

Col. William Denton (1828-1907, the son of William Smith Denton), an English civil engineer, came to California during the Gold Rush, worked for the United States geodetic survey and later pursued an interest in mining exploration and speculation in Mexico. In 1860, he married Elena Cano de los Rios of Mulege, Baja California and eventually moved his family to San Diego in 1874. Denton became a naturalized Mexican citizen in 1896.

In 1885, Col. Denton purchased two thousand five hundred hectars (6,175 acres) of land in Mexico known as "Jacumbo" from Senora Higinia Tortoledo for five hundred pesos. Rancho Jacume, as it was known locally, was located on the frontier of the Northern District of Lower California, Mexico on the international border. Col. Denton maintained his residence in San Diego, where his children were educated, and used Rancho Jacume for cattle grazing.

At the time of his death in 1907, Col. Denton's estate was largely comprised of properties in Baja California, Mexico. He owned an undivided interest in Rancho Algodones, located on the Colorado River in Baja California; Rancho Jacume; and half interest in the mines known as Toronjil, Angel de la Guardia, Nueva Esperanza, La Vaca, Tarantula, the Chubasco group, the Sireno group, Santa Rosa, Alice, Josephina, Ajax and Vulcan. Denton worked in a mining partnership with H.A. Howard of San Diego, who provided capital for survey expenses, title acquisition, and taxes.

Upon Col. Denton's death, title to the Denton Ranch was divided between his wife, who received a one half interest, and his children, William Smith Denton, Oscar Alan Denton, Sara Brent Denton Scott, Alexander Marion Denton, Maria S. Denton Showley and Morgan Gascoigne Denton. Elena Denton willed her property equally to Sara Denton Scott, Maria Soledad Denton Showley, Morgan Gascoigne Denton, and Samuel John Murvin Showley. Oscar Alan Denton occupied the Denton Ranch and administered the property.

In 1939, the Denton Ranch was expropriated by the Mexican government and ownership transferred to a newly form ejido, or agricultural collective. Over the next seven years, Maria Denton Showley and her brother, Morgan Denton, pursued a suit with the American Mexican Claims Commission for compensation and on June 28, 1946 a settlement was reached.