

CHAPTER 3

The Historical Background of the San Pablo Reservoir

By Nancy August

(Editors' note: The San Pablo Reservoir area was heavily exploited by ranchers, dairymen, and farmers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historical occupation by Europeans formed a cultural overlay for the earlier prehistoric occupation.)

The installation of the reservoir masked much of the historical material which antedated the 1916-1920 construction and covered over prehistoric occupations as well. The chapter prepared here by Nancy August focuses on documents and, more importantly, oral history concerning the historic inhabitants of the reservoir area. The oral informants contacted by August were, in many cases, the last of the generations of historical occupants of the reservoir neighborhood. Not unlike the vanished prehistoric occupants, the historical informants from the area would take the preponderance of information concerning the first European habitation of the vicinity with them at their passing. Accordingly, this chapter is an important component in gaining a full perspective of the historical development of the reservoir area.)

The historic period at San Pablo Reservoir can be conceived of as three distinct yet overlapping phases. The first phase was the Mexican Land Grant Period extending roughly from 1841 to 1883. This stage was supplanted by the American Rancher Period which ended in 1916 with the onset of construction of the San Pablo Reservoir. The third and final phase, the Reservoir Period, has continued from 1916 to the present. The history of the area is brief, compacted into some one hundred and forty years. The longest segment, the Reservoir Period, comprised nearly half the total time elapsed but was the most stable time, with only few and subtle changes.

The Land Grant Period began for San Pablo Reservoir with a petition on the part of Juan José Castro and his brother, Victor Castro, for a tract of land. Thanks to the Mexican War and the Gold Rush, this period terminated, in a sense, nearly as soon as it commenced. The Castro land grant proved to be one of the most complicated on record, reflecting the chaotic times. The original grant was for five leagues (22,000 acres); and when the dust finally cleared in 1910, the Castros were left with only 751.52 acres (Collier 1976).

Since 1835 the Mexican government had been indebted to Victor Castro for services rendered in the militia cavalry, including the furnishing of provisions, horses, and necessities to the troops serving under General Mariano Vallejo, and the provision of quarters and of boats to ferry troops across the bay. A land grant was issued in April, 1841, as recompense to the Castro brothers by Governor Juan Batista. The boundaries of the tract, named El Sobrante, were described as the overplus, or sobrante, of the ranches San Antonio and San Pablo, Valencia farm, and Moraga farm, comprising roughly the area along both sides of San Pablo and Wildcat Creeks, from beyond Bear Creek in the southeast to beyond Castro Creek in the northwest. The grant was issued on the condition that a survey be conducted to determine the exact boundaries. In view of the uncertain boundaries, the Departmental Assembly declined to approve the grant.

Nevertheless, the Castro brothers erected corrals and buildings for their cattle ranch, which they visited periodically from their home in nearby San Pablo. By 1846 the Mexican War had erupted, ending with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. In short order, American trespassers were arriving in the former Mexican territory to squat on the land and forcibly take possession of the cattle.

Like other land grantees, the Castros knew nothing of the English language, laws, and business practices. Complaints to the newly established American courts went unheard; furthermore, due to the "surplus" status of this particular grant, the claims of the surrounding ranches had to be surveyed and patented first.

The Castros turned to Ramon deZaldo, a man who was familiar with American law and who was in charge of Mexican archives in California. DeZaldo and his associate, John B. Frisbee, son-in-law of General Vallejo, convinced the Castros to allow them to manage the affairs of the ranch. According to Frisbee and deZaldo, on November 23, 1853, they entered into an agreement with the Castros wherein they would represent them in the land case for payment in land, and the Castros would then sell them whatever land remained for \$100,000. Victor Castro testified that deZaldo and Frisbee never paid him any money or attempted to remove any squatters. He further charged that the two men entered into a conspiracy with attorney Horace W. Carpentier and Mr. Edison Adams to defraud the Castros of their property and to cloud their title. DeZaldo and Frisbee transferred the grant property to Carpentier and Adams with no payment to the Castros. Carpentier was retained by many of the grantees, taking his fees in land;

he took advantage of the confusion of the times to become the largest landholder in the East Bay (Collier 1976).

In 1847 the Castros did legitimately sell one league to the San Francisco firm of Ward and Smith. This property, extending south from the vicinity of Bear Creek to the end of the ranch, flanking San Pablo Creek, was eventually to become Orinda. They also sold one league north of the Ward and Smith league on the east side of the creek to Kelly in 1852. These titles remained valid despite challenges from the aforementioned conspirators (Sorricks 1970).

In 1852 the Castros filed a petition with the Board of Land Commissioners as claimants to the Rancho El Sobrante. The decision issued in 1855 validated the claim at its original 1841 boundaries. In 1876 William F. Boardman, U.S. deputy surveyor, submitted an official survey map of the ranchos surrounding Rancho El Sobrante, thereby making it finally possible to fix the boundaries of their surplus, i.e., of Rancho El Sobrante. This survey, published by William Minto, U.S. surveyor, in 1878, eliminated the southwest corner of the grant, leading once again to an onslaught of squatters who settled on land they hoped was not outside the grant, ignoring survey chains and fences and actually fighting for their claims as though entitled to them. Although the Castros contested the Minto map, it was upheld by the Commissioner of the General

Land Office and declared official by the U.S. Surveyor General in 1883. At last, a patent for the grant of 19,982.49 acres was issued by President Chester A. Arthur in 1883. Nevertheless, litigation continued over the next twenty-seven years, leading to further partitions and a final acreage for the Castros of 781.52 (Collier 1976).

Despite the relentless legal turmoil, life went on back at the ranch. Like the American ranchers who followed, the various land grant families comprised a social unit reflected in the marriage ties among them. Victor Castro's sister married Joaquin Moraga, of the Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados to the southeast. Victor married Luisa Martinez (whose family lent their name to the city of Martinez). Luisa's brother married Guadalupe Moraga; Juan José Castro married Petral Bernal, also of the Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados. The Castro patriarch was grantee of Rancho San Pablo to the west, where the town of San Pablo is now located (Sorrick 1970).

Victor, despite his lack of English-speaking ability, was elected to the first Board of Supervisors of the newly formed Contra Costa County in 1852. His son, Patricio, established a ranch in 1865 at the northwest end of the grant, at the present Castro Ranch Road on Castro Creek near the town.

of El Sobrante. The ranch was continued by his son Percy. In 1916 the family built a slaughterhouse to supply the camp kitchen of the construction crew at the reservoir. While the slaughterhouse is no longer active, Percy, Jr., and his daughter still sell meat in bulk on the one hundred acres that remain of the Castro ranch (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

Although the original Indians had been removed to Mission San Jose by 1810, "Indians did the garden work, raised the produce, and helped with the chores" during the 1840's (Sorricks 1970:9). In the 1850's pneumonia finished off the Indians, already decimated by cholera.

The burden of seemingly endless years of costly litigation on the Mexican grantees was a prime mover in the development of the American Rancher Period, the most dynamic time for the reservoir area. To pay court costs and legal fees over the many years that their cases were disputed, the Mexicans were forced to sell off parcels of their grants. The Kelly league and the Ward and Smith league exemplify this trend. From 1870 to 1900 these large parcel-holders partitioned and sold their property to the numerous ranchers who came to fill the San Pablo Creek valley. William Camron bought one-third of the Ward and Smith league closest to Bear Creek in 1876. Camron surveyed a road to Berkeley through Wildcat Canyon across the Berkeley hills, but could not afford

to grade it. He did, however, develop the first subdivision in the area, naming it Orinda Park. Original purchasers of the approximately 200-acre parcels included Herman and Alice Sandow in 1880; William Minto, the surveyor, in 1882; and Edward Dubois in 1883. By 1887 José and Miguel deLaveaga had bought the Dubois property, where succeeding generations would launch the development of modern Orinda.

General Theodore Wagner, appointed U.S. Surveyor General of California in 1878, married the Sandow daughter, Ida, and moved to the home they built on her portion of the family property in 1882. This was henceforth known as the Wagner ranch. The Wagner estate was a model of self-containment, reflecting the paucity of transportation and communication at the time. On the ranch were a brick kiln, a carbide gas plant, a drying plant, a storehouse, a mushroom cellar, a dairy, a conservatory, a pear orchard, and an olive orchard.

Wagner's enterprise resulted in a village of sorts emerging in Orinda Park. It was the only village along San Pablo Creek between Moraga and San Pablo until 1921. Wagner, like Camron before him, saw a road over the ridge to Berkeley as essential to his success and began the process of surveying and grading in 1882. Wildcat Canyon Road was completed in 1889 but not paved until the late 1930's. As a result it was impassable in winter, when rain turned the adobe hills

to quagmire. At best, the trip took two hours by horse and buggy and four hours for a team of horses pulling a load. During this period other forms of communication were also meager. There was no telegraph, no daily mail, no newspaper. While a telephone exchange had been established in Martinez in 1881, the first lines arrived in 1882 from Berkeley going to the Wagners and the deLaveagas. Orinda did not acquire an exchange or a telephone directory of its own until 1938.

The Wagners allocated property to the newly formed Orinda Park School District for a one-room, ten-grade, one-teacher school, which was built in 1883. Orinda Park School stood in a pear orchard on the southwest corner of the modern intersection of San Pablo Dam Road and Wildcat Canyon Road, until it was auctioned in 1925 by the East Bay Water Company.

Wagner built a hotel in 1885 on the northeast corner of San Pablo Dam Road, where Wildcat Canyon Road and Bear Creek Road now converge. This hotel failed, but it was rebuilt in 1889, when the California and Nevada Railroad tracks were completed from Berkeley. The new hotel was run by August and Catherine Keuhne and was frequented by hunters, fishermen, and seasonal harvest workers. A liquor license was denied the hotel in 1896 due to the proximity of the school. This and the subsequent failure of the railroad contributed to the decline of the hotel, which was razed in 1913.

Also at this time in Orinda Park a blacksmith shop was run by Joe Roland. It shared, intermittently with the hotel, the quarters for the post office.

The family of James E. Symmons came to Orinda Park in 1883 to run the James Eva ranch, adjoining the Wagners on the north on San Pablo Dam Road. When the railroad inaugurated service to Orinda Park in 1890, a station was built on the Symmons ranch. With the Keuhnes, the Symmons were refused a liquor license intended for the comfort of the passengers.

This completes the facilities available in Orinda Park. (See Fig. 3.1) The Wagners left the area in 1895; the village had drifted along into decline and ultimately oblivion, when in 1922 E. I. deLaveaga began developing Orinda (Sorricks 1970).

The Kelly league, flanking the northeast slope of the modern reservoir, was also substantially subdivided by 1872, although ownership of the parcels did not crystallize until the 1880's (Turner 1872). At the southern edge was Sangmeister's Cañon, now known as Sather Canyon. While a structure at the end of the canyon was identified as J. F. Sangmeister's house in 1885, the property was, in fact, owned by the estate of P. Sather (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.). It was separated from the adjacent property to the north by

LAND TRACTS 1894

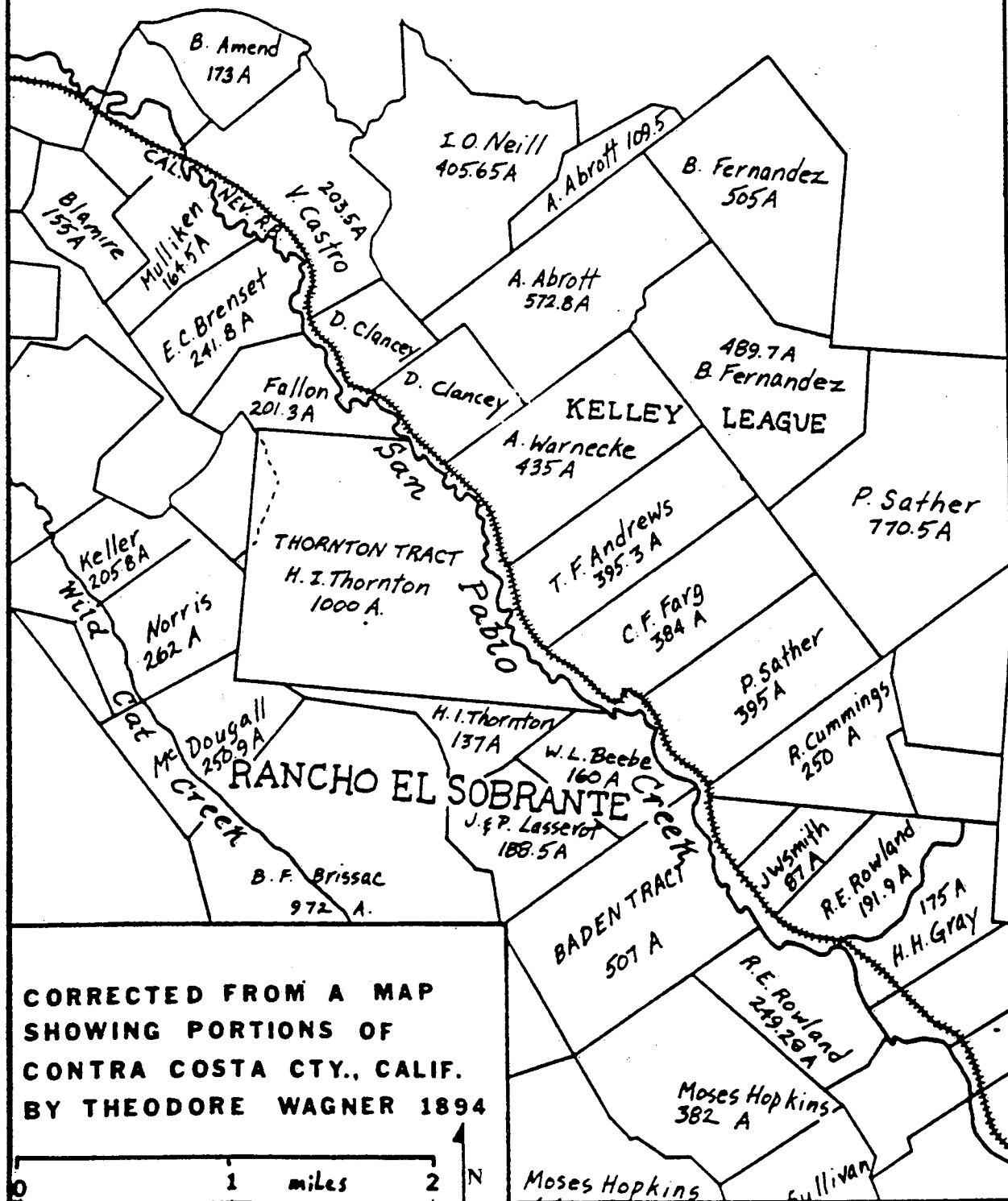


Fig. 3.1: Rancho El Sobrante Map, Land Tracts 1894

Kelly Creek, which flowed down from Mount Pleasant. Near the creek, on the southwest corner of this property, owned by J. Schmidt in 1885 and by C. F. Fargo in 1893, stood Kelly's house and the Mount Pleasant School (McMahon 1893). This school district was created in 1863 to serve the ranches in the Bear Creek and northern San Pablo Creek area. Of comparable size to nearby Orinda Park School, with an enrollment of some twenty to twenty-five pupils, the school remained open until the property was purchased by the water company in the first decade of this century. Nearby, until ten years ago, stood a windmill which pumped water to the schoolhouse and for the cattle. Continuing northwesterly along the creek were the properties of T. F. Andrews, then A. Warnecke, then the estate of D. Clancy in the vicinity of the modern dam structure, and finally, beyond the Kelly league at Castro Creek, the ranch of V. Castro. Heading northeast up Scow Canyon through the Clancy and Warnecke properties were the A. Abrott property on the north and the B. Fernandez property on the south (McMahon 1893).

In 1893, across San Pablo Creek from the Clancy property, near the modern dam, was Mrs. Fallon. Southeast of the Fallon property was the Thornton tract; then Mrs. L. Beebe, with J. & P. Laserot, uphill from her towards the crest of the Berkeley hills; then the Baden tract, where

the Badens lived from 1874 until bought out by the water company in 1904; then Richard Rowland, whose property extended on both sides of San Pablo Creek at its junction with the original Bear Creek and Bear Creek Road. The Rowlands ranched here from 1866 until 1906, when they, too, were bought out by the People's Water Company (Sorrick 1970).

Like the land grantees before them, these early American settlers formed a socially intertwined group, owing to the isolating effect of poor and few roads. Many of the children attended school together at Mount Pleasant or Orinda Park and eventually married each other. Sarah Gray who lived on the Gray ranch, south of Bear Creek opposite the Rowlands, married August Warnecke, Jr. Warnecke's sister, Charlotte, married Joseph Wohlfrom from the adjoining ranch. Mary Ehlers, from well up Bear Creek Canyon, married William Curran, from the opposite facing ridge above the Badens. Mary's brother, Rudolf, married Emma Brockhurst, who lived on a wedge of property north of the Rowlands across San Pablo Creek from the Badens. James Symmons, whose family had the Orinda Park railroad station, married Esther Gerow, who came from the ranch south of the deLaveagas in modern Orinda (Sorrick 1970). At the northwest end of the reservoir, and in later years, George Lehmkuhl, whose family

settled on the Fallon ranch in 1898, married into the Scow family, who rented the Warnecke place. Olaf Owens, who lived on the Andrews property, married Lily O'Neill, from the property bordering the Abrotts and the Castros (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

With the turn of the century, there began the steady push by the water companies to purchase watershed lands surrounding San Pablo Creek and, simultaneously, a shift from stable ownership and operation of the ranches to operation by a stream of renters. This trend tended to obliterate the traditional property boundaries as the new owner, the water company, increasingly rented acreage in general without regard for the original ranches. A 1908 map of Contra Costa County (see Fig. 3.2) showed the Kelly league, except for Abrott and Fernandez, in the hands of the People's Water Company, as were the Baden tract, Brockhurst, and Gray, with Rowland, Eva, deLaveaga, and others following in short order (McMahon 1885). The Wagners had left their ranch in 1895; and by 1907 a Smith family was residing there. By 1917, the home was being used by Guy Palmer, the water company manager, until it was torn down. Subsequently, William Borland built a cottage on the old foundation, and grazed cattle. When he died, rental of the land was assumed by the Bruno family, who were already

LAND TRACTS 1908

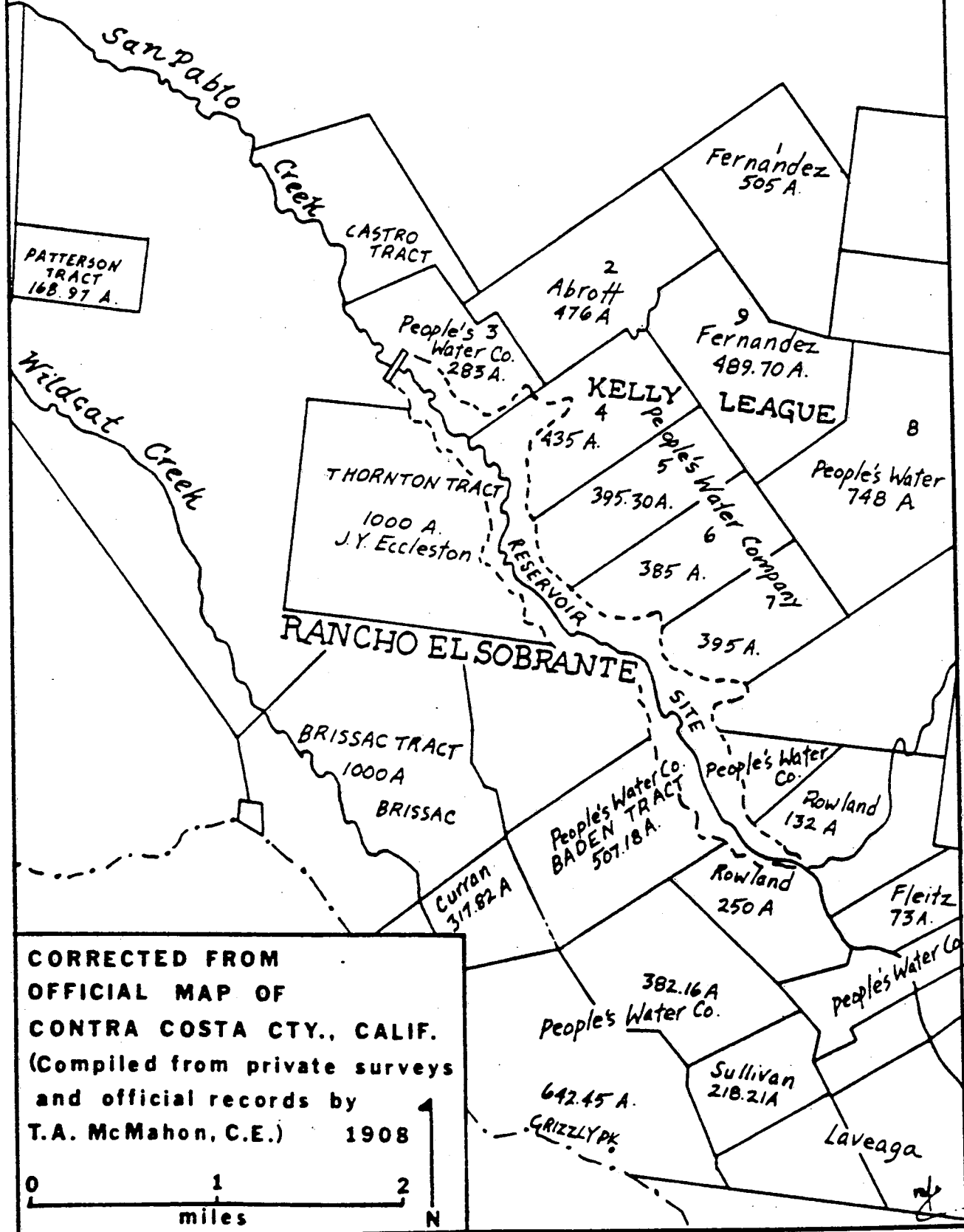


Fig. 3.2: 1908 Map of Kelly League of Contra Costa County

renting water company land on the Eva ranch for grazing purposes (Bruno 1979).

A similar sequence occurred on the neighboring Eva property, where the Symmons had settled in 1883. They were followed by the Fleitz family, who had originally settled in Bear Creek Canyon in the 1880's but were forced to move twice by the water company, first to the Eva property in the 1890's and later to the deLaveaga ranch, which was acquired by eminent domain in 1924 to make way for the pipeline from the Mokelumne River (Sorricks 1970). While running the Eva ranch, they also plowed the neighboring Smith ranch to the west in the flatland bordering San Pablo Creek (*Contra Costa Gazette* 1895). The Eva property was later leased for grazing to the Bruno family from approximately 1931 to 1940, when the elder Bruno retired. Frank and Leroy Dutra next assumed the lease; they also ran cattle on the Gray ranch (Bruno 1979).

As with the Wagner home, in some instances the water company assumed use of the buildings on purchased properties. The Rowland ranch buildings were at first used to keep horses. A cottage on the property was resided in by T. C. and Grace Kendall from 1918-1923; Mr. Kendall was an inspector for the San Pablo Dam, and Mrs. Kendall taught at Orinda Park School (Sorricks 1970).

On one ranch, subleasing by the original owner long preceded purchase by the water company. At the northeast end of the reservoir, Jacinto Nunes rented from Dr. Bernardo Fernandez. Since 1914 three successive generations have lived on the property, including Jess and Jess, Jr., but the land was not purchased by the East Bay Municipal Utility District until 1949 (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

The Scow family came from Oakland, where they ran a coal yard, to rent the Warnecke place, first as a summer home, and then full time to operate the Scow Dairy. The low-lying location forced them to move early in the Reservoir Period. The house was torn down and rebuilt in the town of El Sobrante, where the Scows continued to operate the dairy ranch until 1955 (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

By the early 1900's many other names in the Kelly league were new. The Owens lived on the Andrews property, the Muirs on the Fargo property near Mount Pleasant School, the Rooneys and the Silvas in Sather Canyon (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

On the west side of San Pablo Creek, a Portuguese family named Nunes, unrelated to the Nunes on the Fernandez ranch, lived on the Thornton tract below the present recreation area just on the creek. The Lehmkuhls, driven north from the Paso Robles area by a drought in 1898, lived in the Fallon house for a year. The Laserots were among the last ranchers living

on their own property; they were bought out by the water company and left the area at that time (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

During the Ranching Period, the San Pablo Creek valley was both productive and diversified. The ranchers ran both dairy and beef cattle. There were several dairies, notably Scow Canyon in the immediate reservoir vicinity, the Varsity Creamery near Bear Creek on San Pablo Dam Road, and a dairy on the north corner of the deLaveaga ranch. Dairy products were also sold extensively to Shuey Dairy Company in Oakland. The only slaughterhouse in the area was run by the Castros at the relatively late date of 1916. Principally, the ranchers drove the cattle to the slaughterhouses in El Cerrito and Albany via the San Pablo Dam Road or to the larger slaughterhouses in Emeryville, such as the Oakland Meat Company, via Wildcat Canyon Road. An epidemic of hoof-and-mouth disease in 1924 had widespread repercussions, with a massive slaughter of affected animals and burial at the site of what is now the town of El Sobrante. Horses were raised for farm work well into the 1930's, even though the first automobile was seen in the area in 1913. Some ranchers raised hogs; a local newspaper, *Hayseed Siftings*, reported a booming business in hogs in 1893. The principal crop was hay, both for use on the ranches and for sale to Berkeley and Oakland feed stores and stables. It was transported by train during the 1890's and

for the most part by horse team. Jess Nunes continued to grow hay until World War II, when horses were finally replaced by mechanized farm equipment. Another cash crop at times was tomatoes; the Brunos grew them on the Eva ranch only briefly due to the soil erosion that resulted (Bruno, pers. comm.).

Wildlife was also abundant during this time; both ranchers and visitors hunted and fished. An 1895 edition of the *Contra Costa Gazette* reported good quail hunting, with virtually thousands visible at a time. Coyotes and bobcats were so abundant that \$5 bounties were offered for coyotes in 1894. In 1925 the state and federal governments maintained corps of hunters; as many as 167 coyotes and 72 wildcats were bagged in one six-month period. Consequently, these animals are now rarely seen. Other animals were seldom seen by the end of the Land Grant period, including herds of antelope and elk and grizzly bears. A hunting club in Orinda Park also went after raccoons, rabbits, and doves. By 1926, deer had become scarce but they have since replenished themselves, and then some, from the ten that were imported from the Peninsula by E. I. deLaveaga. Black bears continued to be spotted as recently as 1961 (Sorricks 1970). Before the dam was built, one could walk into San Pablo Creek with a pitchfork, poke around, and emerge with salmon weighing twenty pounds and more (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.). Trout, catfish, bluegill, and bass continue to be available, stocked

yearly from the East Bay Municipal Utility District fish hatchery. The presence of the reservoir has added to the wildlife list wintering ducks and geese, and nesting egrets and herons (EEMUD 1975).

An industry that achieved only minor success during the Rancher Period was oil. A seepage of coal oil was reported in 1862. Soon after, the second oil well ever drilled in California was drilled to a depth of 87 feet on the west bank of San Pablo Creek, four miles south of San Pablo toward Orinda. As it was not profitable, it was discontinued. The craving for black gold persisted and was manifested in a bevy of wells in the vicinity of the deLaveaga ranch between 1888 and 1903. All proved to gush little more than cupfuls and were abandoned (Sorricks 1970).

Except for the water companies and the invention of the automobile, development in the Orinda area would have continued at the slow pace of the 1890's. Few roads, frequently impassable, and a fitful railroad kept the area isolated from the mainstream of Berkeley and Oakland life. The earliest mention of a road into the valley was of a wagon road to Martinez in 1850. Albeit the long way to Berkeley, this route was flat and hence the one selected in later years for the railroad. San Pablo Creek (Dam) road became part of the road district system in 1861. All able-bodied men between the ages

of eighteen and forty-five were required to work on district roads for five days a year, a well-meaning ordinance, but to no avail, for the adobe San Pablo Creek road turned to mud in winter, frequently closing the two schools on its route. The earliest version of this road followed the creek bed. It was later moved to higher ground along the railroad bed. When the dam was completed, the road was renamed San Pablo Dam road and was rerouted to the west side, thus providing access for the first time to the uphill ranches, such as that of the Laseros, who previously could be reached only from Inspiration Point at the summit of Wildcat Canyon road. This road was graded and paved between 1920 and 1923. Finally in the 1950's the present straighter, wider road was constructed (Bruno, pers. comm.).

The nearest direct route to Berkeley was the Wildcat Canyon road built by Wagner in 1889, also severely limited by winter rains. As early as 1902, tunnels were attempted through the Berkeley hills, but were plagued by slides until the modern Caldecott Tunnel was completed in 1937.

A railroad route, following the east side of San Pablo Creek, was surveyed by the California and Mount Diablo Railroad in 1880. In 1881, renamed the California and Nevada, the railroad published a prospectus advertising the potential for freight and tourism on the proposed line. In 1890 the wood-burning, narrow-gauge train finally reached

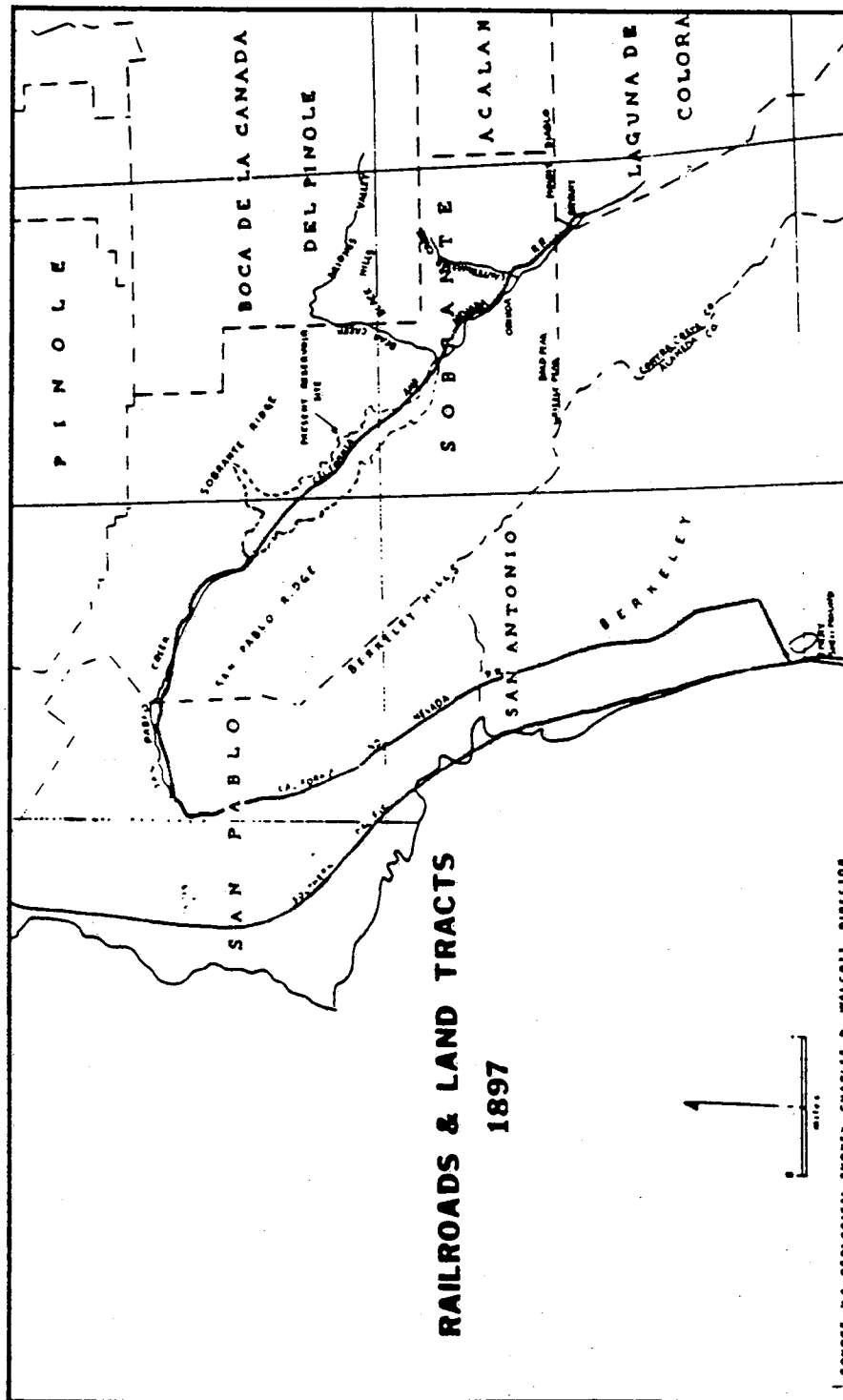


Fig. 3.3: 1897 Railroad and Land Tracts Map

Orinda from Berkeley, bringing with it supplies and picnickers from the city and carrying farm produce as freight on the return trip. It, too, was plagued by earth slides and washouts, making its two daily runs only as weather permitted. Sarah Gray, from the Gray ranch, described the lone passenger car as so dilapidated that riders were required to hold umbrellas overhead in inclement weather. Financial troubles began immediately in 1890, and by 1893 the train ran infrequently, at best. In 1899 it was sold to the Santa Fe Railroad, whose advertised good intentions never materialized; the line was abandoned soon after (Sorrick 1970). With time, ranchers helped themselves to the ties for fence posts, and scavengers took the iron rails to sell as scrap metal (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.).

The reservoir area was kept further isolated by lack of communication until relatively late. Several issues of *Hayseed Siftings* were published from Orinda Park in 1893, but no other local newspaper was published until the *Orindan* in 1927. Electricity was not available to residences until 1922, when the Great Western Power Company, which had installed a 12,000-volt line to provide for the construction of the dam, installed a facility to convert that power to 110 volts for home consumption (Sorrick 1970).

A major shift in the pattern of life in the San Pablo Creek valley occurred with the construction of the San Pablo Reservoir and Dam. With the reservoir came electricity, paved roads, and, coincidentally, the automobile, which reduced the necessity for ranches, raising horses, and hay. Ranching was to decline and urbanization was to commence; but for the immediate reservoir area, time came to a relative standstill. The ranches dotting the landscape disappeared, with the land being used by a relatively anonymous handful. The watershed property was not available for any kind of development, being, in fact, totally off limits to the general public. But even in these matters, time slowly brought changes.

The San Pablo Dam was constructed from 1916 to 1920, but the scenario leading to it opened far back in time, when the Castro brothers were defending their title to the Rancho El Sobrante grant, and even included some of the same cast. The wave of settlers coming to the Bay Area, following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gold Rush, was greeted by a water shortage. In the process of settling, they had denuded the hills above the Bay, causing runoff and erosion, which, compounded with the naturally uneven rainfall, yielded a meager water supply. Homeowners sank wells through the hardpan, finding water at fifteen to thirty-five feet, but such surface water was readily subject to contamination by sewage and

disease. Oakland was incorporated in 1852, with land-hungry attorney Horace Carpentier as its first mayor; his first concern was to locate a reliable supply of fresh water for his growing city.

This need was responded to by the state legislature, which enacted a law in 1858 permitting any company incorporated for the purpose of supplying a locality with pure fresh water to purchase or appropriate any lands and waters as required. Many hopeful water companies sprang up; one more resourceful than the rest was the Contra Costa Water Company, formed in 1868 by a recently arrived Quebecois named Anthony Chabot. By 1875 Chabot Lake and Dam were completed, using Chinese laborers and hydraulic gold-mining techniques. This was a significant step in establishing a water supply, but Chabot foresaw that it was not a sufficient one. In 1869 he acquired a quit claim deed from Horace Carpentier and his associates for all waters of the San Pablo Creek and its sources and tributaries (Noble 1970). Plans to build the dam on San Pablo Creek were published on the 1908 Official Map of Contra Costa County, having been proposed two years earlier by the Syndicate Water Company of Berkeley (Norris 1906).

In the meantime, in 1906 the People's Water Company was incorporated, subsuming the Contra Costa Water Company,

the Syndicate Water Company, and the Richmond Water Company; and the acquisition of watershed land was under way. In 1916, the People's Water Company, unable to meet demands, was bailed out by East Bay Water Company, the same year construction began on the dam. Even as it was being built, it was becoming obsolete. In 1917 World War I placed increased demand on water for production of chemicals and explosives. At the same time, rainfall had been meager for the past several years and, indeed, by 1918 no water had flowed in San Pablo Creek for two years. Some felt this new dam would not be adequate and urged seeking a water source in the Sierras. Others resisted the idea despite the successes of San Francisco with Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite and of Los Angeles in the Owens Valley. As it turned out, San Pablo Dam, completed in 1921, was still not full in 1925; did not reach its 13.29-billion-gallon capacity until 1936, when it spilled over for the first time; and stood quite empty a number of times.

Once again the State rallied to the cause, passing the Municipal Utility District Act of 1921. This permitted the voters to take control of the water from the hands of the fumbling water companies by voting into existence a utility district. In 1923, the people of Alameda and Contra Costa counties voted for the formation of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), which immediately formulated a plan

to bring water from the Mokelumne River to the San Pablo Reservoir. Construction began not a moment too soon. The years 1928-29 were the beginning of a drought which lasted until 1935. By June, 1929, San Pablo Reservoir had dwindled to a seven-day supply of muddy puddles. By the end of the month, the first water flowed in from the Sierras. In view of the success of the utility district and the mismanagement by the water company, the voters did not hesitate to authorize a bond issue for the purchase of East Bay Water Company's 40,000 acres by EBMUD in 1927.

Ironically, San Pablo Reservoir has provided water to residents of Alameda and Contra Costa counties since 1921, but not to its immediate neighbors in the Orinda area. This area was served first by several small water companies; then, from 1932, by the Orinda Water District; and finally, since 1952, by EBMUD (Sorrick 1970).

The impact of water-company ownership on the surrounding watershed has been most apparent in changes in the landscape. Rows of eucalyptus trees had been planted as wind breaks by the ranchers. From 1906 to 1912 the People's Water Company planted pine trees in its watershed tree-planting program. From 1936 to 1940 CCC and WPA crews, camped in Wildcat Canyon and at Kennedy Grove just below the dam, also engaged in erosion control. They planted Monterey pines, firs,

redwoods, shrubs, and grasses. They cleared out poison oak. In all, some 30,000 trees were planted. Additionally, they worked on the reservoir, repairing and replacing pipes, lining creek flood channels, building silt-catching check dams, and paving roads. After World War II, the tree-planting program was resumed, with the thinning of eucalyptus trees; these trees caused erosion by preventing ground cover from taking root, and their oily leaves were a fire hazard (Noble 1970).

Other changes in the landscape involved the former ranch buildings. Ranch houses below the water line were torn down for lumber. Houses above the water were occupied intermittently, fell into disrepair, and disintegrated or burned. Only the Nunes' home on the Fernandez property remains of the original homes. Other buildings were constructed to meet the needs of the reservoir. A house was built near the dam to house Reservoir Superintendent Ogden. It was a handsome building amid fruit trees, but was torn down in the 1940's, when it was felt it posed a threat to sanitation, located so close to the reservoir (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.). Another home was built on the Rowland ranch, to which Dam Inspector Kendall and his wife moved in 1924. This building now serves as offices and ranger headquarters for the reservoir.

After the land was purchased by the various water companies, it continued to be available for ranching through leaseback arrangements. Originally, and for many years, this

was on a first-come first-served basis at a fixed price per acre. In the interest of ecological conservation, the system was converted to animal-unit-months. Each species of range animal was assessed at a certain number of units, depending on what and how much it grazed. Then each tract to be leased was rated for how many animals, of each rating, it could support for a given time period; this regulated how the lessee used the land. Demand for the land has always been high; most recently leases have been granted through bidding. A public announcement of leasable land is made by the district, and bids are accepted from prospective ranchers; the lease is assigned to the successful bidder (Bruno, pers. comm.).

While some of the ranchers continued on in a lease-back capacity, another impact of the reservoir was the creation of new jobs for other family members. One brother of rancher George Lehmkuhl from the Fallon ranch worked as an electrician, while another worked on construction of the dam (Lehmkuhl, pers. comm.). Even after his father retired, Ed Bruno maintained close ties with the lands his family ranched, in the capacities of patrolman and forestry supervisor, between 1924 and his retirement in 1968 (Bruno, pers. comm.).

A continuing problem for the district, after its purchase of the original 40,000 acres from East Bay Water Company, was that it had need for only some 25,000 acres of the total.

East Bay Water Company refused to sell less than the complete package, leaving the district to determine the fate of the excess acreage. Public sentiment favored public recreation, but the district resisted on the grounds that it was not legally authorized to administer recreational land. Nevertheless, the East Bay Regional Parks Association was organized in 1929 to spearhead the formation of recreational areas in the excess lands. In the Depression year of 1934, the East Bay Regional Park District was voted into existence, but with no funds available to it until 1936. In that year it purchased 6,200 acres from EBMUD to develop Tilden and Wildcat parks, in the Berkeley hills overlooking San Pablo Reservoir, and other parks in association with reservoirs elsewhere in the system.

In 1945 EBMUD engendered new controversy by selling surplus ranch properties to private purchasers. Its policy was first to offer surplus land to other public agencies at marked discount, and then to private buyers at market value. This sequence of events transpired in the case of 2,545 acres covering slopes of Wildcat Canyon and San Pablo Valley from the San Pablo Dam road to the ridge top. The city of Richmond was offered the piece prior to World War II; after ten years of indecision, it declined the offer. The district sold the land to speculator-developer Philip Ross. By the 1960's public opposition was so vehement that the district had a Master Plan

drawn up by Stanford Research Institute. Adopted in 1966, the plan authorized some land to be held for eventual purchase by the Park District, such as the 95-acre Kennedy Grove below the dam; some to be kept in open space; and the terminal reservoir areas to be developed by EEMUD for public recreation.

The movement to open the reservoirs for fishing was launched in 1936 by the Hayward Sportsmen's Club, who were joined in 1953 by the sportsmen of Richmond. As with the park lands, the district resisted public fishing, in this case due to the threat of contamination posed to San Pablo and the other terminal reservoirs. The public interest groups managed to get AB 3678, permitting fishing, passed by the state legislature, but it was pocket-vetoed by Governor Goodwin Knight in 1955. In 1956 EEMUD and the State Department of Fish and Game made a study of the use of non-terminal mountain reservoirs for fishing. In 1959 Governor Edmund (Pat) Brown signed into law AB 286, permitting recreational use of all reservoirs, i.e., fishing, boating, and picnicking, but not swimming and waterskiing. EEMUD was now authorized to administer recreation, as well as water. Since 1973 a new era of human history at San Pablo Creek has commenced, with the return of people seeking their outdoor heritage on its flooded shores (Noble 1970).

