



*NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF SAN EMIGDIO*  
*"KERN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY"*  
*BY CURTIS DARLING....*

Sources:

1. Earl Crowe, "Men of El Tejon," 1957.
2. California Division of Mines and Geology: Mines and Mineral Resources of Kern County, CA.
3. F.F. Latta, Kern Country Historical Society, "El Camino Viejo á Los Angeles," 1936.
4. F.F. Latta, Kern County Historical Society, 1939, "Alexis Godey in Kern County."
5. Genevieve Kratka Magruder, Kern County Historical Society, "The Upper San Joaquin Valley, 1772-1870," M.S. 1937, Kern County Historical, 1950.
6. Bancroft Library, Vol. XIX, History of California, Vol. II, 1801-1824, 1885.

The first number of the footnote refers to the source listed above, and the second number to the page in the source.

I. Name: San Emigdio - Spelling

Locally in Kern County it is frequently spelled, "Emidio," see our little map and the Official Kern County map for 1898. Mrs. Magruder spells it, "Emigdio." <sup>5-37</sup>. But the map by Ed Welz she incorporates spells it "Emidio." <sup>5-44</sup>. She says that Bancroft spells the name, "Emilio," but I found it spelled with a "g" as indicated in my copy known as the Frank M. Foote copy in 1885 (presumably the first edition). <sup>6-533</sup>. Roy Loudon told Mrs. Magruder that a number of land grant maps showed the

word as "San Emideon," but that Pio Pico, said it should be spelled with a "g."

II. The Old Road – El Camino Viejo á Los Angeles

"According to old surveys, the trail led from Antelope Valley through what is now Frazier Mountain Park and Cuddy Valley to the head of San Emigdio Canyon. Leading down the canyon the old road passes by the ruins of what is thought to have been a branch of Santa Barbara Mission... Stone foundation was laid for a rather pretentious church building.. According to the San Emigdio Land Grant records, this site was abandoned by the Santa Barbara Mission in 1824..." <sup>3-4</sup>.

III. San Emigdio a mission branch?

Latta is apparently wrong about the branch of the mission. No reference is given by Magruder but she says that "Bancroft makes a slight reference to a possible mission at San Emigdio..." <sup>5-38</sup>.

Bancroft discussing the Spanish first battle with the Indians at San Emigdio April 9 and 11, 1824 does not mention anything about a branch of the mission. Note footnote 50 in Bancroft, <sup>6-534</sup>, "June 1<sup>st</sup> several Indians who had been in the Tulares were examined as to what they saw there, and testified that the refugees had plenty of cattle but had drunk all their liquor; that the married and unmarried were living together; and that they spent their time in gambling without prayer."

The Diary of Zalvidia is referred to by Magruder at <sup>5-39</sup>, "...rather discouraged a mission site in the valley as summers were so hot and land so arid and alkaline, even though Indi-

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ans were as yet friendly.”

“By 1824 the mission Indians were in revolt from Pruisima, Santa Inez, Santa Barbara, and San Fernando took a defensive position at San Emigdio...” 1-97

#### IV. Alexis Godey and San Emigdio

Godey owned a property in Cuyama Valley which abutted San Emigdio Land Grant. Apparently Godey believed that his claim to the land was inferior and he made no attempt to fight the Land Grant claim of the family inheriting from the original grantee. He merely gave up the land property and moved his cattle over to San Emigdio. He had moved to San Emigdio by 1860 when the Civil War broke out. 4-46.

There is no record that Godey had any financial interest in San Emigdio but he was apparently a superintendent and had some crop share of some financial interest in the produce. The story about the glass eye of the foreman was about Godey’s employee. “The foreman pulled out his glass eye, placed it on a post to watch over the Indians.” They worked harder. 4-39

Godey is responsible for the fig trees. 5-40.

Latta quotes Z. T. Blankenship, “A number of Mexicans and Indians gathered about Godey. Upon the sinks of San Emigdio they formed a little village which we called, Pueblo de San Emigdio.” He owned the water and they gardened from his reservoir. 4-39.

#### V. The Indians

The First Indians were Chumash called by the Spanish, “Emigdianos.” The Chumash were one of the largest and most intelligent groups. The tribe at San Emigdio called Tokya (not that they were not Yokuts). 5-37.

Mrs. Magruder quotes A. Kroeber, “Handbook of Indians of California,” at page 552, “This checks up with the statement from the diary of F. R. Garces about the Indians along the Kern River in 1776 and goes to

prove that Emigdianos and Valley Yokuts peoples were not such low specimens as some of our historians would have us believe, or perhaps the association with the white men did not elevate the aborigines.”

#### VI. Ownership of San Emigdio. 5-82.

A. Land Grant, 1842, Alvarado (Governor of California) grants to Jose Dominguez four leagues square. He died in 1853. 5-42.

B. John C. Fremont claimed the whole. The Land Grant Commission held ½ to the Dominguez heirs and ½ to Fremont. Confirmed by the U.S. District Court at San Francisco in 1858. 5-42. In 1860 Fremont gave his property to his daughter, Cornelia Porter. At this time the other half had passed to David Alexander and F.P.F. Temple for \$40,000. Mrs. Porter sold her ½ to Edward F. Beale in 1968 (he owned Tejon Ranch).

C. Beale sold to L.F. Fox for \$10,000 (apparently the Beales owned 2/3 of it by now). In 1866 the tax collector of Tulare County advertised lands assessed to John C. Fremont for sale for \$84.84. This was purchased by John Broder who deeded his rights to F. P. F. Temple. Through some arrangement John Funk leased 1/3 (or purchased) from Temple. By a recorded agreement Fox and Funk agreed that ownership was Fox 2/3 and Funk 1/3. Fox and Funk lost their property in a sheriff’s sale to E. C. Singleterry, 5-83 (who I presume was an agent of Haggin and Tevis).

D. In 1878 Singleterry transfers to Haggin (and Tevis) who transferred to Kern County Land Company on its incorporation in 1890. 5-83

VII. In describing what he saw during his visit to the San Emigdio Ranch headquarters in

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## Camping at Mil Potrero about 1880

Photo from the Kern County Museum Collection #

1863, William H. Brewer (See *Up and Down California in 1860-1864*, pp. 385-386) stated that owner David W. Alexander's "residence was of adobe, the flow of rough stones, the furniture rude." Around the ranch house were "the houses and huts of his Indian and Mexican servants and vaqueros." (Kern County Place Names Second Edition by Curtis Darling, at Page122)

VIII. W. Harland Boyd was convinced that the stone foundations found inside the mouth of San Emigdio Canyon were not those of a mission outpost, but rather that they were what remained of the adobe buildings of the

original ranch headquarters. (Personal conversation with W. Harland Boyd)

IX. The Mil Potrero on the west fork of the San Emigdio Creek was operated by Joseph Gale. He milled lumber for Fort Tejon and other buyers bringing the lumber down from the pine forests on the slopes of San Emigdio Peak 2 miles south of the mill. Joseph Gale's homestead in 1858 was at the site of an Indian rancheria, 400 yards north of Grapevine Station. (Kern County Place Names Page 25, volume by Richard Bailey 1967)

### Supplement to *Kern County Street Names, Spring, 2004* By Curtis Darling

ASHE ROAD - The Richard Ashe farm was approximately one-quarter mile south of Panama Lane on present Ashe Road. The Ashe family has been prominent in the Sheriff's office, and Dick Ashe was married to Marguerite Ashe, Inheritance Tax Appraiser. Their home was a ranch in the Cottonwood Road area . They lived there from approximately 1950 to 1970.

COFFEE ROAD - George Coffee had a ranch that included some of the property now known as Coffee Road . Grandchildren including Frank Smoot, have told me that the family owned property east of Sharktooth Mountain on North Chester and were otherwise in oil business as well as ranching. They assured me that the Coffee Road name came from the Coffee family ranch located on part of what is now Coffee Road.