

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION

OF

SAN BENITO COUNTY.

SAN BENITO is bounded on the North by Santa Clara and Santa Cruz; on the East by Merced and Fresno—the boundary-line lying upon the Mount Diablo Range; on the South and West by Monterey County. It is seventy-five miles in length, lying in a direction North-west by South-east, and is one of the newest counties in the State, having been organized only since March, 1874. It is ten miles in width. We judge its superficial surface to be about 750 square miles, or three hundred and eighty thousand acres. A late issue of the *Southern Real Estate Circular*, however, claims an area of 1,300 square miles.

San Benito was formed from Monterey County. The Gavilan range of mountains, formerly dividing Monterey nearly in the centre, presented an almost impassible barrier to the inhabitants North of the range, shutting them off most effectually from the county-seat, Salinas City. This range now forms the South-western boundary of San Benito, and the North-eastern line of Monterey.

The population of San Benito County aggregates about seven thousand. Probably the actual cash value of property will reach between three and four million dollars. Positively correct figures, however, are impossible at this time, as the county is too young to have obtained correct statistics. In fact we believe some of the taxable property has not yet been transferred from Monterey County—an obstacle sufficient to prevent any thorough investigation of this character.

The principal valleys of the county are the San Benito, formed by the extreme southern portion of Santa Clara Valley; Santa Ana, Quien Sabe, Los Mortes, Tres Pinos, and Hernandez, with portions of Priest and Bitter Water, Dry Lake, Tapo, and Bear Valleys.

San Benito Valley is watered by the San Benito and Tres Pinos Rivers. The soil in the southern portion of the county is a sandy loam, rich and fertile in the extreme. From the peculiar conformity of the land, and the fact that the ocean fogs in summer almost answer the purpose of rain, the soil is naturally productive. Fruit it is impossible to cultivate, the climate being inimical to such growth from the coldness and dampness of the atmosphere. The uplands, however, form somewhat of an exception to this rule; the soil being warm and gravelly, allows of fruit-raising to a limited extent. It can scarcely be said to thrive, however. The cereal products are wheat, oats and barley. In the bottom lands crops are very abundant, and the cultivator is richly and well repaid for the labor of tilling these fertile fields. This valley covers an area of sixty square miles, and contains thirty-eight thousand four hundred arable acres. Almost the entire valley is cultivated in grain, and contains a population of about 2,000 persons, in the agricultural portions of the valley alone.

On the eastern side of the county lies the valley of Santa Ana, fifteen miles square. Although small, this valley, rich in soil, presents an almost unbroken grain field, about 9,000 acres in extent. It is all bottom land, with fine irrigating privileges, derived from the Santa Ana Creek, which serpentine its way, bisecting the valley. It contains about 250 inhabitants.