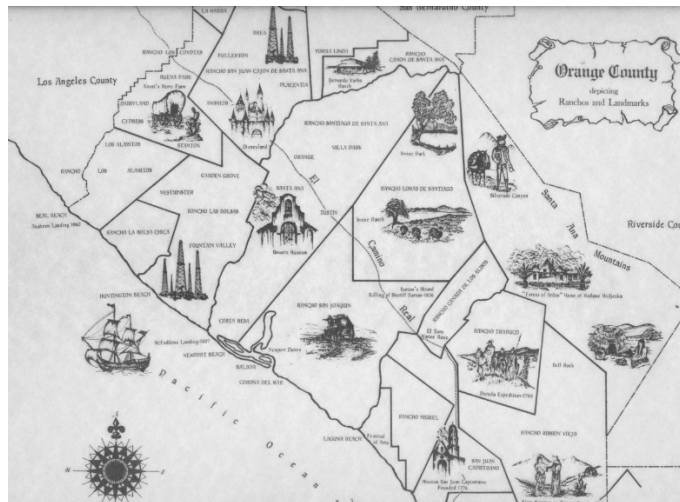


The Irvine Ranch History

Irvine, California

The Irvine Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of the Irvine Ranch, once one of the largest private ranches in the United States

From Mexican Land Grant to Great Irvine Ranch



The story of the modern city of Irvine is intertwined with some of the most intriguing families in California history, past owners of the three major land holdings that went into the building of the great Irvine Ranch. The Yorba family, Don José Andrés Sepulveda, William Wolfskill, the Bixby family, and the James Irvine dynasty - and the native Indians and Spanish missionaries who preceded them - each left an indelible imprint upon the landscape.

José Antonio Yorba I

José Antonio Yorba was born July 20, 1743 in San Sadurni de Noya in Catalonia, Spain. Records indicate he was baptized on July 20, 1746.

By 1801, Jose Antonio Yorba and his father-in-law, Juan Pablo Grijalva, began to pasture their cattle on land that would later be granted to Yorba. Yorba had first seen the land as a sergeant in

Gaspar de Portola's 1769 expedition from Mexico to San Francisco. This expedition charted the area for potential ports and possible sites for religious/military establishments to initiate settlement for the Spanish crown of the land discovered in 1542 by Juan Cabrillo.

Grijalva petitioned "for a tract of the Arroyo de Santiago" in 1801. The petition requested land from the banks of the Santa Ana River toward Santiago, to the mountains, and south down to the Cienega de las Ranas (northern boundary at Red Hill). The Grijalva home, located near the settlements of El Modena and Villa Park, was the first house built in the Santa Ana Valley.

The land grant was, apparently, misplaced. In 1810, four years after the death of Juan Pablo Grijalva, Yorba wrote to the provincial governor, Señor Jose Joaquin de Arrillaga, requesting confirmation of the grant which Yorba claimed had been applied for by his father-in-law in 1801.



Although the breed has changed, cattle have grazed on Irvine land since before the days of the Spanish and Mexican grants. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

Governor de Arrillaga ordered the case to be investigated, and on July 1, 1810, granted Jose Antonio Yorba and his nephew, Juan Peralta, ownership of the 62,516acre Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. The rancho was on the east bank of the Santa Ana River and extended from the Santa Ana Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

After Mexico gained independence from Spain and California had become a Mexican province, the grant for the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana was reconfirmed. By this time - September 1839 - the rancho had three houses, and herds of horses and cattle along with flocks of sheep and goats. The crops consisted of different types of grain and vineyard.

Teodosio Yorba, son of Jose Antonio Yorba I, received the El Rancho Lomas de Santiago (Ranch of the Hills of St. James) on May 26, 1846. He had grazed his herds on the land for ten years without bothering to obtain formal ownership. When it was clear that the United States intended to annex California, he decided to request the grant based on prior occupation and improvements. Pio Pico, the governor of the province, quickly authorized the survey and granted title to the land. The grant was bounded by the Rancho Santiago, Rancho San Joaquin, Rancho Los Alisos, and Rancho Canada de Santiago. According to historian Robert Glass Cleland, Teodosio Yorba's grant was certified on July 7, 1846, the same day a commander of a small fleet

arrived at Monterey Bay and, with 250 men, seized the town of Monterey, raised the American flag, fired a salute, and formally proclaimed the annexation of California to the United States.

Teodosio Yorba's grant was eventually enlarged to include 47,226 acres. It was bounded on the north by the Santa Ana River, acquiring water rights that would one day enable the Irvine Ranch to prosper immeasurably. James Irvine and his partners would later acquire 3,800 acres of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana.



A portion of the El Rancho Lomas de Santiago



Much of Sepulveda's Rancho San Joaquin grant looked very much like these photos taken in different seasons on the Irvine Ranch in early 1970. (Photos courtesy of the Irvine Historical Society.)

Don Jose Andres Sepulveda

Through the Secularization Act of 1833, the Mexican government repossessed most of the lands that had been provided to the California missions by the Spanish crown. The lands, which were to have been returned to the native Indians, were in fact then opened to petitioners.

It was about this point in time that Don Jose Andrés Sepulveda moved his family from Los Angeles to land formerly occupied by Mission San Juan Capistrano. It is believed that Sepulveda's first house there was a structure built by the Spanish missionaries.

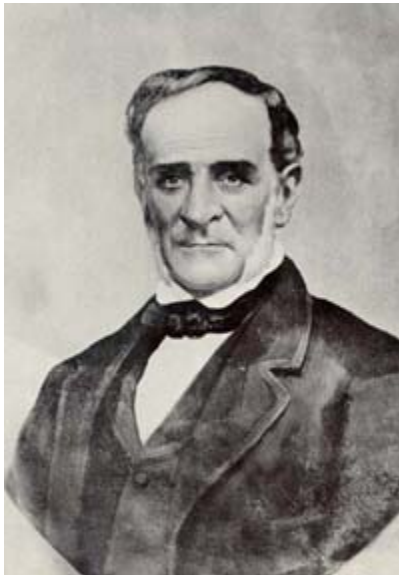
Born Jose Andrés on April 17, 1802, Sepulveda had married Francisca Avila around 1826. The births of their 16 children followed in quick succession: Maria Francisca (1827), Tomás (1828), Jose Miguel (1829), Mauricio (1830), José Francisco (1832), Bernabe (1833), Ramona (1834), Antonio (1836), Bernardo (1837), Joaquin (1838), Andronico (1841), Antonio Ygnacio (1842), Ascencion Concepcion (unknown), María Tomasa (1848), Tranquilina (1851) and Claromilio (unknown).

Mission San Juan Capistrano had control of several hundred square miles of grazing lands, including Cienega de las Ranas (Swamp of the Frogs) and Rancho San Joaquin. Sepulveda

petitioned for Cienega de las Ranas, which extended from the Hill of the Frogs (Red Hill) southwest to the ocean, and along the coast from (today's) Newport Beach to Laguna Beach. His petition for this land claimed that the mission did not have enough cattle to pasture either this ranch or its others.

Governor Alvarado granted the parcel to Sepulveda on April 15, 1837. At the time, Sepulveda's father was commissioner of San Juan Capistrano and a member of the Los Angeles political arena, and his position undoubtedly enabled Sepulveda to secure more land than was generally accorded in Mexican-era land grants.

Within four years, Sepulveda again battled the mission over land as he tried to extend his boundaries by default. This time, however, the mission successfully defended its rights. Governor Alvarado told Sepulveda to stay within the boundaries of his original grant.



Don Jose Andrés Sepulveda

The "resourceful" Sepulveda then filed a petition for a formal grant to the upper Newport Bay property, the Rancho Bolsas de San Joaquin, and was accused of using less than honorable tactics in his zeal to obtain it. The governor's council advised that Sepulveda's petition not be granted due to the deceptive maps on which he based his claim. Despite this advice, Governor Alvarado hastily ordered the grant to be given, and it was confirmed on May 13, 1842.

The two grants were administered as a unit and the 48,803 acres soon became known as Rancho San Joaquin. Encompassing land from Newport Bay to Laguna Canyon, and northward to the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains, it made up the lower half of what would become the Irvine Ranch.

Sepulveda, who had moved in the early 1830s to the west side of upper Newport Bay, built a large adobe house for his family on the east side of the upper bay marshes (near the present day Irvine Senior Center) in order to be on higher ground. The Sepulveda rancheria, or worker's compound, was close by, on the grounds of what is now the Rancho San Joaquin golf course.

Land adjoining the hacienda was put into gardens and fields of grain, but the majority of the Rancho San Joaquin was used to graze large herds of horses and cattle. With approximately 3,000 horses, 14,000 head of cattle, and 8,000 sheep, Sepulveda was one of the largest ranchers in Southern California. The rancho was completely self-sufficient.

Native Americans, who once lay claim to all of Sepulveda's land, now lived on the rancheria and worked for him as vaqueros, ranch hands, and servants. They produced hides and tallow for trade with the clipper ships that came into the port at Mission San Juan Capistrano (now known as Dana Point). The goods were hauled to the steep cliffs above the port in wooden carts called carretas, and were tossed to the sandy beach below to be loaded onto the waiting ship. Taken to factories in New England, the hides were made into boots and shoes and the tallow was used for making candies and soaps.

As one of Southern California's largest cattle ranchers, Sepulveda also realized much money from the invasion of the American forty-niners. During the Gold Rush era, he earned enormous profits selling cattle to be driven to northern California to feed the gold seekers.

Befitting a man of wealth, Sepulveda's lifestyle epitomized elegance and hospitality. He dressed in the finest clothes and his excellent horses had beautiful tack, including silver inlaid saddles and bridles. His home was always open to travelers, who could stay as long as they liked. He gave extravagant parties which often lasted for days. When one of his daughters married, Sepulveda hosted a 45-day wedding fiesta.



In 1831 Don José Andrés Sepulveda (1802-1875) received the first of two Mexican land grants for the 48,803-acre Rancho San Joaquin. Sepulveda had the largest of all the California cattle ranchos, grazing 14,000 head of cattle and 3,000 head of horses. Prior to severe droughts which virtually destroyed his cattle empire, Sepulveda supplied the San Francisco Forty-niners with beef. Sepulveda was considered the finest horseman in all of California, and in 1852 his mare, Black Swan, won the most famous horse race in

California's Mexican era.

(Equestrian portrait of Don José Andrés Sepulveda by Henri Joseph Penelon. Oil on canvas, circa 1856, Bowers Museum.)

A Fortune Rides on a Horse

Sepulveda's productive Rancho San Joaquin provided him with an unparalleled living style, but his penchant for gambling and unrivaled hospitality could not be supported by a ranch even as grand as the one he had been granted.

He gambled vast sums of money on horse races, including the most famous one in early California's history. In 1852, Sepulveda and Pio Pico, owner with his brother Andrés of Rancho Santa Margarita Y Flores and last Mexican governor of California, bet their fortunes on a single horse race. The race, scheduled for March 21, 1852, was to be between Pico's horse, Sarco, who had never been beaten, and any horse of Sepulveda's choosing. The prize for the winner: 500 mares, 500 calves, 500 heifers, 500 sheep, and \$25,000 in gold.

Sepulveda's love of horses was legendary. He was considered the finest horseman of his time, and not surprisingly, prided himself on having the fastest and best horses in the area. For the race against Sarco, Sepulveda found an Australian mare, Black Swan, in San Francisco. Black Swan had not been long in San Francisco, and was ridden from there to the Rancho San Joaquin. By the time she arrived, three months before the race, she was gaunt and tired. During the interim, Black Swan was carefully groomed and well trained.

News of the event spread, and wagers on the race were placed in every town in Southern California. When race day finally arrived, the roads were clogged with travelers; everyone within a hundred miles of Los Angeles was there, including the passengers from the *San Francisco* anchored at San Pedro Harbor.

Señora Francisca Sepulveda was there with a bag filled with \$50 gold pieces which she distributed to friends and admirers to bet on Black Swan.

The mares, calves, and sheep which Pio Pico and Sepulveda had wagered were corralled nearby in San Pedro, and the gold was deposited in waiting carretas to be awarded to the winner.

The race was held on what would become Alameda Street, beginning near where Seventh Street crosses Alameda in Los Angeles. The course, which cut through ten-foot high mustard grass, was four-and-one-half miles long. It was to be run to and from for a total of nine miles.

Sarco was ridden by a Mexican boy using the typical heavy high-horned vaquero saddle. Black Swan was ridden by a small black boy using a light-weight English saddle.

Pico's and Sepulveda's kingdoms rode on the backs of Sarco and Black Swan.

The horses thundered down the track, surrounded by the high mustard grass. Sarco took an early lead, but Black Swan quickly passed him. At the halfway point, she was 150 yards ahead. Sarco fought vainly to make a comeback, and at the finish, Black Swan was only five lengths ahead of the stallion. Sepulveda had won.

After the race, Sepulveda purchased Black Swan, but reportedly the champion mare died of lockjaw within a year.



*The Sinks in the Santa Ana Mountains are the most unusual geological formation on the Irvine Ranch. The hills have been abruptly cut by centuries of erosion from a constant water supply from deep below. Terry Stephenson writes in **Shadows of Old Saddleback** that "the first impression one gets on looking down upon the basin is that an area of two or three square miles has dropped from two to four hundred feet." To early settlers, who often never traveled farther than Los Angeles, the Sinks was a miniature Grand Canyon.*



*Often, grant boundaries were marked by a clump of trees, a cattle skull, or a rock formation.
(Photos courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)*



The Land Becomes U.S. Territory

In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed with the Mexican government, ending the Mexican War and giving California to the United States. The treaty provided that the Mexican land grants would be honored.

California became a state in 1850. One year later, the Land Act of 1851 was enacted, providing for review of all California land titles held under Spanish or Mexican land grants. Despite the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, many of the once great rancheros were either greatly reduced in size or the titles were not honored at all by what some have called an overzealous U.S. court system designed to remove the land from the Mexican grantees.

It proved very expensive for the Mexicans to defend their titles through the American court system. Court attorneys spoke a different language, so English-speaking American lawyers had to be hired, often at enormous sums, to defend what the Mexican's felt was rightly theirs. Much of the land was sold to pay - or given to the American attorneys in lieu of payment - for their defense fees. The boundaries of many grants had been marked by a clump of trees or a cattle skull, and these landmarks were dismissed in the U.S. courts. The United States was accused of repeatedly violating the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as parcel after parcel of the land came under American ownership.

A great deal of resentment between Mexicans and Americans resulted from the title fights. Highwaymen had preyed upon unsuspecting people since the 1840s, and the terror persisted after the American occupation, intensified by army deserters. Outlaws demanded money, firearms, horses, liquor, and anything else they found of value.

In 1857 the gang of Juan Flores, recently escaped from San Quentin prison, descended upon the village of San Juan Capistrano and raided Miguel Kraszewski's store. What they didn't take, they destroyed. Flores' girlfriend, Chola Martina, was willing to assist her lover in any way she could. The day after the raid on Kraszewski's store, she helped the gang enter the store of George Pfleugardt.

They killed him, then ate their dinner near his body. They raided another store that day, as well.

A boy was sent on a fast horse to the county seat at Los Angeles to report the murder to Sheriff Barton. Barton and five deputies set out for San Juan Capistrano, stopping to spend the night at the Sepulveda home. There Chola Martina supposedly emptied their guns of bullets while they slept.

Sepulveda warned Sheriff Barton about proceeding with so few men in his posse, but Barton and his men continued their journey. They were ambushed before leaving the boundaries of Rancho San Joaquin. The knoll where they were killed was named Barton's Mound.

Another posse, led by General Andrés Pico, was assembled in Los Angeles - this time with more than a hundred men who were very familiar with the terrain of South Los Angeles County (present day Orange County). Indian scouts were posted to make sure Flores and his gang would

not escape the area, and the Mexicans and Americans cooperated in the effort to capture Flores and his gang, the first episode of their working together since California had become a state.

General Pico and his men pursued Flores and his gang into the Santiago Canyon, where they captured all but Flores and two of his men. The next day Flores and his two partners were captured near Santiago Creek. Flores was confined in an adobe from which he escaped during the night, but was captured again three days later in San Fernando Valley. This time he was placed in a jail. The public demanded his execution, and he was hanged on a gallows built in his honor.



Even the vast Cienega de las Ranas proved no match for the severe droughts that plagued early ranchers.

Gambling Debts, Drought Part Sepulveda and Rancho San

Joaquin

On December 19, 1856, Sepulveda received U.S. confirmation of title to his Rancho San Joaquin. By now he also owned the land that would eventually become the southwest part of Santa Ana. In 1854, Sepulveda had purchased Domingo de la Resurreccion Yorba's interest in Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, including the house known as El Refugio that Yorba's father, Jose Antonio Yorba II, had built near the Santa Ana River.

Sepulveda continued his extravagant lifestyle, and his gambling debts eventually forced him to mortgage his land at seven to 10 percent per month interest rates. He was in the process of making a comeback when the drought of 1863-1864 struck.

The hills and valleys dried up completely - even the swamp areas dried up. Cattle starved to death by the thousands, and wagons driving along the road reportedly were unable to avoid running over the bones of the dead animals.

Sepulveda ordered his ranch hands to skin out each animal as it died, and to kill and skin thousands of others that were dying of starvation. Money borrowed from friends staved off his most pressing creditors.

But Sepulveda could not recover from the losses the drought brought. To repay his friends, he sold his 48,803-acre Rancho San Joaquin for \$18,000 (approximately 35 cents an acre), less money than he had been willing to gamble on a horse race 12 years before.

The deed of sale recorded December 7, 1864 states that James Irvine bought one-half of the ranch, Llewellyn Bixby and Thomas Flint each bought three-twentieths, and Benjamin Flint purchased four-twentieths.

Don José Andrés Sepulveda and his wife Francisca moved to El Refugio, the elaborate home and acreage in Santa Ana near the river. He also spent time in his townhouse in Los Angeles.

Sepulveda died at 73 years of age on April 17, 1875 in Caborca, Sonora, Mexico.

William Wolfskill

William Wolfskill, a contemporary of Don José Andrés Sepulveda, was one of the outstanding pioneers of California's wine industry. Wolfskill also was a cultivator of tropical and domestic fruits, the founder of the commercial orange industry, and is credited with having introduced large-scale lima bean culture to the Los Angeles area.

Wolfskill was a man of great adventure. His family had been a neighbor of Daniel Boone in North Carolina, but moved to Missouri in 1809 when William was ten years of age. There young Wolfskill learned about fighting Indians, and emerged from his youth well-skilled in the arts of hunting, trapping, plowing, planting, and raising livestock. At age 23, he set out to seek his fortune in the rapidly expanding fur trade in the southwest.

During the next few years, Wolfskill trapped, fought Indians, drove herds of mules for hundreds of miles, became a merchant and a trader, and led expeditions. On Wolfskill's first expedition to the Far West in 1830, he discovered what would become the most famous route from Taos, New Mexico to California - the Old Spanish Trail.

Wolfskill first arrived in Los Angeles in February 1831. He visited the head priest at the Mission San Gabriel, Father Jose Bernardo Sanchez, who told Wolfskill and his partner that "their scrupulous honesty had preceded them there." Wolfskill decided to stay in California for a year and hunt sea otters along the coast. The venture was not entirely satisfactory.

On September 21, 1833, Wolfskill presented naturalization papers to the alcalde (mayor) of Los Angeles as an indication of his intention to remain in the pueblo. Sometime that year, he bought a small tract of land containing some grape vines and settled down, one of the first white settlers in the area.

Wolfskill entered into a common-law marriage with Maria de la Luz Valencia, daughter of Ignacio Valencia and Maria Luisa Varela de Valencia. A daughter was born in 1833, and the next year a son.

To support his family, Wolfskill began building houses, fences, digging wells - anything he was commissioned to do. He built the now-famous adobe on Calle Principal. It served as headquarters for Governor Pio Pico when Los Angeles was temporarily made the capital of Alta California in 1845, and as headquarters for the American occupation forces under Captain Archibald H. Gillespie during the Mexican War. Later, after considerable remodeling, the adobe was turned into the Bella Union Hotel, the finest hotel south of San Francisco.

The first official district census, taken in 1836, listed 1,675 non-Indian residents, 553 Indians living in rancherias, and 55 foreigners (29 Americans, the remainder Europeans). In Los Angeles, the census count indicated a total of 603 men, 421 women and 651 children. Wolfskill was listed as Esten Guillmo Wolfskil, age 38, property owner and laborer, married and a native of the United States. His name was followed by Luz Valencia, 30, Juan Je (Timoteo) Wolfskil, 1, and Suzanne Wolfskil, 2.

Wolfskill continued to acquire more land and to plant more vines to enlarge his vineyard. He experimented with different methods of planting grape vines. He also studied the possibilities of distilling grape brandy, and investigated means for the commercial production of wine.

While Wolfskill spent much of his time with his vines, Luz spent time with a neighbor, Francisco Araujo, a local silversmith of questionable character who was exiled from California in 1837. Luz left her husband and children to go with Araujo, who was later killed in a duel.

The following year, Wolfskill traded his small vineyard for a 100-acre parcel that became the site of his permanent residence. At the time of the exchange, the parcel contained several thousand grape vines and a small number of fruit trees. Wolfskill's brother John came to live with him, and they immediately began to make improvements to the land. Rows of newly-set grape vines soon replaced open fields. Between 1838 and 1846, Wolfskill planted 32,000 new vines and became one of the leading vineyardists in the county.

In 1839, Wolfskill completed a large adobe house on the property, one of the most dignified, well-furnished homes of early Los Angeles. A hand-carved cherrywood four-poster bed and a Chickering grand piano were shipped around Cape Horn for the house. By 1840, Wolfskill was a well-established yanqui in the pueblo of Los Angeles.



*William Wolfskill was a pioneer in the agricultural industry. His involvement with orange production led to the establishment of California as the orange capital of the United States in the 1850s.
(Photo courtesy of Joan Hedding, g-g granddaughter)*

Wolfskill was welcome in all the best homes. In 1840, his old friend, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, introduced Wolfskill to his niece Magdalena who was visiting Los Angeles. Doña Maria Magdalena Lugo was the daughter of Don José Ygnacio Lugo and Doña Rafaela Romero de Lugo of Santa Barbara. The Lugo family was among the oldest and most prominent of the Spanish California residents. Magdalena's father, son of Francisco Salvador de Lugo, was the second native child of Spanish extraction to be born in California. He was confirmed by Father Junipero Serra at Mission San Antonio de Padua in 1778. Magdalena's uncle, Antonio Maria Lugo, received one of the few land grants made during the Spanish period. His Rancho San Antonio, granted in 1810, consisted of 30,000 acres adjoining the pueblo of Los Angeles on the southeast.

Magdalena and William were married on January 12, 1841. They had five children, but one daughter died at age four. The other children all remained in California and became influential members of the community, as did Wolfskill's children from his previous marriage.

In time, the Wolfskill family would own Rancho Azusa de Duarte (6,500 acres), Rancho Santa Anita (9,000 to 10,000 acres), Rancho Rio de los Potos (17,754 acres acquired in 1842 and managed by Wolfskill's brother John; much of this property was later given to the University of California at Davis), Rincon del Diablo (present-day Escondido, also known as Wolfskill Plains), Rancho San Jose de Bueños Ayres (present day Westwood), Rancho Lomas de Santiago, and a portion of Rancho San Francisco (which yielded important oil resources and is the site of present-day Newhall).



William Wolfskill made a fortune growing oranges. His considerable profits "...probably had more to do with stimulating orange growing in Southern California from that time forward than any other influence." (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

Wolfskill Founds Orange Industry

Wolfskill started what would soon be his famous orange groves the year he and Magdalena married. He obtained trees from Mission San Gabriel and set them out on a two-acre site adjacent to his adobe. Fruit sold commercially proved so successful that Wolfskill increased his orange grove to 28 acres by the early 1850s.

In 1851, Wolfskill bought his neighbor's 104-acre property. It had more than 40,000 vines, grown from prized French wine varieties, and 35 orange trees, the largest number of any private garden in Southern California. These trees had been transplanted from Mission San Gabriel and yielded 5,000 to 6,000 oranges per season.

Wolfskill believed the property had commercial possibilities, and within a few years, he had a total of 70 acres devoted to orange trees. An official of the Orange Grower's Union later remarked that Wolfskill's profits "probably had more to do with stimulating orange growing in Southern California from that time forward than any other influence."

Other neighbors planted nurseries of oranges and lemons. In 1855, Wolfskill bought them out and bought even more land to extend his orange orchard. In April 1857, there were probably not more than 100 mature orange trees bearing fruit in the entire county of Los Angeles. Wolfskill's trees were not yet bearing fruit, since it takes seven years for a tree to produce enough fruit to be considered mature. He planted several thousand trees at this time, and established what was then the largest orange orchard in the United States.

While his orange trees were maturing, Wolfskill was reaping the profits from his other fruit trees. In 1853, he began shipping fruit from San Pedro Harbor by ship. Of the 350 packages of fruit shipped that year, the largest number was shipped by the Wolfskill family - 98 packages containing 3,014 pounds of peaches, 487 pounds of apples, and 136 pounds of pears.

In January 1856, Wolfskill's son-in-law introduced seedling strawberries to Los Angeles. That year, Wolfskill was awarded a diploma at the State Fair in San Jose for having the best vineyard in California. He was given a snuff-box by the California State Agricultural Society for producing the best lemons and grapes.

Wolfskill's farm was considered the best in the state, with trees laid out in a pattern of neatness seldom equaled. In 1858, a committee from the California State Agricultural Society visited Wolfskill's orchards, vineyards and cultivated fields, and made a detailed report of each. They had nothing but praise. The report said, "Perhaps no man in the fruit business of this state has realized a more complete and satisfactory success than the proprietor of this place."

By 1859, Wolfskill was producing 15 percent of the total state vintage of 340,000 gallons of wine. His 50,000 gallons were made from 449,000 pounds of grapes valued at \$337,000. In 1862, Wolfskill was listed as having 85,000 vines.

The Wolfskill family shipped the first trainload of oranges to eastern markets in 1877 via the recently completed Southern Pacific Railroad. The ice the fruit was packed in had to be replaced 11 times during the one month trip to St. Louis. The shipment marked the beginning of California's citrus export industry.

An announcement in the Santa Ana Herald in 1886 proclaimed that "in the Wolfskill orchard is a new orange, which promises to become a great favorite with the growers." This was the Valencia, a summer orange which would thrive only in California.

Citizen Wolfskill

On a list of the most wealthy landowners in Los Angeles County published in 1851, William Wolfskill was listed as owning 1,100 acres assessed at \$10,000. By comparison, Don José Andrés Sepulveda owned 102,000 acres assessed at \$83,000; John Temple owned 20,000 acres assessed at \$79,000; Abel Stearns owned 14,000 acres assessed at \$90,000; and John Rowland owned 29,000 acres valued at \$70,000.

With taxes of \$114, Wolfskill barely made the list, published the following year, of the 49 Los Angeles County people who paid taxes in excess of \$100. The four highest taxpayers were John Temple at \$912; Don José Andrés Sepulveda at \$723; Abel Stearns at \$719; and Antonio Maria Lugo at \$676. Within six years, in 1858, Wolfskill was number three on the list of highest taxpayers.

Wolfskill's fortunes were rising as Don José Andrés Sepulveda's were falling due to his extravagant living and gambling debts. In 1855, Wolfskill loaned Sepulveda and his wife, Francisca, \$10,000. This note, secured by a mortgage on Rancho San Joaquin, ran for one year, with interest at two percent monthly, evidently a much lower rate than some were willing to give. The note was paid when due and netted Wolfskill \$2,400.

A firm believer in education, Wolfskill maintained a private school in his home for his children and the children of neighbors. In 1856, Joseph Edward Pleasants, whose parents were neighbors of William's brother John in Solano County, arrived to begin his term at the school and to work on the ranch. Pleasants would later be installed as caretaker of the land sold to James Irvine.

Wolfskill also subsidized the first public school in Los Angeles when a lack of funding threatened its closure after its first year of operation.

Wolfskill Buys Rancho Lomas de Santiago

In 1860, Wolfskill purchased Rancho Lomas de Santiago from Don Teodosio Yorba and his wife, Doña Inocenciai Reyes de Yorba, for \$7,000. He purchased the 47,227-acre rancho to graze his newly acquired stock of cattle, expecting to profit from the high prices for beef being paid by gold seekers in the north. Joseph Pleasants was placed on the land as ranch foreman.

Rancho Lomas de Santiago was bounded on the north by the Santa Ana River, on the east by the mountains, on the south by Rancho Aliso, and on the west by Sepulveda's Rancho San Joaquin. The boundary of this rancho was subsequently the subject of much controversy. It was finally shown that the entire grant was unlawfully made by Governor Pio Pico and was nullified by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The United States Land Commission, however, had confirmed the grant to Yorba in 1854.

Soon after the acquisition of Lomas de Santiago, Wolfskill brought carpenters and lumber from Los Angeles and began to construct a house for Pleasants on the banks of Santiago Creek. As the house was being built, the Yorbas contested the boundary. Wolfskill was indeed building the house on land that was not his. Not wanting to leave the house unfinished, he looked up several of the heirs to Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana and purchased their interest. Now he had as much right as anyone to be on the land. Throughout the six years he owned Rancho Lomas de Santiago, Wolfskill's stock had the right to roam the hills of the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana Spanish land grant.

Unfortunately for Wolfskill, the severe drought of 1863-1864 followed shortly after his purchase of Lomas de Santiago. Cattle had sold for \$8.00 a head in January 1863, but a few months later the starving animals were being slaughtered for the value of their hides and horns - \$2.00 to \$3.00 an animal.

The late spring brought hot winds from the desert and millions of grasshoppers devastated the country. Joseph Pleasants later recalled that "...not over four inches of rain fell from October 1863 to June 1864." As soon as clouds would gather and rain appeared imminent, the Santa Ana winds would blow the clouds away and continue to blow for days, parching the already dry ground.

In the summer of 1863, Wolfskill traveled to Tonopah in San Bernardino County to look after some of his mining interests. While traveling down the Mojave River, he noticed that the bottom lands were covered with grass for a distance of some 20 or 30 miles along the river's course. Pleasants transferred the stock to this pasture - east of the San Bernardino Mountains - in mid-winter 1863. Wolfskill advised two of his friends and neighbors of the pasture, and they joined him in moving the herds, including their livestock as well. It took three months to move the 5,000 head of cattle and 1,000 horses. The animals stayed on the river bottom lands for more

than a year, their return beginning in April 1865 after the rains had replenished the rancho. Though many ranchers lost up to 75 percent of their stock during the drought, Wolfskill and his friends only lost 25 percent.

Despite his comparatively minor cattle losses, Wolfskill began converting the rancho to raise sheep. Cattle, however, continued to be an important crop.

In 1864, William Wolfskill was listed as the second highest taxpayer in Los Angeles County, at \$7,215. Only Phineas Banning, founder of Wilmington and the creator of San Pedro Harbor, paid more. His taxes were \$20,000.

In March 1866, William Wolfskill sold Rancho Lomas de Santiago and his share in Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana to Llewellyn Bixby; Dr. Thomas and Benjamin Flint, and James Irvine. Wolfskill sold the property to Flint, Bixby & Company for \$7,000 - the same price he had paid the Yorba family six years earlier. The total acreage of Wolfskill's Rancho Lomas de Santiago was 47,226 acres.

The change of ownership came just as the court commissioners were dividing up the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. In the final adjustment, James Irvine and his partners were allocated a strip of land approximately three-quarters of a mile wide, running the full eight-mile length of the southeast line of the rancho from the ocean to the foothills. The total acreage received from the original 62,516-acre Spanish land grant was 3,800 acres.

At the time the Rancho Lomas de Santiago sale was approved by the Land Commission, its title was unencumbered by legal entanglements. The official survey carried the northern boundary of the portion of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana purchased by Flint, Bixby & Company to the Santa Ana River, thus assuring water rights.

This new purchase, combined with the acquisition of Rancho San Joaquin from Don José Andrés Sepulveda two years earlier and several smaller acquisitions, brought the Flint, Bixby & Company land holdings in Southern California to 108,000 acres - 168 square miles. The partners paid about \$41,000 for all the land, approximately 38 cents an acre. Adjoining tracts later added increased their land holdings to approximately 125,000 acres.

William Wolfskill, the man to whom Los Angeles and Southern California owed much of their development, died in 1866, six months after selling Rancho Lomas de Santiago and his share of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana to Irvine and his partners.



The Rancho Lomas de Santiago contained hundreds of rolling hills.

*Cattle and sheep were grazed here for two centuries.
(Photo courtesy of the Irvine Historical Society)*

James Irvine I

James Irvine was born in Anabilt, County Down, Ireland on December 27, 1827, the second to the youngest of nine children. His father was "a farmer in easy circumstance," and Irvine and his eight siblings probably lived a comfortable life until Ireland's potato crop failed in 1845. The ensuing famine caused the deaths of more than a million of the Irish people by 1851, and drove millions of others to emigrate from Ireland to America.

James Irvine and his younger brother William were among those who left homes in Belfast in 1846 to take their chances in America. Irvine left Ireland "without a dollar in his pocket" and worked his first two years in America at the Praslee Paper Mills in Molden Bridge, New York.

When gold was discovered in California in January 1848, Irvine decided to go there. He booked passage on a boat sailing to the east coast of Central America; crossed the Isthmus of Panama by canoe, muleback, and on foot; then boarded the Dutch ship Alexander Humboldt, which sailed from the west coast of Panama to San Francisco. His journey took 101 days.

On the trip, during which Irvine consumed "hard beans and harder tack, mahogany beef and bilge water daily," he met Dr. Benjamin Flint and Collis P. Huntington. One would earn his respect and become his friend and business partner; the other would become his enemy.

Irvine began work in the gold fields as a merchant and miner. In 1854, he purchased an interest in a San Francisco commission house on Front Street, operated by a relative, John Lyons. The business was renamed 'Irvine & Co., wholesale produce and grocery mchts."

Few miners became wealthy in the field, but those who sold goods and services to the miners fared well. Irvine was one of the most successful of the merchants. He began investing his rather large profits in income-producing San Francisco real estate and soon became a wealthy man.

Irvine also became a silent partner in the sheep raising venture of brothers Thomas and Benjamin Flint, and their cousin Llewellyn Bixby.

In 1853, the Flints and Bixby had driven 2,000 head of sheep, along with a number of oxen, horses, cows, and wagons, from Iowa to Monterey County, California, where they purchased

54,000 acres of grazing land. The disruption of the cotton industry during the Civil War created a demand for wool that was in large part filled by the Flint, Bixby & Company operation - the "Company" being James Irvine.

The purchase of Rancho San Joaquin from Don José Andrés Sepulveda in 1864 marked the beginning of their operations in Southern California, as well as the beginning of the land holdings the three prosperous sheep ranchers would amass there. The entire 125,000-acre land holding would be known as the Rancho San Joaquin for many years.

Irvine became a very prominent citizen of San Francisco. On July 25, 1866, he married Henrietta Maria (Nettie) Rice from Cleveland, Ohio, daughter of educator, attorney, and newspaperman Harvey Rice who served both in the Ohio legislature and senate. As sponsor of the bill that established Ohio's public school system and school libraries, Rice was greatly respected by the citizens of Cleveland, who memorialized him in 1898 with a bronze statue naming him the "Father of the Ohio School System."

Nettie Rice was 25 years old when she married James Irvine. The following year, on October 16, 1867, their first son, James Harvey Irvine, was born.

James and Nettie Irvine made their home at the corner of Folsom and 11th streets in San Francisco. According to historian Robert Glass Cleland, the house, complete with furnishings, cost approximately \$25,000. Irvine wrote "...it is a very comfortable one, with a beautiful yard filled with shrubbery, flowers, and clover and there I take solid enjoyment." Within nine years, Irvine had built at least 14 additional houses close by for rental purposes.

On October 21, 1868, a severe earthquake shook San Francisco to its foundation. The Irvine home was made of wood and was not heavily damaged. The four tall brick chimneys broke near the roof but none fell down. Irvine stated in a letter to one of his brothers that "I would not live in a brick or stone house. I have felt many earthquakes before but this one beats them all. I hope we shall have no more like it. The business portion of the city, built of bricks, stone and iron suffered severely, but much less than I would have supposed..."

Despite the earthquake, land values in San Francisco continued to soar, and by 1870, Irvine's real estate holdings in that city were valued at nearly \$200,000.



*James Irvine I bought half interest in three major Southern California ranchos as a silent partner of Flint, Bixby & Co., a sheep-raising venture.
(Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)*



San Joaquin House ,

James Irvine I built this two-story home on the Rancho San Joaquin in 1868. Irvine needed a place to conduct business during his visits. The home was occupied by the first ranch manager, C. E. French. It was

torn down in 1961. The building to the left was built around 1877. It currently serves as a home to the Irvine Historical Museum, and is the oldest standing structure on the Irvine Ranch.

San Joaquin House

Meanwhile, Irvine was making improvements to Rancho San Joaquin. In 1868, he commissioned a house to be built that would be a suitable place for him to stay when he visited the rancho to conduct business. The home was also built with the intent of having a ranch manager installed. At a cost of \$1,300, a two-story frame house was constructed near the old Sepulveda compound.

The San Joaquin Ranch house was the first wooden house to be erected between Anaheim and San Diego. The finest house for miles around, it had a kitchen, dining room, parlor, four bedrooms and a porch that ran about the entire house. It also had Chinese household help.

To improve the standard of wool, in 1867 Irvine imported approximately 25 Spanish Merino sheep. These were thoroughbred bucks and ewes, purchased at a cost of between \$250 and \$500 each. The following year he stocked Rancho San Joaquin with 45,000 sheep.

The partners initially shipped Rancho San Joaquin wool from Newport Bay, but after a quarrel with the operators of the Newport Bay shipping port, began shipping from Wilmington (present day Los Angeles Harbor). Wool was shipped first to San Francisco and from there to New York or Boston. Irvine insisted that the wool be sold as quickly as possible once it reached the eastern markets. He had no desire to "hold the goods or speculate on future markets."

In 1868, Irvine's father-in-law, Harvey Rice, spent a week on Rancho San Joaquin and wrote a book, *Letters from the Pacific Slope*, in which the sheep tending was described. Rice wrote, "The sheep with which this ranch is stocked, are subdivided in flocks of three thousand to five thousand, and each division placed in charge of a shepherd, who watches over them, by day and by night, like the shepherds of old, but with this difference, perhaps, that he gathers the sheep into a corral or pen at night, and then betakes himself to his eight-by-ten board cabin, next to the enclosure, and there cooks, eats and sleeps as best he can, with no other associates than his sheep and faithful dog. His life is truly a lonely one, and yet he seems happy in the companionship of his sheep and dog, who understand his signs and his whistle, and even the import of his words, and obey him with a child-like confidence in his superior wisdom and intelligence. The annual clip of wool from the sheep of this ranch is said to be about two hundred thousand pounds. It is of the finest quality, and sells at a high price in the eastern market. Add to the income from the wool the annual product of twenty thousand lambs, and it is easy to see that wool growing is a very profitable business in California."

In May 1870, a young man named Charles E. French accompanied the Bixby's from Boston to Southern California. French had been advised by his family doctor to go to California for health reasons. On a visit to Rancho San Joaquin, the Bixbys and Irvine persuaded French to stay and become the ranch superintendent.

French's arrival at San Joaquin had been preceded by a three-year drought, and its landscape was desolate. Not a blade of grass could be seen anywhere. In a letter to his wife Emma, who had remained in Boston, French described the rancho as a "God-forsaken land with coyotes barking, wild cats screaming, and not a light to be seen anywhere in the darkness of the night."

The very homesick French was sorry that he had agreed to try his hand at supervising the ranch. Added to his problems with coyotes, wildcats and darkness was the most constant annoyance of fleas. The main sheep camp was situated at the home site, and sheep had fleas - lots of them. The only way to get rid of them was to flood the ground or the house.

Within seven months, French's wife and daughter Gertrude came by train from Boston to join him. Before they arrived, French later recalled that he "flooded the floors and plastered walls to

get rid of these pests. At night after undressing, a person jumped into bed as quickly as possible in order not get them in the bed."

Soon after the French's arrival in 1870, thousands of sheep began dying as a result of the drought. By 1871, all but approximately 12,000 of the remaining sheep had been moved to grazing lands in San Luis Obispo County. During that drought, Irvine and Benjamin Flint closed their ranges to the flocks of Bixby and his partner Moore. Apparently there was a falling out between Irvine and Bixby.

The loss of sheep and the resulting loss of revenue forced Irvine to "urge every possible economy in ranch operations." He complained to French about the two Chinese cooks who were making \$60 a month, plus board, to cook for six men. Irvine felt that the average wage should be \$15 per month. Approximately 35 workers were on the ranch payroll.

When Irvine visited from San Francisco, he stayed in the San Joaquin Ranch house with Charles and Emma French. In the evening he read poetry aloud to Mrs. French, a welcome break in the monotony of her isolation. Friends came to visit, but not often enough to relieve the loneliness of living miles away from any neighbor.

Since the closest school was in Tustin - too far away from the ranch house for Gertrude to attend - her mother taught her lessons at home.

Desolate though it was, several notable events happened at San Joaquin Ranch house, among them. the naming of Newport Bay and Newport City.

As told by Ellen K. Lee in *Newport Beach* 75 , in September 1870 Captain Samuel Dunnells "safely navigated his 105-ton sternwheeler river steamer Vaquero from the ocean into the lower bay and all the way into the upper bay where he unloaded a cargo of lumber and shingles. Upon hearing the news, the first James Irvine hurried to the San Joaquin Ranch from his home in San Francisco. At his newly constructed frame ranch house ... he met with James McFadden and his youngest brother, Robert, who had dashed from the northern part of the state by stagecoach as soon as they learned of Captain Dunnells' achievement. All agreed that it really was a 'new port.' They named it Newport."



Drought

Before irrigation, the land was dependent on the weather. There were periods of drought as often

as wet years. This photograph is of the Turtle Rock, looking north.



Early Crops

Wheat and barley were the first major crops to be grown on the Irvine Ranch. Irvine allowed ranch manager C. E. French to devote some land to tenant farming in 1875.

A young pepper tree, which stood until 1996 on the grounds of the Irvine Historical Museum, offered shade to the ranch house. At the time of its demise, the trunk of the *Schinus molle* was 48 inches in circumference, and was the oldest known pepper tree in the city of Irvine.

When young James Irvine was six years old, the Irvine's second son, Harvey Rice Irvine, was born, but the child died in infancy. A week after James turned seven, on October 23, 1874, Nettie died of consumption. Irvine was age 47 at the time of her death. In 1880, when young James was 13, Irvine married Margaret Byrne.

Around 1875, French asked Irvine if he could "do a little farming on his own responsibility and at his own risk." Irvine told him that he had no objection, however, it could "not be a bit of expense to the ranch." Irvine felt that expenses on the ranch were not held in proper check, and he had no intention of having them increase.

The farming apparently was successful, for Irvine informed French within six months that he was willing to have parts of the ranch devoted to tenant farming, providing the tenants assumed full responsibility. No advertising was to be made that land was available; however, French did place a notice that he was offering land between Tustin City and the "Adobe Station" at the corner of Bryan and Browning for rent to farmers.

Irvine Buys Out Partners

The year 1876 was the beginning of an historic drought that practically destroyed the grazing capability of Rancho San Joaquin. The rancho's losses undoubtedly were substantial. Despite the drought, Irvine loved the land and he loved Rancho San Joaquin. In September 1876, he bought out his three business partners - for \$150,000 - and took over the ranch operations.

That same year, Emma French decided she could take the desolate ranch life no more and insisted they move to be near civilization. The Frenchs moved to a lovely home on French Street in Santa Ana, but Charles French continued to work for Irvine. Irvine instructed him to find a more suitable location for a ranch headquarters - one more convenient to civilization. French, with Irvine's approval, decided upon an area quite close to Tustin City, and in 1876 began building what came to be known as "the Irvine mansion."

In 1877, Nettie Irvine's younger brother, James Stephen Rice, moved from Cleveland, Ohio to California due to failing health. He moved with his wife and two children to the San Joaquin Ranch house, and, among other things, went into a hog raising venture with his brother-in-law. The hog farm, located where the University of California, Irvine is today, continued in operation for more than 75 years.

Rice and his family lived at the San Joaquin Ranch house for only one year before moving to Tustin. Like the Frenches, they did not care to tolerate the advantage of being close to work at the expense of being far from friends. After they moved from the house, a cooking wing was added and it became the cattle foreman's home.

The new ranch headquarters site selected by French near Tustin City happened to be near the stage depot. The Seeley-Wright was the most well-known of the stage lines that traversed Orange County in the latter half of the 19th century. The 130-mile line from Los Angeles to San Diego was started in 1866 by Alfred L. Seeley of San Diego. He promised that he would deliver passengers from one destination to another inside of 24 hours; 23 if there were no broken wheels or axles, if the team didn't run away, and if robbers didn't hold up the stage. In 1869, he took Wright on as a partner and by 1871, they had expanded the line to daily service.

From Los Angeles, the road followed the old telegraph line to San Diego. Heading south through Orange County, the stagecoach stopped in Los Nietos, then Anaheim. Leaving there, it forded the Santa Ana River, stopping in Santa Ana after the town was founded in 1869. From Santa Ana the stagecoach traveled to Tustin City, and from there towards Red Hill to avoid the huge Cienega de las Ranas. The telegraph and stage road followed El Camino Real, hugging close to the foothills to get around the marsh land. After stopping for fresh horses on the edge of the San Joaquin (Bryan and Browning), the stage continued across the rancho.

James Irvine had granted permission to Seeley to run the stage across his ranch. The road through Rancho San Joaquin followed an old stream bed, close to the foothills. The sandy bottom was a very hard pull for the horses, and they were forced to slow to a walk. This was the most dangerous stretch of the journey. If bandits were planning to rob the stage, this was where they would strike.

Way stations for changing horses were about 20 miles apart, so none were located on the Irvine Ranch. The next relay at El Toro was closer than usual, to relieve the exhausted horses. The next stop was San Juan Capistrano, and from there the stage continued into San Diego County.

Irvine Battles Railroad, Squatters

The arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad into Anaheim in 1876 dealt a rough blow to the Seeley-Wright Stage Line. Within two years, the Southern Pacific would extend its line into Santa Ana. But the death knell for the stage did not sound until 1887, when the Santa Fe Railroad put its tracks through the Irvine Ranch and into San Diego County - and that didn't happen until one year after the death of James Irvine I.



Stagecoach Route

The stage to Laguna traveled along Old Barranca as it crossed the San Diego Creek on its way through the canyons to Laguna. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

The Southern Pacific Railroad had demanded passage through Rancho San Joaquin as early as 1875. Irvine, however, had no intention of permitting anyone to cross his property without paying due compensation, least of all the arrogant Collis P. Huntington, his former shipmate on the Humboldt who was now a major owner of the Southern Pacific.

As noted in *Rails Through the Orange Groves*, Volume 1, "...there arose stiff opposition from James Irvine... . As a preliminary step to building south from Santa Ana, the Southern Pacific filed a lawsuit in Federal Court to invalidate the title to some of Irvine's landholdings, arguing that the Land Grant Court had erred by assigning to Irvine more land than he was entitled to. The effort, if successful, would have released over 30,000 acres to the public domain, out of which the Southern Pacific hoped to secure both the desired right-of-way for its San Diego line, and alternate sections on either side of the route under terms of its land grant from the Federal Government.

"Despite Collis Huntington's great power in Washington at that time, the case was decided in favor of James Irvine in 1878. The Southern Pacific was unable to win free access across the ranch lands, and Irvine himself refused to sell a right-of-way to the railroad at any price.

This successful resistance ended the Espee's (Southern Pacific) first attempt to build a line to San Diego. As long as James Irvine, Senior (sic), was alive, his implacable hatred towards the Southern Pacific successfully thwarted that railroad's ambitions to reach San Diego; this was a rare event in that era when Southern Pacific's economic and political influence in California was virtually unchecked."

Irvine suffered a considerable amount of bad publicity as a result of his refusal to let the railroad come through, and also because of his prompt removal of squatters who trespassed on his property trying to stake out homesteads. Since he owned property in excess of 108,000 acres, the latter proved difficult.

The Santa Ana Herald attacked Irvine for "evading his rightful taxes and failing to contribute to the settlement and prosperity of the county." The December 31, 1881 article, as reprinted in Cleland's book, reads: "We traveled through the rancho, the property of James Irvine of San Francisco, a distance of nearly twelve miles, during which we saw no house nor found any improvement. Of the San Joaquin rancho of 48,900 acres, one third is level and well adapted to cultivation. There are three artesian wells on tract, and the whole is susceptible of irrigation by artesian water. Mr. Irvine's adjoining rancho, the Lomas de Santiago, containing 47,000 acres, contains about 9,000 acres of fine wheat, corn and fruit land, but is wholly uninhabited... . At present there are only about 35,000 head of sheep upon them, and it is estimated that one hundred thousand sheep could be fed there each year. This immense estate, so dreary and desolate, presents a vivid contrast to the adjoining rancho, which has been made to blossom like a rose in its beauty and luxuriance. The Santa Ana rancho, which was originally granted to the Yorba family, has been cut up and sold out into tracts upon which thousands of happy homes may now be found, including the towns of Santa Ana, Orange, and Tustin City, three of the prettiest and most prosperous places in California."

In 1882 Irvine began subdividing 1,440 acres southeast of Tustin into 40-acre farms to sell. The soil was as rich as could be found anywhere. According to Cleland, "corn grew so tall that a man could scarcely reach the lowest ear on the stalk with an ordinary walking stick, and production often ran as high as a hundred and twenty-five bushels an acre. A yield of two hundred and twenty-five sacks of potatoes an acre and pumpkins that weighed two hundred pounds and more were not uncommon."

A wide road was constructed through the ranch to make transportation convenient, but farmers had a difficult time making any money. Markets for the crops were not often available, and transportation charges were ruinous. The farms did not attract as many buyers as it would take to make subdividing the land successful, and many purchasers failed to make their installment payments. Once again, Irvine was involved in "considerable litigation."

In 1882, Irvine began subdividing 1,440 acres southeast of Tustin into 40-acre farms to sell. The soil was excellent and crops were superior, but the venture failed because markets were not available and transportation charges were prohibitive,



Mule Power

From 1875 through the beginning of the Second World War, the mule was the power for most farming operations. Early day threshing on the Irvine Ranch required a very large team. (Photos courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

Irvine Estate Left to Wife, Son

Despite the attempts by others, Irvine managed to keep his considerable estate intact. Upon his death in 1886 (of Bright's disease, according to historian Jim Sleeper), the estate was valued at \$1,283,181.01. Always an excellent businessman, Irvine was known in business affairs for his "...sagacity, sound judgment, sense of fairness and justice, and his 'exactitude even in the most trivial transactions,'" to quote from Cleland.

Irvine may have been exact in his transactions, but he was not unwilling to share his wealth - in life or upon his death. He had helped his family in Ireland, financing several of his brothers in business ventures. He also went to the aid of an old gentleman who had lost his fortune, but who had been of great assistance to Irvine when he was in need of "aid and kindness."

James Irvine's estate was left to his wife, Margaret, and his 18-year-old son, James Harvey Irvine. Irvine requested that certain relatives and friends serve as executors for James Harvey Irvine. The list included his wife Margaret, her brother James W. Byrne, Irvine's brother George, Irvine's attorney, and two friends.

Irvine directed that cash bequests in excess of \$100,000, provided by the sale of real estate, be provided for his wife, brothers, sisters, and other relatives. His wife and each of seven other beneficiaries were also to receive substantial gifts of land, none in excess of \$5,000 in value, all from his Southern California properties. A tract of 2,880 acres of the Southern California property was specifically allocated to his son, James Harvey, who was to inherit the remainder of the estate when he reached the age of 25. Until that day, the trustees were empowered to lease, improve or sell the assets of the estate at their discretion.



Agricultural Headquarters

In 1876, James Irvine I instructed ranch manager Charles E. French to build a residence closer to civilization than what the San Joaquin ranch house had been. French selected an area close to Tustin City, and the agricultural headquarters developed around that site. In this 1930 photo, Irvine Boulevard can be seen

running the length of the compound. Myford Road cuts into the road from the left. Part of the mansion roof is visible in the upper left area among the trees. Eucalyptus trees outline the area. (Photo courtesy of the late Eddie Martin.)

Cleland writes that the Los Angeles County property was valued at \$748,500. Rancho Lomas de Santiago was valued at \$222,000; Rancho San Joaquin at \$408,000; and though no value was provided for the estate's holdings in Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, they were later appraised at \$118,500. Livestock on the three ranches was valued at approximately \$54,000 and a one-fifth interest in crops of barley on 500 acres, grown "on a tenant sharing basis," was estimated at \$800.

Thirteen months after Irvine's death, the trustees put the Irvine holdings in Southern California up for sale at public auction. Prior to the bid opening, it was agreed that the land would go to the highest bidder, and that bid could not be less than \$1,300,000. A certified check for \$50,000 had to be presented and if the balance of the purchase price was not forthcoming within 60 days, those monies would be forfeited. To make the bidding more attractive, it was also agreed that the trustees would lend the purchaser up to \$900,000 towards the payment of the property, and that all bids must be made within 30 minutes from the actual start of the sale.

Two gentlemen bid for the property. Cleland writes, "In the hectic closing moments of the sale, ... the official timekeeper became momentarily confused and designated (first one and then the other) as the successful bidder." Due to the resulting confusion, each bidder thinking he had won the right to purchase the property, two certified checks were handed to the auctioneer and the trustees refused to accept either check.

James Harvey Irvine was now 19; he had five and one-half years to go before he could inherit the property. In the meantime, George Whidden managed what was now being called "the Irvine Ranch." For the next few years, rumors of the imminent sale of the Irvine Ranch worried nearby communities and made it difficult for the ranch manager to cope with negotiating leases and designating crops.



Railroad Crosses the Irvine Ranch,

James Irvine's property encompassed the land from the eastern Santa Ana Mountains to the western San Joaquin Hills and on to the ocean. To obtain rail access from Los Angeles to the new port of San Diego, the flat central portion of the ranch would have to be

crossed. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

Railroad Finally Crosses Irvine Ranch

James Irvine I had died at the beginning of the "Great Boom" of 1886-1888, when the Southern Pacific Railroad, which had been completed to Los Angeles in 1876, and the Santa Fe Railroad, which had arrived by 1885, went to war. The two railroads competed fiercely with one another for passengers; at one time, a cross country ticket could be bought for a dollar.

But, if either the Southern Pacific or Santa Fe were going to reach the lucrative shipping markets opening in San Diego, a way had to be found to cross the Irvine Ranch. The Southern Pacific's early efforts were unsuccessful, but it renewed its efforts when the Santa Fe arrived nine years later.

Having tried the court system and been rebuked, the Southern Pacific now decided to try brute force. Cleland writes, "One Saturday afternoon (in 1887), after the closing of the Los Angeles courts for the weekend holiday made it impossible for the owners of the affected property to obtain an injunction in time to stop the company's action, the railroad's construction crew began to build an improvised line through Tustin and on across the Irvine Ranch. If the strategy had succeeded, the citizens and ranchers might have whistled to the wind so far as getting the tracks removed was concerned; but a group of landowners, armed with rifles and shotguns, stopped the construction work and drove the crew off the disputed right-of-way. This action ended the Southern Pacific's attempt to build down the coast across the Irvine properties." George Irvine led the group of armed men who met the railroad crewmen and ran them off the ranch.

On February 14, 1887, the San Bernardino and San Diego Railroad, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe, filed suit in the Los Angeles County Superior Court against the Irvine trustees for a right of way across the ranch. Before the case could be brought to trial, the Irvine trustees deeded the desired right of way, plus a site for a depot, side tracks and warehouse, for \$4,500. The site was deeded on April 25, 1887.

There were provisions, of course. George Irvine wanted "a first class regular station for freight and passengers" built within six months, and a fence constructed along both sides of the right of way, in addition to the right to cross the tracks with roads, irrigation ditches, etc.

From Sheep to Cattle, Crops

The Irvine Ranch began a changeover from sheep to cattle after James Irvine's death in 1886. By 1888, sheep herds were down to 12,000 head, and the spring clip yielded approximately 60,000 pounds. The trustees sold one-third of the sheep to lessees on the ranch. Cattle now were being

raised to the greatest extent since Don José Andrés Sepulveda owned the lower portion of the ranch.

The ranch also began the transition from grazing to farming. Acreage was leased to "outsiders" at 62.5 cents an acre. The arrival of the railroad had opened up markets heretofore unavailable, making it lucrative to raise crops.

At the close of 1888, more than 5,000 acres of the Irvine Ranch had been leased to farmers raising hay and grain. Most of the land was farmed on shares.

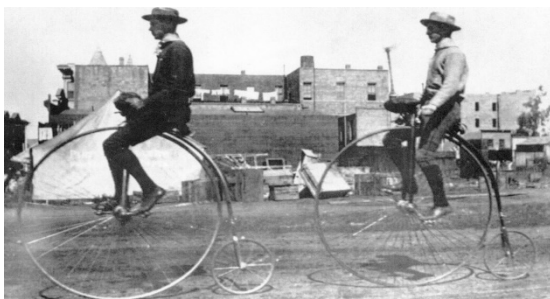
That same year, James Harvey Irvine and his friend, Harry Baechtel, rode high-wheeled bicycles from San Francisco to San Diego. Along the way, they surveyed the Irvine Ranch. Riding a velocipede on the rough, often rutted, roads was not for the faint-hearted. An undertaking of this magnitude was truly a noteworthy event.

Ranch manager George Whidden planted an olive nursery in 1889. When the stock was sufficiently mature, Whidden directed the planting of 160 acres near the agricultural headquarters off Irvine Boulevard and Myford Road. The crop did not fare well, primarily because of the ranch's proximity to the coast, and a market was yet to be developed for the olive industry.

Heavy rains that began in December 1889 caused major rivers, including the Santa Ana, to ignore their banks and wash away farm lands and railroad tracks. Parts of Santa Ana were under four feet of water. The Santiago Creek changed its course and flowed through the heart of the San Joaquin Ranch, according to the Los Angeles Times of December 24, 1889. Flood damage was relatively mild on the Irvine Ranch, but the Santa Fe tracks were washed out near Central (now Sand Canyon) Avenue.

In the early 1890s, a walnut orchard was planted. More than 11,000 blue gum eucalyptus trees also were planted, for wood, oil, tax credit, and for use as a windbreak for the agricultural headquarters area.

By 1890, squatters seemed to have finally gotten the message that the Irvine Ranch was closed to them. Up until then, trouble with squatters had been relatively constant.



In 1888, James Irvine II (left) and his friend, Harry Baechtel, rode their velocipedes from San Francisco to San Diego. (Photo courtesy of Irvine Historical Society.)

Madame Modjeska Arrives

The transition period between James Irvine's death and his son's inheritance of a relatively intact Rancho San Joaquin was highlighted by the arrival of the world famous Shakespearean actress, Madame Helene Modjeska.

Madame Modjeska of the Imperial Theater of Warsaw, Poland, one of the highest paid actresses in the world at the time, arrived in Anaheim in the summer of 1876. With her was her husband, Count Bozenta, their 14-year-old son Ralph (who later became the well-known architect of such bridges as the Benjamin Franklin Bridge between Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, and the Huey P. Long Bridge in New Orleans; he also was chairman of the consulting board for the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge), and a small group of talented friends. They had given up fame, fortune, and their native Poland to come to a land free of Russian oppression to establish a Polish Utopia.

After trying their hand at farming, and failing, Modjeska, homesick for the mountains of her native Poland, determined that the only redeeming feature of Anaheim was the view of the Santa Ana Mountains.

The money Modjeska and Count Bozenta brought to establish the colony soon ran out. So Modjeska, who did not speak English, hired a tutor who taught her in a matter of weeks. She learned some of her dramatic roles in English and in 1877 made a brilliant debut in the San Francisco Theatre.

Modjeska began touring the United States, performing Shakespearean roles and charming audiences with her beauty and personality. Reportedly, even the critics were awed by her grace and polished acting. Previously unknown in the United States, this talented lady for the next 30 years was one of America's most distinguished actresses.

Modjeska returned to enjoy the unspoiled beauty of the Santa Ana Mountains as often as she could, and befriended Joseph Pleasants, manager of Wolfskill's Rancho Lomas de Santiago and the first white settler in the mountains. In 1888, Pleasants' wife, Maria Refugio Carpenter, a member of the prominent Dominguez family, died. Pleasants had been very much in love with Maria, and decided to leave the memories behind. He sold his 400 acres in Santiago Canyon to Madame Modjeska.

The property included the home of Samuel Shrewsbury, the first beekeeper in the Santa Ana Mountains.

Modjeska had once spent the night at the Shrewsbury home and had thoroughly enjoyed her visit. The area was much to her liking and she called the place "Arden" after the Shakespearean play *As You Like It*. Modjeska explained that "...everything that Shakespeare speaks of was on the spot - oak trees, running brooks, palms, snakes, and even lions - of course California lions - really pumas."

Modjeska had a house built on the property, designed by architect Stanford White around the existing cabin of Joseph Pleasants. White was well known for his prominent public buildings in major East Coast cities and would soon be famous for the design of Madison Square Garden and the 1900 restoration of the White House.

Modjeska's nearest neighbors were ranchers and beekeepers, and the trip to the house was by bumpy, winding roads which periodically crossed streams. Hers was a rustic hideaway which offered much needed rest and peace between her lengthy tours. And, when she entertained internationally known guests at the cabin, it also provided a touch of glamour for local residents.

The canyon in which Modjeska lived was later named in her honor, and the northern peak of what locals call Saddleback Mountain bears the name of Modjeska Peak (the southern peak is Santiago Peak).

In 1888, Modjeska met Mrs. James S. Rice, Nettie Irvine's sister-in-law, at a musicale. Modjeska, who had trained many young actors and actresses and was known for her kindness, liked Mrs. Rice's voice. The Rices became friends, and once spent two days at Modjeska's mountain home.

In 1900, Modjeska's husband, Count Bozenta, built Harding Canyon Dam to ensure an adequate supply of water year round. He planted a grove of olive trees, and tended to other agricultural pursuits as well. Bozenta spent a great deal of time with his wife during her travels, helping her as she went by rail, steamship, or horse and buggy from town to town.

Charles French, the first superintendent of the Irvine Ranch who had moved to Santa Ana and became the town's postmaster, used his many connections from his tenure as ranch superintendent and from his later work in real estate and banking to obtain financing for an opera house. In 1889 he announced plans for the Santa Ana Opera House, a three-story auditorium that cost \$50,000 and took seven years to build. Before it was completed, a benefit performance was staged in July 1890, with Madame Helena Modjeska as the show's chief attraction. The performance was heralded as "the most important event in the history of Orange County." Mrs. Rice also performed, as did her son who "played a mean fiddle."

In July 1892, Mrs. Rice and Modjeska teamed up for another benefit performance, this time for the Santa Ana Library.

The following October, James Harvey Irvine turned 25 and received the total of his Rancho San Joaquin inheritance. He took a bride that year as well, and Madame Helena Modjeska became close friends with this second generation Irvine family.



Madame Modjeska

Polish Shakespearean actress Madame Helene Modjeska arrived in 1876 and later built a rustic hideaway in Santiago Canyon. A close friend of the Irvine family, she left an indelible imprint on the area. Modjeska Peak (Saddleback Mountain) is named in her honor.