Spanish and Mexican Land Grants

California was one of the last places that Spain colonized in the New World. In addition to establishing presidios and missions, the government of Spain also made land available to private individuals to found **pueblos** in the hope that new settlers would supply the presidios and missions with food and other products. Spain's hold on the territory did not last long, with Mexican independence coming in 1810.

Mexico's government also granted over 800 large tracts of land to Hispanic and White settlers. Most of these became known as **Ranchos**. Neither Spain nor Mexico recognized Indian ownership of these lands. Most of these grants were not accurately surveyed or mapped which made the claims difficult to prove when California passed into American hands in 1848. With thousands of new immigrants needing land and the owners unable to prove their claims in American courts, most of the grants were divided into smaller plots of land. The same lands that were included in the land grants of the Spanish and Mexican periods are now the cities, **suburbs**, and **agricultural** lands of modern California.

Image below: Diseño del Rancho San Miguelito. A diseño is a hand-drawn map used to mark the natural geography of a land grant. This colorful diseño from Monterey County shows trees, orchards, pathways, waterways, surrounding mountains, and other features

Spanish Concessions
Pueblo Lands

Mexican Land Grants
1822 – 1829
1830 – 1834
1835 – 1839
1840 – 1844
1845 – 1846
California Trail
Old Spanish Trail

Miles: 0, 25, 50, 100
Kilometers: 0, 50, 100, 200

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