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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

UNITED STATES INDIAN IRRIGATION SERVICE

Report on
Tejon Indians.

SUPERINTENDENT OF IRRIGATION

528 FEDERAL BUILDING
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

January 14, 1918.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs,

Washington, D. C.

Through Mr. H. M. Reed, Chief Engineer.

Sir:-

In compliance with your instructions under date of May 12, 1917, to Mr. C. B. Olberg, - Land-Allot 36300-14, 41923-17, P B N - in respect to ascertaining certain information in regard to the Tejon Indians, I respectfully submit the following report.

Particular attention was given only to the making of surveys and the collection of data in regard to irrigation matters, in view of the second paragraph of the above letter, and after reading the letters to Supt. Virtue from both yourself and Mr. Truesdell.

The investigations and surveys were made under authority No. 72709, granted August 10, 1917. The notes for the original and resurveys of the public lands covering that portion of the rancho El Tejon in question were secured by Mr. Palmer from the General Land Office in Sacramento while there upon another matter. Copies of the notes are attached to this report.

On Nov. 19 Mr. H. K. Palmer, Assistant Engineer, and one rodman, were detailed by this office to proceed to the Tejon Indian lands and make such surveys and investigations as were necessary to secure the required data. With the exception of about two weeks which Mr. Palmer spent with Inspector Linnen and party in the fore part of December, the work proceeded without interruption until its completion December 24, when Mr. Palmer returned and made up the map and report.

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The El Tejon rancho land lies upon the lower edge of the western slope of the Tehschapi Mountains near the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley and embraces a tract some 28 miles from north to south and from 5 to 12 miles wide from east to west, covering portions of T 30, 31 & 32 S, R 29, 30, 31 E, N D B & N, and T 10, 11 and 12 N, R 16, 17 & 18 W, S B B & N, in Kern County, amounting to about 183 square miles.

The headquarters of the rancho is located on Tejon Ranch Creek 24 miles south and 15 miles east of Bakersfield in Twp. 11 N, R 17 & 18 W, S B B & N, at an elevation of about 1450 feet.

The portion of the ranch land occupied by the Indians is located in a salient of the Tejon Rancho extending up Tejon Canyon and lies in Twp. 11 N, R 16 & 17 W. It is about 4 miles northwest of the ranch headquarters and the village is 23 miles south and 19 miles east of Bakersfield.

The Tejon band of Indians have been living in the Tehschapi Mountains on the southern edge of the San Joaquin Valley since before the coming of the Spaniards to California. They were christianized by the Spanish padres and during mission days the priests from the Santa Barbara Mission used to make trips across the mountains to conduct religious services among them. Their lands were either adjacent to or included in the old Spanish grant known as the El Tejon Rancho. So far as we can tell from Indians of the present time, the old Spaniards did not molest them to any great extent.

After the Mexican War the United States recognized all the old Spanish grants, and all such grants were surveyed by the General Land Office. These Spanish grants had very vague boundaries according to the terms of the original grant, so that there was more or less latitude in fixing the final boundaries at the time of the survey.

The El Tejon Rancho was surveyed while General Beale was Surveyor General of California, and he soon afterwards acquired the ranch. Whether or not the original Spanish grant was intended to include the Indian land is not known, but the grant as finally surveyed did include this tract.

Soon after this the Tejon Reservation was established and General Beale was appointed Indian Agent. However, it

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was soon learned in Washington that the land was in private ownership and the reservation was abandoned.

The section of the El Tejon Ranch occupied by the Indians is one of the best parts of the ranch, from which the Indians showed their usual disinclination to move. General Deale evidently felt that any violent ejection of them would cause trouble from the Indian Service, and also deprive him of many of his cowboys. He therefore inaugurated a system of mild persecution which compelled many to move away.

The area which the Indians have been allowed to cultivate has been steadily decreased until now it is reduced to 65 acres. Although naturally a stock raising country, the Indians have never been allowed to own any stock except a team of horses and a riding horse for their own working for the ranch.

Whenever an Indian died or moved away, leaving his house vacant, the house was immediately destroyed and the land formerly cultivated by him was thrown open to the cattle range. This custom is still practised, the latest case being that of Sebastiana Hignio. She originally lived on Cedar Creek, where a small ditch carried water out of the deep canyon. About fifteen years ago her house was destroyed and she was compelled to move to what is now the upper allotment. There she cultivated a small tract of 2-1/2 acres and started a small orchard. She died in Feb., 1917. Her only heir was a grand-daughter, Juana Hignio, who was married and lived about a mile below the old house. Immediately after the death of Sebastiana, her house was destroyed by orders of Mr. J. J. Lopez, the manager of the El Tejon Ranch. In July, 1917, this place was rented to an Italian who not only cultivated this lot but appropriated most of the water used by the Indians.

As a result of this treatment, many of the Indians have moved away, some few going to Bakersfield, where they are exposed to all the evil influences of the city; a few others to the Tule River Reservation; a few to Lenoore, Kings Co., California, where about twenty-five of their dependants now live; and more to the Kern River Canyon about 50 miles northeast, where they were given allotments about 25 years ago. As a result of this emigration on the part of the Indians, the population has decreased from probably 250 to 300 to about 60 individuals, or in the neighborhood of 100, counting those that now live at the

Missing

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ranch headquarters. As no census has been taken, these figures are merely approximate.

It is rather difficult to determine exactly how much land was formerly irrigated, as many of the old ditches were nearly obliterated by a sand storm many years ago, and they can now be traced only here and there, but it is probable that at one time they cultivated from 600 to 900 acres, which area has since decreased to 65.

The land occupied by the Indians is shown on the accompanying map. It lies along Tejon Creek at the mouth of the canyon. Of the 5564 acres shown on the map, only 1435 or 27% could be classed as arable, the remaining 75% being mountainous, suitable only for grazing. Probably 80% of this 1435 acres would be too badly cut up by washes, leaving 1185 acres suitable for cultivation, and 750 acres suitable for irrigation if the water is available.

The north slopes of these hills are covered with a dense growth of white oaks and buckeyes, but the south slopes are bare, except on the eastern end of the tract. This forest of oaks provides the Indians with acorns, which still form an important article of diet with them.

During the early days a large part of the arable land was cultivated by the Indians, and was so cultivated at the time the land was granted by Mexico and when surveyed by the United States about 1856.

In 1879 a flood, which must have been the result of a cloudburst, brought down a large quantity of boulders and gravel, covering a considerable portion of the land in the neighborhood of the lower settlement. In consequence of this flood the land has the appearance of being much rockier than it really is, as most of the rocks lie on the surface. Removal of the surface rocks will constitute most of the work of clearing the land for cultivation.

The water in Tejon Creek flows through the tract during wet season, but during the dry season it disappears in the underlying gravels a short distance below the lower settlement. No attempt was made to measure accurately the low water flow, as during the past season many streams in California were still flowing more than their normal on as-

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do not attend school. Unless something is done, these children will grow up unable to read and write, and, in most cases, unable to speak the English language. The chief, J. E. Losanda, has shown enough appreciation of the value of an education to send his two children to Bakersfield, but he is an exception to the rule. Of the present population, only two or three of the men can speak English, and none of the women.

Very respectfully,

Herbert W. Wright
Acting Supt. of Irrigation.

HVC/AM

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Panorama of lower end of El Tejon Rancheria, showing the land occupied by the lower group of four houses. Captain Lozada lives on the extreme right. He was born about 100 yards further up the valley. All the Indians living in this group have lived here all their lives. Old Indian ditches are located just beyond the present cultivated land, and at the foot of the hill in the foreground below the camera. Formerly the Indians cultivated all of the valley land as far down as the oak trees in the middle distance on the left. Photograph taken Sept. 6, 1917, by H.K. Palmer. Information from J.R. Lozada, Captain of the tribe.

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8. House and grape arbor of J. R. Losada, Captain of the
tribe of El Tejon Indians. Losada is standing under
the arbor.



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4. Land cultivated by Ramon Hignio (#VIII).

Dec. 22, 1917.

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5. Panorama of upper settlement of Kl Tejon Bancheria.

Panorama, looking north west, showing the upper settlement of the El Tejon Rancharia. The grape arbors shown in the picture of the ruins of Sebastiana Hignio's house can be seen through the oak trees on the left, at the foot of the hill and almost in line with the horse's head.

In former times the Indians cultivated nearly all of the low barren ridge on the right, and for some distance, said by the Indians to be about a mile, above this settlement. The old ditch is located above the road near the top of this ridge.

The feed in this part of the canyon is much better than below. The present crops consist of corn, beans and vegetables. Some peach and apricot trees and grapevines planted by the Indians are now controlled by an Italian named John Beloma(?)

Photograph taken Sept. 6, 1917 by H.K. Palmer.

Information from J.R. Lozada, Captain of the tribe.



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6. Looking up Cedar Creek. An old Indian ditch can be traced all the way from the creek to the edge of the canyon approximately along the red line.

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7. Ruins of the house of Sebastiana Hignio. El Fejon Hamberia. This house was of wood with an adobe chimney and was built about 1802. Sebastiana Hignio and her family were moved down from further up the canyon at the time the house was built. The grape ar- bors and fruit trees shown in the photograph were planted and cul- tivated by the Indians.

Sebastiana died Feb. 10, 1917, leaving only one grand daughter, Juana Hignio, who is married to a man living near Losada. By or- der of Lopez, the manager of the El Fejon Ranch, the house was im- mediately torn down. In the photograph J. R. Losada is seen stand- ing beside the adobe bricks which formed the chimney. Since July 17, 1917, the place formerly cultivated by Sebastiana Hignio has been leased to an Italian named John Beloni (?) who camps near it, and diverts all the water formerly used by the other Indians in the vicinity.

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8. Hillside on south side of canyon above upper settlement showing the growth of oaks and buckeyes. The Indians depend on these oaks for their supply of acorns, which form an important article of diet with them.

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9. Tejon Creek. The original bed of the creek, now dry, is on the extreme right of the picture. The creek now follows an old irrigation ditch for some distance.

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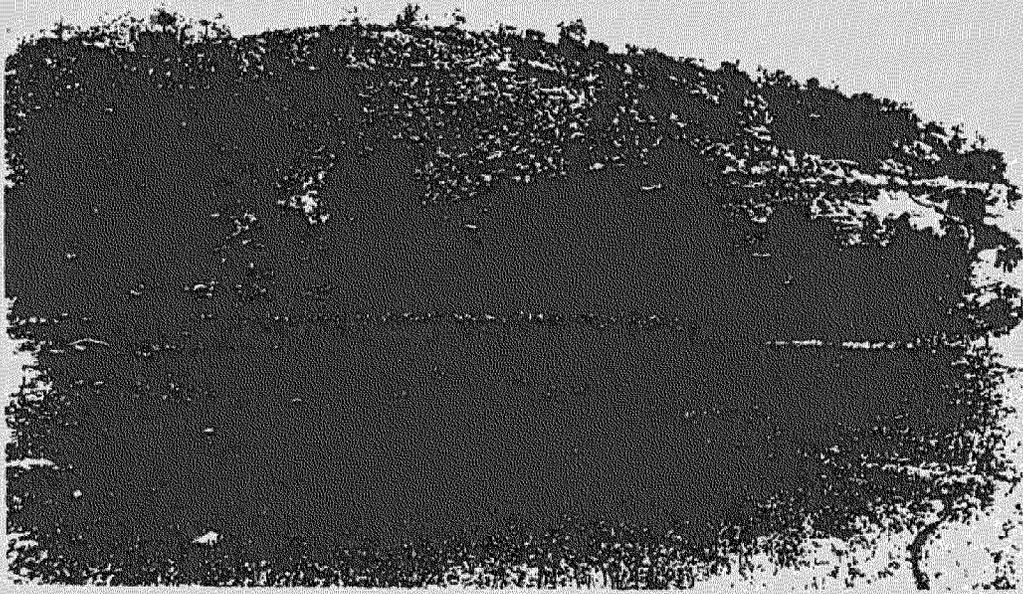
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10. Field of corn and beans belonging to Jose Katrada. This field is located in the upper settlement and the picture was taken from the upper house on the east side of the creek, looking southwest.

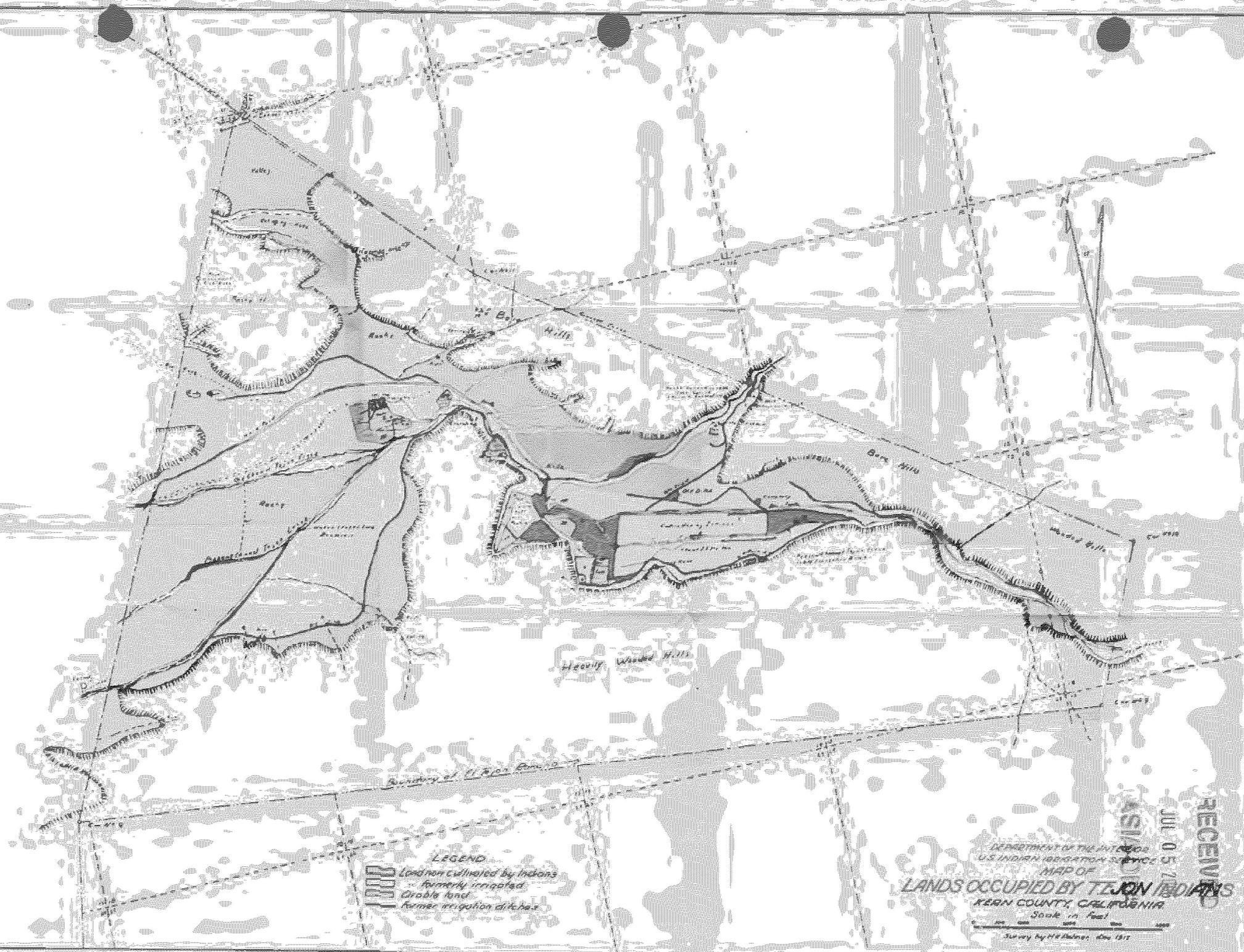
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 [Symbol: Dotted line] Land now cultivated by Indians
 [Symbol: Dashed line] formerly irrigated
 [Symbol: Solid line] Grable land
 [Symbol: Wavy line] former irrigation ditches

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 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 U.S. INDIAN IRRIGATION SERVICE
 MAP OF
LANDS OCCUPIED BY TIUJON INDIANS
 KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
 Scale in Feet
 Survey by H. H. Palmer, Dec 1911