



Picturing Californios

An Orange County Family Photograph Album

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The Californios, or Spanish-speaking colonists and their descendents, established themselves in present day California (Alta California) and Baja California beginning in the late 18th century. By the early 19th century, wealthy landowners such as the Sepulveda and Yorba families owned vast ranchos. They were fairly independent governmentally and economically from Mexico.

The photographs from this album document 19th-century descendents of prominent Orange County Californio families. Many of the individuals depicted are relatives of the Sepulvedas and Yorbas. Additionally, there are portraits of Peralta, Burruel, Reyes, and Avila family members.

Such albums were first introduced in the 1860s and were fashionable through the 1890s. They were a popular medium for displaying portraits of family members. This particular album provides a valuable record of Californio family ties across generations and illustrates the complex network of relationships among families. The collector of these photographs remains unidentified, but it is likely that he or she was a member of one of these families.

The photographs have been removed from the album for preservation purposes. They represent various examples of photographic processes and formats, two of which (tintypes and cartes-de-visite) are described on the last page.



1. **Clodomiro Sepulveda and Peregrina Rosa Yorba wedding portrait.**
By B.F. Conaway, Santa Ana, 1885. Collodion print.

Clodomiro was a distant relative of José Sepulveda, who received several land grants from Mexican Governor Juan B. Alvarado following Mexican independence from Spain in 1821. Peregrina was a direct descendent of José Antonio Yorba, patriarch of one of the original Californio families to receive land titles from King Ferdinand VII of Spain in 1810.

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Two Yorba and Sepulveda ranchos (Rancho San Joaquín and Rancho Lomas de Santiago) later became part of the Irvine Ranch, established by James Irvine I in 1876. The vast 110,000-acre area supported cattle and sheep ranching, as well as grape, barley, and bean fields. In 1894 his son, James Irvine II, incorporated the family's holdings as the Irvine Company. In 1960 the Company donated 1,000 acres of its land to the State of California to build the UC Irvine campus.

2. **Emelia Burruel with children Rosita, Ernest, and Raul.**

Unidentified photographer, ca. 1905. Platinum print.

The Burruel family owned land known as Burruel Point, later the town of Olive, and now part of the City of Orange. Originally the home of the Yorbas, this land was inherited by Desiderio Burruel after his marriage to María Escolástica Yorba. Emelia was one of their eight children. This item is pictured on the cover.

3. **Margarita and Isidro Reyes.**

Unidentified photographer, ca. 1875. Hand-colored tintype.

Margarita and Isidro were daughters of José Isidro and María Antonio Villa de Reyes, owners of significant land tracts in Orange County in the late 1890s.

4. **Bernardo Yorba II.**

By J. Crissman, Santa Ana, 1880. Albumen carte-de-visite.

Bernardo Yorba II was the grandson of José Antonio Yorba, who was granted lands constituting Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana in 1810.

5. **Julia Dryden with daughter Margarita.**

By J. Crissman, Santa Ana, 1880. Albumen carte-de-visite.

Bernardo Yorba II married Julia Dryden on 28 September 1878.

About some of the photographic processes and formats

Cartes-de-visite, or “calling cards,” consisted of photographic prints mounted on cardboard. They were one of the most popular forms of portraiture from the 1860s through the turn of the 20th century.

Tintypes were popular from the late 1850s through the early 1900s. Many were hand colored, often to highlight individuals’ faces. Durable and inexpensive to produce, they were made of lacquered iron (not tin) with a collodion emulsion on the surface. Unlike photographic prints produced through the use of a negative, tintypes are positive images fixed onto the light-sensitive collodion emulsion. They are thus unique objects.

The Elizabeth R. Annis Exhibit Case

Exhibits in this case honor the generosity of Elizabeth R. Annis to the UC Irvine Libraries through her bequest to establish *The Elizabeth and Verle Annis Collection in Early California History* in Special Collections and Archives. The Orange County Californio Families Portrait Photograph Album (MS-R76), was acquired by Special Collections and Archives in 1999 for its extensive regional history collection. This exhibit was curated by archivist Adrian Turner.



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