

north Orange Street.

This and more land — 1,050 acres in all — along Riverside's Main Street to the west — is being proposed for transfer from San Bernardino County to Riverside County.

The county line is a few hundred feet north of Highgrove's Center Street, just north of the ruins of the Trujillo adobe, which is surrounded by a tiny Riverside County Park, itself not too well tended.

You know you've crossed the county line when you see an unofficial trash heap including the hulks of a couple of abandoned cars alongside what appears to be an old ditch with a long-dead cottonwood trunk beside it.

The ditch is a trace of Riverside's old Lower Canal, which was abandoned in 1913. Thirty feet higher, up the steep slope to the right, alongside a line of old fence posts, is the mark of another abandoned canal — the upper part of Riverside's first canal, which brought water to the downtown area starting in May or June 1871.

The canals were supplemented in 1886 by a higher intake at the mouth of Warm Creek in the San Bernardino Artesian Basin. By 1913, the flow below the basin in late summer was too small to justify maintaining the original intakes. The Warm Creek flow (now from wells) joins the original line of the Upper Canal a little south of Highgrove's Center Street, a few feet west of Highway 91, the Riverside Freeway.

Another quarter mile or so along the road, at the foot of the slope to the right, is a stone house with a little lawn about it — the onetime home of Antoine Pellissier, vintner and dairyman. It's now the home of Joe and Mary Jackson, lessees and operators of the Pellissier Ranch, which belongs to the City of Riverside, although it's in San Bernardino County.

Still farther along the road is a complex of cement block buildings, wooden sheds and silos — the onetime operating center of the Pellissier Dairy. The winery is gone, except for a vestige of a corrugated iron building west of the stone house.

Next along the road you come upon the ruins of a frame house at the mouth of a ravine from the hills, the La Loma Hills, on the right.

It was the Garcia House of the pre-Pellissier community of La Placita, founded in 1845 by Lorenzo Trujillo and his sons and others from central New Mexico.

La Placita was known to early Riverside as Spanishtown, part of a dual community including

Past

Tom Patterson



Agua Mansa across the river. Officially, the two communities became known to early San Bernardino County as San Salvador, which was also the name of the Catholic parish serving both.

Follow Pellissier Road far enough and you find where the Lower Canal trace is crossed by the levee that was built after a 1938 flood swept across the La Placita fields, across Riverside's Main Street and through Fairmount Park.

Just beyond the levee is the last intake (concrete) of the Lower Canal. The original one of 1876 was a hundred yards or so upriver, with no trace remaining.

The Upper Canal, 30 feet higher, can be followed around the hills, where it is partly obscured by a San Bernardino County landfill. Now, however, we're outside the Pellissier area.

The story of La Placita and the Pellissier Ranch is an often told tale, although usually the junky aspect is overlooked. The area is in limbo.

The city of Colton in San Bernardino County has taken steps toward annexing the former Pellissier-La Placita land belonging to the city of Riverside.

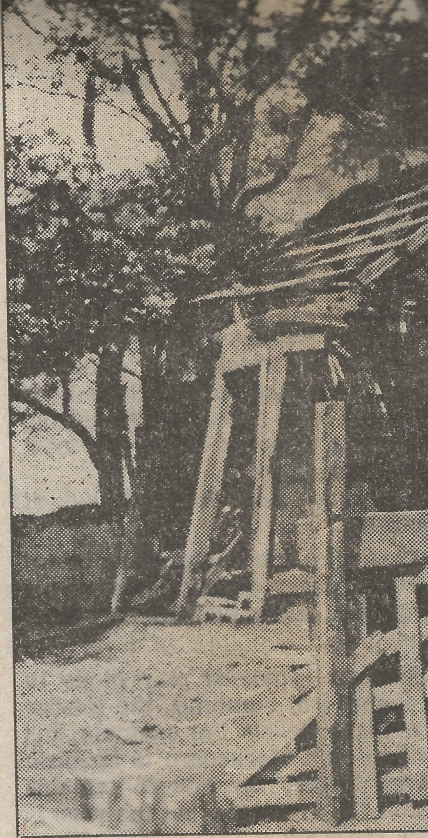
The Supervisors of Riverside County have asked their San Bernardino County counterparts to hold a hearing on a proposal to switch the 1,050 acres, a triangular piece, into Riverside County.

It is clear that the area, across the river and otherwise isolated from Colton, has closer ties to Riverside. The early relationship, when the land was the scene of a unique community, was stormy and one-sided.

La Placita and Agua Mansa were like no other community in Mexican California. The land was given by Juan Bandini, grantee and owner of the Rancho Jurupa, on condition that the settlers from New Mexico form a bulwark against marauding Indians from Utah. Those Indians had been stealing horses en masse by means of large-scale raids on the California ranchos.

The La Placita land was divided among families after the manner of the settlement grants of New Mexico and quite unlike that of the large-scale hacienda or rancho grants made to politically favored individuals in Mexican California. Each family received title to a small farm with river frontage.

By the time Riverside was



The Pellissier house is now occupied by the city of Riverside.

founded in 1870, the early community had developed herds of cattle, horses and sheep that grazed undisturbed on the surrounding public and private lands.

California law, even early Anglo-California law, favored a grazing economy. Anyone raising a crop had to fence it or risk invasion by free-roving animals.

In 1872, California adopted the No-Fence Act, requiring the animals' owners to keep them out of neighbors' fields, fenced or not.

At least two private pounds were established in Riverside where La Placita animals were impounded and their owners required to pay pound fees and