

Name: _____

Date: _____

Compare and Contrast (Handout #16)

Landowner Biographies

Dwight Whiting (1854–1907)

During the drought of 1863–64, many of José Serrano's cattle died, forcing him into financial ruin and his ranch into foreclosure. Los Angeles banker J. S. Slauson acquired the property and then sold it, in 1884, to Dwight Whiting, a Bostonian who had become a resident of the area.

Whiting, a forester and a recognized authority on eucalyptus culture in America, tried to recruit English settlers to become “gentlemen fruit farmers” in a village he called Los Alisos by subdividing the level land; planting olive trees, grape vines, and 400 acres of eucalyptus trees; and bringing the railroad through the property. When train officials asked what the local station should be called, Whiting's wife Emily reportedly suggested “El Toro” for a hapless bull that had recently fallen into a well and drowned.

Because blight shriveled the vines, and poor soil and fickle rains made agriculture difficult, the land was developed instead for residential use. Thus, what had once been the English farming village of Los Alisos and later the train stop of El Toro became the city of Lake Forest.

Richard O'Neill (1824–1910)

Richard O'Neill grew up in County Cork, in the heart of Ireland's dairy country. During the 1840s, a potato famine caused members of his family to emigrate from Ireland to the New World. They settled in New Brunswick, Canada, where they worked as fishermen even though Richard's father was a skilled beef butcher.

When gold was discovered in California, young Richard O'Neill sailed around Cape Horn to California, hoping to find his fortune in the waters of the Sacramento River. Unable to strike it rich, O'Neill set up a butcher shop in San Francisco, where he met fellow Irishman James Flood. With partners, Flood had made a fortune operating silver mines on the Comstock Lode. Impressed with O'Neill's knowledge of beef and cattle and with his business sense, Flood hired him to rescue several faltering ranchos.

So successful was O'Neill that he persuaded Flood to put up the money to purchase Rancho Mission Viejo, Trabuco, and Santa Margarita y Las Flores by promising to serve as resident manager. O'Neill introduced new cattle breeds, such as the British Angus and Hereford, and new agricultural crops, such as alfalfa and wheat. By 1907, at the age of eighty-three, Richard O'Neill had invested enough "sweat equity" at the agreed-upon compensation rate of \$500 a month to become half owner of the property, which included more than 200,000 acres and stretched from Aliso Creek (near El Toro Road) to Oceanside.

In 1941, as America was preparing for war, the U.S. Navy identified the need for a West Coast training facility and purchased the 122,798-acre Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores for this purpose. The land that had once belonged to Pío Pico, to Don Juan Forster, and to Richard O'Neill became Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Members of the O'Neill family gave the name Rancho Mission Viejo to their remaining 52,000 acres and adopted the "Rafter M" brand for their herds. Beginning in 1964, the family and its partners developed portions of the ranch as the planned communities of Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, and Ladera Ranch.

Lewis Moulton (1854–1938)

Lewis Moulton was born in Chicago. Despite growing up in a family of doctors and lawyers, he left Illinois for California in 1874 because he yearned for the outdoor life. Soon after he arrived in Santa Ana, he was hired by James Irvine for \$35 a month to do odd jobs under the supervision of Charles French, who was general manager of early Irvine interests on Rancho San Joaquin.

Ten years later, Moulton leased Rancho Niguel, which had previously belonged to Don Juan Àvila, and hired Jean Pierre Daguerre, a Basque shepherd, to supervise ranch operations. Moulton and Daguerre began raising sheep and cattle and growing barley and beans. In 1885, the success of their efforts made it possible for Moulton to buy the rancho, which became known as Moulton Ranch, and to make additional land purchases that increased its size from 19,000 to 26,000 acres. In 1908, Moulton deeded one-third ownership of the ranch to Daguerre.

That same year, Lewis Moulton married Nellie Gail. Born in Irving, Kansas, on December 8, 1878, Nellie grew up in Nebraska and then began teaching school near Seattle, Washington. Her father, John Gail, was a storekeeper in the community of El Toro (which was renamed Lake Forest when it incorporated as a city), and Nellie frequently visited him during the summer months. On one of these sojourns, she met and fell in love with

Lewis Moulton. Their marriage produced two daughters, Charlotte Moulton Mathis and Louise Moulton Hanson.

In 1938, after working the land for more than fifty years, Lewis Moulton died. For twelve years following his death, Nellie continued to manage the ranch before eventually turning the day-to-day operations over to Charlotte and Louise, their husbands, and Daguerre's three daughters. Beginning in 1950 and continuing for a quarter century, the ranch land was slowly divided and sold off, with the final purchase being the one made by the Mission Viejo Company in 1976. Gradually, what had once been a California rancho became part or all of the cities of Aliso Viejo, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, and Laguna Woods. A large hillside community in Laguna Hills is named for Lewis Moulton's remarkable wife, Nellie Gail.