

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA

BIOGRAPHIES

Serrano Families

According to Bancroft there were three Serranos who came to California before 1800. They were Francisco, a soldier, Leandro José, a child, and José Maria, a Catalan Volunteer. Francisco served as Alcalde of Los Angeles in 1799. Bancroft also mentions Ygnacio Serrano as living at Los Angeles 1846; Jose Serrano, Juez del Campo (Justice of the Plains) at Los Angeles in 1846; Jose Antonio (son of Leandro) at San Juan Capistrano in 1841; Tomás, Juez de Campo at Los Angeles in 1848; and Rafaela at San Diego in 1821.

It is impossible to trace the family relationships of those early Serranos with certainty but the two Serranos who founded Orange County families seemed to have been brothers. Jose and Leandro, who were sons of the above mentioned Francisco Serrano.

Of the two "brothers" José Serrano was grantee of Rancho Cañada de los Alisos (El Toro) and Leandro was claimant for Rancho Temescal, but for some years a resident of Santa Ana Vieja (Olive). He was son-in-law of José Antonio Yorba I.

José Serrano

José Serrano, grantee of Rancho Cañada de los Alisos, married Petra Avila, sister of Don Juan Avila, well known rancher of San Juan Capistrano.

Children of this marriage, seven sons and four daughters; Joaquin, Francisco, Reyes, Ruperto, Jose, Cornelio, and Juan Pablo were the sons. Of the daughters; Isabel married Juan Yorba; Concepción married Raimundo Yorba; Josefa was wife of Macedonio Rios; and Refugio, wife of Dolores Garcia.

The original home of José Serrano was near where the 101 Highway crosses the Aliso Creek. The exact site is in dispute but it is agreed that the Serrano and the Juan Avila adobes were near each other in that vicinity. Later Jose Serrano built what is now known as the "Whiting Adobe" (2 miles north of El Toro) and that became the family home. José Serrano died there in 1870.

Three sons, Joaquin, Francisco, and Reyes, built adobes for their respective families along the Aliso Creek and occupied them until the late 70's. Francisco and Ninfa, children of Joaquin, still live (1937) at the eastern ex-leagues, 10,688 acres, along the valley of the Aliso Creek after it comes out of the Santa Ana Mountains; most of it excellent land for grazing and, where water is obtainable, good for horticulture as well.

Judge Benjamin Hayes, who rode this "Southern District," 1852-54, mentions stopping overnight at the José Serrano home (at original location on Los Alisos Creek) in 1856. He and Horace Bell are authorities for the general location of the old Serrano and Avila adobes. Hayes says that the

Serranos raised corn, and watermelons and that they had a vineyard. He also pays tribute to their hospitality and innate courtesy which traits are confirmed by acquaintances of José Serrano's descendants. Mrs. Joseph A. Wilkes, who taught the first school in that vicinity, at the Joaquin Serrano adobe (about 1880) recalls that these traits together with a great eagerness and capacity for learning made teaching, in the midst of household duties and furnishings, a real pleasure in that pioneer community.

The rancho was divided into ten blocks to the different heirs and parts were sold to Dr. Ellis, Madam Modjeska, James McFadden and Dwight Whiting.

Joaquin Serrano, eldest son of Jose Serrano,, married Encarnacion Olives. Their family consisted of seven sons and two daughters. The sons were: Francisco, Cornelio, Leandro, Joaquin, José, Alfonso, and Juan Pablo. The daughters were: Isabel (who died at the age of twenty-five) and Ninfa. This is the family now living in Aliso Canyon (1937). Of these, Cornelio, José, Joaquin and Leandro are deceased, unmarried. Francisco married Juana Pacheco. Their children are: Albertina, Encarnacion, Isabel (deceased) Josefa Dolores, Miguel Reyes, and Francisco. Alfonso married Agate Pacheco (deceased). Their children are: Andres, Ruperto, Enrique, and Feliz. Ninfa, unmarried. Juan Pablo married, but no family.

Francisco Serrano (son of Jose), family consists of seven sons: Jose Antonio V., Rafael, Carlos, Francisco, Aviano, Joaquin and Juan. Four daughters: Clorinda, Beatriz, Erlina, and Refugio.

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Reyes Serrano (son of Jose), family consists of two sons and one daughter. Miguel, Reyes, and Clenencia.

Ruperto Serrano (son of Jose), left four children. Two sons: Jose and Savino. Two daughters: Ruperta and Petra.

Cornelio and Jose died unmarried.

Of the four daughters of José Serrano and Petra Avila Serrano, Isabel married Juan Yorba. Of this marriage there were three sons: Miguel, Godofredo, and Francisco. One daughter, Francisca.

Concepcion married Raimundo Yorba. The children of this marriage were: Beazida, wife of Juan Peralta, Sinida, Constanca, Celest, Victor and Raimundo.

Josefa married Macedonio Rios. No children.

Refugio married Dolores Garcia. No children.

Leandro Serrano

Leandro Serrano was Mayordomo at Pala for San Luis Rey Mission for some years. He then appears as owner of Rancho Temescal - east of the Santa Ana Mountains - where he lived most of the time from 1819 to 1852.

He married Presentacion Yorba - daughter of Don José Antonio Yorba I - by whom he had six children as follows: Francisco, Jose Antonio, Maria, Jesus, Manuel, and Rosa. Jesus and Manuel died unmarried. Francisco married Soledad Feliz and died leaving three daughters - Maria Antonia who married Amhorsio Castillo, Dolores de Manuel Gutierrez and Luisa de Guadalupe Martinez. Jose Antonio was grantee of Rancho Pauma and married Nieves Aguilar. A daughter of this union married Judge Benjamin Hayes. Maria married Juan Machado. Rosa married Don Lorenzo Soto and died leaving a daughter, Rosa Soto who participated in the 1868 Partition of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. The other heirs of Presentacion had sold their portions.

Leandro Serrano after the death of this wife Presentacion married Dona Josefa Montalva and she with her children.

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Orange County Historical Research WPA Project #3105 - 1937 - participated in the final will of Leandro Serrano. On the Santiago de Santa Ana Rancho they received what is known as the Serrano tract of 3300 lying southeast of Olive. The second set of children numbered six also; Ramona who married Jesus Burruel; Leonor who married Patricia Ontiveras; Maria de los Angeles II; Leandro (Jr.) and Dolores.

When the time came for presenting his claim for Rancho Temescal he could produce only a temporary permit, and although he had held the ranch for about thirty three years, his claim was rejected. He died in 1852 about the time when his claim for Temescal should have been pressed; and the circumstances of his absence, together with that of an active opposing claimant, caused his family to lose the fruit of many years of labor on the ranch.

José Antonio Serrano, second son of Leandro, was in the battle of San Pascual. in 1846. Later in the same year his wife, Nieves Aguilar, his younger brother Manuel and his brother-in-law Ramon Aguilar were killed in an uprising of the San Luis Rey Indians.

References: Partition of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana.

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Research: C. E. Roberts

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