the government for an additional 14,000 acres which was granted. "Rancho Trabuco" was continued as the name for the enlarged property. Santiago Argüello

returned with his wife Pilar to Rancho Tijuana, his first land grant. It would appear that he continued to maintain a townhouse in San Diego, as he is listed there in the 1851 census of San Diego County. He died in Tijuana in 1862, but was buried in San Diego. Pilar died about 1878 in Santa Clara, having outlived at least seven of her children.

The first children of Santiago Argüello and Pilar Ortega, all baptized at Santa Barbara, were:

- (María Juliana) Luisa, baptized 7 March 1812, married Agustín Zamorano 15 February 1827 San Diego Presidio, buried 12 May 1847 Plaza;
- Santiago Emigdio Ignacio, baptized 20 August 1813, married to Guadalupe Estudillo 13 November 1834 San Diego Presidio, buried 21 October 1857 in San Diego;
- Concepción Zeferina, baptized 27 August 1815, married 6 July 1842 Capistrano to Agustín Olvera for whom Olvera Street at the Los Angeles Plaza was named, buried 26 December 1853 Plaza; and
- María del Refugio Francisca Lugarda, baptized 10 February 1817, who married Juan Bandini, *viudo* 7 February 1835 San Diego Presidio, died 29 June 1891 Santa Barbara.

Now living in San Diego, Santiago's and Pilar's children began appearing in the Mission records, all baptized at the Presidio:

- José Francisco Antonio Nicomedes María, baptized 15 September 1818, married Manuela Tomasa Lugo 30 August 1843 Plaza, buried 7 August 1880 Plaza;
- Ramón Martín, baptized 30 January 1820, married Feliciana Pico 9 February 1839 San Diego Presidio, living in 1851 San Diego;
- María Antonia, baptized 11 December 1821, living in 1838;
- Luis Gonzaga Mariano, baptized 27 July 1823, buried 6 September 1823 San Diego Presidio;
- Luis Gonzaga Saturnino, baptized 2 December 1824, buried 17 September 1868 San Diego, single;
- Dolores Inéz, baptized 21 April 1826;
- José Antonio Francisco, baptized 29 December 1827, married first Nimfa Yorba of José Antonio and Benigna López 13 November 1869 at the Rancho Jesús María in Baja, recorded 5 January 1870 San Diego, married second Benigna Ramos 10 October 1899 Tijuana;

José Ignacio Celso, baptized 7 April 1830, married Rita Roles about 1860 in Tijuana, died 14 May 1883 Tijuana;

José, baptized 8 April 1833;

María Teresa Fortunata, baptized 16 October 1835, married José María Bandini, Juan Bandini's son by his first wife, 8 February 1860, buried 12 October 1878 Plaza; and

María Lugarda Saloméa, baptized 22 October 1837, buried 2 November 1839 Capistrano.

During the Yankee invasion of California, Santiago Emigdio Argüello (the eldest son of Santiago and Pilar Ortega) early allied himself with the American cause, serving as a captain in Stockton's battalion. Even as Pío Pico was hiding at the Forster home, Argüello and his brother-in-law Juan Bandini went to Forster in an attempt to find the fleeing Governor. Already fighting for the United States forces, Argüello and Bandini had hoped to dissuade Pico from leaving the country, but their efforts proved in vain.

From their arrival in Alta California the influence of the Argüellos and their kin were felt statewide. They were always involved. Whether in religious, civic, or military positions they took a stand. Although San Juan dropped "de Argüello" and restored "Capistrano" to its name, Point Argüello in Santa Barbara County still reminds today's travelers of this family.

### **Some Land Will Be My Land**

Other families were resolute and constant in their pursuit for family lands. The Ontiveros' were such a family, and Juan Pacífico was such a man. However, neither international romance, political cause, nor high office were part of their story. For the Ontiveros', to have land - their piece of land - elicited the needed perseverance to obtain it, the attention to develop it, and the determination to maintain or to part with it as they saw fit.

Juan Pacífico Ontiveros chose to carry on and to fulfill the dream of his forefathers. The progress toward effecting a new way of life did not start with either this man or with his father. It began with his grandfather, José Antonio, the first Ontiveros to come to Alta California from Sinaloa, Mexico as a soldier in the Spanish Army. He served as escort for the first group of colonists to settle in the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781.

His enlistment papers (Carpenter 1982:17) signed on 1 August 1780 at Rosario gives us the following description of José Antonio:



His stature 5 feet, 4 inches and 9 lines . . . chestnut colored hair, blue eyes, brown skin, reddish thick eyebrows, curved or hooked nose, a gash in the eyebrow of the right eye, another one above the chin, or beard and another on the left side of the forehead, a thin beard . . . in the presence of Alferez Don José Argüello.

José Antonio Ontiveros, usually known just as José, was born about 1744 at Chemetla near Rosario, Sinaloa, son of Teodoro Ontiveros and Josefa Gertrudis Niebla. Perhaps about 1767 he married there Ana María Carrasco, who had been born about 1753, daughter of José María Carrasco and Ana Birviescas. Only two children are known to have accompanied them in the 1781 Expedition of Rivera y Moncada: Juana de Dios, born about 1768; and Juan Patricio, born about 1772. María de la Assumpcion's baptism was recorded on 15 August 1783 at Mission Buenaventura. Other children were probably born, who did not survive. Additionally a family tradition states that one daughter was left in Mexico.

On arriving at San Gabriel, José Ontiveros was assigned to the Santa Barbara Company, where he served until 1785. That year he was convicted of planning to desert and was sentenced to serve additional time at Monterey, but was released from the service in a few years. As was standard practice, he was then sent to one of the pueblos as a settler. By 1790 José Ontiveros was listed in the Pueblo of Los Angeles, as a shoemaker, a trade that he may have learned while a soldier. With him were his wife and seven year old María Assumpcion, always known as just "Maria", who would marry Esteban Perez about 1803, and be buried 28 June 1825 as a widow at San Gabriel.

Juana de Dios, their eldest known child, had married Miguel Olivares at Buenaventura on 9 September 1784. Five years later, in 1790, they were listed at San Diego, where he was serving as a soldier. Miguel died in 1791 and Juana de Dios married again 24 June 1793 at San Gabriel to Juan Olivas, the widower of Dorotea Espinosa with five children. She brought two children to the marriage and they then had six children together before his death in 1806. She would serve as a midwife and godmother for many years before her burial 5 December 1846 at the Los Angeles Plaza Church. José Ontiveros, himself, did not live long, being buried 11 March 1798 at San Gabriel. His wife, Ana María survived him by nearly 26 years, being buried there 16 January 1824.

Family tradition states that at the time of the family's stop at Mission San Gabriel in 1781, José left his nine year old son, Juan Patricio, to be educated by the priests there. Juan Patricio, too, became a soldier in the Spanish Army, and married María Antonia Rodríguez on 1 June 1794. She was a daughter of one of the settler couples in the 1781 expedition, Pablo Rodríguez and Rosalía Noriega. The first child of Patricio and Antonia was Juan Pacífico Ontiveros, baptized 25 September 1795 at San Gabriel.

As Patricio was the only known son of José, Pacífico was to be the only son to carry on the family name to the next generation. The other children of Patricio and Antonia Rodríguez were:

- Tomasa, born about 1798, married Juan "Crispin" Perez 16 February 1813 at Capistrano, living in 1851;
- Felipa, baptized 14 September 1800 San Gabriel, married Hilario García 3 August 1816 at San Diego, living in 1844;
- Apolinaria, born about 1801 San Luis Rey, married Manuel Antonio Duarte 5 August 1821 San Gabriel, living in 1848;
- José Antonio Florencio, baptized 8 November 1802 San Gabriel, buried 8 March 1803 San Diego Presidio;
- Juan, baptized and buried 17 June 1805 San Diego Presidio;
- María Teresa de Jesús, baptized 25 October 1808 San Diego Mission, buried 17 December 1808 San Diego Presidio; and
- Gregoria, baptized 20 November 1809 San Diego, married Manuel Romero 29 May 1825 Ventura, buried 20 September 1883 Yorba Cemetery.

As Juan Pacífico Ontiveros grew to maturity his father Patricio served as *mayordomo* of Mission San Juan Capistrano and as *encargado de justicia* at Los Nietos. In 1825 the father was in the employ of Antonio Nieto on part of the vast acreage of Rancho Santa Gertrudis (partially situated in what became the northwesterly portion of Orange County). During this time Juan Patricio observed that there was unclaimed land just east of Los Nietos which bordered Rancho Los Coyotes, Los Bolsas and Santa Ana. He thought of making it his own.

Patricio finally submitted a petition for a grant to Governor José Figueroa in 1835. Before the Governor could act however, Juan José Nieto, owner of Rancho los Coyotes, and other neighbors raised objections. During the ensuing delay, Patricio died before he gained title.

During the delay six men would hold the office of Governor - testimony to the rapidly changing political scene. José Figueroa's reign gave way to that of José Castro. Castro served from 1835 until January of 1836 when he fled to exile in Mexico proper. Nicolás Gutiérrez managed to remain in office until May when Mariano Chico took the reins of power. By August, Gutiérrez was back in office for another three months before Juan Bautista Alvarado took over. Alvarado held office (1838-1842) despite constant attempts aimed at the overthrow of his regime.

Whether the changes in political power had any influence on Juan Pacífico's decision to renew efforts to obtain a grant or whether he simply believed he could overcome the objections of the neighboring rancheros is uncertain. He did feel a deeper commitment than ever to own the land his father had desired. In addition his own family was growing, and he wanted a place for them. A new petition was presented to Governor Alvarado for Rancho San Juan Pacífico in 1836. On 13 May 1837 under a grant approved by the governor, the 35,790 acres of Rancho San Juan or Cajón de Santa Ana (as it was thereafter designated) became his.

During the years that Juan Pacífico had been in the employ of Antonio Nieto, he married on 24 November 1825 at San Gabriel, Martína Osuna who had been baptized at Santa Barbara 31 January 1809, the daughter of José María Osuna and Antonia Marta Cota. Their children included:

María de la Resurrección, baptized 15 April 1827 San Gabriel, married 18 August 1843 Felipe Reid, (a Gabrieleño Indian, who had been adopted by Hugo Perfecto Reid, when Hugo married the widow Bartoloméa, Felipe's mother), buried 18 August 1852 San Gabriel;

Patricio, baptized 6 July 1829 San Gabriel, married Leonor Serrano on 20 January 1853 Capistrano, buried 24 March 1924 Santa Maria;

María Petra de Jesús, baptized 13 August 1831 San Gabriel, married the German immigrant August Langenberger 10 February 1850 San Gabriel, died 7 July 1867 Anaheim;

María de los Dolores, baptized 15 August 1833 San Gabriel, married Prudencio Yorba (son of Bernardo Yorba and Felipa Domínguez) 4 August 1851 San Gabriel, buried 27 November 1894 Yorba Cemetery; and

Ramón Guillermo, baptized 1 September 1835 Plaza, married Magdalena Perez (daughter of Marcos Perez and María Luisa Espinosa) 12 May 1854 San Gabriel, died 30 December 1930 La Brea, Santa Barbara County.

After a brief stay on the Rancho Los Coyotes (another Nieto property), Juan Pacífico and Martína moved to their Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana where were born:

Juan Nicolás, baptized 10 December 1837 San Gabriel, married María de los Angeles Serrano (sister of his older brother's wife) about 1856 San Fernando, died 9 September 1883 Sisquoc, Santa Barbara County;

José Florentino, baptized 7 April 1840 San Gabriel, married Tomasa Arrellanes 7 February 1864 Santa Barbara, died 9 December 1911 Santa María;  
María Rita, baptized 3 April 1842 San Gabriel, married Juan Bautista Ruíz 16 August 1859 Santa Inéz, died 19 November 1925 Garey, Santa Barbara County;  
Salvador, baptized on 20 March 1844 San Gabriel, married María (Zoraida) Olivera (daughter of Pedro Olivera and Benigna Gallardo) 29 October 1878 Santa Inéz, buried 26 December 1891 Santa María;  
José Dolores, born 19 March 1846 Rancho San Juan de Cajón de Santa Ana, married Angustia Flores 2 March 1883 Santa Inéz, died 4 March 1909 Sisquoc;  
Abraham, baptized 3 April 1848 San Gabriel, married first Doraliza Vidal (daughter of Francisco Vidal and Anita Muñoz) 27 November 1879 Santa Inéz, and married second Petra Arrellanes, 12 August 1903, died 7 September 1926 Santa María; and  
Isaac and Jacobo (twins), baptized 23 November 1851 San Gabriel, both died as infants.

A *fiesta* to celebrate a baptism or a marriage in old Alta California would have been a many splendored thing in many ways. The members of the family often came from many heritages, and the Ontiveros family is an excellent example. José Ontiveros, the first who came, is listed in the 1790 Los Angeles Padron, or census, as a *mestizo*, that is of European and New World Indian descent, although we can not determine from which side of his parentage which came. The physical description given in his enlistment, mentions three characteristics, which agree with Indian ancestry, i.e., brown skin, curved nose and thin beard. However, his blue eyes and reddish eyebrows indicate that he had at least some European blood on both sides of his family. Interestingly, in the San Diego 1790 Padron both of his elder children, Juana de Dios and Patricio, are in their own households and are listed as *mulatos*, implying that their mother was of some black descent. Juana de Dios's first husband was a *mestizo*, and Patricio's wife was the daughter of two full blooded Indians from Durango. Their sister María married a *coyote* from the Rio Yaqui District, that is one of mixed Spanish, Indian and Black descent.

Juan Pacífico, son of Patricio, married a girl, who was most probably of strictly *Español* descent, that is almost entirely European ancestry. Of their eleven children, who are known to have survived to marry, one married a San Gabrielesño neophyte; several married *españoles*; and one married an emigrant from Germany. It is interesting to note that after 1847 many of the Ontiveros given names were "Old Testament", Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,

Raquel etc., all rare in early California. In the next generation it was even more pronounced. It can be speculated that the family had Jewish traditions. In 1492, Spain decreed that all Jewish families had the choice to convert to Catholicism or leave Spain. At that time, at least a quarter of the families were Jewish and most chose to convert. Within the group of converts some proportion outwardly became Catholic, but in the privacy of the home continued their Jewish ways. For example, they did not eat pork nor work on Saturdays. Some carried on these traditions simply because that was the way their family had always lived, others actually remembered their Jewish ancestry and were referred to as "Crypto Jews". "Crypto" refers to the fact that it was hidden, because, if discovered, they were subject to the Inquisition and severe penalties. Many of these people left Spain for Mexico, and then went to the frontiers where there was less likelihood of coming to the attention of the Inquisition. With the breakdown of Catholic Church control at the time of the American Conquest, perhaps some families felt more free to express their traditions. Whether this applies to the Ontiveros' or not, there is no solid evidence.



Martina Osuna and Juan Pacifico Ontiveros  
(*Saddleback Ancestors*, 1969)

Juan Pacífico Ontiveros was reputed to have been an honest, hard worker and his Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana became prosperous. He was joined on the ranch by two of his sons, Patricio and Ramón, and his son-in-law August Langenberger, each of whom built homes for their families. The town of Placentia would one day emerge in the area where they lived.

Groves and grazing lands would have sufficed for the Ontiveros', but Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana had one product which was in truth a godsend for the settlers in the Santa Ana valley. In one of the dry canyons was a wall of rock, seeping thick black asphalt. The early ranchers discovered that this material, called *brea*, was useful in waterproofing the roofs of their adobes. Thus they made numerous visits to the Ontiveros property for supplies of it. Although we think of early Spanish homes as roofed with red tiles, this was not true in the Los Angeles-Orange County area. Typical roofs were of tules and tar, either from the La Brea Tarpits or sources such as on the Ontiveros' land.

In 1852 after California had been admitted to the Union, it was necessary for owners of the ranchos to prove title to their lands to the U.S. Government Land Commission. Much to his dismay, Juan Pacífico found it difficult to prove his claims. First, the Land Commission held that the grant issued in 1837 for Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana failed to delineate adequately its boundaries as it did for most of the grants. It was necessary to present the original petition and maps to validate the grant, but some years earlier Ontiveros had lost his copies of the documents necessary now to prove his claim. A search in the state archives was to no avail; neither the petition nor map could be found. Because of his inability to produce these relevant documents, Ontiveros' claim was initially rejected.

Undaunted, Ontiveros appealed the decision. Among those appearing in his behalf were Manuel Duarte, Bernardo Yorba, and George Hansen, who had surveyed the original grant. In 1856 the United States District Courts reversed the initial decision. Ontiveros felt sure that his title was now clear. Then the almost automatic appeal was carried to the U.S. Supreme Court. It was subsequently dismissed in December of 1857. The patent to Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana was finally signed and the case closed twenty-five years after his original filing in 1877.

Long before the case was cleared, though, Juan Pacífico had deeded some of the land to his son Patricio. Juan Pacífico had bought for himself Rancho Tepusquet located near present-day Santa María at the junction of the Sisquoc and Cuyama Rivers. Here he had built an adobe home in which he took up residence in 1857, where he lived until his burial on 9 March 1877 in San Ramón Cemetery, Sisquoc at the age of 81. His wife Martínez Osuna was buried 22 February 1898 also at San Ramon.

On 27 July 1857 George Hansen bought 1,165 acres of the Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana. Earlier Ontiveros had employed Hansen, a German immigrant and civil engineer from San Francisco, to survey his holdings. Hansen became so enamored with this land that not even the owner's remark, that the land wouldn't keep a goat, could dissuade him from his choice (Carpenter 1982:91).

The full potential of the land was not realized at the time and would not be for some years to come. When Hansen's title was confirmed, it was issued in the name of the German colonists who founded the "Mother Colony" which became Anaheim, the first town formed in Orange County after San Juan Capistrano. It is recorded that two dollars per acre (or \$2,330) was paid for the property. It included the privilege of bringing water from the Santa Ana River through the Yorbas' Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana without interference.

August Langenberger, Pacífico's son-in-law, and Benjamin Dreyfis purchased 3,900 acres of the Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana lands which had been deeded to Patricio Ontiveros by his father. This land was sold again in 1865 to another German immigrant, Daniel Kramer, for \$4,600. He lived on it with his family for fifty years. Most of what was left of the Ontiveros ranch was eventually bought by Abel Stearns, the land baron who came into ownership of many of the early Mexican grants.

With the sale of the last of the old rancho, Patricio followed the rest of his family to the Santa María rancho. Several of his sisters also went north, and the Ontiveros name disappeared from the annals of Orange County history.

### **A Man From Spain and His Family**

Writing of Francisco Serrano's son, Leandro, historian Bancroft (1966, XXII:717) states, "He was a son of a soldier of the First Expedition." To what this refers has not been determined, as Francisco first appears in the records in 1779 at San Carlos. He next appeared in the records as a *soldado de cuera* of the San Diego Company, aged 37, born Sastago. The best estimate is that he was born about 1744 in Villa de Sastago, Aragon, Spain. What his career was in the first 35 years of his life until he appears in Alta California remains a mystery. He was married 7 February 1783 at the San Diego Presidio to María Balbaneda Silvas, who had been born about 1764 in Villa de Sinaloa, daughter of José Miguel Silvas and Pascuala Lugo, who also came to Alta California by 1782. Francisco and María Balbaneda are known to have been the parents of eleven children:

Rafaela Antonia, baptized 2 March 1784 San Gabriel, buried 1 March 1784 San Gabriel;

Leandro José, baptized 27 February 1785 Capistrano, married first Presentación Yorba 26 May 1805 San Diego Presidio, married second Josefa Montalván (*informaciones* 16 June 1834) San Gabriel, buried 5 August 1852 Capistrano;

Eugenio, baptized 16 November 1786 San Diego Presidio, died before 1790;

María (Teodora) Ramona, baptized 10 November 1787 San Gabriel, married Francisco Sepúlveda (of Chapter VIII) 19 October 1802 San Diego, buried 10 January 1870 Plaza;

Rafaela, born about 1789 probably Mission San Miguel, Baja California<sup>30</sup>, married Juan Germán 15 May 1802 San Diego, buried 26 December 1846 Plaza;

Dominga, born about 1792 San Miguel Baja married first Antonio Góngora about 1807, and second Marcial Lobos on 10 August 1832 San Diego, buried 29 November 1835 Capistrano;

Rafael Thomas, born about 1794 San Miguel Baja, married Nicolasa Navarro (*informaciones* 1 September 1823) San Gabriel, buried 24 December 1848 Plaza;

Rosalía, born about 1796 probably San Miguel Baja, married Bruno Avila (of Chapter III) (*informaciones* 25 October 1823) San Gabriel, buried 3 July 1829 Plaza;

Manuela María de la Encarnación, baptized 27 March 1799 San Gabriel;

José Antonio Fernando, baptized 16 April 1804 Capistrano, married María Petra Avila (*informaciones* January 1829) San Gabriel, buried 16 March 1870 Capistrano; and

María de los Angeles, born about 1805 San Miguel Baja, married first Juan José Duarte 21 January 1821 San Gabriel, married second Januario Avila 28 April 1838 San Gabriel, buried 16 September 1844 Plaza. Estimates of her date of birth range from 1791 to 1806, and her birth place is usually given as San Miguel Baja, but also as San Luis Rey.

Don Francisco Serrano's long career included his service in the military followed in 1799 by his appointment to *alcalde* of the pueblo of Los Angeles. After that he served as *mayordomo* at Mission San Luis Rey. He was buried in the San Diego Presidio on 27

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<sup>30</sup>Mission San Miguel, Baja California, hereinafter within the vital listing of the children, will be referred to as "San Miguel Baja".



March 1808 while still holding this position. His family continued on at San Luis Rey until at least 1812, after which they moved to Los Angeles. His wife, Balbaneda Silvas was buried 22 July 1837 at the Los Angeles Plaza Church.

Don Leandro Serrano, Francisco's eldest son, was for many years *mayordomo* at Pala, the *asistencia* built by Father Peyri in 1816 and named *Capilla* de San Antonio. It was in this secluded valley at the foot of the Palomar Mountains that Don Leandro and his wife María Presentación Yorba spent the early part of their married life. Presentación had been baptized 22 November 1791 at San Diego, daughter of José Antonio Yorba and Josefa Grijalva. The children of Leandro and Presentación included:

Francisco Leandro Mateo, baptized 12 October 1809 at San Diego Presidio, married Soledad Félix about 1828, died before 1844;

José de Jesús, baptized 13 August 1812 San Diego, (served as a *padrino* in Capistrano 14 February 1835, but no further record has been found of him);

José Antonio de Jesús, baptized 17 October 1814 San Diego, married María Nieves Aguilar (of Chapter II) about 1836 probably at San Luis Rey, died after 1875 San Diego;

Raymunda, perhaps born about 1816, served as *madrina* with her brother Jesús as *padrino* in Capistrano in 1835;

María Presentación, born about 1818, married Juan Machado about 1833 (this family moved to Baja California some time after 1852), died 1 August 1899 Ensenada, Baja California<sup>31</sup>;

Rosa, born about 1820, married Lorenzo Soto about 1834 and was living in San Diego in 1851; and

Manuel, born about 1824, died in December 1846 in the Pauma Massacre.

Presentación Yorba de Serrano died before 1834, as her husband Leandro's permission to marry Josefa Montalván at the Plaza Church was recorded at Mission San Gabriel on 16 June 1834. She had been baptized 19 July 1807 at San Fernando, daughter of Laureano Montalván and Anastacia Zuñiga. Josefa, 22 years younger than Leandro, was to become the mother of at least six children:

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<sup>31</sup>Ensenada, Baja California, hereinafter within the vital listing of children, will be referred to as "Ensenada".

María Ramona Primitiva, baptized 30 November 1835 Plaza, married Jesús Burruel about 1851, buried 4 October 1853 at Capistrano;  
Leonore, baptized 17 July 1837 Plaza, married Patricio Ontiveros 20 January 1853 Capistrano, buried 10 April 1898 San Ramon;  
María de los Angeles Eustaquia, baptized 4 March 1839 Plaza, married about 1856 Juan Nicolás Ontiveros, buried 15 August 1882 Santa Maria;  
María de los Angeles, born about 1843, living in 1851;  
Leonardo, born about 1846, living in 1851; and  
María Dolores Bernarda, baptized 8 August 1848 Plaza.

About 1850 Don Leandro and his family moved to Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, ancestral home of his first wife, Presentación Yorba. They set up housekeeping in a dwelling at Santa Ana Vieja (near the then-future community of Olive, now part of Orange). His interest in Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana was based on the inheritance of his first wife, her children, and subsequent purchases he made from Felipe Peralta, an heir of one of the original grantees. At the time of Leandro's burial on 5 August 1852 at Capistrano, only eight of his thirteen children were living. These included three children of his first marriage, José Antonio de Jesús of San Diego, María Presentación Serrano de Machado, and Rosa Serrano de Soto. Josefa Montalván, his widow, was left with the young children of his second marriage.

One son of Leandro Serrano and his first wife Presentación Yorba is worthy of special mention, José Antonio. He was granted on 9 November 1844, Rancho Pauma, the site of the Pauma Massacre described in Chapter Two. He and his wife Nieves Aguilar deeded at least some of it to their sons-in-law Andrew Cassidy and José Machado in 1868. There were at least ten children, several of whom married into prominent San Diego families:

José de Jesús Salomé, baptized 29 October 1837 San Diego, married Ramona de la Merced Olivera 27 July 1873;  
José Severiano, baptized 28 February 1840 San Diego;  
María del Espiritu Santo, baptized 13 May 1841 San Diego, married José Machado (of Juan and Presentación Serrano) 25 October 1860 San Diego;  
Adelaida, born about 1842, married as his second wife, Judge Benjamin Hayes, the oft quoted diarist, 1 August 1866 San Diego, buried 1 April 1872 San Diego;  
Luis Abram, baptized 20 March 1846 San Diego, married Serafina Stewart 1 February 1870 San Diego;

Rosa, born about 1847, married Andrew Cassidy 23 September 1863 San Diego, buried 10 September 1869 in "*el Campo Santo*, Old Town, San Diego";

Ramón, born 1850, died soon;

Catalina, baptized 26 March 1853 San Diego, married Samuel Ames 2 November 1868 San Diego;

Lorenza, born about 1855, married Juan María Marron 15 July 1875 San Diego;

Juan María, born about 1858, living in 1871; and

Adolfo, born 3 October 1862, confirmed 1875 San Diego.

Don José Antonio Fernando Serrano, old Francisco's youngest son, married in 1829 Petra Avila, who had been baptized 19 October 1809 San Gabriel, daughter of Anastacio Avila and Juana Ballesteros. Don José, an expert horseman, was the *juez de campo* for the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1835, and the first years of his marriage were in residence there, as shown by the baptisms of his first seven children all at the Plaza Church.

His first grant of land on the slope of old Saddleback was received 3 May 1842 from Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. It became known as Rancho Cañada de los Alisos. This grant was supplemented by Governor Pío Pico on 27 May 1846 and confirmed by the United States government 21 October 1853. The total comprised about two and one-half leagues or approximately 10,669 acres. El Camino Real formed the southwest boundary of the property, and was adjacent to Ranchos San Joaquín and Lomas de Santiago on the west and Rancho Trabuco on the east. The first home constructed on the ranch was situated on a hill overlooking El Camino Real. Also built were detached *cocinas*, housing to provide shelter for the servants, corrals, and storehouses for the grain, wool, tallow, and hides. The last three-mentioned commodities provided the hard cash necessary to purchase imported luxuries.

On a visit to the Serrano home in the mid-fifties Judge Benjamin Hayes (1929:112) commented in his diary:



José Antonio Serrano  
(Los Angeles County Museum  
of Natural History)

Señor Serrano manages to raise a patch of corn, water melons, etc. although there is little water; it is in a deep *arroyo*, and scarcely running now, not very palatable, somewhat alkaline. He has a vineyard farther above, a couple of hundred cattle, and, if I rightly remember, thirteen children.

Unless some of the records have been lost, Judge Hayes' memory failed him. Apparently Don José Serrano and Doña Petra had "only" twelve children:

María Concepción, baptized 2 December 1829 Plaza, married Raimundo Yorba 11 May 1856 Capistrano (as his second wife);  
Juan Pablo, baptized 27 June 1831 Plaza, married first Brigida Rios 3 November 1854 Capistrano, married second Apolonia Montaña 28 June 1873 Capistrano, buried 11 April 1875 Capistrano;  
Cornelio Bernabe, baptized 13 June 1833 Plaza, married Soledad Cota 14 February 1855 Plaza, buried 11 July 1864 Plaza;  
(Visitación) Isabel, baptized 5 July 1835 Plaza, married Juan Yorba 13 July 1854 Capistrano, buried 24 December 1868 Capistrano;  
Joaquín, baptized 10 September 1837 Plaza, married Encarnación Olivares about 1860, buried 24 November 1899 Capistrano;  
José (Anastacio) de los Reyes, baptized 9 January 1840 Plaza, married Dolores Alvarado 11 January 1866 Capistrano;  
María Andrea, baptized 27 June 1840 Plaza;  
Francisco, born about 1842;  
Ruperto, baptized 19 May 1845 San Gabriel, married Delfina Sepúlveda 10 April 1886 at Santa Ana;  
Josefa, born about 1847, married Macedonio Rios 11 January 1889 Capistrano;  
María de Refugio Romualda, baptized 24 March 1850 Capistrano, perhaps married José Dolores García; and  
Carlos de Jesús, baptized 22 August 1853 Plaza.

On his visit to the Serranos, Judge Hayes (1929:112-113) further observed that:

Doña Petra was courteous and kind, like all the California ladies, who in this respect are not to be surpassed the world over. The young nephew . . . was sick with the chills, and so were several others of the children, probably owing to the water they have to drink. No physician nearer than fifty miles; they do the best they can with the herbs of the adjacent hills, many of which are excellent remedies in various diseases.

It was not an uncommon occurrence to hear the sound of horses in the night announcing the arrival of an agent (or *supercargo*, as he was called) from a merchant vessel due to arrive at Bahia de San Juan Capistrano, now Dana Point. The custom was for the agent to debark at a port farther up the coast, then ride to the intervening ranchos and advise the residents in advance of the ship's local arrival. No matter what the hour, the agent was always given a cordial reception by Don José. The two men would spend a short time discussing the cargo aboard the ship and the current market value of the rancho's saleable items. When the men grew weary of conversation - and if the agent had no more ranchos to visit that night - Don José would see that his guest lacked nothing to ensure his comfort for what remained of the night.

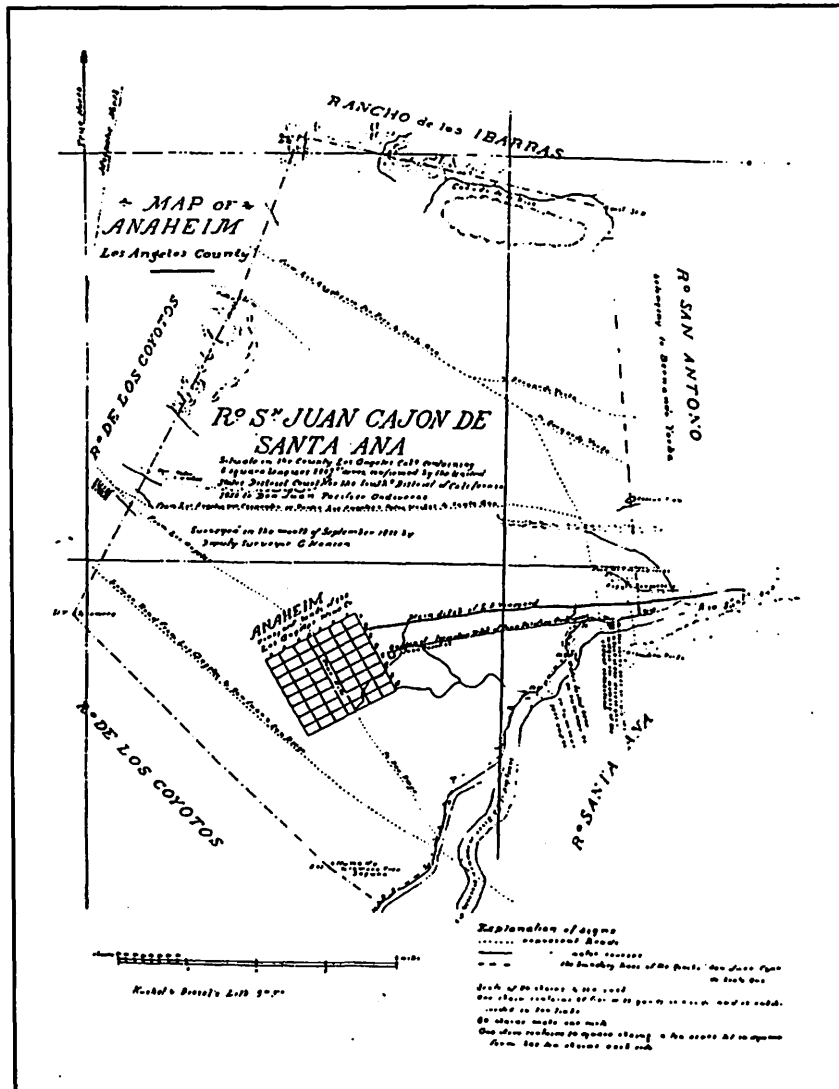
One can imagine what might have happened the following morning when the agent's visit was discovered generally. There would be great excitement throughout the rancho. The elder sons of the household would be assigned to the storehouse to tally items for loading into the carts for transport to the port. The younger boys would ride to the neighboring ranchos to discuss the news of the agent's coming and the expected arrival of the ship. In the ladies' quarters the shrill voices of the younger girls would be heard coaxing their mothers for permission to go aboard the vessel when it arrived, a privilege rarely granted to those of tender years.

Having disposed of the immediate problems, the matrons might go into the common rooms to view the sample book left by the ship's agent. From it they could begin to compile the list of orders for the goods they would want in the coming months. It might be decided that the entire family could travel to San Juan Capistrano the following morning to await the coming of the trading ship. Since the winds and tides were unpredictable, the ship might be late or early in arriving. This was of no importance to Don José's family, however, for they would be in the company of their friends and relatives. As for Don José, he would have business to transact with the ship's agent. The village of San Juan Capistrano would soon be filled with visitors, and a full-blown *fiesta* would be in progress.

The house of Don José was eventually inadequate to accommodate with ease the many visiting relatives and the family's numerous friends, so in 1860 a new home was constructed on a low hill beside the future Trabuco Road. It is said the name El Toro, which applied to both the ranch and the little village that came later, was so-called, as early as 1838 "because there was a nice, tame bull there" (Gudde 1969:342).

While in the happy times the biggest worry on the rancho was whether Don José's horses would win at the frequent races held at his nearby race course, during the later difficult times there were the smallpox epidemic and the drought of the 1860's causing the cattle to die by the thousands. Don José Serrano was buried 16 March 1870 at Capistrano. His wife Petra Avila was buried there 4 August 1878. Although his heirs later lost the

ancestral lands, the dream of lands and vast herds of stock of the Serranos, along with other soldier-settler families, had for a while come true.



The early settlers, upon their arrival, were each given a map (above) of Anaheim. The legend: " . . . . = roads; \_\_\_\_\_ = water courses; - - - = the boundary of the Rancho San Juan Cajon de Santa Ana: 80 chains to the 1/2 inch; 1 chain contains 66 feet or 22 yards or 1 rod; 1 acre contains 10 square chains. . . "

(Anaheim Public Library, Special Collections)