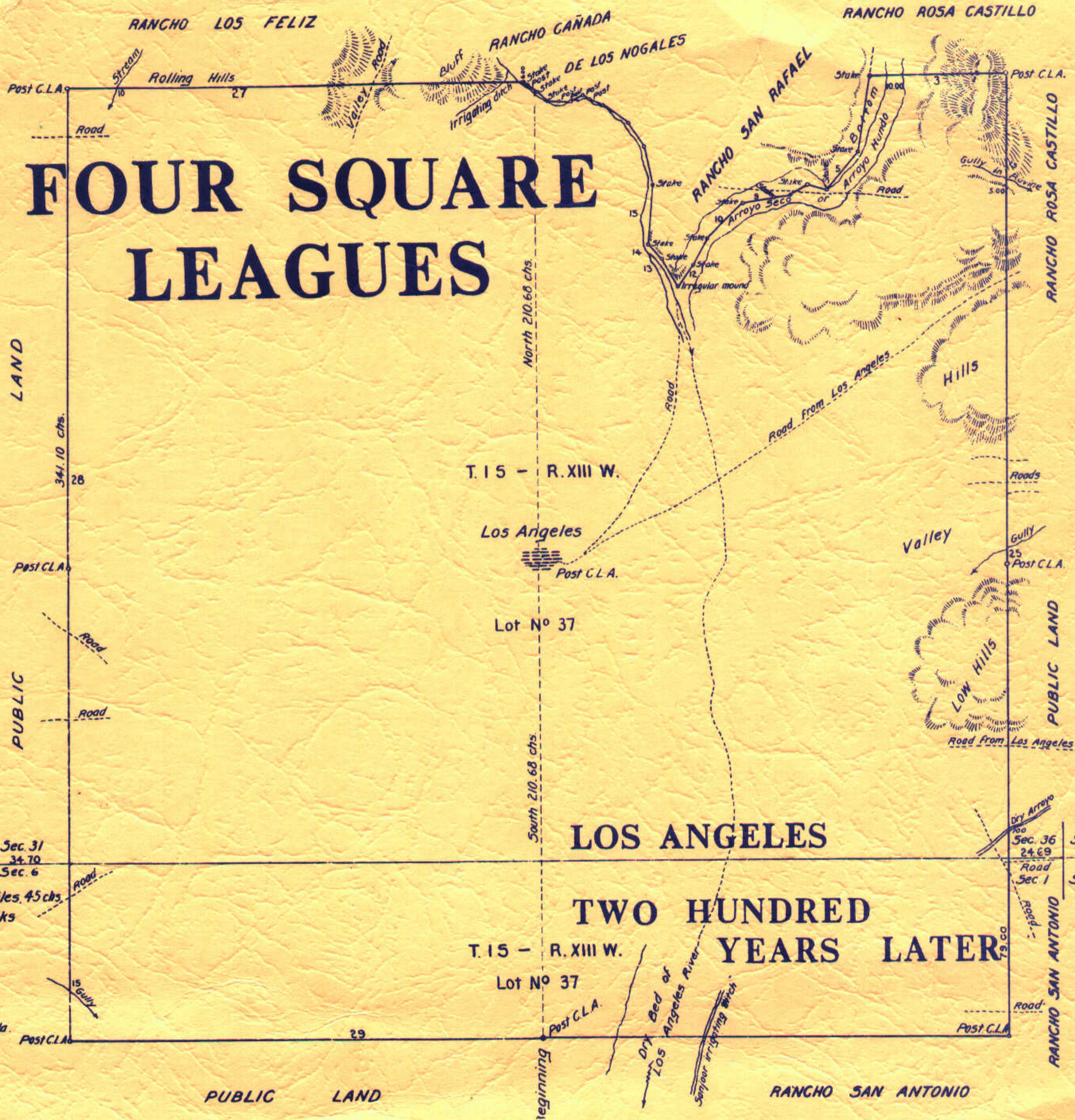


FOUR SQUARE LEAGUES



LOS ANGELES

TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER

Sec 36	Sec 31
34.70	34.70
Sec 1	Sec 6

22 miles, 45 chs, 37 links

Genl. Cala

Sec 36	Sec 31
24.69	24.69
Road	Road
Sec 1	Sec 6

RANCHO SAN ANTONIO

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TOM BRADLEY
CITY OF
LOS ANGELES**

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Preparation of this Brochure directed by

DONALD C. TILLMAN
Los Angeles City Engineer

Text and layout by John P. Hunt and George Chambers.

Grateful acknowledgment for cooperation and valuable assistance to Division Engineer David L. Dona, Chief of the Survey Division, City Engineer's staff.

Also to George Chambers, Survey Division, whose exhaustive research and efforts in the field re-established exact locations of the original "Four Corners" of the early Pueblo.

Finally, deserving of the highest praise is David Iberri whose design work on marker plaques and of this Brochure brought this project to a successful conclusion.

THE NAME OF OUR STATE

The California region had its name many years before any of the eastern states were named except Florida.

Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Irish, French, and others are believed to have explored the Western Hemisphere before Columbus but their voyages were not recorded in any of the early maps of those times.

When Spanish explorers began to probe seas unknown to them and look on new lands, very few names before were known. In fact, the names given by soldiers were mostly referring to an island or a natural phenomenon; names applied by priests were religious and usually such by being perpetuated in letters, journals, maps and official reports.

An early Spanish voyager—Cristóbal Colón de Fonseca, however, is believed to have been the first to use the name California in a map of 1492. Colón's measure of latitude, 14° 30' north of the equator, is a name famous now, known as Santa Catalina.

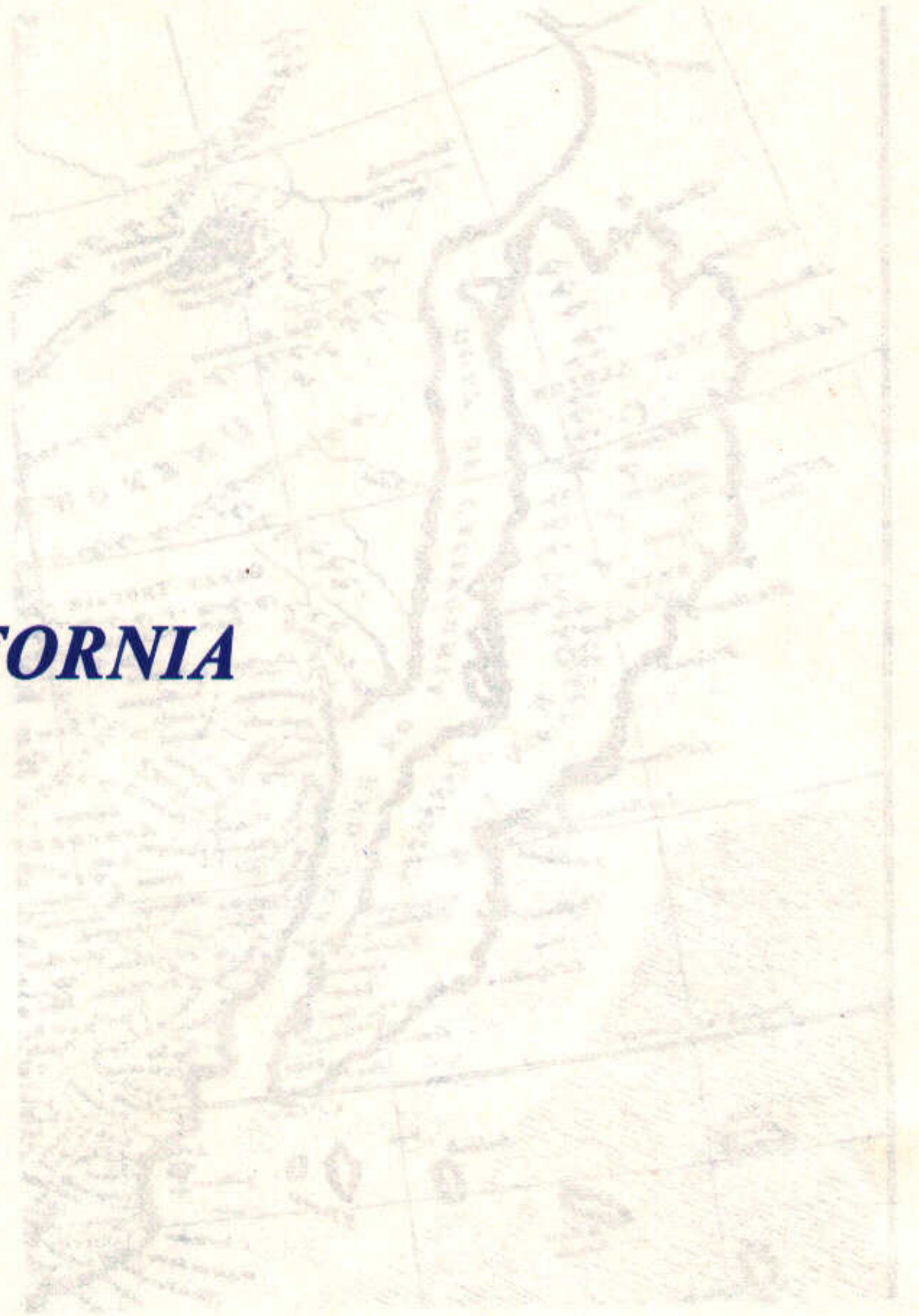
Now that we know the origin of the name, it is not called California very early in the history of the world.

EARLY CALIFORNIA

It is a fact that the name California was first mentioned in 1492 in a Spanish map of the world. The name California was first mentioned in the book "The History of the World" by Samuel Purchas in 1625. The name California was first mentioned in the book "The History of the World" by Samuel Purchas in 1625.

Before the first voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492, the name California was first mentioned in a Spanish map of the world. The name California was first mentioned in the book "The History of the World" by Samuel Purchas in 1625.

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THE NAME OF OUR STATE

The California region had its name many years before any of the eastern states were named except Florida.

Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Irish, Phoenicians, Vikings—and possibly others are believed to have explored the Western Hemisphere before Columbus but their voyages were not knowledge widely shared by the early world of those times.

When Spanish explorers began to probe seas unknown to them and set foot on new lands, very few natural features went unnamed. In most cases, the names given by soldiers were realistic, referring to an incident or a natural phenomenon; names applied by priests were religious and usually stuck by being perpetuated in diaries, journals, letters and official reports.

An early Spanish novelist—Garci Ordonez de Montalvo, however, is believed to have been the first to use the name California. In an early Sixteenth Century romance of chivalry, *Las Sergas de Esplandian*, a sequel to a more famous novel *Amadis de Gaula*, Montalvo wrote:

“Know that, on the right hand of the Indies, there is an island called California, very near to the Terrestrial Paradise . . . in the whole island, there was no metal but gold.”

Etymologists suggest Montalvo got the name from Charlemagne who, in *La Chanson de Roland*, the Ninth Century national epic of France, mourning the dead Roland, wrote “Now the Saxons shall rise up against me, and the Bulgars, and the Huns—Apulians, Romans, Sicilians, and the men of Africa and Califerne.” Califerne was the domain of the caliph, the ruler of the Mohammedan world, hence a pagan, exotic place. Baissonade, a French etymologist, suggests that Montalvo was inspired to borrow the Frankish Califerne and hispanicize it California.

Before his fourth voyage, Columbus, hoping to find a sea passage through what is now the Panama Isthmus, wrote his king and queen he expected to come as near as man could do so to the “Terrestrial Paradise”. Later, Spanish explorers familiar with the Montalvo novel and sailing the Pacific north from Mexico found a peninsula they thought was an island and called it California. Maps issued from various sources for the next 150 years showed Baja, California as an island, one issued just 24 years before the first mission was established at San Diego.

The man whose 1510 novel named California is remembered in this state today by a city which bears his name—Montalvo—between Oxnard and Ventura.



The first Los Angeles pobladores (settlers) were recruited from various places around the Gulf of California. Antonio Clemente Feliz Villavicencio, 30, a native of Chihuahua, was the first to enlist, doing so on May 30, 1780, at Villa Sinaloa. With him were his wife and adopted 8-year-old daughter.

By February, 1781, the volunteers (11 families—44 people including children) were finally assembled at Los Alamos, a mining town near the Fuerte River. Within the group were Spaniards, Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians; a prophetically appropriate microcosm in view of the millions of people of all races, colors and creeds destined one day to come to the City which would rise from the little Pueblo.

It was not an easy trip for Los Angeles' first families. Under command of Lt. Jose Zuniga, they crossed the Gulf of California from Guaymas to Loreto and, on May 16, 1781, started the long, difficult march up the Peninsula to San Gabriel which they reached August 18.

Here, because of exposure to small pox, the settlers were forced to remain for seventeen days. Then, on September 4, 1781, accompanied by four soldiers under Corporal Vincente Feliz, the party traveled the final twenty or so miles to the banks of the Rio Porciuncula. There, in the valley so admired on a previous exploration trip by Father Crespi, and at the site designated by Governor Phelipe de Neve of the Californias, was established the Pueblo.

The little pueblo was isolated by the width of a continent from Yorktown where, the same year

(Cont. on Page 6)



Los Angeles was founded, eastern colonists were winning their independence. In 1781, there was as yet no Washington, D.C., no Chicago, Indianapolis, Memphis, Minneapolis, Tampa, Kansas City, Seattle, Houston, or Omaha. There wasn't even a United States of America but the forces of destiny which were to create the new nation were on the move, even in the hot, dusty and remote little Pueblo a continent's width away from the original thirteen colonies.

El Pueblo de La Reina de Los Angeles had its first settlers.

The site of the Pueblo—"El Pueblo de La Reina de Los Angeles"—had been the scene of preparatory activity before its settlers were given formal possession of the land on September 4, 1781. Each family received "in the name of the King our master" one solar (house lot) and two suertes (farm land). Each house lot was 55 by 110 feet, each farm lot 200 varas each way (a vara measured 33 inches). In true Spanish style the house lots surrounded a public plaza.

The method of conferring title to the land was totally informal. Each head of the eleven families was taken to a lot that had been previously staked off and the ranking military person in charge would say to the Pobladore—"(Call off the name), this is your property." There was no legal written document given but land was so plentiful and cheap that there was little reason to anticipate disputes.

An early historian—researcher—engineer Charles J. Prudhome who got his information from elderly Dons wrote that from September 4, 1781 to 1850 . . . "they did not have any official records, and there is nothing on record to prove that each of the first adults were the original owners of the first Pueblo lots."

Disenos (maps roughly reflecting the Pueblo plan but lacking accurate scale measurements) were drawn to record the event. But early Los Angeles was measured, not surveyed. In time, the Plaza area was relocated, near the original site but nothing remains by way of markers to specifically locate the original site.

In 1785, four years after founding of the Pueblo, each new settlement was formally allocated "the extent of four leagues in a square." A league was about 2.6 miles, the probable length of each of the four sides although how the measurement "from the center of the plaza" was applied would one day become controversial.

For example, it is by no means certain whether the Pueblo's limits embraced four square leagues or four leagues square.

Early growth was steady but slow. By 1830, the town had increased to 764 inhabitants and about 200 Indians. Herds were increasing faster with an estimated 40,000 cattle on the surrounding plains.

For years, lack of an accurate survey was no cause for alarm because land was so plentiful there was no urgency to delineate and record explicit boundaries.

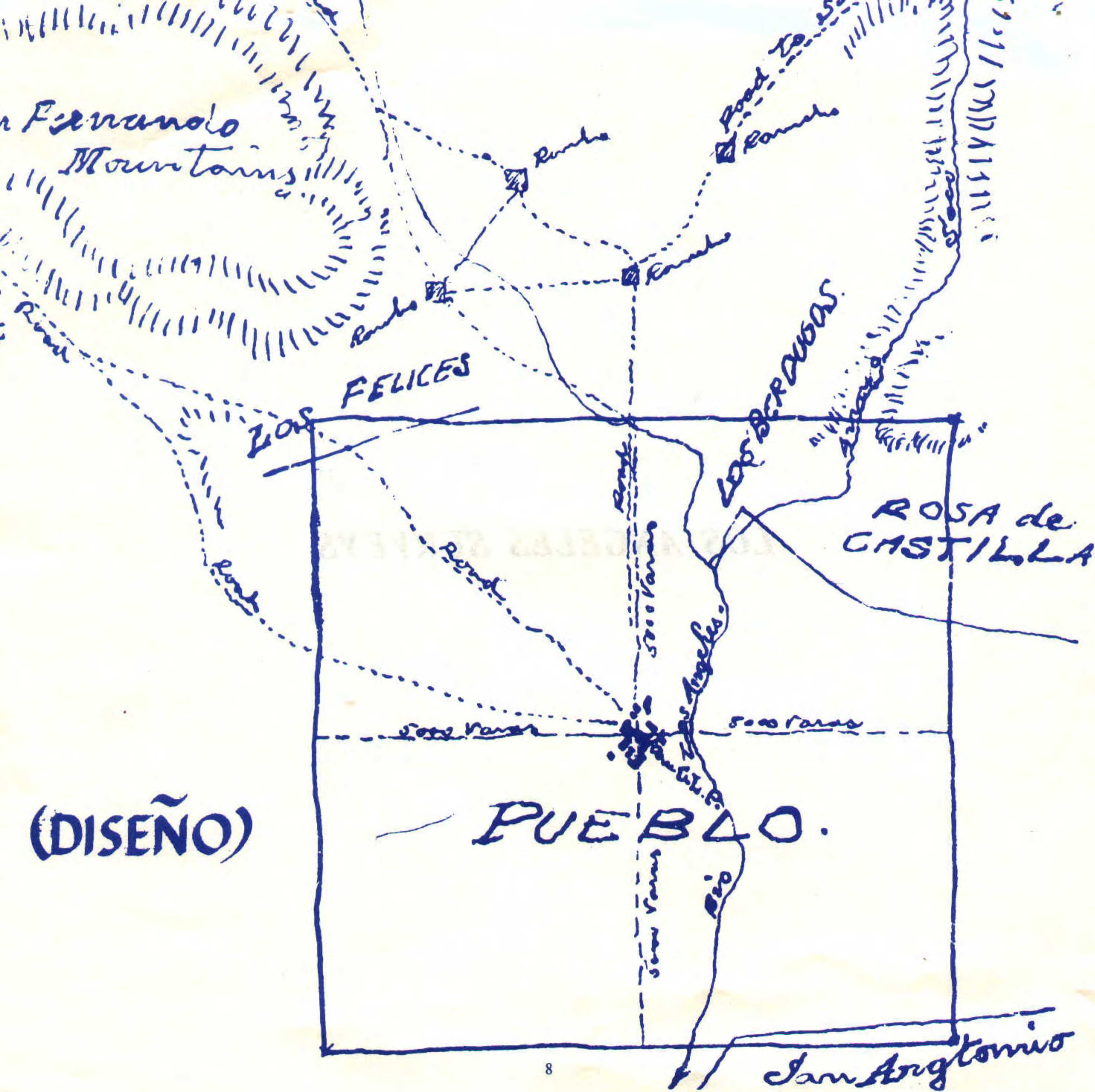
In 1817, Guillermo Cota described the original boundaries to Governor Sola. As he recalled, they began "close to the River of San Gabriel, where a corral was constructed for the purpose of killing horses, from there below, measuring one half of a league, and towards the West in a straight course until reaching the (rancho) Sausal Redondo, and from South to North to the place Aguajito (near modern Inglewood), taking in half of the hill to the beach, and from there opposite to (beyond) the Sausal Redondo, and looking from East to West to the other beach (toward Santa Monica); taking into consideration the land remaining to Vecino Manl. Guiterrez (rancho San Pedro) of about six leagues more or less from South to North and three leagues more or less from East to West, and noting that the Ranchos of Anto. Maria Lugo (San Antonio) and Franco. Feliz (Los Felis) remain within the limits of the Pueblo." Some such extended boundaries were by the end of the Mexican period accepted and traditional.

When a survey of municipal lands was ordered in 1834, the experts (Antonio Coronel, Juan Sepulveda and Cristobal Aguilar) were directed "to measure two leagues in each of the four principal directions . . . from the Church (of Our Lady of the Angels) as the central location . . ." If this map were made, it has long been lost.

Meanwhile, the tempo of population growth began to increase but as the town grew so did confusion and chaos over accurate boundaries. The problem was becoming acute.

A faint, historical map of Los Angeles, likely a survey map, showing a grid of streets and various landmarks. The map is overlaid with a grid of lines, and there are numerous handwritten annotations in pencil or light ink. The text "LOS ANGELES SURVEYS" is printed in a bold, blue font across the center of the map. The map shows a network of streets, including a prominent north-south street and several east-west streets. There are also some curved lines and irregular shapes, possibly representing natural features or specific survey plots. The overall appearance is that of an old, hand-drawn or hand-annotated map.

LOS ANGELES SURVEYS



(DISEÑO)

The first maps to record land ownership in California were diseños. These were sketches unverified by formal survey of land boundaries. Instead of using the coordinate system, boundaries were identified by location of great oak trees, large sycamores, streams, or mountain ranges.

In this Pueblo period of early Spanish California there was no such thing as a written title to land—possession was all that mattered. The Ayuntamiento (Council) would grant a lot if the requested land was unused. Once a person ceased to use his land, he could lose it and it would revert to the municipality. The lot would be whatever size and shape was available and the streets angled to suit the convenience of the house builders:

In 1847, it was decided streets must be fifteen varas (41.25 feet) wide—many still are. But in those days, measurements in “varas” and “leagues” were grossly imprecise. A vara was considered the length of the average man’s arm from the back of the shoulder to the tip of the fingers. A league was described as the distance a man could comfortably walk in an hour. Not until somewhat later did authorities establish a vara as 33 inches and a league as 2.6 miles.

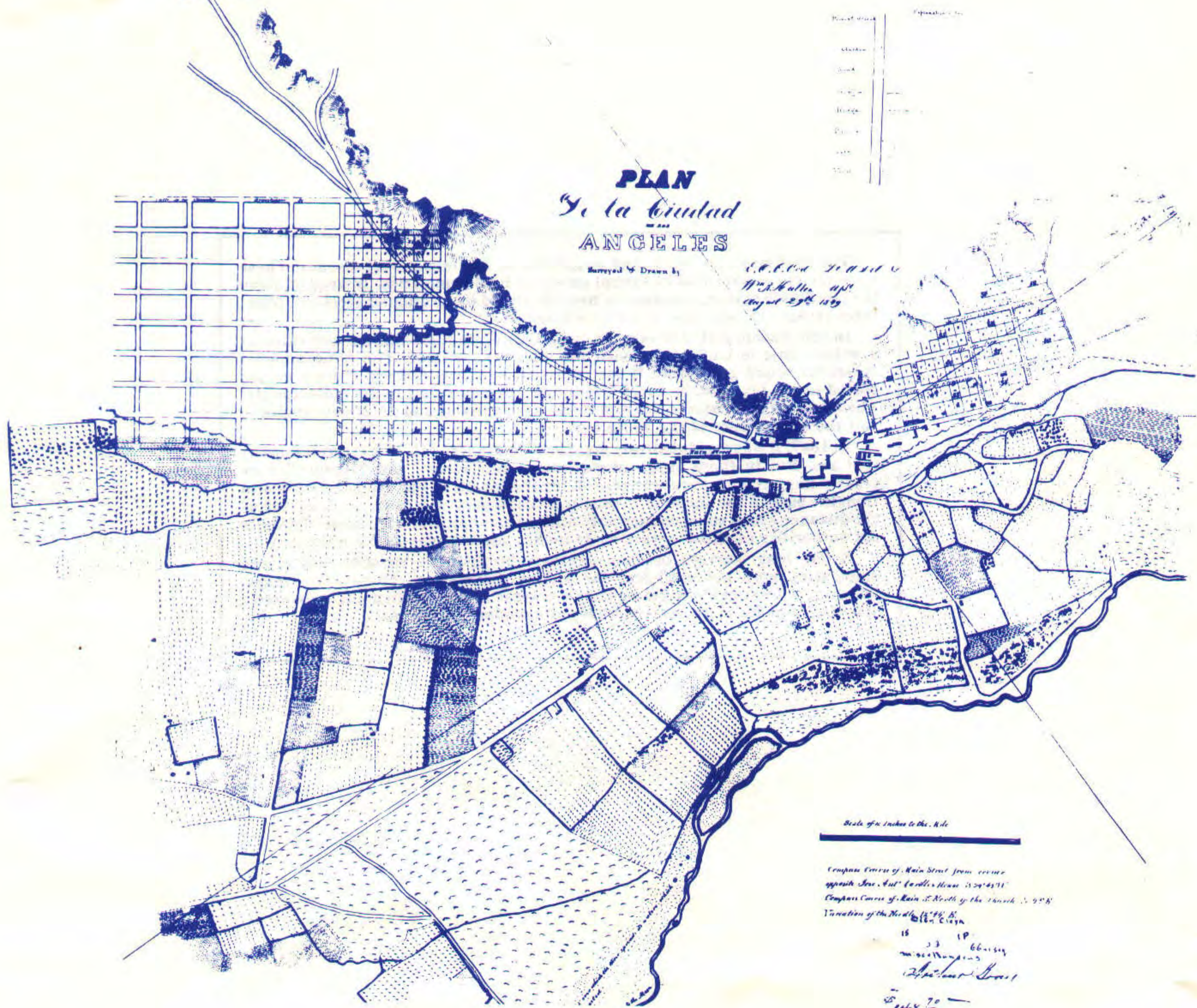
Before long, surveys became necessary because the vagueness of diseño boundaries were not sufficient for precise recordation. These early maps, however, at least in a general way showed areas of demarcation and they were a starting point for more exact methods of boundary locations.

Los Angeles City Map
No. 1 -

PLAN
De la Ciudad
ANGELES

Surveyed & Drawn by
C. C. Cole & W. S. Hall
August 29th 1859

Symbol	Description
—	Main Street
—	Other Streets
—	Water
—	Buildings
—	Other



Scale of 1000 Feet to the Mile

Compass Course of Main Street from corner
opposite San Ant. Cardillo House $52^{\circ}45'31''$
Compass Course of Main St. North of the Church $5^{\circ}58'$
Variation of the Needle $16^{\circ}46' 15''$
W. S. Hall
1859

ORD SURVEY



EDWARD OTHO CRESAP ORD

Other than diseños, Los Angeles had no map. It did not even have "recognized limits" for the exact boundaries up until the 1840's. The plans of the 1780's, long misplaced in government files, had no discernable relationship to then current possessions in the late 1840's, nor to geography which was evidenced by the complete disappearance of the originally depicted plots and streets even of the old Pueblo—such disappearance occurring long before the American occupation. Promptly, therefore—for local officials were eager to dispose of city lands . . . the Ayuntamiento, on June 9, adopted a resolution asking the Territorial Governor, General Bennett Riley, to name a surveyor.

The Governor's choice was Lt. E.O.C. Ord, U.S. Army, who had just finished a survey of Sacramento. On July 18, 1849, Lt. Ord proposed making a map of the city, marking boundary lines and points of the municipal lands for \$1,500 and ten lots selected from among the defined lots on the map and vacant lands to the extent of 1,000 varas to be selected in sections of 200 varas wherever he may choose—or he would be given a straight \$3,000 cash. The Ayuntamiento chose the later, explaining each of the lots he may select one day could be worth as much as \$3,000 each. (Today, a front foot in this area could cost that much.)

The survey requested by the city to consider the city boundary as sixteen square leagues (two leagues in each cardinal direction) as had been fixed by the Mexican Territorial Legislature in 1834. The U.S. Land Claims Commission, however, later reduced the city's allocated area to the original Four Square Leagues.

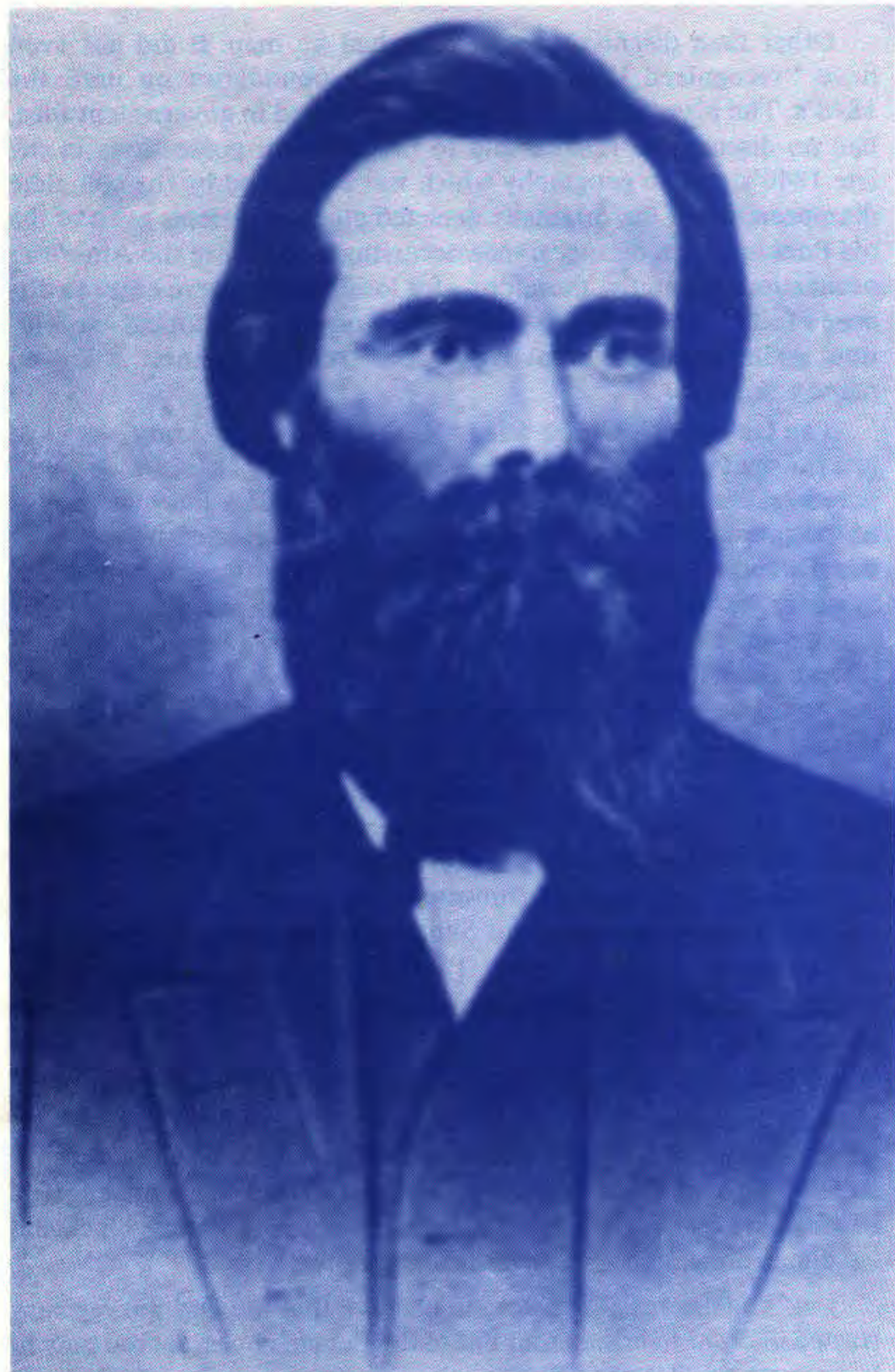
In July and August of 1849, Lt. Ord assisted by William R. Horton mapped the entire Pueblo, covering the heart of the original Four Square Leagues.

Unfortunately, while the survey looked neatly proper on paper, some of the houses in the older parts of the city were in the middle of streets designated by the map while others were isolated without street frontage. Later surveyors were both puzzled and angered because the Ord Survey failed to indicate all street widths, block and lot dimensions, and Ord made no field notes.

Los Angeles residents were to observe that the Ord Survey contracted in order to bring order out of the Pueblo chaos, served only to leave even greater confusion.

The City Council, however, was impressed and appropriated \$6.00 to buy a frame for the map. Later, the map was varnished to preserve it because a glass could not be found in town large enough. The original apparently did not survive but an official copy (circa 1872) hangs in the vault of the City Clerk.

HANCOCK SURVEY



HENRY HANCOCK

On February 5, 1856, the United States Land Commission confirmed four square leagues of land to the City of Los Angeles (using 2.63 miles per league) with the center of the Plaza designated as the center of city land.

Part of the United States Land Commission's description follows: "contains four square leagues . . . and is bounded on the north and south by two parallel lines, each two leagues in length running due east and west, and on the east and west sides by two parallel lines, each two leagues in length and running due north and south, said boundary lines being so drawn that their respective centers shall be in a direction due north, south, east, and west from the center of the plaza of said City of Los Angeles, and each at the distance of one league from the same."

The Plaza referred to in the above description was the one shown on Ord's survey and had occupied its present position since at least the 1820's. The original square lay slightly to the northeast, probably about where the parking lot is north of the Pueblo Church, but its exact limits are now unknown. It was the existing Plaza, then, that gave direction to the streets of the growing city.

In 1858, United States Deputy Surveyor Henry Hancock, a prominent local surveyor, surveyed the lands confirmed to the City by the United States Land Commission Patent of 1856.

He ran the boundaries setting markers at the corners referring to landmarks, and using compass courses and distances on the ground. The original patent boundary can be easily seen on a map of the City bounded by Hoover Street on the west; on the north, Fountain Avenue produced to Indiana Avenue except where it deviates from a straight line by following the channels of the Los Angeles River (formerly the Porciuncula) and the Arroyo Seco. On the east Indiana Avenue; on the south, the line of Exposition Boulevard and Olympic Boulevard produced from Hoover Street. Quite noticeable within the area described is the orientation of the streets running several degrees from cardinal direction.

As with previous surveys, Hancock used a landmark structure as his starting point. He wrote "Commenced September 13, 1858, at the center of the Plaza in front of the Catholic Church of the city, at which point I put a post (identified with the initials) C.L.A. (City of Los Angeles) and charred stake . . ." The posts referred to in the survey notes were furnished by the Mayor and the common council of the City of Los Angeles and described as follows "squaring 6 inches, 7 feet in length, 3 feet in the ground."

LECOUVREUR SURVEY



FRANK LECOUVREUR

Prior to adoption of the Los Angeles City Charter in 1889, the terms "City Surveyor", "City Engineer", or "City Surveyor and Engineer" were used interchangeably to refer to the same position. Surveying obviously was of primary importance in Los Angeles from the time of American Occupation of Los Angeles until the turn of the Century and the city burgeoned.

Perhaps one of the most colorful Engineers the City of Los Angeles ever had (he was then called a Surveyor) was Frank Lecouvreur who held this position in 1868-69.

Apparently born in Germany, he came to California by way of the Horn. One historian and prominent resident of the time recalled his arrival.

"When the excitement about the gold finds along the Kern River was at its height, Frank Lecouvreur arrived here (Los Angeles) March 6th, on the steamship America, lured by reports then current in San Francisco. To save the fare of five dollars, he trudged for ten hours all the way from San Pedro, carrying on his shoulders forty pounds of baggage; but on putting up at the United States Hotel, then recently started, he was dissuaded by some experienced miners from venturing further up the country."

Soon after, Lecouvreur took a job in a saloon, but understandably disliking his duties after being shot at several times by patrons as expressions of disapproval for the way he served them, he went to work for a carriage painter named John Goller.

Later, he took up surveying when he went to work for Captain Henry Hancock, then county surveyor, as a flagman at \$60.00 a month (later raised 25%) on a trip to survey the Mojave.

In 1869, he undertook to survey the City, a task during which he left no doubt in his reports to the Mayor and Common Council that previous surveys, particularly the Ord Survey, was "utterly valueless."

Bad as this survey apparently was, "we might get along well enough, had the fieldwork of the survey been executed in a more precise and careful manner," Lecouvreur wrote in one report. He said city blocks, traditionally 330 by 600 feet in size, showed up in his survey as being larger than the previously reported survey as much as an extra 10 to 12 feet in depth. He said efforts to correctly correlate his survey with previous surveys caused him to be "vexed and annoyed."

Whatever the alleged deficiencies in previous surveys, Lecouvreur somehow managed to restore some order to what he believed was a chaotic situation. Notwithstanding grumbling in official reports on the work of his predecessors, he approached his tasks methodically and his work was noteworthy.

More sophisticated and much more thorough surveys were to follow but surely Lecouvreur must be credited with setting precisely high standards for those who would follow.

No. 59

Diagram
 of the
Western Boundary Line
 OF THE
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

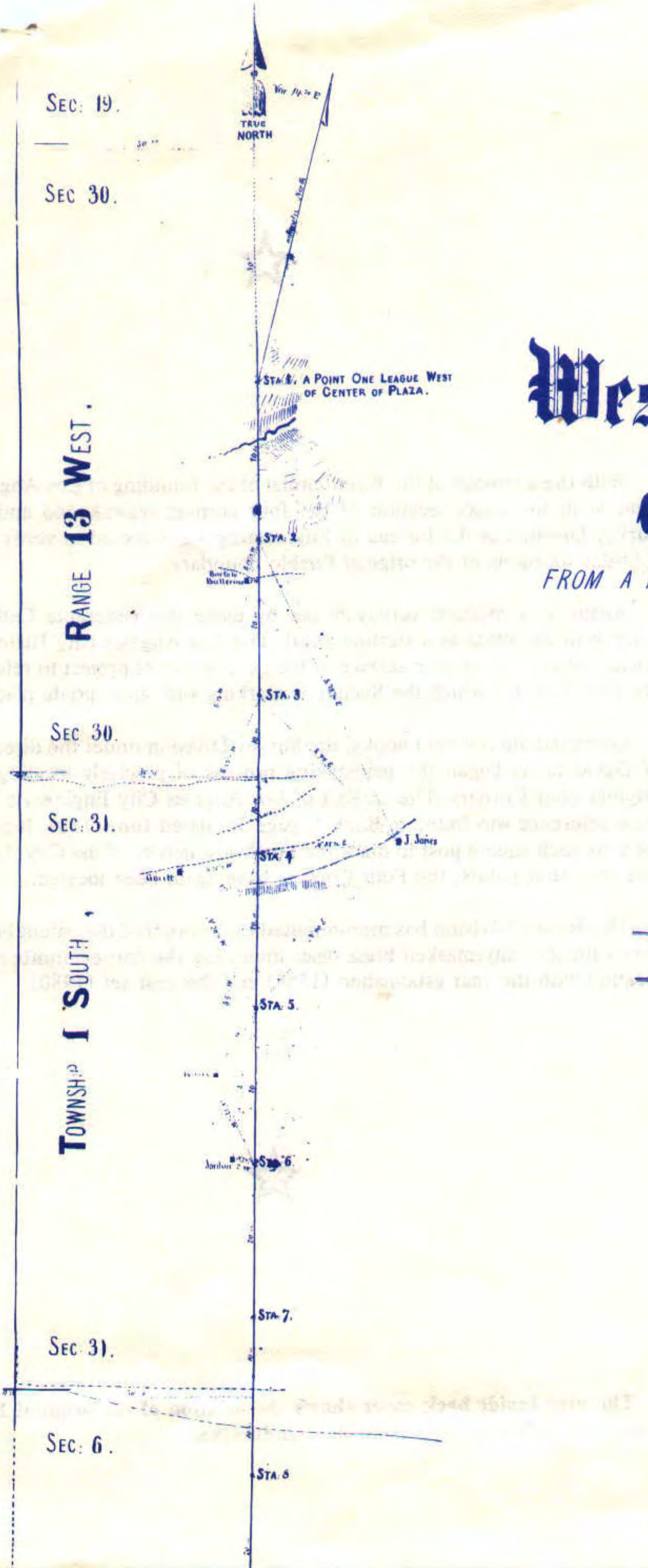
FROM A POINT ONE LEAGUE WEST OF THE CENTER OF THE PLAZA TO THE
 SOUTH WEST CORNER OF THE CITY LANDS

surveyed and established by Order of the
Common Council

JANUARY 11TH 1869

by
Frank Lecourcier
 Surveyor

SCALE: 10 CHAINS TO THE INCH.





City Surveyor George Chambers sights through an engineering transit at the exact location of one of the Four Corners of the original Pueblo.



With the approach of the Bicentennial of the founding of Los Angeles, interest in the exact location of the four corners reawakened and the Survey Division of the Bureau of Engineering was directed to verify present-day locations of the original Pueblo boundary.

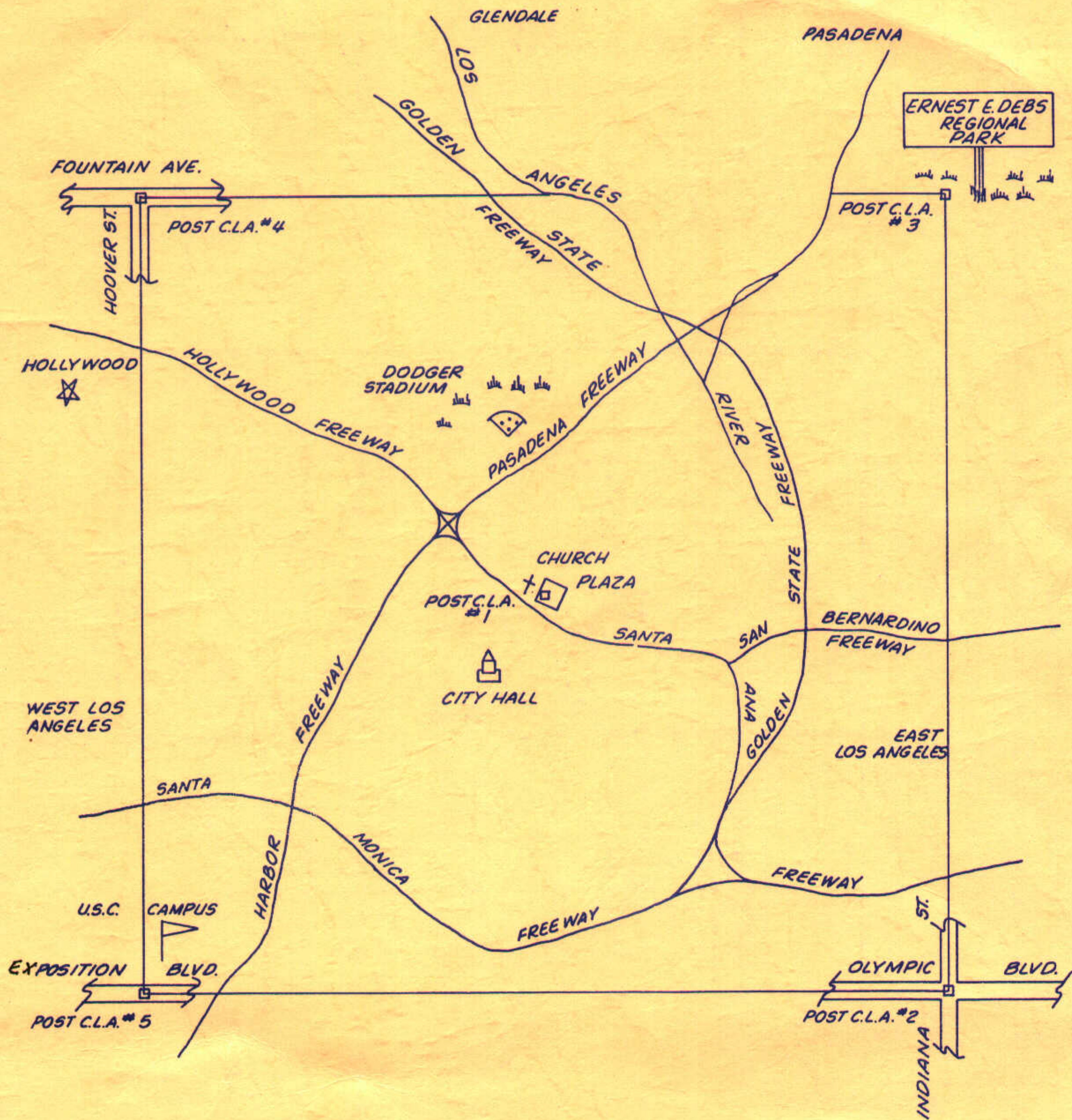
Again, this modern survey began by using the venerable Catholic Church in the Plaza as a starting point. The Los Angeles City Historical Society rendered valuable service in their independent project to relocate the Four Corners which the Society is marking with appropriate plaques.

Using old Survey field books, the Survey Division under the direction of David Dona began the painstaking process of precisely locating the original Four Corners. The earliest of Los Angeles City Engineer's field book reference was found in Book 1, page 36, dated June, 1886. It called for a six-inch square post to mark the northwest corner of the City. Using this and other points, the Four Corners have again been located.

The Survey Division has monumented each corner of the patent boundary with specially-marked brass discs indicating the corner number and location with the year established (1858) and the year set (1980).



The map inside back cover shows the location of the original Four Corners in reference to present-day landmarks.



Los Angeles City Map
No. 50 -

