



THE IRVINE RANCH



A veritable empire in itself for wealth and extent of territory, is the famous San Joaquin Ranch of 107,000 acres, the largest single realty holding in Orange County and one of the greatest undivided properties in the west. The ranch extends from the Santa Ana Canyon on the north, bordering on Olive, El Modena and Tustin to El Toro and the Trabuca country on the south and embraces in its domain mountains and foothills, valley and canyon lands and about 10 miles of seacoast frontage. Originally one of the early California land grants from the Mexican government, the property has been kept in its entirety by the owners, who today hold their title to it in fee simple.

With its wide diversity of soil conditions, the products are naturally of a varied character. More than one third of total area is rich, tillable soil, including some of the well known peat lands, partially under irrigation and productive of crops of hay and grain, beans, alfalfa, olives, walnuts and fruits. Much of the remainder of the territory is devoted to stock-raising and sheep grazing land, while in the mountains are mineral deposits of importance. Of the cereal products, barley is by far the most important, although wheat is also raised to some extent. In a year of average rainfall the grain yield will amount to 2 to 300,000 sacks, in addition to large quantities of hay.

Both in the Santiago hills and on the Laguna range the natural pasturage is sufficient to maintain thousands of cattle. Sheep pasturage in different sections is also plentiful and these two branches of stock-raising form an important part of the industries of the ranch. Natural water springs are found in all the hills and greatly enhance the value of the cattle ranges.

A few years ago the culture of lima beans, which had proved such a successful venture in Ventura County, was introduced on the San Joaquin. The experiment was an unqualified success, the land proving to be naturally adapted to raising banner crops of this vegetable. Gradually the area devoted to beans has been increased until this season about 7500 acres were set out. Both the staple varieties of limas and several other varieties are used. The former command the higher price, while the latter are more prolific bearers and require less work. The average yield over the entire bean acreage is about 15 sacks to the acre. The major portion of the land devoted to grain and beans is rented out each year to tenants for a one fourth share of the crops, and the terms of the lease specify the proportion which must be set to beans. In accordance with its policy of the past few years, the Irvine Company is requiring that an increasing acreage be devoted each year to the bean crop and in this the owners are meeting with the hearty co-operation of the tenants, who recognize it as a plan administering mutually to their own and the company's welfare, for the bean crop although requiring more careful attention is much more remunerative than the grain crop.

Other crops of importance include alfalfa, grown in increasing quantities round the Tustin end of the ranch, where water has been developed in large supply; and large orchards of walnuts and olives are grown on irrigated lands around the ranch house; honey is produced from numerous apiaries in the hills. Experiments recently made in walnut raising demonstrate that much of the fertile soil over the entire valley is perfectly adapted to the culture of this product.

The principal shipping point for the ranch is at (Myford, P. O.) Irvine Station on the Santa Fe, which has its San Diego line directly through the finest portion of the land. Considerable consignments are also sent out from Aliso station on the same road and from Tustin, and Thurin. Large warehouses owned by the Irvine Company are found at Irvine Station and other localities, and here the bean cleaning and sacking for almost the entire ranch is done. Aside from its warehouses, the company has its ranch house headquarters among the olive and walnut groves east of Tustin.

Water supply, always a question of vital importance in California ranching, is a problem that is being admirably taken care of upon the San Joaquin. As a natural supply it has a partial interest as a riparian owner in the waters of Santiago Creek, and these rights have recently been determined by arbitration with the John T. Carpenter and Serranos Water Companies of El Modena and Villa Park. Natural water springs, found in all the hills, have always been sufficient for cattle pasturing there. In addition to these sources, the company has installed seven pumping plants at various points on the ranch, and has six more in contemplation. Three of these at the ranch house give abundant domestic water and serve to irrigate the walnut and orange orchards there. Others at Aliso station and in the lowlands east of Tustin furnish irrigating water for extensive alfalfa fields in that section.

A notable piece of water development has been carried on for the past two years in sinking test holes all over the ranch and careful mapping out and recording all the water bearing sections. In this manner more than three hundred holes have been sunk, and for each one of these it is definitely known just where and at what depth water can be found, thus providing accurate data for future years when water development will undoubtedly be much more extensive than now.

The sinking of these test holes has demonstrated that a very large portion of the ranch is water-bearing and that abundant supply can be obtained in many locations. In many places important artesian flows have been discovered by the experimental work and these are now being utilized.

Mention of the San Joaquin Ranch would be incomplete without notice of the Orange County Park, a tract of 160 acres in the mouth of Santiago Canyon, given by James Irvine several years ago as a perpetual picnic grounds to the public of Orange County. The Park is traversed by the Santiago Creek and with its superb groves of live oaks and old sycamores is as beautiful a natural spot as can be found anywhere. Improvements on the place have not been extensive thus far, but public policy is coming more and more to regard it as a show place which should be the object of attention and improvement. Thousands of Orange County people and outsiders visit the Park each year to picnic under its massive oaks and it is a prime favorite as an assembling place for societies on pleasure excursions.

Within the ranch confines are also located the San Joaquin Gun Club at the head of the Newport Bay, the Santiago Golf Club links on the heights west of the County Park, and the seaside towns on Corona Del Mar and Laguna Beach, the latter being at the extreme southern end of the ranch coast line.