

# *Neighbors:*



RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

*"Neighbors" team:*

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*and*

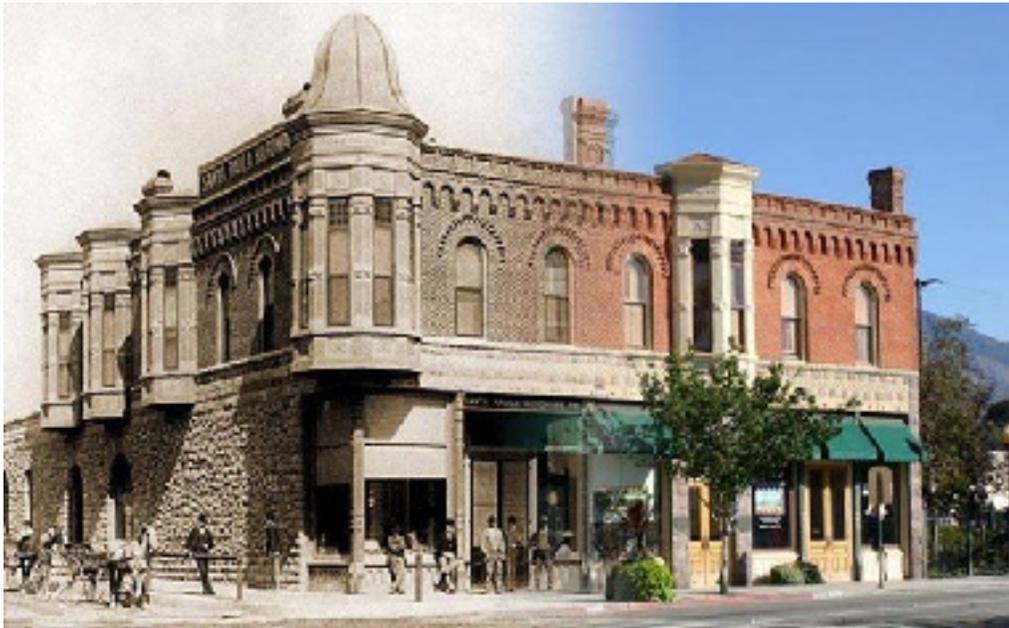
*Maria Christopher, Docent*

*Rancho Camulos Museum*

*Introduction*  
*by Mary Goldberg*

In this part of the “*Neighbors*” series, we learn about two historic museums located off Highway 126. The California Oil Museum in Santa Paula, and the Rancho Camulos Museum, one mile east of Piru. This series of articles which started with a look at the McCrea Ranch, showcases our “*Neighbors*” that you might like to explore both virtually and to visit when they reopen.

How many have YOU visited? Please send us your memories of places that you recommend. I’ll include them in a future article.



**The California Oil Museum**  
*Honoring the Past, Exploring the Future*  
*By Jeanne Beach, Executive Director*

The California Oil Museum is housed in the magnificent, turreted Italianate building that centers Santa Paula’s historic downtown and museum district. Site of the original offices of the Union Oil Company, the Museum now offers permanent and rotating exhibits, educational programming, event spaces, filming locations, lecture series, and special events.

Completed in 1890, the building’s downstairs held the Santa Paula Hardware Company and the town’s first Post Office, while the second floor was devoted to office space. In

1950, the first floor was established as the Union Oil Museum. For its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the upstairs offices were restored to reproduce the original 1890 appearance, and the entire building was renovated and became the California Oil Museum.

The Museum’s permanent exhibits explore the science and historic context of the discovery of petroleum in California – from early use of oil and petroleum precursors by local Native American cultures to modern production and marketing – and look to the future of emerging technologies of renewable energy sources. On the first floor, visitors encounter the geology of oil, drilling and production techniques, and modern usages in household and commercial products – from rocket fuel to beauty products to the plastics used for medical equipment and personal protective equipment.



Marketing and Petroliana are featured in the “Filling Station,” a retro look back at the classic architecture of California’s Union Oil gas stations, and the colorful marketing campaigns of bygone brands that fueled car culture and advanced aviation. Antique signage, gas pumps, and travel maps recall the days of Green Stamps and what “full service” meant to travelers.

The first floor also offers rotating exhibits on science and STEM. Currently in the Iron Room is *Voyage of Discovery: Women in STEM*, which highlights women throughout history who pioneered important roles in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In the Alcove Gallery, *Treasures from the Earth*, the newest exhibit on rocks, minerals, fossils and gems, is currently set to open May, 2021. Recent past exhibits include *When Dams Fail* (featuring the St. Francis Dam), *Prehistoric California*, *Earth From Space*, *Insectology*, and more.

Outside the main building are the Lundgren Courtyard – a fine place for picnics – and the free-standing Rig Room Building. The Rig Room houses an authentic, working, turn-of-the-century cable tool drilling rig salvaged from local oil fields.





The Museum's second story has been carefully restored to reflect working conditions and operations of the Union Oil company's first corporate offices. Original office furnishings, including the entire Paymaster's Office and vaults, and the careful restoration of architectural details, can be seen during guided tours.

The permanent and changing exhibits on the ground floor of the Museum and in the Rig Room are self-guided and available during regular Museum hours. Second floor guided tours for walk-in visitors are given on the weekends (reservations are suggested) or by special arrangement on other days. Advance arrangements are required for groups of ten or more. Second floor exhibits are accessible only during a guided tour.

Along with exhibits, the Museum also offers students, researchers, and learners of all ages access to historic materials, education curriculum, and hands-on activities. The Museum's Education Program is accessible for public schools, home-schoolers, learning pods, and science educators. A variety of earth science workshops -- including plate tectonics and earthquakes, fossils through geologic time, rocks and minerals, and soil science - meet California Next Generation Science Standards. (School tours and workshops are scheduled in advance through the Education Department staff.) The Museum's California Energy Education Center also holds a library of STEM books and materials, a fossil dig, and scheduled craft and learning activities for families to enjoy.

Following state, county, and city protocols, the California Oil Museum has been closed due to COVID restrictions. We are excited to announce that starting Friday April 16, we reopened to the public. For the foreseeable future we will have limited days and hours of operations.

Spring Summer Schedule (tentative): Open Friday, Saturday, Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed Monday – Thursday. Special group accommodations for groups and classes on other days by arrangement. Visit our website for the current schedule.

Admission for student visitors is free; suggested donation for adults is \$5. Class, lecture, and workshop fee schedules are available through the Education Department or are as advertised per event.

Free First Sundays: The California Oil Museum will resume the First Sunday program, offering free admission, family-friendly activities and crafts, special tours and events on the first Sunday of the month, in June 2021.

For more information:

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Social Media: [@caoilmuseum](#)



Rancho Camulos  
National Historic Landmark  
*By Maria Christoper, Docent*

Discover the Rancho Camulos National Historic Landmark... Where the History Myth and Romance of Old California still linger ...

Rancho Camulos Museum is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to preserving, restoring, sharing the story of, and providing public access to, a portion of the 40-acre Rancho Camulos National Historic Landmark which is part of the privately owned 1,800-acre Camulos Ranch. Camulos was the western most portion of Rancho San Francisco, a 48,000-acre 1839 Mexican land grant to Antonio del Valle.

The earliest written mention of Camulos is in the diary of the 1769 Portola expedition, where they talk about coming upon a Tataviam village near the confluence of the Santa Clara River and the Piru Creek. The neighboring tribe, the Chumash, called the place, Camulos. Eventually Camulos would become part of the San Fernando Mission lands. The Tataviam would play an important role in the development and success of Camulos Ranch.

Antonio del Valle who had been an officer in the Mexican army petitioned for land to compensate for his service including his role in the secularization of the San Fernando Mission. Two years after he received the land grant, he died and the land was divided among his seven heirs. The western most portion went to his eldest son Ygnacio, who continued to use Camulos as the name for his ranch.

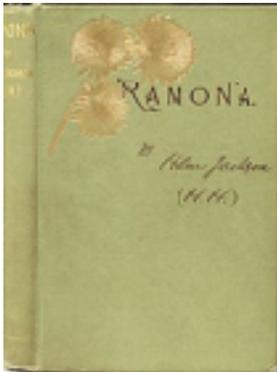


Gathering with guests on Verandah of Main adobe late 1800's. On far right , Reginaldo del Valle ( Ygnacio and Ysabel's eldest son ) with his only child, Lucretia . She would later become an actress and star in the Mission Play in the original San Gabriel theatre.

While Ygnacio lived on Olvera Plaza in Los Angeles, he had a ranch manager handle the Vaquero cattle operation at Camulos. In 1852, 43-year-old Ygnacio married 15-year-old Ysabel Varella. A few years later they begin building the main Spanish Colonial style adobe at their Camulos Ranch. In 1861 the growing family relocated from Los Angeles and expanded the main adobe to over 20 rooms.



In 1867 they built a Catholic chapel and a winery. Over time, they added other ranch related buildings, the last of which was a Spanish Colonial Revival style combination Ranch Manager residence and Ranch office that was built in 1920. Camulos was known for the first commercial production of wine, olive oil, and citrus in the area.



It also became famous as the “Home of Ramona “, one of the settings for Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 novel, *Ramona*. She wrote the novel to call attention to the mistreatment of Native Americans. However, its major impact was to cause the first tourism boom to California. That notoriety would result in it being the shooting location for the first movie based on that novel, a 1910 DW Griffith silent film starring Mary Pickford.

1884 first edition

The del Valle family lived on the property until 1925. when it was sold to the son of a Swiss immigrant, August Rubel. They preserved the historic buildings as they raised their five children in the evolving ranch operation.



1930 adobe. / aka Nachito’s Adobe. Originally constructed as a combination Ranch office and Ranch Manager’s Office. Now houses the Marie Wren Research Library and eventually the Museum Visitor Center.

In 1930 they added a school house / recreation building. Their descendants still own the 1800-acre Ranch today.



Rancho Camulos - L-R: unknown man - Isabel and Adolfo Camarillo - Isabella Camarillo (in dark dress) - behind her is Ave Camarillo (in white blouse) - unknown man - unknown woman - unknown woman - [from Rosa Camarillo Petit's album - courtesy of the Marvel family]

Isabel, Adolfo and their daughters Isabella and Ave visited Rancho Camulos in this undated photo from Rosa Camarillo Petit's album.



Adolfo Camarillo with great-grandchildren:  
David Lamb, Martina Nicholson and Bert Lamb



Adolfo Camarillo (93 years old) ringing the Russian Bell with his great grandchildren David Adolfo Lamb and Robert Bertram Lamb

On October 29, 1957, Don Adolfo Camarillo celebrated his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday at Rancho Camulos. He is pictured above with three of his great grandchildren.

Extensive damage to the historic buildings as a result of the 1994 Northridge earthquake precipitated efforts to establish the nonprofit Rancho Camulos Museum and gain its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 2000. It is still the only National Historic Landmark in Ventura County.

In 2019, we welcomed the addition of a Tataviam Interpretive area that includes a traditional dwelling and sweat lodge. The project was designed by Tataviam elders and built using traditional methods and materials.

Today visitors may visit the Rancho Camulos Museum only when accompanied by a Docent volunteer or for a private event. Currently tours are offered Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00. Private tours, group tours, and special focus tours, such as, the research library, or Camulos films, are also available by appointment. Come for a tour and bring a picnic lunch for a peaceful visit. It is a perfect venue for weddings, Quincineras, private parties, and family gatherings.

As the Covid conditions improve we look forward to resuming our interactive programs for school children and special events. In the meantime, you can join us live for Zoom events or link to previous “Camulos Connection” events such as” Helen Hunt Jackson Returns”, “The St. Francis Dam Disaster Commemoration “, “An afternoon with Alan Salazar, Tataviam Elder and Storyteller”, on our Web page or Facebook pages.

Visit this unique hidden gem, the Rancho Camulos Museum.  
See [ranchocamulos.org](http://ranchocamulos.org) / 805-521-1501/ [info@ranchocamulos.org](mailto:info@ranchocamulos.org). The museum is located on Highway 126 about one mile east of Piru and About 10 miles West of I-5.

Do you have a comment, story or photo you'd like to share?

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