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Historical

Torrance Part of Land Grant Made to Juan Jose Dominguez

(Reprinted from Silver Anniversary Edition of The Torrance Herald).
Ownership of California lands by the same family for 148 years—until the direct line of that family is extinct—is a record. It is held by land in Northwest Torrance which, at the time stood in her name.

Granted to Juan Jose Dominguez in 1785 by Governor Pedro Fages in the name of the King of Spain, this was a portion of the 43,179 acres which included the present sites of Torrance, Compton, Redondo Beach, San Pedro, Wilmington and Gardena.

The Dominguez "San Pedro" grant was one of three made south of Tehachapi by the Spanish king through his governors, the others being the Nietos grant, embracing all land between the Santa Ana and San Gabriel rivers, from the foothills to the ocean, and the Verdugo grant, from the left bank of the Los Angeles river to Arroyo Seco.

Little is known about Juan Jose Dominguez. He must have been a soldier, because these grants were usually made for some military service, but other than the fact of this grant and of his subsequent death, about 1822, history records no date with respect to him.

By the time of his death California had passed from Spanish to Mexican rule, and Governor de Sola, acting under authority of the Mexican government, renewed the grant to his brother, Cristobal Dominguez, who was probably his successor in interest under Spanish law.

When Cristobal died he left a widow and six children—Victoria, Manuel, Nasario, Helena, Marcelina and Pedro. Before the courts had acted on the estate, some of the heirs made a conveyance, dated Dec. 22, 1854, to Benjamin B. Wilson, William Stanford, John G. Dowhey, Henry Myles and Joseph E. Grant, of the property now known as Wilmington. Manuel was not a participant in this conveyance and attacked the deal in the District court.

Final decree in the suit was entered Sept. 14, 1855, in which Manuel, having purchased the interests of some of his brothers and sisters, received about 24,000 of the 43,179 acres, the balance being allotted to Pedro and the nephews and nieces.

It was the share received by Manuel which was the foundation of the old Dominguez estate. This sterling Don, who was born in San Diego Jan. 26, 1803, saw California, under the flags of Spain, Mexico and the United States, and was one of the few prominent native Californians who, although holding a position of neutrality in the struggle, actually favored the Americans.

MARRIED in Los Angeles in 1827 to Maria Engracia Cota, Don Manuel was a member of the Los Angeles Ayuntamiento (City Council) in 1828 and 1829. He was First Alcalde and Judge in 1832, Second Alcalde in 1838, First Alcalde again in 1842, and was appointed Prefect—highest office under the Mexican government—in 1843.

Under American rule Manuel was a delegate to the constitutional convention at Monterey which drafted the first constitution of California in 1849, and in 1854 he was elected a County Supervisor.

He died Oct. 11, 1882, leaving an estate of approximately \$400,000. Each of his six daughters was awarded \$5 in his will, the balance of the estate being left to his widow. On her death, March 16, 1883, it was found that she had made her will on the same day as her husband, but was not as generous toward her daughters, for one dollar each was awarded them with the balance of the estate to be given to her husband.

Inasmuch as this made her intestate, one-sixth of the estate was allotted to each daughter. One of these was Mrs. Ana Josefa Dominguez de Guyer, while others were Mrs. Susana del Amo and Mrs. Francis.

The de Guyer property formed the basis for the Dominguez Estate Company, and it was from this corporation that Jared Sidney Torrance and his associates purchased the Torrance tract, while the del Amo and Francis properties included land now within the city, but then somewhat to the west.

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