Chapter
14

The Carmel Valley

It was the year 1840. Don Jose Manuel Boronda rode at the head of the pack train that carried the family's possessions. Beside him was his eldest son, the eighteen-year-old Juan de Mata, and at the rear, in the bulging *carretas* hat lumbered up the steep trail out of Monterey, were Doña Juana and the younger children. Emerging from the deep shade, they saw the Carmel River, glistening between willow-bordered banks below them. Beyond were the tawny flanks of the towering Santa Lucias, tapering to a dark green sea-girt point.

They descended the hill to the desolate Mission San Carlos, then continued along the dusty trail that wound through golden oak-studded hills into the beautiful Carmel Valley. It was a great day in the lives of the Borondas. They were on their way to occupy their land grant from Governor Alvarado, the 6,625-acre Los Laureles.

The only dwellings along their route were occasional shacks in the Indian *Rancherías*. Dispersed by the secularization of the mission, many of the Indians had suffered great hardship and few had been able to keep their allotments of mission property. Men like José Antonio Romero, the first of the Carmel mission's civil administrators, were ambitious and more than ready to exploit the Indians. Romero had also tried to get Los Laureles for himself a few years earlier, but Governor Alvarado had given the land to Boronda, son of the retired corporal.

There had been other land grants bestowed in the Carmel Valley. In 1839 the 4,367-acre Rancho Cañada de la Segunda, through which the Borondas were passing, had been granted to Lazaro Soto. And mounting the wild reaches of the Santa Lucias to the southeast was the 4,307 acre Rancho Potrero de San Carlos, granted to Fructuoso del Real in 1837, as well as the 8,814-acre San Francisquito, given in 1835 to Doña Catalina Manzanelli de Munrás. But none of the grantees had chosen to occupy their land.

At the eastern end of the valley, beyond Los Laureles, Rafael Gomez

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had built a two-story adobe on the Rancho Los Tularcitos, granted him by Governor Figueroa in 1834. But the poor man was killed when he became entangled in the reata of a horse he was trying to drive away from newly planted grain. Of course, his lovely widow, the former Joséfa Antonia Estrada, could not live alone on the 26,581 acres of untamed wilderness. So, Don José Manuel Boronda would be the first ranchero to take up permanent residence on the Rio Carmelo.

As the red ball of the sun sank behind the somber wall of mountains, the Boronda family came to their adobe, which was nestled in laurel trees near the river. The house consisted of three rooms, with dirt floors, a crudely raftered ceiling, and a thatched roof of tules tied on with rawhide thongs. The original building had once housed an Indian family charged with care of the mission's cattle, but Don José Manuel and his eldest son, with the help of mission Indians, had altered the building so that it was not unlike the Boronda adobe in Monterey.

The Borondas worked hard at Los Laureles, and gradually they were able to enlarge their small herd of stock. In the spring they planted grain, and Doña Juana made great, round mounds of yellow cheese from the rich milk that became plentiful. There were gay times, too. Friends and relatives made the long trek to Los Laureles from Monterey and the Salinas Valley for fiestas and a delicacy like bull's head wrapped in wet sacking and slowly steamed in a pit of glowing coals.

For the first years, the Borondas' only neighbor was a gentle, friendly Indian family headed by Juan Onesimo, who as a boy worked to build the mission and whose most treasured possession was a violin which. the padres had given him and taught him to play. Onesimo lived with his daughter Loretta, her husband Domingo Peralta, and their two children Jacinta and Madalena.

The devout and industrious Loretta had been a great favorite of the padres and, when the mission lands were divided, she and Domingo had been given a large tract. They cultivated the land, planting corn, tomatoes and onions to sell in the markets of Monterey. Soon they hoped to have enough money to buy cattle, but almost every week, men like civil administrator Antonio Romero came to threaten the Peraltas with ouster or worse.

Doña Juana sent gifts of her golden Spanish cheese to the Peraltas and old Onesimo, and she urged her husband to talk to the governor about the harassment of these innocent people. But Don José Manuel considered the problem hopeless, especially since his patron Alvarado had declared himself too ill to govern.

Still, the kindly Doña Juana continued to protest until, one day, the dead body of Domingo Peralta was found in a gulch. Then, even

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she had to agree that the situation seemed hopeless and that the widowed Loretta should abandon her land and seek work as a servant in Monterey. Both of the, Borondas failed to reckon, however, with the role to be played by a British sailor who had just returned from fourteen months in the prisons of Mexico.

James Meadows had first set foot on the shores on Monterey in 1837, a seaman on a merchant ship out of London. Hot-tempered and independent, he resented the kind of treatment he had received enroute. Monterey looked good to the twenty-year-old youth, so he decided to desert. The Peraltas helped him hide until his ship had sailed, and a friendship quickly developed.

For a couple of years, Meadows worked contentedly as a *vaquero* on the Rancho El Sur, the property of a fellow Englishman, Juan Bautista Roger Cooper. But he was unable to stay away from the Isaac Graham tavern, a notorious hangout for deserters from foreign ships, and on an April morning in 1840, the government, alarmed by reports that Graham s cohorts planned insurrection, arrested all foreigners who had no passport. Meadows was among the 46 foreigners shipped to Tepic for imprisonment.

Lengthy negotiations between the British consul and the Mexican authorities ensued. Finally, clemency was obtained for some of the prisoners and, in July of 1841, Meadows returned with a tattered group of twenty. The following year, he married Loretta Onesimo de Peralta and assumed responsibility for her land. After that, no one was inclined to challenge her claim to the 4,592 acres, between the Rancho Cañada de la Segunda and Los Laureles.

The adobe house that Meadows built near the river became a favorite gathering place for the area. Despite a testy disposition, Meadows was well-known for his generosity; anyone could get a loan, borrow a farm implement, or receive sound advice on a business problem. He donated land for the first school in the valley and constructed the building and furniture. Many prominent men began their careers with his support and encouragement. William Brainard Post, for example, who was later to become a pioneer rancher in the Big Sur area, worked on the Meadows land. He also married Anselma Onesimo, Loretta's sister.

James and Loretta Meadows had four sons and one daughter, Isabella, who, was born on July 7, 1846, the day the American flag was raised over the Custom House in Monterey. Miss Isabella's reminiscences of intimate details of mission life in the days of Juan Onesimo, as told to her by her mother, served as the basis for much of Anne Fisher's novel *Cathedral in the Sun*. Miss Isabella ended her days in a blaze of glory, when it was discovered by the staff of the Smithsonian Institution

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that she was the last living person to know the speech of the Costanoan Indians. At the age of 89, she was taken to Washington, D.C., where for five years she worked to record the language before it was completely lost. Then, quite suddenly, this remarkable woman simply died in her sleep.

In the American military contingent that landed in Monterey on the day of Isabella's birth was Isaac Hitchcock. After receiving his military discharge, he acquired a piece of land in the area and soon became acquainted with the Meadows family. Isabella's half-sister, Madalena, captured his heart and they were married. Three decades later their son Joseph, one of the best loved characters in the Carmel Valley, came to work on the Rancho Los Laureles, which, by then, no longer belonged to the Borondas.

Late in the 1860s, Don Jose Manuel's son Juan de Mata, who had inherited the rancho, sold it to Nathan W. Spaulding of San Francisco. When Spaulding looked upon his property, he saw a place of incredible beauty, with deep-pile emerald green grasses, flower-frosted chamise, and great spreading oaks. Much of the Carmel Valley was still an untamed wilderness, with wildcat and coyote roaming the countryside. Only on the isolated Meadows ranch were there signposts of civilization.

He placed the rancho under the management of his brother-in-law Kinzea Klinkenbeard, who initiated innovations in its operation. Flumes were installed to irrigate the land, lumber for fences was brought from San Francisco, and new cattle breeds Were introduced. Klinkenbeard and his family resided briefly in the Boronda adobe, until they could build the more modern dwelling which eventually became the nucleus of Los Laureles Lodge. Then, the Boronda adobe fell into disrepair and was used to house cattle. A different way of living had come to the Rancho Los Laureles. It was a harbinger of the future.

By 1875, none of the five land grants in Carmel Valley were held by their original owners. Lazaro Soto had sold the Rancho Canada de la Segunda for $500. It had then passed through several hands until it became the property of Faxon Dean Atherton, father-in-law of the well-known writer Gertrude Atherton. Both the Rancho Potrero de San Carlos and the San Francisquito had been purchased by Bradley Sargent, who, with his three brothers, had acquired about 80,000 acres in central California. Los Tularcitos, at the upper end of the valley, now belonged to Andrew Ogletree, for Joséfa Antonia Estrada de Gomez had married a dashing German sea captain, Charles Wolter. and preferred to live elsewhere.

While the old Monterey families were disposing of their Carmel

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Valley property, other men were finding new ways of cultivating the rugged area. One of these was Edward Berwick. Born in London, he spent his early years as a clerk in a banking house. Then in 1865, at the age of 22, he sailed for California and courageously embarked upon a new career by investing in a cattle ranch in southern Monterey County. He lost money but maintained himself and learned a great deal about the dairy and stock-raising business.

In 1867, he sent to England for his fiancee, Isabella Richardson, and the newlyweds made their home in a sparsely settled area near King City where Mrs. Berwick did not see another woman for eight months. The Carmel Valley seemed civilized by contrast, and Isabella suggested wistfully that they might live there someday. When Berwick discovered 120 acres of the old Meadows tract for sale in the valley, he bought it for $500 in gold. He planned to supplement his income by teaching at the Carmelo School and use his dwindling capital for some experimental agricultural projects he had in mind.

Loretta Onesimo Meadows had told Berwick about the wonderful pear orchards that had been part of the mission gardens, where a few gnarled old trees still filled the air with fragrance every February. They had been grown from cuttings brought by Father Lasuén in 1795. Berwick determined to try planting some of his own, and his success as a farmer was phenomenal. The Berwick orchards became world famous. Carloads of Winter Nelis pears were shipped each year to London and Paris. High praise was also accorded the apples, walnuts, and strawberries raised on his acreage.

The tall, blue-eyed Mr. Berwick also developed quite a local reputation as a scholar. He was seldom seen without a book of philosophy or poetry, and he was often observed stopping at the end of a long furrow to sit down and read. He was an ardent pacifist and published voluminous writings in his endeavor "to rid the world of that idiocy called war." In 1881, Berwick built a house in Pacific Grove and from then on commuted to his work in the Carmel Valley. Everybody liked the genial outgoing man, who was always ready to engage in spirited conversation.

Edward Berwick's agricultural achievements attracted other enterprising farmers to the valley. South of the Berwick tract, near the entrance to a lush canyon that led into the Rancho San Francisquito, Richard Snively had a thriving dairy and fruit farm on land that once had belonged to Mariano Soberanes, a cousin of the Borondas. Snively branched out to include apricot, nectarine, and cherry trees and was experimenting with growing almonds.

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About nine miles up the canyon, two retired sea captains, Anson Smith and Jonathan Wright, were trying their luck at bee-keeping and the growing of grapes and peaches on land rented from Bradley Sargent. They also kept a herd of goats, which Wright tended, and Smith spent his spare time hunting grizzlies, still abundant in the Santa Lucias.

Robert Louis Stevenson credited Jonathan Wright with saving his life in 1879, when he had set out, despondent and desperately ill, on a solitary camping trip in the warm sun and dry air of the mountains. After spending a night at the Berwick ranch, he made his camp, and for a few days all went well. Then one night, it suddenly turned cold, and by morning he was too miserable and pain-racked to move. Dimly in the distance he heard the tinkle of goat bells as he fell into a stupor. Wright found him two days later and took him to his cabin, where he and Smith nursed the emaciated writer back to a modicum of health.

In his later essays on "The Old Pacific Capital," Stevenson wrote of the Carmel Valley with a brooding nostalgia, suggesting his premonition that this land would soon be changed. His forecast came to be only two years after his visit, when Rancho Los Laureles was sold for a second time. The buyer on this occasion was not another rancher but the Pacific Improvement Company, the holding company that represented Crocker, Stanford, Huntington and Hopkins, their Central Pacific Railroad, and Crocker's elegant Del Monte Hotel. The newly opened spa needed a large water supply, as did the rest of the 7,000 acres the Big Four had purchased from David Jacks. The Carmel River would be that source.

Los Laureles ranch house became the company headquarters for the purchase, which included besides Los Laureles a portion of the Rancho Los Tularcitos and several thousand acres of back country. Soon 700 Chinese laborers were put to work building the original San Clemente Dam and laying twelve-inch pipe to bring water out of the valley. It proved to be a very difficult undertaking. The pipe-line crossed the river in five places, and, at the entrance to Robinson Canyon, it had to be elevated on a five-foot trestle. The job was accomplished and the Pacific Improvement Company hired William Hatton to manage the dairy and ranching operations of Los Laureles.

Hatton was a man of long experience and established reputation as a farmer and rancher. Born in Ireland, he had left home at the age of thirteen to become a merchant seaman. After seven years of seafaring, he settled in Charleston, South Carolina, where he worked for a year as an agent of the United States Revenue Service and met and married the charming Kate Harney. In 1870, they came to California, and Hatton took his first job as an apprentice on the St. John dairy ranch near

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Salinas. The thrifty and industrious Hattons eventually saved sufficient money to buy this 640-acre piece of property, in addition to land south of the mouth of the Carmel River. Then in 1888, Hatton became manager of both the widowed Dominga Doñi de Atherton's Rancho Cañada de la Scunnda and the vast acreage that belonged to the Pacific Improvement Company. It was a formidable challenge, but the energetic Will Hatton responded easily.

On the Rancho Los Laureles, he increased the stock and modernized the dairy operation, still located at the old Boronda adobe. Huge vats and presses were installed to manufacture great quantities of the golden cheese, which once had been made by Doña Juana. The process was the same, except she had used a simple keg with a heavy board pressed down across its top by a jack--which, some say, is how the cheese came to be called Monterey Jack.

Soon, Del Monte Dairy was sole supplier of milk products for the Del Monte Hotel. Then, in 1890, Hatton built an auxiliary dairy a few miles up the valley. The unique construction of the tower at the newer farm was designed to ventilate the milk house. Forty years later, the building was converted into an inn, then to an art gallery. It is still standing in Carmel Valley Village.

The Hattons lived in the house built by Kinzea Klinkenbeard. There they raised their seven children and spent congenial times with their neighbors: the Meadows, the Snivelys, and the Berwicks. Another name came into the friendly valley roster when Joseph Hitchcock, son of Isaac and Madalena, came to work for Hatton. Joe Hitchcock lived in a small house in the canyon which still bears his name, and his son, Joe Jr., wrote many colorful memories of the early days in the valley.

It was a good life, despite long hours and hard work. Family activity centered around the black, cast-iron stove in the kitchen. The day began before five in the morning, with the sound and smell of coffee being ground in the mill attached to the wall. After breakfast each member of the household went to his task: milkers to their stools, *vaqueros* to their bronchos, field hands to their plows, and teamsters to their wagons. A round trip to Monterey or Salinas, with a four-horse wagonload of butter or cheese took at least eight hours. And in the rainy season, when the twisting dirt road became a ribbon of mud, it took even longer.

The women had the job of feeding the hired help as well as their kinfolk, churning homemade dairy products, and sewing clothes for their large broods. Their only piece of mechanical equipment was a primitive sewing machine. Often, twenty loaves of bread were baked in each family's wood stove. Many of the women were equally at home riding

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in their side-saddles, or driving a team of horses, and almost all helped out in the fields during the harvest season.

A wonderful camaraderie existed among these first families. Neighbors worked together in periods of peak workload and turned them into festive occasions. One such time was the annual matanza, or butchering of cattle, when the meat had to be quickly converted into salami, corned beef, and jerky. Another was when a new building, such as a school, was being constructed. As soon as the floor was down and the roof-beam raised, a dance would be held. Then the men went to work putting up the partitions.

Frequently, surprise parties were given to celebrate a birthday or anniversary. For these popular festivities, settlers, like the Steffanis, the Bertas, and the Jameses, would come from as far up the valley as the Cachagua to join residents of Los Laureles. After dark and when they were sure the household was asleep, they would gather near the unsuspecting host's house, surround the place, and then the musicians in the group would start to play. Gleefully, they would watch the kerosene lamps being lit in the rooms, and then as the door swung wide, the women would troop in with huge quantities of sandwiches, pie, cake, and freshly ground coffee. To the strains of the accordion, banjo, and harmonica, the dancing went on until four o'clock in the morning, when the revelers had to get home in time to milk their cows.

Until 1890, all of the celebrations were held in the residents' homes. Then, in the kind of joint endeavor for which it was famous, the community built a clubhouse. Land and materials were donated, and every able-bodied man who possessed a hammer and saw took part in constructing what came to be called the Farm Center Building. Delos Goldsmith, then developing real estate in Carmel City, was hired to design the structure, and the Martins, prominent ranchers at the mouth of the Carmel River, helped to supervise the project.

Located at the midway point in the valley, near the entrance to Robinson Canyon, the building became the setting for many a joyous occasion. A quadrille at midnight became the traditional highpoint of the evening, after which supper was served by the ladies and the dancing continued until dawn. A few formalities were established. Gentlemen were expected to have been introduced to the ladies whom they asked to dance, there was no liquor served, and musicians were to be paid for their services with a donation from each couple.

By 1892, Will Hatton had purchased the Rancho Canada de la Segunda, which he had been managing. He and Kate built an elegant, eighteen-room Victorian house at the entrance to the valley, on the

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land which is now Carmel Knolls. Set in the midst of spacious gardens, it was the showplace of the area. Tragically, the year that the house was completed, 1894, William Hatton died. He was only 45.

Mrs. Hatton managed the property, with the help of her brother John Harney, until at the turn of the century, her sons took over. About the same time, James Meadows, then in his eighties, relinquished control of his ranch to his son Edward, from whom it passed in turn to his son Roy Meadows. On Los Laureles, the Pacific Improvement Company enlarged the original ranch house and added a number of small cottages, since the ranch had become a popular destination for guests of the Del Monte Hotel. They usually came for lunch in tallyhos and, if they were interested in hunting or fishing, stayed overnight.

In the early 1900s, the Pacific Improvement Company liquidated its holdings on the Monterey Peninsula, and Del Monte Properties, a group of financiers spearheaded by Samuel Morse, acquired the lands. The new company decided to subdivide its Carmel Valley acreage and tried unsuccessfully to find a developer who would take the entire 10,000 acres for $150,000. In 1923, then, they offered the land in eleven parcels, termed "gentlemen's estates," at $60 an acre. Easterners staying at the Pebble Beach Lodge became interested. International golf champion Marian Hollins bought the 2,000 acres which later became the valley village and the C. E. Holman ranch. Sam Fertig, a Pennsylvanian, purchased the part of Los Laureles that included the old Boronda adobe and the embryonic Laureles Lodge. But the pioneer real estate developers of the valley were the Frank Porters of Salinas.

In 1926, the Porters acquired 600 acres on a deeply wooded hillside in the southeast corner of old Rancho Los Laureles. They named the tract "Robles del Rio" and began carving roads into the steep terrain in preparation for subdividing the land into small plots. It was still relatively wild country. Mrs. Porter recalls "bobcats almost as plentiful as deer" and the "winding pretzel of a road" that was their tenuous link with Salinas.

After many obstacles, forested hills were divided into lots, many measuring 75 by 150 feet, and these were offered at $90 apiece. Robles del Rio Lodge was built to promote the sales. Slowly, where once there had been only sycamores and oaks, weekend cabins appeared, followed by houses. Jet Porter now had neighbors, although even into the 1930s, she remembers the sound of cowbells floating up from the valley floor and the rolling acres of land carpeted with wildflowers and silver grain. For at that time, subdivision had still not extended beyond the Porters' portion of Los Laureles.

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A different kind of activity came to the gigantic Rancho San Francisquito Y San Carlos. In 1923, the heirs of Bradley Sargent sold the 22,OOO-acre property to the eastern millionaire sportsman George Gordon Moore. Moore built ten miles of private road into the Mountains and, on a great swale of land, cupped in the Santa Lucias, erected a 35-room mansion. The main room was 75 feet long, overlooking a sweeping polo field. Paddocks for 80 ponies were provided, and famous polo teams came from all over the country. No expense was spared for lavish entertainment. For the pleasure of his guests, Mr. Moore built a golf course and introduced Russian boar hunting, importing the animals from his North Carolina estate.

It was fabulous while it lasted, but in 1929, the market crash wiped away Moore's fortune. Hard-pressed to satisfy his creditors, he sold the ranch to Arthur C. Oppenheimer. It is rumored that the price was less than a quarter of a million dollars, about a fourth of what Moore had been offered in his heyday. The Oppenheimers have preserved the house and maintained the property as a working cattle ranch.

Los Tularcitos, largest land grant in the valley, was lost by Ogletree to Alberto Trescony in a mortgage foreclosure. The former Italian tinsmith, who had become a wealthy landowner in the Salinas Valley, later leased a portion of the property to Carlisle Abbott. Chinese were employed to operate a dairy in part of the old adobe built by Rafael Gomez. In 1924, the major portion of the rancho was sold to John and Robert Marble. It is still one of the most beautiful pieces of land in the valley, almost entirely in its natural state.

Progress continued in the remainder of Carmel Valley at an ever more accelerated pace. The Porters acquired a portion of the Hollins ranch and sold it to Byington Ford, a prominent Monterey Peninsula real estate developer who was imaginative as well as enterprising. He built the first commercial development in the valley, comprising an airport and business district. The shops were designed to look like a Mexican village, with murals painted in glowing colors on the fronts of the buildings. They lent a romantic aura to the area and attracted the attention of tourists.

For a time, Muriel Vanderbilt Phelps Adams owned what had been the Fertig property, and on it she raised race horses. Then, the Porters bought that acreage too and subdivided. The Los Laureles ranch house was purchased by Sanborn Griffin, who converted it into the present-day Los Laureles resort. Only the old Boronda adobe, with its crumbling walls and fallen roof-beam, stood as a reminder of the days of the dons.

At last, in the 1940s, it came into the possession of someone who

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appreciated its unique value. With loving care, George Sims restored the neglected building that was more than a hundred years old. A protective coating of plaster was applied outside of the three-foot thick walls, plank flooring was laid down with hand-made pegs, modern conveniences were unobtrusively installed, and the roof was repaired with antique tiles. Once again the home of the Borondas became a private residence filled with life and laughter.

Today, great stretches of the Carmel Valley are occupied by clusters of houses, and the fragrant pear orchards have given way to shopping centers and a variety of building complexes. Still, in the springtime, buttercups and shooting stars sprinkle the meadows, and poppies flaunt their gold over fields of deep blue lupine. Cattle can be seen browsing on a hundred hills, while venerable oaks, like hunched-over sentinels, spread their dark green shade. And the wonderful sense of camaraderie, of everyone being wanted and needed, continues to characterize life-style in the valley.

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