

3. HISTORY

Many sources contributed to the known history of the land that is now the Tijuana River Estuary. Tried and true techniques for gathering and interpreting information enable us to trace traditions from long ago to the present. **Prehistoric archaeology** investigates physical clues to evaluate what happened before the development of written records. **Historic archaeology** performs the same function for historic periods (after writing was invented). Relying on written records to explain what happened in the past, **History** uses **primary documents** written by the historical characters themselves about their life and times, as well as **secondary documents** written by someone who lived after that time. Together the tools of archaeology and history provide a colorful, accurate, and dynamic narrative about the past.

Prehistoric Period

Poring over a prehistoric archaeological site is like casing a crime scene. One must leave, literally, no stone unturned, no questions unasked. Thorough analysis often raises as many new questions as it asks, and hypotheses are often biased and inconclusive. For instance, the Kumeyaay - San Diego's native people - believe they have always resided in this region. Some scholars think that human beings may have arrived as early as 40,000 years ago, in the Late Pleistocene era, but their evidence is still refutable. However, most archaeologists, having carefully examined the cobble layers that are buried in the hills overlooking the Tijuana estuary, agree that until ten thousand years ago, it is very unlikely that *Homo sapiens* lived in this region.

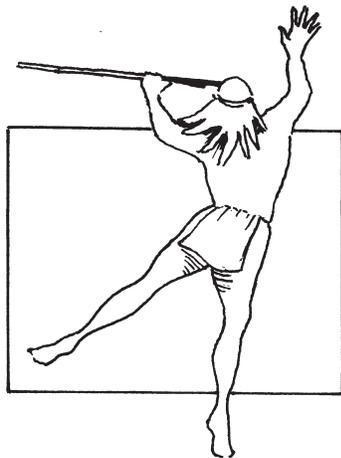
Forty thousand years ago, much of Earth's water was still trapped in polar ice sheets, and the estuary resembled river-bottom land, thick with trees and shrubs. The surf line was six miles to the west of its present

location. About 10,000 years ago, at the end of the Pleistocene era, the climate warmed. As the polar ice melted, the sea level rose and flooded coastal valleys. The land that is now the estuary was a bay, devoid of people.

Finally, ancestors of native people, who had made their way from Asia over the Bering Strait ice bridge to North America, traveled down the Pacific Coast, eventually settling on the mesas and hills surrounding this bay. On the nearby mesas, the new human residents gathered plants, and snared and hunted animals to use for food, medicine, clothing and shelter, as well as cobbles and volcanic stone from which to make stone tools. From the nearby bay



and riverbanks, they fished and collected other foods. The kelp beds' underwater forests provided a bounty of sardines, tuna, and shellfish. In the beginning, they must have survived strictly by foraging and use of sharp spears on large prey. Prehistoric peoples were to refine these methods over time and develop new tools to profit from changes in the environment.

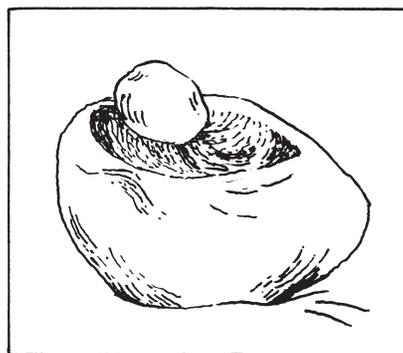


Archaeological sites up to six meters deep on land, and additional underwater sites located in or near what is today the Tijuana River Estuary reveal that "Early Humans," called the San Dieguito lived here during the Early Holocene period, dating from 10,000 to 8,000 years ago. Judging from what turned up at these sites, the San Dieguito culture used spears called *atlatls*, fashioned by tying flaked stone to shafts.



Among the artifacts archaeologists have found are scrapers, crescents, leaf-shaped points, and knives. The San Dieguito must have fished and hunted large prey that are now extinct, as well as the ancestors of today's large game, such as deer, mountain sheep, and antelope.

A climate not dissimilar to that of today's northwestern United States nourished oaks, pines, and grasslands around the river valley. The Native Americans were gradually developing new ways of living on and from the land, and they were using new tools. Grinding signaled the beginning of the "Milling Stone" or what is sometimes called the "La Jolla" culture in the Middle Holocene from 8,000 to 1,300 years ago. Employing *manos* and *metates* to grind seeds and acorns added new foods to their



diet. The addition of more plant foods modified what scientists call their *subsistence strategy* or how they made their living. Sea level stabilized around 3,500 years ago, creating a lagoon rich in shellfish and fish, surrounded by a fertile marsh and riparian (streamside) woodlands. Not surprisingly the human population increased as well.

Impressions left in archaeological layers show that the La Jollans had newfound basket-making skills that helped them harvest shellfish more easily. They certainly used their ingenuity for more than subsistence, but not a lot remains of their basketry after thousands of years.

As centuries passed, the climate became drier. The trees and grasslands receded. Drought-tolerant scrub and chaparral spread over the uplands and salt-tolerant species took over the expanding marshes. Sedimentation increased, converting the lagoon into a mudflat and estuary. Around 1,300 years ago, in the Late Holocene, another group called the Kumeyaay

emerged. They occupied a coastal region that is similar to what we see today at and around the estuary - a diverse and resource-rich zone between the continent and ocean.

As the climate became drier, it became easier to hunt small animals like rabbits, ground squirrels, woodrats, and birds living in the emerging chaparral and scrub. Bands of hunters used traps, clubs, sticks, and nets made of yucca fiber. They also set controlled fires to corral game. Today, San Diego's Kumeyaay elders guard the details of their timeless traditions very closely, but there is evidence that body decoration may have been part of religious and coming-of-age ceremonies.

The Kumeyaay's southern branches near the estuary called themselves the Tipai, which means "the people." The Kumeyaay's Tipai communities, which extended south from San Diego Bay to the southern mountains around the US-Mexico border, flourished until 250 years ago. The Tipai moved between permanent and semi-permanent villages with the changing seasons, sometimes using resources in the mountains away from the estuary during summer months. They selected these camp and village sites strategically, looking for drinking water, edible vegetation and animals, and protection from inclement weather and ambush by other tribes.

By cross referencing data from sites near the estuary with sites elsewhere in San Diego County, archaeologists have learned that communication and trade among native groups expanded during the Kumeyaay epoch. Trade networks encompassed coastal, mountain, and desert regions. They helped to broaden Kumeyaay' contacts and assets. The Tipai probably engaged in farming - planting maize, beans, melons and "wild" greens, sage, and cactus on newly flooded - and drained - land. Excavated artifacts reveal that the Tipai

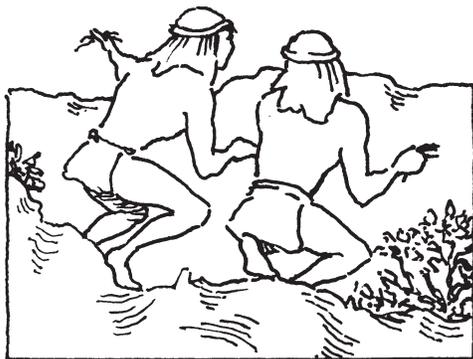
had a talent for ceramics, which they may have learned from relatives in inland deserts. They collected clay from ocean-side cliffs and the banks of what would eventually be called the Tijuana River. In addition to bone and shell ornaments, the Tipai fashioned beads of steatite (soap-stone), obsidian, and shells. Their pole-framed huts - *e'waas* - opened to the east, according to ritual. They had slightly sunken floors, walls of woven willow branches, and brush-covered roofs. When the Tipai died, their houses were burned.

These details about the Tipai are the product of archaeological investigations in the Tijuana River Valley. Scientists have discovered numerous sites that suggest former occupation and some with evidence of stone tools. These remnants are called "lithic scatters." Findings indicate the existence of more dense populations on the bluffs to the south, where there are more habitation sites and more stone tools. The reported village of *Milejo* in the Tijuana River Valley is probably buried under lagoon and river valley sediments inland, its actual location lost, like so much prehistory, in the sands of time.

What has not been lost is the Kumeyaay's intimate acquaintance with the land. Over the many centuries, these native people learned to thrive on local resources, to use willow for weapons, tule for canoes, yucca fibers to make rope and nets, sagebrush and dodder for medicine, and buckwheat for honey. The Tipai ground seeds into flour from sages and grasses. They were efficient at harvesting shellfish, at hunting deer as well as hunting, trapping and cooking birds and small mammals.

By the 1770s, an estimated 16,000-to-20,000 Kumeyaay people lived in San Diego and Baja California (then known as Antigua Californnia). Their population remained relatively stable, never declining or expanding suddenly. Their compatibility with the estuary and surrounding scrub

and woodlands suggested that their culture would not only endure, but continue to develop.



Spanish Period

By the mid-sixteenth century, however, the seeds of what would become a major change to the region were being sown far to the southeast with the arrival of Spanish explorers. In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed on the east coast of Mexico, and shortly captured the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico City). The former Aztec empire became the center of Spanish expansionism. Over the next three centuries, Spanish viceroys in Lima (Peru) and Mexico City administered a vast territory encompassing much of today's South and Central America, the West Indies, Florida, Hawaii, and southwestern United States. Imperial Spain became almost entirely dependent upon resources, particularly silver, imported from her New World colonies.

Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, who sailed north from Mexico in pursuit of gold, must surely have passed the mouth of the Tijuana River in 1542 as he headed into the sheltered mooring at Ballast Point near today's Lindbergh Field in San Diego. We don't know whether the Tipai spotted Cabrillo's galleon off the coast, or not. If so, they probably thought it was an apparition. Just as likely, the galleon passed undetected, shrouded in coastal fog. Sixty years later in 1602, another Spaniard named Sebastian Vizcaíno rediscovered

and named San Diego Bay before continuing north, where he discovered and named Monterey. His exaggerated descriptions of Monterey as a large, protected harbor with many pine and oak trees made it desirable to the Spanish throne. However, the goal of settling the northern bay at Monterey was put aside over the next 160 years, as an over-extended Spain grappled with the economic and governing challenges of its empire. Dutch, English, French, and Russians explorers and traders competed along the Pacific Coast, which intensified Spain's desire to settle what was later called Alta California.

Meanwhile, the Tipai living around the estuary had probably heard of Spanish explorers and soldiers working inland in Arizona, though they had no way of knowing how the incursion of a new culture would affect their lives. Nor did the Indians have any way of knowing that Spaniards were by now missionizing other Native Americans - converting them to Christianity and involving them in work on Spanish held land, using Spanish practices.

In New Spain, as in Spain itself, religious competition between two Catholic sects - Jesuits and Franciscans - escalated. In the 1760s, Don Gaspar de Portolá was already involved in revoking Jesuit rule and instituting Franciscan dominance in the New World. His efforts issued from the seat of Baja California government in Loreto, on the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California), where he was the governor.

The coastline to the north beckoned - seemingly rich with pagan Indians, new prospects for conversion to Franciscan Catholicism. The Spanish crown was in full support. Visitor-General (*Visitador General*) José de Gálvez organized sea and land expeditions to create a base and port at San Diego, a midway point on the way to Monterey. The *San Carlos* and *San Antonio*, set sail with supplies and a hundred seasoned sailors from La Paz in

1769.

As the natives were thought to be docile, the clergymen ventured forth by land with only a small military escort as protectors. In 1769, a Franciscan friar, Junipero Serra set off with Gaspar de Portolá, northbound from Loreto in Baja California. Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada and Father Juan Crespí led the other land expedition destined for San Diego. Though the missionaries' ultimate objective was far to the north in Monterey, the San Diego region was an interim destination where they connected with the seafaring expeditions. They had strict orders to treat any Indians they encountered with the utmost respect and forbearance, since the natives' cooperation was vital to evangelical success. Several men, on both expeditions, kept detailed journals - examples of primary documents from which historians have gleaned much information about the routes, tribulations, and encounters with native peoples.

On May 12, 1769, the Rivera-Crespí land expedition, its numbers already thinned by starvation and desertion, spotted an enclave of Indians south of what is today Tijuana. They also spotted the Coronado



Islands rising from the indigo waters, a sign that they were near San Diego. The beleaguered band turned away from their route along the beach, probably where Tijuana's Las Playas community is today, and made their way up the gentle seaside

slopes and across gorges. Setting off the next day, they noted that the shoreline had become steep. Soon, in the distance the estuary appeared below them. As the tide was rising, it looked as if the sea extended inland. It was from this vantage that the missionaries spotted Galvez's two ships anchored offshore. What they didn't know was that most of the ships' occupants were dead or dying of disease, hunger or thirst.

The party found what Father Crespí called a "handsome stream, running with a good-sized flow of water" which was probably the Tijuana River. They made their way across the valley full of tule, rush and sedge - "everything well grown with green grass." Father Crespí's diary indicates that the explorers had seen a native village located in the river valley, possibly *Milejo*. Crespí wrote that the Tipai men and children were naked and had long hair, a stark contrast to the Spanish. The Indians may have sent scouts to follow the missionaries. From there, on May 14, 1769, after six hours of mostly rainy weather they came in sight of the harbor and the ships. Soon thereafter, Father Junípero Serra's band followed, descending into the river valley through an arroyo that matches the description of "Goat Canyon." Like Father Crespí's group, the expedition picked its way north toward the ships.

Though the estuary was miles from Father Serra's first mission in Alta California, the new Spanish culture near the San Diego River precipitated changes and unrest that significantly impacted the Tipai far to the south. Diseases, for which they had no immunity, decimated populations. Distrust of these foreign traditions spread outward to tribes that had no contact with the Spaniards on a daily basis.

Perhaps the biggest changes were in the horticultural practices introduced by the Spaniards. Unlike the Kumeyaay, the Spaniards planted corn, oats and beans they had brought with them, and grazed

livestock. Their efforts were barely able to support them and famine resulted while they waited for supplies to arrive by sea.

The missionaries compelled the Indians into helping them, but San Diego's clay-like soil and erratic water supply were insufficient to support the missionaries themselves, much less feed the converts. As a result, San Diego converts stayed in their villages and only came to the mission to work or attend services. All told, the missionaries' efforts to convert the native people were unsuccessful, more so in San Diego than at other missions to the north.

Uneasy about the presence of these foreigners in their midst, unconverted and non-converted Kumeyaay rebelled. They twice organized to destroy the mission and most likely had included Indians from as far south as the estuary in their plans. The first revolt was in November 1775 when eighteen Kumeyaay rancherías, including *Milejo* allied to burn the mission, killing three Spaniards, including Father Luis Jayme. This was the first major Indian insurrection against Spaniards in California.

Increased contact with the Spaniards was problematic in many ways for the native people. The introduction of an alien culture created divisions among native peoples in San Diego that continue to exist.

Mexican Republic Period 1821-1848

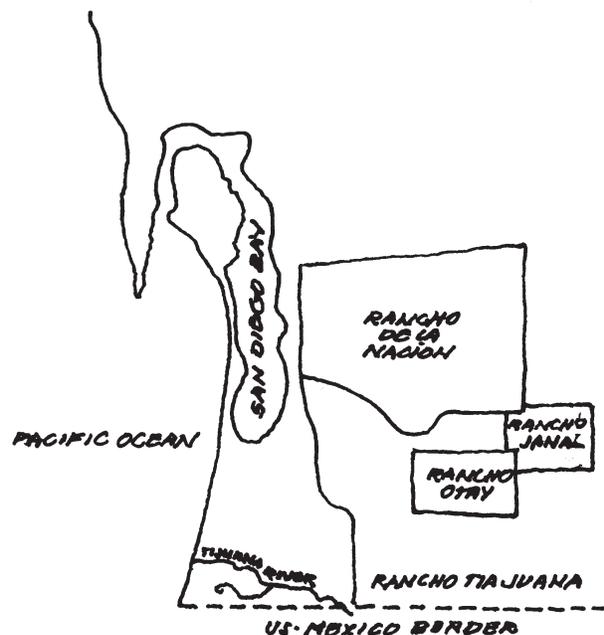
Spain faced enormous challenges in its attempt to control so distant and vast a colony, particularly as subsequent generations born in New Spain grew wary of the "mother country's" continued autocratic rule. People of Spanish descent, born in California, called themselves "*Californios*."

In 1810 mainland Mexico rebelled against Spain, in an independence movement joined by *Californios* and supported by

Indians and people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. The colonists finally won their independence in 1821 and the estuary, like all of Alta California, became part of the Republic of Mexico. This independence, though long overdue, interrupted supply lines and revenue streams even more. As a consequence, Alta California suffered from considerable isolation and unrest during these years.

Alta and Baja California's missions were secularized in the early 1830s. The Franciscan padres were replaced by parish priests, and mission holdings, cattle, horses, and equipment were turned over to government-appointed administrators. The demise of the missions - the bulwark of economic development - spawned political turmoil. Military garrisons were disbanded. Indian resistance mounted. Leading *Californio* families petitioned the Mexican government to grant them deeds to choice mission lands as ranchos, as a reward for past service in the military. *Ranchos* were granted to those best suited to oversee the land and its cattle.

Here are a few examples of *ranchos* grants near the estuary: In 1829, Governor Augustin Melijo of Baja California granted Santiago Arguéllo nearly 26,000 acres in



the Tijuana River Valley. It became Rancho Tia Juana. Janal Rancho, 4,436 acres on spongy ground adjoining Otay Lakes, was granted in 1829 to José Antonio Estudillo of Old Town San Diego. In the same year, his sister, Doña Magdaleña Estudillo, received 6,658 acres in present-day Otay Mesa, east of the estuary. This deed to Otay Rancho was regranted by Governor Pío Pico in 1846.

Under the terms of secularization, the Mexican government planned to resettle the *ex-neophytes* (Christianized mission Indians) in pueblos or towns, under the supervision of mayors (*alcaldes*). Few of the former *neophytes* became landowners. Those who settled in Indian pueblos complained to inspectors that the *rancheros* had encroached on their lands. The experience in the mission ill-prepared former *neophytes* to participate as ranchers in the emerging hide and tallow economy. It had bred dependency and subordination, not autonomy. The holdings under the law -- thirty-three acres per Indian head of household -- were obviously too small for ranching or farming (although records indicate that one Indian did own a rancho).

Consequently, many of the mission Indians could not easily adapt to their freedom. Furthermore, many were stricken with diseases introduced at the missions. Unable to regain their previous lives, most of the neophytes either went to work for the *Californios* as servants, cowboys and laborers, or fled into the backcountry to live with roaming bands of unconverted Indians. Without unity and in an atmosphere rife with distrust, native bands frequently raided the outlying ranchos in San Diego and Baja California.

These were rough and independent times, especially in the San Diego region. Having won their independence from Spain, the *Californios* in San Diego were ardent to protect their control over their vast landholdings. Many of them chafed under con-

tinued rule from distant Monterey, the province's capital. Prominent local landowners, including Juan Bandini and Pío Pico, organized a rebellion against Governor Manuel Victoria in 1831 and took over the Presidio above Mission Valley.

In 1835, Old Town San Diego at last became a civilian *pueblo*. Its male citizens elected an *ayuntamiento* or town council. Without military protection and a declining population (as residents relocated north to Los Angeles), the *pueblo* was vulnerable to frequent Indian plots, often organized by Kumeyaay servants.

Life on the *ranchos* outside the *pueblo* was both difficult and perilous. Indian raiders stole or butchered livestock. Massacres occurred on both sides especially in 1837. Bands of Indians from Baja California traveled north to aid raiding parties, and it seems likely that the Tipai from the Tijuana area participated in these raids.

Rancho San Ysidro near the estuary was the site of an Indian attack in 1837. It was owned by the family of Juan Ybarra. A faithful Indian servant got word of the impending raid and informed Ybarra's wife. Believing that he and his two *vaqueros* (cowboys) could resist any raid, Señor Ybarra refused to move his family to the Presidio in San Diego. Soon a raiding party descended on the *rancho*. Señor Ybarra and his men were outside the house; his wife and daughters inside. A young Indian boy saw Ybarra running toward the house and, in complicity with the natives, locked him out, where he and several cowhands were killed. The Indians captured two daughters and forced Doña Ybarra out of the house naked, ordering her to walk to San Diego. They then turned their attention to Rancho Tia Juana, the land south of the estuary, still owned by the Argüellos. Mostly coastal sage scrub, the Argüellos used it for cattle grazing. The Indians set it ablaze too. Despite the problems of native unrest and

political instability, *ranchos* gained a foothold in the area during Mexican rule, but the cost to native Kumeyaay was significant. Disease decimated their population, frequently killing off children as well as the elders -- the people most knowledgeable about the ancient ways.

Early American 1846-1941

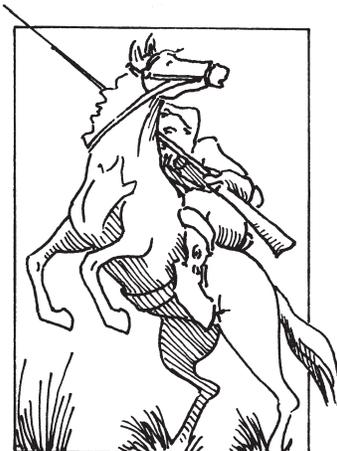
In November 1845, U. S. President James K. Polk's emissary to Mexico failed to secure boundary adjustments and the United States declared war on Mexico. California didn't suffer during the war as much as Texas and the rest of the southwest, though American soldiers occupied the region in mid 1846 and declared martial law. The *Californios* were divided in their feelings about the Americans. Some distrusted the anticipated changes and fought to keep San Diego under Mexican rule. Others like the Bandinis and Argüellos gave American soldiers food and shelter.

The U.S. Cavalry, under the command of Stephen Kearny, made their way toward the ocean in late 1846. They knew the *Californios* had good horses and anticipated that they'd have no problem acquiring them. It wasn't as easy as they'd thought; twenty-one American soldiers died at or directly after the ensuing Battle of San Pasqual near today's Escondido. Commencing in early December 1846 and continuing for several weeks, the American

cavalry and *Californios* fought for California, with Andrés Pico leading the *Californio* charge. The Mexican forces claimed they won the famous Battle of San Pasqual, but they were ultimately defeated and signed the Cahuenga Capitulation in early 1847. After Americans took Mexico City, Mexico ceded roughly half its territories, including Alta California, San Diego and the estuary, to the United States. Most of the Tijuana River watershed upstream, however, remained in Mexican hands, a decision that continues to affect the estuary greatly today.

In the aftermath of war, Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. It demanded a new 2,000-mile border between the two countries. The surveying would be a six-year process, complicated by poor equipment, underfunding, and political infighting. However, the border's westernmost position was clear: "The international boundary will begin at a point one marine league south of the Port of San Diego, and run, at that time, to the junction of the Gila and Colorado River," the treaty stated. In October 1849, members of a joint U.S.-Mexico International Boundary Commission met in the bracing ocean air, on the mesa overlooking the Tijuana River Estuary's southwestern corner to begin the Commission's border survey. This boundary marker, designated by a simple stone cairn, marked the southernmost point, with only a small promontory south separating it from Tia Juana Rancho.

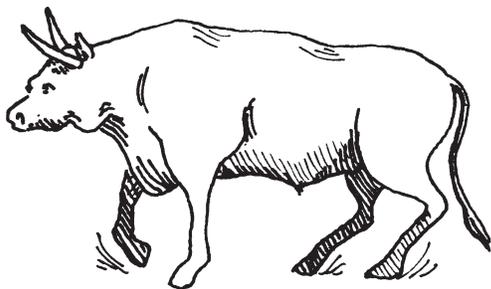
In 1851, the schooner *Annette* delivered a permanent boundary marker, made of Italian marble in New York. U.S. Army soldiers from New Town (today's downtown San Diego) escorted the three-piece obelisk to the border by gun carriages and ceremoniously erected the 15-foot high obelisk onto a four-foot thick, mortared brick base. The site officially became known as "Monument Mesa."



The new U.S. government garrisoned many soldiers in San Diego, and thus U.S. citizens began to control the local economy and local government. San Diego's *Californios* tended to be more pro-American than their counterparts in Los Angeles because they hoped to sell their numerous cattle and because they were much depleted from the turbulence of recent years. Most Mexicans in the San Diego region chose to give up their Mexican citizenship, believing that their right to the land would be upheld.

Importantly, the ranching economy during the Mexican period was very different from the market economy most American's used. *Rancheros* were land-rich but cash-scarce. There were no banks, houses of credit or uniform currency. With little cash and distant from a market economy, people traded goods, services and labor.

In 1851 the U.S. Congress passed a law creating a Board of Land Commissioners

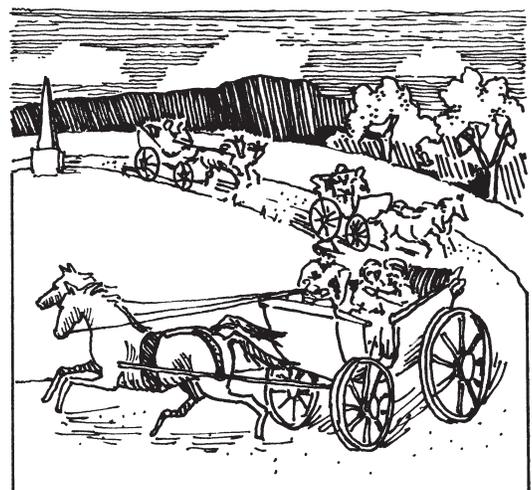


to confirm or reject Mexican land claims. The law also allowed rival parties, including the U.S. government, to challenge the board's rulings in local district courts. Few *Californios*, however, had the needed finances to defend their claims in lengthy court battles. They seldom spoke English and were unfamiliar with the U.S. legal and judicial systems. Their *ranchos* had never been surveyed; instead, to define their *rancho* boundaries, they presented hand-drawn maps called *diseños*. As a result, most of the *ranchos* in San Diego County were lost.

In addition, *Californios* didn't have the cash to pay property taxes - another legal requirement that was new to them. Unable to pay their creditors, attorneys, and court costs, they were forced to sell off much of their property. Those who resisted the confiscation of their once vast estates were labeled Mexican *banditos* [bandits] by the Americans. The drought of 1860-1862 added to the hardship of expensive legal proceedings, new taxes and higher costs of living.

The Argüellos, who owned the Tia Juana Rancho, were unable to sustain their claim to land south of San Diego Bay in the United States. The land they lost included the estuary. Santiago Argüello's widow disposed of her rights to 3,000 acres of former Mission San Diego lands in the 1870s. As was happening all over the state, squatters moved onto the land and fiercely resisted expulsion. Gradually, land in the Tijuana River Valley, in the vicinity of the estuary, was given over to farms, like much of San Diego County at the time. Clearly, the Mexican era was over, just as that of the native Tipai had disappeared earlier.

Standing out on the skyline above these changes were Monument Mesa, a plateau of approximately eight acres, with an elevation of fifty feet, and Lichty Mesa just east, a mesa of about two acres, which is not as flat. Both overlook the Tijuana River Valley and establish its southern boundary.



With this panorama, the 15-foot obelisk and monument became quite the destination and a major tourist attraction over the years, with many American visitors arriving by buggy.

South of the border, on a portion of the former Argüello *rancho*, a small settlement of ranch houses, a customs house, and a few trading stores became the town of Tijuana. The town was officially incorporated on July 11, 1889, growing slowly until the 1920s when liquor prohibition in the United States jump-started the town's tourist industry.

On their way to Tijuana, American tourists often stopped off at Monument Mesa, the U.S.-Mexican boundary marker. More than 100,000 tourists visited the monument in 1888 when the railroad connection between San Diego and Tijuana was completed. Unfortunately, vandals and souvenir hunters by this date had badly defaced the marble and granite. While it was being refurbished, the International Boundary Commission elected to number all boundary markers, beginning in Texas and moving westward. Hence, the restored monument has the number 258 etched into its marble, even though it was the starting point for the 1849 boundary survey.

The completion of the railway fed the speculative boom and increased visitation to the border. Speculators built hotels and other attractions, and businesses and homes lined the route of the railway. Lots at the "southwest corner of the United States" sold for between \$100 to \$500. The boom went bust before so-called "Monument City" became a reality.

In 1887 a speculator named R.R. Morrison subdivided the lots he had purchased north of the estuary. Another developer, George Chaffey soon bought a large portion of it to develop into a summer retreat for residents of Imperial Valley. "Imperial Beach" was born. In 1909, the first sidewalks and the

pier were built, together with machinery to harness wave-generated electricity. E.S. Babcock, builder of the Hotel del Coronado, dredged a channel from the bay to the north end of Tenth Street to ferry tourists from downtown San Diego to the "South Bay Landing." This channel filled with silt during the flood of 1916 and was never re-dredged. Nature was already demonstrating a way of besting engineering schemes to transform the landscape.

A map printed in 1904 shows a cluster of houses near the base of Spooners' Mesa, but there were no roads or buildings to the west at that time, within present-day reserve boundaries. In the same year, the Border Patrol was established to stem the flow of Chinese laborers who were entering the U.S. through Mexico.

In 1910, chaos exploded in Mexico. In response to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, President William Howard Taft ordered U.S. troops to the Mexican border. The 3rd Oregon Infantry, the 21st Infantry and finally the First Cavalry were stationed at camps near the monument. To help patrol the boundary, the army established Camp Hearn at Imperial Beach to the north of the estuary. The 11th Cavalry was stationed there until October 1931. An estimated 890,000 Mexicans crossed the border during the Revolution, many of them hired by railroads such as the San Diego and Arizona Railroad that connected to Imperial Valley.

Interestingly, the Tijuana River Valley appealed to a visionary group led by the irrigation promoter and newspaper editor, William Smythe. He founded an agricultural utopian colony called "Little Landers" in 1909. The 300 families irrigated their tracts with wells. Members christened their community "San Ysidro" after a beatified farmer whose fields were reputedly tended by angels. Believing they could sell their surplus crops, Little Landers opened a cooperative market at Sixth Street in San



Diego. The colony prospered, largely by trading with the settlements in Tijuana, until 1916 when the Tijuana River flooded San Ysidro. A few determined settlers remained and though they were dogged in their commitment to the community, they became wary about the flood channel and their proximity to the border.

International events added to the U. S. government's concerns about border raids by Mexican revolutionaries. In 1917, a proposed alliance between Germany and Mexico further eroded relations with Mexico. In April 1917, the U.S. declared war against Germany. The war and Bolshevik revolution in Russia fueled a nativist campaign that lobbied Congress to pass immigration restriction laws in 1921 and 1924. Ironically, California agriculture at this time became ever more dependent on Mexican laborers crossing the border northbound.

During and after the World War I, Tijuana became a tourist Mecca. Its hotels, brothels, casinos, and dog and horse racing tracks catered to a largely American clientele, anxious to escape the bans on horseracing and alcohol in the United States. Prohibition, in particular, swelled the number of Californians pouring into the border town. The train trip between San Diego and Tijuana became known as the "Roadway to Hell" because visitors could indulge their every desire south of the border. Border-side residents worked in Tijuana's booming tourist industry. San Ysidro became a jockey town. Breeders and owners kept horses at stables in the Tijuana River Valley, while others - many

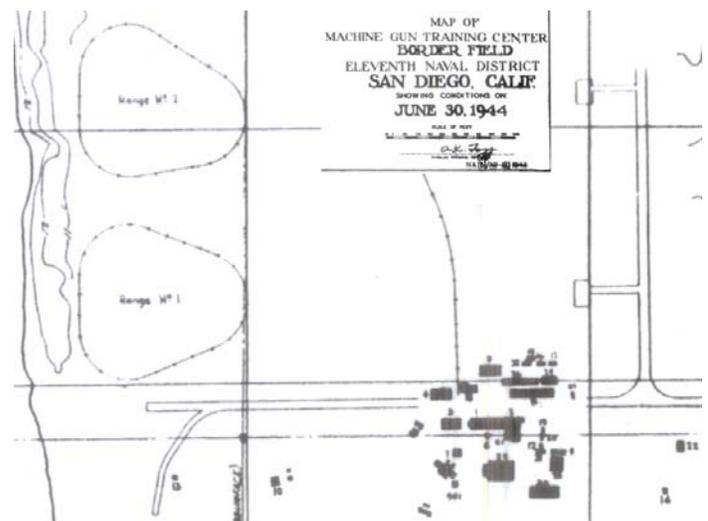
Anglo-Americans and some Chinese - ranched and farmed.

World War II and Border Field 1941-1945

Beginning in July 1929, the U.S. Eleventh Naval District began acquiring leaseholds on acreage just north of the border, an action that would ultimately secure the southern border of the estuary. The Navy called its first leasehold "Border Field" and used it as a machine-gun range and airborne gunnery range. Without development, there seemed nothing objectionable about using our country's southernmost boundary on the Pacific Ocean for war games. Military staging along the border served a dual purpose - training and an impressive presence of border defense.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor and fear of Japanese invasion led to development of defensive fortifications along the California coastline. Between 1940 and 1942, the U.S. Navy leased 245 acres along the border and in the Tijuana River estuary, much of it from the Crofton Investment Company. Here, it established Border Field Auxiliary Landing Field - an operation that included thirty-five buildings, one barracks, a galley and a machine-gun range.

The Navy used Border Field for gunnery training on five moving-target machine gun ranges. As part of the region's coastal



defense system, the Army created a fire control station and bunkers on Bunker Hill east of Monument Mesa. It erected a 50-foot tall radar tower on Monument Mesa.

Near the northeast corner of the estuary was a dirt landing strip that the U.S. Army and private pilots had used. By 1942, the Navy had acquired this field too and named it after Major W. R. Ream, an Army medical officer who was killed in a plane crash in 1918. On July 17, 1943, Ream Field was commissioned as a U.S. Naval Auxiliary Air Station; a year later it became another unit of the Eleventh Naval District. During the war, it grew from the original 140 acres to 623.

Situated on a floodplain and largely uninhabitable by humans, the border region seemed like an ideal site for training combat pilots. Pilots flying from either Ream or Border Fields flew low and practiced dive-bombing and air-to-air gunnery, shooting at drones above the estuary. They shot at stream-driven targets that moved along the sand dunes on rails called "rabbit tracks." Mariners offshore had to be alert and stay clear of firing areas. Birds were often unknowing victims.

Hard to believe this same land had been the hunting and gathering ground for self-



sustaining civilization of Tipai, just 150 years before. The ecological importance of its plant and animal communities was of no consequence to the military. However, the military presence had the effect of preserv-

ing the estuary and its resources against more destructive activities and development.

Reserve Founding 1945 - 1971

With the end of World War II, the military scaled back operations. The Navy classified Border Field as "semi-inactive" but continued to employ it for landing practice and launching drones, and use its moving target range. The California National Guard also drew on Border Field training resources.

In the 1950s, the federal government purchased 278 additional acres for Border Field to continue mission-assigned tasks and to use for its measurement station. Most of this land had been leased since World War II. In 1958, the Navy purchased an additional 120 acres under a deed of restriction to buffer its operations, but it remained in use as a dairy farm. In 1961, the Navy deactivated Border Field and transferred 377 acres to the Navy Electronics Laboratory for classified experimental work in fleet electronics.

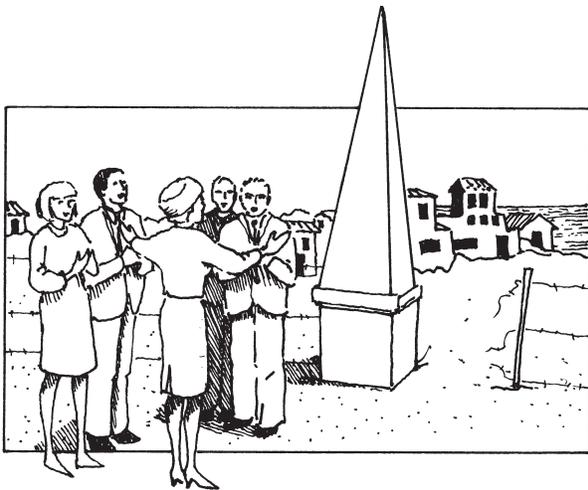
California voters approved money for Border Field's acquisition as a state park in a 1964 Bond Act. However, the land's preservation was exceedingly controversial, because the ambition to build a "Monument City" still inspired dreams of development. Developers were lobbying the federal government and local landowners with a plan to create an upscale marina in the estuary.

Their ambitions pitted them against environmentalists, already alarmed by Southern California's rampant growth. Publication of biologist Raymond Dasmann's book *The Destruction of California* in 1965 had decried growth and progress as creating a "not so golden state." Imposing a densely populated marina on a river valley already suffering the

negative effects of sewage from burgeoning Tijuana, Mexico augured an environmental Armageddon of the sort Dasmann described. Activists prevented nearby some of the border highlands from becoming a sand and rock quarry. The U.S. and Mexican governments approved joint construction of a flood control project for the Tijuana River in October 1966. Tirelessly, environmentalists labored to have Border Field preserved as a natural park, asking the Navy to declare the acreage surplus property. In October 1970, the Navy complied.

In his Environmental Address of February 1971, President Richard Nixon announced that Border Field would be developed for recreational use as part of his "Legacy of Parks" program. Exactly 372 acres became part of Border Field State Park, and a 60-foot strip was conveyed to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. On August 18, 1971, First Lady Patricia Nixon visited to dedicate California's new Border Field State Park.

Community groups persuaded governmental authorities to declare the International Boundary Monument a state and national historic landmark. On September 6, 1974,



the monument was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, one of only three to hold such status. The southern flank of the estuary was preserved.

Ream Field, closed in mid-1949 and was

given an "auxiliary landing field" status. The Korean War renewed activity with the first helicopter squadron arriving in October 1950. The field was re-commissioned on September 1, 1951 as part of the Naval Air Station, North Island. On July 1, 1955, it became fully independent, operating primarily as a helicopter landing field. Ream eventually became known as the "Helicopter Capital" since it was the home base for all helicopter squadrons of the Pacific Fleet. The Vietnam War brought modernization, including construction of a new hangar and 500-man barrack. On January 1, 1968, the Navy upgraded the station to a Naval Air Station. Following the Vietnam War, the facility became an Auxiliary Landing Field again. Today, it is still used by helicopters from North Island and as a Navy Supply Center.

Preservation Years 1971-1981

Even though Border Field State Park represented a sizeable chunk of land, the majority of the Tijuana River valley and estuary was, unfortunately, still unprotected. Upstream in Mexico at the time, the *colonias* [neighborhoods] of Tijuana were filled with impoverished squatters, makeshift commercial activities, and auto dismantlers. There was no infrastructure, nothing to prevent sewage and other waste - much of it toxic - from flowing from these makeshift settlements right into the river and from there, right across the border into the estuary and out to sea. Intermittent flooding carried inordinate quantities of garbage, housing materials, tires, dead animals, and sewage right through the river valley.

On the U.S. side, the river bottoms were owned by American Plywood and the Helix Land Corporation. Developers and the City of Imperial Beach, aspiring to raise the depressed economic situation in the area, remained intent on the idea of dredging the Tijuana estuary. They wanted to get rid of

what they called "muck" and create a marina the likes of which California had never before seen. Local biologists Joy Zedler and Paul Jorgensen knew that what developers called "muck" was the basis for estuarine ecology, with its related importance to water quality, air quality, ocean health, and many living systems outside the estuary, including humankind.

Enter a wildlife veterinarian, Mike McCoy. Dr. McCoy was increasingly frustrated with his work in rehabilitating wounded wild animals. He understood from years of experience that the loss of wildlife always stemmed from a lack of adequate habitat. The need to preserve the Tijuana estuary habitat - what was truly one of the last remaining estuarine systems along the Southern California coast, where 90 percent of the wetlands have been destroyed - was dire. McCoy began to organize local environmentalists and Imperial Beach residents in 1971. He enlisted Jorgensen and used Zedler's science to back their campaign. Resisting the developers would be a long, colorful, and on occasion dangerous battle.

Despite non-cooperation and threats from the City of Imperial Beach and people who wanted to sacrifice nature to increase the city's tax revenues, support for the activists grew. Because of his work with injured wildlife rehabilitation, McCoy already had professional connections with resource agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation. He was able to expand these contacts. Numerous important government staff committed to work toward the estuary's preservation.

At the time, all county townships and unincorporated areas except Imperial Beach voted to oppose the developers, siding with City of San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson who had announced that the proposed channeling of the Tijuana River would be a "pipeline for disaster," resulting in the distri-

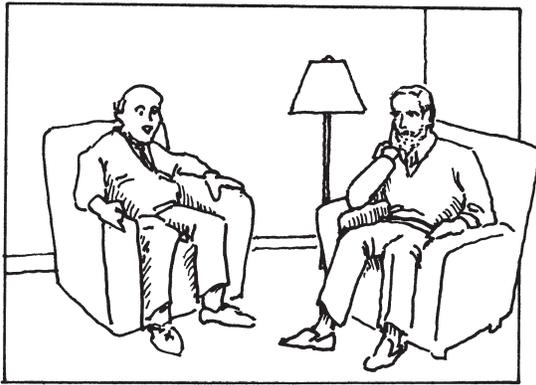
bution of Tijuana sewage up and down the coast. With this vote, McCoy and other activists began getting threatening phone calls. Bert Stites, then Mayor of Imperial Beach exclaimed, "I don't care if we concrete the world!"

Concern about the environment mushroomed during the seventies, with the gradual passage of federal bills such as



the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act and state bills like the California Coastal Act. Finally, environmentalists could use legislation to thwart efforts to encase the Tijuana River in a concrete channel. Other activists put McCoy in touch with then U.S. Representative Lionel Van Deerlin, whose support ultimately proved vital. McCoy also began working with Ralph Pisapia, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Ecological Services, toward the estuary's preservation. Sensing escalating thwarts to development, the Helix Land Corporation initiated separate secret meetings with Mike McCoy and Van Deerlin.

The passage of environmental legislation helped the activists and created many more hurdles for the marina project. The



rift in the community widened during 1980. Someone even loosened the lugnuts on the McCoy's car tires, nearly causing an accident on the freeway. Nevertheless, activists continued doggedly. In the spring of 1980, the City of Imperial Beach decided to put the marina issue to a vote. Acrimony increased and factions clashed in public. In the winter, a fierce storm flooded the river valley and estuary, carrying trash up the banks. The marina folks said, "Vote Yes on A and we'll get this mess cleaned up!" The activists said, "We'll clean it up today. Vote No!" Volunteers, including students, cleaned the trash out of the estuary and piled it high around Proposition A placards.

The evening after the clean up and before the election, "Vote No" proponents met to celebrate at the old fire station. A man walked in and shot an activist in the mouth at point-blank range. Although the victim lived, it was a sobering reminder of the tension surrounding this issue. At the election, more Imperial Beach residents voted in favor of a marina than those in favor of the estuary's preservation.

The atmosphere was extremely tense. Uncertainty over the outcome of the upcoming presidential election contributed to uneasiness. If Ronald Reagan and other Republicans won the election, no one knew if they would be open to preserving the estuary. In the days prior to the election, Mike McCoy and his wife Patricia McCoy received a cryptic phone call from Ralph Pisapia of the Fish and Wildlife Service, asking them to meet him mid-

morning at the end of Seacoast Drive. There, Pisapia got out of a car with government plates, accompanied by another man. He introduced him thus: "I want you to meet the new refuge manager at the new Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge!"

Yes, Republicans won in November, but the official purchase of the 500 acres from the Helix Land Corporation, for \$7.6 million (acre-for-acre, the most expensive refuge yet purchased) was announced on Christmas Eve, 1980. It was a dream come true!

A year later - again in spite of heated opposition from developers - the estuary became part of the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Estuarine Sanctuary Program.

The federal government chose the Tijuana Estuary for the sanctuary program because it was the only remaining estuary not bisected by roads, rail-lines, or powerlines. It was impacted by wastewater and sediment, as are all wetlands in Southern California. Though it was an urban refuge system, it wasn't fragmented like the northern estuaries. Peñasquitos, San Dieguito, San Elijo, on up to Batiquitos, and into the Santa Margarita system at Camp Pendleton were already marred by Interstate 5, the Coast Highway, bridges and railroad systems. When it was site-selected and funded in 1982, it became the tenth estuary in the Reserve Program, which links estuaries all over the country.

The Sanctuary Management Authority hired biologist Paul Jorgenson, who had worked so hard on its preservation, as the first manager of the 2,885-acre sanctuary. The remaining private holdings comprising the reserve have been acquired over the last 22 years. Now called the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, it is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Navy

leases other land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge. Together, the Border Highlands, Border Field State Park, Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve constitute approximately 5,000 acres, a big interconnecting complex.