



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2003

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County and State Parks Receive 290 acres of Cottle Ranch Land for Historic Agricultural Park

SAN JOSE, CALIF.— In a remarkable commitment to preserve the County's rich agricultural history, Walter Cottle Lester of the Cottle Ranch family has entered into an agreement with the County of Santa Clara and California State Parks to enable them to preserve and develop 290 acres of land into a historic agricultural park. Lester gifted the County with 153.3 acres and, in a separate transaction, sold State Parks 136.5 acres at a significant discount. The County of Santa Clara will develop and manage the entire property as the Martial Cottle Park. The park's name is significant because Martial Cottle, Mr. Lester's grandfather, originally settled the property in the 1860s.

"It's not often that opportunities of this magnitude arise that enable us to preserve the agricultural roots of Santa Clara Valley," said Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, Chairperson of the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. "We are extremely grateful to Mr. Lester for this generous contribution to our community. Nearby residents and the Santa Clara County community will have access to a tremendous historical resource with the creation of the Martial Cottle Park."

The 290-acre property, located in San Jose and bounded by Snell Avenue, Branham Lane and Chynoweth Avenue, is surrounded by suburban development. This represents one of the largest and most significant public donations of its kind in the County's history. This donation will expand the County's parkland to 43,328 acres and an additional 700 acres leased for operation by other agencies.

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“The County of Santa Clara shares the same vision for this farmland as Mr. Lester,” said District 1 Supervisor Don Gage. “This joint County-State Park will be developed into a agriculture history museum and park, preserving the legacy of Martial Cottle and the significance of farming in Santa Clara Valley.”

Under the County transfer agreement with Lester, he will donate the 153.3-acre parcel to the County, subject to restrictions and the obligation to develop a historic agricultural park. The park will provide the public with a unique view of farming at the turn of the last century and the importance of this legacy to the history of Santa Clara County. Lester will reserve a 32-acre life estate that includes the historic house, outbuildings and water rights for the remainder of his life.

Under the State Parks agreement with Lester, the State will pay \$5 million to acquire the former estate property of Edith E. Lester, Walter Lester’s sister, who is deceased. Lester also will transfer title of the 136.5-acre parcel to the State subject to deed restriction and the obligation to enter into a joint powers agreement with the County to develop, manage and operate the property.

“Californians made it clear that they want special places like this preserved when they approved Proposition 40 last year,” said California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman. The State’s purchase of the land for \$5 million will be paid for by Proposition 40, which includes funds for parkland acquisition.

Lisa Killough, Director of the County Parks and Recreation Department said, “As we move forward, County Parks and Recreation and the State Parks Department will work closely together in a joint planning process. The County will assume the responsibility for establishing a master plan to guide future development, maintenance and operation of the entire Martial Cottle Park facility, including the State-owned land.”

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NEXT STEPS

- Joint planning process between the County of Santa Clara and the California State Parks to develop Martial Cottle Park.

PROPOSITION 40

Proposition 40, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, was created to protect rivers, lakes, and streams to improve water quality and ensure clean drinking water; to protect beaches and coastal areas threatened by pollution; to improve air quality; to preserve open space and farmland threatened by unplanned development; to protect wildlife habitat; to restore historical and cultural resources; and to repair and improve the safety of state and neighborhood parks.

BACKGROUND

Walter Lester is the descendent of Martial Cottle, a Santa Clara Valley settler and farmer, who arrived with his parents in San Jose in 1854 after crossing the plains from Missouri. Martial Cottle and his father acquired the Lester property, a portion of the original Santa Teresa Rancho, in 1864. Martial Cottle, Lester’s grandfather, set up his own farming operation and eventually developed the existing farmhouse by incorporating additional improvements to the original 1878 structure. The farmhouse is listed in the Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory.

Discussions of the transfer of property have occurred over the last 30 years. In 1991, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution that the County would accept the property if donated and restrict its use to demonstration farming.

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