

Bella Vista Ranch, Ojai Valley

Bella Vista Ranch



Photo credit: San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2020

Front Porch of Residence, Bella Vista Ranch



Photo credit: San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2020

The Bella Vista Ranch contains a California Bungalow-style farmhouse built around 1910 and embodies the distinctive characteristics of this architectural style. The home is surrounded by citrus and avocado orchards, and mature Oak trees and other specimen trees. The residence's unique features include a side-facing gable roof broken by a front intersecting gable, a long, recessed front porch supported by a low brick wall with square wood columns, and details such as wood knee brackets located under the eaves and a decorative frieze with a raised wood design and classical dentil molding.

The property was once part of a larger 80-acre parcel purchased by Thomas R. McNell in 1890 who altogether invested in over 160 acres of land in the Ojai Valley to raise citrus. The property is significant for its reflection of the settlement and agricultural development of the Ojai Valley as one of the more intact examples of a ranching property from the latter decades of the 19th century and early 20th century. Further, it is associated with the development of citrus as an important crop in the Ojai Valley. Following successful efforts beginning in the 1870s to grow citrus and other orchard crops in the Ojai Valley, much of this area would be settled by homesteaders who experimented with citrus and a variety of other tree and row crops.

McNell Ranch, Ojai Valley

Residence at McNell Ranch



Photo credit: San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2020

Barn at McNell Ranch



Photo credit: San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2020

The McNell Ranch consists of a Folk Victorian-style farmhouse built around 1890 and a Western-style barn and implement shed, all situated amongst citrus orchards. The residence's important features include a symmetrical facade with two front gables, two brick chimneys, and details such as fish scale shingles under the boxed eaves and a decorative front door with flashed glass. The house is on a raised stone masonry foundation and clad with wide shiplap siding. Along with Bella Vista Ranch (Landmark No. 180), this property was once part of a larger 80-acre parcel purchased by Thomas R. McNell in 1890, and his descendants operated the property as a citrus ranch for three generations from 1890 to 1971.

Noble Oaks Estate, Ojai Valley



Photo credit: Stephen Schafer, 2021

The Noble Oaks Estate contains a two-story, Spanish Colonial Revival-style main residence completed in 1928, attached garage, and two detached garage buildings, all situated on a property with steeply sloping hillsides planted with native oaks. The main residence is significant for its reflection of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style, a popular style amongst the middle, upper middle, and wealthy classes in southern California in the early 20th century and retains almost all of its original construction materials, including siding, fenestration, and roof cladding, as well as those design elements that exhibit the skilled, handcrafted workmanship typical of the time period.

Further, the property is significant for its association with John Burnham, an important figure in the early residential development of the Ojai Valley. As one of the first developers of a planned, residential subdivision, Country Club Estates, in 1926, Burnham along with another visionary, Edward Libby, helped to cultivate the suburban development of Ojai Valley. Moreover, the property is significant for its representation of the work of Harold E. Burkett, a master architect who contributed significantly to the architectural heritage of southern California, and in particular, the County of Ventura.

Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick, Oxnard Plain



Photo credit: Andre Plummer, 2022

This approximately 110-foot steel oil derrick is the most prominent feature of the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery location and serves as a key representation of an important phase of Ventura County history. The former refinery is the site of one of the first wells on the Oxnard Plain and the last existing refinery in the Oxnard area.

The steel derrick has a square shape and narrows toward the top. There are two access areas with railings at the mid-point and at the top. It appears to have been built between 1947 and 1962 and covers the El Rio No. 2 well, which was first drilled in 1945 and re-drilled in 1952. The period of significance for the refinery is from 1952-1968 and is associated with the involvement of Ralph Edgington, a lawyer turned oilman. Ralph Edgington was born in Delaware, Ohio, in 1905 and later moved to California to begin his career in law. In 1941, he first acquired a refinery in Long Beach and was soon dragged into producing asphalt for the World War II effort. His company ultimately supplied 78 percent of all asphalt used in the Pacific front. During the refinery's period of significance, Ventura County's petroleum and associated industries were one of the primary sources of employment in the county.