

THE RANCH HOUSE AT WARNER'S

by Kathleen Flanigan

Photos from this article

For one hundred and fifty years, journalists, travelers, historians, and countless others have written of Warner's Ranch; some as visitors to the locale, and others as historical detectives who painstakingly attempted to document the structure's age and prominence in San Diego County and California history. Juan Jose Warner, the man for whom the property is named, stood larger than most men, both physically and professionally. Six feet, three inches tall, his lifetime accomplishments as a state legislator, merchant, trapper, and rancho exceeded the feats of most individuals. He was not the first to possess the Valle de San José, nor did he occupy it the longest. In fact, he did not build the ranch house there, although his name seems permanently affixed to the area and the time-scarred adobe dwelling.

Of the several historians who have researched and written about the Valle de San José, perhaps the most comprehensive account is *The History of Warner's Ranch and Its Environs*, published in 1927 by Joséph J. Hill, Associate Curator of the Bancroft Library and distinguished scholar of the southwestern fur trade.¹ Prominent California historian, Herbert J. Bolton, who wrote the preface to Hill's book, claimed he was "a trained scholar who knew how to draw upon the fountains of knowledge." Bolton noted that Hill had at his fingertips the unrivalled resources of the Bancroft collection and that "his instinct for research took him to local archives and other repositories." Bolton concluded by saying, "We may feel confident that he has utilized all the principal materials pertinent to his fascinating subject."²

Although Hill certainly accessed the Portilla and Warner land grants to the Valle de San José and highlighted some of the resultant legal issues, he overlooked the essence of California Private Land Claim-Docket 531 in the matter of Silvestre de la Portilla and the Valle de San José, commenced in 1870 and completed in 1880. This land claim is actually a compendium of documents resulting from an adjudicated conclusion of a long legal battle

between the successor claimants of the Portilla grant of 1836 and the Juan José Warner grant of 1844.³

It seems that the land confirmed to Warner by the District Court in 1856 was the same land working its way through the courts by Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Carrillo, the grantee of the Portilla property. She had not contested the Warner ownership because her property had entered the courts first for confirmation and judgment had not yet been rendered. Also,

Portilla's 1836 grant to four square leagues in the valley preceded Warner's ownership of six square leagues by eight years. Each time a judgment was rendered, an appeal was filed. Thus, by the time ex-Governor John G. Downey began his acquisition of the Valle de San José in 1869, its chain of title was embroiled in a legal hot bed of controversy over ownership.⁴

So, in an attempt to disentangle this complicated land mess, William P. Reynolds, Deputy Surveyor under instructions from Sherman Day, U.S. Surveyor General for California, set out in May 1870 to conduct a survey of the Valle de San José based on the information contained in the Portilla and Warner land grants. His resultant Field Notes and detailed survey, accompanied by a Plat, provided a picture of the valley unlike any produced before or after this time. Rancherías, natural landmarks, lagunas, canadas, vegetation, and adobe structures dotted the Reynolds map along with measurements by chains and links, vivid descriptions, and input by J. J. Warner regarding various features of the terrain and the specific location of his ranch.⁵ Most interestingly, Reynolds' report located and described in detail the Ranch House. The Warner's adobe that so many had written about in journals and diaries before, and historians had pondered over in regard to the Butterfield Stage Route, was not the Ranch House! Warner's second residence, the only one erected by him after his land grant in 1844, commanded an elevated position on a hill several feet from the Ranch House. It suffered destruction at the hands of the Indians in the Garra Uprising of 1851, and was not just re-roofed and repaired as historians have theorized.

According to Reynolds' survey, reinforced by Warner's comments which Reynolds cites throughout the document, "The ruins of the house occupied by J. J. Warner and which was burnt by the Indians during an uprising by them in 1851 bears N 40 1/2 degrees W. The ruins of the Blacksmith Shop about 150 links west of the ruins of Warner's House bears N 42 1/2 degrees W."⁶ Thus, the actual structural remains, visible in the early 1870s but not today, were *north* of the "Upper Buena Vista" and its continuation westward as the Arroyo de Buena Vista.⁷ Even Warner's 1885 testimony in the *Pico v. Downey* case, alluded to the place where his home stood on the banks of the Buena Vista. He said, the "Buena Vista Upper, as it was known then, the western termination of it was in front of my house, right in front and South of where my house stood."⁸ But what of those crumbling adobe ruins

south of the Arroyo de Buena Vista now designated as “Warner’s Ranch” by a California Historical Landmark? Although the name of Warner will forever be synonymous with the Valle de San José, recent irrefutable documentation uncovered by the present writer after two years of intensive research has revealed that although those ruins indeed have considerable historical importance — *they are not Warner’s Ranch*. That story, overlooked in the work of previous historians who have studied the history of Warner and Warner’s Ranch, is documented here for the first time. The building that Reynolds described in his Field Notes and identified on the Plat as the “Ranch House” was erected by Portilla claimant Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Carrillo in 1857. He referenced the chimney in the “present” Ranch House as bearing N 66 1/4 degrees W, and wrote, “This house was built by Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda (the Grantee of Don Silvestre de la Portilla of the Rancho Valle de San José) in the year 1857 and is now occupied by some of the present owners as the Ranch House.”⁹ The Plat confirmed this location as the current Ranch House near the historic “fork in the road” where the trail to San Diego diverged from the main Southern Emigrant Trail to Los Angeles. Today this fork can be approximated as being close to the intersection of Highways 79 and S-2.¹⁰

Thus, it must be reiterated, the validation of the true location of the historical Warner’s Ranch House and the more recent Ranch House would only be possible by using Reynolds’ 1870 detailed Field Notes and Plat drawing in conjunction with input provided by J. J. Warner, as provided by this author.

With Reynolds’ information about the correct building date and owner of the Ranch House adobe, other legal and historical documents supported his claim. A deed, originated by Silvestre de la Portilla, and dated November 6, 1858, conveyed four square leagues of land, which included the Ranch House, to Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Carrillo. Jonathan Scott of Los Angeles carried the mortgage on one half of the property for one thousand and seven dollars, but the other two leagues were deeded to Doña Vicenta

free and clear with the provision that Portilla reserved the right “to live on said Ranch or lands during the period of his natural life, to build thereon such house or houses as he shall wish for his own use. . .and raise cattle, sheep, goats, and hogs of his own property.”¹¹ Although the erection of the house preceded the deed conveyance, the San Diego County Assessor’s office assessed Vicenta Sepúlveda in June 1857 for the following: 4 leagues of land (17,600 acres) valued at \$2,200; 435 head of cattle — \$2,610; 150 mares and colts — \$900; 55 gentle horses — \$1,650; 16 mules — \$480; 15 sheep and goats — \$30; 20 hogs — \$60, and improvements — \$100.¹² All of this begs the question: Who was Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Carrillo and to what extent was she historically important?

Doña Vicenta was the daughter of Francisco Sepúlveda who had come to Alta California as a six-year-old child with his parents as part of the 1781 Fernando Rivera y Moncada

expedition. Francisco served in the military at the San Diego presidio, and on October 19, 1802, at age twenty-seven, married Maria Teodora Ramona Serrano y Silvas, aged fifteen, at the Mission San Diego. The ceremony, performed by Padre José Barona, was witnessed by Antonio Bustamante, a fellow *soldado de cuero*, and Antonio Llamas, a member of the Catalanian volunteers. The Sepúlveda couple, with their family, moved north to Los Angeles around 1813. Born on March 25, 1813,¹³ Maria Vicenta, their seventh child, was baptized that same day in the Plaza Church.

In September of 1834, Vicenta married Tomás Antonio Yorba, the second son of José Antonio Yorba, at the Mission San Gabriel; she was 21 and he was 47 years old. Yorba, born in Monterey on December 20, 1787, was educated by the padres in San Diego, and moved to Santa Ana with his family around 1815.¹⁴ After marriage, the couple lived on the Yorba property at the Rancho Santa Ana where they operated a stock ranch and ran a small store which sold goods that came to California from around the Horn and the Orient, as well as wine, brandy, hardware, and a few groceries. Hides and tallow were hauled from the ranch to San Pedro where they were traded to the Americans. The partnership, successful both in the business and family sense, produced six children which included three daughters and three sons.¹⁵ Don Tomás and Doña Vicenta impressed more than a few people with their finery and elegance during the rancho period of California history. According to Edward Vischer, a merchant who visited the Yorbas in 1842:

The estate was like a fortress on an elevation. Everything was arranged for order and comfort. I was astonished at the completeness of furnishings, from the solid dining table, the well-stocked buffet, the excellent beds, down to the Black Forest clock, which I was surprised to find in this country. The owner, Don Tomás Yorba, was known everywhere for his hospitality. He combined polite frankness with modest dignity, and belonged to that class of our customers whose word is as good as gold. Doña Vicenta, attractive and slender, was just the person to rule the comfortable household with grace and dignity.

Tomás Yorba died January 30, 1845 at the age of 57. His will left Doña Vicenta, now age 31, her jewels, large herds of cattle and sheep, and an eighteen room adobe house, on the Rancho La Sierra near Santa Ana where she continued residence with her four surviving children.¹⁷ William Heath Davis painted a marvelous picture of the widow Doña Vicenta during this time period when he visited Santa Ana. He wrote,

We stopped next at the rancho of Santa Ana, owned by the beautiful and fascinating widow of Don Tomás Yorba, who had extensive land possessions, and great numbers

of cattle and horses. She managed her rancho with much ability. The lady was one of my best customers. In June, 1846, I sold her from \$2,000 to \$3,000 worth of goods, she having come to the vessel at San Pedro to buy them. Here we passed the night. She also insisted upon furnishing us with fresh horses to Los Angeles, having herself before we appeared in the morning dispatched ours and the vaquero back to Teniente Pico.

Returning the vaqueros and horses was frequently done when guests remained over night. She provided us with two horses and another vaquero. It had been raining for some days, and the Santa Ana river was high.

While we were making our preparations to start, Doña Vicenta, her fine hair streaming over her shoulders, a picture of womanly grace and beauty, gave orders to her mayordomo to group four or five manadas, which was done. Having the horses together, the vaqueros drove them into the river, across to the other shore, and then immediately back to the same place. As they returned, Doña Vicenta said: 'The river is now prepared for you to cross.' The object of the movement of the large number of horses had been to trample down and harden the soft sediment or river quicksand at the bottom, so that we could cross on our horses with greater ease and safety, without risk to horse or man.¹⁸

Doña Vicenta persevered through widowhood for two years. In February 1847 at the Mission San Gabriel, she married Don José Ramón Carrillo, a man she had met the year¹⁹ before at the wedding of her niece, Louisa Avila, to the Mexican General Manuel Garfias. Carrillo, the son of Joaquin Carrillo, a native of San José del Cabo in Baja California and a *soldado de cuero* at the San Diego presidio, and María Ignacia Lopez, native of San Diego, was born on February 9, 1820. Baptized on February 10, 1820, at the San Gabriel Mission, he resided in San Diego until his father's death in 1836.²⁰ Sometime between 1836 and 1837, José Ramón moved north of Sonoma with his mother and several siblings to the Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa, a land grant his mother applied for and received in 1841.²¹ José Ramón assisted in the management of the Santa Rosa ranch, and received mention of such by William Heath Davis in *Seventy-five Years in California* who said:

I have seen Doña Maria Ygnacia robed in a neat calico dress of a French texture, with a broad-brim straw hat made by one of her Indian women, mounted on a horse which had been broken to the saddle by some of her sons expressly for her use, ride over the hacienda and direct the gentiles in sowing and planting seed and in harvesting the same. She supervised the farming herself, but the management of the stock and rodeos was left to her son, José Ramón, and his brothers. José Ramón inherited his mother's gift (dealing with Indian laborers).²²

In addition to his expertise in ranch management and Indian relations, Davis praised Carrillo's Californio skill with horse rearing, riding, and racing. Davis, who purchased two horses from Carrillo, also chronicled Don José Ramón's bear fighting episodes as well. He wrote:

Don José Ramón Carrillo, before mentioned as a distinguished bear hunter, notwithstanding his fondness for the exciting sport, was himself as gentle as a lamb. There always appeared on his face whether in conversation or not, a peculiar smile, which indicated his good nature. On one occasion he was out in the woods, with his companions, in Sonoma county where he lived, and they saw a bear a little distance off. He proposed to the others to go on foot and fight the animal alone, to which they assented. He had a large sharp knife, and taking the mochila from his saddle he held it in his left hand as a shield, and thus accoutered approached the bear, which immediately showed fight. The combat began. Carrillo, as the bear charged upon him and attempted to seize him, held up his shield to repel the assault, and with his knife in the other hand made skillful thrusts at the animal, with telling effect. Before long the creature lay dead before him. Davis continued:

On another occasion he was riding along through the woods, when, seeing a bear a little distance away, he went after him on his horse, prepared to throw his reata and lasso him. That part of the country was overgrown with chamize, so that the ground was a good deal hidden. The chase had hardly commenced when the bear plunged suddenly into a ditch, perhaps five or six feet deep. Before Carrillo could check his horse, the animal and himself plunged headlong into it also. He immediately disentangled himself from his horse, and while doing so, the bear showed signs of retreating. Under circumstances of the kind a bear is apt to lose all his courage and is not inclined to fight, and in this instance the suddenness of the shock seemed to have knocked all the savageness out of him. Don José Ramón instantly took in the situation; and saw that in such close quarters with the animal, with no room to move about to use his reata or otherwise defend himself, his situation would be a dangerous one should the courage of the bear revive; and that his safety was in allowing him to get away. The bear commenced to climb up the steep sides of the pit, where it was very difficult to get any kind of a hold, and Carrillo, with wonderful presence of mind, placed his strong arms under the brute's hindquarters, and exerting all his strength, gave him a good lift. The bear having the good sense to rightly appreciate this friendly assistance, struggled forward, got out, and scampered away, leaving the horse and his master to climb out as best they could.²³

Davis also wrote that in 1851, as he was leaving San Diego, Carrillo purchased his furniture for use in the home he shared at Santa Ana with his wife and their children.²⁴ In

addition to Carrillo's escapades with four-legged mammals, he also engaged in military skirmishes in 1846 and 1847 which earned him both fame and infamy. In Santa Rosa in June 1846, the Juan Padilla band of Californios of which Carrillo was a member, attacked and killed two members of the Bear Flag Party, Thomas Cowie and George Fowler. Rumors spread that the men, cruelly tortured before death, had been the victims of José Ramón Carrillo. Even though he and his friends maintained his innocence, this accusation and suspicion followed him throughout the rest of his life.²⁵

Marie L. Walker, José Ramón's great-granddaughter, wrote in her short family history, *The Progenitors*, that Carrillo felt the Bear Flag event was a farce. He claimed the Americans thought the Californios would seek retaliation for Vallejo's capture. However, it was the looting and pillaging of their properties, along with the destruction of crops and livestock, that drove the Californios to fight.²⁶

In September 1846, during the Mexican War, Carrillo joined the forces of General Castro and marched south, taking part in some of the major war campaigns. In Los Angeles, under the direction of Serbulo Varela, he engaged in an uprising against the California Battalion, organized by John C. Frémont, then holding that city. In late September or early October, Carrillo and Varela commanded a similar group of Californios, who aided José Lugo in the siege of Benito Wilson at Rancho Chino, owned by Isaac Williams. After this event, Carrillo supposedly intervened to prevent the execution of the Americans after their surrender. Through this action, Don Ramón sought to vindicate his reputation as a cold-blooded assassin.²⁷

On December 6, 1846, Carrillo, with troops commanded by General Andrés Pico, engaged in the bloodiest battle of the war at San Pascual in San Diego County. Although the Americans outnumbered their opponents, the Californios, with Don Ramón at his pugnacious best, proved victorious.²⁸

In January 1847, around the time of the Cahuenga Capitulation, José Ramón participated in his last military campaign, the Temécula Massacre. This battle was fought in retaliation for the Pauma Massacre, which occurred sometime between December 8 and December 11, 1846, and resulted in eleven Californios killed by the Pauma, Temecula and Agua Caliente Indians. In Los Angeles, José del Carmen Lugo, under orders from General Flores, assembled a force of about twenty-two well-armed men for this purpose, and rode to the area between Temecula and Aguanga ready for a fight. He requested reinforcements from Los Angeles, and invited Ramón Carrillo, who was at San Luis Rey at the time with ten men, to join his forces, which he did. Additionally, Lugo enlisted the help of Juan Antonio, Chief of the loyal Cahuilla Indians, who lived on his Rancho San Bernardino. On the day of battle, thirty-eight Luiseño Indians under the command of Manuelito Cota and Pablo Apis, the younger, were killed, with only six of Lugo's men sustaining injuries.²⁹ Lugo wrote of

the battle:

I stationed myself in the mouth of the canyon with some men, and Carrillo went to trick the enemy by calling their attention and leading them to follow him. As soon as they saw him they rose and went after him. He passed them (remained in front), fired at them and retreated slowly and in an orderly manner until he came to where I³⁰ was.

Judge Benjamin Hayes chronicled the bloody battle, and said, “Don Ramón Carrillo, at the head of a strong party of native Californians, attacked the Indians of Apis. Those retreating without thought fell into the hands of the Cahuillas who showed no mercy; great numbers were slain.”³¹

Before assisting Lugo in Temecula, Carrillo had visited with Doña Vicenta at the Rancho La Sierra and asked for her hand in marriage. In February 1847, they became man and wife.³² The couple lived at her rancho until 1857 when they moved to the Valle de San José, where she built the Ranch House to which she obtained ownership in 1858, along with approximately 18,000 acres of land. Three sons and five daughters were born of this marriage, and of these, two were brought into the world at the Ranch House.

No historian, to this point, has documented the Carrillo tenure at the Ranch House from 1857 to 1869. However, various historical evidence has been uncovered by the present writer that references their presence in the valley at this time.

The *San Diego Herald* of April 10, 1858, reported that something had to be done to “clean out” cattle thieves in the county. It seemed that 311 head of cattle had been stolen in the back country, and that Ramón Carrillo had lost 108 of them. Vigilante justice seemed to be in order as the article accentuated:

Whipping has got to be of small account in deterring the Indians from thieving, and we have come to the conclusion that the delectable and efficacious remedy of hanging is about the best after all. One fellow whom they whipped, out near San (sic) Ysabel the other day, got so³³ mad about it that he just walked off about a hundred yards and laid down and died.

No report followed about how Don José Ramón personally handled the loss of his cattle; it could be assumed that he was not intimidated by the Indians. William L. Wright, who painstakingly pieced together the history of the Butterfield Stage stop in the Valle de San José, wrote that, “During the entire Butterfield-Southern Route operation, October 1858 to

April 1861, Carrillo's Buena Vista, being the olden Warner Ranch House acquired from Portilla and repaired by the Carrillos, served as the home-owned Butterfield Station on Warner's Ranch."³⁴ As Wright was not aware of the Portilla Docket #531, he was unaware of the correct builder of the ranch house. In 1859, records of the Post Office Department in the National Archives at Laguna Niguel showed that Ramón Carrillo applied for the position of postmaster at Buena Vista. He was awarded that job, but the returned document indicated that Warner's Rancho and not Buena Vista was the name given the post office.³⁵

Twenty-year-old José Antonio Yorba also resided at the Ranch House with his mother and stepfather. In 1859 and 1860, he was sued in the San Diego Court of Sessions for selling "spirituous liquors by the glass" and goods, wares, and merchandise without a license.³⁶ Obviously capitalizing on the needs of the travelers on the Butterfield Stage, Yorba seemed unaware that he needed legal permission for such activities. An erudite young man, educated at Boston College, he handled the business affairs for his mother at the ranch. His exquisite penmanship on assessment records and other documents signed for himself and his mother who was illiterate, as was typical of many Californio women regardless of their station in life, and others, attests to his educational background. Additionally, in 1862, a separate assessment record for him at the Ranch location, indicated his libraries were valued at \$5.00, a sizable sum for the time period.³⁷

The 1860 census records for San Diego County listed the Carrillos in residence in the valley. Individuals who resided at the Ranch House in Agua Caliente Township included: Ramón Carrillo, aged 40, Vicinta, his wife, aged 42, Ramón, aged 11, Maria Y, aged 10, Encarnacion, aged 9, Florimedo, aged 8, Alfreda, aged 7, Felicidad, aged 3, Mathalia, aged 2, Forbo, aged 3 months, and José Antonio Yorba, aged 21.³⁸

Additionally, under Schedule 4 of the 1860 Census which profiled Productions of Agriculture, Ramón Carrillo as the owner, agent or manager of the farm, received this reference:

100 acres Improved Land, 13,400 Acres unimproved Land, \$10,000 Cash value of Farm, \$500 Value of Farming Implements and Machinery
LIVE STOCK, June 1, 1860: 100 Horses, 12 Asses and Mules, 60 Milch Cows, 60 Other Cattle, 100 Sheep, \$6,000 Value of Live Stock
PRODUCE DURING THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 1, 1860: 160 bushels of Wheat, 1,200 bushels of Barley, 10 tons of Hay, \$500 of Animals slaughtered.³⁹

Along with the Carrillo brood, José C. Sepúlveda, ⁴⁰ Vicenta's brother, and his family, along with Sylvestre Portilla resided at the compound.

Following the termination of the Butterfield Stage line in April 1861 and the advent of the Civil War that same month, José Ramón served in the somewhat dubious role of Union Army scout and/or spy in Arizona and Sonora, as well as provider of rations for Union troops which passed through the valley. Camp Wright, established near the mountain crossing known as Warner's Pass, north of the Carrillo adobe and on the road to Yuma, was discussed in the Army Official Records. Major Edwin A. Rigg, the commander of Camp Wright reported on October 25, 1861 that ". . . I have examined nearly every inch of the ranch....The camp is situated about one mile north of Carrillo's house and at the intersection of the San Diego road with the road to Yuma."⁴¹ San Bernardino historian George Beattie wrote that:

He (Carrillo) had been employed by Colonel Carleton, doubtless because of his familiarity with the Spanish language, to serve as a scout and a helper in preparing the way for the troops that were to cross the desert. . . In 1861, he had been sent into Arizona and along the frontier of Sonora by Colonel Carleton to gather information concerning rebel forces said to be approaching Fort Yuma with the idea of invading California. He made the journey, but was unable on his return to give much information of the sort desired, as the Confederates had not then reached Tucson or even that part of Arizona.

Lieutenant-Colonel West, on his way with the Volunteers that were to relieve the regular soldiers at Fort Yuma, seemed to look upon him favorably, and wrote, "I shall take him and his son to Yuma. . .Carrillo is becoming more useful. I send him to Tucson by way of Altar (in Sonora)..."⁴²

As the Carrillo ranch ran large herds of cattle and sheep as well as grew barley and hay, its close location to Camp Wright and Warner's Pass, seemed ideal for providing rations and supplies to the Union soldiers. Additionally, José Ramón exerted supervisory authority over a large herd of cattle placed on his ranch by John Rains in 1861, then a part owner of the property. Both Carrillo and Rains supplied beef to the Union forces, which seemed at the time a lucrative position for Carrillo who resided in the area and established the prices — until complaints began. Beattie wrote that:

The commander at Camp Wright complained to Colonel Carleton that José Ramón Carrillo has not acted toward the Government in the way of furnishing barley, hay, and so forth, as you expected him to do so.... He sold what barley he had on hand (or

pretended to do so) to other parties, and immediately the price was raised from one to four cents per pound....”

The commander also wrote that “Carrillo raised the price of hay from one to four cents per pound; or rather, left orders to do it after he left with Colonel West.”⁴³

John Rains, politically opposed to José Ramón, vying with him for beef sales to the Union forces, heavily in debt, and supposedly possessing a piece of the Valle de San José, was found dead, shot in the back, near Los Angeles on November 17, 1862. Many speculated that Carrillo performed the dastardly deed. Once again embroiled in a homicidal controversy,⁴⁴ a warrant for his arrest was issued by the Sheriff of Los Angeles on February 13, 1863.

On April 18, 1863, the *Los Angeles Star* reported that the Court examined Carrillo on the charges of participating in, or being accessory to, the murder of John Rains. This was supposedly the second time that Carrillo came “voluntarily” before the Court and submitted himself to legal examination. As the District Attorney stated that the “people of the State of California had no complaint against Ramón Carrillo (sic); and further, that he knows of no testimony against said Carrillo (sic) on such or any other charge,” the Judge discharged Don Ramón.

The *Star* continued, “There are few men, indeed, who would submit themselves a second time to investigation on a charge of which they have been once acquitted. Yet the accused has done so; and we think it should be considered as an indication of his entire innocence of accusation.”⁴⁵ The murderer of Rains was never found.

Although granted legal absolution for this crime, Carrillo remained a suspect for multiple murders during his lifetime by his enemies. His luck finally ran out in May of 1864. While riding his horse alongside the widow Rains in her carriage on the highway west of the Cucamonga station, an anonymous assassin ambushed and shot him. Don Ramón fell wounded from his horse,⁴⁶ walked about a thousand yards, and met death in a nearby tavern a few hours later. The *Los Angeles Star* of May 28, 1864, reported:

On Saturday last, Don Ramón Carrillo was murdered at Cucamonga, in San Bernardino county, when riding on a highway, in broad day light....Don Ramón Carrillo, in company with a man named Ruiz, was riding on the highway in the immediate vicinity of a store and blacksmith’s shop, at Cucamonga, when the discharge of a gun was heard to issue from behind some trees and bushes which lined the road, and immediately the unfortunate gentleman fell from his horse, pierced through the lungs by a rifle ball. He arose from the ground, placed his handkerchief in the gaping orifice, walked a short

distance, when he was assisted to a neighboring house, and in three or four hours afterward, he was a corpse. The assassin's work was done surely and well. The narrative is short and simple. The click of a trigger, and a human being is hurried into the darkness of death and the silence of the grave.

Rumor, of course was busy with the topic. We do not think it worth while to repeat any of the gossip on the subject, or to ruthlessly drag names before the public of men who have been idly spoken of in connection with the murder. It is for the officers of that county to bring the perpetrator to justice as well as his accomplices; if he had any. But we may be permitted to express our horror of so base an act being committed in a populous neighborhood and no action taken to arrest or detain the assassin.

Our district has, we must confess it, a most unenviable reputation throughout the State for deeds of violence and revenge — will this act, and its attending circumstances, tend to remove that reputation, or give assurance of security for life and property among us?

Needless to say, the murderer of Carrillo, like that of Rains, was never found. Dead at 44 years of age, he left behind Doña Vicenta, a widow once again, at age 51, and eight children, most of them youngsters.

After the Civil War, life proved hard for Señora Carrillo. M. L. Walker wrote in her family history that in the months following Don Ramón's death, Theodore Rimpau, who had married Doña Vicenta's niece, Francisca Avila, and his older boys, often assisted at the ranch. She claimed:

Vicenta put her shoulders to the difficult task of raising her large family alone on the isolated rancho. She employed hundreds of Indians from nearby Diegueño and Luiseño tribes and provided living quarters for them. One winter, during a smallpox epidemic, she had scores of them on rawhide cots in a large adobe barn near the main house where she personally ministered to their care.

Benjamin Hayes in a letter to Dr. John S. Griffin in 1869 regarding his potential purchase of the ranch and its worth wrote:

It must be remembered, however, that once in a while there will be a snow storm — - this seldom in a long series of years. In the winter of 1865-66 snow fell in the valley to the depth of several inches. Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda then had to remove her sheep. This can easily be done. It is only necessary to descend a few miles along the Temecula road, or better about four leagues down the San Luis River to Pauma, where there is

plenty of grass and water and a climate milder even than that of the port of San Diego.⁴⁹

On August 23, 1867, Silvestre de la Portilla conveyed another deed to the four square leagues of El Valle de San José, written in Spanish and filed in the Office of the San Diego County Recorder, to Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Carrillo, which eliminated his life tenancy provision.⁵⁰

Assessment records from 1867 through 1869, indicated that Doña Vicenta with the assistance of Antonio Yorba, operated primarily a sheep ranch in the valley with a herd that numbered from 400 to 600 animals. Less than 100 cattle, about 50 horses, and a few oxen, asses, and mules also figured among her personal property which ranged in value from \$1,575 in 1867 to \$2,390 in 1869.⁵¹ In 1869, Vicenta ended her extensive ranching period in the Valle de San José, and moved north to Anaheim where she purchased the Mother Colony House, in which she lived with her family through the 1870s. She then retired to the Anaheim home of her daughter, Mrs. Natalia Rimpau, where she died on May 8, 1907, at the age of 94.⁵²

In November 1869, 4,444 acres, or one league, of the Valle de San José, which included the Ranch House, was conveyed to Ex-California Governor John G. Downey, by Antonio Coronel, Doña Vicenta's agent. As time passed, Downey eventually acquired the remainder of the valley from the Warner and Carrillo interests.⁵³ From this point on, Anglo-American owners and leaseholders of the property, which included the Ranch House, also figured prominently in California and Southern California history.

Born in 1827 in Roscommon County, Ireland, Downey came to the United States in 1842 at the age of fourteen. With little formal education, he worked his way west in drugstores from Washington D. C. to Cincinnati, ultimately reaching the gold rush in California in 1849. In 1850, Downey moved south and settled in Los Angeles where he entered the drug business with Dr. James P. McFarland.

His business and political empire expanded in Los Angeles as he invested in land and real estate, and joined the first volunteer police force. He married Maria Jesus Guirado in 1852. Californians elected Downey lieutenant governor in 1859; and in 1860 when the state legislature chose Governor Milton S. Latham as California's U. S. Senator, Downey succeeded him as governor. As the state chief executive during the first two years of the Civil War which commenced in April 1861, Downey stood firm in his commitment to keep California connected with the Union. He left office in 1862 and returned to Los Angeles where he continued business and civic involvement with the creation of the Farmerstan Merchants' Bank, the founding of the first Chamber of Commerce, the erection of the cable car system, and the donation of land for the establishment of the University of

Southern California. The town of Downey was named for him as well as one of the streets of Los Angeles.⁵⁴

John G. Downey, always a legal resident of Los Angeles, visited his ranch often in the Valle de San José throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Although a variety of horses and other livestock grazed the land, Downey specialized in sheep raising. In 1870, he employed Charles R. Ayres, a 34-year-old Virginia native, to supervise his stock. Ayres lived at the Ranch House with his wife, Jesusa, age 23 in 1870, and their three year old daughter, Mary.⁵⁵

Hired by Downey for his expertise in sheep raising and fleece production, Ayres found periodic mention in the *San Diego Union* in this regard. On June 13, 1873, the *Union* reported that:

Mr. Charles Ayers (sic) of Warner's Ranch brought in 24,500 pounds of wool day before yesterday. The whole lot was purchased by Steiner & Klauber. It is first-rate wool. In fact the wool of San Diego County is graded way above that of Los Angeles and other Southern counties, and commands several cents per pound more in the Eastern markets.⁵⁶

The procedure Ayres utilized to extract such superior wool fleeces, unique to San Diego because of the environment from which they were produced, was detailed in the *Union* of October 23, 1873. The impressed journalist stated:

Mr. C. R. Ayers (sic) of Warner's Ranch has struck a good thing on the wool question. Up at his place there are a number of soda springs, the water from which he has used in several instances to wash sheep just previous to shearing them. By slight friction with the hand the water frees the wool from all grease and other impurities and leaves the fleeces as white as snow. Mr. Ayres states that by the expenditure of \$50 the water from the springs can be collected so that four men could wash fifteen hundred sheep per day. Messrs. Stewart & Co. received from Mr. Ayers (sic), yesterday, two fleeces that had been washed in the water from the soda springs, one before being clipped and the other after. Both were clean and white, but that washed while on the sheep had a live appearance, while the other looked dim and dead. These fleeces will be sent East to find out how much buyers in that market are willing to pay for wool cleaned by the soda water process. It is well known by wool raisers that over one half of their

fleeces, by weight, is dirt and it costs about a cent a pound to haul wool to this market, and a half a cent more to send it to New York. If clean wool is worth more in proportion to the dirt removed, the sheep owners in the vicinity of the Warner Ranch soda springs have certainly struck a good thing. By washing the sheep occasionally, long fleeces, which are so valuable in the market can be secured by having but one clipping a year or three every two years.⁵⁷

Stewart & Co. received a reply from the East to the wool question which was reported in the 1873 Christmas issue of the *Union*. Greene & Siebert, the large commission house of New York reported their opinion to the two samples sent from Downey's ranch. They claimed the fleece cleaned before shearing was "very handsome, in very light condition, and of good quality," and worth fifty-five cents. The second fleece, cleaned after shearing, was "less sightly and somewhat inferior to the other in quality," but would bring forty-two to forty-four cents in the New York market.⁵⁸ The *Union* of May 19, 1875 wrote that, "W. W. Steward & Co. have commenced receiving a lot of washed wool from Downey's flock at Warner's Ranch. This is the first instance in the county, we are told where all the sheep have been washed before shearing."⁵⁹

The winter of 1876 proved a harsh one for sheep farmers, not unlike the one Doña Vicenta suffered through in 1865-66 when she had to move her stock from the valley. From January to March, terrible wind, rain and snow storms devastated the grass, cattle, and sheep in the Valle de San José. A writer for the March 28, 1876 edition of the *Union* lamented:

I have not heard the owners of the sheep say anything about their losses, and don't know whether they care to talk of the matter, but the facts are as stated. This high mountain altitude is not adapted for sheep growing like the country a little lower down. In fact, there are only about six months of the year when stock of any kind can be said to do well up here. Messr. Downey struck too high an altitude when he bought this for a sheep ranch.⁶⁰

After this stormy, moist season, the following year proved drier and more profitable for Downey. Instead of concentrating on the sale of fleeces to east coast markets, probably because most of his mature sheep had died, he sold young sheep to California markets. Los Angeles butchers purchased all of Downey's 5,000 "fat wethers" (one-year-old castrated male sheep) for \$2 per head in 1877. In 1878, five hundred head of "fine fat sheep" were shipped by steamer to San Francisco and sold. Also, during this time period, Jacob

Metzker, a fifty-eight year old native of Pennsylvania took possession of the Ranch House and became the “stock raiser” for Downey.⁶¹

Downey continued involvement with his ranch and made at least two trips there in 1879. In March, he spent time recuperating from health problems, and in June he came to supervise the wool clip intended for the Boston market.⁶²

In 1880, the ex-Governor hired Andrew Linton, a native of Scotland and single man in his forties, to oversee his ranch operations from the Ranch House. During this time and through the latter part of the decade, Linton supervised twenty-five to thirty thousand head of Downey’s sheep, horses and cattle in the valley. Listed in the 1880 Census for Agua Caliente Township as the Farm Overseer, he became the postmaster for the newly established Agua Caliente branch in 1881. In 1884, he received United States citizenship.⁶³

Wool production continued to be the economic backbone of this ranch operation during Linton’s tenure. The wool clip in 1880 was reported at over 60,000 pounds.⁶⁴ The *Union* of May 20, 1882, reported that, “Governor Downey was having his wool hauled yesterday afternoon from Wentscher’s warehouse to the wharf, to be shipped by steamer Santa Cruz to San Francisco. The Governor has 207 bales and we understand it is already sold.”⁶⁵

In 1884, Downey sold his entire wool clip for the year to W. W. Stewart & Co. which amounted to 90,000 pounds. The *Union* of June 13, 1884 reported that the wool from Warner’s “is one of the finest clips, as well as one of the largest in Southern California. The wool is nearly equal to the best Oregon wool and will be graded and shipped to the Boston market.”⁶⁶ In April 1885, W. W. Stewart & Co. handled 50 bales of wool from Warner’s Ranch, and in May, 64 bales or 21,000 pounds of wool.⁶⁷

In 1888, Downey, past sixty years of age and ailing, leased the Valle de San José to Walter L. Vail, a cattleman, who owned and operated the Empire Ranch in Pima County, Arizona, and various ranches in Temecula, which included the Pauba, Santa Rosa, Temecula, and Little Temecula. In partnership with entrepreneur Carol W. Gates, the two ran one of the largest cattle businesses in Southern California through 1913. The Ranch House provided the focal point for their cattle enterprise. Yearlings, either driven from the Empire Ranch to the valley, or carried by railroad car from Arizona to Beaumont, California, and then driven to the valley, leisurely fattened on the abundant grass and water around the Ranch House. After two or three years of pastoral life, cowboys drove the mature animals to the Vail properties at Temecula where they were shipped by rail to Los Angeles for slaughter.⁶⁷

From 1888 until 1891, James Walsh, a single man in his twenties, and a native of Wisconsin, supervised the Vail interests at the Ranch House in the Valle de San José.⁶⁸ In

addition to Walsh, the *San Diego Union* of October 10, 1906, reported that William W. Carpenter spent a year at the Ranch House to regain his health:

Sixteen years ago Mr. Carpenter spent a year on the ranch here in a successful effort to restore his health. He lived at the old ranch house and assisted in the work of looking after the cattle.⁷⁰

James W. Knight, another single cattleman in his twenties from Texas, managed the ranch and resided at the Ranch House from 1891 to 1894. Representing Vail's interests, his tenure as foreman received notice in various sources of the time. An advertisement in the *Julian Sentinel* of March 20, 1891 stated that "All stray stock found on the Warner Ranch after this date will be corralled and damages collected, or the stock disposed of according to law." It was dated March 7, 1891 and signed by Vale (sic) and Gates, lessees, and J. W. Knight, foreman.⁷²

Edward Vail, in his 1891 diary which recounted a cattle drive from Arizona to the Valle de San José mentioned Jim Knight as a participant. The 1892-93 *San Diego County Directory* listed James Knight as the foreman of the Warner's Ranch.⁷⁴

In 1894, Samuel B. Taylor, aged 33 and a valley resident since the 1880s, with his new wife, Mary Helm Taylor, moved into the Ranch House to manage the Vail cattle. The couple, both California natives, brought their eight children into the world at the Ranch House. The School Census Marshal's Reports from 1895 through 1907 document their arrival and presence there.⁷⁵ In 1897, Sam Taylor⁷⁶ became a trustee to discharge the Census Marshal duties for the Warner School District. Elected Justice of the Peace in the Agua Caliente Township in November 1902, Taylor won by a margin of 11 to 77.⁷⁷

The *San Diego Union* of March 4, 1903 reported that cattle had been stolen from Warner's Ranch by Indians. It said that "They were caught redhanded by Sam Taylor, who came upon them suddenly while they were killing a steer." Taylor then went to Justice Billingsley of Witch Creek, and filed a warrant for their arrest. The article continued, "Constable William Dyche of Mesa Grande accompanied Taylor, and the two caught the thieves on the ranch." In response to the removal of Indians from Agua Caliente, the *San Diego Union* of April 21, 1903 reported that:

Sam Taylor told a little in regard to the present condition of affairs. He stated it was true that white people had been ordered from the Hot Springs, but it was not true that he had ordered Dan McPherson away. Dan is his brother-in-law, and had as much right

to be on the ranch. In spite of Taylor's talk it could be seen that he expects trouble before the removal takes place.

When asked concerning this matter, he said: 'There are not enough Indians to stir up a row-there being only thirty-five or forty on the whole ranch, and they might make things a little disagreeable by taking to the hills. I think, however, when the removal takes place, they will submit all right. None of us know when the removal will take place. In all probability it will be soon, but as yet there is not a wagon upon the place.⁷⁹

Regarding cattle operations at the ranch, the *San Diego Union* of October 9, 1905 wrote:

The work of rounding up, counting and sorting the 5,000 or more cattle on Warner ranch, which has been in progress since Monday was completed yesterday. It was done under the general direction of Walter L. Vail. . . assisted by several experienced cattlemen and fifteen or twenty vaqueros captained by Sam Taylor, for fourteen (sic) years foreman of the seventy-seven square miles of property.⁸⁰

Clarence McGrew included a biography of Taylor in his 1922 book *City of San Diego and San Diego County* which provided further insight into this man's life. McGrew recorded:

Samuel B. Taylor is a rancher and ranch manager at Warners Hot Springs, and has been identified with that interesting locality of San Diego County for thirty years. He is a native son of California, has lived a life of action and enterprise, and is widely and favorably known.

Mr. Taylor was born at Sacramento January 7, 1861, son of Thomas and Mary Jane Taylor. His father was a seafaring man, making his first voyage around the Horn at the age of twenty-one.

Samuel B. Taylor had very little educational opportunities, and since early manhood has been doing for himself. Mr. Taylor married in 1894 Mary Jane Helm, daughter of a pioneer of San Diego County, Turner Helm. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have eight children: Lilly, Samuel B., Charles C., Mildred, wife of Ed Means, John who died of the influenza while in the navy in 1917, Henry Banning, and Arthur.⁸¹

After Walter Vail's death in 1911, George Sawday secured the lease on the ranch in 1913

which remained in his family until 1960, eleven years after his death. Known as a cattle baron whose business interests reached from the California coast to the Imperial Valley, and from the Mexican border to Riverside, Sawday owned and operated the largest cattle enterprise in Southern California, and one of the biggest in the west during this time period.⁸²

Sawday, the son of Frederick Sawday, a British immigrant and pioneer in the Witch Creek area, was born on October 6, 1876 in Julian. In 1904, he married Emily E. Crouch of Oceanside, also an offspring of British immigrants. Secure in his marriage, Sawday erected his home by the side of Highway 76 in Witch Creek where he and his wife raised two daughters, and spent long business hours building his empire.⁸³

Cattlemen Sawday employed Ed Grand, born at Ranchita in 1891, as his foreman. Grand, a single man, lived at the Ranch House through 1935 with a multitude of cowboys who assisted with the cattle operations. Basically, Sawday's business was similar to that of Vail in that he imported yearlings from Arizona, kept them for two to three years, and then drove them to the Vail's Pauba Ranch in Temecula for sale. Additionally, the Ranch House at Warner's provided the headquarters and center for the extensive Sawday cattle interests as it had earlier for the Vails.⁸⁴

The Ranch House from 1913 until 1960, when it was vacated, became a boarding facility for many who assisted with the Sawday ranching interests. Individuals such as Charles and George Sawday, nephews of George, resided here as teenagers and young adults during summers and weekends to assist with round-ups. Career cowboys such as Zeb and Gib Reed, Charley Ponchetti, Harold Smith, and others lived here year round. Also, throughout the year, George Sawday, an active participant in the ranch operations, often lunched at the Ranch House with his employees and conducted business from this locale.⁸⁵ In addition to the hard-working cattlemen, noted celebrities, captivated by life in the "Wild West," visited and lunched at the Ranch House. Will Rogers spent some time at the "old cowhands ranch house" in the 1930s. John Wayne in the 1940s paid homage to the site and exchanged hats with George Sawday. After that encounter, Wayne wore Sawday's hat in various Western films such as "She Wore A Yellow Ribbon."⁸⁶

After Grand's relocation to Campo in 1935, Hans Starr, Sawday's son-in-law managed the ranch from his home in Witch Creek. Cowboys who conducted the day-to-day operations continued residency at the Ranch House. In 1960, the decaying old adobe passed from the ownership of the Sawday family into the hands of the Vista Irrigation District, and the rest of it is history.⁸⁷ Or is it?

Joséph J. Hill's account of Warner's Ranch, written in 1927 makes scant reference to the real builder and inhabitants of this time-scarred adobe. Other authors, who based their

research on his work, provided no reliable information on this building's history. And the travelers and visitors who left diaries and other documents about this place really referenced a structure that was burned by the Indians in 1851. So, one can read all the previous historical documents related to this dwelling, and find that all of it is more or less erroneous. Whether Hill chose to overlook the Hispanic presence connected with the building of the Ranch House is unknown.

The fact remains that: Doña Vicenta Sepúlveda de Yorba de Carrillo received title to four square leagues of land in the Valle de San José in 1858, after she had built the adobe residence in 1857 that still stands, and lived at this locale with her family through 1869. And, after the Carrillo tenure, a number of interesting people, well-connected with California and San Diego history either owned, leased, or lived at the Ranch House through its abandonment in 1960. This adobe represents more than an aged dwelling, it gives us a glimpse of life through the eyes of a myriad of individuals who came from a variety of countries and backgrounds. This humble little structure provides the only visible evidence of the grand and tumultuous times from the mid-nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century experienced by the people who called this place home.

Notes

1. See Joseph J. Hill, *The History of Warner's Ranch and its Environs* (Los Angeles: Privately Printed, 1927).
2. *Ibid.*, x.
3. *Ibid.*, 143-144; and Silvestre de la Portilla, Valle de San Jose, California Private Land Claim, Docket 531, MS, in Microfilm Record Group 49, National Archives, Laguna Niguel, California.
4. Hill (*Warner's Ranch*, 143-144, 149, 153), writes, "By about 1875, the entire rancho, one part after another, passed into the hands of Louis Phillips and John G. Downey, and later [April 1880] to Downey alone. Hill said that in 1880 Downey possessed 10 leagues of land; four from the Portilla grant and six from the Warner grant. See Patent, U. S. Government to Juan Jose Warner, 6 January 1880, Book 2, Page 73, San Diego County Recorder's Office; Portilla's land patent of four leagues was issued on 10 January 1880, Patent, 10 January 1880, Book 2, Page 84, San Diego County Recorder's Office. San Diego County Assessment Records from 1871 to 1873, now at the San Diego History Center indicate that Downey, Downey & G. A. Hayward, and Downey & Griffin, possessed portions of the ranch.
5. Hill (*Warner's Ranch*, 143-154), left out the details of the Portilla case. William P. Reynolds, "Survey of the Valle de San Jose, including Field Notes of Valle de San Jose,

August 1870," MS, in Portilla, Valle de San Jose, Docket 531 (1880). Reynolds henceforth will be cited as: Reynolds, "Survey" (1870); Reynolds, Survey, Field Notes (1870); or Reynolds, Survey, Plat (1870).

6. Reynolds, "Survey" (1870), 3. A "link" measuring 7.92 inches was a part of the 66 foot "chain" (or the 33 foot "chain" used on rough ground). The link consisted of a slim steel bar fastened to the preceding, and following "link" by a circular loop. Thus, 100 links would be exactly 66 feet. Modern "chains" are 100 feet.

7. The site has been identified on the ground from the 1870 Field Notes and plat by my colleague, surveyor-historian Leland E. Bibb.

8. J. J. Warner, Testimony, in Pico v Downey, Case 1591-4105, February 1885, 17th District Court, San Diego, pp. xx, quoted by Bertram B. Moore, in "Report on Butterfield Stage Station, Warner's Ranch, California," unpublished typescript, Office of County Historian, San Diego County, p 10. This study provided further documentation that the Ranch House was not Warner's residence. In precise and crucial testimony, J. J. Warner responded to the question asked him about whether he knew of a place called the ruins of the Warner Ranch House. He replied that he knew where the place stood that was destroyed by the Indians. In regard to the direction or location of this building, he said that it was located in Buena Vista upper, as it was known then, "the western termination of it (the Buena Vista canada) was in front of my house, right in front and south of where my house stood." The Buena Vista runs north of the current Ranch House, thus confirming that the Ranch House was not Warner's Ranch.

9. Reynolds, "Survey" (1870), 3. The "present owners" statement refers to Downey and his partners. Also, in Reynolds' survey, he references the dwellings of a number of Hispanic individuals residing in the valley. Whether Hill chose to omit these historically important individuals in his book, or overlooked the essence of Docket 531, is unknown.

10. Reynolds, "Survey," Plat (1870).

11. Deed, Silvestre de la Portilla to Dona Vicenta Sepulveda de Carrillo, 6 November 1858, Deed Books, 1:279-281, San Diego County Recorder's Office. Portilla apparently had occupied and lived on the property from 1834 or 1835 through 1836. He then had returned to his native Sonora and did not come back until the 1850s. The property allegedly was left in charge of his brother, Pablo de la Portilla, who used it as a stock ranch briefly and then sold it to Jose Joaquin Ortega without benefit of a written deed. Ortega took possession in 1837 and remained for a number of years. In 1847, he conveyed the land to the Mission San Diego in exchange for land in the Pomo Valley. The question of Portilla's abandonment of the grant apparently was never addressed by later courts nor was the Ortega trade of the property to the Mission San Diego. See Hill, Warner's Ranch,

143-144, 146-149.

12. San Diego County Assessment Record for Vicenta Sepulveda de Carrillo, attested to by Ramón Carrillo, 29 June 1857, now located at the San Diego Historical Society. The records for the prior year of 1856 indicated that Don Silvestre de la Portilla owned the property of four leagues but that the land then had no monetary value. Ramón Carrillo was listed as his agent.

13. See Sister Mary Joanne Wittenburg, SND, "Three Generations of the Sepulveda Family in Southern California," *Southern California Quarterly*, 3 (Fall 1991): 203-205, for further information on the Sepulveda family which migrated to Alta California from a small settlement near Sinaloa, Mexico. Maria Teodora Ramona Serrano y Silvas was the daughter of Francisco Serrano y Catalun, a native of Aragon, Spain, and Maria Balbaneda Silvas y Lugo of Sinaloa. Francisco and Ramona had thirteen children. Don Francisco became active in Los Angeles civic affairs. After 1825, he served as regidor and alcalde after the suspension of Jose Maria Avila. According to Saddleback Ancestors, *Rancho Families of Orange County, California* (Orange County Genealogical Society, 1969), 102-103, Francisco Sepulveda received the 30,000 acre Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica in recognition of his services as a Spanish army officer in 1839. Mr. & Mrs. H. H. Lee, and Mr. & Mrs. William R. Stewart, *Carrillo Family Genealogy*, San Diego Historical Society, documented Maria Vicenta Sepulveda's birth date. See also Marie E. Northrup, *Spanish-American Families of Early California: 1769-1850*, Volume I (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1976), 279-280, 328, 336-337.

14. See Terry E. Stephenson, "Tomas Yorba, His Wife Vicenta, and His Account Book," *Quarterly Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California*, 23 (September-December 1941), 131; and Northrop, *Spanish-American Families*, 336-337, for further details of the Yorba genealogy. Don Jose Antonio Yorba, a Catalan volunteer with Portola, received a Spanish land grant to a rancho east and south of the Santa Ana River. After his death in 1825, Yorba's sons and their families lived at the rancho.

15. Saddleback Ancestors, 69. Don Tomas also served as a member of the diputacion, the provincial legislature in 1830, as alcalde of Santa Ana from 1831-32, and juez de paz in 1840.

16. Stephenson, "Tomas Yorba," 133-135.

17. *Ibid.*, 134; William Heath Davis, *Seventy-Five Years in California* (San Francisco: John Howell, 1929), 286.

18. Esther Boulton Black, *Rancho Cucamonga and Dona Merced* (Redlands: San Bernardino County Museum, 1975), 98; Northrop, *Spanish-American Families*, 279-280; and M. L.

Walker, *The Progenitors* (Santa Ana: Pioneer Press, 1973),

19. Louisa was the daughter of Encarnación, the sister of Dona Vicenta, and Francisco Avila. Mrs. Walker, the great-granddaughter of Dona Vicenta and Don Jose Ramón wrote this book primarily for the benefit of her children and relatives who desired to know more about their family history. Stories handed down by Dona Vicenta and others found their way into her publication. Walker wrote, "An immediate attraction sprang up between the vivacious Vicenta and the rugged Ramón. She found herself sharing the turbulent feelings of the young soldier who felt so deeply concerned about the rights of the Californians."

20. Black, *Rancho Cucamonga*, 98; and Northrop, *Spanish-American Families*, 279-280.

21. Brian McGinty, "The Carrillos of San Diego," *The Historical Society of Southern California*, 34 (September 1957), 285; Black, *Rancho Cucamonga*, 97; and Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California, 1840-1845*, 7 vols. (Santa Barbara: Wallace Heberd, 1969), 4:718. Bancroft wrote that Maria Ignacia, the half-sister of Pio Pico's mother, received the Santa Rosa Rancho in 1841.

22. Davis, *Seventy-Five Years in California*, 25-26.

23. *Ibid.*, 58-59, 302-303.

24. *Ibid.*, 303.

25. See McGinty, "Carrillos of San Diego," 283-284, 287, 295-296; and Bancroft, *History of California*, 2:744, which makes Carrillo's involvement in political and military skirmishes in the Sonoma area more understandable because of his relatives. His sisters and their marriages were as follows: Francisca Benicia married Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Maria de la Luz became the wife of Salvador Vallejo, Ramona wedded Romualdo Pacheco, Josefa married Henry D. Fitch, and Felicidad, a claimant of part of the Santa Rosa Rancho, wedded Victor Castro. His brothers, Joaquin and Julio, were both interned with the Vallejo brothers at Sutter's Fort during the Bear Flag Revolt. Bancroft, (2:746), felt that Carrillo "was a rough and reckless fellow, often in bad company, but not regarded as a bad man by those who knew him best."

26. Walker, *The Progenitors*, 15.

27. McGinty, "Carrillos of San Diego," 288; and Black, *Rancho Cucamonga*, 96. Black said that Carrillo was one of the Californios attacking the Williams' home in the Battle of Chino, and it was Carrillo who saved the lives of Isaac Williams and his seven year old daughter, Merced, along with other offspring. Merced Williams, who married John Rains, and became a godmother to one of Carrillo's daughters, will be referenced later.

28. McGinty, "Carrillos of San Diego," 288; James Mills, "San Diego...Where California Began," *Journal of San Diego History* (October 1967), 35; and Arthur Woodward, "Lances at San Pascual," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 25 (December 1946), 289-308, and 26 (March 1947), 21-62.

29. Horace Parker, *The Temecula Massacre* (Balboa Island: Paisano Press, 1971), 7-13. Parker wrote that shortly after the battle, Lugo's friend, Diego Sepulveda, the brother of Dona Vicenta, arrived with a force of twenty-five men.

30. *Ibid.*, 15.

31. *Ibid.*, 16.

32. Walker, (*The Progenitors*, 16), says Vicenta had listened to Jose Ramón's account of the ambush at Pauma and felt "proud there were men of his stature who were defending their people." She also wrote that Vicenta's sister, Encarnación, when hearing about the impending marriage had "cautioned her sister and related the rumors that still persisted about Carrillo's involvement in the Cowie-Fowler murders that took place during the Bear Flag Revolt." Walker claimed that Vicenta strongly defended Don Ramón and "reminded her sister that he had been exonerated by both the courts and the vigilantes."

33. "Cattle Thieves Again," *San Diego Herald*, 10 April 1858, 1. The *San Diego Herald*, 6 March 1858, 2, did not mention Carrillo by name, but discussed cattle thievery and frontier justice in the area. It said, "...the men who were engaged in hanging the Indian cattle thieves a short time ago have been arraigned before Squire Maxey, and discharged from custody-there being no evidence that they had committed any offence against the public peace! We are rejoiced that the people in the interior of the county have taken these cattle thieves in hand, and that there is a 'right smart' prospect of lessening their number. Within a short time 18 or 20 head of stock have been stolen from San Filipe (sic), and 100 from Warner's. The Chief, Francisco, was put on trial by Squire Maxey, as being a party to one theft, in lending his horse to pack off the meat. He was sentenced to receive fifty lashes, which was laid on in the most satisfactory manner by a big Indian six feet two, and weight 200 pounds!"

34. See William L. Wright, "The Butterfield Station at Warner's Ranch, 1960," unpublished manuscript on file at the Office of the San Diego County Historian; William L. Wright, *The Warner's Ranch Butterfield Station Puzzle* (Los Angeles: The Westerners' Brand Book 9, Los Angeles Corral, 1961).

35. See Moore, "Report on Butterfield Stage," no page number, which included this document.

36. *People v Jose Antonio Yorba*, Court of Sessions, Civil and Criminal Case Files, Case No.

89, 1859 and 1860, San Diego History Center Archives.

37. San Diego County Assessor's records for 1858-1869, San Diego Historical Society Archives, and other legal documents footnoted in this paper which include Yorba's signature and comments. A portrait of him with a caption provided by the Mother Colony Room of the Anaheim Public Library indicated that he and two Sepulveda cousins had studied at Boston College.

38. See Census 1860, San Diego County, 57-58. Most of the names of this family were misspelled and some of the ages were wrong. This is not atypical for census reporting.

39. *Ibid.*, 121.

40. *Ibid.*, 58. The census indicates that Serefino Martinez (Cota), his wife, Francesca, son Jesus, and other children lived at the Ranch House. Assessor's Records, Silvestre de la Portilla, 1856, documented Portilla's ownership of 4 leagues of the Valle de San Jose with no improvements nor personal property, thus indicating that he still held possession. Ramón Carrillo was listed as his agent. Assessor's Records, Silvestre de la Portilla, 1860, assessed Portilla \$250 for his personal property and \$180 for 6 horses. Portilla's residency at the Ranch House continued through the 1860s. A document located in the Portilla Biographical File, San Diego History Center, indicated that Portilla, a widower, sixty years of age, married seventeen-year-old Claudia Valdez, a native of Hermosillo, Sonora, at the Buena Vista Rancho on September 25, 1861. The ceremony, performed by Angel Molino, Parish Priest of San Diego, was witnessed by Jose Maria Contreras and Serafina Cota. Also, the case file of *People v Sylvester Portilla* (San Diego County Court, Case No. 147-C, 1864, San Diego Historical Society Archives), mentions his residence at the Buena Vista Ranch. He was sued for petit larceny for allegedly stealing a horse belonging to Horas Burnham.

41. Wright, "Butterfield Station," A-12; and George William Beattie and Helen Pruitt Beattie, *Heritage of the Valley San Bernardino's First Century* (Pasadena: San Pasqual Press, 1939), 150. In the fall of 1861, all the regular soldiers on the Pacific coast were ordered to the seat of war east of the Mississippi. Volunteer troops filled their places, and arrangements were made to send a California Volunteer column to Arizona and New Mexico to dislodge Confederates menacing that region. Fort Yuma was a strategic point and thus Camp Wright was established at Warner's Pass to provide a base where supplies could be collected and the Volunteers prepared for their march to Yuma and beyond.

42. Beattie and Beattie, *San Bernardino's First Century*, 150, 151, 155.

43. *Ibid.*

44. McGinty, "Carrillos of San Diego," 290; Black, *Rancho Cucamonga*, 99-101; and "Discharge of Ramón Carillo (sic)," *Los Angeles Star*, 18 April 1863, 2. 45. *Los Angeles Star*,

18 April 1863, 2. 46. Beattie and Beattie, *San Bernardino's First Century*, 162. A month before his death in April 1864, Carrillo had written a letter to his brother, Julio, about a conflict he had with Bob Carlisle, the brother-in-law of John Rains. Don Ramón felt that Carlisle had persecuted him, not personally, but through others. He felt he suffered this abuse from Carlisle because he did not abandon his position as superintendent of the stock at the time of John Rains' death. In 1864, he still managed the Rains stock on the Carrillo ranch. Don Ramón said that, "After Rains' death, Carlisle was appointed agent and manager, and he cannot conduct the business with as much liberty as he could if I were out of the way. He is trying to get the power which I have from the widow herself, who is the absolute owner of the property...I am resolved to protect her, if it costs me my life." Carrillo's death occurred near a tavern kept by William Rubottom, a friend to widow Rains and also a Secessionist (as was John Rains), on the west side of Red Hill near Rancho Cucamonga. In June 1864, Dona Mercedes married Jose Carrillo, supposedly a half-brother of Jose Ramón. Also, Black, *Rancho Cucamonga*, 98, wrote that Merced Rains was the godmother of Natalia, the seventh child of Dona Vicenta and Don Jose Ramón Carrillo, which indicated a close relationship between the two families.

47. "Another Murder," *Los Angeles Star*, 28 May 1864, 2.

48. Walker, *The Progenitors*, 25-26.

49. See Benjamin Hayes, *Pioneer Notes From the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes, 1849-1875*, ed. Marjorie Tisdale Wolcott (Los Angeles: Private Printing, 1929), 288-289.

50. Deed, Silvestre de la Portilla to Vicenta Sepulveda de Carrillo, 23 August 1869, Deed Books, 4:22-23, San Diego County Records Office. Silvestre Portilla had settled upon and occupied a 160-acre claim in the locality of San Pasqual for the purpose of cultivating and grazing the same. Measurements of this land were detailed and the document indicated he had residences there. Pre-Emption Claim (R-2-90), No. 17, 6 July 1868, San Diego History Center,

51. See San Diego County Assessment Records, Vicenta Carrillo, 1861-1869, San Diego Historical Society.

52. Stephenson, "Tomas Yorba," 155-156, said Dona Vicenta was buried in the Anaheim City Cemetery. The Mother Colony House, located originally on Los Angeles Street (now Anaheim Blvd.), currently stands at 414 N. West Street. The house, designated State Historical Landmark 201, is Orange County's oldest museum, and contains photographs, a chandelier, and other memorabilia related to the Carrillo family.

53. The deed of Manuel Coronel to John G. Downey (Deed Books, 29 November 1869, 8:75-76, San Diego County Recorder's Office), was the first conveyance. San Diego County

Assessment Records, John G. Downey, 1871-1873, at the San Diego Historical Society, indicate Downey's ownership of 4,444 acres with Phillips and Griffin as associates.

54. See Margaret Romer, "Pioneer Builders of Los Angeles, Part II," *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* (September 1961), 334, for a concise biography of Downey. She wrote that Maria Guirado Downey met an untimely death in a train accident in the Tehachapi Mountains in January 1883. John Downey survived, but the horror of this event affected him for the rest of his life. Julia H. Macleod, "John G. Downey As One of the Kings," *California Historical Society Quarterly* (December 1957), 327-330, highlighted Downey's life based on information he provided for a vanity book published by Hubert Howe Bancroft called *Chronicles of the Kings*. Downey's information claimed he was the son of Dennis Downey and the former Bridget Gately. He was born in his grandfather's house, Castle Sampson, built from the stone of an old Norman castle, and spent his early years working on the farm. He came almost penniless to America and built his fortune in Los Angeles. Downey described himself as 5'6" tall, with a square build, fair complexion, auburn hair which turned white in later years, and hazel eyes that were deep and keen. He claimed a quick manner of address, concise and to the point, and said he was very forceful. He wanted it known that even though he was a Catholic, he donated the land for the Methodist oriented University of Southern California. See also Laurance L. Hill, *La Reina-Los Angeles in Three Centuries* (Los Angeles: Security Trust & Savings Bank, 1929), 28, 47, for an overview of the development of Los Angeles with Downey's contributions.

55. See 1870 Census for San Diego County, Wanuis (Warner's) Rancho District, 161. Ayres was listed as a trader. The value of real estate on Downey's land was \$9,000; the value of personal property was listed as \$5,000. San Diego County Assessment Records, Downey & Griffin, J. G. Downey, and Downey & G. A. Hayward, 1871 to 1873, San Diego History Center, did not reflect the Census accounting. The one league of land or approximately 4,444 acres was valued at \$5,555, and personal property value never exceeded \$2,461. C. R. Ayres was listed as the agent for Downey on all assessment records of this period.

56. "Wool From Warner's Ranch," *San Diego Union*, 13 June 1873, 3. Ayres' wool, along with about 43,000 pounds of other wool, was to be shipped by Panama steamer to Boston.

57. "Clean Wool," *San Diego Union*, 23 October 1873, 3.

58. "Premium Wool," *San Diego Union*, 12 December 1873, 3. The writer continued by saying that, "We have always contended that the wool of San Diego county is the best produced in Southern California, and we have now authoritative confirmation of our claim in this regard." *The San Diego Union*, 14 June 1874, 1, claimed that the spring wool clip from Warner's Ranch amounted to 58,000 pounds.

59. *Ibid.*, 19 May 1875, 3.

60. Ibid., 28 March 1876, 3. The writer related, "I do not know the loss of sheep on the ranch, but I was out this morning over a portion of the country and saw a good many dead sheep."

61. Ibid., 23 November 1877, 1; 24 January 1878, 1, which said that Mr. J. Metzker of Warner's Ranch was in town to ship the sheep to San Francisco, and the San Diego Great Register of Voters, 1866-1879.

62. *San Diego Union*, 21 March 1879, 1; 4 June 1879, 1.

63. 1880 Census for San Diego County, Agua Caliente Township, mentions Linton's position as Farm Overseer. The San Diego Great Register of Voters, 1880-1887, 1888-1892, lists Andrew Linton as a farmer residing at Agua Caliente. See *San Diego Union*, 26 March 1881, 4, regarding Linton's appointment as postmaster. The San Diego City and County Directory, 1887-1888, lists Andrew Linton as a stock raiser at Warner Ranch. The *San Diego Union*, 21 November 1886, 3, discusses the number of livestock raised at Downey's ranch.

64. Ibid., 3 June 1880, 3.

65. Ibid., 20 May 1882, 3.

66. Ibid., 13 June 1884, 3; 13 July 1884, 3, which published a list of the "Heavy Tax Payers" of San Diego County. John G. Downey was ranked 5th with a property valuation of \$85,093. He was preceded by Richard O'Neil, the San Diego Land & Town Company, the California Southern Railroad Company, Clayton & Howard, and the Escondido Company.

67. *San Diego Union*, 28 April 1885, 3; 16 May 1885, 3.

68. Ibid., 13 November 1902, 5. The Union mentions that Walter L. Vail had run the ranch since 1888. See also Edward L. Vail, "Cattle Drive To Warner's Ranch," *The High Country* (Winter 1973), 24-32, (Spring 1974), 42-47, (Summer 1974), 19-25, and (Autumn 1974), 9-10. These articles were reprinted from Vail's 1891 diary and provide an interesting glimpse of a cattle drive conducted out of necessity during that time period because of the Southern Pacific Railroad's exorbitant charges for transporting basically worthless young cattle to California. The Vails made their money on the cattle after they were fattened in the Valle de San Jose. With this cattle drive, the Vails proved the point that they did not need the railroad to conduct business. After this event, the railroad lowered its fees and yearlings were transported either to Beaumont or San Bernardino and then driven to the Valle de San Jose. See also Lester Reed, *Old Timers of Southeastern California* (Redlands: Citrograph Printing Co., 1967), 141, 146.

69. The San Diego Great Register of Voters (1888-1892), indicates that John James Walsh was a farmer at Agua Caliente. The School Census Marshal's Report, 1891, San Diego

History Center, indicates that James Walsh resided in the Warner District that year.

70. See "Automobile Line to Warner's Hot Springs," *San Diego Union*, 10 October 1906, 5, which relates that Carpenter spent a year at the Ranch House recovering his health. See also, "County Pioneer Dies at Escondido; Rites Today at 2," *San Diego Union*, 29 December 1937, II-10, which reported William W. Carpenter's death in Escondido at the age of 79. Buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Mr. Carpenter resided in the county for more than half a century, and had been associated with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad.

71. Great Register of Voters, 1888-1892. The Great Register of Voters, 1892-1894 indicated that Knight was 5'11" tall, with blue eyes, light hair, and a light complexion. The *San Diego Union*, 22 September 1892, 3, stated that the Warner's Ranch is "skillfully managed by James Knight."

72. Julian Sentinel, 20 March 1891.

73. See Vail, ("Cattle Drive to Warner's Ranch," Spring 1974, 42), who wrote that Knight was a cousin of Tom Turner, the foreman of the Empire Ranch, and Reed, Old Timers of Southeastern California, 142, who said that "Jim Night (sic) was one of the old-timers on Warner's Ranch and was there when the Vails drove a herd of steers across the desert country between the Empire Ranch in Arizona to the Warner Ranch."

74. San Diego County Directory, 1892-1893, and the School Census Marshal's Reports, 1892-1893, document Knight's presence at the Ranch House during this time period.

75. School Census Marshal's Reports, 1895-1907, and Great Register of Voters, 1894-1895.

76. See "Appointment of School Census Marshal-Oath of Office" document, April 20, 1897, San Diego History Center.

77. "Three Contests of Election," *San Diego Union*, 21 April 1902, 6.

78. "The Cattle Thieves," *San Diego Union*, 4 March 1903, 2.

79. "The Removal of Warner Ranch Indians," *San Diego Union*, 21 April 1903, 6.

80. "Rodero Completed on Warners Ranch," *San Diego Union*, 9 October 1905, 7.

81. Clarence Alan McGrew, *City of San Diego and San Diego County*, 2 vols. (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1922), 497-498. See also *San Diego Union*, 16 September 1939, B-12, which carried Taylor's obituary. It mentioned that he died at the Carlsbad home of his daughter, Mrs. Lillian Cantarini, on September 15, 1939. His services were held at Johnson's Mortuary in Oceanside. It gave a brief history of his life which stated that, "Mr. Taylor, a native of Sacramento, was a rancher and had resided at Warner

Hot Springs many years. He came here five weeks ago to visit his daughter.” Survivors included: five sons- Henry, Arthur and Banning of Warner Hot Springs; Charles of San Diego; and Sam Taylor of Los Angeles; and two sisters, Mrs. Mary Duffy and Mrs. Susan McPherson of San Diego.

82. *Empire Land and Cattle Co. v Walter L. Vail Estate*, Superior Court, Case No. 17487, November 1911, indicates Walter Vail’s death. An interview with Charles Sawday, George’s nephew, 2 December 1996, provided the date of the Sawday lease and other insights into his uncle’s life. See also *San Diego Union*, 23 December 1949, 1, Sawday’s obituary, which detailed this individual’s interesting life. He died on December 22, 1949, in a La Jolla hospital at the age of 73. The article stated that, “As a cattle buyer, he was known throughout Southern California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. For many years he had been a director of the California Cattlemen’s Association. He once was vice president of the organization.” He was also a very private man who shunned publicity and had never permitted interviews or “more than passing mention of his name in newspaper or magazine articles.” Sawday’s empire included the Coogan Ranch, north of Campo; the Cameron Valley Ranch in the same area; the San Felipe Ranch; several ranches in the Laguna Mountains; Rose Canyon and Penasquitos Ranches, north of San Diego; and property in the Imperial Valley. Additionally, he held an interest in the Orita Land Cattle Co. near Brawley; the Santa Ysabel Dairy; the Sawday, Owen Co., which operated a sheep ranch near The Willows, and Sawday & Sexson, Inc., a corporation that operated the Rose Canyon and Penasquitos Ranches.

83. Sawday interview, 21 December 1996.

84. *Ibid.* The Sawday interview provided information about Ed Grand’s tenure at the Ranch House, as well as the history of the ranching operation. Sawday said that the yearlings were procured from Williams, Peach Springs, and Prescott, Arizona. They were shipped by the railroad to San Bernardino and then driven to the valley—a feat which took two days to accomplish. Reed, *Old Timers of Southeastern California*, 153-156, also mentioned Grand’s involvement at the ranch.

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*, 20 December 1996, and *San Diego Union*, 1 April 1951, A-22, which wrote that “Mrs. Sawday recalled, ‘I am sure that had he (Will Rogers) lived he would have bought it (the ranch).’”

87. Sawday interview, 20 December 1996.

[Photos from this article](#)

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