

DESERT

KALEIDOSCOPE

... a variegated changing pattern of sand and mesquite, high mountain peaks and narrow canyons, majestic ocotillo and carpets of colorful desert blooms, glowing sunrises and iridescent sunsets. This is Borrego Valley, a 60,000 acre area in the northeasterly corner of San Diego County.

Civilization invades the privacy of this desert scene in the form of the community of Borrego Springs, more often referred to simply as Borrego. Completely embraced by one of California's last frontiers-Anza-Borrego Desert State Park—Borrego Springs offers a welcome relief to a parched land of little rain, hot suns, and restless winds. The green vineyards and white fields of cotton, tall tamarisks and stately palms, the lush golf greens and modern homes with swimming pools of Borrego seem proof enough that man has conquered the water problem in this desert valley.

Though it has a permanent population of less than 1,000, Borrego is an established and developing business community. Confidence in its potential growth is reflected in recent approval of the area for insured loans by the Federal Housing Administration and the establishment of the first lending company in the valley, the First Borrego Finance Co. A continuing increase in assessed valuations—

410% in a ten-year period—is yet another measure of the community's progress as well as an indication of its importance as a contributor to the economy of San Diego County. These factors are particularly significant when you consider that prior to 1946 there was only a handful of farmers and ranchers in the valley.

Yesterday, a barren desert; today, a veritable oasis. This is the story of Borrego. Pronounced Bore-RA Y-go, it is a Spanish word meaning "yearling lamb," and was so named because of the large bands of desert bighorn sheep that found sanctuary there in the early years. Though seldom seen the big game animals, whose numbers are now protected in California, still roam the Santa Rosa and Coyote ranges, northern boundary of the valley. The San Ysidro Mountains furnish a western boundary for the valley, the Yaqui Mountains a southern boundary, and the serrated canyons of the Badlands an eastern boundary.

Valley ranchers today reap rich har-

vests from this fertile desert land. This was not true of its first inhabitants, the Indians, who found it necessary to spend most of their waking hours in an effort to eke out a meager living from the desert. The Indians of the desert were for the most part either Cahuillas or Dieguenos of Shoshonean or Yuman extraction, and were a hunting or seed gathering people. Their pottery was plain but functional, and their implements made of stone, while crude, were adequate enough to satisfy their simple needs. Indian women sat long hours in the sun grinding beans from the mesquite bush into meal in hollowed depressions in the rocks called morteros. This meal accounted for a major portion of their diet. Rabbits, fish, deer, and bighorn sheep were supplemented by "delicacies" against which our coddled appetites would revolt, namely lizards, reptiles, rodents, grubs and insects.

The Indians led a primitive day-to-day existence for several hundred years before the first exploring party of white men

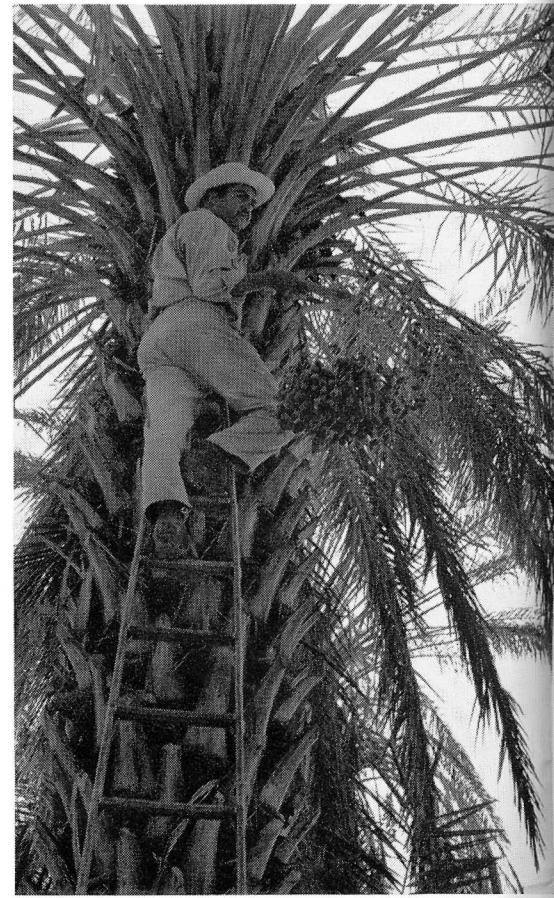
entered the valley in 1774. Headed by Juan Bautista de Anza, who commanded a small fort in Southern Arizona known as Tubac, the expedition was seeking a fast route to Monterey via San Gabriel Mission.

Things haven't changed much, for even then almost two hundred years ago it was the Russians who were cause for alarm which resulted in this trek into the desert. Having secured a foothold in the Pacific Northwest, the Russians were moving down the coast into California. Already their penetration had reached the area near Santa Rosa. Fearing that all of California might soon fall into their hands, the Spanish Government rushed orders to Juan Batista de Anza to find a shortcut to speed the flow of colonists to the threatened outpost. By establishing prosperous communities and occupying enough territory, it was hoped to block the Russian drift to the south. So it was that Anza and his party early in 1774 entered what appeared to them to be an almost end-

less desert wasteland.

After many days of travel, the springs at Borrego were a blessed sight indeed to the desert-weary expedition. Two days rest and it pushed on to discover another oasis in Coyote Canyon, ". . . a spring or fountain of the finest water, which runs for about two leagues, having willows most of the way . . ." as Anza described it, which they named Santa Catarina. His expedition a success, the following year Anza led the first colonists across the desolate route. A "route" was all that was destined for the next hundred years or so though, for the colonists found more fertile places in California to settle.

The desert held little appeal in those days, particularly since gold had been discovered in other parts of California. Still Borrego received a reasonable amount of attention from early prospectors once they heard that a desert guide by the name of Peg Leg Smith had found rich outcroppings of gold ore in black quartz



Date palms planted on the Ensign Ranch in the 1920's are still producing dates. Date palms have been known to bear fruit for 100 years.



The fertile Borrego Valley soil produces top quality cotton fluff and crispy lettuce above.

rock 'near three hills' in the area. Neither Peg Leg nor those who followed him were ever to locate the lost vein again. Many died in the attempt. Today, a monument to the old prospector stands at the northern end of the valley. Those who seek the lost mine are directed to 'add ten rocks to the pile to quiet the ghost of Peg Leg Smith.'

It was well after the turn of the century when the first hardy pioneers took advantage of the Desert Land Act and began homesteading in the valley. But the desert clung tenaciously to its wonton covering, and would-be farmers toiled long hours to clear and ready the sandy soil for planting. The fact that very often fifteen generations of man may come and go between the time the desert land is cleared and full recovery is made to its original state may be explanation enough for this stubborn resistance. Few of the homesteaders stayed long enough to "prove" their claims, though the scars of their efforts remain today as visible evi-

dence of their having come and gone.

First to turn desert farming into a profitable operation was the Ensign family. Acquiring 160 acres in 1926 under the Desert Land Act, O. H. Ensign with sons Paul and Roy sank a well and planted a small orchard to prove their claim. Ensign had put his knowledge as a reclamation engineer to good use when he selected what he considered to be "the best property in the whole area." His well, pumped by diesel power, produced a thousand gallons of water per minute to interlace the mesquite covered desert sand with thick green fields of alfalfa. Another innovation was introduced in the desert scene the following year with the planting on the Ensign ranch of date palm offshoots from the Coachella Valley. Thus began San Diego County's only commercial date plantings, from which the first dates were harvested in 1939.

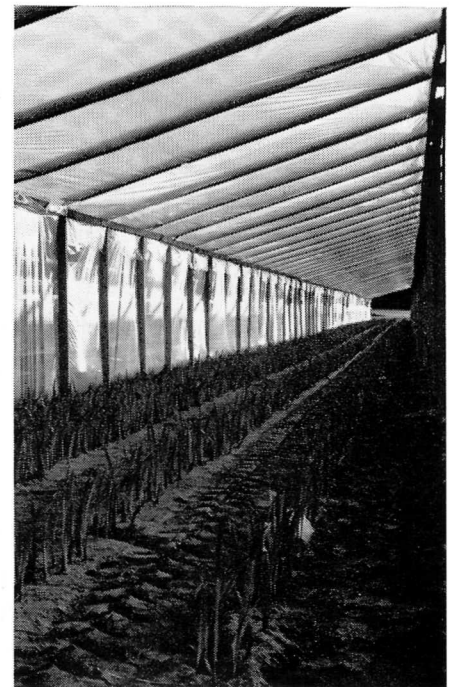
With exception of the sizable Doc Beatty ranch at the mouth of Coyote Canyon, the Ensigns' neighbors-few in num-



Some 1500 acres of grapes are under cultivation in the fertile Borrego Valley.



Fields of grapes are protected from the wind by long rows of tamarisk trees.



Acres of gladioli are grown under cover at the Fortiner ranch.

The desert climate is likewise favorable to citrus crops, including grapefruit.

ber and scattered throughout the valley—farmed only small patches of the desert. Meanwhile, the Ensigns increased their holdings over the years until their ranch took in 1160 acres of the fertile valley land and became a self-sufficient community in its own right.

During the 40s the Ensigns purchased a herd of Jersey cows and added dairying to their other operations in the valley. Then came World War II, and the nation was plunged headlong into a new way of life. Even this secluded desert valley has soon to feel the effect of the war-time activities. The Marines landed, and a large part of the ranch officially became Camp Ensign. Serving first as an artillery range and later as a truck driving school where the Marines pitted wheels against rugged expanses of desert sand, the camp played an important part in the training of men for the North African campaign. The Ensign well with its diesel-powered pump without strain furnished water for both ranch and camp.

When the war ended only about 200 acres were under cultivation in Borrego. While some field crops were still being



In Borrego it's possible to own a home right on the golf course. Fairway homes are built in four-house complexes, each complex having its own swimming pool.

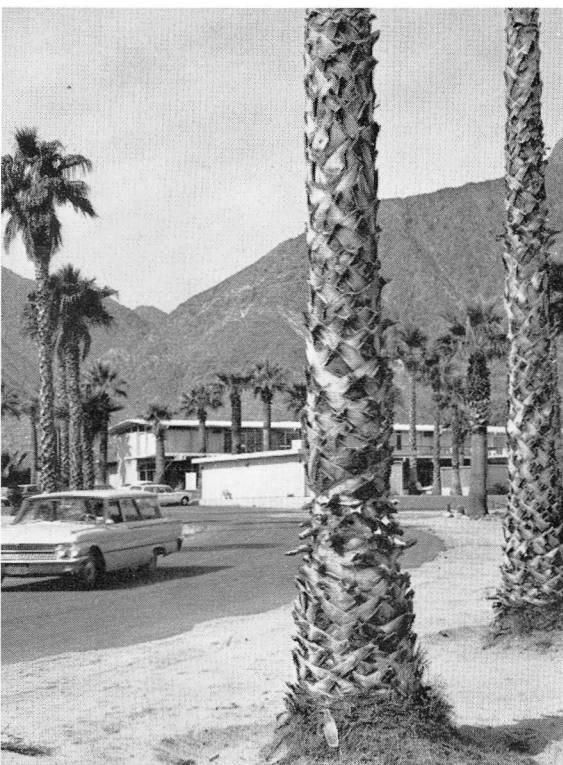


The beautiful La Casa del Zorro resort hotel has a uniquely shaped swimming pool.

Borrego Palms Resort also offers complete accommodations to the desert vacationer.



Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Andres have brought a new type of home ownership to the Valley in their Sun and Shadows cooperative homes development, complete with swimming pool and recreation area.



harvested on the Ensign ranch, the operation had diminished considerably. In 1957, the ranch was sold for the first time in history to Patrick Nolan, who immediately undertook the task of re-establishing the date and farm production.

By 1959 there were 3600 acres under cultivation throughout the valley, producing crops such as alfalfa, cotton, asparagus, lettuce, grapes, citrus, and commercial flowers, principally gladioli, bells of Ireland, and stocks.

Since the days before electricity usually bring to mind the days of the covered wagon, it's difficult to visualize an area such as Borrego, only 90 miles dis-

tant from San Diego, with no electricity as recently as 16 years ago. It's a fact. In 1945 the San Diego Gas & Electric Company completed a 14 mile line into the valley at a cost of \$600,000 in answer to a request for the service by the DiGiorgio Fruit Corp.

The DiGiorgio Fruit Corp. purchased 2,000 acres in the central part of the valley and planted grapes on a major portion of the land. They desired the electricity to replace the not always dependable gasoline engine method of pumping water for crops. The DiGiorgio ranch was the first to combine electric power and sub-surface water for a large scale

agricultural development, and it now has 21 wells in operation throughout the ranch.

The DiGiorgios chose the Borrego Valley location for their grape orchards with good reason. The valley's warm climate and ample water supply provides a combination of elements that is hard to beat. The results are twofold: first, the grower is reasonably certain of a bounteous harvest, and second, he can expect that his grapes will reach the nation's markets well ahead of those from other parts of the state, thus commanding a top price.

Bringing electricity to Borrego was the first major step toward a steady growth for the community. That growth is evidenced by the need for additional facilities in a nine year period. In 1954, a 69,000 volt line was extended into Borrego. Two new substations were constructed, one at the Narrows to reduce voltage from an 88,000 volt line to feed through the extension, and one at Borrego Valley Road to feed three outgoing 12,000 volt lines, representing another \$272,000 investment.

Trace the growth of any Southern California community and you will find

dified both the park boundaries and the private ownership boundary.

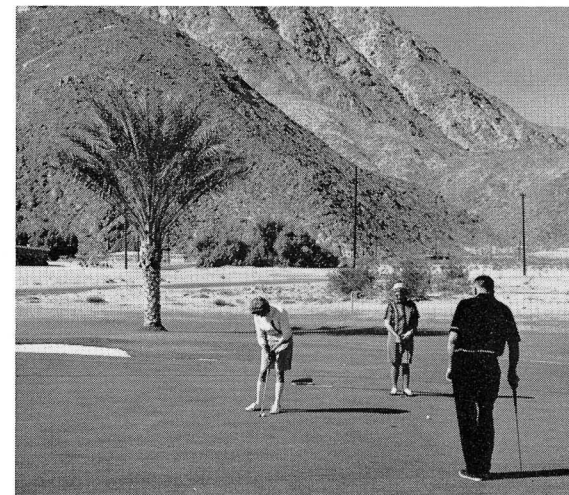
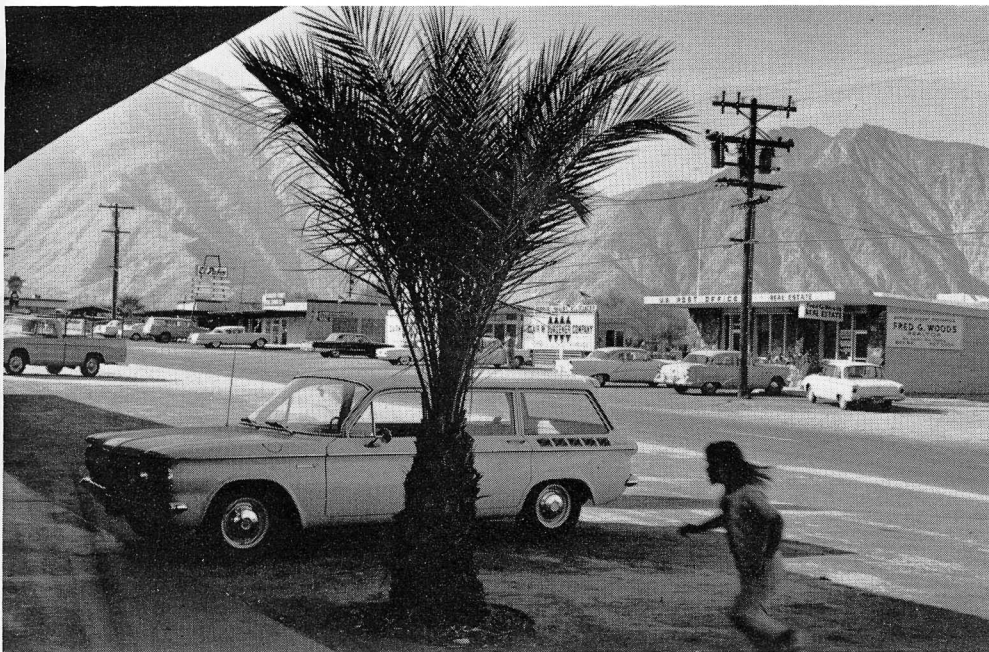
Anxious to get his development under way, Burnand convinced two Los Angeles businessmen of the potentials of the valley, and in 1947 they formed the Borrego Land & Development Company with some 10,000 acres of desert property under their control. The original Borrego Springs subdivision included 1800 acres and was carved up into generous sized lots of one acre or more in order to preserve the beauty of the desert. The Los Angeles interests have since been purchased by James S. Copley, William H. Black, and the DiGiorgio Fruit Corp.

This was but the beginning, however. Since that time a number of other subdividers and developers along with real estate brokers and early residents of the valley have worked just as hard and long to help promote and build the community. Outside investors have seen fit to put their dollars into the community not for a quick profit, but simply because they believe in and have faith in the future growth of the desert community. There is no "boom" type development, just a slow, sound growth. To give credit where

views, for although the valley may look perfectly level at first glance, elevations vary as much as 400 feet.

Other residents prefer locations a little closer to community activity, and the largest concentration of homes at the present time is in the original Borrego Springs tract. More recently a number of prestige homes have been built around the De Anza golf course, one of Borrego's major attractions. This 18 hole championship course in the middle of the desert is becoming more and more popular for tournament play. The De Anza Desert Country Club, currently scheduled for a \$75,000 improvement program, was built in 1955 as part of a 300 lot subdivision by the Borrego Valley Golf & Improvement Co. While a number of home owners in the golf course subdivision are permanent valley residents, others hail from such far-away places as Canada, Illinois and Missouri.

One has only to look at the Chamber of Commerce membership list to see what widespread interest there is in this desert community. Membership not only includes many San Diegans, La Jollans, and other Californians, it includes just as many who



No golf course can claim a more beautiful setting than the 18 hole championship course in Borrego.

Hub of the business community in Borrego Valley is Christmas Circle.

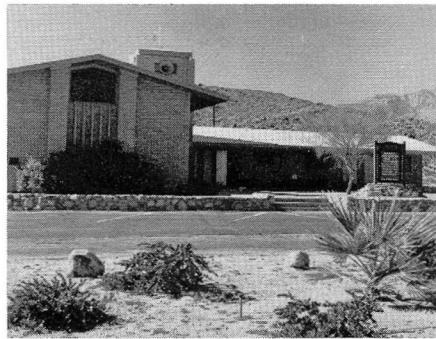
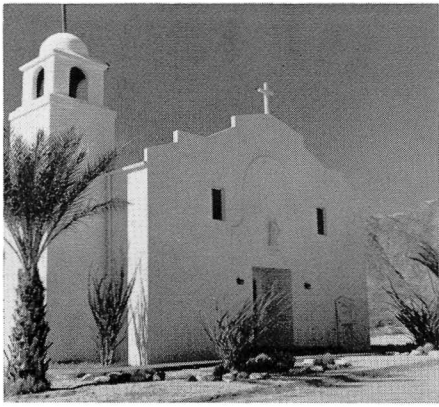
a "subdivider" as the motivating force behind the first substantial development. Borrego is no different than other communities in this respect. Credit in this case goes to A. A. Burnand, Jr., the original subdivider of Borrego Springs, for spearheading the first development of homes in the valley. Burnand began by purchasing most of the privately-owned land in the valley as well as some irregular right-of-way land belonging to the Southern Pacific Company. Further negotiations with the State of California, which likewise owned some oddly-shaped pieces of land, resulted in a trade of properties that soli-

credit is due would mean individually naming every citizen in Borrego for each and everyone is a staunch supporter and enthusiast of this desert community. Each is there because he enjoys and appreciates the desert way of life.

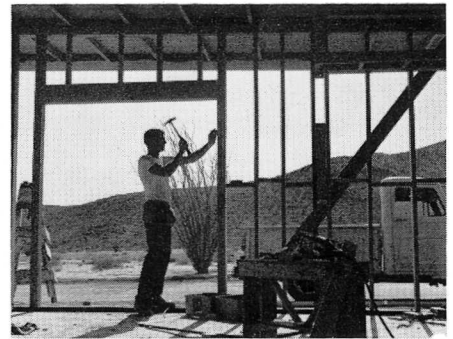
Some 450 homes are scattered throughout the valley. Since there are 60,000 acres, it's pretty obvious that there's plenty of elbow room for those who seek it. Some do, and it's not uncommon to find a home completely enveloped by the stillness of the desert, miles away from the nearest neighbor. Many of the home locations were selected for their choice

list residence in Montana, Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois, New Mexico, Utah, New York, and other parts of the nation. President of the chamber, well-known movie and TV star Gale Gordon, owns a home in the Tub Canyon area and makes Borrego his "home away from Hollywood."

Unique to this desert community is the Sun and Shadows cooperative homes development of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Andres. Built around a swimming pool and recreational area, purchasers of the first 16 planned units may enjoy these facilities as well as all maintenance and upkeep of



These beautiful churches play an important role in community life in the Borrego Valley.



For a home in the desert, special consideration must be given to building materials that will withstand both heat and cold.

their property for a low monthly charge. A paid membership in the Desert Club, one of two private clubs in the valley, also goes with the purchase of each unit.

Borrego is not a place that the motorist just happens to drive through. As yet it is an isolated community not on the road to anywhere. There are no rail, bus or scheduled air transportation facilities. The present road system with steep mountain grades might even be categorized as a "tortuous route" into the valley. Those who come to Borrego do so intentionally, for the only way of getting there is a turn-off from Highway 78. This is not likely to remain the case for long.

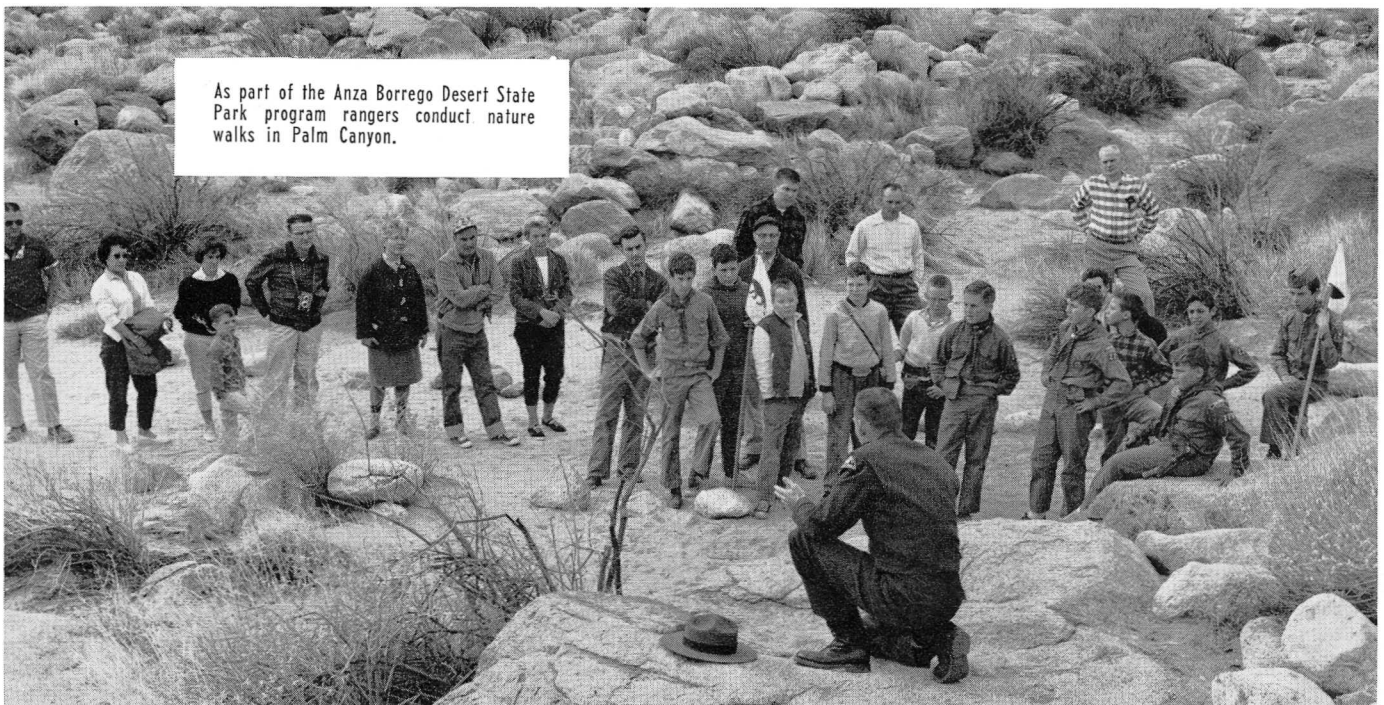
This road through Yaqui Pass, completed in 1934, provided the first graded road into the valley. Heavy use of the road during the war years when the Marines were training at Camp Ensign necessitated its being paved. In 1956, the County drew up a master plan for arterial roads within the valley which includes three new roads out of the valley. Monte-

zuma Road, which will enter the valley from the west, is already under construction. Honor camp laborers have completed some twelve miles, and the Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce is requesting the County Board of Supervisors to divert funds from road projects within the valley proper to complete the road from the valley to connect with the portion built by the honor camp crews. Another road in the master plan is the Coyote Canyon road to the north towards Hemet giving better access to the Los Angeles area, and the third is the paving of the old Truckhaven Trail to Highway 99. Completion of these roads will open Borrego Valley to "through" traffic, but funding and building roads is a slow process at best so it may well be several years before Borrego will feel the effects of any traffic not specifically bound for that community.

At present, the only way to get to this desert valley is to drive or to fly by private plane. Though not yet a reality, com-

mercial air service has been requested and an application is currently under consideration by the Civil Aeronautics Board. The County Airport has a 3500 foot runway, a full length taxiway, lights, a rotating beacon, fuel, a '15-plane tie-down area, and a Unicorn system. There are also three private landing strips in the valley.

Despite the transportation barriers, better than a half million people visited this desert community and state park last year. Anza Borrego Desert State Park, containing 470,000 acres, is the largest park in California and possibly the largest in the world. Scenery, history, nature and Indian lore attract large week-end crowds. Planned park programs of nature lectures, hikes, and jeep trips with park naturalists are designed to give visitors a better understanding of the desert. Many come with their trailers or camping gear and take full advantage of the park facilities; others prefer a little more luxurious accommodations at one of the 15 hotels and motels in the valley, all air-conditioned.





Jim Hutchison, Union Title customer relations representative follows a tradition by adding another stone to the pile at the Peg leg Smith monument.

As long as man can remember there has been water in Coyote Creek. Traces of Indian life can still be found along the creek bed.



and a number of them with swimming pools.

Christmas Circle is the hub of the business and service establishments in the valley. Roads from all sections of the valley lead to this focal point, conspicuous by the absence of even a single traffic light.

Actually, there's more going on in this quiet valley than meets the eye at first glance. Its importance as a resort area increases yearly. Active civic groups promote and sponsor community projects. Better than 125 students attend classes at the Borrego Elementary School. The *Borrego Sun*, a Copley newspaper published monthly, keeps subscribers informed on what's happening in the valley.

In the northeast section of the valley, on the floor of Clark Dry Lake, the world's largest radio-telescope constructed by the scientific research department of General Dynamics-Convair delves deeper into the wonders of space in a secret world of its own.

And early next year it is anticipated that valley residents will be enjoying TV programs produced by the three major networks. The high mountains surrounding the valley have thus far almost completely isolated Borrego from the TV world. A Phoenix firm momentarily expects to receive a permit from the FCC to construct and operate a tower atop the Santa Rosa Mountains. When that event occurs, a local corporation, Tele-Cable Service Corporation, stands ready to purchase a micro-wave signal service. Underground cables will then carry the service into subscriber's homes by means of a device much the same as a telephone jack. There will be no TV antennas to mar the aesthetic beauty of the desert. That this beauty shall never be destroyed is the wish of everyone who is a part of this desert community.

That Borrego will some day become one of the most desirable resort areas in the nation seems inevitable, for the desert is many things to many people. To the

businessman it may be a retreat or haven for relaxation from a round of scheduled appointments, meetings or phone calls. To the senior citizen it may provide the quiet, restful atmosphere he seeks for his retiring years. To the geologist it may be just the place in which to spend long hours exploring the fossil beds and marine life imbedded in the rocky mountains.

Ask any desert dweller why he lives there. He will tell you there's a strange and fascinating magnetism about the Borrego desert that's difficult to describe. It isn't alone what you "see," it's what you "feel" about the desert, a feeling that goes deep within the human soul. Perhaps it's the vast silence that engulfs you, the closeness to nature, the weirdly beautiful plant life in a sea of sand, or the peaceful solitude distant from a busy world. The decision is yours. In any event, there's a captive serenity unique to the desert. As for Borrego Valley, it is developing a character all its own unlike any other community in the nation.-P.M.A.

A view of the Borrego Badlands from Font's Point. The Point commemorates the priest who traveled with Juan Bautista de Anza's party through the valley in 1174.

