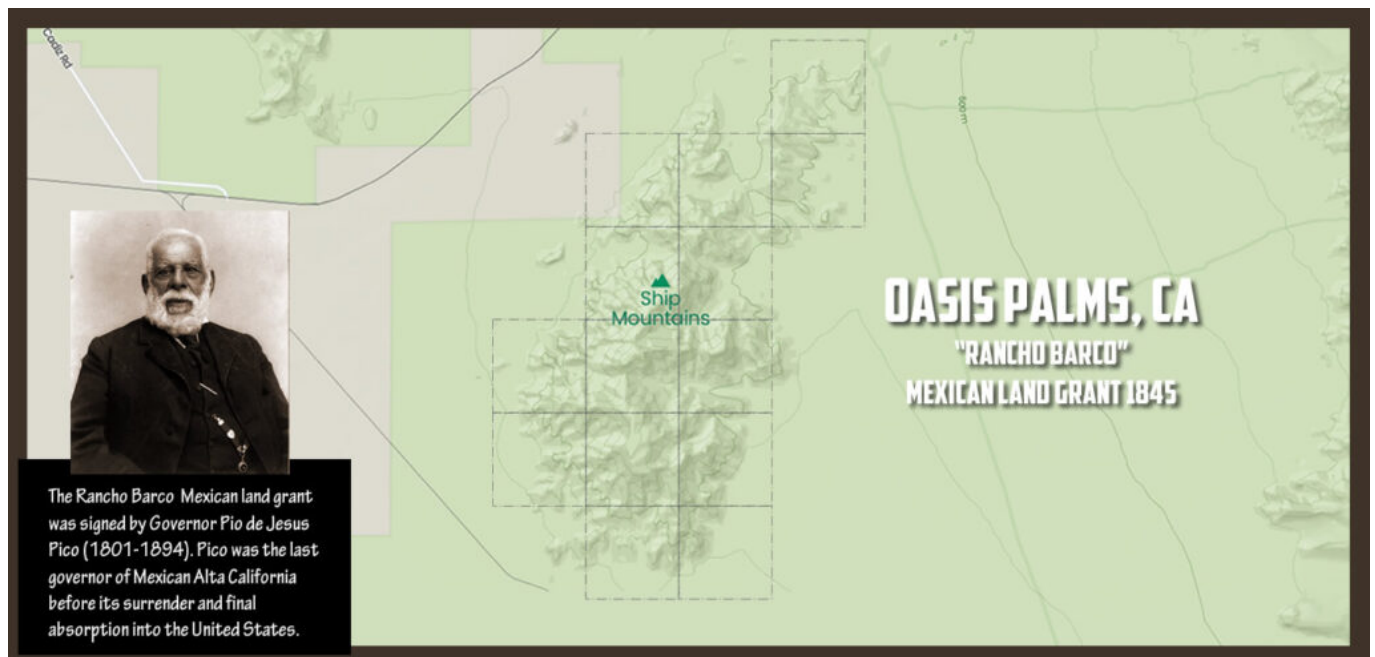


In 1845, Smith officially claimed ownership of the land through a land grant application submitted to [governor Pio de Jesus Pico](#) of the [Mexican Alta California government](#). This application included a detailed diseño map outlining the territory of the Ship Mountains. Smith made strategic choices to enhance his likelihood of approval, claiming Mexican citizenship, converting to Catholicism, and filing the application under the name 'Cameron Herrero' (Herrero being the Spanish translation of Smith). The grant application, requested two square leagues, approximately 14 square miles, covering the Ship Mountain range, aligned with the typical size for Mexican Rancho land grants during that era.



While most Mexican land grants were concentrated along the California coast, specifically around San Francisco Bay, the Sacramento River, and the San Joaquin Valley, Smith's request stood out due to its remote desert location, making it less competitive.

Furthermore, given the political climate of the time, with the regional government transitioning to the United States, Governor Pio de Jesus Pico was eager to assign as much property as possible, and Smith's application was easily granted. Smith's original claim was one of around 270 land grants issued by Mexico between 1833 and 1846. Under Mexican law, this grant bestowed permanent, unencumbered ownership rights to both the land and its mineral resources. Remarkably, this transaction cost Smith a mere twelve dollars, equivalent to approximately \$500 today.