

A HISTORY OF THE LAS CRUCES ADOBE

By

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In its desire to secure a power base in California, the Spanish government in 1769 undertook the establishment of a series of presidios along the coast, each of which was to act as a catalyst for future colonial development. It was hoped that growth would radiate from these areas as well as along the major connecting roads. As early as August 17, 1773, we find the beginnings of a land grant system in California under Viceroy Antonio Bucareli, who issued a decree giving Commandant Rivera y Moncada the power to grant the native population land for raising sheep and cattle. Land grants were also made to citizens of the pueblos with the stipulation that the grantee reside on the land given.¹ Under Spanish rule, however, little land was actually granted. It was not until Mexico declared its independence on April 9, 1822, after 280 years of Spanish domination, that we find any significant change in land grant policies.

Between the years 1822 and 1847, Mexico encouraged colonization through the passage of liberal laws which allowed the governor to cede large tracts of land ranging from one to eleven leagues [4,428 to 48,708 acres]² in sparsely populated areas. These grants were almost always located outside the pueblos.³ The 1824 law passed by the Mexican Congress stipulated that "no one person shall be allowed to obtain the ownership of more than one square league of irrigatable land, four leagues of land dependent upon the seasons [i.e., seasonal rainfall] and six for the purpose of raising cattle."⁴

A grant was obtained by petitioning the governor and submitting a *diseño* (rough map) of the desired land. Since land was so plentiful at this early date, little stress was placed on specific boundaries; thus the *diseño* would refer to marked rocks or trees to define the property limits. This laxity in surveying and specifically defining the boundaries would prove to be the cause of serious problems after the Mexican War for those who had received land grants. The petition requesting title would indicate the state of the petitioner's Mexican citizenship, military and/or citizenship activities, as well as other relevant information concerning the assets and character of the petitioner.

Upon receipt of a request for a land grant, the governor would refer the matter to a local prefect or other local official who would verify the information in the petition, ascertain the loyalty and character of the petitioner, and check to ensure that the desired land was part of the public domain. The finished report was then returned to the governor, and it served as the determining factor if the governor had no personal relationship with the petitioner or local official. If the governor agreed to the grant, he would



Escala de Millas



- A. Lomas y Llanas de San Pedro perteneciente a la Mission de San Ynes
B. Rancho de San Ybanes o Rancho de la Mission
C. Rancho de San Ybanes
D. Rancho de San Ybanes
E. Lomas y Llanas de San Ybanes

Diseño of Rancho Las Cruces

Cover photo courtesy I. A. Bonilla.

issue a *concedo*, an official order to make ready the grant papers.⁵ Once issued, the *concedo* gave the petitioner the legal right to develop his land, even though he still lacked title. The grant was then submitted by the governor to the territorial legislature for final approval. If denied, the petitioner could appeal to the central government.

When approved, most land grants required that certain conditions be met by the grantee. Briefly, these were (1) that the grantee construct and occupy a permanent residence on the land granted within a year of the grant; (2) that the land might be fenced off if this did not interfere with public roads; (3) that the right of those living on said lands [i.e., native Indians] be respected; and (4) that the grantee have the local magistrate define and measure the boundaries, and that once defined, the grantee mark them "with fruit trees or forest trees of some utility."⁶ After this final requirement was fulfilled, the grantee, now in legal possession of the land, would ceremonially pull up grass and earth and throw it about in the four cardinal directions, symbolizing ownership.

In 1835, following the secularization of mission lands, Miguel Cordero, a soldier at the Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara, applied to the Governor of California, Mariano Chico, for a land grant outside the Presidio. The area he desired was the land on which he had been living since his retirement from military service in 1833.⁷ Cordero's family had been long established in California. His father, Mariano Cordero, along with other members of the Cordero family, were among the Spanish troops who came with Gaspar Portolá in 1769, aiding in the colonization of Monterey, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara.⁸ In view of his family heritage, his own work at the Santa Barbara Presidio, and the Mexican government's desire to settle sparsely populated areas, in 1837 Miguel Cordero was granted two leagues of land formerly belonging to Mission Santa Ynez.

Cordero's first petition, submitted to Governor Mariana Chico, noted his large family and possession of a large number of cattle as sufficient justification for a land grant. His request was approved by Chico on July 12, 1836, and the grant was confirmed by the Assembly within a month. However, before it was confirmed, Chico was forced to vacate office. On May 2, 1837, not knowing the fate of his request, Cordero submitted a second petition to Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado,⁹ this one calling attention to his livestock, military service, and old age as reasons for the grant. Alvarado, who was in Santa Barbara at this time, consented to the grant on May 8, 1837. The grant was signed on May 11 and received final approval exactly one week later.¹⁰ Along with the requested lands, Cordero also was granted the *sobrante* or lands unaccounted for between the land shown on his *diseño* and other nearby rancho lands already accounted for.¹¹ It was not until eight years later that Cordero had his boundaries officially measured and defined.¹²

While living on this property, probably as early as 1833, Miguel Cordero built his adobe house. His grant of 8512.81 acres¹³ soon consisted of two fields under cultivation, primarily with wheat and barley, a garden near his house, a vineyard containing approximately two thousand grape vines, and an orchard of fruit trees including pears, apples and peaches. Cordero, who also raised cattle, surrounded his garden, house and one field with a fence as permitted by the provisions of the grant. In 1876, Cordero's eldest son, Vicente, added a third orchard of fruit trees.¹⁴

For many people the years between 1849 and 1856 represented the height of the cattle boom. Cattle brought record high prices, and those involved in cattle raising made record profits. Many times those who got rich quick had more money than they were accustomed to: saddles allegedly laden with silver and spurs of gold were examples of this encounter with riches. Robert Cleland writes:

... a lady in Santa Barbara amused me by describing the old adobe houses, with earthen floors covered with costly rugs; four-post bedsteads with the costliest lace curtains, and those looped up with lace again; and the senora and senoritas dragging trains of massive silk and satin over the earthen floor. It must have been an odd mixture of squalor and splendor.¹⁵

Although such may not have been Cordero's situation, it is probable that he, too, partook of the high profits at the time. This is evident in the fact that Cordero did engage in the cattle business (leaving over one thousand head at the time of his death),¹⁶ although there is no extant record of his income.

From a report that as late as 1846 the Tulare Indians still fought with the Coast Indians and made frequent attacks on residents of the area, stealing horses and cattle, it is evident that Las Cruces and nearby environs were not completely settled. In 1846 there was an alleged attack on the original Las Cruces Rancho in which sixteen persons were said to have been trapped within the adobe walls in a raid by the Tulare Indians. Accounts of this raid spoke of arrows sticking out of the walls of the house. Perhaps typical of western justice of those years, the Indians were later pursued and all but one killed. The horses were returned to their owners.¹⁷

Other evidence that this area was still frontier-like is found in an article in the *Los Angeles Star*, which reported on October 20, 1855:

We well recollect of hearing of the robberies committed on the San Buenaventura and Santa Clara Rivers, in the county of Santa Barbara, the actual capture and spoilation of the Mission of Santa Buenaventura by the Indians, while Santa Ynez, Santa Rosa,

Lompos [sic], Los Alamos and other exposed Ranchos in the same country were actually stripped of all their horses.¹⁸

In early March, 1851, Miguel Cordero died suddenly after an illness of less than twenty-four hours.¹⁹ Because of his unexpected death, there was no will. His estate comprised a thousand head of cattle, a considerable number of horses, his land, and his house. It is not known how much money was left as part of his estate.

Shortly thereafter, the United States Congress passed legislation entitled "An act to ascertain and settle Private Land Claims in the State of California." Since many of the original Mexican and Spanish land grants were vague in their description of boundaries, the purpose of this act was to specify the boundary lines and determine the validity of the titles of the various grants now that California was part of the Union. The Act required recipients of Mexican land grants to appear before a Board of Land Commissioners within two years with proof of title. If no such proof was available, grantees would often lose their land. If proof was presented, and the decision was in favor of the claimant, the decision would be appealed by the United States to the U. S. District Court where the presentation of proof of title was repeated. Following a verdict in this court in favor of the claimant, the case was appealed to the U. S. Supreme Court. All this took place at the expense of the defendant. Attorneys' fees were often paid in parcels of land. After the process had reached the Supreme Court, the question of title was resolved.

A second legal process followed all this, pertaining to the patent. This latter proceeding demanded that the Surveyor General survey the land at the expense of the grantee, after which the District Court would decide whether the patent should be issued.²⁰ Basically, the Act passed in 1851 was a legal measure to delay as long as possible the official recognition by the U. S. Government of the ownership of lands by Mexicans and native Californians.* Granted, as Kathleen Lane notes, that "the task assigned to this commission was great, [it being] asked to decide upon titles to a domain larger than many kingdoms of the world, with no knowledge of the Spanish people and customs, and much less a knowledge of Mexican law,"²¹ because of this law

*While this interpretation of the California Land Act of 1851 reflects the widespread view of the Act as no more than legalized land grabbing, another view holds that the basic purpose of the Act was the removal of adjudication of land claims from Congress, to the courts, where it properly belonged. Although the Las Cruces grant was valid under Mexican law, most of the fifty-six grants made by Governor Pio Pico just before the cession of California were not. For a discussion of the facts and misconceptions regarding the California Land Act, the reader is directed to Paul Gates' article in the *California Historical Quarterly* for December, 1971.—Editor.

many of the lands granted originally to native Californians fell into the hands of bankers and lawyers during the time their cases were under legal consideration.

Since Cordero's widow, Maria Antonia Jiménez Cordero, could not read, write or speak English, she was not aware of the legal requirements of this Act, and since Santa Barbara had no newspaper at the time, there was little chance she could have known even if she had been able to read. She continued to reside on the land with her children, paying taxes on it until her death in 1857.²²

Maria Antonia also died intestate and the Rancho was distributed among the nine children in undivided interests.²³ They built their own dwellings on the land and continued to live there, breeding sheep, cattle and horses. Between 1857 and 1876, six other adobe structures were constructed on the ranch, not including additions made to Miguel's original adobe house.²⁴ The adobe presently referred to as the Las Cruces Adobe was probably built during this time, perhaps about 1860.

Also during this time, the Corderos engaged in various real estate transactions, selling undivided interests in their land probably to compensate for financial losses following a glutted cattle market in the north. In 1860 the Corderos rented land to Frank L. Birabent²⁵ and the same year Pedro Baron settled on Rancho Las Cruces, engaging primarily in merchandising and stock raising. Baron remained in Las Cruces until 1870.²⁶

The period between 1861 and 1864 was one of extremely hard times in California. During these years the inhabitants were first subjected to abnormal rains which caused serious flooding throughout the state, followed immediately by two years of drought. These forces of nature, assisted by an oversupply of cattle in the north in 1860, caused a large depreciation in the value of livestock. Fortunes were lost, the most vulnerable people being native Californians and Mexicans. Cattle were sold cheaply so that taxes could be paid. Besides the glutted northern markets and the extremes of nature, grasshoppers invaded some areas of the state, including Santa Barbara, and consumed vital summer and fall pasturage. In 1861, Pedro Carrillo noted in Santa Barbara:

Everybody in this Town is Broke not a dollar to be seen, and God bless everyone if things do not change. Cattle can be bought at any price, Real Estate is not worth anything . . .

The "Chapules" [grasshoppers] have taken possession of this Town, they have eat all the Barley, Wheat &c. &c. there is not a thing

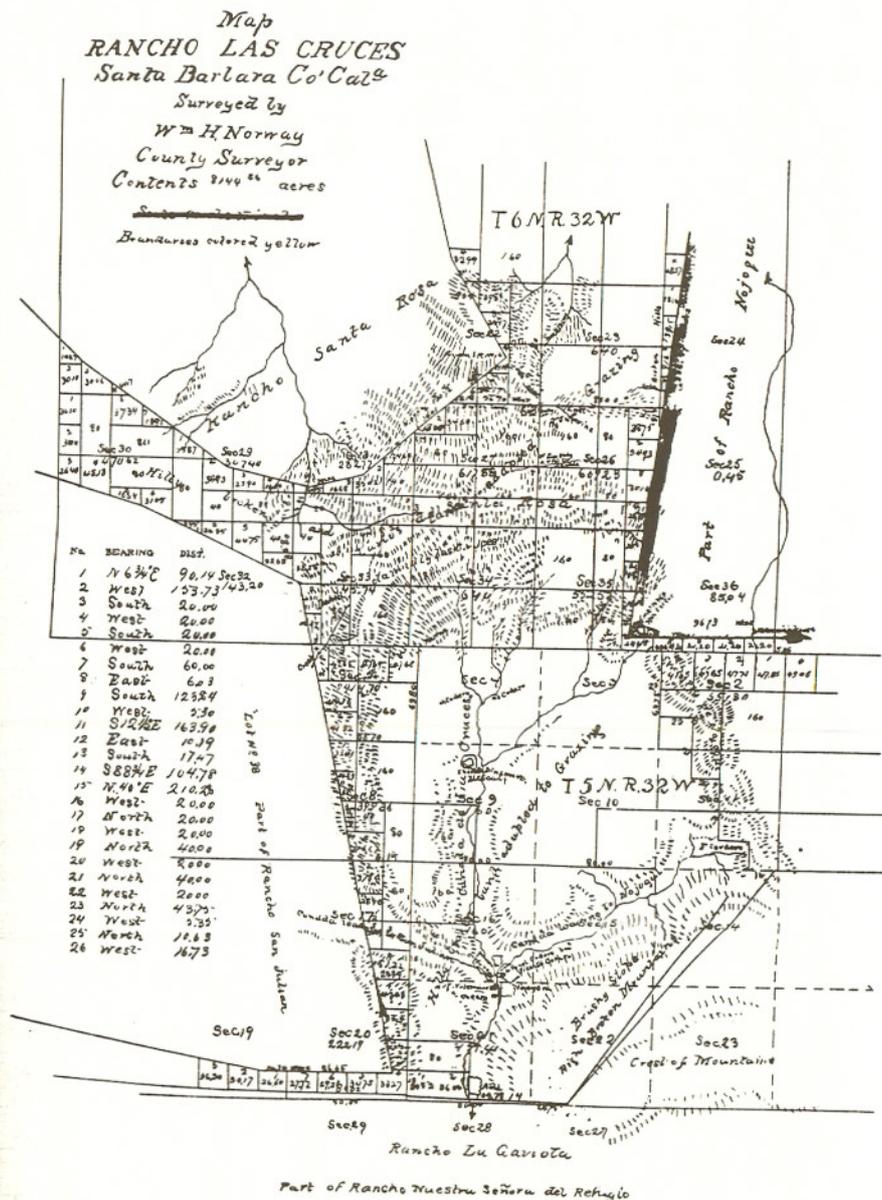
left by them, they cleaned me entirely of everything and I expect if I do not move out of Town they will eat me also. "Dam the Chapules," I have lost about two thousand dollars.²⁷

Because of the floods of 1861, which reached an extent "Unknown to the oldest inhabitant,"²⁸ the collapse of the cattle market in the north, and the *chapules*, one of the most romantic periods of California's history came to an end. By 1864 most Spanish-Americans had been forced to sell their lands in order to meet daily living expenses and to pay taxes, primarily the latter. As Cleland notes, "Reduced by mounting debts and unpaid taxes to the condition of a 'devastated grain field,' the little that was left of their once lordly estates passed forever into alien hands."²⁹

That the Corderos were affected by these disasters is unquestioned. Over nine-tenths of the cattle, horse and sheep population in Santa Barbara County are said to have died during the drought of 1863-1864.³⁰ Though no records exist of the Corderos' financial condition at this time, in their 1876 petition to Congress for the official patent it is mentioned that they were poor and lived solely off their land.³¹ This suggests that they were unable to make a financial comeback following the series of disasters of the sixties.

After the enactment of the Homestead Act of 1862, the U.S. Surveyor General began to measure tracts of land for the thousands of Yankee settlers heading west. Since the Corderos never fulfilled the requirements demanded by "An act to ascertain. . ." the Federal Government considered Rancho Las Cruces part of the public domain. Thus in the latter half of the decade, lands on Rancho Las Cruces were surveyed to be catalogued as such and therefore eligible for homesteading. Seeing this development and the increased activity in the area due to the stage lines as potential threats, the Corderos and others who had purchased undivided interests in Rancho Las Cruces³² submitted a petition to the United States Congress in 1876, requesting permission to secure their land patent. Though the title was confirmed to Vicente Cordero *et al.* on September 7, 1871,³³ without the patent the title was meaningless.

Submitted as part of their petition to Congress were numerous letters from prominent citizens of Santa Barbara attesting to the character of the Corderos and verifying that they indeed had resided on Rancho Las Cruces from 1833. Those submitting depositions included Lewis T. Burton, who had known Miguel Cordero, the original grantee of the lands, since 1831; Judge Charles Fernald; County and District Court Clerk H. P. Stone, who testified that Vicente Cordero had paid taxes on the land since 1850; Judge John Maguire; and James L. Ord. Other prominent citizens included State Senator Antonio Maria de la Guerra and the president of the Board of Supervisors, Thomas Moore.³⁴



Congress granted the Corderos permission to have their case tried before a district court (as required by "An act to ascertain . . .") and finally on August 31, 1880, the grant was confirmed.³⁵ The land survey was completed in August, 1881, and the patent was finally approved July 7, 1883, by A. C. McFarland, Commissioner of the General Land Office.³⁶

In 1864 one of the bloodiest murders in the history of Santa Barbara County took place at Las Cruces over a change of stage coach routes. During this time most distant travel was done primarily by stage. A stage stop at one's house provided the owner of the house with a substantial income, the owner providing meals for the travelers and often a night's lodging as well. This, in addition to a crew who boarded full time in order to serve the needs of the coach line, resulted in considerable revenue. Thus in 1864 a proposal to alter the existing stage line that stopped at Gaviota to a point closer to Las Cruces generated much competition for the new station. The final route approved was to pass by the house of an American, Wilson Corliss, a sheepherder owning two or three thousand head as well as an interest in the Las Cruces Ranch. Corliss, who lived with his wife and a shepherd, Franc[isc]o Coronado, a native Californian, built a house within a mile and a half of the crossroads in order to serve the new stage line.

Within a few days after they moved into their new house, Corliss and his wife were beaten and placed inside the house, the door locked from the outside, and the structure burned to the ground. Coronado was found sixteen days later, his bloody body wedged between some rocks.

The murder caused a huge uproar in town and a vigilante committee of fifty men from Santa Barbara formed at the Saint Charles Hotel, along with a sheriff's posse of fifteen men, to pursue the murderers. Following a brief inquest they drew up their plan of pursuit. "Both parties were well armed and composed of determined men whose purpose was to make short work of the murderers if found."³⁷

In a cloak-and-dagger escapade, a plan was devised whereby one group would go to Gaviota concealed in a stage with its curtains closed so that no news of their coming would precede them. The second group would wait until dusk before departing. Upon their arrival at Gaviota, the men in the stage immediately arrested the members of the Cota family, one of whom was "Cabeza Blanca," a known desperado. Suspicious-looking characters were picked up along the road by the second group, who also collected testimony from nearby residents.

After a sixteen-day investigation at the site of the murder, three major suspects emerged. These were the Williams brothers—Bill, Elize, and Steve—from Oregon, who lived fairly close to the Corlisses and who were competing to get the stage coach stop in Las Cruces.³⁸ So sure were they that they would get the new station that the brothers had had a corral and barn built for the

stage horses. They probably remodeled the interior of the house at this time as well as built the exterior wooden additions. Interior changes probably included the partitioning off of what is now the central bedroom as well as the addition of the fireplace in order to meet the new demands to be placed on the adobe as a hotel. The exterior rooms were to serve as kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms for travelers.

While the Cotas from Gaviota also had a motive, there was no evidence against them. A California woman, Ysabel Yorba, stated that one of the Williams brothers had solicited her to place strychnine in the Corliss's milk, which she delivered daily, and this testimony tended to implicate the brothers as prime suspects. It was suggested that the brothers be arrested and mock hanged until they confessed, but many of the vigilantes felt that such action was a bit rash. A vote was taken and it was decided that the evidence was circumstantial, the only proven fact being that one brother had proposed poisoning the Corliss family.

The affair finally ended in acquittal for the Williams brothers for want of concrete evidence, although it was generally believed by the townspeople that they were indeed guilty. After the excitement had died down, the oldest brother, Bill, left town to return to Oregon and shortly thereafter the two remaining brothers were murdered while camping one night in San Luis Obispo. They had left Las Cruces to move their sheep to the Tulare Valley, away from the drought-ridden areas. Their murder was evidently unrelated to the Corliss incident and appeared to have been done for money. A man named Stanner was arrested after he was discovered wearing a gold watch belonging to one of the brothers. Stanner had been working for the Williamses for only a short time and most likely he had no motive other than robbery. He was hanged for the crime.³⁹

The Williams brothers lived in what is now called the Las Cruces Adobe. While the adobe was probably built by the Corderos in the late 1850's, it is most likely that the Williams brothers built the wooden exterior additions in 1864 in anticipation of obtaining the stage route. The original barn that they erected no longer stands, the present one having been constructed in the 1880's by W. W. Hollister. The old stage road passed between the adobe and the Hollister barn.

Following the deaths of three of the Williams brothers, a fourth, A. Bascom Williams, arrived in Santa Barbara to investigate the circumstances surrounding their deaths as well as to tie up any loose business affairs of theirs. He decided in the fall of 1866 to take up residence in Las Cruces and remained there until he was elected County Clerk of Santa Barbara in 1880.⁴⁰ While living in the Las Cruces Adobe, Williams "had the unique distinction of being postmaster, deputy sheriff, constable, and justice of the peace there."⁴¹ A man of many facets, Williams also served as judge of the township court⁴²

(a position held formerly by his brother Elize)⁴³ as well as managed his adobe as a stage stop.

For four years his adobe served in this capacity. Then, from 1870 to 1872, the local stage company violated its contract with the U. S. Post Office Department. During this period the Las Cruces Adobe, while still considered the only post office in the third township of Santa Barbara, received and distributed no mail. A letter to the *Santa Barbara Press* in 1872 noted that this violation by the stage line subjected "the people of this part of the County to much inconvenience, and positive loss of time and money."⁴⁴ As postmaster, Williams received a total of \$12 per year in postage stamps as his salary, although for these two years his quarterly report simply read no mail received, none dispatched.⁴⁵

The stage company evidently remained in violation of its contract until late in 1873 when the *Santa Barbara Weekly Press* mentioned that a new mail contract had been negotiated. The new stage route was to go through Gaviota, Las Cruces, Nojoqui, and the Santa Ynez Mission, where it would connect with Bucklay.⁴⁶ This stage line, traveling between Santa Barbara and Guadalupe,⁴⁷ may have been the one owned by Don Miguel Burke.

Traffic to and from the adobe undoubtedly increased substantially after 1875 when W. W. Hollister, with Thomas and Albert Dibblee, constructed a wharf at Gaviota to export their supplies of wool. The wharf soon became the major exporting site for the farmers of the Santa Ynez and nearby valleys. Many would bring their goods to the wharf by way of the Gaviota Pass to be shipped to market by steamer, stopping overnight at the adobe before making their way back to Santa Ynez.⁴⁸

During the late 1870's, Williams was elected County Clerk of Santa Barbara and moved from Las Cruces into town. In 1877 R. J. Broughton moved into the adobe and assumed similar responsibilities as hotel manager, storekeeper, and postmaster.⁴⁹ Working at Las Cruces station, he came into contact with many people, and thus the adobe seems to have served as a stepping stone to public office, for in 1883 Broughton also became an elected official, gaining the position of Santa Barbara County sheriff.⁵⁰

It has been suggested that at this time the adobe became notorious as a brothel and whiskey emporium, serving the needs of the men on their trip back to Santa Ynez.⁵¹ However, to what extent this was true remains in question because the adobe was managed during these years by Sheriff Broughton.

On June 28, 1880, Vicente Cordero sold his share in Rancho Las Cruces to W. W. Hollister and the Dibblee brothers, local land barons, for \$2,218. The exact acreage was not specified in the sale, rather the land was simply described as Rancho Las Cruces and the neighboring ranches were named in order to define the boundaries.⁵² Cordero sold the land in 1880, although it was not until July 7, 1883, that his patent was finally confirmed.⁵³ Along

with the sale there may have been a gentlemen's agreement whereby the Corderos were permitted to continue living on the lands. As far as the occupants of the Las Cruces Adobe were concerned, there were probably few if any consequences from the change of ownership except that they paid their rent to a different landlord.

The Hollister-Dibblee empire continued to grow and by 1891 it comprised over 100,000 acres, including Ranchos San Juan, Salsipuedes, Espirada, Santa Anita, Gaviota, and Las Cruces. The entire area was referred to as the San Julian Ranch, and the partnership owned between 50,000 and 75,000 head of sheep and five hundred head of cattle.⁵⁴

With the arrival of the narrow gauge railroad at Los Olivos in 1889, farmers from Santa Ynez no longer had to make the long trip to the Gaviota wharf to ship their goods.⁵⁵ However, the loss of patronage from the Santa Ynez farmers did not hurt Las Cruces in any way, for in the same year the Southern Pacific Railroad was extended to the coast. Those stages previously using the San Marcos Pass now began taking the easier grade from Gaviota to Las Cruces.⁵⁶

Following the death of Sheriff Broughton, a Basque sheepherder, Jacob Loustalot, and his wife Rosaline rented the adobe from the Hollisters. The adobe still fulfilled its established function as stage stop, cafe, and bar, but it was no longer a hotel. The station was frequented by the numerous ranch hands working for the Hollisters, who stopped by for meals as well as drinks. During the Loustalots' stay at the adobe, a tack room was added between the house and the barn to satisfy the expanded needs of Hollister's ranch.⁵⁷

With the completion of the Southern Pacific Coast Line, use of the adobe dwindled rapidly. Although stages continued to link Solvang with the railroad at Gaviota as late as 1914,⁵⁸ the adobe only served in the capacity of cafe-bar. Jacob Loustalot died in 1916 and three years later his wife left Las Cruces. Others who lived in the adobe for short periods following the Loustalots were respectively Vicente Ortega, Oliver Johnson, and Frank Lugo.⁵⁹ The Hollisters continued to use the ranch house as a stopover when driving their cattle through the pass for shipment by the Southern Pacific. Dibblee Poett recalls driving cattle to Gaviota in the late teens, noting:

We usually left Rancho San Julian in the early morning, arriving at Las Cruces about noon, when the cattle would rest and water there for about an hour; and then go down the pass. There were usually four or five riders in the lead to warn approaching drivers or to prevent the lead cattle from straying into the creek or nearby hills.⁶⁰

Poett also notes that vaqueros wearing red bandanas rode in the lead to warn motor traffic coming up the pass to pull off the road and permit the

herd to continue. After the early twenties, cattle were still driven through the pass with the aid of members of the California Highway Patrol who would warn motorists of what was coming down the road, a practice that continued until shortly after World War II.⁶¹ Also in the immediate area during the twenties were a small store owned by John and Cesarina Loustalot and an inn run by Charles Nicholas.⁶²

Adobe houses are fragile structures, and if not cared for properly they quickly fall to ruin. A photograph of Rancho Las Cruces taken in 1940 (see cover) shows its condition about ten years after it was vacated. Since that time a new highway has been built and the adobe has remained virtually ignored, subject to much vandalism and malicious mischief. As the forces of nature take their toll, most of the shingles have blown off, the roof has caved in, and the walls have fallen over.

In October, 1967,⁶⁶ the State of California purchased Rancho Las Cruces from the Hollister Company. Since then plans have been made to restore the adobe to its condition during the most historically significant period of its use—the 1880's and 1890's. It would seem within the realm of possibility that it might once again be used (perhaps as a youth hostel) for lodging travelers making their way along the California coast. Although today it stands in its ruined state with the freeway as a backdrop, the Las Cruces Adobe serves to remind us of an important part of Santa Barbara County's history.

NOTES

1. Rose H. Avina, *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in California* (San Francisco, 1973), p. 16.
2. Between 1822 and 1847, 428 Mexican land grants were approved in California. For a complete list of these grants, see Avina, *Ibid.*, pp 36-90.
3. Charles E. Huse, *Sketch of the History and Resources of Santa Barbara City and County, California* (Santa Barbara, 1876), p. 14. Different sources quote different acreage equivalents for Spanish leagues. Huse gives 4,438 acres per league, while Avina give 4,428.
4. Robert H. Becker, *Diseños of California Ranchos: Maps of Thirty-seven Land Grants (1822-1846), from the Records of the United States District Court, San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1964), p. xii.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv. United States district courts, when later verifying individual claims of Mexican land grantees, considered the date of the *concedo* as the legal cession of land from the public domain.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
7. *Ibid.*, Chapter 28.
8. H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, 2. p. 767.
9. For text of his request, see Appendix I.
10. For text concerning the ceremony following approval, see Appendix II.
11. Becker, *loc. cit.*

12. *Ibid.* The Rancho Las Cruces was defined until this time as being bordered on the north by Rancho Santa Rosa and Nojoqui; on the northeast and east by the Cuchilla (ridge) and Nojoqui; on the south by Rancho Gaviota; and on the west by Rancho San Julian.
13. This figure represents the final size of the Ranch ultimately determined by the United States Surveyor General in 1881. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office, *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.
14. *In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces, Santa Barbara County, California. Petition to Congress by Claimants* (Washington, D. C., 1876), pp. 12, 20.
15. Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* (San Marino, 1951), p. 106.
16. *In the Matter of . . . , op. cit.*, p. 20.
17. Jesse D. Mason, *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties* (Oakland, 1883), p. 301.
18. Anonymous, "Indian Affairs in the South," *The Los Angeles Star*, Oct. 20, 1855, p. 2.
19. *In the Matter of . . . , op. cit.*, p. 21.
20. Huse, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
21. Kathleen Rosella Lane, *The Early History of Goleta* (unpublished thesis, University of Southern California, 1935), p. 33.
22. *In the Matter of . . . , op. cit.*, pp. 22, 24.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 22. Miguel's children were José Antonio, Vicente, José Gregorio de Jesus Miguel Higinio, Juan de Parma, José de Jesus, Tomas de Jesus, Isabel, Maria Reyes (died in infancy), José Salvador, Juan Jesus Antonio, and Maria Teresa (died in infancy). Santa Barbara Historical Society genealogical records.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 39, 44.
25. Owen H. O'Neill, *History of Santa Barbara County—Its People and Its Resources* (Santa Barbara, 1939), II, p. 142.
26. Relatives of Baron, Pierre and Iran Baron, purchased land at an auction held by order of the Superior Court in 1861. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, *Book of Deeds*, Book C., p. 587.
27. Cleland, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 136-137.
30. According to Huse, less than eight inches of rain fell this year (Huse, *op. cit.*, p. 14).
31. *In the Matter of . . . , op. cit.*, p. 25.
32. The nine parties listed in the 1876 Petition include: (1) Vicente Cordero; (2) Juan J. Cordero; (3) Heirs of Ysabel Cordero Valenzuela (deceased)—Refugia, Felipa, Maria Antonia, Concepción, Micaela, Gertrudis, Juan, and Eugenio; (4) A. B[ascom] Williams; (5) Thomas B. Dibblee; Albert Dibblee, and W. W. Hollister; (6) Ramon Gonzales; (7) J. M. Short; (8) O. D. Metcalf; (9) Heirs of Augustus J. Dinsmore (deceased)—Sarah, Albert, Bradley T., Fanny E., Thomas, Irwin W.
33. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, frontispiece map.
34. *In the Matter of . . . , op. cit.*, pp. 5ff.
35. Becker, *op. cit.*, Chapter 28.
36. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office, *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.
37. William A. Streeter, "Recollection of historical events in California, 1843-1878," edited by William Ellison, *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XVIII, No. 3 (1939), p. 262.
38. Elize Williams was justice of the Third Township at the time of the murder.
39. Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-264.
40. Anonymous, "A. B. Williams services to be tomorrow," *The Morning Press*, Feb. 16, 1937, p. 3, and Santa Barbara County Archives, Office of the Clerk of the Board.
41. Anonymous, "New mail routes," *Santa Barbara Weekly Press*, July 19, 1873, p. 5.
42. *The Morning Press, loc. cit.*, reported on his death in 1937 that Williams was proud of his record as judge, "for he never opened a docket but was able to get litigants together in a conference, at which they invariably settled their differences amicably out of court."
43. Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
44. Fessor, "Letter from Las Cruces," *Santa Barbara Press*, June 15, 1872, p. 2. This letter also calls attention to Las Cruces as a future rural retreat for pleasure and health seekers because of the nearby sulfur hot springs (temperature 95°), located less than a mile from the adobe.

45 *Ibid.*

46. Anonymous, "New mail routes," *loc. cit.*

47. Walker Tompkins, *Yankee Barbareños* (unpublished MS in the Santa Barbara Public Library). According to an advertisement in the *Santa Barbara Press* of March 23, 1872, page 1, in the 1870's it took forty-eight hours to travel from Santa Barbara to San Francisco via the Coast Line Stage.

In March, 1874, Burke changed the stage route to bypass Las Cruces and go through San Marcos Pass and Ballard. However, according to O'Neill (*op. cit.*, p. 460), Las Cruces was a stage stop from 1878 through 1901. It is probable that more than one stage serviced this stop, so that although Burke changed his route, other stages continued to stop at the Las Cruces Adobe.

48. Dibblee Poett, "The Gaviota Pass," *Noticias* (quarterly bulletin of the Santa Barbara Historical Society), X, No. 2 (1964), p. 8.

49. Yda Addis Storke, *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura* (Chicago, 1891), p. 491.

60. List of sheriffs of Santa Barbara County in Santa Barbara Historical Society Library.

51. Walker Tompkins, "Las Cruces Hotel ruins," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, Feb. 23, 1975, p. C-8.

52. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, *Book of Deeds*, Book W, p. 62. The land was described as bounded on the south by Rancho La Gaviota, which is part of the Rancho Nuestra Senora del Refugio; on the west by Rancho San Julian, and land of the parties of the second part (i.e., the Hollisters and Dibblees), on the north by Rancho Santa Rosa and public lands of the United States, and on the east by Rancho Nojoqui, the Cuchilla (ridge) of the Nojoqui and by public lands of the United States.

53. Santa Barbara County Surveyor's Office, *Patents*, Book A., p. 584.

54. Storke, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

55. Poett, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.

56. Tompkins, *YB*, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

57. Interview with Vicente Ortega, April 24, 1975.

58. Tompkins, *YB*, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

59. Interview with Caroline D. Henning, April 26, 1975.

60. Poett, *loc. cit.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. Interview with Caroline D. Henning, April 26, 1975.

63. Santa Barbara County Hall of Records, Book 2207, p. 1050, Oct. 10, 1967.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the following for their contributions to this study: Dr. David Gebhard, Robert Gates, Librarian of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, and members of the Las Cruces Adobe Advisory Committee. For their criticisms and aid in the final preparation of the text, further gratitude is due Sarah L. Speik, Sharon Swigart and Sonja Olsen.— B. Z.

APPENDIX I

To His Excellency, the Governor:

I, Miguel Cordero, of this vicinity, before your excellency, with due respect, appear and say: That, being desirous of devoting myself to agriculture, since I am the owner of a considerable amount of stock, and being aware that, under the laws of colonization, I must apply to your honor, as I do, asking for a grant of the place named "Las Cruces." This tract of land, although it has belonged to the ex-mission of Santa Ines, is at present unoccupied, and the said mission does not need the same. Wherefore I think that the same is in a condition to be colonized, and I think there is nothing to prevent said place from being granted.

My old age, and the military services I have given to the country, impel me to make this petition to your honor.

Wherefore I pray your honor to be pleased to grant my petition, admitting this on common paper, for want of sealed paper.

Santa Barbara, May 2d, 1837.

At the request of the petitioner.

JOSÉ DE LA GUERRA Y CARRILLO.

(Translation of Expediente, presented as Exhibit "B" at proceedings
In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces)

APPENDIX II

On the said Rancho of Las Cruces, and on the same day, month, and year, Don Miguel Cordero, a resident of the port of Santa Barbara, in company with the Alcalde and the assisting witnesses: he said, that the lands of this Rancho, having been measured, as shown by the foregoing proceedings, he took the true and corporal possession of the said lands, since they belonged to him by the just title, which was issued to him by the superior government of the department. He entered upon and passed over said lands, pulling up herbage and scattering handfuls of earth, breaking branches of trees, and making other demonstrations, as a sign of the possession, which he said he took, of said land. Whereupon I, the said Alcalde, ordered that, from that time forth, he should be considered as the owner and possessor of the same.

Of all of which the said Miguel Cordero asked a testimony for the future security of his rights, which I, the said Alcalde, gave, signing the same with the assisting witnesses.

NICOLAS A. DEN.

Assist. RAYMUNDO CARRILLO.

Assist. JOSÉ Ma. ORTEGA.

(Translation of document in support of petition
In the Matter of Rancho Las Cruces)

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