

From *Diseños of California ranchos; maps of thirty-seven land grants; 1822-1846, from the records of the United States District Court, San Francisco* by Robert H. Becker. San Francisco: San Francisco Book Club, 1964.

“MIGUEL CORDERO retired from active military service in 1833, and shortly thereafter occupied a tract of land formerly controlled by Mission Santa Ynez. In 1835 he presented a petition to Governor Mariano Chico for a formal grant of this land, citing his large family and the possession of a number of cattle as justification for the request. Governor Chico signed a concession on July 12, 1836.

“However, even before confirmation by the assembly, Chico had been forced to leave California in one of the periodic political upheavals that were characteristic of this decade. Cordero did not know that all was right with his grant, and a few months after Chico’s departure he addressed a new petition to Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado for the same land on May 2, 1837, this time giving his advanced age and his military service as reasons for his need. Alvarado happened to be in Santa Barbara at the time; he referred the petition to the town council, *ayuntamiento*, on May 7; the *ayuntamiento* gave its concurrence on May 10; Alvarado signed the concession on May 11; and the departmental assembly approved the action on May 18.

“Cordero was a bit slower about obtaining juridical possession. Although his petition does not so state, he was being granted the *sobrante*, or land remaining from several tracts surrounding him. Nevertheless, it was until late in 1845 that his boundaries were finally designated. They were determined to extend from San Julian on the west to Rancho Najoqui on the east and the high hills to the southeast; and from Rancho Gaviota (a part of Rancho Nuestra Señora del Refugio) in the south to Rancho Santa Rosa in the north.

“By all appearances, Miguel Cordero had a perfect title to his rancho; certainly he had fulfilled all the requirements of Mexican law. He died in 1851 at about the same time the U.S. Congress passed “An Act to Ascertain and Settle Private Land Grant Claims in the State of California .” His children were for the most part minors, and his widow could not read or write, nor could she speak or understand English. The widow did not realize the new requirement imposed upon her and her countrymen, and years went by before any thought was given to confirmation of the title.

“In the late 1860s, crews of the U.S. Surveyor General began to work through Rancho Las Cruces. This was a plain warning that the land was formally being made part of public domain, and subject to homestead entry. As a result, twenty-five years after Miguel Cordero’s death, his heirs began the process of making legal the title to land that they had, in fact, occupied for nearly forty years.

“The limiting date established by the Act of 1851 had long since passed; it was necessary to obtain specific approval of the congress in order that the case might be heard in the district court. The claimants submitted their petition in 1876, and with it depositions of many of Santa Barbara’s most prominent citizens, including State Senator Antonio María de la Guerra, president of the county board of supervisors Thomas W. Moore, and county Judge Francis J. Maguire. Congress approved the petition; the district court heard the case, confirmed the grant on August 31, 1880, and in 1881 directed a survey in accordance with the original description.

“The outline of the rancho as depicted by the diseño is somewhat elongated, but the topography is remarkably well drawn. The scale is in *millas*, equal to 0.87 of an English mile, making the tract about 7 miles long and nearly 2 miles wide. The dimensions established by the survey of approximately six miles and a maximum breadth of three. The features noted in the legend are:

- A. *Camino y lomas de Sta. Rosa perteneciente la Mission de Santa Ynez.* Roads and hills of Santa Rosa, belonging to Mission Santa Ynez.
- B. *Cañada de San Julian ó Rancho de la Nacion.* Valley of San Julian, the Government Ranch.
- C. *Canada de Na-joa-ui.* Najoqui Canyon.
- D. *Entrada de la Gaviota.* Entrance to Rancho Gaviota.
- E. *Lomas cubierto de Sacate y Encino.* Hills covered with grass and oaks."