CHAPTER 4
FULL CIRCLE: LOS VAQUEROS FROM 1929 TO THE PRESENT

Within the first decades of the 20th century, agricultural land at Los Vaqueros had become marginal. Without irrigation it could not support specialty crops or orchards, and the hilly terrain precluded widespread mechanization. The subsistence-based mixed farms that had developed on the Vasco and in the Black Hills were beginning to be anachronistic, and it became clear that the most efficient use of the land was for grazing. Gradually, many of the Los Vaqueros farm families packed up their belongings and moved on—some to nearby towns, and some to ranches of their own. On the Vasco, tenant arrangements under Mary Crocker and Kate Dillon had been generous, so attrition was slower, but change was inevitable in the volatile economy of the first half of the 20th century. By the late 1980s, when the Contra Costa Water District began acquiring the lands of the watershed, much of the old rancho and adjoining property was once more sparsely settled and given over to livestock grazing.

LAND SALES

The nationwide economic depression that began with the stock-market crash of 1929 had a grave effect on agriculture in California. Crop prices fell dramatically, and cereal growers needed at least 400 harvested acres to support a family—double the amount of land they had needed at the beginning of the century. New Deal crop-subsidy programs inadvertently favored large farms over small interests by basing awards on the absolute size of the operation as opposed to proportional needs of families. In addition, the subsidies allowed many small farmers to get by without improving their operations, thereby hampering their ability to remain competitive after the crisis had passed.1

The effects of the depression were felt at Los Vaqueros. Falling crop prices would have been felt more immediately by tenants than landowners, particularly where leases were on cash terms. Reflecting these difficulties, tenancy rates in Contra Costa and Alameda counties fell significantly in 1930. Rather than signaling a shift to land ownership, these statistics probably represent families who had to drop out of farming and seek wage work.

The tragic death of Mary Crocker less than two months after the stock-market crash sealed the fate of the Vasco farming community. Her heirs held the property together for nearly six years, but finally began to divide and sell in 1935. Much of the property in the Kellogg Creek Valley and the low hills surrounding it—almost 8,000 acres—was sold to Oscar Starr.2 Starr did not continue any lease agreements, nor did he live on the property. He did, however, build a large residential complex near the site of the old Vasco Adobe and he allowed other ranch complexes to fall into ruins. Louis Souza purchased more than 6,500 acres in the eastern portion of Starr’s ranch between 1944 and 1947, which he used to raise sheep. In 1948 Mrs. Edith Ordway bought the western portion of the Starr Ranch, which included the old Suñol place.

Land at the south and east edges of the old rancho was sold to Charles and Sue Nissen, who had acquired about 3,500 acres by 1940. Some of the tenant ranches were preserved under the
Nissens’ tenure: they bought the land as an investment and continued to lease to some of Crocker’s tenants, making improvements where necessary. They themselves continued to reside in Livermore, where they had a hay-and-grain business. Some of their properties at the Vasco were leased as grazing land, and Charles Nissen later farmed some of the property through the early 1950s. The Nissens sold to the Jacksons in the early 1950s.

At the north end of the valley, much of the land was eventually consolidated under the ownership of the Grueninger family, who by 1940 had acquired a full 640 acres. The Grueningers farmed the land well into the 1930s but gradually purchased stock and turned the place from a farm to a ranch. The acreage passed down through the family until it was sold to Kaiser Construction Company in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

Ownership in the Black Hills was more complex and varied from ranch-to-ranch. Several families, such as the Cardozas and the Gleeses, held onto land well into the 1960s, using it mostly for grazing purposes.

**CONTRA COSTA WATER DISTRICT**

The modern fate of the Los Vaqueros watershed has everything to do with the formation by popular vote, in 1936, of the Contra Costa Water District (CCWD). CCWD was charged with contracting, purchasing, and distributing the water provided by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which, after the construction of the Contra Costa Canal in 1948, was a straightforward matter. But by 1960 water customers began to demand better-tasting water, and the idea of a new intake and a backup reservoir was born.

The largely undeveloped canyons and grazing land along Kellogg Creek were a natural choice for the reservoir site, although the first area examined was actually north of the current
Los Vaqueros Reservoir Imagined. This is how CCWD envisioned the reservoir when planning began in earnest in the 1980s. Although the design of the dam has changed slightly, this is probably a fair approximation of how the landscape will look. (Reproduced from CCWD 1989.)

project area, in the next canyon downstream. By 1968 the focus of geological studies had shifted to the south in what became known as the Los Vaqueros Project.

The pace of the project was painfully slow as feasibility studies and funding negotiations continued at a snail’s pace through the 1970s. CCWD was hoping to establish a three-way cost-sharing arrangement between the federal government, the state, and the water district, but events precluded waiting for the necessary approval. Levee failure in 1972 and a severe drought in 1976-1977 demonstrated the pressing need for the project, but it was not until the possibility of development became a real threat in 1985 that CCWD was forced into action. When the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors approved the “Bankhead” subdivision within the Los Vaqueros watershed, CCWD’s time was at hand. They increased the pace of studies and sought voter approval to purchase the lands of the watershed. A funding measure was approved in 1988, and land acquisition got underway.

It has taken CCWD almost a decade to purchase all of the land within the Los Vaqueros watershed, and they have continued to lease many pieces of it to the previous owners. Most of the property has been used as range land while the environmental and engineering investigations have been ongoing. The hills in the southeast part of the watershed have been developed over the years as windfarms, harnessing the powerful natural resource that plagued inhabitants of Los Vaqueros for centuries.
TIME'S CYCLE

Until recently the rural feel of Los Vaqueros has been preserved. In the early 1980s, when cultural resources investigations began, much of the land was still privately owned and used for livestock grazing. Surveying for archaeological sites meant climbing over barbed-wire fences, braving bull pens, scattering herds of grazing cattle, and always watching your feet for rattlesnakes hidden in the tall grass. Even after CCWD began to acquire the land, they continued to lease it out to ranchers, and although all of the buildings were eventually abandoned, the watershed was alive with activity. Archaeologists excavating some of the old ranches had to be mindful of cattle gates, step out of the way of cattle drives and bull herding, and never—as one rancher cautioned—try to rescue young calves left alone in the pasture by their foraging mothers.

Standing on Louis Peres’s sandstone patio, watching the sun rise over the eastern hills as the fog recedes toward the west, it is hard to grasp how much Los Vaqueros has changed in the 150 years since the Alvisos obtained their land grant. The early-morning quiet is complete, and the view is unobstructed by the hand of man. But then a line of commuters passes on distant Vasco Road, and the steel wind machines on the southern hills start up, adding an industrial sound to the rustling of the leaves. Soon the realization dawns that this patio will imminently be under 170 feet of water, and the spell is broken.

The lives of the early ranchers and farm families who shaped the Valley of the Cowboys are over—their time has passed. But the tangible nature of historical archaeology helps brings them back, in a way, and makes the place seemingly come alive. We expose the very stones that they carefully placed in walls and patios, reexcavate the holes that they dug, and examine the plates and bottles that they touched and used. We have the satisfaction of feeling that we are bringing time full circle. Just as Los Vaqueros faces its biggest change ever, when the hills and valleys themselves will be altered beyond recognition, we are plunging into its past to make sure that the stories of its inhabitants are brought into the present.

Excavating the Vasco Adobe. The architectural remains of the Vasco Adobe were so well preserved, and the landscape around them so untouched, that it was easy to imagine life at Los Vaqueros in the last century.
CATERPILLARS AND COWS: 
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF OSCAR STARR

The sweeping vistas of the Vasco bring to mind stereotypes of the days of old: cowboys and Indians, cattle and sheep, and maybe even a bandit or two. Does one immediately think of important developments in technology? Hardly. Yet the Starr Ranch, located near the site of the old Vasco Adobe, played a part in the development of the diesel Caterpillar Tractor. Oscar Starr used his ranch, from 1935 to 1948, to develop and test his experimental engines and tractors. Although little known outside of the industry, Starr was recognized as “one of the West’s leading production engineers and manufacturing experts” and “a prime mover in adapting the diesel engine to crawler trailers.” Starr was a driving force in the development of the Caterpillar Tractor Company, one of the most important companies to develop in Alameda County in the first half of the 20th century.

Stealing Starr

Born in San Francisco in 1885, Starr began his career with Union Iron Works, a manufacturer of steam engines and boats. He later built gas engines for Gorham Engineering Company in Alameda, where “the first gas self-propelled fire engine with turbine pump” was built. A keen inventor, Starr jointly developed with Bill Gorham a new type of aircraft—a two-cylinder radial airplane engine—in 1910. According to the local press, the engine was said to be “the only one of its kind” and was “expected to herald an advance in aviation.” As Starr recalled, “It flew, but we got orders from Gorham’s father to stop before we killed ourselves. The engine was sold to Stanley Hillar, father of the Helicopter name of today.” Shortly thereafter, Starr went to work for Holt Manufacturing Company, which had developed the “track-laying” tractor, subsequently dubbed a “Caterpillar.” Starr’s task was to put into production the Auroa gasoline engine for the early Holt Caterpillars.

While the Holt Manufacturing Company was developing tractors in Stockton, the Best Gas Tractor Company—the other leading pioneer in tractor development—was busy with tractor experiments in San Leandro. There was a keen and intense rivalry between the two great pioneering firms. In their fight to dominate the tractor market, the two companies went to “war” to get the services of Starr, who had gained a reputation for production efficiency while working for Holt. Starr went to work as a manager for Best in 1913. During World War I, Holt’s Caterpillar became the standard artillery and supply tractor for the United States and its allies, and Holt contacted Starr for help to increase tractor production. Starr’s response: “I’m ambitious; make it enough money and I’ll come out and help.” Presumably Holt’s office was generous because Starr returned to work for them and dramatically increased tractor production. Best wanted Starr back at any cost. Starr returned to work for Best with the distinction of being “the man who drew more salary than the president.” Although he was expensive, he was worth it. The company had been struggling, but with Starr as a vice president it soon prospered.

Pursuant to the axiom “if you can’t beat them, join them,” Holt and Best decided to merge and became the Caterpillar Tractor Company in 1925. It
would save money because much of their research and development was duplicative. It would also save them the cost and bother of “stealing” Starr from each other. Starr became a director and vice president of the new company and headed all research activities.

Under Starr’s direction, the Caterpillar Tractor Company invested heavily in the development of diesel power. It took decades of research to overcome numerous technological hurdles, but Starr successfully developed and marketed the diesel tractor.

“A Model Institution”

Starr used his ranch on the Vasco to test and further develop his tractors and other inventions. Although his primary residence was near Mission San Jose and he only used the ranch for an occasional weekend, Starr built an entire complex at the ranch. His building campaign included two houses in the Spanish Revival style, a machine shop, shed, silo, bunkhouse, “cowboy house,” chicken coop, a garage, and possibly the barn. In the machine shop, Starr perfected a couple of engines. Starr had also purchased the ranch as a place to relax with his wife, Hazel Wagness, and to be a farmer. He raised hay and grain and had about 25 horses and 500 Herefords. He was quite the “gentleman rancher”; he did not want the cowboys to rope the calves because it “was too rough.” Instead they used a calf chute for branding, castrating, and earmarking. It was probably during Starr’s tenure at the ranch that the fenceline through the old Vasco Adobe was erected and the east end of the structure was inadvertently demolished.

Starr sold his ranch in 1948. After 49 years with Caterpillar and its predecessors, he retired in 1961. Although Starr is long gone and much of his ranch is in disrepair, he is not entirely forgotten. According to the county history of the era:

Starr’s cattle ranch on the Vasco is a model institution, equipped with caterpillar tractors and other modern farm machinery. Home buildings of Spanish architecture and landscaped grounds, spacious fireproof storage sheds with concrete floors, generating power plant and water system are but a few of the features of the 8,000 acre establishment that is conducted on an efficient business basis.5

More importantly, he should be remembered for his contributions to the Caterpillar Tractor Company, one of the most important companies to have developed in Alameda County.
In community history there are always a few men who are remembered as larger-than-life characters. It is rare for a woman to be recalled in this fashion, but former Vasco rancher Edith Ordway certainly “stands tall” in local memory and legend. Her exploits, in fact, rival those of American folktale heroines, Calamity Jane and Sloughfoot Sue, at least in the memories of old Vasco area families.6

Mrs. Ordway, a wealthy San Franciscan, purchased a large portion of the Starr Ranch in 1948. Unlike Oscar Starr, Edith and Ken Ordway apparently lived year-round at the ranch headquarters in the Vasco and they quickly put their stamp on the place. They made additions to the main house, changed the course of the driveway, and installed a swimming pool in the front yard. Mrs. Ordway was enamored with California’s Hispanic heritage and had one of her employees build an “adobe” wall around the house and guest house. The remains of the Vasco Adobe—a good 600 feet west of her house—were no more than a grass-covered mound in her era, so it is uncertain how aware she was of the grant’s early Spanish and Basque history.

The Ordways also built a split-log cabin, probably from a prefabricated kit, out at the “corrals” (the old Suñol place). This former tenant ranch had served for many years as a picnic grounds, and the Ordways used it as a site for barbecues. Ken Ordway continued the tradition of serving “Mountain Oysters,” following the branding and castration of calves. Edith kept an odd assortment of exotic pets at her ranch, including monkeys and doves.

Some said that one socialized with the couple at some risk to life and limb. Edith Ordway in particular is remembered with awe as a real “cowgirl” who could “out-drink [and] out-fight . . . the guys.” It has been said that, although charming and gracious when sober, she was a real hellcat when she drank and she would take a shot at anybody, without provocation. A neighbor recalled that he often drove guests to town who had been hit by buckshot. On one occasion Mrs. Ordway reportedly fired at a Chinese cook who in terror ran up into the Black Hills. No trace of him was ever found.

According to local ranchers, Mrs. Ordway’s wealth allowed her the privilege of this reckless lifestyle. “She could shoot you and get by with it.” She is described as tough and dangerous, but also as “great,” and certainly a character worth remembering.
The year was 1942, Franklin Roosevelt was President, short skirts were the fashion, big bands were popular, and television had not yet been introduced to the public. The bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of the previous year had thrust America into a second World War, and the San Francisco Bay Area was rimmed with shipyards that turned out “Liberty Ships” for the war effort. Amid this cacophony of progress and urbanism, farmers in the Vasco—just 40 miles southeast of San Francisco—continued to use horses to work their land.

As early as 1900 the Golden State was agriculturally more specialized and commercialized than any other state in the Union. Yet in 1942 when U.C. Davis-educated Graham Nissen began to farm his family's holdings in the Vasco, he harnessed up teams of Belgium horses to work the land. The steep terrain, the power of tradition, and a lack of capital made the early adoption of tractors and other mechanized farm equipment almost prohibitive for farmers in the Vasco.

Graham Nissen did buy a T-20 International tractor in 1934 when he first returned from college. Like all good self-reliant farmers he tinkered on his own, first with a mower that he could attach to the tractor and later with a hay bouncer that he invented. All local farm families were testing out their own ideas or ordering custom work from Livermore machine shops because the factory-made equipment could not handle the rough work and steep hills of the area. It was common, however, for farmers to flip tractors over as they tried to maneuver a turn on the hills. And so, horses remained in use for harvesting, mowing, and hay pressings long after they were only a memory in other parts of California.

Mr. Nissen’s parents, Charles and Sue Nissen, were grain merchants in Livermore. In 1936 they purchased 2,394 acres of the Los Vaqueros land grant near the Contra Costa-Alameda County line. They had previously bought the former Elliott Estate, which included Brushy Peak, in 1917.

The County Line Ranch, investigated by Los Vaqueros Project archaeologists in 1993, was where Graham Nissen built a small storage shed and worked on some of his farm equipment. Here, on a stone pavement probably laid down in the 1880s, Graham parked his hay mower, his grain drill, and his gasoline-powered tractor and replaced mower sections, drag-chain links, and sparkplugs. Graham does not remember the pavement, so it was probably silted over by the time he used the nice firm ground it provided for his outdoor work area.

Graham recalls that much of his family’s land “was so steep [but] we still tried farming a lot of things we shouldn’t do. And don’t do it now.” The Nissens grew hay and grain, including red oat hay for the racehorse Sea Biscuit. They sold hay to Italians in South San Francisco and shipped double five-wire bales to feed army mules in the Philippines. The Nissens raised shorthorn cattle year-round and in summer they moved their band of sheep up to the Vasco from their Patterson Pass ranch. The Highway Patrol had to stop traffic along I-580 so that the sheep and shepherds could cross in safety.

Between 1948 and 1952 the last farmers in the area finally made a switch to machine labor, and Graham reluctantly sold his beautiful Belgians. He had always been for change, “for new things,” as traditional farming was hard on men and hard on the horses. Still the transition was not without a sense of loss. “Yes I did miss the horses. I had some special ones, just like friends. And some almost you’d think they understood what you were saying.”
Flagstone Surface at the Nissen Ranch. The stones of this surface were buried under just a couple inches of soil, so they probably provided a patch of solid ground in wet weather. Artifacts left there by Graham Nissen, including some gasoline-powered tractor parts, suggest that he used it to park or service equipment. The surface is very similar to barn floors found elsewhere at Los Vaqueros, and may have been built for that purpose in the 1880s.
THE EVOLUTION OF A ROAD

“Vasco” is a picturesque name for a road that is now three-lanes wide in places and moves 13,000 cars a day from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to the Livermore Valley. The road, which originally cut right through the middle of the Los Vaqueros land grant and followed the route of Kellogg Creek across the valley floor, has become a major commute corridor for suburbanites in the Delta to their jobs in the semi-urban areas of the Livermore Valley. Vasco Road has kept pace with changes in Contra Costa County, and, over the years, has been paved, straightened, widened, and finally moved to accommodate the ever-increasing flow of traffic.

“El Camino”

The first passage through the Los Vaqueros land grant was probably a small footpath that followed the ravines between hilltops and meandered alongside the course of Kellogg Creek. We don’t know when the road was first built, but a camino is dotted on the 1840s diseño of Cañada de Los Vaqueros. The course of the camino departs from the Arroyo de Los Vaqueros about midway through the grant, but there are not enough details on the map to be sure precisely where this was.

By the 1870s, when the Basques had moved to Nevada and Louis Peres was overseeing the ranch, the roadway was well established. Not yet officially called Vasco Road, the dotted line on the 1873 California Geological Survey map shows the road closely following Arroyo del Poso (“Canyon of the Spring,” now Kellogg Creek) through the land grant, then diverging to the east. Soon after that, when much of the ranch was divided into tenant farms, the road through the grant grew many branches. In 1879 it was dubbed Vaqueros Ranch Road.

For the rest of the 19th century, though, the road remained a local route, meandering from ranch to ranch. It wasn’t until 1918 that the road became an

Ghosts of Vasco Road Past. A careful look reveals some of the old twists and turns of Vasco Road in this aerial photo taken in 1950.
official transportation corridor between Byron and Livermore.\textsuperscript{10} The \textit{Livermore Herald} proudly proclaimed that “The Vasco road from Byron to Livermore is now open... and will open up a new trade territory for both sections.” Four years later graveling operations began with a call to local farmers who might want to supplement their incomes by hauling the material for the roadworks.

But Vasco Road in the early years of the 20th century became a symbol of the technological conservatism that had seized Los Vaqueros. One-time residents remember it as a cranky old road.\textsuperscript{11} Emelia Crosslin (née Grueninger) recalled her school days at the turn of the 19th century:

And oh, that road used to get so muddy. The horse could hardly pull us through that dirt road. Now they have that blacktop. Now why couldn’t they have had that when we went to school!

Frances Cabral (née Bonfante) remembered an adventure on the muddy and rutted Vasco Road of the early 1920s:

At 12 years old. I was driving that [laughs]. I always remember those hills, you know in the Vasco. Course now they cut the Vasco but there was a hill going down like this one time, and of course I was a kid. I stood up on the brakes to put my feet like this cause I was in the rut. The thing was sliding. I thought I was going up the other side! Ohh. I never forget that... Every so often the roadway was graded by teams of horses, but the twisting route and surface conditions made it a slow road that, in those years, was never a thoroughfare. It was a friendly, local route used by Los Vaqueros farmers to get to town for their weekly or monthly supplies, and by their children to get to school. Mrs. Crosslin said they

\textbf{The Oldest Vasco Road.} The narrow shelf on the side of the hill in the center of the photograph is what remains of a portion of an early Vasco Road. The Los Vaqueros watershed has plenty of these old road remnants that provide clues to the locations of abandoned farmsteads.
knew everybody who passed by the house on Vasco Road.

**God’s Country**

Ambitious plans were laid in the economic boom times of the 1920s to make Vasco Road something grand. Starting with a call to pave the route between Byron and the county line, by 1927 the papers were reporting plans to construct a whole new highway that would connect Oakland to Stockton via the Vasco and Byron. The proposed road—somewhat north of current I-580—was to enter Los Vaqueros over the Black Hills and join up with the north-bound alignment of Vasco Road about midway through the grant. Promoters claimed, “There are thousands of acres in the magnificent Vasco country, between Byron and Livermore, in beautiful dales and oak-covered hills, that would make ideal country homes with the finest soil, marvelous climate, and within a short run of the bay cities.”

The unexpected economic downturn in 1929 squelched all such ambitions, but Vasco Road got much-needed repair work on account of the media spotlight. It was back in the news a decade later when editorial after editorial called for major road improvements that would include widening and straightening. Hailed as a shortcut between Livermore and Byron, it was nonetheless defamed in the press: “the road at almost any time of the year discourages frequent use, and during winter months is practically impassable.” Finally, in 1939, the project to improve the road by realigning portions of it, minimizing grades, widening the right-of-way, and oiling the surface was underway in Alameda County. Funds for the Contra Costa County segment were likewise appropriated, but construction was delayed by the war effort, and the improvements were not completed until the early 1950s.

Vasco Road, which had once traced the natural topography, curving its way around steep hills, was finally straightened and widened along its entire length, and the much-touted thoroughfare was ready for heavy traffic. Pieces of the old road became just memories and subtle scars on the hillsides.

The “new” road was fast and dangerous; daredevil drivers routinely caused tragic head-on collisions. From 1981 to 1996 there were 450 accidents on the road, 22 of which involved fatalities. In the morning commute hours the road became a steady stream of traffic heading south. A minor mishap along the way could easily cause a 5-mile backup on the two-lane roadway.

But the country that the road passed through remained much the same, and the old barns and sheds acquired an almost mythic status as icons of lost America to the harried commuters. “I truly believe that area is God’s country” said one driver in a recent newspaper article.12 Another commented: “When I drive there, I almost forget that there are hundreds of thousands of people living on either end of the road.”

The most recent incarnation of Vasco Road was begun as soon as the ground was broken for the new Los Vaqueros Dam. The old road along Kellogg Creek’s valley floor will be inundated by the new reservoir, so a new 12.8-mile segment was built in the hills to the east of the watershed. “With softer curves, passing lanes, and emergency stopping areas, it is a significantly safer road.”13 Safer, perhaps, but not really Vasco Road any longer.
NOTES

Chapter 1. An Introduction to Los Vaqueros


3. More detailed information about this early period at Los Vaqueros can be found in Fredrickson, Stewart, and Ziesing 1997. See that volume for specific references regarding facts cited above.

4. Or so it was claimed by Sibrian and Welch in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, pp. 305, 311.

5. King, Hickman, and Berg 1977, p. 86. This assessment might be unduly harsh as much good archaeology was done for the River Basin Salvage Program, and it set the stage for the development of new programs and research.


7. The National Park Service actually initiated cultural resources studies for the Los Vaqueros watershed in 1964, but it was not until after 1979 that more intensive archaeological work began. The 1979 study is documented in Russo and McBride 1979.

8. Researchers who focus on this period of history are called Ethnohistorians because their studies are a hybrid of traditional history and ethnography (which describes living cultures). In California, early-20th-century ethnographers interviewed Native American elders, some of whom remembered their tribal lifestyles or recounted stories they had heard from their parents and grandparents. Ethnohistorians use these narratives—in conjunction with accounts by early Spanish explorers and records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths kept by the Mission fathers—to try and reconstruct the history and lifeways of this critical era. The results of most of this research for the Los Vaqueros area are presented in Fredrickson, Stewart, and Ziesing 1997.


10. There is some disagreement among project scholars regarding the language group of the Ssaoam. Randall Milliken considers them to be Costanoan speakers while Catherine Callaghan believes the Ssaoam were bilingual Costanoan and Miwok speakers. Details of their arguments can be found in Fredrickson, Stewart, and Ziesing 1997.

11. Thompson 1978, p. 2. Other useful sources on oral history or its relationship to historical archaeology include Glassie 1977; Frisch 1990.

Chapter 2. Disputed Range


2. Palizadas were easily constructed log buildings chinked with mud and tules.


4. This information is from testimony during the land confirmation hearings in the 1850s; see Livermore v. United States 1852-1855.

5. Information about California’s changing range land has been taken from several sources, including: Burcham 1957; Gates 1967; Liebman 1983.

6. These figures come from Gates 1967, pp. 22-23; Jelinek 1974, p. 27.

7. The cases were Peres et al. v. Suñol 1866; Dupuy v. Suñol 1868.

8. Contra Costa Gazette, May 18, 1867.

9. A summary of the Altubes Nevada ranching enterprise can be found in Patterson, Ulph, and Goodwin 1969, pp. 387-389.
Chapter 2—Continued

10. Figures were taken from census records: United States Bureau of the Census (U.S. Census) 1860b, 1880a.
11. This quote is from Pitt 1966, p. 2, an excellent source of information regarding the Spanish and Mexican heritage in California.
12. This information and other birth and marriage data in this chapter are based on mission-record research conducted by project ethnohistorian Randall Milliken.
18. As presented in his testimony in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, pp. 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65.
20. Information in this paragraph comes from DeNier 1926, p. 50; Livermore v. United States 1852-1855, p. 7; testimony of Valentine Amador in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, pp. 54, 60, 68, 144, 152, 470-471.
22. This essay is based on information contained in three California Supreme Court opinions (Blum v. Suñol et al. 1883; Peres v. Crocker et al. 1897; Peres et al. v. Suñol 1870) and court records from both the trial and appellate levels.

Court records from Alameda County include Hamilton and Kirkpatrick v. Peres et al. 1893; Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1890. Court records from Contra Costa County include Alviso et al. v. Cockerton et al. 1869; Peres et al. v. Suñol 1866; Dupuy v. Suñol 1868. Court records from the California Supreme Court include Peres et al. v. Suñol 1869; Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895; Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, 1884, 1887.
23. Juan Suñol had once owned the share that the Bascos purchased. Both the Bascos and Juan’s brother, Lorenzo, purchased their interests in the rancho on the same day, and both groups also had interests in Calaveras County. The disintegrating relationship between the Suñols and the Bascos was manifested in the lawsuit, People v. Garat 1858.
24. Blum v. Suñol was tried primarily on depositions. If the case had originally been tried primarily on oral testimony, the second judge would not have interfered with the first decision no matter how much he disagreed with it, unless it had been wholly unsupported by the evidence. He would not have granted a motion for a new trial when there was a conflict in the evidence as in the case at bar. Because the trial court based its decision on depositions, however, the second judge applied the concept of “same lights” (i.e., when looking at the same written testimony, neither judge has the ability to observe the demeanor of the witnesses and evaluate their credibility on that basis). Previous to Blum v. Suñol et al., the “same lights” concept had only been applied at the appellate level. The second judge applied the “same lights” concept for the first time at the trial court level. By doing so, he was in essence able to “overrule” another trial court judge with whom he disagreed—a highly unusual (and questionable) situation. See Judge Hunt’s Opinion (1883, pp. 20-22) in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881.
26. Good summaries of the fence laws and their effects on California landholding can be found in Duncan 1962; Ludeke 1980.
27. Testimony of Rufus Green and Louis Peres in Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895, p. 138, 143.
29. From testimonies of Welch and Sibrian in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, pp. 31, 305; and other testimony in Dupuy v. Suñol 1868; Peres et al. v. Suñol 1869.
Chapter 2—Continued

30. Information in this paragraph was taken from testimony in Angulo v. Suñol and Suñol 1859, p. 15.
31. From Contra Costa County Tax Assessment Rolls 1859, pp. 29, 36.
32. These figures were taken from U.S. Census 1860a. The Contra Costa County Tax Assessment for that year credited him with only the 900-some acres reported the year before and $3,440 in personal property.
35. For information on Hispanic women and their roles in the 19th-century family see McEwan 1991; Jensen 1988, pp. 103-104, 107.
36. All of the details of Maria’s life and the quotes included in these paragraphs have been taken from court testimony in the lawsuit she eventually brought against the Suñol brothers: Angulo v. Suñol and Suñol 1859.
37. These items were found in refuse pits filled with artifacts dating to the 1860s. Details of the archaeological excavation are presented in Ziesing 1997b.
42. Unless otherwise cited, most of the information in the following paragraphs about the Basques that does not deal specifically with Los Vaqueros was compiled by Carol Hovey, a direct descendant of Pedro Altube, and presented in Hovey 1990.
43. Property acquisitions and transfers described here and in the following paragraphs are recorded in Calaveras and Contra Costa counties Deeds books.
44. Testimony of Louis Peres in Peres v. Crocker et al. 1895, p. 166.
47. Patterson, Ulph, and Goodwin 1969, p. 390.
48. The history of the Vasco Adobe and its inhabitants has been gathered from archaeological data and numerous primary documents including Contra Costa County Deeds, Mortgages, and Tax Assessments, in addition to U.S. Census schedules, historical maps, and court testimony. The history and physical appearance of the Adobe are summarized here from a more detailed presentation in Ziesing 1997b.
49. Harold Kirker has written extensively on the history of architecture in California. Three of his works, in particular, were consulted: Kirker 1957, 1986, 1991.
50. As a rule, adobe houses predating 1835 did not have fireplaces; Richard Henry Dana, on his travels through Monterey in that year noted that “[t]hey have no chimneys or fireplaces in the houses, and all their cooking is done in a small kitchen, separated from the house.” Kirker cites a 1928 survey of extant adobes in Los Angeles, which reported that only one-third were fitted with fireplaces. He claims a “Spanish prejudice against interior fires” and cites Sanchez’s observation that fires were considered weakening to one’s health. The California adobes of the pre-American era were generally equipped with a separate kitchen building in which all the cooking was done. (Dana was quoted in Kneass 1961, p. 2; Sanchez was cited in Kirker 1957, p 91.)
51. The whereabouts of Louis Peres are reconstructed from Righter 1878; testimony of Albert Weymouth in Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895; U.S. Census 1880b.
52. This was a case first filed by Simon Blum in 1862 in an effort to invalidate the chain of title that the Basques, and subsequently Peres, had bought into. Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881 is discussed in the “Battle Royale” essay in this volume; a comprehensive summary of the case can be found in Praetzellis, Stewart, and Ziesing 1997.
53. Two lines of evidence, in particular, suggest that these improvements were made after Peres lost the
property. First, the pipe, which ran under Peres’s paved yard, was laid after the stones had been put in place, creating a visible disturbance in the pavement. Second, the well itself was fitted with a pump housing manufactured by the Woodin and Little firm of San Francisco, a business that first appeared in the city directories in 1882, a year after Peres signed his land over to McLaughlin.

Although the kitchen plumbing was certainly an improvement to the Adobe, the system was still primitive by modern standards. There was no drainage for the water supply; the sink was just a basin that had to be emptied by hand into the yard.

54. This was how the Vasco Adobe was first officially recorded by Hendry and Bowman 1940, p. 541.

55. This is not to suggest that domed bake ovens are not part of the Old World Basque tradition, which, indeed, they are. In fact, ovens in the Basque provinces are variously housed under wooden sheds standing apart from the house or attached to the house but enclosed under their own roof. The most remarkable examples protrude from a second-story wall and are supported by a braced and roofed wooden balcony. But these may be more recent additions to Basque cookery. Bake ovens are most commonly associated with wheat-based breads, and corn, once introduced to the Basque regions from the Americas, took the place of the more expensive grain and became a central part of the diet. Until recently wheat bread was an unaccustomed luxury, and farmers came to prefer corn to wheat bread. The two types of corn breads that are made were not traditionally baked in an oven. Talo is a corn flour patty cooked on an open grill and arto is unleavened corn meal bread that was traditionally baked in a pan beneath hot coals. Only recently have ovens replaced the hot-coal method for baking arto. Therefore, the oven at the Vasco Adobe may not have been considered a necessary accoutrement of a traditional Basque kitchen so much as a luxury in which wheat bread could be prepared.

The association between free-standing ovens and wheat-based breads has been proposed by Kniffen 1960. Information about traditional Basque cookery was taken from Isusi 1983. Extensive data regarding the use, construction, and lore of bread ovens was gathered by researchers in Quebec and reported in Boily and Blanchette 1979.

56. The history of the early Vasco Adobe residents has been reconstructed from several key sources, including Hovey 1990; Contra Costa County Tax Assessment Rolls various dates; U.S. Census 1860b.

57. All information about the kinds of food eaten at the Adobe and the tableware on which it was served is derived from archaeological excavation of three refuse pits filled at the end of the 1860s. The data are presented in detail in Ziesing 1997b.

58. All bone was analyzed by a zooarchaeologist, Sherri M. Gust. Her results are included in Ziesing 1997b.

59. Dates and locations for this essay were derived from the Oakland City Directory; San Francisco City Directory; U.S. Census populations schedules; court transcripts (Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881; Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895); recorded real estate documents (Contra Costa County Mortgages Vol. 13, Chattel Mortgages Vol. 2, Deeds Book 15; Alameda County Deeds Book 109).

60. After a series of lawsuits and years in litigation, the court ruled in 1870 that Juan Suñol’s title was invalid and he lost all claim to the rancho (Peres et al. v. Suñol 1866, 1870; Dupuy v. Suñol 1868). After that year, Suñol disappears from both the Contra Costa County and Calaveras County Tax Assessment Rolls.


63. M.A. Peres filed a Lis Pendens against L. Peres, which referenced another case to “obtain a decree of divorce from the bonds of matrimony existing between plaintiff and defendant aforesaid: that all the property belonging to the community should be set aside to plaintiff, and that the property in the County of Contra Costa affected thereby is that certain tract known as the ‘Rancho de los Vaqueros’.” No further official record could be found on the Peres divorce; if it had been filed in San Francisco as was the initial Lis Pendens, it would have been destroyed in the fire of 1906. A letter has survived, however, describing the settlement: on January 8, 1878, Minnie Barnes wrote to her mother, “He [Sylvain Bordes] says Mrs. Antonia
Chapter 2—Continued

Paris [sic] is living in Oakland. If you call on her you may make her something for Mr. Paris pays her $2,000 a year for the last two years and two years more:”; Mrs. Antonia Peres visited Mrs. Barnes, who saved her elegant calling card.

64. Hovey 1990, pp. 132-134.

65. Archaeological excavation is the source of information regarding physical improvements to the Adobe. The sequence of events was determined based on site stratigraphy, while dates were derived from associated artifacts. That Peres made these changes is more than likely; that he did so in preparation for his new wife’s tenure at the adobe is conjecture. Details of the excavations are presented in Ziesing 1997b.

66. To date, four tenant ranches have been excavated at Los Vaqueros, and all have evidence of similar stone surfaces. At two of these sites, the Weymouth/Rose site and the Perata/Bonfante site, these surfaces have been positively identified as barn floors. Only the Weymouth/Rose site was recorded as a tenant ranch on the 1880 census, so the buildings at the other sites may not have been constructed by Peres, although he did not sell out to McLaughlin until 1881. The site reports that document these stone surfaces are Praetzellis et al. 1995; Ziesing 1997a.

67. Although he was born in France, Simon Blum’s surname shows that was an Ashkanazi—an eastern European Jew, possibly of German/Prussian descent. In contrast, the name Peres suggests ancestors from Spain or North Africa; Peres was almost certainly a Sephardic Jew. In 19th-century North America—as today—the Sephardim and Ashknaizim were far from being a homogeneous ethnic group. They practiced distinct, historically rooted variations on the basic Jewish rituals, and maintained separate religious and social institutions.


69. Quotations in the following paragraph are taken from Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895.

70. Hovey 1990, p. 135.

71. Information in these paragraphs was taken from Slocum & Co. 1882, p. 510; Daggett’s Scraps n.d., p. 170; Contra Costa County Tax Assessment Roll 1864; S. Blum & Co. n.d.; Pioneer Records 1947, 1972.


73. Testimony of Amador and Higuera in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, pp. 155, 262.

74. People v. Simon Blum 1865.

75. Contra Costa County Probate Court, Simon Blum’s Probate, “Final Account” (filed January 26, 1914) and “Decree Settling Final Account and of Distribution” (filed June 22, 1914).

76. These are second-hand accounts. Sylvain Bordes’s comment is reported by his great-nephew Franklyn Silva (1991, p. 4). Joseph Cardoza is quoted by his daughter Ida Taylor (1996, p. 3).

77. Jackson 1939, p. 16.

78. As suggested by Jackson 1939, p. 17. See Dame Shirley 1970 for text of anecdote.


81. Slatta 1990, p. 68.

82. Testimony of George Swain in Blum v. Suñol et al. 1881, p. 366.


84. Barnes 1878 (letter to her sister, Sarah, on March 8, 1878).

85. Testimony in People v. Garat 1858.

86. Information for this section was derived from oral-history interviews with one-time residents of the Vasco.
Chapter 3. Parceling the Land

1. Slocum & Co. 1882. Several secondary sources were consulted for information about the development of agriculture in California. They include Gates 1967; Jelinek 1979; Liebman 1983; Pisani 1984; Reed 1946.
2. Research on public land policies was reported in Praetzellis, Praetzellis, and Stewart 1985, pp. 123-125.
4. The Vasco was the subject of major articles in several annual special editions of the Byron Times. The authors extolled the beauty of the place, but urged its development. For example: “When it is realized that water may be obtained almost anywhere on the Vasco rancho in quantity necessary for irrigation and domestic uses, the value of these rich lands under intensive cultivation may better be appreciated (Byron Times 1922-1923, p. 72); or “Placed under a modern system of operation, hundreds of these rich acres could be diverted into highly productive fruit orchards and vineyards. There are no limits, in fact, as to what might be accomplished in the favored Vasco country” (Byron Times 1924-1925, p. 108).
5. As recorded in court testimony, Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895, pp. 55-56.
7. Praise for McLaughlin’s lease agreements was recorded in testimony in Peres v. Crocker and Dillon 1895, p. 543; Bordes 1993; Fragulia and Bignone 1993.
8. Details of everyday life at Los Vaqueros were recorded in oral-history interviews and reported in Hattersley-Drayton 1993.
9. Information in the following two paragraphs comes from Byron Times 1908-1909, 1912 (p. 106), 1916 (pp. 60-61, 93), 1918 (p. 58), 1922-1923 (p. 72).
12. A number of oral history interviews were used for this essay: Fragulia and Bignone 1993; Mourterot 1993; Vallerga and Sod 1995; Gleese 1995.
13. Both of these sites were subject to field investigation, the results of which are reported in detail in Praetzellis et al. 1995 (Cabral sheep camp); Ziesing 1997a (stone sheep shelter).
18. Hargraves 1995. Ann Homan, a local historian and retired high-school teacher, graciously shared her research on families who lived along the Morgan Territory Road. As an example, it is through her diligence that we have a copy of the guardianship document drawn up between Miguel Palomares and Francisco Alviso.
19. A variety of primary source materials was used to compile these biographies, including oral histories, newspaper articles, census and tax records. Former ranchers/farmers who remembered and spoke about these two included Mourterot 1993; Gleese 1995; Vallerga and Sod 1995; Crosslin and Santos 1993; Gomez 1993.
20. For information on Swedish immigrants see Ljungmark 1979; Carlsson 1988.
22. Reports of the murder appeared in local newspapers; the following excerpts are taken from the San Francisco Call, December 14, 1883, pp. 3, 5.
23. Summaries of the court decisions are from Williams 1977, pp. 208-209; Mr. Williams cites the Oakland Tribune December 12, 1891, and the San Francisco Call October 5, 1886.
Chapter 3—Continued

25. The notion of cultural landscapes and their appropriateness as the subject of historical, anthropological, and geographical study is what guides this essay. Inspiration came from Jackson 1977; McClelland et al. n.d.
26. Excellent discussions of barn forms and their geographical variability can be found in Francavilgia 1972; Hubka 1984; Noble 1984.
27. Details of the Perata/Bonfante barn were synthesized from a variety of sources including oral history interviews with two of the Bonfantes and archaeological investigations conducted in 1995.
29. Extensive stonework and stone pavements have been found at all historical sites investigated archaeologically at Los Vaqueros. While some of these features are clearly floors and/or foundations, many are haphazard concentrations of cobbles and small stone slabs apparently set in high-traffic areas.
30. Details about this curious structure are included in Ziesing 1997a.
32. Mourterot 1993. A variety of primary-source materials has been used to construct these four family biographies. Emelia Crosslin (née Grueninger), 98 at the time, and her son Pyron Crosslin provided information about the Grueningers and other farming families in the area (Crosslin 1993). Paul Fragua, born in 1904, was interviewed on three occasions (Fragua 1993, 1994; Fragua and Bignone 1993). His daughter, Marie Bignone (née Fragua) also contributed to our knowledge of the Fragua family, and to Vasco social history in general. The family photo collection was copied, and these personal mementos helped to document farm labor and equipment, family and social events at the ranch.

The history of the Cabrais was helped along by several interviews with daughter-in-law Frances Cabral (née Bonfante; Vallerga and Cabral 1992, 1993), and through the memories of other local ranchers. The materials available to write a family history for the Bordes was the richest of all. In addition to interviews with Sylvain Bordes III (a Bordes grandson; Bordes 1993) and Sylvain Terence Rooney (a great-grandson; Rooney 1996), project historians had access to family letters, photos, and records compiled by both Mr. Rooney and his cousin Franklyn Silva.

Newspaper articles from the Byron Times and the Livermore Herald, census records for all available years, and tax assessments also helped to provide context and a chronology for settlement patterns and agrarian production for these and other farmers.
33. For a good discussion of this immigrant group see Bohme 1956.
36. The Argonaut, April 8, 1889, p. 11.
37. Mary Crocker’s personal possessions were inventoried as part of her probate: San Francisco Superior Court 1929-1935, p. 57.
38. The accident that took Mary Crocker’s life was reported in the San Francisco Chronicle, June 27, 1929, p. 1; June 28, 1929, p. 2; August 3, 1929, p. 3.
40. Much of the information in this essay comes from oral-history research, and, unless otherwise noted, direct quotes were taken from transcripts of interviews. Interviews include Vallerga and Cabral 1992, 1993; Crosslin 1993; Schwartzler 1996; Vallerga and Sod 1995.
42. Archaeologists uncovered a stone cellar at the Bonfante site that was full of refuse apparently left behind when the Bonfantes moved to Livermore in the late 1920s. There were numerous tin cans, bottles, ceramic dishes, and some animal bone. Many of the dishes were decorated with a rose pattern popular in the 1910s and 1920s. These were interesting because there were at least four slightly different rose patterns on different vessels. Mrs. Bonfante probably mixed and matched pieces, filling in gaps in her set of china with
whatever was available at the time she needed it. While this did not produce an actual set of matching china, her table at least appeared somewhat uniform. Excavations at the Bonfante site are reported in detail in Ziesing 1997a.

44. The archaeology of the Bonfante’s blacksmith shop is fully reported in Ziesing 1997a.
45. Blacksmith shop activity areas and layout have been identified and reported by Light 1984.
46. The interviews consulted for this essay were: Fragulia 1993; Vallerga and Cabral 1995b; Vallerga and Sod 1995.
47. Or so the story goes, as reported by Denham 1995.
48. One way to find out how these tools were used is to look at trade manuals of the period. For example: International Correspondence Schools, Blacksmith Shop & Iron Forging.
49. An excellent summary of historical recycling practices can be found in Busch 1991.
50. The academic literature on the topics of ethnicity and immigration is extensive. A few references that have helped to frame this very brief discussion include Barth 1969; Conzen et al. 1992; di Leonardo 1984; Fischer 1986; Sanchez 1993; Sollors 1991; Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman 1989.
51. Oral-history interviews used in this essay include Fragulia 1993; Fragulia and Bignone 1993; Crosslin 1993.
52. Foodways as a private yet persistent expression of identity and ethnicity is discussed in Bronner 1986.
53. For additional information about Portuguese-Americans and the festival of the Holy Ghost see Bohme 1956; Salvador 1981. For first-person reminiscences about the Livermore festa see St. Michael’s Church 1978, pp. 33-35; Basso 1996.
54. No culture is completely without communal beliefs and practices, both secular and religious. The need for these practices is universal although the content and expression of them vary according to the culture of which they are a part. The study of these rituals of transition, solidarity, and togetherness is a large part of what anthropologists do. A couple of good introductions to this subject are Harris 1971; Van Gennep 1960.
55. Most of the events described in this essay were reported in the local newspapers. Articles consulted include the following:
   “Was First Wedding in the Vasco - Alice M. Coats Becomes Bride of Edward McIntyre – One of the Most Popular Young Ladies in the Grant,” Byron Times (February 14, 1908, p. 1, col. 3);
   “Marriage Epidemic Taking Away the Pretty Girls,” Byron Times (December 6, 1907, p. 1, col. 6);
   “Pretty Wedding Ceremony: Miss Eda Morchio the Bride of Paul Volponi,” Byron Times (December 24, 1909, p. 1, col. 2);
   “Taken at Monterey: Minnie Bordes on Her Way Home to Parents,” Oakland Inquirer (June 21, 1897);
   “Patrick Gleese, Well-Known Valley Pioneer Passes Away,” Livermore Herald (1903, p. 1, cols. 1-2);
   “Notes of Local Interest,” Livermore Herald (February 26, 1910, p. 5, col. 3);
   “Pioneer’s Dying Wish is Respected,” Livermore Herald (October 21, 1911, p. 1, col. 1);
   “Terrible Accident: S. Morchio Jr. Killed, J. Santos Jr. Injured in Crash,” Byron Times (November 2, 1928, p. 5, col. 5);
   “Death of Infant Child of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Armstrong,” Byron Times (April 28, 1911, p. 1, col. 2; p. 2, col. 2);
   “List of Those Who Were in Costume at the Great Masked Ball of the Native Sons,” Byron Times (February 14, 1908, p. 8, col. 2);
   “Mask Ball Glorious Success,” Byron Times (February 13, 1914, p. 1, col. 5);
   “Mask Ball Fine Success,” Byron Times (February 8, 1929, p. 2, col. 2);
   “Swell Dance is Held at Marsh Creek,” Byron Times (February 21, 1908, p. 1, col. 6);
   “Picnic at Brushy Peak,” Byron Times (April 15, 1880, p. 3, col. 4);
Chapter 3—Continued

“All at Brushy Peak,” Livermore Herald (August 22, 1908, p. 5, col. 2);
“Bohemians Hold Annual Outing on Brushy Peak,” Livermore Herald (May 1, 1909, p. 7, col. 2);
“Picnic at Brushy Peak,” Livermore Herald (September 23, 1910, p. 8, col. 2);
“Delightful Dance,” Byron Times (September 13, 1907, p. 1, col. 5);
“A Pleasant Surprise Party,” Byron Times (April 10, 1908, p. 8, col. 3);
“Surprise Party,” Byron Times (September 17, 1909, p. 1, col. 2);
“A Pleasant Surprise Birthday Party,” Byron Times (February 18, 1910, p. 2, col. 8);
“Birthday Celebration,” Byron Times (May 26, 1911, p. 8, col. 2);
“Loved Woman Celebrates Seventy-Eighth Birthday,” Byron Times (June 14, 1929).

57. The technical reports that document these excavations are Praetzellis et al. 1995 (the Connolly site);
Ziesing 1997a (the Rose site).
58. The plates have manufacturer’s marks that identify them has having been produced by John Maddock & Sons of Burslem, England. Ceramic marks have been well researched and often provide some of the most reliable dates for 19th-century archaeological deposits. One of the most useful reference books, and the one from which we got the Maddock date, is Godden 1991, p. 406.
59. Dates for these items were found in Toulouse 1969, p. 136, 1971, pp. 116-117. Additional information on the Budweiser bottles was obtained from Brown 1995.
60. There are a number of sources for information about medicinal and toiletry products. One of the most thorough is Fike 1987.
61. One of the best sources for understanding what kinds of consumer goods were available at a given time is the mail-order catalogs of the day, many of which have been reprinted. Sears, Roebuck and Co. and Montgomery Ward were the major national catalogs in the late 19th century; the catalogs used to look at the Roses’ ceramics were Sears, Roebuck and Co. 1897, 1900, 1902. Information about changing ceramic styles can be found in Majewski and O’Brien 1987; Wetherbee 1980.
62. Information about the Wehrle stove and the company that made it was taken from Sears, Roebuck and Co. 1908, pp. 626-639; Dickman 1994.

Chapter 4. Full Circle

2. Information about land transfers was taken from official land documents such as Contra Costa County Official Records and county histories such as Purcell 1940.
3. The following history of the Contra Costa Water District was taken from their publication, CCWD 1989.
5. Purcell 1940, p. 198.
6. The Ordway’s tenure in the Vasco is constructed through tax records and oral-history interviews: Gomez 1993; Crosslin and Santos 1993; Wheeler 1992; Souza 1996.
7. A common assumption about rural life is that farmers are merely passive receptors of innovative ideas that have been forged at the “top.” In fact, evidence from this study points to another model for change. Although the local farm bureau may have had some influence, state and county fairs, farm catalogs, and traveling salesmen apparently played a minor role in the dissemination of new ideas. Instead, farmers more readily absorbed technology through a bottom-up communal process in which neighbors worked together to craft a new piece of equipment or sent their ideas to town to be constructed at local machine shops. Ideas
Chapter 4—Continued

were only cautiously accepted from the “outside.” Although ultimately corporate culture did come to dominate farming in this area, it arrived late.

8. These are all artifacts found during the archaeological excavation of the stone surface. The surface itself is remarkably similar to the barn floors at the Rose and Bonfante sites and may have been laid for that purpose. An account of excavations at the site is included in Praetzellis et al. 1995.


10. The following Livermore Herald articles were consulted to reconstruct the history of Vasco Road:
   “Byron Road Via Vasco Grant is Now Open,” July 5, 1913, p. 4;
   “Will Start Graveling Roads,” September 21, 1918, p. 8;
   “To Improve Byron Highway,” September 3, 1921, p. 3;
   “Vasco Country Would be Opened by Road,” November 25, 1927, p. 3;
   “Vasco Road Put in Shape for Winter,” December 23, 1927, p. 4;
   “Improvement of Vasco Road Urged,” September 17, 1937, p. 4;
   “Favor Improvement of Vasco Road,” December 2, 1938, p. 1;
   “Urge Improvement of Vasco Road,” February 10, 1939, p. 2;
   “Vasco Road Work Will Start Soon,” February 24, 1939, p. 1;
   “Complete Vasco Road Negotiations,” June 9, 1939, p. 1;
   “Reconstruction of Vasco Road Starts,” September 8, 1939, p. 1;
   “Splendid Job on Vasco Road,” November 10, 1939, p. 1;
   “Endorses Vasco Road Improvement,” November 23, 1945, p. 5;

11. The following quotations are from Crosslin 1992; Vallerga and Cabral 1995a.


13. CCWD 1996.
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1868 Fifteenth District Court, Contra Costa County, no case number.

*Hamilton, Noble, and Edward Kirkpatrick v. Louis Peres, Pedro Altube, Kate May Dillon and Mary Ives Crocker*  
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From Rancho to Reservoir

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Oral History Interviews

Unless otherwise noted, the interviews listed below were conducted by Karana Hattersley-Drayton and were recorded on tape. Transcripts, summaries, and indexes are on file at the ASC, SSUAF, Rohnert Park, California.

Basso, Ernie

Bordes, Sylvain, III
1993 Grandson of Sylvain and Mary (née Barnes) Bordes, former Vasco residents. Interviewed on August 23, 1993, Antioch, California.

Crosslin, Emelia (née Grueninger)

Crosslin, Pyron, and Jess Santos
1993 Crosslin is a former Vasco resident (CA-CCO-535H); Santos is a former Vasco ranchhand. Interviewed on February 5, 1993, Byron, California.

Fragulia, Paul
1993 Former Vasco resident (CA-CCO-448H). Interviewed on October 29, 1993, Alameda, California.

Fragulia, Paul, and Marie Bignone (née Fragulia)
1993 Fragulia is a former Vasco resident (CA-CCO-448H); Bignone is the daughter of Paul Fragulia. Interviewed on December 21, 1993, Alameda, California.

Gleese, Jack, Jr.

Gomez, Ed

Hargraves, Juanita (née Robles)

Leighton, Kathy Armstrong

Mourterot, Bernard (Fred)
Nissen, Graham
1993 Former Vasco rancher (CA-CCO-426H, CCO-569H, ALA-536H) and son of Charles and Sue Nissen. Interviewed on April 11, 1993, Livermore, California.

Rooney, Terry
1996 Grandson of Lucy Rooney (née Bordes) and great grandson of Sylvain and Minnie Bordes, former Vasco residents. Interviewed on May 31, 1996, Livermore, California.

Souza, Josephine (née Pimentel)
1996 Former Vasco resident. Interviewed on November 25, 1996, Stockton, California.

Schwartzler, Elizabeth (née Dario)

Taylor, Ida (née Cardoza)

Vallerga, John, and Evelyn Sod (née Bonfante)
1995 Vallerga is a former Vasco resident and the son of Mary Vallerga (née Bonfante); Sod is a former Vasco resident (CA-CCO-427H) and daughter of John and Angela Bonfante. Interviewed on August 15, 1995, Richmond, California.

Vallerga (née Bonfante), Mary, and Frances Cabral (née Bonfante)
1992 Former Vasco residents (CA-CCO-427H) and daughters of John and Angela Bonfante. Interviewed on April 28, 1992, Castro Valley, California.
1993 Former Vasco residents (CA-CCO-427H) and daughters of John and Angela Bonfante. Interviewed on February 10, 1993, Castro Valley, California.
1995a Former Vasco residents (CA-CCO-427H) and daughters of John and Angela Bonfante. Interviewed on May 2, 1995, Castro Valley, California.
1995b Former Vasco residents (CA-CCO-427H) and daughters of John and Angela Bonfante. Interviewed on June 20, 1995, Castro Valley, California.

Wheeler, Mark
From Rancho to Reservoir