

Antelope Could Repeat the Saga of San Fernando Valley Growth

With freeways abuilding and water contracted to flow, Antelope Valley in the next few years could repeat the saga of San Fernando Valley. Or, if you give ear to the area's most enthusiastic boosters, Antelope may even outboom San Fernando.

Spread over roughly 2,500 square miles of North Los Angeles County and East Kern County, the high-desert area's southern border is roughly 50 road miles, or 30 air miles, from downtown Los Angeles.

Closer And Closer

This summer, when a 16-mi. stretch of the Antelope Valley Freeway opens, Los Angeles will seem even closer. Eventually, the freeway will span the 47 mi. between Mojave and San Fernando, and will cut the travel time between the two valleys to less than 30 min.

Water—needed to nurture Antelope Valley's continued growth—is scheduled to increase its flow to the area, too. The Antelope Valley-East Kern Water Agency has contracted with the California Department of Water Resources for delivery of 120,000 acre feet of water—with delivery scheduled to start in 1971. Within the valley, Palmdale Irrigation Dis-

trict has contracted for 15,000 acre feet annually. Antelope already has registered impressive growth. Current population of 90,000 is more than four times the 1950 figure of 21,000. Much of this growth reflects Uncle Sam's heavy investment in the valley. Two major government facilities occupy a sizable chunk of valley real estate: sprawling Edwards Air Force Base and Air Force Plant No. 42 at Palmdale.

Many of the nation's prime aerospace contractors cluster facilities around the two establishments. Edwards, a major aircraft-missile testing center, spends in the area of \$70 million annually, and close to a quarter of the valley's work force are employed at the base.

Should Edwards be designated the U.S. Space Control and Recovery Center for orbital vehicles, a Washington decision now pending, the space race would play more of a role in the area economy. Even without such a designation, Edwards continues to expand. During this year and next, 10 construction projects are scheduled for the base with a value of \$13 million.

At Palmdale, a new \$4.5

million Air Traffic Control facility of the Federal Aviation Agency began operations this year. It will generate a payroll exceeding \$3.5 million annually.

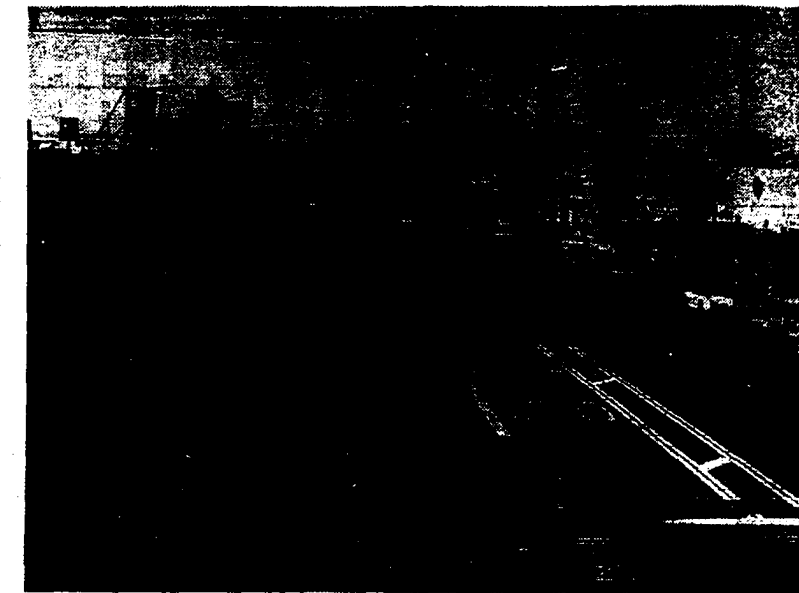
While such heavy government investment in the area has pump-primed expansion it also has caused problems. For example, over the next 12 to 18 months it's expected that the Air Force Plant No. 42 facilities of North American Aviation, Lockheed Aircraft and Douglas Aircraft all will cut back at Air Force Plant No. 42.

Such a reduction in employment could cause a serious crimp in Antelope Valley's economy. But, in advance of the cutback, industrial developers have launched a program aimed at filling the upcoming void with industrial employment.

Optimistic View

Robert Byers, Antelope Valley Progress Association president, said he is optimistic about the plan. "Over the next two years, \$25 million in new non-defense plants here is possible." He added that the program "is timely, urgent and affects every man, woman and family in Antelope Valley."

"New freeways and new water supplies not far off



MODERNIZED shopping center on Lancaster Blvd., where Saturday afternoon is still the farmer's day in town. This is the main street in Lancaster.

make the effort timely. The urgency is that if and when the B-70 and other defense aircraft contracts in this area commence phasing out, in 18 months or so, we shall be ready with substitute activities and jobs. We are already receiving substantial underwriting commitments for this program," Byers said. To be sure, the valley already houses important industry. Among the firms operating there: California Portland Cement, United

States Borax & Chemical Co., Monolith-Portland Cement Co., Texas Aluminum Co., Great Lakes Carbon, U.S. Rubber Co. and United Carbon Co. and American Potash & Chemical plans a \$15 million plant there next year.

Valley dwellers believe they possess some natural attractions for industry. Clifford L. Rawson, the progress association's executive director, pointed out that the valley is not harassed by such problems as smog, fog and traffic congestion. Land

prices and taxes are below those prevailing in neighboring areas.

Another industry mushroom in the valley—the "senior citizen" enterprise. The Lutheran Church acquired a 202-unit housing facility at Lancaster for retired people two years ago and, just recently, purchased a similar size complex in Palmdale. Near the town of Quartz Hill, a \$5 million, 557-unit senior citizen rental project was recently completed.