

August 23, 1990

NOTES ON THE NEWHALL RANCH HOUSE

RECORDS SEARCH

Jerry Reynolds

Square nails and the use of rip saws on the timbers suggest a construction date prior to the 1890s for part of the building.

Bricks stamped "J.Mullally Los Angeles" also testify to a mid-19th century date.

Joseph Mullally and his associates, Porter and Ayers erected some of the first brick buildings in Los Angeles in 1853. By October of 1869 he had a brickyard by the Jewish Cemetary with two kilns with a capacity of 225,000.

SOURCE: Harris Newmark
"Sixty Years in Southern
California"

A map of the Rancho San Francisco, dated 1870, shows three structures at the Newhall Ranch House site. One is labeled "The old ranch house", which is the Asistencia site on the hill. The other two are not marked, however one is part way down the hill and is the old milk house. The third is marked exactly where the Newhall Ranch House stood until August 14, 1990.

SOURCE: L.F. Cooper, C.E.
"Rancho San Francisco
As Partitioned January
A.D. 1870"

"It was not until the autumn of 1878 when (Henry Mayo) Newhall and his son (Henry Gregory Newhall) set up their headquarters in a frame house that had been built to replace the old Del Valle Ranch House...standing today at the location of the feed yards (now Magic Mountain overflow parking lot). Newhall dammed the stream and installed one thousand feet of pipe to the house."

SOURCE Ruth W. Newhall
"The Newhall Ranch"

"...on the Southern Pacific Line where the Newhall Ranch now stands."

1890
SOURCE: Maj. Horace Bell
"On The Old West Coast"

"In 1893 the Board of Directors (of Newhall Land and Farming) approved an expenditure of \$3,500 to build a residence on the ranch, which was a major expense for those people."

SOURCE: Ruth W. Newhall
Minutes of Board Meetings
at Newhall Land.

Personal Communication
August 21, 1990

- 1797, September 8. Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana founded, claiming the San Fernando and Santa Clara Valleys.
1804. Rancho San Francisco started by mission fathers, an Asistencia erected on a hill overlooking the junction of Castaic and Santa Clara Rivers.
- 1839, January 22, Don Antonio Del Valle granted Rancho San Francisco by Mexican governor Alvarado. The asistencia on the hill becomes his home.
- 1841, June 21. Don Antonio dies, the rancho divided among several heirs.
- 1857, January 9. The asistencia-ranch house destroyed by earthquake. Del Valle family moved into a former milk house below (midway down the hill).
1860. William Wolfskill buys the rancho at Sheriff's sale for the unpaid debt of \$16,350.
- 1865, March 18. Thomas R. Bard, acting as agent for his uncle, Colonel Thomas A. Scott, buys Rancho San Francisco for \$62,839.
- 1873, April 17. Property auctioned to Charles Fernald and J.T. Richards of Santa Barbara who gave a note for \$33,000, which they never paid.
- 1875, January 15. 48,612 acre rancho acquired by Henry Mayo Newhall for \$90,000.
- 1882, March 13. H.M. Newhall dies, leaving his estate to his widow and five sons.
- 1883, June 1. Newhall Land and Farming Co. incorporated with Margaret Jane Newhall as principal stockholder and Henry Gregory Newhall as president.
- 1886, June. H. Gregory Newhall builds a home in Los Angeles to be close to Newhall Land operations in the Santa Clara Valley.
1893. H. Gregory Newhall retires from presidency of Newhall Land to be succeeded by Walter Scott Newhall, a younger brother.
1903. Gregory Newhall passes away
1904. Walter Scott Newhall dies.

Statement of Ruth W. Newhall on August 21, 1990

"Of all the sons of H.M. Newhall, Gregory was most attached to the (Newhall) Ranch. He managed to get the ranch house built and visited there frequently until his death in 1903. He certainly would not be considered a permanent resident, for he had homes in Los Angeles and San Francisco and other family members would stop by the ranch house now and then. It was after Walter died in 1904 that the house became a residence for the ranch foreman.

"When I first started visiting the ranch in the 1940s, Henry Pool lived there. Dean Galleon, up in Castaic, lived there for something like 17 years. The house was very badly damaged during the 1971 earthquake. The company decided to move it, taking down the chimneys and reinforcing it. They got sidetracked by other projects and the house was left where it was.

"You know that this used to be the feedlot for the ranch with as many as 17,000 head of cattle being fattened up before shipment from the (Castaic) Junction."

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OF THE NEWHALL RANCH HOUSE

The back portion appears to be older than the main house. The timbers are rough cut, square nails are used and this is the only part where there is a brick basement. Skirting does not match the rest of the house.

The two story portion of the house seems to envelope the back (kitchen), as if tied in, while false ceilings create a dead space. The front is almost all smooth cut timbers, wire nails, and board and batten skirting.

CONCLUSION AND SPECULATION

From the physical evidence, maps and written sources, it is fairly certain that the back portion of the Newhall Ranch House was built sometime before Henry Mayo Newhall acquired the property in 1875.

It is doubtful that the Del Valle family would have built it as they were nearly impoverished and by all accounts living in the Milk House midway up the hillside.

Obviously Fernald and Richards would not have built the house, as they, probably, were never there and never even paid their note on the place.

The most logical candidates would be William Wolfskill, who owned the Rancho San Francisco jointly with Ygnacio and Jose Del Valle (1860 to 1865) and Thomas Bard, Col. Scott's agent and nephew (1865 to 1873).

Since some structure appears on the 1870 map and the bricks were made in the 1860s, we may conclude that this portion was put up between 1860 and 1870.

Bard was frequently at the Rancho and was primarily interested in its oil potential, even sinking some wells on the property. The corporate owner during this time was The Philadelphia and California Petroleum Co. Three wells drilled produced such poor kerosene that it was unsalable.

More than likely it was Thomas Bard who built the small house sometime between 1865 (when he bought the ranch) and 1870 (when the Cooper map was made).

The main house, of course, was built by Henry Gregory Newhall in 1893. It went through several alterations after that, mainly in 1971, after the February earthquake.

Jerry Reynolds
Curator