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San Quintin



In the 1880's, a British land company with plans for a wheat empire purchased much of the San Quintin area from the U.S. – based International Land Company; at the time, ILC owned most of northern Baja. In response to promises of agricultural wealth, around a hundred English colonists purchased subdivided land tracts from the parent company, planted wheat, and constructed a gristmill. For flour transportation, the English built a pier on inner Bahiá San Quintin and began constructing a railway to link up with the Southern Pacific tracks in California. Thirty km of track were laid - including a rail causeway from the west bank of inner Bahiá San Quintin – before the colony failed. A 17-ton, six-wheeled locomotive still lies underwater at the mouth of the bay, the remains of a loading accident for the aborted railway.

A drought devastated one of the first wheat harvests, and by 1900 all colonists had abandoned San Quintin. Although individual farmers were economically ruined, the U.S. and British land companies walked away all the richer, a pattern that would recur several times in northern Baja. Remains of the gristmill, railroad causeway, pier, and English cemetery still stand along the perimeter of the inner bay. The English names on the cemetery's heavily weathered wooden crosses have faded from sight, and more recent Mexican graves are beginning to crowd out their neglected English counterparts.

In recent years a small community of gringo retirees has moved into the area, leasing bay front property and building homes. The most concentrated area is Pedregal, where some houses are built of volcanic rock. Around San Quintin these days are many lots "for sale"; actually available only through lease or *fideicomiso* arrangements.



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