Rios...California Ranchero  
(Continued from Legacy Number 38)

Jack Rios was Lompoc Pioneer Society president in 1983. His Rios Ancestry was traced in Legacy No. 38 from his great, great grandfather, Petronillo Rios, to his father, Herbert C. "Bert" Rios. His grandmother, Grace (Smithers) Rios was English, and her Smithers family also appeared in Legacy No. 38. In addition to Petronillo Rios (who owned 50,000 acres in Salinas valley) Jack’s Spanish ancestry goes back to his great, great, great, great grandparents Gregorio and Manuela (Gonzales) Linares. This Legacy continues the story of Jack’s father, "Bert" Rios, who had already served in World War I in France, and vowed he would "sit out" the next war on a ship in the Navy...

Bert Rios... (Continued)

Myrtle Pierce and Bert Rios had known each other in school. So when he came home from World War I and began working at the Bank of Italy where she was employed, a courtship began.

Herbert C. "Bert" Rios married Myrtle Pierce, daughter of Alfred H. and Rosa Lee (Kerr) in 1920. They had four children:

1. Phyllis Rios, b October 6, 1921 m. D. W. "Jim" Phelan

2. John H. "Jack" Rios, b. September 13, 1922 m. Victoria Penza

3. Charles Pierce Rios, b. October 4, 1924 m. Edith Benn. (Called "Pierce" by his family and schoolmates, and "Chuck" by his business associates. They live in Arroyo Grande.


Most of the Lompoc children in that era were born in Nellie Sperber's Sanitarium at 131 South F Street. The Rios children were no exception.

Pensa...Sons of Italy  Part II

Jack Rios, standing between his grandmother, Grace (Smithers) Rios and his grandfather, Charles Rios. Phyllis Rios is sitting on her grandfather's knee. About 1925.
Bert worked for Standard and Richfield Oil companies. He was sent to Pt. Reyes to be distributor there and at Santa Rosa. Jack remembers riding on the train with his mother to join his father in Northern California. Jack had pneumonia on the train.

Bert returned to Lompoc with the family, and worked for 34 years at Johns-Manville Corporation. He was foreman in the quarries, worked as storekeeper in supply and became purchasing agent. He retired at age 65 in 1960.

He spent his 50th birthday on the beach at Makin Island in the Gilbert chain, in the South Pacific in the heat of World War II. His two sons, Jack and Pierce Rios had joined the Navy and Bert remembered his own advice to "sit out" the war on the sea... He served on an ammo ship as a Chief Petty Officer in storekeeping in the C.B.'s. He served from 1943 to 1946.

His wife, Myrtle Rios was with the Bank of America for years. Then in 1938 and 1939, she had a hamburger stand at her home at 212 South L Street. She sold the best hamburgers in town to the Junior and Senior High Schoolers during lunchtime.

Herbert "Bert" Rios died in 1971, aged 75. His wife, Myrtle Mae (Pierce) Rios died in 1982. She was 83.

Alfred Hayward Pierce was born in 1867 in Merrillville, Lake County, Indiana. He was of English heritage going back to pre-Revolutionary War days. He left his home in Indiana in the mid-1880's when he was 17 years old and traveled to Santa Barbara to live with his aunt and uncle who had settled there in 1875.

One of his interesting youthful jobs was bellhop for the San Marcos Hotel busses that met the trains. He became acquainted with Col. W. W. Hollister and his wife Annie while on that job. He was then employed by the Hollisters which included being an errand boy for Annie Hollister. Another job he held in Santa Barbara was driver (chauffer) for a Montecito doctor. He always told of the beautiful horse and buggy owned by the doctor. He left Santa Barbara and went to Portland, Oregon, where he was a street car conductor and piloted passenger boats up and down the Columbia River.

Al Pierce returned to Santa Barbara where he held a wide variety of jobs. He drove a delivery wagon, worked for a soda pop factory making deliveries, had a feed store and was a partner in the Monarch Bowling Alley on Lower State Street. The Monarch Bowling Alley was a combination saloon, pool room, bowling alley, and was the town's first movie theater. The movies were shown on Saturday night.

Myrtle Rios' Hamburger stand

Rosa (Kerr) Pierce, Myrtle, Marie, and Alfred Pierce. About 1900.
There was a tea room near the bowling alley where Al Pierce ate his midday meal. He met Rosa Lee Kerr waiting tables there. Rosa, who had been reared in the Orcutt area, and Al were married in 1895 in Summerland. Al was 28 years old and Rosa was 21.

In 1910 the Pierces, with their two daughters, Marie and Myrtle, moved to the Hollister estate in Salsipuedes ranch. They lived on the part of the ranch that faced the Santa Rosa Road. Al was in charge of the dairy and farming operations. He had been working on the Hollister Winchester Canyon property for the Hollisters prior to moving to Lompoc.

"Pierce" and Jack Rios at their grandfather, Charles Rios' home on the N.W. corner of K and Ocean.

Jack Rios with his mother, Myrtle (Pierce) Rios.

Jack Rios

John H. "Jack" Rios, Pioneer Society President, 1983, was reared in Lompoc, except for a brief period north of San Francisco when his father had jobs at Pt. Reyes and Santa Rosa. Jack lived across the street from the Junior High and High School on South L Street (where his mother, later, had the hamburger stand), so he didn't have far to go to school.

In WW II, he and his brother, Pierce Rios, entered the U.S. Navy. Jack was in the service from September 1942 to May 1945. He was a gunner on B-24 patrol bombers and flew over 900 search flights with VPB-115 "Bulldog" Squadron.

Jack was in the hospital in 1945 and had a kidney removed. He was down to 117 lbs. at one point. From that experience, he received a medical discharge in May 1945. Home from the war, he did some farming in Santa Ynez Valley. He worked a short time at J. M. then worked for Valley Auto Parts. Then he worked at the Shell Service Station four years.
He married Victorina Pensa April 18, 1954 (See Pensa, below). Their children are:

Maryann Rios b. May 31, 1957
She works for San Rafael Graphics

Twins:
Charles H. Rios b. February 16, 1959
Manville Forklift Operator

John Ambrose b. February 16, 1959
Respiratory Therapist U.C. Irvine Medical Center Hospital.

Jack worked for the Santa Maria Bearing House and then in 1957 he went to work for the U.S. Post Office. He was a city carrier until 1961 and for over 20 years has been driving Rural Route #1. Thirteen years ago Buellton was added to Lompoc Route #1, "temporarily." It is still part of his route. He covers 111 miles every day.

25th Anniversary Celebration
John, Maryann, Jack, Victorina and Charles

RIOS FAMILY PHOTOS

Smithers Family
Grace Rios and her sisters and brother, Jack. Mrs. Smithers in middle.
The home of Camilo and Mary (Castillo) Rios on the corner of Cypress and K. Mrs. Rios had a nursing home there. She also made and sold tamales at the home.

Bert Rios, prim and proper, age 8, with his mother, Grace (Smithers) Rios. An "English" school boy, whose Californiano great grandfather owned 50,000 acres of California.

Louise (Young) Smithers with her daughter, Grace, and grandson, Bert Rios. About 1910.


Phyllis, Pierce and Jack Rios in front of their Pierce grandparent's home at 121 North L St. The Fabing-Mckay-Spanne house is in the background. (Little sister, Carolyn was born in 1934, about the year this photo was taken.)
Ambrogio Pensa was born in Esino Lario, Como, Italy on May 3, 1886. He married Maria Adamoli in February, 1906, in Esino Lario. Maria was also born there, on October 14, 1887. In Italy, the Pensas had three children:

1. Cesarina Pensa m. Jean Raymond Loustalot
   b. August 9, 1907 b 1869 in Las Cruces (near Gaviota Pass)

2. Inez Pensa m. 1st Robert Harper, Jr.
   b. June 9, 1909 2nd Donavan Wilbur Austin
   3rd Arnold Hoffman

3. Vittorina Pensa

In 1912, Ambrogio Pensa came to the United States leaving his family behind to follow when he earned enough money to send for them. He was 26 years old when he came to California. He worked in Santa Barbara for several months, then came to Lompoc where he got a job in the old Lome Quarry in Miguelito Canyon. By 1914, he was able to send for his wife and three children.

Maria (Adamoli) Pensa arrived in New York near the end of June, 1914 with her three girls ages 6, 5, and 2, and had to make her way across the U.S. to Lompoc. A black porter serving on the train recognized her confusion in the New York depot and kindly helped her to board the train and saw to it she made all the right connections across the country to California.

Re-united in Lompoc, Abrogio and Maria Pensa were able to do well. Ambrogio founded a store on West Ocean Avenue and expanded it to a general merchandise business. He constructed a building to house his business at 212 West Ocean Avenue. He also had a shoe repair shop next door. Two more girls were born to them in 1915 and 1916 and all seemed to be going so well. Then they were saddened by the death of their 5 year old daughter, Vittorina, September 22, 1916.

Their children born in Lompoc were:

4. Lucy Pensa m. Mario Raffetto
   b. June 15, 1915

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4. Lucy Pensa m. Mario Raffetto
   b. June 15, 1915
Gregorio Rios m. Mariana Layas - their son Petronillo (1866-1895) m. in 1832 to Catarina Avila (1812-1889)

11 children of Petronillo and Catarina

1. Jose Camilo (1833-1916) m. about 1856 to Mary Antonia Castello (1843-1913) their 11 children were:


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would come to Lompoc, he would visit old friends; Buck Weaver, Mac Williams, Jansson and others. They would make sure his car was loaded with oak for his barbecue pit at home.

When Jack Rios went to work for the Post Office in 1957, there was Johnny Jansson, (the friendly face at the counter from 1954 to 1972 when he retired), the man who knew his father, grandfather, great uncles and cousins near and far.

LOMPOC LEGACY is published quarterly by the LOMPOC VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc., P.O. Box 398, Lompoc, California 93438.

Single Copies ........................................... $1.00

Subscription rates:
Historical Society Members ............... $2.00 per year
Non-Members ........................................ $3.00 per year
President .............................. Earl W. Calvert, 736-5044
Edited by .............................. Vance Newcomb, 736-3031

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