

THE LEO CARRILLO RANCH HISTORIC PARK

A local, state, and National Historic Landmark in Carlsbad, CA

The Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park encompasses 27 acres of rustic parkland home to old adobe buildings, magnificent cacti, and vibrant peafowl. Other sights to enjoy include vintage farming equipment, fragrant citrus trees, and native critters riddled throughout the park.



Come to experience the tranquil beauty of this urban ranch and learn about the inspiring life of original landowner Leo Carrillo - a beloved Golden Age Hollywood actor - and the history of Old California which he sought to revive.



The park has remained open despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Walk the park grounds to read interpretive panels illustrating the history of the Carrillo family as well as those who inhabited this fertile land before them. In addition, visitors may now come inside the buildings when they are open to view complementary exhibits and historical artifacts on display.

(Call the park in advance to ensure staff or docent availability for viewing inside the buildings.)

HISTORY

One of the earliest known inhabitants of this parkland were the indigenous people known as the Payómkawichum, and as eras progressed this land sustained Spanish explorers, followed by American homesteader Kelly family. Most recently and notably though, this land became home to Hollywood actor [Leo Carrillo](#) (1880-1961).



Leo Carrillo, circa 1925

Leo began his career in the entertainment industry working vaudeville on Broadway. He made his way into the Hollywood scene, and starred in over 90 films beginning in the late 1920's. He is most famous for the amusing role he played as "Pancho" in the popular 1950's children's television series, [The Cisco Kid](#).



Leo Carrillo and Duncan Renaldo on set of "The Cisco Kid," circa 1953

Leo was proud of his Spanish heritage and fond of the historically festive rancho lifestyle during the age of Old California. In 1937, he purchased 1,750 acres of land in Carlsbad and created a lively ranch complete with orchards, hundreds of farm animals, and unique adobe ranch buildings and a hacienda. He called it "Rancho de los Quiotes" after the Spanish dagger plant which grew in abundance on the property.



Leo Carrillo riding horse SuiSan on his ranch, circa 1945

Leo's ranch served as a marvelous vacation home for him and his little family, for he mostly lived at his home in Santa Monica due to his work. He was known to hold grand fiestas at his ranch, inviting Hollywood friends to experience a day in the life of a true cowboy.

As an influential member of the California Beach and Parks commission, Leo was passionate about preserving California's historic sites and conserving its natural wildlife. Since taking possession of Los Quiotes, the City of Carlsbad has honored his legacy and protected his ranch from urbanization in the form of a historic park, officially opened to the public in 2003.

OFFERINGS

Today, the Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park is a peaceful place for visitors to picnic, exercise, create art, and learn about California history. Typically, reoccurring special events for the public to enjoy are scheduled annually such as the Film Festival, Day of the Dead, and Holiday at the Rancho celebrations. Other special events may arise as well. Check the park's webpage titled "[Future Programs and Events.](#)"



Film Festival, 2018



Day of the Dead, 2018



Classic Car Show, 2019

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our special events have been on hold. However, the Park has still embraced the joy of festivity by decorating our historic hacienda for several holidays.

The park has also found successful alternatives to our other traditional offerings to respect CDC guidelines. While our free docent-led tours are temporarily canceled, one can now tour the park virtually on the webpage titled "[Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park Then and Now.](#)" Similarly, our tours for fourth grade students in the California History & Art Program have also been made virtual.



California History & Art Program students at the Ranch, before the pandemic

The Park also offers a wide array of [classes and camps](#) for children centered on the arts, sciences, and personal well-being. All have been restructured to keep participants safe on-site by adhering to the CDC guidelines.

The Park will resume all traditional offerings as soon as it is safe to do so. We hope to see you here soon, *amigos!*

CONTACT

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For more information, visit our website:

[www.carlsbadca.gov/services/depts/parks/
facilities/south/carrillo](http://www.carlsbadca.gov/services/depts/parks/facilities/south/carrillo)



If you find yourself loving the Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park, consider becoming a member of the Friends of Carrillo Ranch, Inc.! Visit the Friends' website here:

carrillo-ranch.org/membership



This article was written by Parisa Ghopeh, who is the archivist at the Leo Carrillo Ranch Historic Park.