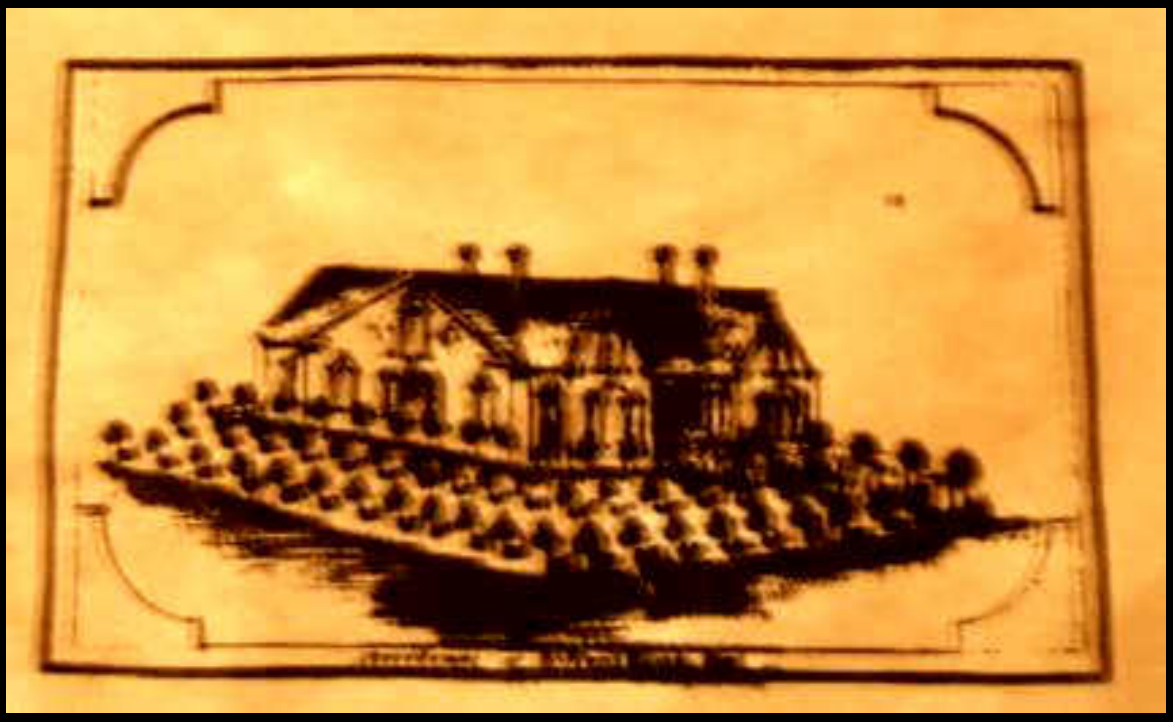
Land, Labor, and Livestock

The Uses of the Puente Hills Region, 1769-1880



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Introduction

Sprawling across the southern boundary of the San Gabriel Valley, the Puente Hills have witnessed vast changes throughout their existence, most notably within the past two-hundred and thirty-five years. In an area once inhabited by the Tongva people, the Puente Hills and surrounding environment came under the control of the Franciscan missionaries at Mission San Gabriel. During the first fifty years of the Spanish era (1769-1821), Mission San Gabriel developed agriculture and livestock production through the efforts of a seasoned Tongva labor force. By the Mexican era (1821-1848), the mission's agricultural land, which included the former Tongva village (the *rancheria* of Ahwingna), as well as the western portion of the Puente Hills were granted to Anglo settlers John Rowland and William Workman by the Mexican provincial government.[1] This land grant became known as Rancho La Puente. Today, the area that surrounds the old rancho and former Tongva village is now part of the cities of La Puente and the City of Industry. Situated within a maze of factories, warehouses, and residential buildings, the only physical representations of historic importance are the Workman-Temple Homestead Museum and the Dibble Museum that is adjacent to the two-story brick building that served as the home of John Rowland.

This paper will examine the uses of land and property ownership within the vicinity of the western part of the Puente Hills from 1769-1880. This time frame represents three distinctive eras: the Spanish, Mexican, and American. These periods serve to underscore the development of agricultural and pastoral/ranching, as well as the differentiating ideals of land ownership. By focusing on land ownership, this paper

[1] The Tongva village of Ahwigana has various spellings. Certain accounts have mentioned the village as Awigana, while another has noted it as Ajuinga. The spelling of Ahwigana will be utilized in order to be consistent with the other works on the Puente Hills.

attempts to chart the relationships between land owners and economic development in early Los Angeles. The ideas and principals of land ownership and the demarcation of the Puente Hills changed significantly during this ninety-year period. The first section of the paper explores the inclusion of the Puente Hills in the colonization process by the Spanish missionaries, roughly, from 1769 until 1821. The Puente Hills became a geographical reference point for the mission and the ranchos in the area, serving at times as a border or natural fence. The second section in the paper emphasizes the social and political changes during the Mexican era (1821-1848). The most significant events that took place during this time were the secularization of Mission San Gabriel's vast land holdings and the growth of commercial trade. Finally, the last section of my paper explores how the American government redefined land ownership through the Land Act of 1851 and land surveys, which took place during the American era from 1848 until 1880. The outcome of the Mexican-American War had brought new changes that would forever affect the lives of all residents in the San Gabriel Valley.

Primary sources from the Homestead Museum's archives and the Santa Barbara Mission Archives provide us with documents and maps that give insight to the relationship between Rancho La Puente and the Puente Hills. Original maps and land surveys offer critical understanding of how the Puente Hills were incorporated within the land grants given to John Rowland and William Workman. The *diseño* (map), for example, was one of the first maps to demark the Puente Hills within the property lines of Rancho La Puente. The land surveys that were conducted after the American conquest of California shows a clear outline of the hills and other property lines that were in the vicinity of the Puente Hills. The reports from the missionaries of Mission San Gabriel

highlight the successful agricultural production of the La Puente region and, as important, they demonstrate the ingenuity and determination of the Tongvas who labored under the watchful eye of the padres and foremen. It is unfortunate that many accounts, especially from the nineteenth century, described the indigenous people of California as being lazy and childlike or unproductive. Mission records counter this often misleading notion of the Tongvas whose legacy lives not just the mission repots and records, but also in their craftsmanship in the mission buildings and artwork.

Secondary sources such as Donald E. Rowland's *John Rowland and William Workman: Southern California Pioneers of 1841*, Richard Steven Street's *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913*, and Robert Cleland's *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* offer a much broader perspective of life in early California.[2] Rowland's book is among the few comprehensive accounts of the Rancho La Puente. The description of ranch life and of the hills gives us a picture of life in nineteenth century Los Angeles. Although the works by Cleland and Street do not exclusively deal with Rancho La Puente or the Puente Hills per se, their research provides the critical insight on the agricultural and economic development of the La Puente area during the nineteenth century.

[2] Donald E. Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman: Southern California Pioneers of 1841* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1999), Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), Robert Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1975).

The Spanish Era 1769-1821

Although the founding of the presidio and mission at San Diego in July of 1769 is often viewed as the commencement of the settlement of Spanish California, Spanish explorers such as Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, who charted the California coast in 1542, and Sebastián Vizcaíno, who discovered Monterey Bay in 1602, were the first European contacts in California. However, due to the remoteness and vast distance between California and Mexico City, colonization efforts by the Spanish on any systematic level did not begin until Russian fur trappers began to encroach from the north during the mid-eighteenth century. This prompted the Spanish Viceroy to implement plans to colonize the California region. After the founding of San Diego, Don Gaspar de Portolá led an expedition to scout potential locations for future settlements and reestablish Monterey Bay for the Spanish monarchy. It was during this expedition that Spanish accounts first mentioned the Puente Hills and marked the region as a reference point for future settlements.

Among the participants of the Monterey expedition of 1769, who provided journal accounts from the journey, were Franciscan Friar Juan Crespí, Miguel Costansó, and Portolá. Charting out a land route from San Diego to Monterey, the group traveled throughout the Southern California coastline and inner valleys. Upon entering a region of what is now known as the northern part of Orange County (possibly the La Habra area), Father Crespí provided only a vague description of a low range in the area. Within this unnamed small range, Crespí noted a large village with a small pool and what he

described as "friendly gentiles," meaning receptive indigenous people.[3] Unfortunately, Crespí did not give a detailed account of the hills. His companion, Costansó, stated that on July 30, 1769 they "ascended some hills which were quite rugged and high;" while Portolá's account only mentioned that they had traveled "for four hours on a good road, with the exception of two very steep hills."[4] Descending from a pass within the hills, the expedition entered a wide and spacious valley with "large live oak trees and sycamores."[5] Upon exploring this new valley, which Crespí named San Miguel, his account gives us the first indication of how the area came to the "La Puente." Over what is now known as the San Jose Creek, the group constructed a makeshift bridge to cross. Portolá writes: "We halted in a very large valley where there was pasture and water. Here we had to construct a bridge to cross a gully."[6] While constructing the bridge Crespí bestowed the name in his journal. This was *La Puente del arroyo del valle de San Miguel.*[7] These events had a later significance as reference points that the Spanish authorities and missionaries at San Gabriel utilized. Renaming the valley also began a marked Hispanicizing of the area as the land and indigenous peoples were incorporated into the Spanish colonial world.

September 8, 1771 marked the establishment of the first colonizing effort by the Spanish crown in the San Gabriel Valley. Franciscan missionaries Pedro Cambón and Angel Somera, along with fourteen *soldados de cuera* (leatherjacket presidio soldiers)

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[3] Juan Crespí, *A Description of Distant Roads: Original Journals of the First Expedition into California, 1796-1770 by Juan Crespí*, ed. and trans. By Alan K. Brown (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 2001), 323. The event was recorded on July 29, 1769.
[4] Miguel Costansó, *The Discovery of San Francisco Bay: The Portolá Expedition of 1769-1770, The Diary of Miguel Costansó*, ed. by Peter Browning (Lafayette, CA: Great West Books, 1992), 17. Gaspar de Portolá, *Diary of Gaspar de Portolá: During the California Expedition of 1769-1770*, eds. by Donald Eugene Smith and Frederick J. Teggart (Berkeley: University of California Press, October, 1909), 23.
[5] Crespí, *Description of Distant Roads*, 324.
[6] Portolá, *Diary*, 23.
[7] Crespí, *Description of Distant Roads*, 328.

and four muleteers composed the principal group founding Mission San Gabriel. Although many believe that the current mission site located in the present city of San Gabriel dates back to 1771, in actuality the first four years of the mission settlement took place at a location west of the Puente Hills. Descriptions from the Monterey expedition inform us that the La Puente area was a potential site for the location of a mission. Father Crespí noted in his journal in 1769 that the area around La Puente constituted a "large and excellent location for a large and abundant mission."[8] Portola, too, mentioned that the area around La Puente was considered "a good place for a mission."[9] Despite the favorable descriptions of the La Puente region, Fathers Cambón and Somera and company constructed the first mission site alongside the San Gabriel River (Rio Hondo) in the present day Whittier Narrows Recreation area.

With the founding of the mission, the Puente Hills were integrated within the realm of Mission San Gabriel. Based on the information provided by Crespí and Portolá, the notation of La Puente and nearby rancherías as well as the surrounding geographical area (which included the Puente Hills) fell under the authorities of the missionaries at San Gabriel. The Franciscan missionaries, authorized by the Spanish Viceroy in Mexico City, also became warders of the local indigenous groups (in this case the Tongvas) and the lands they used and roamed. The process known as *congregación* (congregate), forced the resettlement of the Tongvas around Mission San Gabriel. It also enabled the mission to accumulate a significant portion of land in order to expand its population and

[8] Ibid., 326.
[9] Portolá, *Diary*, 23.

agricultural production.[10] Thus, the missionaries and the colonial Catholic Church maintained control and ownership of the Puente Hills and their immediate surroundings.

The acculturation of the Tongvas into Spanish colonial society was one of the main functions of the mission system. Hispanicization of the Tongvas also included renaming their *rancherías* (villages) with Spanish names. Mission San Gabriel's first recorded baptism highlights this action. The record notes that the *ranchería* Guichi, from which a young Tongva boy originated, was renamed by the Franciscan missionary as *San Francisco de Guichi*.[11] This procedure was also applied to the *ranchería* Ahwingna, which then became known in the records as La Puente instead of its Tongva name. Many of these Hispanicized points of reference illustrate the expansive power and control of the Mission Fathers.

Mission San Gabriel's first location was marred with repeat flooding of the adjacent San Gabriel River (today the Rio Hondo), which stalled efforts to successfully grow crops in the area. This prompted the missionaries in 1775 to move the mission to its present location. It is unclear exactly why the Franciscan missionaries decided to move Mission San Gabriel farther north instead of relocating to the La Puente region given the favorable descriptions by Crespí and Portolá six years earlier. For the most part, the decision to move the mission was probably based on situating the mission settlement on a plain to offer a commanding view of the entire valley as opposed to being in a location obscured by hills.

As the California Missions expanded economically they needed to expand geographically also. When missions grew some established farms outside the original

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[10] John J. Macias, "From Colonists to Californios: The Social World of Mission San Gabriel, 1771-1834" (M.A. thesis, Claremont Graduate University, 2005), 15-16.
[11] Macias, "From Colonists to Californios," 22-23.

borders of the mission grounds. In some cases these became "estancias"-- what historian of California field laborers, Richard Street, calls a "sprawling complex of outlying ranchos and farms…." that housed indigenous labor camps as well as "storehouses, dormitories, homes for *mayordomos*, chapels, threshing floors, and wineries."[12] San Antonio de Pala located east of the present day city of Temecula was one of the notable *estancias* in the area, providing the Mission San Luis Rey community with its agricultural crops. Street argues that because certain missions "lacked some key resource, such as arable land, a conveniently located water supply, or a warm climate suitable for growing specific crops," it became necessary to establish *estancias* outside the mission compound. Another advantage was that baptized Indians could remain in or near their rancherías while working for the mission." It is also important to note that the estancias allowed Mission padres to maintain control over large numbers of indigenous workers. Neither the Mission San Gabriel nor the Mission San Luis Rey lay in unsuitable agricultural locations, but the missionaries in both wanted expanded power over the Christianized and non-Christianized Indians nearby. The struggle for dominant control over the indigenous laborers had long been a critical issue between the missions and military officials in California and it remained so into the nineteenth century. Furthermore, if the mission fathers could refer to an "estancia," rather than a "rancho," they might be able to persuade officials in Mexico to send (and pay for) an additional padre to tend the estancia's flock.

[12] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 34.

According to Hubert Howe Bancroft's *California Pastoral*, Mission San Gabriel "occupied one of the most charming spots in California."[13] In a somewhat romanticized perspective, he describes: "Its gardens abounded in oranges, grapes, figs, pomegranates, peaches, apples, limes, pears, and citrons, and the air was perfumed with its trees and flowers. Wine, brandy and cattle were here produced in great abundance."[14] The Spanish imported most of the fruits and vegetables to Mission San Gabriel via Mexico. They brought cattle and other livestock such as sheep and pigs through the land route from Sonora and Sinaloa, Mexico, a route originally established by Juan Bautista de Anza in 1774-1776. By the 1780s, Mission San Gabriel produced 2,935 bushels of wheat, 2,623 bushels of corn, as well as producing smaller quantities of beans, lentils, and garbanzos. In addition, the mission's inventory of livestock consisted of 900 head of cattle, 1,900 sheep, 1,000 goats, 140 pigs, 147 horses, and 36 mules.[15]

By the 1790s, demand for the Mission's agricultural products and livestock grew, fed by the growing population of the mission neophytes and colonial settlers in the nearby pueblo of Los Angeles and the Presidios of San Diego and Santa Barbara.[16] Part of the Spanish colonization process included the establishments of presidios and pueblos, which the mission system was required to provide agricultural substance and certain commodities such as leather goods and candles. Apart from this, with the increasing number of cattle, the mission was able to thrive by trading hide and tallow with sea merchants who visited the mission via a port at San Pedro. The Mission San Gabriel,

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[13] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral, 1769-1848* (San Francisco: The History Company, 188), 191.
[14] Bancroft, *California Pastoral*, 191.
[15] Father Zephyrin Engelhardt O.F.M., *San Gabriel Mission and the beginnings of Los Angeles* (San Gabriel, CA: Mission San Gabriel, 1927), 71.
[16] The pueblo of Los Angeles was founded in 1781, while the presidio of Santa Barbara was founded in 1784.

therefore, saw such economic prosperity that it founded the Rancho La Puente about nine miles away to provide even more agricultural products and livestock. The earliest accounts of Rancho La Puente's productivity can be found in historical accounts. Franciscan Friar Zephyrin Engelhardt noted that in 1796 Rancho La Puente "had 3,000 head of cattle and more than 4,000 sheep, besides the horses."[17] Many of the livestock roamed freely throughout Rancho La Puente and the Puente Hills.

In the missions and in their outlying ranchos and estancias, the Fathers retained control over workers by appointing an overseer--called the "mayordomo." They also appointed Christianized Natives, "alcaldes" who acted as go-betweens with the native labor force. Since it was nearly impossible for the padres to oversee every function or operation on a daily basis, the responsibilities given to the *mayordomos* and *alcaldes* ensured them favorable status among Church and military officials. *Mayordomos* typically consisted of presidio soldiers stationed at the mission. According to Street, "*mayordomos* were often paid in kind—typically six steers and six sheep annually, approximately twenty-one quarts of corn and about three quarts of beans weekly, plus all the necessary rations of candles."[18] In addition, "Those receiving wages averaged between sixty and 144 pesos per year, and sometimes were also provided with a manservant." Thus, certain and skillful *mayordomos* were able to gain and to wield considerable power and influence.[19]

The *alcaldes*, mission neophytes who represented and oversaw the indigenous mission workforce, were often selected from the more acculturated and trusted native

[17] Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission*, 66.
[18] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 44-45.
[19] Ibid., 45.

men.[20] Often the decision to appoint an *alcalde* was done through the recommendation of the *mayordomo*. It was especially important that the *alcaldes* had the ability and influence to supply other Tongva laborers not living at the mission compound. Thus, the *alcaldes* were critical in making sure that agricultural production and livestock oversight at the Mission San Gabriel and the Rancho La Puente met the needs of the colonization efforts of the Spanish authorities.

Historians believe that by the early nineteenth century Rancho La Puente was home to approximately six-hundred people.[21] Bancroft claims that many of the Mission San Gabriel's neophyte population were moved to La Puente as the agricultural land around the mission itself became depleted.[22] As I noted above, however, there are other explanations as well. On March 16, 1816, Father Zalvidéa petitioned to Governor Don Pablo Vicente de Solá for permission to construct a chapel at Rancho La Puente to minister the needs of the Tongva neophyte workers. Some historical accounts, such as Engelhardt, describe the building of a chapel in 1816; Bancroft on the other hand notes a "chapel was much needed."[23] According to the original letter from Zalvidéa to Solá, Father Zalvidéa referred to La Puente as a location three and half leagues from Mission San Gabriel and because of the distance he wanted a small chapel constructed to administer the sacraments on a daily basis for the community there.[24] Another likely reason to construct a chapel at Rancho La Puente was that it sustained the mission's control of the rancho.

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[20] Ibid., 46.
[21] Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 35. Bancroft, *History of California*, 356. Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission*, 271.
[22] Bancroft, *History of California*, 356.
[23] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California Vol. II. 1801-1824* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 356.
[24] Father José de Zalvidéa to Governor Don Pablo Vicente de Solá, May 16, 1816, transcript in the hand of Father Zalvidéa, Santa Barbara Mission Archives, Santa Barbara Mission, Santa Barbara, CA.

For awhile, in spite of the independence of Mexico from Spain and the creation of the Republic of Mexico in 1821, life at the Mission San Gabriel and its Rancho La Puente remained little changed. The Mission still maintained paternal dominance over the Tongva neophyte population at all agricultural sites and it also retained its jurisdiction over the Puente Hills. The ripple effects from Mexico City did not pose much change for at least another decade.

The Mexican Era 1821-1848

With the independence of Mexico from Spain, significant changes that took place legally, socially, and economically in Southern California, changes that affected the Puente Hills as well as the missions and their outlying properties. Land ownership changed and for the first time the Puente Hills became not just a geographical reference point, but an actual delineation of property lines for the ranchos in the area.

In Mexico, revolutionaries demand state control of Catholic Church lands and missions. Liberals in the new republic also proposed emancipating all mission neophytes, thereby dismantling the monopoly held by the missions over indigenous laborers. The secularization process began. New rulings emerging out of Mexico City such as the Colonization Act of 1824 and the *Reglamento* (the Regulation) of 1828 indicated changes ahead. Both acts sought to break the monopoly of the missions in land, agriculture, and in the hide and tallow trade. The Acts also paved the way for additional settlers to California by making land grants easier to obtain.[25] Under Spanish law, land in

[25] Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills,* 19. Cleland points out that the "Colonization Act, together with its important supplementary *Reglamento* of 1828, furnished the legal pattern for subsequent land grants in the Mexican border provinces and 'established a principle which, with slight modifications, remained in force down to the enactment of the Constitution of 1917.'" Ibid., 19-20.

California not owned by the missions could be granted only to *inválidos* (retired presidio soldiers) based on their military service on behalf of the Spanish Crown. The first land grants in the Los Angeles region were issued in 1784 to Juan José Domínguez (Rancho San Pedro), José María Verdugo (Rancho San Raphael), and Manuel Pérez Nieto (Rancho Los Nietos).[26] Under the terms of the grants, the new landowners could not infringe upon Mission San Gabriel's developing agricultural production. Furthermore, the mission retained control in areas of what became the future Mission-controlled ranchos of La Puente, San José, and La Merced.

Under the Mexican Republic, however, the government quickly offered land grants in the hundreds, as opposed to only thirty during the Spanish period. This began with the far-reaching Secularization Act of 1833. In part an effort to emancipate the neophyte population and to convert the missions into parishes serving the local inhabitants, the decree also dramatically created a new system to redistribute mission lands into private ownership. Mexican liberals argued the act was necessary because the mission system neglected the needs of the neophyte population and hindered further colonial development of California.[27] For the first time, non-soldiers could petition for land grants and authorities began granting large ranchos to male Mexican citizens. Secularization became the golden opportunity for the Mexican settlers already in California—a minority group in the province--to gain access to thousands of acres (or in this case leagues) of prime mission land and livestock, and to take control of the

[26] Macias, "From Colonists to Californios," 49.
[27] Paul Gray, *Forster vs. Pico: The Struggle for the Rancho Santa Margarita* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1998), 36. Gray notes that "on August 17, 1833, the Mexican Congress passed a bill secularizing the missions. Vice President Gómez Farías signed it the next day. This action was taken because of a longstanding belief by Mexican liberals that the missions prejudiced the welfare of the Indians and retarded further development of the underpopulated province. Although passage of the Law of Secularization was not a direct response to agitation by Californians, it was what the presidial elite in the province fervently desired." Gray, *Forster vs. Pico*, 36.

mission's indigenous labor force and economic trade. Former Mission lands now became the property of individual landowners who constructed adobe buildings to house their families. They set aside sections of land for laborers and their family members.

The Secularization Act meant not only the disintegration of the mission's monopoly on agricultural production and neophyte labor force, but the emergence of an elite class. Those able to attain a land grant gained more than wealth. They also now gained a social identity of prestige and respect as *Californios*. Owning large tracts of former mission land and large herds of livestock now conferred social prestige as well as great wealth. *Californios* typically consisted of second or third generation offspring from colonial settlers who forged a new social class in the region in order to differentiate themselves from the indigenous population and from recent immigrants from Mexico. Some Anglo settlers such as Abel Stearns, Hugo Reid, and Benjamin Wilson were accepted among the *Californios*, because a number of them intermarried.

The symbol of the so-called "Rancho Era" became the vast expanses of rancho land and the herds of cattle roaming freely around the valley and hills. This period was also known as the "Pastoral Era" for the projected image of *vacqueros* (cowboys) tending the large herds of cattle on their owners' estates. The boom years came in the late 1840s when the Gold Rush created a lucrative market for beef. The Southern California rancho owners shipped herds of their cattle to San Francisco and other parts of Northern California to feed the thousands of gold miners. That prosperity proved short lived, however, as what became a severe and long lasting drought began in the 1870s.

Impacts on the La Puente Area

Despite the political changes taking place in Mexico City in the 1820s, Mission San Gabriel maintained its property ownership, including the Puente Hills, and its control over the Tongva labor force. For awhile the newly formed Mexican Republic did not interfere with that Mission or its outlying properties although the secular authorities eyed the Mission's wealth. An 1827 inventory gave the Mission San Gabriel approximately 18,400 head of cattle, 2,400 horses, and 14,000 sheep.[28] The inventory stimulated the California territorial governor to greater efforts to take full control of the mission's diverse properties, an effort that resulted in the provincial government in California taking control of Rancho La Puente, severing its ties with the Mission San Gabriel. In this, it also assumed ownership of the Puente Hills.

Despite the secularization laws, the fathers at the Mission San Gabriel resisted the loss of their land and workers. In letters to the governor they opposed the petition of Rowland and Workman for the land. Father Esténaga argued that Rancho La Puente remained under the ownership of Mission San Gabriel, given that Rancho La Puente's land, livestock and laborers were at stake. Even the President of the California mission system, Father Narciso Durán, petitioned the governor to argue that the Mexican provincial government could not award any mission property. The legal system imposed during the Spanish era no longer held and Mexican governor Juan Bautista Alvarado did not pay much attention to the Mission's claims. In March, 1842, he granted the Mission San Gabriel's former Rancho La Puente to two Anglo men-- Rowland and Workman as part of a large land grant.

[28] Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission*, 141.

One reason for John Rowland's success with Governor Alvarado was that when he arrived in California via Taos, New Mexico, Rowland visited the California governor in Monterey to discuss the Rancho La Puente. Governor Alvarado asked Rowland why he was interested in the rancho and Rowland responded that he was "greatly distressed" by the living conditions of the Tongva neophytes and wanted to "give employment to many of them."[29] Historians point out that Rowland's proposal to the governor was not so much of an act of kindness towards the Tongvas, but rather an informal petition to be granted control over the Tongva laborers who resided on the former *estancía* and *ranchería*. With an assured labor force, Rowland and Workman could quickly reestablish Rancho La Puente's agricultural and livestock production to levels achieved during the mission period. Apart from his proposal to employ the Tongvas, Rowland offered gold to compensate for the "taxes and assessments" towards Rancho La Puente, which the governor accepted. Such reassurances of intent and hard cash reduced the time it took to grant the property to Rowland and Workman.[30] When they took over the former Rancho La Puente in1842, therefore, they gained control over the former *estancia's* acres of land, agricultural and livestock production, as well as the Tongva laborers living within the realm of the La Puente region.

The initial petition of 1842 awarded Rowland 18,000 acres of land exclusively so Rowland, once again, had to petition Governor Alvarado to include Workman in the official grant. Alvarado approved the request and finally on March 22, 1842 officially granted Rancho La Puente to both Rowland and Workman.[31] By 1845, through the

[29] Ibid., 62.
[30] Ibid., 62.
[31] Ibid.,, 67.

men's close friendship with then Governor Pio Pico, he extended the land grant to 48,000 acres and included both Rowland and Workman in the grant.

Indeed, the arrival of John Rowland and William Workman in the San Gabriel Valley marked a new chapter in the history of the Puente Hills. Dan Rowland describes the surrounding area of the Rancho de la Puente when Rowland and Workman first arrived in 1841:

> Southeast from the Mission San Gabriel and across the Río San Gabriel, the two men [John Rowland and William Workman] found a stretch of country containing thousands of acres of excellent grazing and wheat lands, most of which had been used as a station in support of the Mission San Gabriel. On the south of the plain rose the hills known today as the Puente Hills, through which the San Gabriel River had cut a two mile wide gap, the *Paso de Bartolo* (the Whittier Narrows).[32]

The land grant giving Rowland and Workman their new Rancho La Puente is the first actual recorded demarcation of the Puente Hills. The awarding of the land grant required a *diseño* to establish the boundaries of the rancho. Isaac Given, a friend of Rowland and Workman, surveyed the land that constituted Rancho La Puente and drew the map that was then given to Mexican authorities in order to create the land title for both Rowland and Workman.[33] The process of generating a land survey during this period was quite interesting. Given and two *vaqueros* utilized a fifty-yard chain with two poles at each end. With this simple instrument, "Given would mark one corner of the land grant arbitrarily, sight a compass heading down a proposed property line, find a landmark (such as a tree) on this heading a mile or so distant, point out the object to the vaqueros, and instruct them to go in a straight line toward the landmark while keeping tally of the

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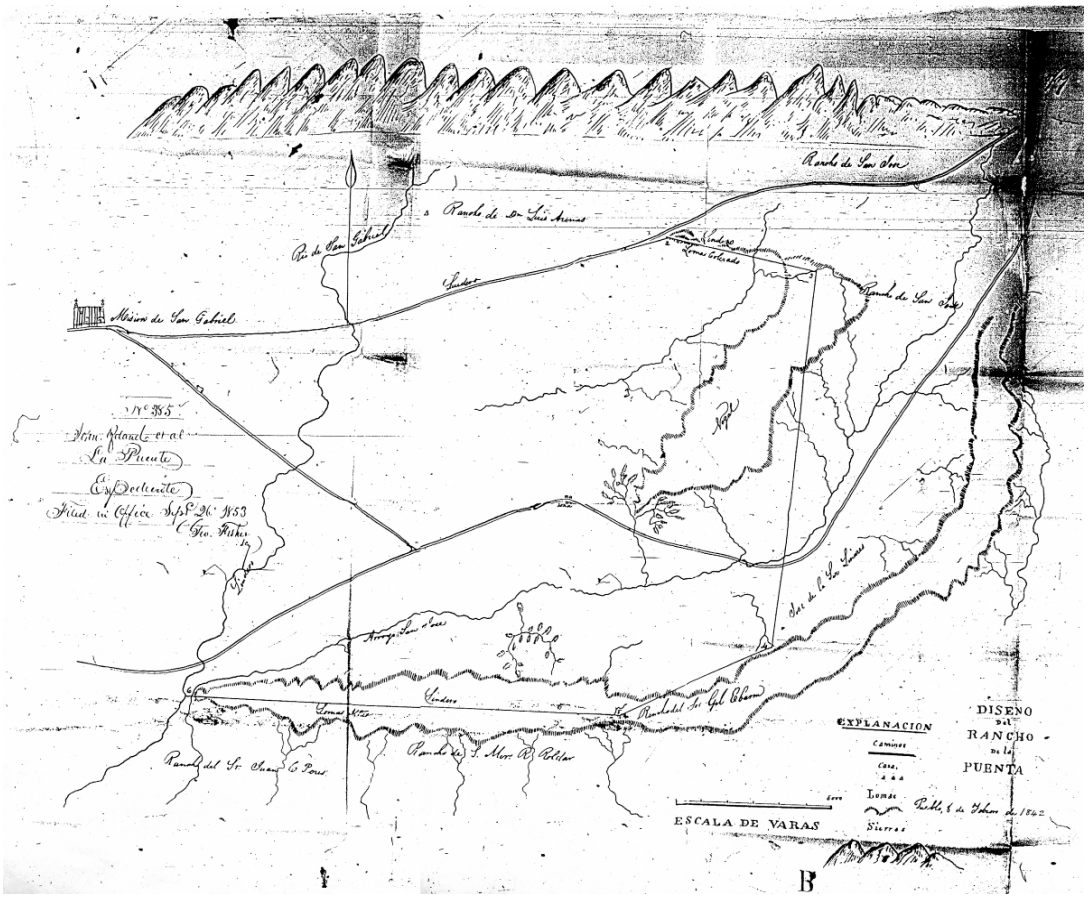
[32] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 61.
[33] Ibid., 70. Rowland notes that Given was an engineer who also had accompanied Rowland and Workman from New Mexico to California. Rowland does not give any other specifics or any background information on Given.

number of lengths they traveled."[34] The Puente Hills served as a principal landmark for this surveying purpose. Given outlines the Puente Hills range in the *Diseno del Rancho de la Puente*, denoting the southern extent of the rancho.[35]



Map 1. Photocopy of the original Mexican era diseño or land map, which established property lines via natural boundaries such as hills, rivers, and routes. Every Mexican land grant was required to submit a diseño in order to claim any of the former mission lands. (Courtesy of the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.)

The property line Given drew appeared to incorporate half of the western part of the Puente Hills up to about the location of La Habra. From that point, the property line followed the base of the hills, then northward away from the Puente Hills. As a result,

[34] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 70.
[35] Issac Givens (surveyor), *Diseño Del Rancho De La Puente*, 1842 (photocopy), viewed at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.

the Puente Hills were no longer just a geographical reference point for Mission San Gabriel; rather, the hills became part of the property of Rancho La Puente, although it is unclear to what extent the hills did fall under the ownership of Rowland and Workman when the *diseño* was first created.

At the time of awarding the Rancho La Puente to Rowland and Workman, various ranchos surrounded the Puente Hills. Rancho La Puente bordered on the northern section of the Puente Hills, Rancho La Habra was located in the middle section of the hills, and Rancho Paseo de Bartolo Viejo was situated to the southwestern base of the hills. To the east lay Ranchos Rincon de la Brea and Cajon de San José. In describing the surrounding area of Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo, W.W. Robinson stated:

> The site of Whittier before the white men came was an unoccupied slope at the western end of the rolling Puente Hills. Live oaks dotted the hillsides. Sycamores marked the course of the arroyos, including Turnbull Canyon, that came down over the high land to meet the San Gabriel River hidden by green willows. Between hills and river were several tiny lakes.[36]

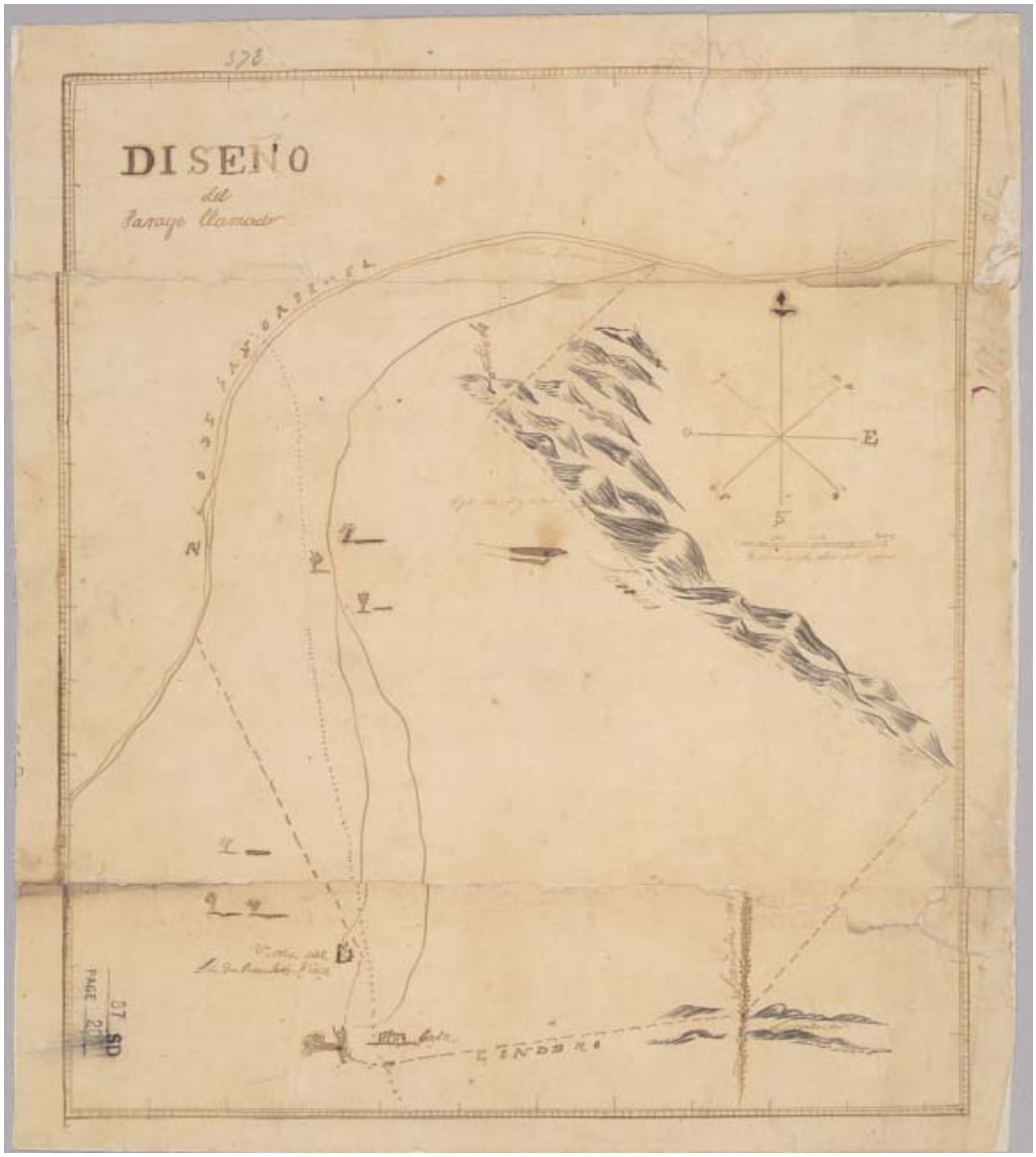
Robinson incorporated the Puente Hills in his description of the history of the rancho. He also pointed out that the Tongvas, who lived in the vicinity, traveled "into the hills and to the springs in Turnbull Canyon." The hills allowed the Tongvas to catch glimpses of the ocean.[37]

[36] W.W. Robinson, *Ranchos Become Cities* (Pasadena: San Pasqual Press, 1939), 62.
[37] Robinson, *Ranchos Become Cities*, 63.

In September of 1833, Juan Crispin Perez, a settler who lived on Rancho Los Nietos, petitioned the governor for a rancho in the area. Governor Figueroa granted the Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo to Perez on June 12, 1835. Historian Robinson notes that the rancho adjoined "the Santa Gertrudis Rancho on the north, and extending between the Puente Hills and the river, thus including all of Whittier."[38] By the late 1840s, Pio Pico purchased the Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo from the heirs of Juan Crispin Perez. Pico then commissioned to have an adobe house built, which today is located alongside Whittier Boulevard, and named it "El Ranchito" because of the rancho's nine thousand acres of land. According to the *diseño*, which was drawn by Abel Stearns, the property line of the rancho extended up to the Puente Hills, but did not include a significant portion of the hills as Rancho La Puente did on the northern side of the Puente Hills. However, the rancho's boundary did cross over a small section of the Puente Hills, which more than likely included Sycamore Canyon.[39]

[38] Ibid., 66.

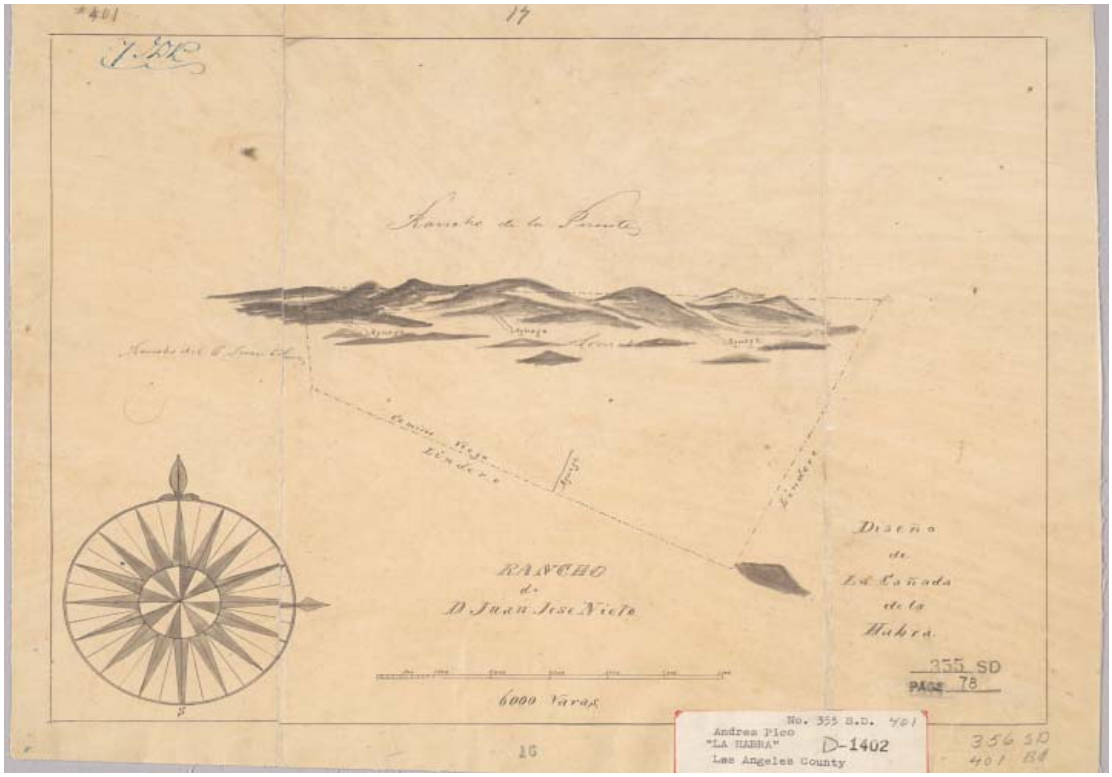
[39] Abel Stearns (surveyor), *Diseño del parage llamado Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo*, 1850s?, viewed online at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ (accessed 8-21-06). The Bancroft Library notes that the *diseño* retraced the 1835 land grant and that Pio Pico was a claimant to the land at the time of trial before the Land Commission in San Francisco.



Map 2. The diseño of Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo, which was part of Pio Pico's property during the Mexican era, shows the property line extending up to the base of the Puente Hills. (Courtesy of the Online Archive of California. Originals located at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

In June of 1840, Rancho La Habra was granted to Mariano B. Roldan by Mexican governor Juan B. Alvarado. The rancho was once part of Mission San Gabriel's vast land holdings and much like Rancho La Puente was lost due to secularization. It is unclear as to when Andrés Pico (brother of Pio Pico) took possession of Rancho La Habra. Robinson notes that the six thousand acre rancho was patented in the 1850s by Pico and

Francesca Uribe de Ocampo, widow of Francisco Ocampo.[40] The *diseño de La Cañada de la Habra* provides an interesting outline of the property in relation to the Puente Hills. Based on the map, it appears that the northern border of the rancho consisted of the middle and eastern sections of the Puente Hills.[41] Although the original *diseño* does not provide a detailed outline of the land grant, it is possible that Powder Canyon was included in the land grant of Rancho La Habra.



Map 3. The diseño of Rancho La Habra was part of Mission San Gabriel's vast land holdings. The Puente Hills separated the property between Andres Pico and John Rowland and William Workman. (Courtesy of the Online Archive of California. Originals located at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

[40] Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills*, 24-25. Robinson, *Ranchos Become Cities*, 221. Robinson provides a list of ranchos that were confirmed by the U.S. Government during the 1850s and 1860s. This process is explained in the following section of the paper.

[41] Surveyor unknown, *Diseño de La Cañada de la Habra*, 1840s?, viewed online at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ (accessed 8-21-06).

At a time when no fences distinguished the property lines of the ranchos, cattle roamed freely with no major objections from land owners. The only claim to ownership was the distinctive rancho markings that were embedded on the side of each claimed cattle. At the height of Mission San Gabriel's pastoral economy their cattle brand mark was in the shape of a T and an S, which stood for the Spanish word *temblors* (earthquakes). The Rancho La Puente's cattle brand incorporated a W, while Pio Pico's cattle were marked with an oval shaped symbol. Yet, with the vast number of cattle and especially with wide open spaces, rancho owners were not at all distraught over which cattle were grazing in different properties. These ranchos were all dependent on the hide and tallow trade and thus, cattle became an important commodity in relation to the vast leagues of land. The American government's belief in Manifest Destiny and more importantly the outcome of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) redefined the concept of land ownership and agricultural production in California. For the Puente Hills, the American government established the actual property lines of the hills.

The American Era 1848-1880

After the 1848 war with Mexico, the United States claimed California (along with other areas of the southwest) and a new system of legal land ownership began. Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed by the U.S. and Mexico in 1848, the U.S. agreed to protect and uphold earlier land grants awarded during the Spanish and Mexican periods. Specifically, Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty "promised full and

complete protection of all property rights to Mexicans."[42] For example, Article VIII stated:

> In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, their heirs and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract shall enjoy ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.[43]

Although the language of the treaty suggests that Mexican land grants and property rights would be upheld by the U.S. government, the U.S. Congress passed a Land Reform Act of 1851 that challenged the Spanish and Mexican era land grants by forcing land owners to prove the validity of their grants with official written documents and land surveys of their property.

To oversee these land claims, the Act established the Board of Land Commissioners, which consisted of a three member commission based in San Francisco.[44] The main purpose of the commission was to review and determine the validity of each land grant. However, the provisions of the Land Reform Act created inconveniences for many of the rancho owners who lived far from San Francisco. Robert Cleland points out that since the commission held court in San Francisco, "it was necessary for southern landowners to take their lawyers, witnesses, and documents to the northern city."[45] Furthermore, the commission took the position, says historian Douglas Monroy, "that all titles were invalid until proved otherwise."[46] Monroy notes that "This

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[42] W.W. Robinson, *Land in California: The Story of Mission Lands, Ranchos, Squatters, Mining Claims, Railroad Grants, Land Scrip, Homesteads* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 100.
[43] Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 190.
[44] Robinson, *Land in California*, 100.
[45] Cleland, *Cattle on a Thousand Hills*, 40.
[46] Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 203.

policy put an enormous burden on the Californios, who did not understand the workings of a system based on common law or even the language in which it was implemented."[47]

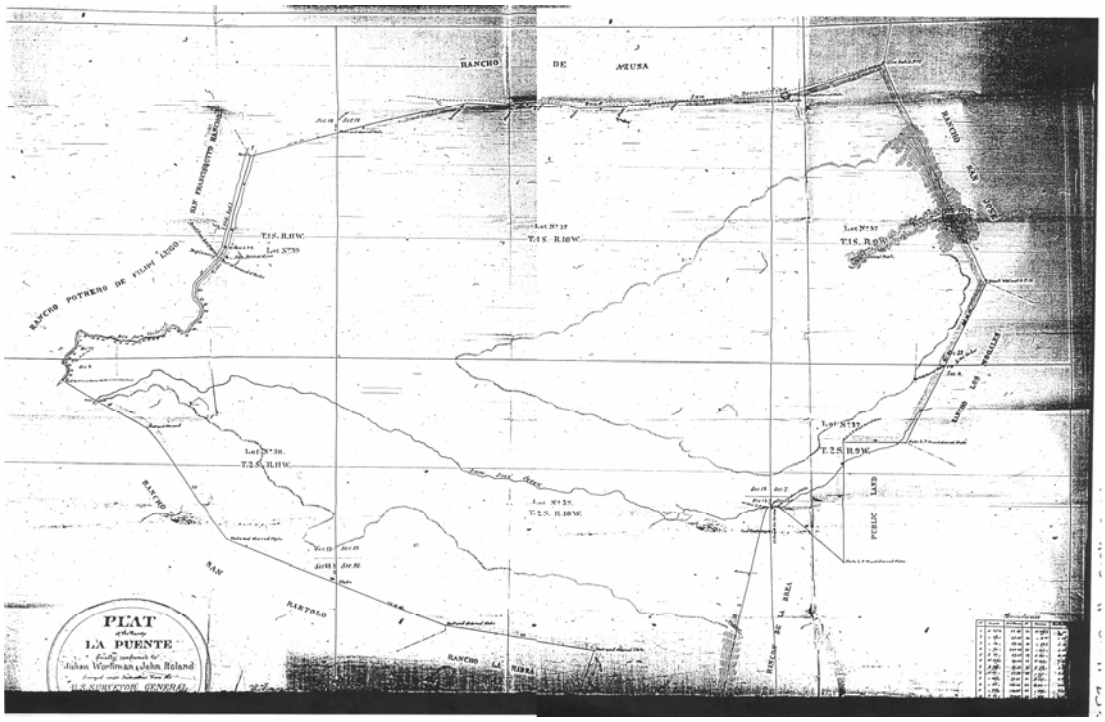
These legal changes brought into question the actual ownership of the Puente Hills for if Rowland and Workman or any other land holders did not claim the entire Puente Hills as part of their land grant, then the remaining sections of the hills were to be claimed as public property owned and regulated by the American government. Unlike the mission era when the entire Puente Hills were part of the Mission San Gabriel's property jurisdiction, the American government, or in this case the land commission, clearly defined the demarcation of the Puente Hills. Land surveys conducted in the 1850s and 1860s, however, highlighted the fact that a portion of the hills laid within the property lines of Rancho La Puente.

Even though Rowland and Workman had a valid written document from the earlier Mexican government giving them full ownership of Rancho La Puente and their portion of the Puente Hills, the U.S. government mandated that they still had to prove they were the rightful owners. According to the U.S. court documents, both Rowland and Workman entered their claim to the Land Commission on October 9, 1852 in order to confirm the title of the Rancho La Puente. By 1854, the commission validated the shared claim by stating, "the land of which confirmation is made is situated in the county of Los Angeles, and is known by the name of La Puente, being the same that was granted to the claimants, John Rowland and William Workman, by Governor Pico, on the 22nd of July, 1845, and is now held and occupied by them."[48] The U.S. government later appealed the decision made by the Land Commission and challenged the size of the original land grant

[47] Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 203-204.
[48] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 120.

which had been 18,000 acres in 1842, extended to 48,000 acres in 1845. The U.S. District Court ruled on December 1856 that the 1845 land grant issued by Pico was "good and valid;" yet, the court decreed "that the claim could be no larger than eleven square leagues [a league being 4428.4 acres], customary for Mexican landgrants."[49]

To affirm property lines, a land survey was conducted of the rancho and was submitted to the "commissioner of the General Land Office in August 1859."[50] The 1857 land survey, conducted by Henry Hancock for the U.S. Surveyor General, retraced the same basic rancho boundary as in the 1842 *diseño* made by Isaac Given for the Mexican government.[51]



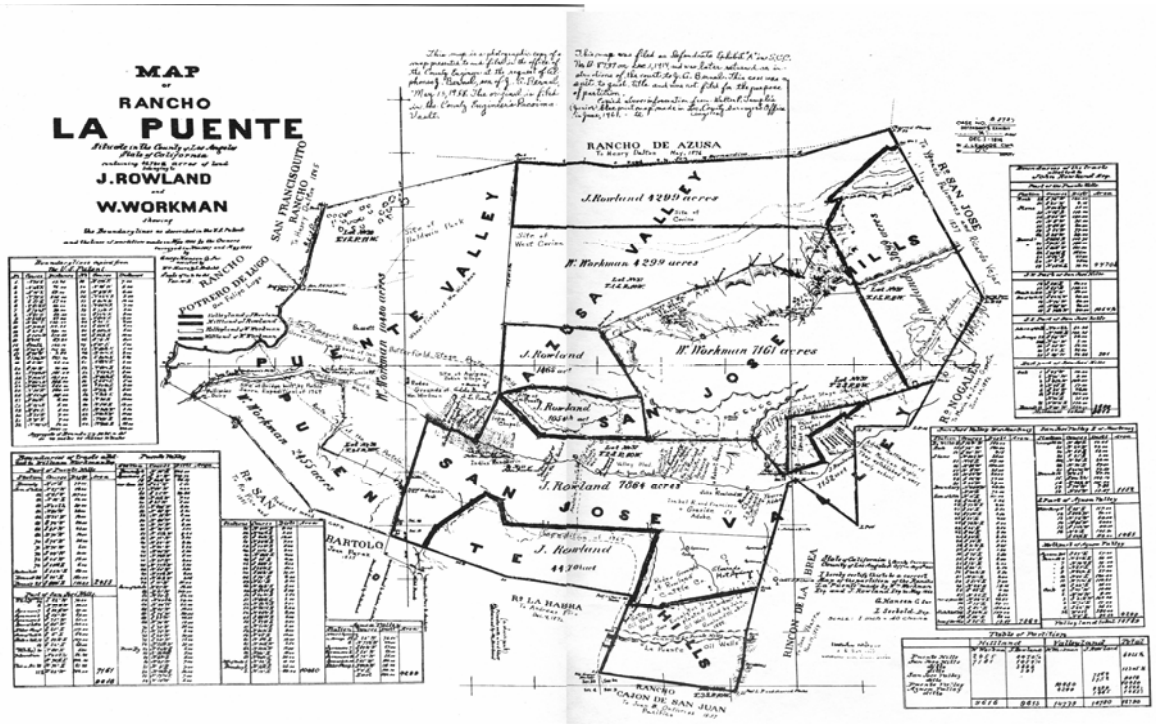
Map 4. Photocopy of the original 1857 land survey. Much like the diseño, this land survey follows the same outline as the 1840s land map. (Courtesy of the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.)

[49] Ibid., 120.
[50] Ibid., 120.
[51] Henry Hancock (surveyor), *Plat of the Rancho La Puente*, 1857 (photocopy), viewed at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.

The property line on the southwestern part of the rancho still included the Puente Hills, which, according to the survey, appeared to extend the property line up the slope of the hills. On the other side of the hills, the survey notes the property lines of Ranchos San Bartolo and La Habra. Specifically, the land survey featured a section of public land along the southeastern part of the rancho bordering next to Ranchos Rincon de la Brea and Los Nogales. It remains unclear why that section of land was deemed public and not included in any of the mentioned ranchos. Possibly it had no particular value or was undisputed land that no one claimed.

In 1868, Rowland and Workman decided to equally divide "their holdings in the Rancho La Puente into two separate ranchos." Rowland took the eastern part of the rancho, while Workman inherited the western half of La Puente. Dan Rowland notes that the division of the rancho reflected "an attempt to divide both the flat farm land and the hilly grazing land into equal portions."[52] Thus, the western part of the Puente Hills became part of the Workman property and Rowland's property consisted of the mid-section of the hills. According to the 1868 map of the divided rancho, bordering the southern part of the Puente Hills were Pio Pico's Rancho Paseo de Bartolo and Rancho La Habra, and Rancho Rincon de la Brea to the east.[53]

[52] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 160.
[53] Ibid., 161. George Hansen (surveyor), *Map of Rancho La Puente*, November,1867 and May, 1868 (photocopy), viewed at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.

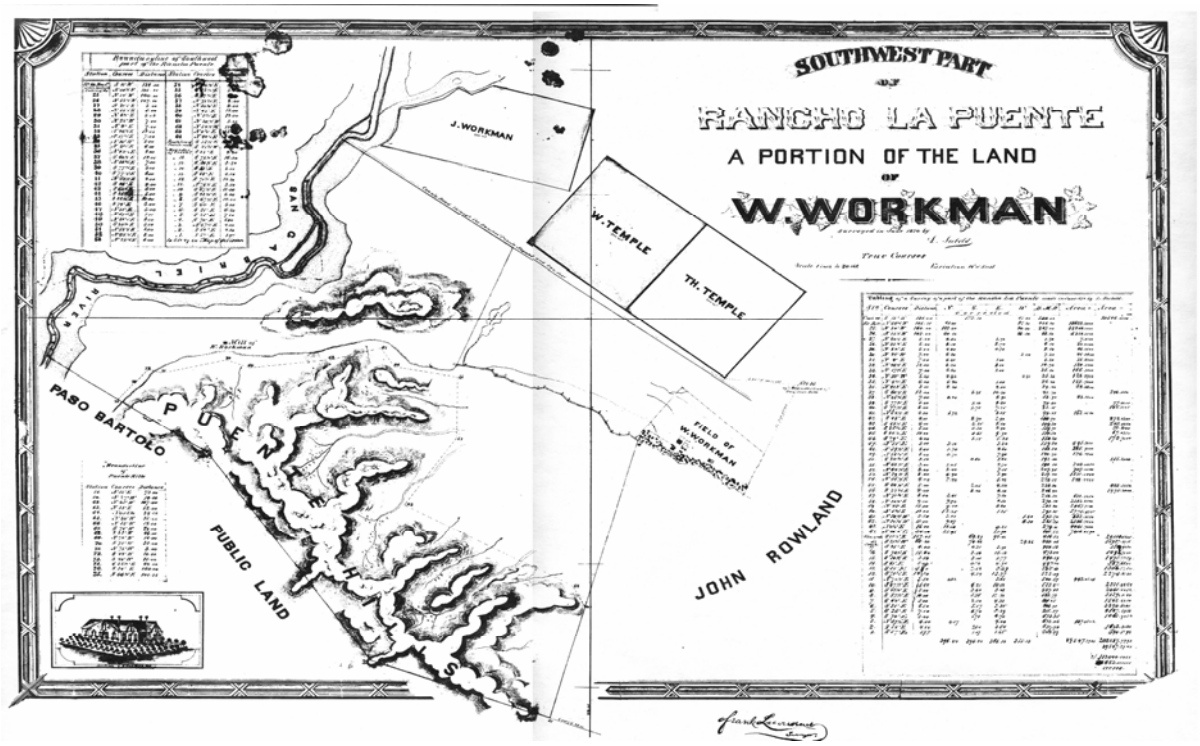


Map 5. Photocopy of the 1868 land survey, which highlights the subdivided Rancho La Puente among the Rowland and Workman families. Notice how the Puente Hills are noted along the southern border of the original rancho. (Courtesy of the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.)

In June of 1870, Lothar Seebold and Frank Lecouvreur surveyed Rancho La Puente.[54] The land survey of the southwestern section of Workman's half of Rancho La Puente gives a much more detailed outline of the Puente Hills. However, in that particular survey, a significant portion of the western part of the Puente Hills lay within Workman's property lines. Unlike previous surveys that only provided a generalized outline of the hills, the 1870 version maps the actual slopes of the Puente Hills and even includes the actual name of the hills. Unfortunately, none of the land surveys that were conducted during this era described or named any of the canyons in the Puente Hills. The 1870 land survey points out a section of public land adjacent to Pio Pico's Rancho Paso

[54] Lothar Seebold (surveyor) and Frank LeCouvreur (assistant surveyor), *Southwest Part of Rancho La Puente, A Portion of the Land of W. Workman*, June 1870 (photocopy), viewed at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.

de Bartolo Viejo. Previous land surveys did not emphasize any public land on Pico's property. This indicates that Pico lost a section of his property to the U.S. government, which now owned the land between Pico's and Rancho La Habra. In addition, based on this particular survey, one can infer that Turnbull Canyon was situated within the parcel of public land.



Map 6. Photocopy of the 1870 land survey. This particular map gives a much more detailed outline of the western edge of the Puente Hills. This particular map shows a section public land, which was property owned by the government and not a private land owner. (Courtesy of the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, CA.)

Nineteenth century accounts, such that written by Judge Benjamin Hayes, give a unique look at life at Rancho La Puente; but, more importantly, give insight as to how the Puente Hills were being utilized. Upon his first visit to the rancho on January 31, 1850, Hayes noted that Rowland had a sizable number of sheep on his part of the rancho; however, they were rounded up "near the house" each night "on the account of the

wolves, which [were] numerous in the neighboring hills."[55] Even in his subsequent visit to the rancho in January of 1861, Hayes mentioned that "the plain in front of them [Rowland and Workman], and all the hills, are covered with their cattle, horses, and sheep."[56] This clearly indicates that the Puente Hills served as grazing lands for the livestock of Rancho La Puente. It is also likely that livestock from the other local ranchos were allowed to wander freely in the Puente Hills. W.W. Robinson notes that during the time when "land titles were in dispute, sheepherders drove their flocks over the Puente Hills, camping at the springs in Turnbull Canyon."[57] The mention of wolves reminds us that undomesticated animals also continued to inhabit the Puente Hills.

Although it is difficult to estimate the actual number of cattle on the Rancho La Puente property, according to one historical account, old records indicated that there were "3,000 head of cattle and horses on the grant to Rowland and Workman."[58] Other accounts indicated that both Rowland and Workman each had 5,000 head of cattle.[59] Lenore Rowland points out that the "Rowland Cattle Company would round up its cattle on the Puente Hills, where separating and branding would take place."[60] Rowland even mentions that families in the La Puente Valley would spend the day in the Puente Hills enjoying the rodeo. In addition, Rowland notes that an artificial lake, which was fed by a spring from a canyon in the Puente Hills, was situated adjacent to the home John

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[55] Benjamin Ignatius Hayes, *Pioneer Notes: From the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, 1849-1875* (Los Angeles: private print, 1929), 69.
[56] Hayes, *Pioneer Notes*, 216.
[57] Robinson, *Ranchos Become Cities*, 66.
[58] Lenore Rowland, "The Romance of La Puente Rancho" (s.l.: s.n., 1948), 18.
[59] Col. J.J. Warner, Judge Benjamin Hayes, and Dr. J. P. Widney, *An Historical Sketch of Los Angeles County, California: From the Spanish Occupancy, by the Founding of the Mission San Gabriel Archangel, September 8, 1771, to July 4, 1876* (Los Angeles: Louis Lewin & Co., 1876; reprint, Los Angeles: O.W. Smith, 1936), 112 (page citations are to the reprint edition).
[60] Rowland, "Romance of La Puente," 18.

Rowland.[61] The mention of the rodeo and the artificial lake reminds us that the Puente Hills served recreational as well as functional economic purposes.

By the 1870s, Rancho La Puente and the Puente Hills once again faced significant changes. The boom times of the 1850s and 1860s, which resulted in great prosperity for both the Rowland and Workman families, gave way to financial struggles mainly because of the changing economic structures. Many prominent ranchos across Southern California were foreclosed because of the decreased demand for beef, hide, and tallow. In addition, the region suffered from a drought that literally wiped out herds of cattle, including many of the 1,000 head of cattle at Rancho La Puente.[62] Cattle and other livestock were not the only economic goods produced at La Puente. Much like the time of Mission San Gabriel, Rancho La Puente's rich and fertile soil provided an ideal location for agricultural production. By 1858, Rancho La Puente had approximately 150,000 vines and 400 apple trees.

Along with environmental problems came debt. William Workman's son-in-law, F.P.F. Temple decided to venture into the banking business, persuading Workman to become one of his primary investors. Unfortunately, Temple fell into financial difficulty due to financial scares of the 1870s. He traveled to San Francisco in October of 1875 to seek out loans to aid his ailing bank in Los Angeles. Temple was able to borrow over $310,000 from E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin, "who amassed a fortune from the Comstock Lode" in Nevada and had a reputation for being a "callous speculator."[63] In order to secure the loan, Temple offered his property along with Workman's half of the rancho, in addition

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[61] Ibid., 21.
[62] Janet I. Atkinson, *Los Angeles County Historical Directory* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1998), 73.
[63] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 179.

to the Rancho La Merced owned by long time associate Juan Matias Sánchez. According to the 1850 census, Juan Sanchez was employed as the *mayordomo* of Rancho La Puente.[64] Sanchez had migrated along with Rowland and Workman from Taos in 1841 and in later years resided at what is now known as the Rancho La Merced adobe in the present day Montebello. Temple was able to reopen the Temple and Workman Bank on December 6, 1875; yet, within a month's time, the bank was forced to close for good. Baldwin foreclosed on all of the properties. In an act of depression over the lost of his half of Rancho La Puente, Workman committed suicide in one of the rooms of his beloved adobe on May 17, 1876.[65] Since John Rowland had passed away on October 14, 1873, the two deaths signified the end of the rancho period of La Puente. [66]

[64] Atkinson, *Los Angeles County Historical Directory*, 123.
[65] Rowland, *John Rowland and William Workman*, 180-181.
[66] Ibid., 172.

Conclusion

The coming of the railroad to Southern California brought yet another chapter in the history of the region. By 1880, the Southern Pacific traveled through the former Rancho La Puente, its tracks running parallel to the slopes of the Puente Hills. The days when cattle, sheep, and horses roamed freely in the hills were gone. "Lucky" Baldwin—speculator and financier--assumed ownership of Workman's western part of the Rancho La Puente. Part of the Puente Hills now became his property, which also included Rancho Santa Anita as well as Rancho La Merced.

Thus, the Puente Hills constitute part of the long and rich history of Southern California. The hills offer us an important understanding of land ownership, agricultural production and geographical reference points in diverse eras. As the history of the Los Angeles region changed dramatically over the years, the Puente Hills have stood silently witnessing the progress laid out before them.

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