

In 1839 California was part of Mexico. California had been Spanish until Mexico broke away during the turbulent years following the rise and fall of Napoleon in Europe. Only a few people of Spanish and Mexican descent lived near San Francisco Bay. The bay had been discovered only 70 years before, from a high ridge in what is now Pacifica.

Francisco Sanchez was given a land grant that included almost all of what is now Pacifica, and more. Pacifica is about 8000 acres. Sanchez' ranch consisted of almost 9000 acres. On that ten mile wide sliver of land we call the San Francisco Peninsula, Don Francisco and other members of the Sanchez family had received grants (gifts) of land from the Mexican Governor totaling about 24,000 acres. Their ranches straddled the Peninsula from bay to ocean. San Pedro Rancho is now most of Pacifica. Rancho Buri Buri includes most of South San Francisco and parts of other cities to the east of Pacifica. Together this family of pioneer Californios owned more than 37 square miles of what is now some of California's most heavily populated land.

Pacifica has an official birthday. It is November 22. That is the day we celebrate the day in 1957 when the city of Pacifica was incorporated. That is the day when the people of this community became able to govern themselves, through our city council and city manager.

It might be said, however, that Pacifica's real birthday is January 26, for it was on Jan. 26, 1839 that Francisco Sanchez received the land grant for Rancho San Pedro from the governor. Three years later he began building his adobe house, now the oldest building in San Mateo County.

His home was completed in 1846. Like many northern California ranchers to this day, Sanchez continued to spend much of his time in the city. Sanchez had been Alcalde (mayor, judge) in San Francisco, and lived near

Mission Dolores much of the time, both before and after he built his ranch house.

Francisco Sanchez was a leading citizen, both under Mexico and when the U.S. had taken control of this area. When most of what became San Mateo County was still part of San Francisco County, he was a member of the Board of Supervisors. When San Mateo County separated from San Francisco in 1856, he was listed as one of the five richest men in the county.

Life was different when he lived here. There were only a few buildings. There were no Eucalyptus trees, no Monterey Pines, no Monterey Cypress, and few other trees along the coast.

Longhorned "Spanish" cattle roamed the hills between roundups, when the calves were branded and older cattle were butchered for their hides and tallow. There was always a concern that Grizzly Bears would come out of the hills to attack the cattle or break into storage buildings.

Wealth was measured in horses, cattle and land. There were few books.