

THE HISTORY OF THE CREEKS AND PEOPLE OF
RANCHO TRES OJOS DE AGUA
AND VICINITY



BY DEAN A. SILVERS

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This book is **NOT** for sale and is for educational use **ONLY**. It is dedicated to my mom, Jane (Enos) Silvers, and all of the women in my family, who taught me a love of family, history, books, writing, and nature. I could not have completed this book without the love and support of my husband, Ira E. Schwartz!

The cover shows a detail of the 1954 (revised 1994) Santa Cruz topographic map titled "Santa Cruz, CA" (CA - USGS Topo Quad 36122h1); published by the United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey.

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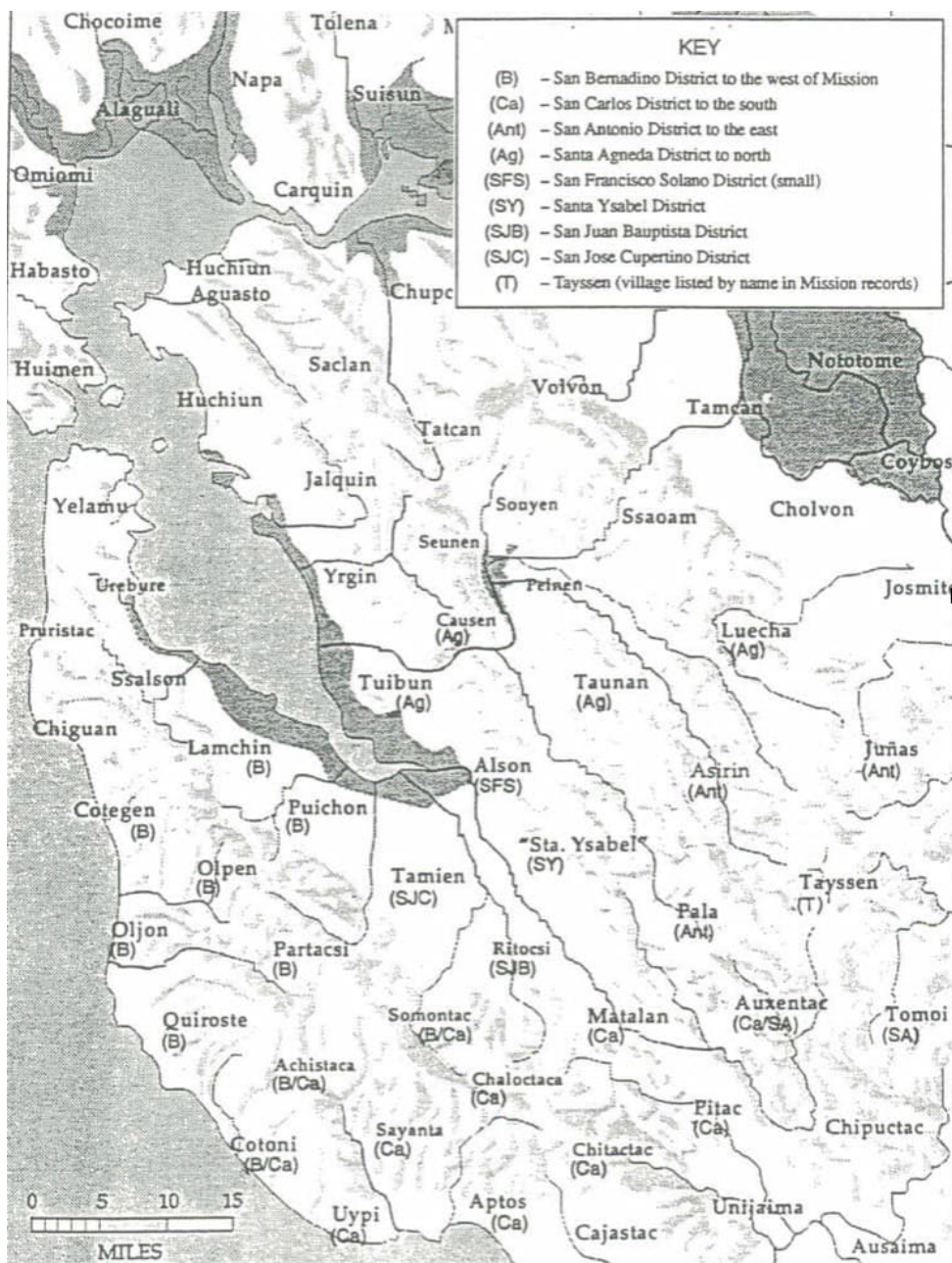


Figure A: “Map of the tribal regions of the southern San Francisco Bay Area”; (from Milliken, p. 7

Acknowledgements

I am pleased that in the past few years, many buildings, institutions, and gatherings have posted signs or verbal statements that acknowledge the (often un-ceded) land of the original indigenous people of that place. Since my childhood, I was made aware of the history of the indigenous people of the San Francisco and Monterey bay areas, where I have lived all of my life. Upon becoming an elementary school teacher, I made it an integral part of my curriculum to inform my students of the past and present histories and lives of the indigenous peoples of our region, state, nation, and the world. Unfortunately, little specific information is known about the indigenous use of the area of the area that (in the much later era of Mexican control) became known as the Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua.

Nevertheless, *Awaswas* Ohlone people have lived here for centuries, and their descendants, neighboring Ohlone nations, and other indigenous groups still reside here. Thanks to the significant research and subsequent publications that Dr. Martin Rizzo-Martinez has done about the

Ohlone people of the Monterey Bay Area (past to present), we have a more complete view of our region. Martin's writings, which he has permitted me to quote at length, help to inform us about the deep history of these various indigenous groups in relationship to the land that was later named Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua.

I could not have written this book without the support of numerous individuals. I wish to thank Dan Dickmeyer for finding the environmental impact reports for the Kalkar Quarry planned development. A 1990 visit to U.C.S.C.'s map room and conversations with author and librarian-emeritus Donald Clark offered further clues. Stan Stevens, then at UCSC's Special Collections, was a model and marvelous assistant for my research. The staff of the UCSC Map Room and the Santa Cruz County Surveyor's office were patient, knowledgeable, and wonderfully helpful.

Figure B; Edna Kimbro photo (courtesy of Edna Kimbro Archive)



Edna Kimbro, Santa Cruz County Historian and architectural conservator, shared with me the fruits of her exhaustive research on the Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua and filled in the important final details that had eluded me. In the late 1980s, she, too, had been compiling a history of this rancho, but other commitments delayed its publication. I am **deeply** indebted to Edna for her wonderful assistance, suggestions, and permission to attempt to paraphrase some of her findings. I also received many fine ideas from Edna's good friend, Charlene Duvall, who has decades of involvement with California history and architectural history.

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Mark Whitely generously spent hours to take most of the contemporary black and white photos used in this book. Harold Van Gorder, Judy Baldwin, Cyril McGranahan, Ed Twohig, Gail Page, Vince Dominguez, Victor Bogard, Sr., Keresha Durham, David D'Arpino, Don Wilson, and other neighbors (in my area and in the Westlake area) generously provided me with their time, suggestions, and anecdotal information about the area's history. Victor Bogard, Sr. provided me with copies of the aerial photos of Westlake Pond and the early days of the home building in that neighborhood.

In 1989, Westlake Elementary School staff (Sylvia Ellefsen, Mathilde Rand, and Rae Tobey) taught me how to use the school's word processor for the first edition of this history book. I also want to give special thanks to my first editor, Dennis Hall; second editor, my husband, Ira Schwartz; and third editor, Stephen Ordway (who spent innumeralbe hours), though I assume all responsibility for any historical, grammatical, or mechanical errors.

Figure C; Map showing the creeks that flow to Neary Lagoon (and then Monterey Bay);
From City-Wide Creeks & Wetlands Management Plan: Final Draft. Santa Cruz, CA, 4/17/2002,)



Introduction

This book is my fourth edition about the history of the creeks that are in or near the region of what was the Mexican era land grant called Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua. For thirty-five years, I have been researching this topic and exploring the area on foot. The aquifer for these creeks is the land of the UCSC campus. The creeks then flow basically south into the neighborhoods below the campus and continue to Neary Lagoon (near my home), finally emptying into Monterey Bay.

For the indigenous people of this area, these riparian corridors were essential for life. Similarly, during the eras of Spanish and Mexican control of Santa Cruz, the creeks—three of them by then channelized into a water ditch (*zanja*) provided the water used by the large Mission Santa Cruz complex. In the early American period of the growing town of Santa Cruz, the *zanja* was still the major water system. The topics covered in this current edition are a historical survey of the creeks and their use by the many people who have lived by, depended on, and enjoyed them.

As a child, I always was delighted by nature, particularly creeks. I loved rainy days, when I could wear my rain boots on the way home from school and slosh through the block-long creek next to our street. In my teens, I began to try to trace the watercourses of the streams of my town of San Carlos, California, and continued this fascination when I came to U.C.S.C. in 1970. One of my favorite

areas was upper Spring Street. I was always curious about the old Kalkar Quarry and its history.

After twelve years teaching elsewhere, I was hired at Westlake Elementary School (next to UCSC), and also moved to my new home just a few blocks from Laurel Creek and Neary Lagoon. In the spring of 1987 of my first year at Westlake, we had a training on pond studies and a field trip for teachers to the ponds in the Spring St. area. I was delighted to gain access to such wonderful sites. For all of my 22 years at Westlake School

the Gail and Mitchell Page family. In conversations in the late 1980s with a fellow Westlake teacher and creekside property owner, Joyce Gil-Osorio, we both became excited about studying exactly where the numerous creeks flowed.

My interest lead to the publication in September 1991 of my first edition of the history of this rancho. George Ow, Jr. donated the printing costs for two hundred copies, which were sold as a fundraising project for the Westlake Elementary School Library. When those copies sold out, I xeroxed 50 more copies, which were also quickly grabbed.

As an elementary school teacher, I had always been frustrated by the paucity of school-age appropriate materials about our county's history. In 1992, working entirely by myself, I wrote a script (at eighth grade level) and videotaped a fourteen-hour history of Santa Cruz County. This work was part of my what I did for a mentor teacher project.

Two years later, I voluntarily translated my video script into fourth-grade-level Spanish, which I had Roberto Sanchez proofread, because he was a Cabrillo College Spanish language instructor and a fellow Westlake School teacher. I spent hundreds of hours to create a four-hundred-page book (half of the pages being maps and photos) that I used with my bilingual third grade class. Despite the disappearance of bilingual education at Westlake, the book still proved useful in my subsequent teaching years--due to the 200 pages of illustrations that provided images for classroom discussions.

In 1995, "The Old Mission Santa Cruz Water Supply," a synopsis of part of my first book on the creeks, was published in the "Santa Cruz County History Journal, Issue Number Two." After the initial run of 250 copies of my original Tres Ojos history book sold out, there were requests for additional copies. This interest intensified after I led a walking tour of the creeks of the Spring Street area on July 11, 2004, for the monthly meeting of "Researchers Anonymous." My history walk was tied in with the Santa Cruz County Museum of Art and History exhibit entitled "Arc of the Adobes: Santa Cruz to Monterey," which ran from July 10 to September 12, 2004.

Prior to my first edition's publication in 1991, all well-known sources had said that just ONE of the three springs of water was diverted in a ditch to the Mission Santa Cruz to provide its water. In that first book I had attempted to determine which creek was the ONE diverted. Just prior to its publication, I was in search of further information and therefore contacted Edna Kimbro, Santa Cruz County Historian and architectural conservator. Her sharing of her research solved many mysteries for me.

Since my first book's publication, I continued to do much additional research, during which I found more old maps, photos, and newspaper articles relating to this topic. In December of 2004, I finally found the time to finish a second (and larger) edition of my Rancho Tres Ojos book, for which I printed 200 copies. Because I donated all of the proceeds from the sales of my first and second editions, I ended up raising over \$5,000 for the Westlake School library.

Ironically, after all my long walks and attempts over the years to trace the location of the rancho's creeks, the City of Santa Cruz Planning Dept. published in 2003 its "City-Wide Creeks and Wetlands Draft Management Plan." The plan has beautiful color maps showing the locations of almost all of the creeks, seeps, and wetlands in the city limits. However, I do not feel my own original efforts were in vain, because the city's maps serve to usually confirm my original guesses about the creeks' locations (and in a few cases disagree both with my own findings and the city's own storm drain maps from 1990). Because the Creeks Plan is available to the public only in CD format, is very brief in historical information (and is very complex in regards to hydrological statistics and potential and controversial city policies regarding creekside land use), my research is not redundant and instead serves to complement (and at times rectify) the city's document.

In between the second edition and this fourth one, there was a digital version (completed in Sept. of 2020), which I called "Edition 2.5." Its creation in 2020 was due to requests for information about the Tres Ojos area by the staff of K.I.N. ("Kids in Nature"), an outdoor after-school program at Westlake Elementary, the school where I'd taught my final twenty-two years. They had so many questions and were also quite well-informed, having found a copy of my first edition.

Being that both editions of my book were sold out, I decided to take the next step and begin the process of a new edition. In the digital edition, I was able to use my up-to-date computer to download and clean up the images of the old maps and photos that had looked so poorly in the xeroxed versions of my first two editions. After spending six months adding the improved images and clarifying some of the text, I posted this edition on my Dropbox account, thereby allowing it to be shared with anyone who was interested, such as Ron Goodman, who printed out copies for his neighbors around Kalkar Pond.

Writing and researching this topic several times has proved analogous to the plot of a typical mystery novel: This history detective was constantly looking for missing clues, only to find a few scant facts that were seemingly contradictory. Most "witnesses" were dead by now, and written accounts with enough details were few and far between. Like Sherlock Holmes, I tried to test my various hypotheses and create an overall theory. While my original thesis has not changed, I hope this new publication will add more details, present the information in a clearer format, and satisfy the demands of avid history lovers for more copies of my book. May this publication animate others the to (legally) explore spots, dig into history, and help save our invaluable riparian corridors!

In my first edition, I had thought it best to merely concentrate on the geology, hydrology, and history of the creeks—without telling that much about the humans involved. With each edition, I have added more information about the lives of the people who are part of the story of the area of today's city of Santa Cruz.

In this fourth edition, I have inserted many more maps and other images, plus numerous newspaper quotes, garnered from years of research. I also delved further into a topic that has always been important to me. It is one which I emphasized with my elementary school students: the contributions by women, indigenous people, and other often-overlooked groups. This fourth edition has more images of women and along with a discussion of their part in the history of these creeks. Aside for the aerial photos (old and recent), most of the other photos—for which no source is given—were taken by me during 36 years of studying this topic.

There is also a greater amount of information about the post-contact era for indigenous people here. During the period from 1769 onward, there were tremendous cultural, political, sociological, psychological, and ecological changes happening here as Spain, then México, and finally the United States took over what had been indigenous

territory for many centuries. This edition contains some rarely-known biographies of several indigenous individuals, who were definitely part of the history of the Tres Ojos de Agua region. Such material is thanks to the generous sharing by Martin Rizzo-Martinez of lengthy quotations from his doctoral thesis (*NO SOMOS ANIMALES: INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL AND PERSEVERANCE IN 19TH CENTURY SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA*) and from his subsequent book that was based on his thesis — *We Are Not Animals; Indigenous Politics of Survival, Rebellion, and Reconstitution in Nineteenth-Century California*.

For the second edition of my book, I was trying to determine what became of the mission's water supply ditch and what were the original watercourses of the creeks of the Tres Ojos Rancho—prior to European settlement. In creating the subsequent editions of this book, I think of what Alfred Hitchcock said to explain why later in life he did an American remake of his classic British film "The Man Who Knew Too Much:" Mr. Hitchcock mused, "The first version was the work of a talented amateur." I hope I can claim the same for my fourth version of this book!

I conclude this introduction by quoting from an article titled "Los Tres Ojos de Agua" that was in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (10/20/38, p. 2):

All three of these streams are now heading along precise courses to King St. where they are captivated by concrete conduits, rushed down Laurel St. and to Neary's Lagoon; hidden and rushed away, as if they were objects of fear and shame, rather than melodious and enchanting streams. This is the price we pay for civilization and the demand of modern mothers that children be kept dry, aseptic, and away from mud.

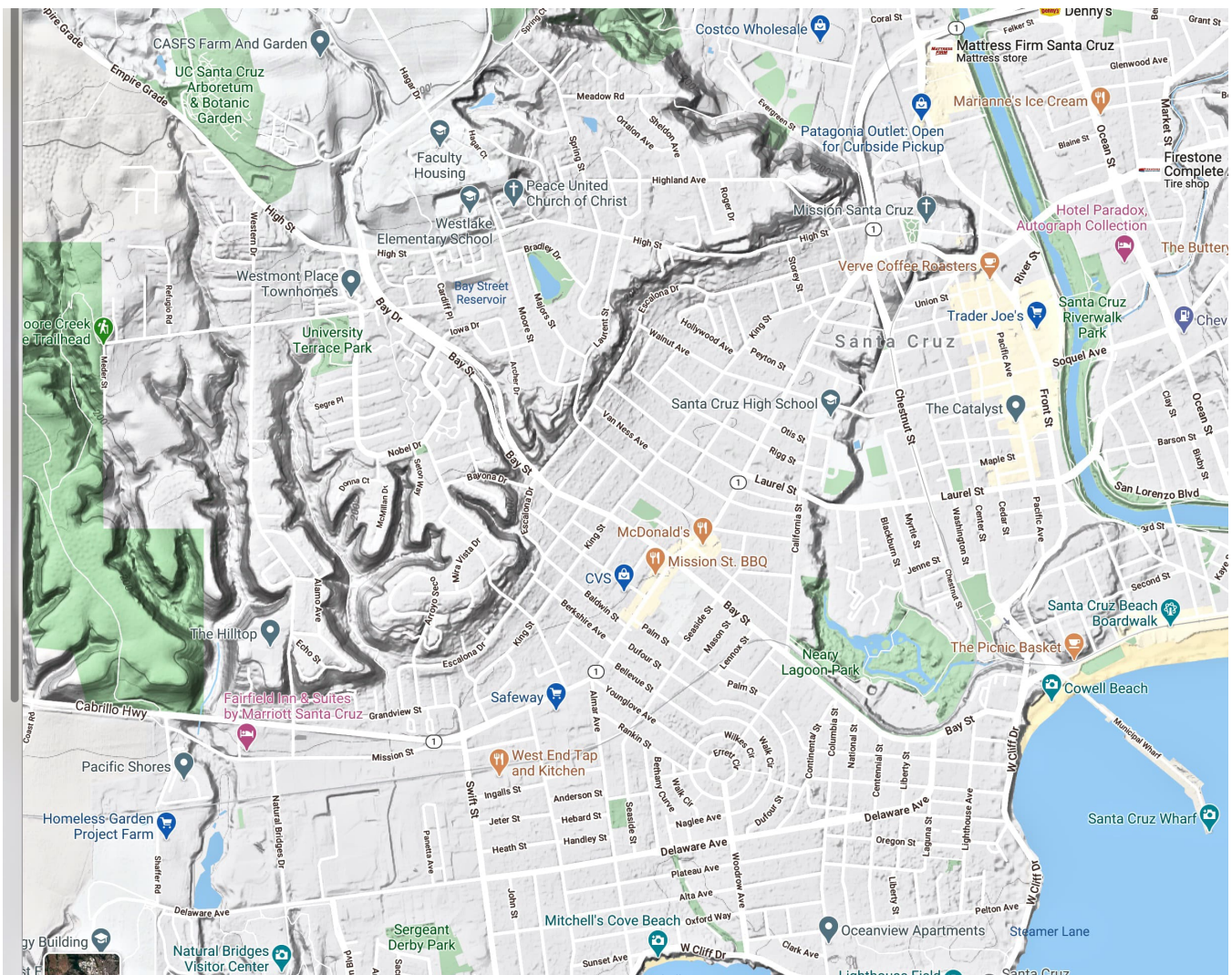


Figure D; “ Terrain map of the area of study; “Terrain” selection, from Google Maps

Synopses of Each Chapter

Chapter One (“The Granting of Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua”) covers the location of this land grant made to Nicholas/Nicolas Doderio during the era of Mexican control of Alta California. I discuss some of the challenges and counter-claims to Doderio’s land grant.

Chapter Two (“The Mission Santa Cruz *Zanja*”) describes the water ditch (*zanja*) that was dug by indigenous Ohlone workers to divert the water of the three springs to supply the needs of the mission, beginning with the era of Spanish control. I point out that despite the rancho’s name meaning “Three Springs of Water,” one of the three springs (today’s Westlake Pond—the start of Laurel Creek) was actually outside of the rancho’s boundaries. Maps and news articles are provided to show that all THREE springs (and not one) were diverted to the mission. The subsequent use and history of the *zanja* is reviewed—from the Mexican to the American periods of the city of Santa Cruz. The importance of this water source for the mission and early days of the city is explained, as well as the history of the gradual truncation and culverting of the water of the three creeks.

In **Chapter Three** (“Doderio Spring and Creek”) I begin the process of describing each of the several creeks in and near the original Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua. Due to both the valuable water and many rocks and minerals at Doderio Spring, its history is long. It begins with indigenous use, followed by becoming the site of an early grist mill (using the creek’s water power). The next use was for a quarry. Now it is a private park for the nearby residents. More information is given about the Doderio descendants and their division of the original rancho. Because this spring is adjacent to

UCSC, the campus's effects on the water is covered. Much information is provided about subsequent owners of the large estates and parcels of the former Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua: C. C. Moore, the Rittenhouse family, "Villa Fairview," "Logan Heights," Piedmont Court, and the Wagner family. There is a review of the then-hot topic (from 1890-1930) of the city's consideration of buying the creek's water rights. The later history of the creek and its current state is also examined. There is a brief history of the effects that the Highway One freeway project and Chestnut Street extension had on the creeks and topography.

Chapter Four ("Laurel Creek", with Westlake Pond and Neary Lagoon) looks at the three water features that are best known to the people of Santa Cruz. There is an introduction to the indigenous use of Westlake Pond—from the pre-contact to American eras, with more extensive information provided in the appendices that quote the work of Dr. Martin Rizzo-Martínez. The relationships between the Dodero, Castro, and Majors families are shown. Much information is given about the American history of the area (from early to present day. I cover the development of the land around Westlake Pond area and the Escalona cliffs, Joseph Majors' Mill, and my theory about the location of his long-gone home. Also reviewed is the possible location of the Escalona cliffs' *calera* (limestone quarrying site). Further downstream use of Laurel Creek is looked at in the sections about Richard Kirby's tannery (with a biography of his more famous wife, Georgian Bruce), flooding, Blackburn Lagoon and Neary Lagoon.

Chapter Five ("Messiah Lutheran Creek") explores this little-known stream—where it flows now and may have gone in the past. Chrystal/Christal Gulch and its streamlet are

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also examined, with the theory being proposed that it was once the canyon where the water from Messiah Lutheran Creek used to flow, prior to being culverted in the 1920s. The many historic homes (many by now demolished) of the Towne Terrace and Chrystal Terrace areas are shown.

Chapter Six ("Bay Creek") talks of the stream that, despite being well outside of the boundaries of the former Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua, is quite important, due to the amount of water that it carries to Neary Lagoon and for the delightful pedestrian corridor along the upper portion of it.

Chapter Seven ("Other Creeks in the Vicinity") discusses the streams that are usually known just by the neighbors that surround them: Longview Drive Creek, the former Myrtle Street Ditch/ "Gutter," and the Taylor Street Spring. Various marshes, ditches, and springs are reviewed. A theory is offered that the diverted (and perhaps also subterranean) water from Dodero Creek is the source of the water bursting out of the Escalona cliff, suddenly creating the Longview Drive Creek. The (now culverted) Myrtle Street ditch used to carry not only the water from the Taylor Street Spring, but it is also proposed that it had the water coming down Chrystal Terrace Gulch, which itself was very likely also carrying the water from Messiah Lutheran Creek.

The **Appendices** contain additional information that will be of interest to those wishing to delve deeper into the history, mineralogy, and educational topics of this fascinating area.

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