

Neighbors



Dudley House



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Special thanks to:

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Museum of Ventura County

Introduction by Mary Goldberg

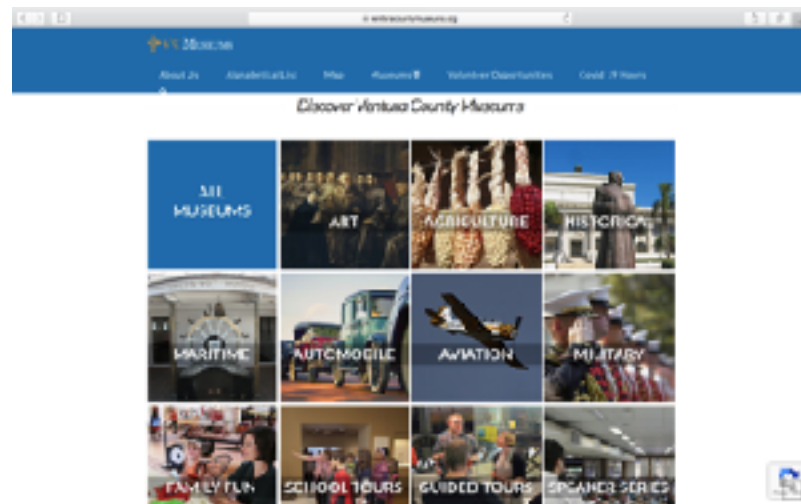
We have enjoyed the many articles which began with the Camarillo Sisterhood and expanded to include a variety of interesting topics. This series of articles which started with a look at the McCrea Ranch, showcases our “Neighbors” that you might like to explore both virtually and to visit when they reopen.

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

Ventura County Museums website

For an overview of the large variety of museums located in our own Ventura County, visit the Ventura County Museums website: <https://www.venturacountymuseums.org>. This informative site gives links and information to museums listed alphabetically and by topic.

The website was created and is updated by The Museum Alliance of Ventura County, a consortium of over 30 historical societies, museums, and tourist bureaus in Ventura County which was founded in 1988. Their goal is “to help visitors become aware of the multitude of cultural and historical places to visit in beautiful, scenic Ventura County.”





Museum of Ventura County Virtual and Onsite Offerings

The Museum of Ventura County

By Bob Cromwell
 Education Manager
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 Agriculture Museum (Santa Paula)



The Museum of Ventura County (MVC) continues to offer resources that reflect our County's historical, artistic, and scientific contributions, as well as the character and diversity of our local communities. The best place to learn more about what the MVC offers is to visit our website at venturamuseum.org. There is so much to explore and enjoy that it will be helpful to share some of our highlights with you. Whether you are an educator, art aficionado, history enthusiast, or general museum enthusiast, we believe that you will discover features that pique your curiosity and offer entertainment.

In order to provide engaging and meaningful learning experiences for teachers and their students, the MVC offers new [virtual tours](#) featuring our Ventura Museum and the Agriculture Museum (AG). Our museum educators interact live with the students by offering these elementary school programs that focus on Native American culture and the science of agriculture. Our [Chumash history tour \(3rd-5th\)](#) explores the Chumash life-ways, from the use of natural resources to the importance of storytelling and games. Our AG Museum tour, [From the Land to My Hand \(K-2nd\)](#), compels students to explore the question of where our fruits

and vegetables come from, as well as the history of how food was grown, distributed, and sold in Ventura County. We also offer free [virtual learning modules](#) for parents, kids, and educators to learn about a variety of science, history and art topics!

While the MVC is preparing our exhibit spaces for reopening as soon as possible, we continue to offer a free, virtual alternative. Our [virtual exhibit pages](#) feature fourteen exhibits that include images of artwork, videos, and more! These exhibits include depictions of history, such as [Huelga! Photographs from the Frontlines](#), Jorge Corralejo's depiction of the United Farmworkers movement through photography.



Local art exhibits include [Legacy: Seven Decades of Ventura College Artwork](#), and [Nordic Myths and Legends: George Stuart Historical Figures](#), as well as many others.

We look forward to the day when our patrons will enter our galleries in person.

Until then, we hope you enjoy our virtual exhibits for free, for fun, and to inspire wonder and contemplation.



Mounted photo of Billie Wolfson. Caption reads "Wolfson - plowing Camarillo Ranch 1894." Wolfson stands on plowing equipment with teams of horses on both sides of him. Courtesy MVC Digital Photograph Collection

For folks who are interested in our [Research Library](#) and [Collections](#), we have more than a dozen web features designed to connect you with virtual cultural resources. You can enjoy "time-travelling" by viewing historic images from decades or even centuries past by accessing our [digitized photographs](#). Also, experience local history through fascinating artifacts and objects that are available at our [Highlights from the Collection](#) page. We believe you will be inspired by what our staff and docents have preserved and prepared for your virtual encounter with the collections and archives.



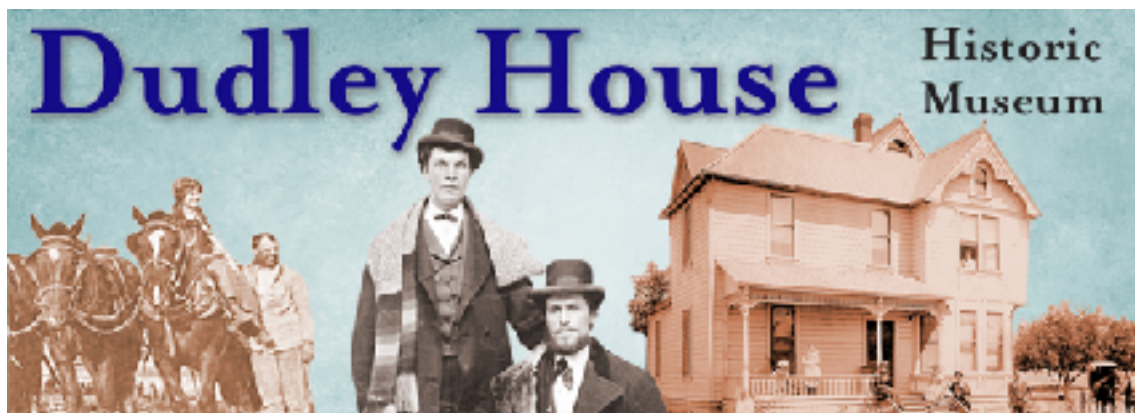
Story time with Alberta Word

The MVC will also continue to offer events. Our [event calendar](#) features free grab bag handouts for families, interviews with fascinating local musicians, artists and scholars, and more! Ivor Davis serves as the entertaining and inquisitive interviewer throughout our *Up Close and Personal Series*. Ivor has recently interviewed Chris Hillman, Malcolm McDowell, and will continue the series with Miriam Archa and others. The

Museum also hosts *Community Story Circle: Hindsight is 2020*, featuring guests such as Tracy Hudak, the founder and principal of CreativityWorks, a think tank and consultancy firm specializing in the creative sector's role in economic and community development. Stay tuned, and join us for upcoming events!



Museum Educator Brianna (sitting on a lima bean planter) offering a virtual tour at the Agriculture Museum



Dudley House Historic Museum

Website: <http://dudleyhouse.org/>

197 N. Ashwood Avenue.

at the Corner of Loma Vista & Ashwood Ave. in Ventura

The Dudley House, originally located faced Telegraph Road at the corner of Ashwood Avenue, was completed in 1892. It was the home of Benjamin Wells (B.W.) Dudley, who fought for the north and helped to find and capture Jefferson Davis. After the Civil War he came to California with his brother Frank. Between 1875-1877, Benjamin purchased 200 acres in San Buenaventura. In 1891, he hired architect builder Selwyn Shaw to build the two-story, five-bedroom home in the middle of a field of wildflowers and mustard. It was a normal farmhouse for that period. Franklin Ward worked with Shaw on this project as well as designing the Camarillo Ranch House.



Dudley House around 1900, Courtesy The Dudley House website

Five generations of Dudleys lived in the house. Carrie Louise Smith, a Southern Belle, met and later married Benjamin Dudley after she visited her aunt and uncle in San Buenaventura. The family raised livestock and grew wheat and barley, but eventually settled on lima beans, and later citrus.

Benjamin was a prominent community member. He was a member of the school board, clerk of the Board of Supervisors and a Justice of the Peace. He held court in the Dudley House parlor. He worked for the advent of the telephone, electricity and officiated at the opening of the first bridge over the Santa Clara River in 1898.

Their grandson, Leavitt Dudley, was an artist. His artwork includes the Rancho Maps of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Los Angeles, set designs for Paramount Studios, and illustrations for books and magazines.



Examples of Leavitt Dudley's film studio illustrations

The Dudley family loved music and books. Their books are found throughout the house. Top shelf exhibits some of the illustrations created by Leavitt Dudley.

Over the years pieces of the farm were sold off. One large parcel went to the Ventura County Community College District and eventually became the site of Ventura College.

In 1977, local residents formed the nonprofit San Buenaventura Heritage Inc. to preserve the home and to oversee the restoration and operation of the Dudley House, which then belonged to the city. That year it was relocated about a

quarter mile north to the corner of N. Ashwood and Loma Vista, still part of the original ranch.



It took 17 years and \$350,000 to raise the funds and restore the home to its original state. The home partially opened on November 25, 1994 with regular tours beginning in 1995. Improvements included a new foundation, with meeting rooms and a functional kitchen installed in the basement. A parking lot was constructed, and electrical wiring was added throughout the house. Serious flooding in 2014 destroyed the community room which was repaired.



The house and docents showcase what life would have been like from the 1890s to the 1920s. In a 44 minute video on their website, docents tell the stories of the Dudleys and this special home.

Unlike many historic homes, most of the items in the Dudley House, belonged to the Dudley family. The sewing machine belonged to Dudley daughter-in-law, Miriam Knox Dudley. She was a trained seamstress and supplemented the farm income during the Great Depression by sewing.





Just like at the Camarillo Ranch House, bedrooms were connected. In Carmen's Room you go through a bathroom to get to Ave's Room.

In the Dudley House the closet door leads into another bedroom. Dudley children enjoyed running into Grandma's room through this closet.

For many years, the Dudley House has been transformed into a Holiday Boutique. Due to the pandemic, it was cancelled in 2020. They hope to resume this festive event in 2021. Check their website for information on reopening plans, tours and events.

References:

The Dudley House website <http://dudleyhouse.org/>

VC Star Nov. 28, 2016 Dudley House in Ventura shows off Victorian character by Anne Kallas

LA Times Nov. 25, 1994 Farmhouse Gets New Lease on Life : Ventura: It took 17 years to restore Victoriana to Dudley House, which opens tonight for special party. By Kay Saillant

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

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