

Comparing Maps of Creeks of Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua

During my over thirty-five years of studying the history of the Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua, I've been obsessed with trying to figure out the original routes of the creeks—back in the pre-contact/Indigenous era. To further substantiate my theory about the original creek routes, I've created this document, which contains images and citations that I've used previously and am recycling to make my point.

In comparing the first two maps (shown on the subsequent pages), one can see the hatch marks that indicate the **cliffs** between Escalona Drive and High Street. Also depicted are the **upper portions** of the three main creeks of the former Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua. Those three creeks still flow in approximately the same routes today as they did in 1850 (and likely in the pre-contact era). The three creeks are: Laurel Cr., starting at Westlake Pond; Dodero Cr., starting at upper Spring St.; & Messiah Lutheran Cr., which starts in the pond at that church.

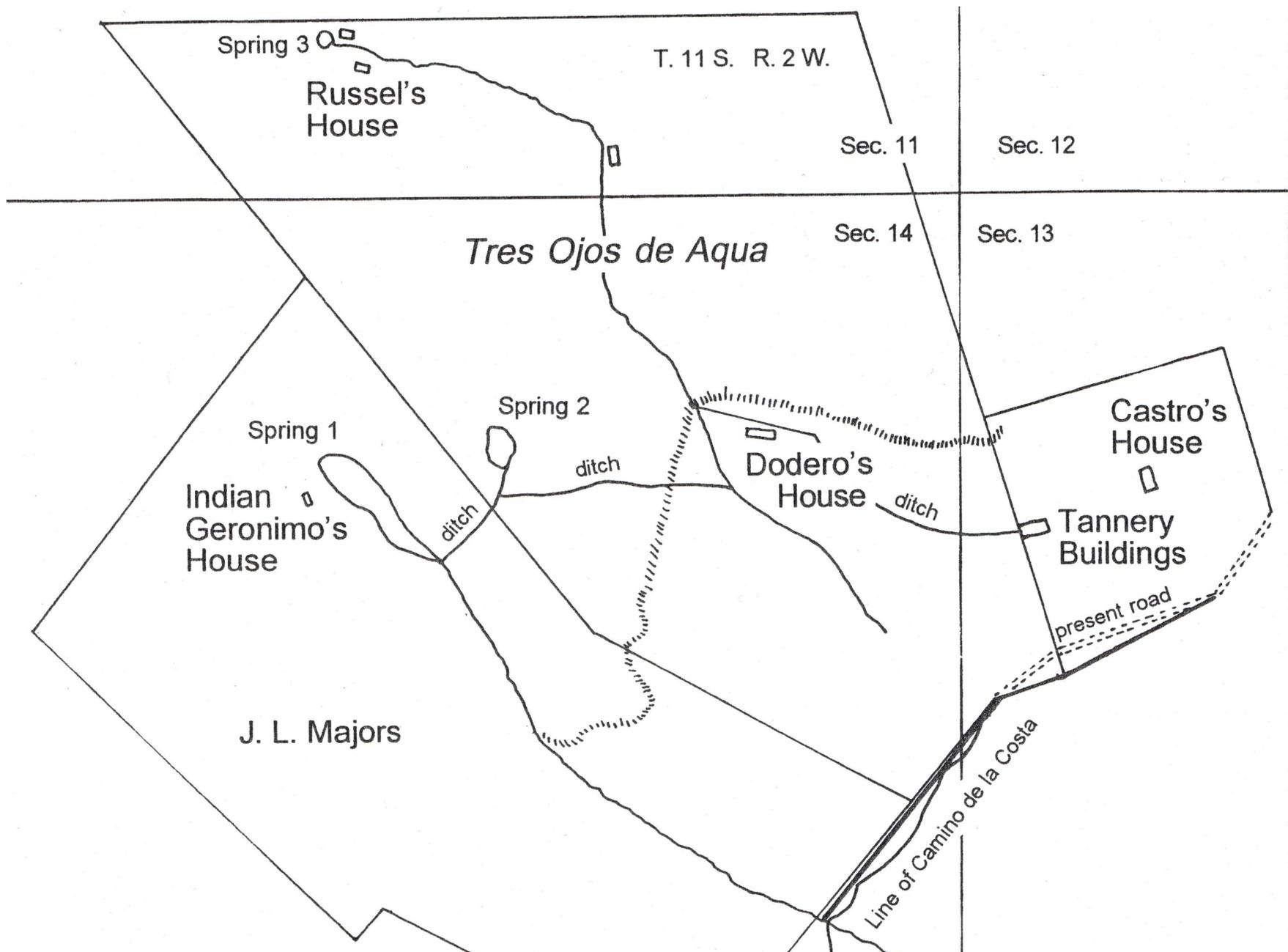
On the third page is a close-up of the famous image “A Bird’s Eye View of Santa Cruz,” created in 1870 by Charles B. Gifford. I’ve labeled some of the features. Below the map is a modern view of the same area.

The fourth and fifth pages have Google Earth maps, for which I selected “contour view,” thereby making the Escalona Dr./High St. cliffs that much more obvious. If you also look at the location of the combined Messiah Lutheran & Dodero Creeks, you will notice that this joined stream is heading towards what today is Chrystal Gulch. However, since 1891 (when the first part of the “King St. Canal” was being built), the water from these combined creeks has been culverted along King Street and directed SW to join Laurel Creek. I was suspicious that this culverted route was a relatively modern one. I always wondered where the combined Messiah Lutheran & Dodero Creeks used to flow in ancient times.

The final two pages are sections from my book that mainly quote Ernest Otto’s “Old Santa Cruz” columns. Based on the topography and what Otto stated about the locations of the creeks, I believe that the combined Messiah Lutheran & Dodero Creeks used to flow (prior to 1891) into Chrystal Gulch. From there, the water went downhill, flooding out onto the flat land (by what today is Chestnut Street), and eventually drained into Neary’s Lagoon. In the late 19th century, the water from these creeks was channelized into the Myrtle Street “ditch,” which also flowed to Neary’s Lagoon, as it still does today, but in underground pipes.

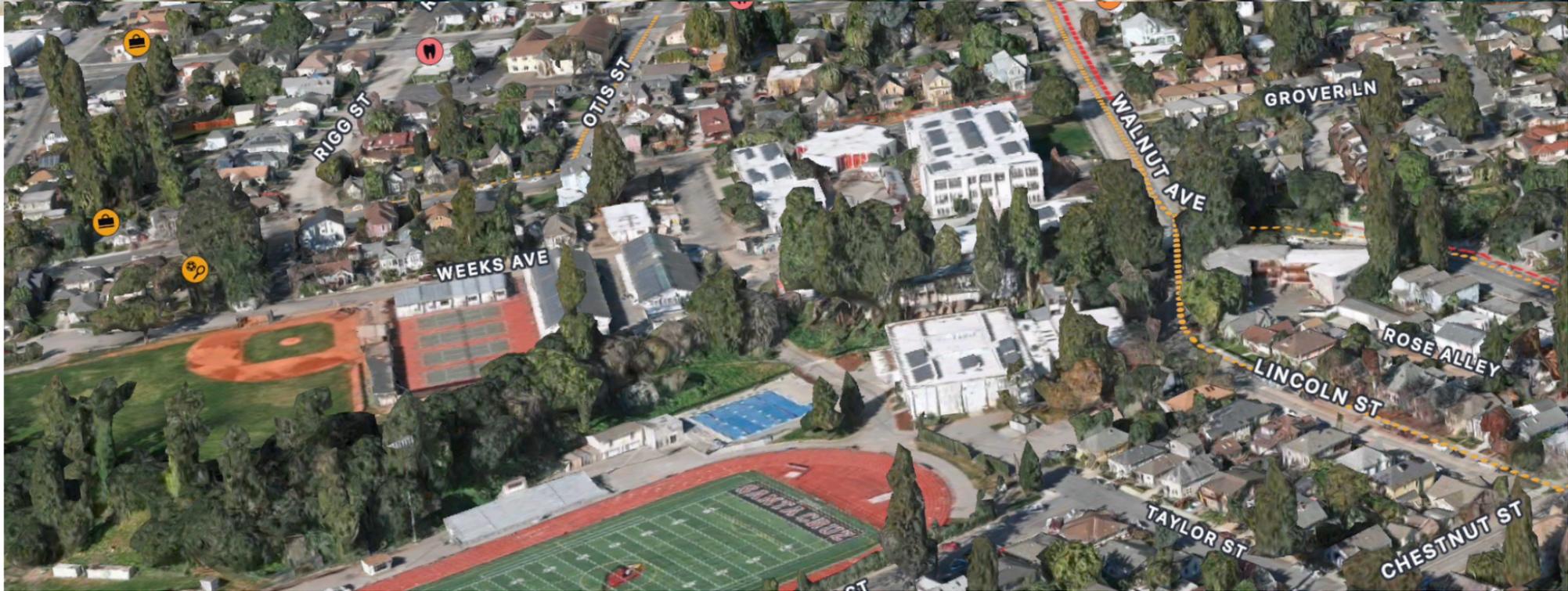
[1850 map by Edmund B. Kellogg
For the Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua;
hatch marks show the Escalona cliff
Courtesy Bancroft Library, UCB]

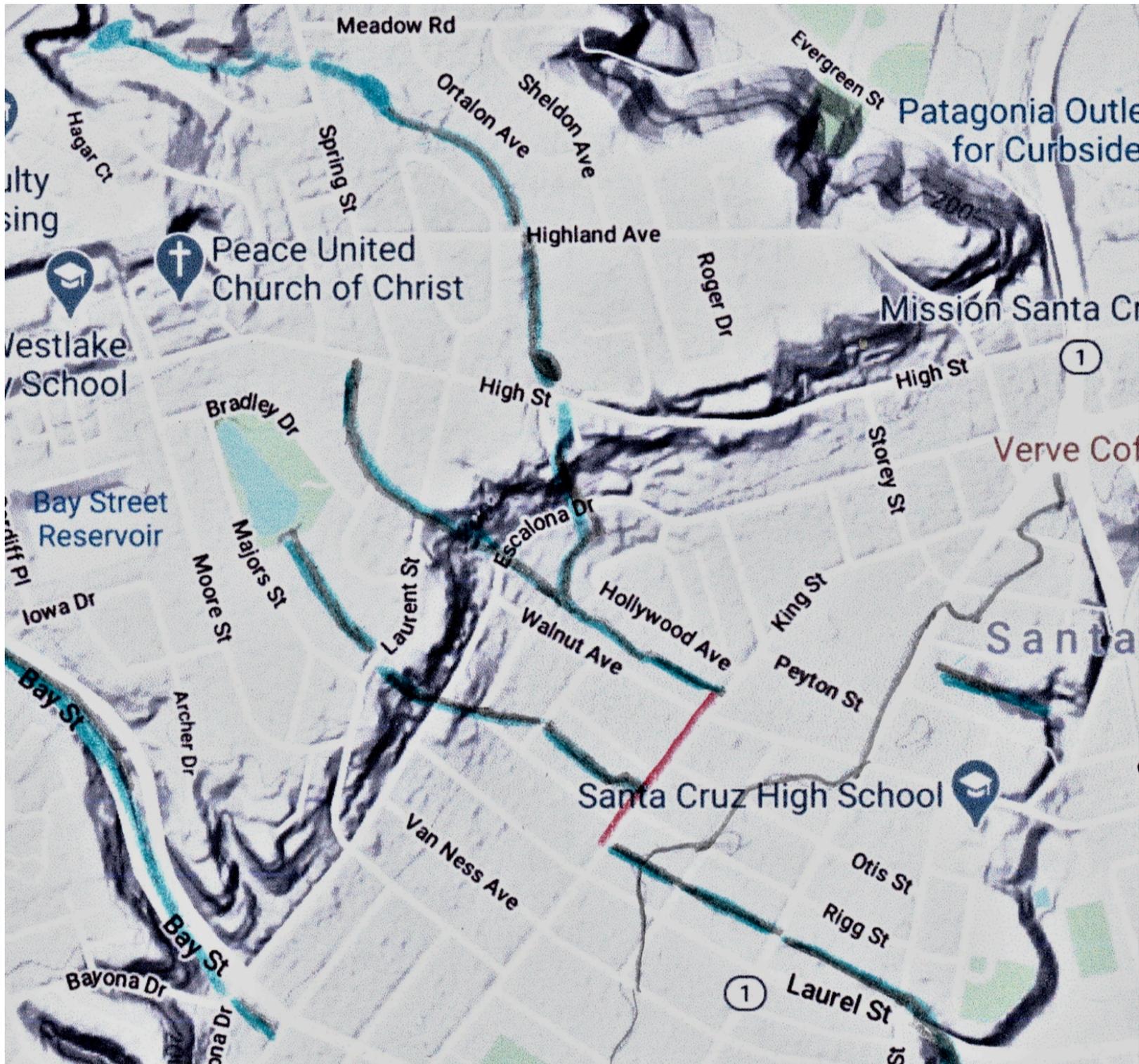


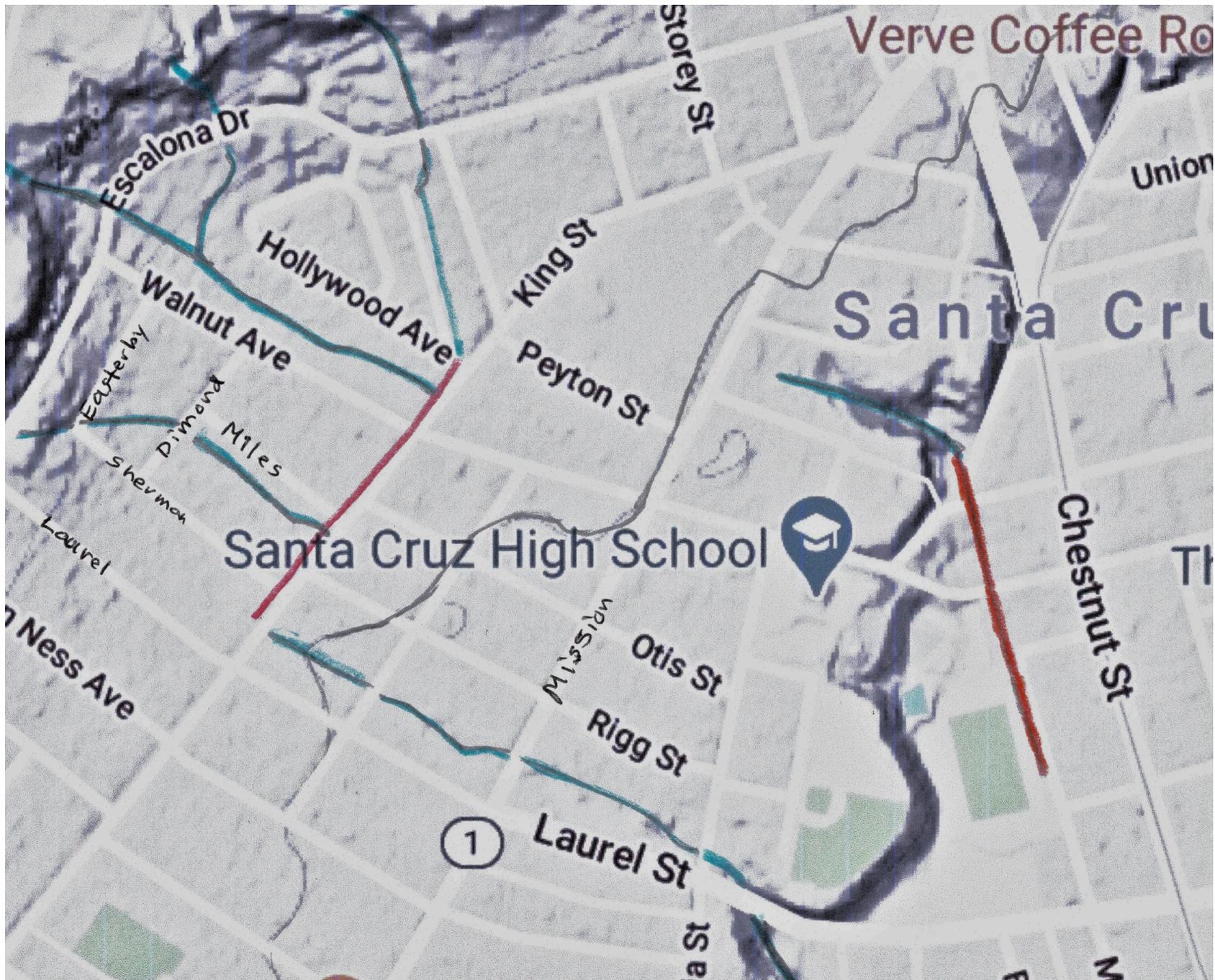


Map showing *Tres Ojos de Agua* land grant and land owned by Joseph L. Majors. Map redrafted for clarity from original map dated 1850. (Original map is in the collection of the Bancroft Library: No. D1330 Survey 1850 by Edmund B. Kellogg, 285 S. D., p. 664.

Map redrafted by Jill Perry from copy provided by Edna Kimbro.)







Close-up of a Google Earth Map highlighted by me: **blue lines** show the creeks. The **red lines** depict the “King St. Canal” and “Myrtle St. Ditch.”

[Below are selections from my Tres Ojos book that back up my theory about the original route of the combined Messiah Lutheran & Dodero Creeks.]

Ernest Otto's *Santa Cruz Sentinel* article (9/8/1940, p. 8) entitled "Los Ojos de Agua," implies that before 1890, Messiah Lutheran Cr. did **not** join up with Dodero Cr. (as it does today—between Walnut and Hollywood, below Escalona Dr.), and instead followed towards Chrystal Terrace Gulch and onward.

The third stream had its source on what is now the Frank Morris place [today's Messiah Lutheran Church], and this creek **came through Towne Gulch and crossed Walnut Ave. by a culvert.** The stream which passed down Towne Gulch was used to furnish water for the horses and animals of early day circuses which usually put up their tents on the corner of Walnut and Chestnut avenues.

The *Daily Surf* (July 30, 1891) in an article entitled "Walnut Avenue" tells about the original flow of today's Messiah Lutheran Creek and its relationship to Chrystal Gulch:

J. F. Cunningham...will cooperate with Mrs. Boston and other property owners to extend Walnut Ave. through to Mill St. [today's upper Walnut Ave.] to King St. and it will then be well on its way to meet the extension of High St. which passes Henry Meyrick's place [opposite the C.C. Moore/Rittenhouse estate on High St.] en route to Cowell's lime works. From California St. to Lincoln, on Walnut Ave., there remains several feet of cutting to be done. The **springs which have been laid bare** will have to be confined in a harmless channel, the water mains lowered, etc., but all these things are sure to come and the transformation will be complete almost before our citizens awake to the fact that it is done.

The *SC Sentinel* (10/20/1935, p. 4) had this article that informs us about the creek in Cristal/Chrystal Gulch and its relationship to the Myrtle Street ditch or "gutter":

Historic Gutter on Myrtle St. Being Eliminated: The long deep gutter which was on the west side of Myrtle St. along the entire length of the high school athletic park has been filled in. This at one time was the bed of a small stream making toward Neary's Lagoon, one of the "Tres Ojos" which have their source in the neighborhood of Escalona Heights and the C.C. Moore place. These streams, now all combined in one on King St., flow across Cleveland Ave, Mission St., California St., Laurel St., through the Neary Lagoon and its outlet into Monterey Bay just W. of the wharf...The water, which flowed through the Weeks property [SC High football field], now Myrtle St., which has just been filled, was by way of culverts and open stream, came across Mission through what is now the Dr. M. J. Gates property [on Chrystal Terrace] which was filled in and where much adobe from the Santa Cruz Mission was hauled when it was demolished to make room for the

new brick Holy Cross church, then through Christal Gulch where the stream was lined with redwoods, now standing. It flowed under Rincon St. and along willow-lined banks, went under Walnut Ave. through a culvert and then down where the hill has just been made. When circuses were in the lot from the top of Walnut Ave. hill to Chestnut Ave., many a horse and elephant drank from this stream.

On Feb. 14, 1943, Ernest Otto's "Old Santa Cruz" column stated:

Urban Water Features—Stream Ran on Rincon Street: Another **stream**, which was on the flat, now a thing of the past, started where the present Chrystal Court is located. The greater part of a field bordering Mission St. was a springy **marsh**, & from it flowed a **stream** through the Christal Gulch between the property of John Town & Dr. J. F. Christian. It flowed between clumps of beautiful redwood trees, & on the Towne Hill was a hillside of larkspur in the **spring** which were sought by the girls who made the blossoms into wreaths & pressed & dried them. Below the **gulch** were a number of buckeyes. The clear **gurgling stream flowed** under Rincon & then down Rincon, bordered by willows, across in a **culvert** under the street & across the High lot, also known by the boys as the circus lot. Many elephants drank from the **waters** of the **stream**, which finally reach the Nearly **Lagoon**.

These old sources reveal that before 1891 (when Messiah Lutheran Cr., Dodero Cr. and Laurel Cr. were channelized into the King St. "canal") the combined **Messiah Lutheran and Dodero Creeks used to keep flowing southeast towards Chrystal Gulch and probably on to Myrtle Street's ditch**. The "City-Wide Creeks and Wetlands Management Plan" (2002) has a small section about Chrystal Gulch. The gulch was named for James Christal, who settled here in the 1870s, but the area was misspelled "Chyrstal" Terrace when the land was subdivided in 1941. The city management plan describes the gulch as today being a swale or intermittent creek with a dense growth of willows.