The Changing Land of Many Hills:
A History of Reche Canyon

Reche Canyon is a short cut for drivers dodging the heavy traffic on the 60 and 215 freeways. To many who travel from the areas of Moreno Valley to San Bernardino and Colton the canyon is little more than a passageway to get to work more quickly. Huge numbers of people travel through Reche Canyon unaware of its rich and interesting past. Many of the Native American people, animals, and settler families that established this canyon and put it on the map have been forgotten by history. Few know why this particular canyon even bears the name Reche. Some residents recall a time when the Console or Reche families ruled the upper part of the Reche Canyon. Since then, however, part of Reche Canyon has evolved into a typical urban suburbia, while other parts struggle to sustain their peaceful rural lifestyle rarely found in Southern California. Few of these newcomers and commuters know that Reche Canyon is much more than a route that parallels the San Timoteo and Pigeon Pass canyons, that it is there where the Reche and Console families once planted roots and in the process helped the area thrive and become an extremely desirable place to live in the Inland Empire. Reche Canyon’s history is virtually unknown to anyone except longtime residents and is seldom written about, which has left even researchers stuck between fact and legend. Reche Canyon was once know for the pioneers that braved the hills of the canyon and a closer look at the history of the founding families of Reche Canyon will show just how much of an impact this area once had and what its role has become in the larger picture of the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

Long before California became part of the United States of America, Reche Canyon was inhabited by a variety of dangerous animals and small tribes of Cahuilla Indians who hunted and gathered along the “scrub oaks, chamise bushes, green sages, and thick grass” that filled the
canyon.¹ The Cahuilla called the canyon area *Humaba* (other spellings include Jumuba and Humabba) “The Land of Many Hills”² which is an excellent explanation of the canyon’s mountainous terrain. “Bounding deer were plentiful, predatory cougars [and mountain lions] roamed freely, black bears hunted at leisure, coyotes ruled the ridges and hawks owned the skies,” while a half dozen or more Cahuillas made their small villages in this beautiful area.³

The Native Americans set up their grass and mud wickiups⁴ along a stream, called Homoa creek⁵ (also referred to as Homora) by its first inhabitants, that flowed year around from the numerous natural springs of the upper part of the canyon.⁶ Sadly, over the decades, many springs have run dry, and the Homoa creek that once flowed year-round has become non-existent except when there are heavy rains. The Native Americans had a seemingly limitless abundance of game and natural resources, but they quickly found that this Canyon had more to offer than meets the eye.

Reche Canyon is unique from the surrounding San Timoteo and Pigeon Pass canyons of this watershed because of its distinctive natural springs.⁷ The Native American people of the entire San Bernardino Valley considered the springs of the Canyon sacred ground and the waters a preventative or cure for all of their ills.⁸ According to legend handed from generation to generation of Native American shamans and storytellers, the springs were called “Two Sisters

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⁴Wickiups were homes of hunting and gathering peoples who moved from place to place, sometimes staying perhaps a few days or several weeks in one location. Their homes were easy to construct from wooden sticks and brush found at each campsite. Whereas tipis were tall and cone-shaped, wickiups were short and squat. But unlike tipis, which were taken apart and moved from place to place, wickiups were just left behind when Indian families moved on. For more information refer to http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/houses/wickiups.html
⁷Watershed is A drainage basin is an extent of land where water from rain or snow melt drains downhill into a body of water, such as a river, lake, reservoir, estuary, wetland, sea or ocean. The Reche Canyon Watershed dumps into the Santa Ana River.
and Brother Life Springs.”9,10 One story tells of a family of five with three small children that camped near the springs to gather wild berries, roots, and herbs. As they gathered, the three young children wandered off in the narrow part of the upper canyon.11 Shortly thereafter the parents and relatives went in search of the missing young ones, and followed their tracks, which ended near three newly created springs. Dumbfounded, the searchers consulted their local shaman (the local medicine man and sage of the tribe). After much deliberation and ceremony, he declared that the Great Spirit had taken the children and the parents should not grieve because this was considered a good omen.12 The shaman explained that the children were taken, but in return the Great Spirit had left three healing springs to save the lives of these tribes and keep them healthy.13 “From that day tribes brought their sick to the springs and built temescals, or sweat lodges, out of brush and mud”14 where they would dwell and drink from one of the springs selected by a shaman after ritual. Many Native Americans traveled to the sacred Two Sisters and Brother Life Spring but despite the many travelers, excavation of the area has never found any implements of warfare. “Authorities on Indian Lore…claim that this is proof of the legends which indicate that all who entered [this] ‘valley of health’ did so on a peaceful footing, and that no battles ever marred the little ravine’s quiet [landscape,] which was dedicated to the Great Spirit, with the mineral waters blessed by his hands.”15 For many Native Americans sojourns to the springs became an annual event, and even as others arrived to make the secluded canyon their home, until more recent decades, Native Americans still came to these curative springs.

9 Other spellings of the springs include “Two Sisters and One Brother New Life Springs,” “Two Sisters and One Brothers Life Springs,” and later “Console Springs”
13 ibid.
As the first non-native born settlers took notice of the wealth of the lands of the San Bernardino area, they quickly took notice of the Native Americans’ interest in the acclaimed ‘valley of health.’ Soon Europeans found the new world and eventually the valleys of California. Spanish Catholics established missions in the first attempt to colonize the Pacific Coast region and give Spain a valuable toehold in this frontier land. The Spanish explored California, tried to convert the Native Americans to Christianity, and discovered its hidden treasures. “The Valley of San Bernardino and all the other great inland valleys were as an unknown country to the Conquistadors and the Franciscan Padres until shortly before the time Padre Dumetz came over from the San Gabriel [mission] and founded San Bernardino […], but it is known that the padres of San Gabriel had long had their thoughts on [San Bernardino] Valley”\textsuperscript{16} for various reasons. Early accounts tell of Native American families from the San Luis Rey and San Gabriel missions taking children to the Two Sisters and One Brother springs for medicinal purposes even though the trip could take days to complete. After a while a priest asked them what they were doing to heal the sick children and they explained they merely drank and bathed in this mysterious spring. The priest then asked them to bring back water for his own uses and he discovered it worked as a useful medicine.\textsuperscript{17} With this valley of healing “being far away for these people to come get [the] water and mineral, the missionaries established a mission in old San Bernardino so they could be near these”\textsuperscript{18} curative springs and have a ready supply for their medical uses.

While new settlers flowed in to the beautiful area of San Bernardino most considered the land the Native Americans held sacred as worthless. Looking for a place to call his own, an adventurous explorer named Anthony Reche found paradise where others saw only worthless

\textsuperscript{17}"Console Springs: Strong Mineral Salts" Console Springs Pamphlet. (Oct 1912).
\textsuperscript{18}Russ McDonald & Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 1.no. 1 (September 1978), p.3.
land. “Though earlier settlers the Lugos, the Mormons, and later the Americans had all preferred the fertile flatlands, Anthony Reche found what he was seeking in the silent hills…that the white settlers of the [San Bernardino] valley called the ‘badlands.’ Long before Anthony Reche’s path led him to California, his older brother Vital would aid in guiding him to where he would discover the canyon that would one day bear his name.

The Reche brothers came from a family of seven from Nicolet, Canada. “In 1849 the siren voice of gold in California cried out and 24-year-old Vital, strong-willed and determined, answered” while Anthony, 16, was left to wait until he was old enough to begin his own adventures. Vital Reche sailed to Panama finding his way through the swamps of the Isthmus to board a ship that would bring him to the port of San Francisco. It was here that he would begin his quest for gold and riches. Vital found his opportunity not in the gold fields with the miners but in a partnership with Captain H. Parkell whose crew had deserted him to take a chance to strike it rich panning for gold. They beached the captain’s deserted ship, the Niantic, into a thick mud bank just off the corners of what are now Clay and Sansome Streets in San Francisco. Reche and Parkell then converted the deserted ship into a much needed hotel. The partners quickly became wealthy, but the many fires that swept through San Francisco destroyed any structures made of wood. When their hotel burned to the ground Vital decided to take his earnings, and seek prosperity in a new setting. After exploring California several times, Vital, along with his brother Anthony, who by this time had come to California in search of gold, headed to San Jose and opened the Reche Exchange Hotel in 1854. After five years Vital sold

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20ibid p.42.
22“Reche Boat Store Photo” An 1850 lithograph of San Francisco from: “Time-Life “49er’s”
out and headed south to join some of his wife’s family. Eventually, after much travel, they decided to homestead near a place he later named Fallbrook.

Anthony, “fruitless in his own search for gold…found he could make more following his trade as a carpenter and millwright.”\(^\text{25}\) While building a mill in Visalia, he met the woman he would marry, Menora Cayton. Anthony and Menora were married on February 22, 1861. Shortly thereafter they moved to the San Bernardino area, which had just begun to experience a gold rush of its own after the discovery of gold in Bear Valley and Lytle Creek. Anthony, like his brother Vital before him, cleverly opened a general store “to supply miners headed for a gold

\(^{24}\) “Reche Boat Store Photo” An 1850 lithograph of San Francisco from: Time-Life “49er’s”
strike” in any part of the San Bernardino Valley rumored to have gold.26 When Anthony had free time he explored the valley that he called home. Then he laid his eyes upon the Canyon he would one day claim as his own. “He saw the land of his dreams in the chamise covered hills dotted with scrub oak,” and he even found The Two Sisters and One Brother Springs that the surrounding Native Americans cherished. Fate, it seems, threatened Anthony’s dream when in 1862 “one of the region’s greatest floods came roaring through the [San Bernardino] valley, wiping out nearly every structure, including Anthony and Menora’s store.”27 Anthony and Menora lost most of their investment and left San Bernardino to find work and eventually ending up with Vital in Fallbrook. Soon “Anthony not only found it increasingly difficult to work under his older brother’s guidance but still cherished his dream to start a town of his own.”28 In 1876, he decided it was time to move to the place were he could step out of the shadow of his brother and make his own mark on California. Anthony homesteaded 160 acres where ‘he built a house, developed one of the many natural springs and began farming, raising bees and bringing in a large flock of sheep in the area that would from then on be called Reche’s Canyon.29,30

In 1877, just as Anthony Reche had settled in, the San Bernardino area experienced an exceptionally dry year, but due to his seclusion and the flowing springs of Reche Canyon Anthony prospered in harsh times. He introduced the Italian Queen Bee, increasing his honey production by twenty percent, and his sheep herd also grew.31 Soon Anthony made the trails, created by generations of Native Americans, negotiable, opening the roads for stage coaches and

26Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 2. no. 1 (September 1979), p.3.
28ibid. p.46.
29ibid.
30Early surveys by Fred Perris refer to the area as Reche Canyon.
31Russel McDonald and Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 2.no. 2 (September 1979) p.2.
freight haulers. On May 18, 1892, the ‘Old Riche Canon Road’\(^{32}\) was deeded to be a road for public highway purposes.\(^{33}\) Anthony quickly added 320 acres to his previous homestead, giving him ownership to practically the entire canyon. “A handful of families moved in to live near Barton Road at the lower end of the Canyon, but in its upper parts lived only the Reche family and the remaining Indians,”\(^{34}\) and it seemed that Anthony Reche’s dream of a town to call his own would one day become reality.

In relation to other areas in the San Bernardino Valley Reche Canyon was quite isolated, because of this isolation the Canyon became a safe haven for bandits and outlaws in the early development of Southern California. Once stage coaches began going through Reche Canyon, it was only a matter of time before people would use the land of many hills to their advantage to ambush or steal from unsuspecting riders. One tale maintains that, “an organized crime wave in Reche Canyon was broken up after outlaws stole money and as many sacks of flour as they could carry.”\(^{35}\) In their hasty escape in the middle of the night the outlaws had no clue one of the sacks had leaked a flour trail back to their hideout. Another story tells of a Mexican bandit named Castillo who held up the Butterfield stage coach, and escaped with a box containing $80,000 in gold bricks. Shortly after hiding his loot somewhere in the Reche Canyon, Castillo was shot to death leaving his gold. To this day the gold bricks have never been found.\(^{36}\) Lastly, while the remaining Native Americans of the area seemed to cause little trouble to the invading American settlers, for reasons that are unclear they openly attacked a wagon passing through the canyon.

\(^{32}\)The actual deed of San Bernardino County first record of construction on Reche Canyon road had various misspellings many spelled the name Riche which was wrong
\(^{33}\)County of San Bernardino, "Deed to Old Reche Canyon Road" Riverside Road Department, May 18th 1892, 11.
\(^{34}\)ibid.
Anthony Reche’s desire was to open the canyon to travel to Moreno Valley, Fallbrook, San Diego, and other areas. His idea was to open Reche Canyon to traffic like San Timoteo Canyon and Pigeon Pass areas that were parallel to Reche Canyon, but because the canyon was a dangerous and difficult terrain, Anthony’s plan could not be accomplished. Taming the hilly terrain of Reche Canyon has been a problem since people began to travel through it on anything besides their own two feet. Anthony Reche would have to make the Canyon easier to travel if he was ever going to have a successful town of his own, and his legacy would be determined by these efforts.

Anthony Reche tried to promote urbanization in Reche Canyon, but despite some initial success, his attempts failed because his ideas were considerably ahead of his time. Once he began to establish decent roads in Reche Canyon he desired to make a path for railroads to travel through the Canyon. Anthony drafted a map showing the ‘S.P. Railroad’ running through Reche Canyon aimed at promoting development of the Reche Canyon area, but the railroad was built around the west side of Box Springs Mountain on easier grade. Wagon traffic also found that path easier than going through Reche Canyon, but as the canyon traffic dwindled, Anthony still sought to make the town of Reche an important place on the map.

Anthony Reche’s dream of creating his own town looked as if it would become a reality on May 31, 1883, when he applied for and was granted a position as postmaster. He named his post office the Vital Reche Post Office. The post office was a fourth class post office, located

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38 This route is were the 60 freeway currently goes up to Moreno Valley from Riverside.
39 Tom Patterson, "History was Against Reche Canyon." *Out of the County's Past Tom Patterson Riverside Library Collection*, June 25th 1989.
13 miles south of Colton.\textsuperscript{41,42} “On November 26, 1887, the future of the town of Reche seemed secure as Anthony filed for and was granted the water rights to the Homora Creek that flowed through his canyon.\textsuperscript{43} He soon constructed a small store and stage coach office to service his tiny town of 20, half of whom were his own children or some other relation.

Anthony’s vision was undermined “as the town’s infant struggle lasted less than twelve years.”\textsuperscript{44} Vital’s health began to decline, forcing Anthony to travel from Reche Canyon to Fallbrook regularly, but “[b]etter roads were developed over more flat and desirable terrain from San Bernardino, Riverside, and Temecula,”\textsuperscript{45} leaving the use of Reche Canyon Road unpractical and out of the way. Furthermore, the arrival of the railroad left Reche Canyon even more isolated from the flow of regular traffic. “The town of Reche, for all practical purposes, ceased to exist in 1888, when the government withdrew its post office permit.”\textsuperscript{46} This left Anthony a broken man, and he returned to Fallbrook but continued to hold onto the land in Reche Canyon. Anthony continued to raise bees and sheep in Reche Canyon under a caretaker’s supervision. Then on May 27, 1898, at the age of 65, Anthony Reche drove his buggy down to talk with the new settlers of The Two Sisters and Brother Springs, Giovanni and Cipriana Consoli. He found a nice quiet place to watch over the Canyon and fell asleep, never to awake again.\textsuperscript{47} Anthony Reche was taken to Fallbrook for burial. Two months later a “savage brush fire swept through the

\textsuperscript{41}Fourth-class post offices and postmasters comprised the lowest tier of a classification system based on annual receipts and mail volume. These postmasters did not receive salaries like their first, second and third class counterparts. Instead, they earned a commission calculated on the annual sums for box rentals and cancelled stamps as well as amounts received from waste paper, old newspapers, printed matter, and twine sold. Typically, fourth-class stations were located on private property, whereas first-class post offices usually operated in government-owned or -rented buildings. The classification system is still in effect today. For more information check the National Postal Museum at “http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/museum/1_museum.html”

\textsuperscript{42}Russel McDonald, "Historic Reche Canyon Post Office." \textit{Reche Canyon News Vol.1 No.6}, February 1979, 6.

\textsuperscript{43}Russel McDonald, "The Reche Brothers" \textit{The Californians} (1989), p.46.

\textsuperscript{44}Russel McDonald, "The Reche Brothers." \textit{Heritage Tales}, (1984), p.27.

\textsuperscript{45}Russel McDonald, "The Reche Brothers" \textit{The Californians} (1989), p.47.

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{47}Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, \textit{Reche Canyon News}, vol 2. no. 3 (November 1979), p.3.
canyon, destroying his ranch buildings” eliminating any trace of the town of Reche.\textsuperscript{48} It soon became forgotten among the many hills of the Reche Canyon, and no one is completely sure where it once stood.

Sometime around 1894, Giovanni Consoli’s arrival signaled a third wave of people willing to try their luck in making their home in Reche Canyon. Where many saw nothing in the hilly terrain of Reche Canyon, Giovanni saw opportunity and prosperity, like Anthony Reche before him. Anthony Reche may have given up on the town of Reche, but Giovanni’s discovery of the beautiful springs of the upper Reche Canyon, were a way to make his own dreams a reality. With his strong will and raw determination, Giovanni thrived in the upper part of the Reche Canyon, but his life’s path took him on a long journey to the Canyon where he spent a majority of his life.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid. p. 4.
\textsuperscript{49}“Painters depiction of Reche Canyon Post Office” Undated
Although Giovanni Consoli made the Reche Canyon his home for most of his life, he explored the world and found the love of his life before he even set eyes on the San Bernardino Valley. Giovanni Consoli was the first of seven children born to the owner of a candy store and vineyard in Catania, Italy. Tragedy struck his family when many of the children got sick, and due to a doctor prescribing a purge medicine, which was ultimately poisonous, all of the children died, except Giovanni and his youngest sister who somehow managed to survive the ordeal. At a very young age, Giovanni apprenticed as a stonemason, a profession that would fund his adventurous lifestyle and his lifelong determination to strike it rich.

Giovanni, with a skillful masonry trade at his disposal, left his native Catania at the very young age of 16 years. There are various rumors about his departure from his homeland at an age when most would consider him far from an adult. One suggests that he left because he was in love with the daughter of a family with strong mafia ties and his life was threatened. Another legend suggests he left to avoid military conscription in a corrupt government that seemed to have a short future due to great political upheaval from fascists. Yet, other stories maintain that Giovanni left because Italy was in a depression due to bad harvests or simply that he decided to seek a better life abroad.

Giovanni’s travels took him across Europe to places like France, the Middle East, and Arabia, and eventually to South Africa. Like many of his generation, the desire to find gold led him to adventures in South Africa. Along the way, Giovanni learned to speak many languages eventually becoming fluent in French, Spanish and English, and could converse in German and

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51 "Picture of Consoli confectionary shop in Catania"
53 Florence Sheltiesam, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 7th 2009.
55 Florence Sheltiesam, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 7th 2009.
Greek, as well. Giovanni seemed to have no luck in finding gold in South Africa. After a brief visit to his hometown in Italy, he returned to South Africa a second time and then caught a freighter to South America to take his chances in yet another new land that still had gold to be found. Through his trials and adventures Giovanni somehow made his way to California near the Los Angeles area, where his path gradually turned toward Reche Canyon.

Through all of Giovanni’s trials and tribulations he traveled alone to find the better life he longed for, but he soon began to establish a Consoli family of his own. Sometime before 1887, Giovanni acquired a small boarding house on the famous Olvera Street in Los Angeles. There he met his future wife, Cipriana Acuna, a 16-year-old working at a Catholic book store on the same street as Giovanni’s business. Cipriana was half Spanish, half San Gabriel Mission Native American, who had been raised by a nun. Eventually, the nun got her the job where she met Giovanni. Giovanni (26 years old) and Cipriana (16 years old) married at Our Lady Queen of Angels Church on Olvera Street on July 3, 1887 the same street they most likely first crossed paths. Shortly thereafter, Giovanni applied for and received his citizenship papers making him a legal resident of the United States of America. Giovanni had started a family, and he needed to take more caution in pursuing adventures for riches, but he began one more trip searching for gold before he set his sights on the hilly terrain of the Reche Canyon area.

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57 There are no records of Giovanni Consoli in Ellis Island data records showing that he came to America a different way.  
60 Florence Sheltiesam, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 7th 2009.  
Giovianni and Ciprianna on their wedding day

The Our Lady Queen of Angels Chruch still stands today over 100 years later

63 “Giovanni and Cipriana’s Wedding day photo” 1887
64 Nick Perry, “Our Lady Queen of Angels Church Photo” (2009)
Stories handed down through the Console family tell of Giovanni taking his obsession for gold down to the Sierra Madres in Mexico. Giovanni’s new wife Cipriana said relatives had seen pack mules loaded with gold leaving central Mexico. Even though he had a very young child and another on the way, Giovanni headed south to find some yellow rock to call his own. The details are unclear as to what exactly transpired, but it seems that Giovanni made friends with the local Yaqui Indians, which aided in his search for gold. However, once he found gold he found trouble. The local government, bandits, or renegade Native Americans cut his lucrative adventure extremely short. There are various re-tellings of this family story, but the general consensus is that Giovanni left Mexico in a miraculous escape, but with very little gold to call his own. He then headed for the San Bernardino Valley for the safety of himself and his family. Fate led Giovanni to places where he would find a considerably different type of gold to seal his place in Reche Canyon’s history. Cipriana had family in both the Devore Pass and Redlands areas, which made the San Bernardino Valley as a good place to stop on the way back from Mexico as any other, and quite possibly a place to raise their new family. In the early 1890’s, Giovanni quickly realized that his trade as an exceptional stonemason was in dire need in the San Bernardino area, and he could create wealth with a hard day’s work instead of depending on his luck finding gold. He went to work doing a mix of jobs such as building bridges, walls, and other varieties of stonemasonry work. Family members say that Giovanni found work in Highgrove, San Bernardino, and he even helped build the original Victoria Bridge across the Tequesquite Arroyo in Riverside. Studies One project he worked on for some time was a huge stone retaining wall along a stretch of highway connecting Riverside to Rubidoux, which still stands today. One

65Jo A. Carlstrom, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 6th 2009.
A postcard of the original Victoria Bridge Giovanni worked on

stone along the wall has his initials carved into the surface. While Giovanni found work he explored the area and came across the land he wished to call his own. Giovanni had heard that land in the area was available to homesteaders willing to work and develop the allotted 160 acres. After living in the San Bernardino area for a few years, Giovanni quickly headed back to Los Angeles to apply for a title to the land on which he had previously set his eyes upon. On December 21st, 1899, Giovanni was granted a homestead certificate for the upper Reche Canyon. He quickly returned and made his way up near the Two Sisters and One Brother Springs, the place he called home for the rest of his life. Sadly, by the time Giovanni and Cipriana headed for the upper canyon, the Native Americans had almost become non-existent in

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67 "Victoria Bridge postcard photo" Circa 1900
the Canyon because most had moved or been forced to relocate on the reservation at Morongo.70 Nevertheless, “While gathering stones for construction…Giovanni noticed along the stream numerous Indian metates and Stone Manos71 close to some of the springs. Giovanni befriended the few remaining Native Americans in the area and discovered the legends about the significance of the springs in the area.72 He paid them a small sum of money to have the rights to the Two Sisters and Brother Springs under the condition that they could come up annually to practice their traditional ritual.73 He initially used the springs purely as a water supply, but afterward found it had many more uses. Bad luck struck the majority of people who lived in Reche Canyon, but where others had found failure, Giovanni found great promise.

Once in the Reche Canyon, Giovanni got to work developing the area to his liking. First he had to build a house, so he collected many stones from the riverbed of the disappearing Homoa creek. He swiftly put his lifelong profession to work building a home that would house his growing family. After he built the house he continued to build his family as well. “He had always believed, as had his father and grandfather before him, that if a man was fortunate enough to have many strong children and land of his own, he was indeed blessed by God.”74 If happiness came with many children and land, then Giovanni was an undeniably blessed man. Once Giovanni and Cipriana finished their house, they continued to build their family, eventually having 16 children together. Being a master stonemason, Giovanni built a fine house that few could replicate. In fact, part of the house still stands today. He added a wooden portion to the house, and then later he dug a wine cellar into the hillside. In addition, he built a house just for

70Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 2. no. 5 ( January 1980). p.3.
71Metates were bowl like hole craved in rock used for grinding meal, while Manos are the stones grinded in the Metates
72Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 2. no. 5 ( January 1980). p.3.
73Jo A. Carlstrom, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 6th 2009.
An artist’s depiction of the Console house

Piece of the Console homestead that still stands

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75.“Console Homestead Painting” undated
76.Perry, Nick “Picture of Parts of Console House That Still Stands”
the boys and a barn. With some hard work and determination he fashioned the upper area of the
Reche Canyon to his liking.

For a while Giovanni would travel out of Reche Canyon for work, but after being up in
the canyon, he discovered the healing powers of the many springs around his new home.
Giovanni had heard some of the stories of the Two Sisters and Brother springs, but thought
nothing of them because he was so busy building his home and trying find to find work.
However, one day he noticed his cattle licking rocks around the springs, so he zeroed in on this
place and collected some of the mineral, curious why his animals were drawn to that area.77 It
was either fate or destiny, as Giovanni’s oldest son, Dewey, became ill with tonsillitis around the
same time that Giovanni collected some of the mineral and water from the springs to which his
animals were drawn. Giovanni thought back to the legends he had heard about the springs’
healing powers and ground up some of the minerals and put them in water for his son Dewey to
gargle and drink.78 Surprisingly, Dewey was cured of his tonsillitis. This incident made Giovanni
a true believer of the powers of the springs that were literally in his backyard.

At first, Giovanni had no thoughts of commercially exploiting the Two Sisters and
Brother Springs for its healing powers and its potential uses as he was content to use the mineral
as a family medicine and purge.79 Other homesteaders had moved to other parts of Reche
Canyon and were amazed by Giovanni’s Native American tales and the proven results of his
springs. Giovanni finally envisioned just how worthwhile his springs could be if he took the
initiative. Later, another homesteader from the Reche Canyon, Dr. Rowell, astonished by
Giovanni’s stories, arranged for a sample of his water to be sent to a well-known laboratory in
Providence, Rhode Island. In time, Calder and Strickland Laboratory sent news to Giovanni that

77Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.7.
The Console family

The Giovanni at his springs

80 Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, “Console Family Photo: The Early Years” *Reche Canyon News*, vol 2. no. 4 (December 1979)

81 Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, “The Professor at Console Springs” *Reche Canyon News*, vol 1. no. 2
their analysis test number 14062 showed several silicas and sulfates such as ferric, ferrous and aluminum, which were used by doctors at the time to treat many illnesses.\textsuperscript{82} The water also appeared to contain a natural fluoride, which helps keep teeth clean and healthful. Many Console family members claimed they never had to go to the dentist because of the minerals in the water in the springs of the upper Reche Canyon.\textsuperscript{83} With the test results of his water and the few experiences Giovanni had about the health qualities of the springs, it was apparent that he could sell the water and advertise it as a miraculous healing tonic for people looking for something to alleviate their sicknesses.

Sometime around 1904, as Giovanni began to develop his springs he also began to develop the business that would make him renowned for his healing tonic. First, he dug a 50-foot tunnel into the granite of the main springs where he built a concrete wall half-way back to make a reservoir to collect and pool the spring water. He also began experimenting with various mixtures of his mineral water eventually making a ‘Light Mineral Water’ and a ‘Strong Mineral Water.’ Once he had a product, he developed directions about how to use his mineral water for different illnesses such as catarrh, dyspepsia, and leucorrhoea, just to name a few.\textsuperscript{84} Early on, Giovanni named his bottled water for the Indian legend about the springs and called his water ‘Two Sisters and One Brother Life Springs’ and ‘New Life Spring’ tonic. Eventually he settled on ‘Console Mineral Water,’ which became the name most familiar to people of Southern California. “Recognition was slow coming, but by 1911 the Console Mineral Water was well-established in the San Bernardino Valley. Several stores in San Bernardino, Colton, and Redlands carried his product.”\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{82}“Console Springs: Strong Mineral Salts” \textit{Console Springs Pamphlet}. (Oct 1912).
\textsuperscript{83}Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.6.\textsuperscript{84} “Console Springs: Strong Mineral Salts” \textit{Console Springs Pamphlet}. (Oct 1912).
The Giovanni filling bottles at the springs

A Console New Life Water poster

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86 "The Professor filling at Console Springs” undated
87 "Drink Console Water Poster." *The Californians*. June 1994
ROOT BEER
served made from Light Console Water
makes most excellent drink

With, the understanding, before this water to be beneficial in the treatment of ailments and diseases of the human body, must be used in proper doses, under medical supervision. It is a natural, mineral water containing balancing minerals, known to be beneficial for the health and well-being of the body.

RECIPE:
1. Take Console Water.
2. Boil lightly for 5 minutes.
3. Allow to cool.

Perry, Nicholas                                                                                                                           2009

88"Console Mineral Springs New Life Water Pamphlet" undated
At the turn of the nineteenth century healing tonics, elixirs, and syrups were in high demand and the market was exploding. People could find a remedy using almost anything in an age where medical science was just developing. This left people to sometimes search for ‘health’ tonics claiming to heal anything and everything. As many people moved to the untamed lands of California, many searched for natural remedies to cure their illness due to lack of modern medicine in the unpopulated areas of California in the early nineteenth century, these natural remedies became popular. Some seemed to realize that “most patent-medicines were loaded with alcohol, chloroform and, in some instances, cocaine,”89 so Giovanni decided to take a pure and natural approach to selling his “Healing Water.” He decided to sell the mineral water with nothing but the ingredients found at the springs area, staying away from anything that was possibly addicting. With an effective natural product to sell, Giovanni ventured out of the canyon, to let the healing powers of the water the upper Reche Canyon be known once again.

The first thing that Giovanni did was to prove to people that the claims he made about his water were true. The first step he took was entering his water into every contest he could including the Colton Carnival, the San Bernardino Valley Centennial, San Bernardino Festival of Arrowhead, and even the National Orange Show. He took first place for best medicinal or mineral water at every event.90 His waters consistently beat “Arrowhead and others in fairs, carnivals, and the early Orange Shows in the 1908-1918 periods.” 91 This record firmly established Giovanni’s water as the purest of the land. Giovanni also began gathering physicians’ testimonials as well as comments from happy customers who swore by the healing powers of Console Mineral Water. Giovanni flaunted all of these awards and testimonials to attract more

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customers for his product and made pamphlets, banners, and business cards to show the public what they were missing if they had never tried the famous Console Mineral Water.

Giovanni became an exceptional showman and salesman and proved his water was not just another elixir making claims it could not keep. His knowledge of many languages assisted him in promoting his waters and aided his showmanship. Sometime in the early 1900’s, to conceal his Italian lineage, he Americanized his name from Giovanni Consoli to John Console, the last name he used for his business.92 Later, a superior court judge was so impressed by Console’s discovery of the healing waters and of his efforts to distribute his water, that the judge conferred an honorary title of “Natural Professor.” He cherished this honor and insisted even his own family call him his “official” title of Professor.93 94

To establish a good reputation throughout the San Bernardino Valley, Professor Console used his healing water to help people in need and prove to the community that his water did have healing powers. There are numerous tales of John taking his water to people during droughts or epidemics to alleviate their suffering. One story told by many members of the Console family tells of the Professor helping people in the Highgrove area that experienced a typhoid epidemic and were destitute.95 He took the fresh water at no charge to help them in their time of need. The Professor would help cure their ills and, at the same time, make them true believers in his water, and thereby successfully acquiring more customers.

John wisely took advantage of the new technology at his disposal to make Console Mineral Water a successful business for more than a decade. It is unclear exactly when, but at the very beginning of marketing Console Mineral Water, John switched from using a wagon to using

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92 Lewis Garrett, *Place Names of San Bernardino County.* (San Bernardino: Lewis Garrett), 1995. p.46
93 Jo A. Carlstrom, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 6th 2009.
94 Many photos are titled ‘the Professor’ instead of John Console
95 Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.11.
Console Mineral Water at the Orange Show

Another fair to attract customers

96 “Console Mineral Water at Colton Carnival in 1914” undated
97 “Come Try My Water Photo” undated
a Model-T automobile for transportation. The purchase of an automobile started a fascination with motorized vehicles that remains strong in the Console family. Traveling on the unforgiving dirt roads of the Reche Canyon made horse drawn wagon time-consuming and unpractical. Plus, long distances the Console Mineral Water routes demanded made the automobile the perfect fit for his thriving business.

Once his water business was well established, John quickly formed a route around the San Bernardino Valley, the Los Angeles area, and even the Imperial Valley. In such a dry arid area water was sometimes the key to survival, which meant that fresh water was always in high demand. Soon, with the help of his sons, John set up offices in places as far from Reche Canyon as El Centro. They even delivered to a mining town called Randsburg. Rumors have circulated that “transported home-brewed liquids of perhaps greater strength” were in high demand at mining camps like Randsburg, especially during prohibition. However, there is no confirmation that John or the Console Mineral Water participated in supplying miners with these stronger brews. With the hard work of John and his family, the folklore of the Console Mineral Water Springs healing powers grew, becoming well known across Southern California.

From their first journey up to the Reche Canyon area, John and Cipriana worked hard to make their homestead a marvelous retreat for themselves and, later, for others. John quickly went to work making roads, flattening terraces, and building walls to make his dream home. Cipriana and their children were expected to work hard on the land as well. Eventually the Professor and his children attempted to build a road to the top of the mountain above the springs, which is now called Console Mountain, with the dream of building a resort at its peak. They only made it

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98 There are numerous photos of Console family member with automobiles in the early 1900’s when they were still rare.
99 Lewis Garrett, *Place Names of San Bernardino County.* (San Bernardino: Lewis Garrett), 1995. p.46
Console Booth at a 1916 fair

The Professor making a delivery in Colton

100. "Colton Mineral Water Booth at a 1916 Fair" undated
101. "Console Mineral Springs Colton Delivery Photo" (Colton:Persona Portrait Studio)
halfway to the top before the Professor decided the effort was not worth the final result.  
Throughout the area the Console’s planted roses, lilac, eucalyptus trees, and lavender to bring a piece of Italy to John’s new home in America. To keep the area looking nice, the children and later the grandchildren were instructed to haul buckets of water to the roses each child was assigned to care for.  Also, the children would have to sweep the area to keep it looking pleasant. Facing the springs to the right, the Professor constructed a dance floor and patio where people could have a good time. They also built a dirt oven into the side of the rock next to their house, so Italian bread and other types of wonderful foods could be made. The Console family constantly attempted to make the area they lived in better for themselves as well as for others.

Once Console Mineral Water was well-established, and his business seemed to be booming, the Professor made use of his secluded paradise. With the Console house being seven miles up the rough Reche Canyon road, and having the steep canyon hills for privacy, the area around the Two Sisters and Brother springs could be turned into a clandestine nirvana for a select large group. With a dance floor in place, some of the Console daughters played music on a piano and mandolin, joined occasionally by Professor Console with a small flute, and they would sing Italian songs. Cipriana, being an excellent cook, made salads and plates of spaghetti in addition to garlic bread from the oven. Some of the children also made different types of

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103 Many of the plants named are contingent to Sicily
104 Jo A. Carlstrom, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, January 7th 2009. p. 4.
105 *ibid.*
106 Jo A. Carlstrom, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, January 7th 2009. p. 4-5.
Overhead view of Console Springs

Road that the Console family started up the mountain

110. The Springs” undated
111. “Going up the Road above the Console Springs” undated
handiwork, such as necklaces, chains, and other little souvenirs to sell to visiting guests. The Professor insisted that his favored guests partake in a few drinks of his homemade vino, which at certain times would have been illegal due to prohibition. All in all, John Console established a reputation for having a great product and having the best place in the valley to throw a party.

Excursions to the Console Springs became a regular affair for people from all over. Several lodges, particularly the Elks Lodge of San Bernardino, would rent the entire area for weekends and arrange with the sheriff to blockade the bottom entrance to the canyon so they would not to be disturbed. The Professor’s retreat became known as the place to be and he entertained dignitaries that heard of this wonderful place to have a good time. It is even rumored that Theodore Roosevelt came to Console Springs numerous times for private parties during his visits to Redlands and the surrounding areas. Family members once had pictures of Roosevelt and the Professor on the dance floor next to the springs, but they have been lost to time. The only substantial proof of these claims is Roosevelt’s signature on John Console’s homestead certificate dated 1908. It is certain the parties were very popular. One Console family member tells of a man having memories of going to the Console parties over 60 years later. It is clear that people knew about Console Mineral Water and Console’s exciting parties.

The Console family continued to expand over the years and new settlers arrived into lower parts of the canyon. This meant that the children living in the area needed a school in the Canyon. It was difficult to send the children to public schools in Moreno Valley or to Colton, so

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112Jo A. Carlstrom, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, January 7th 2009. p.4.
115Florence Sheltiesam, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 7th 2009.
118Jo A. Carlstrom, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, January 7th 2009. p.5.
Oven to cook for guest of Console Springs

The Professor

\[119^a\] "Making Bread Photo" undated
\[120^a\] "The Professor" undated
the Professor built a school in the canyon. “He moved a small, one-room building onto Console land, remodeled it by adding a bell tower, and hired his own teacher to conduct classes.” It proved difficult for a teacher to travel to the school everyday, so they hired one that would live with various families during the week, but go home during the weekends. A Console family member remembered driving the teacher, Vera Bagwell, to school from his house when he was only 11. The Ferndale School, as it was called, was a small one-room school with a pot belly stove, outhouse, and exercise bars. The school usually had a dozen or so students, the majority of whom were members of the Console family. The Ferndale School tended to the needs of generations of Console children. Nora Hurd remembered seeing the initials of her grandfather Edward Console carved into the desk that she used when she went to Ferndale school. The little school offered elementary grades one through eight to the children of the Canyon until 1954, when the Riverside County Health Department decided to close the school because it lacked piped-in water and still retained the old-fashioned unhealthy outside toilets. The roads of Reche Canyon were improved by then as well, making it easier to travel to the school further down the road in Colton. Ultimately, the County of Riverside decided to bulldoze the little Ferndale School, leaving only a flat terrace where it once stood. Many memories for longtime residents of Reche Canyon revolve around the school, and the steps to the school are still there today if someone knows where to look for them. Another school would not be constructed in Reche Canyon for its residents until 1988, when Reche Canyon Elementary opened to accommodate an increased population at the lower part of the Reche Canyon area.

123 Jo A. Carlstrom, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" interview by Nicholas Perry, January 7th 2009. p.5.
Ferndale School

Some Students in front of Ferndale School House

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126 McDonald, Russ & Norma, “Ferndale School” *Reche Canyon News* 1, no. 6 (1979)

127 “Kids at Ferndale” undated
All that remains of the Ferndale school is its steps in the brush

A Native American Grinding stone next to the old school grounds

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128 Perry, Nick “Ferndale Now” (2009)
129 Perry, Nick “Indian Grinding Stones near Ferndale” (2009)
For decades many people knew stories of the old Ferndale schoolhouse up near the Console Springs, but had no idea of who built it, why it was there, and why it was torn down. Many people go up to the schoolhouse area to see the grinding stones of Native Americans from long ago in the huge rocks and others come to play paintball. Some people even go up to the flat area where the school house stood to party and tell ghost stories about the abandoned terrace. Recently, some Console family members were around the old school grounds and they found what was called a Geo-cache box. The box contained pictures and information about the Consoles’ and Ferndale, but the people that placed the box there had many unanswered questions. In 2008, the people that placed the Geo-caching box soon became friends with the Console family members, who helped fill in much information about the questions found in the box. Now, with a little searching, people can find a little army ammo box that contains a great deal of information about the surrounding area of the Ferndale School grounds.

In the late 1920s medical science was advancing and the numerous magic cure-alls soon declined in popularity. Earlier in the decade Console Mineral Water, with its water route and parties, was at its peak, but the business slowly began to decline. With the business hitting hard times, Arrowhead Bottled Water saw an opportunity and offered to buy the Console Springs, but the Professor quickly refused such an offer, especially since he still called the area his home. Then in the summer of 1926 at the age of 65, coincidently the same age of Anthony Reche’s passing, the Professor died, leaving his family to carry on with the healing water empire he had built. “Without Professor John Console at the helm with his guidance and showmanship, it

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130 Geo-caching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geo-caches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geo-caching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment.

131 Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.2.

seemed the elixir was doomed to go out of existence and take its place in American nostalgia.”

The family still sold water for many years, but it was nothing like the years when the Professor was alive. Cipriana divided the land between the 11 remaining children and the family was in firm control of upper Reche for decades. Eventually family members moved, died, or sold their land, leaving only one Console family member on the original homestead land. Although the Console family faltered after the death of John Console, Cipriana and her children managed to keep the upper Reche Canyon as their personal retreat for many years.

The hardest part of living in parts Reche Canyon was finding water, but because water was so abundant where the Consoles dwelled, they could stay in the area even without the profits from the Console Mineral Water Business. They used the many natural artesian wells of the area and Console Spring water to supply the family with water and sell their surplus to other areas in need of fresh water. One Console family even had a wind mill connected to a water tower that with a pull of a lever would fill up leaving a plentiful supply of water, but if it over-filled it would spill, wasting gallons of precious fresh water. Other Console family members still made their way to Console Springs to get water, which was thought of as a chore to the many children. Without the successful family business, the Consoles had to find other ways to make money, but Reche Canyon was still their home. It would be more and more difficult to live in the upper Reche Canyon, but just like the Professor, the Console family found creative ways to make a living. Although the best years of Console Mineral Water were gone, the Console family would still use the local water, and make Reche Canyon their home for many decades.

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134 Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.10.
135 An artesian well is a confined aquifer containing groundwater that will flow upward through a well without any need for pumping or manipulation.
137 Sheryl Perry, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on April 6th 2009.
Console Springs circa 1910 pathway leading to the famous dance floor

Console Springs privately owned in 2009

138 “Console Springs pathway to dance floor” undated
139 “Console Springs pathway to dance floor now” 2009
In the early 1900’s outsiders considered a new potential use for the badlands of Reche Canyon. The San Jacinto Oil Company began to drill test wells in Reche Canyon.\textsuperscript{140} Numerous times men hunted for areas that would contain oil in the Reche Canyon, and sometimes even drill several hundred feet, but no oil was ever found.\textsuperscript{141} Had oil ever been found in Reche Canyon during the exploration of the early 1900’s, the terrain would be dramatically different than it is today.

The Console fascination with motorized vehicles did not end at automobiles, they soon found a new love for motorcycles to transverse the difficult Reche Canyon terrain. Cars still had a hard time navigating the roads of Reche Canyon, leaving motorcycles an option to the youth of the Canyon. Once the Console family was entrenched in upper Reche Canyon, seeing people riding motorcycles all around the Reche Canyon area was a common experience. Although motorcycles were very dangerous on the dirt roads of the Canyon, they still became the main transportation for many who couldn’t afford to buy a car.

Above the Console homestead and the Ferndale School lays the most rugged terrain of hills in the entire canyon. This was an ideal area for anyone who was up to the challenge with a motorized vehicle. Sometime in the 1940’s or 50’s many motorcyclists found a new way to race in the hills above the Console Springs. Many attended motorcycle races at the ‘Console Spring Race Track’ deep in the hills of Reche Canyon.\textsuperscript{142} Resident Nora Hurd remembers going to races when she was very young seeing at least 100 or more people going up just to watch people on their motorbikes going up and down the ravines and around in circles.\textsuperscript{143} Motorcycles became a large part of Reche Canyon life, and still are to this day. The land of many hills is perfect for

\textsuperscript{140}Tom Patterson, "New Stories Add Pages to County's Oil History." \textit{Out of the County's Past Tom Patterson Riverside Library Collection}, August 19th 1984.
\textsuperscript{141}"Hunting For Oil." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, January 11th, 1900, p.5.
\textsuperscript{142}"No Drags Sunday; 'Cycle Scrambles in Reche Canyon." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, Apr 11, 1956, 43.
\textsuperscript{143}Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.21.
people who enjoy riding motorcycles, and now the back areas of the Canyon are filled with motorcycle jumps and trails. Console family members brought the first race track to the Reche Canyon area, but others have continued where the Consoles began. In 1979, The State of California made a $6.8 million grant to enlarge the De Anza Cycle Park located in part of the badlands of Reche Canyon, because of the popularity of off-road recreation in and around the area. In addition many professional riders have got their start in of Reche Canyon. In more recent years, motocross riders have come to Reche Canyon to make popular motocross films especially the famous ‘Crusty’s demons’ series. Long after the demise of the Console Mineral Water, the Consoles still seem to leave a mark on the Canyon they called home.

At the time the Console Spring Race Track was in full force, John Console Jr., and his son, turned their fascination with mechanical vehicles into their careers. Sometime in the 1930’s these men opened the Midway Garage on Highway 99, which is now Redlands Boulevard. The garage was a successful shop evolving from a small two pump gas stop to a full service garage in only a few years. With a constant stream of customers and all the Console family members that went there for their vehicle maintenance John Jr. was able to support his family and eventually purchase the entire mountain near Console Springs, later named Console Mountain, with the profits from the garage. Later his son opened a motorcycle shop attached to the same building, and the garage would also begin to service lawnmowers and other smaller engines. The Garage would operate for decades turning into a family business that serviced many loyal customers. The Midway Garage was another successful business for the Console family, but like Console

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147 John Console Jr., “Deed to Property Around Console Mountain” 1971
Consoles going out for a ride

Taking a break and Console Springs Race Track

148 "Consoles and their bikes" undated
149 "Johnny Console at Console Spring Race Track" undated
Johnny Console and partner

Business card of Midway Garage

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150u „Johnny Console and Business Partner on Race Day” undated
151u „Midway Garage Business Card” undated
Mineral Water, its demise came with the death of its creator.\textsuperscript{152} Sometime in the 1980’s the Midway Garage closed after many decades of prosperity, closing another chapter of Console and Reche Canyon history.

The lower part of Reche Canyon also had an historic building called the Holly Hill Dairy. The dairy was built by George W. Wilder of Redlands as a place to raise cattle and produce milk.\textsuperscript{153} The dairy prospered heavily because it was located near the mouth of Reche Canyon with easy access to a railroad line that came along the flatter areas of the valley. The Southern Pacific railroad helped the Holly Hill Dairy flourish because trains could quickly stop, pick up milk, and have it shipped to anywhere in the United States.\textsuperscript{154} Harold Willis recalls moving from Alabama to California so his father could work at the renowned Holly Hill Dairy that even offered employees their own cottages on site.\textsuperscript{155},\textsuperscript{156} The Holly Hill Dairy was doing well enough that in time Mr. Wilder built a large house on the top of a hill close to his business to watch his dairy grow, but the Holly Hill Dairy days were numbered. After the dairy had a few decades of financial growth the railroad near by was diverted to another path closer to San Timoteo Canyon, which eventually led to its closure because they had lost their access to easy transportation of their product. After its demise, the Holly Hill Diary became a restaurant and then later a summer school.\textsuperscript{157} Many of the successful businesses found that, as Southern California grew into a more urban area, their businesses either faced new competition or became obsolete.

\textsuperscript{152}Alfred Jr. Huddleston, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on January 17\textsuperscript{th} 2009
\textsuperscript{153}Scott Wingert, "Historic Reche Canyon Path to the Past: Many Old Landmarks Still Remain to Recall Early Days of the County." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, Dec 15, 1959.
\textsuperscript{154} Oral History with Harold Willis by Suzie Earp Historian at the Water Resources Institute. Jan 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2009.
\textsuperscript{155}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156}Jo A. Carlstrom, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 6\textsuperscript{th} 2009.
During World War II the government took notice of the Reche Canyon area because of its location. During the war many road projects were proposed to make sure the military had easy access between military camps and bases. The Federal Government proposed “the extension of the Reche Canyon Road to the south, across the range of hills separating the San Bernardino and Moreno valleys,” which would give the Military an easy access route to Camp Haan and March Air Force Base. The military needed multiple routes from the Inland Empire to ensure the success of both of these places located above the Reche Canyon. Ultimately, a route that developed to Moreno Valley transformed Reche Canyon forever.

When Reche Canyon Road was paved and the route to Moreno Valley was connected, the once secluded Canyon was transformed into the dangerous highway shortcut that Reche Canyon is today. The narrow road that winds through many blind turns “was just not designed to handle any traffic.” People that once deemed the Reche Canyon area the ‘badlands’ now saw tremendous value in the land that was barely touched by the modernization of Southern California. In time, Reche Canyon would attract a unique array of people and businesses. Many would come to Reche Canyon that would live completely different compared to the crude rural lifestyles that the founding families that had once experienced. Anthony Reche sought to urbanize Reche Canyon into a booming Southern California city, but this occurred later after his failed attempt in the late 1800’s. With easier access to this beautiful canyon, the newly paved road brought with it a domino effect of problems that plague the canyon even today.

One of the first problems to surface as Reche Canyon’s population increased was that fires soon became a much more common experience of Reche Canyon life. Many Console family members remember few, if any, fires while they were growing up, but in the more recent

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158 "Reche Canyon Road Project Not Approved." San Bernardino Daily Sun, Mar 10, 1942.
159 Steven Barrie, "Safety Runs Head-on into Status Quo on Road." The San Bernardino County Sun, July 5th 2000, B1-B5.
A map of Reche Canyon created by author.
decades fires have swept through Reche Canyon numerous times becoming almost an annual event.\textsuperscript{161} The Reche Canyon has always been covered in brush that easily catches fire, but with an increased population, it seems that chances of carelessness or accidents occur more often than when very few families lived in Reche Canyon. California’s dry climate has made fires an issue in Reche Canyon such as the 5,700-acre fire that swept through the area in July 1976 that threatened resident’s homes.\textsuperscript{162} There is no clear reason why fires are more common today. It could be due to more human interaction near the dry brush throughout the area or because of a higher frequency of automobiles making their way through the canyon. Together, these problems make the Reche Canyon more susceptible to catching fire than before.\textsuperscript{163,164} To address this Riverside County installed “techniques such as avoidance of building in high-risk areas, creating setbacks that buffer development from hazard areas, maintaining brush clearance to reduce potential fuel, establishing low fuel landscaping, and utilizing fire-resistant building techniques to alleviate the more hazardous ways that put people in danger of or starting wildfires in Reche Canyon.”\textsuperscript{165}

Floods have become hazardous to the people of the Reche Canyon area as well. In years of heavy rain, houses can break from their fragile granite foundations and slide into the lower part of the riverbed, which some Console family members have experienced.\textsuperscript{166} More recently, as people have relocated to Reche Canyon, parts of the Homoa Creek have been reinforced to control the riverbed’s path. The newer flood control projects located in the upper Reche Canyon

\textsuperscript{161}Nora Mae Hurd, Interview by historian Nick Perry, February 6\textsuperscript{th} 2009
\textsuperscript{162}Jan Cleveland, "Six Injured Fighting Reche Canyon Fire" \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, July 1st 1976, p.1.
\textsuperscript{163}Nora Mae Hurd, Interview by historian Nick Perry, February 6\textsuperscript{th} 2009
\textsuperscript{164}Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, \textit{Reche Canyon News}, vol 1. no. 11 (July 1979), p.1.
\textsuperscript{165}Riverside County Reche Canyon/Badlands Area Plan."
http://www.tlma.co.riverside.ca.us/genplan/content/ap2/rcbap.html#TOC1_1 (accessed March 26th 2009).
\textsuperscript{166}Sheryl Perry, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on April 6\textsuperscript{th} 2009.
have been made with concrete, but the older rock filled ditches of the lower Reche remain

Flood damage in Reche Canyon

The creekbed after rain

167 “Flooding in the Reche” undated
168 “Water in the Reche riverbed” undated
unchanged due to their effectiveness. Mainly, the Reche Canyon community now sees the main road flood requiring cars to slow down in certain areas, but the most unique flood that hit the Reche Canyon was manmade. In the 1970’s a Mr. Bianchi built an earth mound dam on what is called the Rockhound Creek near Console Springs that after many years turned into a lake.  

This makeshift dam was not engineered properly and after several days of heavy rain the dam broke, causing a huge flood that destroyed many neighbors property and killed some animals. The flood swept through the Console area in the upper Reche Canyon throwing boulders like tennis balls. This event, the Bianchi flood, prompted better flood control to ease the concerns of people affected by such a careless disregard for others further down Reche Canyon.

Increased traffic in Reche Canyon now brings the problems of increased population. Crime has become a renewed problem in the last half century, because people have found, like bandits before, that the seclusion of Reche Canyon can aid in their ability to evade law enforcement. After the death of the Professor the Console family found that burglary became a problem. One day when Cipiranna went to Colton to buy food she found that in her absence someone had come over from Sunnymead and stole furniture and other belongings from her house.

After the burglary members of the family paid for house alarms, stamped their name on furniture, and even went so far as to put their social security numbers on important items to deter any would-be criminals. Living secluded from the cities surrounding Reche Canyon has its drawbacks as theft continues to be a problem, but as long as residents are cautious burglary is less likely to happen.

169 Russ McDonald and Norma McDonald, Reche Canyon News, vol 1. no. 6 (1979)
A larger problem that residents of the Upper Reche Canyon experience is illegal
dumping. Although the Reche Canyon is near a government dump, whether for financial reasons
or carelessness, people make the Reche Canyon area their own personal waste bin. In the past
few years people have even started to dump on properties near the Console Springs. Residents
have tried to stop the onslaught of trash collecting in this area, but the only solution Riverside
County officials have devised is clean it up every 6 months.

All of Reche Canyon’s problems are intensified because the area is divided by the County
line. Reche Canyon is settled between the southern most part of San Bernardino County and the
northern part of Riverside County. At one time, Reche Canyon was only in San Bernardino
County. When Riverside County was formed from parts of San Bernardino County and San
Diego County in 1894, county lines cut right through the middle of Reche Canyon. This led to
many problems, including where to send children to school after Ferndale School closed.

Students that are less than a mile from the Moreno Valley High School in the upper Reche
Canyon are forced to travel to Colton because of the school boundaries. Likewise, residents of
Reche Canyon get their mail from the San Bernardino County’s Colton Post Office, even though
they live in the Riverside County part of Canyon. This county barrier makes it difficult for
Reche Canyon to receive any type of substantial funding, because counties only wish to pay to
improve their section of the Reche Canyon.

The last few decades have brought more changes to the Reche Canyon than in the prior
200 years of its history. Now it is home to a rehabilitation clinic, a nursing facility, the large St.
Mina Coptic Orthodox Church, several housing developments, a mobile home park, and a
Christmas tree farm. Some residents made use of the many secluded hills of Reche Canyon to

173 Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.17.
174 Russell Perry, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on April 10th 2009.
Map of Reche Canyon by Author
create the Olive Dell Nudist Resort 30 or more years ago. For many years this resort was a successful utopia for who sought to free themselves of the norms of society, along with their clothes. All of these additions have become a part of Reche Canyon’s history, but as more people and places have entered the canyon the issues they face have only intensified.

Many who have traveled the Reche Canyon in more recent decades know of the wild burros that wander the land, but most do not know that they are not native to Reche Canyon. These wild burros have survived in the Reche Canyon since they were brought there by Ralph Bush in the 1950’s. Bush once lived in Rialto and made frequent visits to Butte Valley and Panamint Valley, north of Death Valley, to rope wild burros and horses with his friends Buford "Jiggs" Olson and Newt Rich. They would bring the donkeys back to the Rialto area and give the burros to families who lived in the area. Sometimes they would sell the wild burros or horses to car dealers or amusement parks for $5 to $10 a head. Local government officials eventually learned of this and told Bush to get rid of the burros on his property, so he took some to Reche Canyon and others to Big Bear and set them loose. Eventually, the burros in Big Bear became such a nuisance that, in 1997, 100 burros were removed because they had become both a road hazard and a nuisance to residents. Wild burros are a protected species under federal law, which makes removing them near populated areas complicated. As for the Reche Canyon burros, they are still there today. Many people want Reche Canyon to be rid of the animals, but others wish to protect them. These advocates have come to love them, going so far to create a website to honor them, and to accept donations and protect their existence. In 2007, Assembly

177 ibid.
178 ibid.
179 ibid.
One attempt to save burros and people was putting reflective collars on the animals.

Reche Canyon Burros


Ibid.
Bill 222 passed by the State Senate authorizes the State or a local agency to capture and relocate undomesticated burros from private lands upon request of the landowner. Also, they can remove burros if it is necessary for the health and safety of the burros, a problem that exists currently with such heavy traffic flow through Reche Canyon.\textsuperscript{183} The government seems to be taking steps in the right direction, but there are problems with people that want to let the burros stay on their land. There is not one right answer that will make everyone in Reche Canyon happy about the burro problem, and there is still conflict about what is the best course of action for these creatures.

The addition of a paved highway and the introduction of wild burros have created an ugly situation and some people have paid with their lives. One of the more recent accidents involved a man and woman in their early twenties traveling down the Reche Canyon from Moreno Valley at a moderate speed when they struck a 1,000-pound burro, killing the animal and the woman as well.\textsuperscript{184} Sometimes motorists enchanted with the animals stop their cars to watch them, creating a road hazard in the many blind turns of Reche Canyon. Some people get out of their cars to take pictures of these herds of wild animals on the narrow road, causing even greater hazardous conditions to an already treacherous stretch of road.\textsuperscript{185} To some, the burros have become a part of living in Reche Canyon, but to others it has become a road hazard. Each turn around the many hills could be the drivers last. Cars hitting burros have become a monthly occurrence, but this is only one of the many issues that residents now find themselves in if they venture up the Reche Canyon road.

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{185} Nora Mae Hurd, "Water Resources Institute Intern Project" Interview by Nicholas Perry, February 8th 2009. p.12.
In addition to having to dodge wild burros on a road that once rarely saw one or two cars a day, motorists must also dodge other drivers. By the year 2000 about 15,000 vehicles each day traveled the Reche Canyon road in an effort to find a quicker way from the Moreno Valley area to the Inland Empire and beyond.\textsuperscript{186} With the Southern California 215 and 60 freeways heavily congested, many find the Reche Canyon Road a popular alternative. The Reche Canyon road was not designed to handle so much traffic, and drivers frequently exceed the speed limits, which increases the chances of accidents. With so much traffic, Reche Canyon now experiences an early morning and afternoon rush hour, turning the lower part of the Canyon into a nightmare of typical Southern California congestion.\textsuperscript{187} The Reche Canyon road becomes a dangerous freeway that canyon dwellers find hard to get on from the narrow side roads that lead to their houses all around the canyon. Increased traffic has changed travel on the once pleasant countryside drive into a dangerous highway experience.

With easier access more families have migrated to Reche Canyon to find a more rural lifestyle, like Console and Reche families experienced, because of this demand the area has dramatically increased housing development. In more recent years many professionals have looked to the canyon to find a more country-like setting. For decades very few called Reche Canyon their home, by the 1970’s only about a dozen families dwelled in the hills of Reche Canyon. By the 1980’s developers sought to build in Reche Canyon, drastically changing the Canyon landscape.\textsuperscript{188} Long time Reche residents were concerned with keeping a more isolated lifestyle and did not welcome an onslaught of new neighbors. Counties and cities happily approved expansion of new communities encouraged by more tax revenue and business, so when

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\textsuperscript{186}Steven Barrie, "Safety Runs Head-on into Status Quo on Road." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, July 5th 2000, B1-B5. \\
\textsuperscript{188}Cindy Yingst, "Galloping Growth Spurs Move To Draw Up Reche Canyon Plan." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, August 8th 1988, B2-B3. 
\end{flushleft}
many people of Reche Canyon fought to stop development, their efforts were in vain.\textsuperscript{189} Progress in Reche Canyon was swift and dramatic, and since the 1980’s Reche Canyon’s population has swelled to thousands of people.

As development came to Reche Canyon, unforeseen problems arose that from the increased population. The Reche Canyon is a ‘Land of Many Hills’ making it difficult to build numerous houses in the flat narrow spaces of the canyon. Fights by conservationists against development of the beautiful landscape have been constant at council meetings since the development boom began.\textsuperscript{190} Residents recently have gone so far as to protest with signs out on Reche Canyon Road. One of the earlier track developments built in Reche Canyon, the Hidden Canyon Estates, experienced foundation problems due to the shifting soils of the Reche riverbed.\textsuperscript{191} Growth and development has continued, but it has become apparent that more careful planning is a must when building in the Reche Canyon area.

Like the founding families of Reche Canyon, new residents find the most important part of calling Reche Canyon home is how you get your water. Even at the time Professor Console roamed the hills of Reche Canyon, the Homoa creek dried up only to return in times of heavy rain.\textsuperscript{192} All residents of Reche Canyon have to dig and use wells to get water. With the development boom demands on the water table increased. Water was in short supply. In the early 1970s the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water company realized that if something was not done people would run out of water in a matter of a few years.\textsuperscript{193} In the lower and middle part of the Canyon several small companies, such as the Sullivan Mutual Water Company, Reche

\textsuperscript{189}Howard A. Ellis, "Canyon Residents Objections Fail to Dissuade City Council." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, September 7th 1983, B2.
\textsuperscript{190}Jacob Ogles, "Slippery Slope for Builders." \textit{The San Bernardino County Sun}, Feb 13, 2006, B1-B2.
\textsuperscript{192}Jo A. Carlstrom, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry on February 6\textsuperscript{th} 2009.
Canyon Mutual Water Company, and Montecito Water Company delivered water to residents. More recently, the City of Colton has taken control of the water supply forcing many residents to cap their wells, and receive water from the City of Colton to lighten the demand on the ground water supply. Now water is pumped in from the City of Colton to the San Bernardino County line in the middle of the Reche Canyon. In the Riverside County section of the Reche Canyon, which is in the upper less densely populated part of Reche Canyon, residents still use well water, however the City of Colton still has the right at anytime to force people to cap their wells. Fortunately for those residents, it is not cost effective to pump water seven miles to the back of the canyon. It is certain that the water quality of the Reche area will one day only come from the water supplied to the Reche Canyon area.

With the approval of hundreds of planned homes in one of the City of Colton’s last vestiges of rural seclusion, the completion of the Crystal Ridge Estates has marked the end of the rural lifestyle that many have known their whole life in Reche Canyon. “As much as residents may fret over the loss of a quieter, more peaceful way of life…the path is clear” more homes will be built. Like cities all around Southern California which once seemed like endless countryside, the Canyon will eventually become part of a continuous suburbia.

After years of neglect the government has finally taken interest in the traffic and population problems facing Reche Canyon. In the spring of 2009 the Counties of Riverside and San Bernardino have begun work on The Reche Canyon Road Corridor Project, which “would widen Reche Canyon Road to a total of four lanes throughout the length of Reche Canyon Road

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194 Hitchin post owner, Interviewed by historian Nick Perry March 11th 2009.
197 Monica Whitaker, “Pedestrians, beware” The San Bernardino County Sun, April 20, 2007.
with access allowed at key controlled intersections.” Although the widening of the road symbolizes the end of a secluded Reche Canyon many people that have fought progress now embrace many projects that will eventually make the Reche Canyon Road safer. Reche Canyon will be safer, but residents of Reche Canyon would still like to have the San Timeteo and Pigeon Pass areas developed so commuters have other alternatives to use rather than exclusively using the Reche Canyon. The new improvements have marked, like road improvements long ago, another chapter in the history of Reche Canyon, but if residents are not cautious Reche Canyon will lose the rustic appeal it has always been known for becoming just another typical California suburb.

The glory days of the Reche’s and Console’s seem to have been forgotten in history, but Reche Canyon has come into the spotlight as a desirable place to call home. People have now made Reche Canyon their home with no idea of the trials and tribulations that the area has faced in the past or even in recent decades. The ‘Land of Many Hills’ has completely changed, but it has somehow managed to keep the mystique that attracted the founding families and people that never wanted to be anywhere else. Although Anthony Reche sought to turn Reche Canyon into a wonderful city, he could have never imaged what it would actually become. The Professor’s desire was to make Reche Canyon an empire of his own, but his dreams of Reche Canyon unfortunately were lost with his death. Eventually, Anthony Reche lost his post office and Console Mineral Water sadly fell to legends and family memory, nevertheless the Reche Canyon will never be forgotten by those who had once experienced a heaven on earth in the hills where history continues to be made.