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Sale Of El Cajon Ranch For \$1 Per Acre Showed Profit

(This is the ninth in a series of articles telling the history of El Cajon Valley. Herein is related the story of Joseph Knapp, one of the first white men to purchase land in the Valley, and the reason for his move.)

As related in our last story, there does appear to be little record upon which might be founded the actual happenings surrounding the first purchase of El Cajon Valley. There are the vague meanings which are told in B. Tureman's short news item or letter, and it is from these facts that we try to gather up the actual happenings.

When Elder Knapp had bargained for a portion of the El Cajon Rancho with the apparently destitute Don Miguel, it can be reasoned that the old boy did not have the \$9000 in his jeans. Rather, he must have bargained with the knowledge that the money was available from another source. It is further apparent he must have deposited a retaining payment.

It can be further assumed that Don Miguel was agreeable to such a transaction because of his lack of funds. It is a verified fact, by certain miscellaneous Records in the Hall of Records at the Civic Center in San Diego, that the agreement covered with this purchase of Knapp's, went further than the 10,000 acres which he acquired. There seems to have been an option agreement attached, which is revealed in this letter from Knapp to Don Miguel, from San Francisco, dated July 31, 1868:

(Taken from Miscellaneous Records of San Diego County, 1868. Book No. 1, Page 197*)

"Miguel de Pedorena, San Diego, California.

Dear Sir:

According to our agreement with you, we write to give you notice of our acceptance of your offer on the three quarters undivided interest in the Cajon Rancho at the rate of one dollar per acre and we hereby delegate Mr. L. Chase as our authorized agent and attorney to complete the negotiations and transfer of said Cajon Rancho. We wish the deed to be made out in the name of Isaac Lankershim who advanced money to us. Mr. Chase will give you full particulars, and it will be positively necessary for you to visit this city in person to complete the negotiations and mortgages. We hope to soon have an opportunity to thank you for the honorable manner of your dealings with us. Trusting that everything will be conducted to our mutual satisfaction we beg to remain,

Your very obligated,
Jacob Knapp
J. W. Dodge."

Who this J. W. Dodge might have been, cannot be satisfactorily established. However, one school of thought tends to make him the

man who arranged for the original purchase price or advanced the money, while another thought simply suggests that he may have been the go-between agent, causing Knapp to locate Lankershim. We are inclined, however, to go along with the first in order to confirm the fact that Knapp did sell his holdings at an \$18,000 profit as stated by the Trueman.

Further records in these 1868 Miscellaneous Records of San Diego County, Book No. 1, give the rather lengthy complete transaction between Don Miguel, Knapp, Dodge and Lankershim. The total price paid for the remaining Rancho El Cajon was about \$37,000. This price and reference to acreage again causes further speculation into the Knapp purchase, as it specifically states the price at \$1 an acre. As the Rancho contained a little more than 48,000 acres, this would indicate that the 10,000 acres which Knapp had originally purchased, was sold under another deal. We must therefore assume that Lankershim must have paid Knapp and Dodge or Knapp alone \$27,000 for their holdings, as well as the outright option price to the remaining 38,000 acres.

Although all of these dealings appeared to be above board, and certainly to the satisfaction of all concerned, it is interesting to wonder just how Don Miguel might have felt if he had known in the beginning how this man of God had worked this deal. We even wonder further if it is just possible that Don Miguel was not aware of just what the value of his Cajon Rancho was? All we can do is wonder.

Finally, Lankershim was yet to face 10 more years of long litigation, and in addition to have to pay nearly 7000 of his acres to secure title of his lands.