



HISTORIC ADOBES of VENTURA COUNTY

FROM 1800 TO 1900 .

County of Ventura
 April 22, 2024
 Cultural Heritage Board Meeting
 Item 9a
 Exhibit 3 - Historic Adobes of
 Ventura County by Richard Senate,
 1976 (Excerpt)

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INTRODUCTION

The word "adobe" means a brick made of sun-dried mud mixed with straw. Most adobe bricks are 18 inches long, 12 inches wide and up to 6 inches thick. Adobe has been used as a building material for many centuries. The Spanish and later the Americans who came to the Southwest discovered adobe had many advantages over other building materials--the most important being that it was readily available. There were no sawmills to cut and shape wood, no brickworks to fire bricks, but the earth could easily be mixed, using foot power, and poured into the wet wooden brick-molds. Dried in the sun, the adobe was laid using adobe mud as mortar. The thick walls kept the interiors cool in the summer and made the adobes easy to heat in the winter.

The early adobes were roofed with tule reeds smeared with waterproof asphalt. Later adobes were roofed with wooden shakes, although some were roofed with Spanish tiles purchased--or stolen--from the padres at the missions. The outsides of the adobes were, for the most part, plastered and whitewashed as protection from the elements. Left untended an adobe melts, returning to the earth from which it was made.

Twelve adobes are still standing in Ventura County today. One of them is melting rapidly and will not be standing in coming years. Once over two hundred adobes stood in Ventura County. Many were

destroyed by developers, others just abandoned and left to return to the soil. The settlers who came in the last decades of the Nineteenth Century looked upon the adobes as "old-fashioned" and "dirty," somehow "un-American." The newer settlers wanted "modern" wooden homes. By this time sawmills had been built so the lumber could be purchased for the roomy clapboard houses so admired at that period. The last adobe in Ventura County to be demolished was the old Valdez Adobe on Main Street, Ventura, torn down as recently as 1957 to make room for a used car lot! Let us hope that no more of these links with our past will be destroyed by unthinking developers.

List of Adobes
VENTURA'S ADOBE HERITAGE

- 1) ARNAZ ADOBE (1863) 9504 N. Ventura Ave., Ventura, CA
Built by Don Jose de Arnaz--Ventura's first doctor. Built on Rancho Santa Ana, this fine two-storied adobe is owned by Art Langford. Private Residence.
- 2) CAMULOS ADOBE (1864) Piru, CA Still a working ranch.
This fine home was the setting of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel of early California life, "Ramona." Owned by Edwin Berger, this is a private residence.
- 3) DE LA GUERRA ADOBE (1800) 17333 Tierra Rejada Rd., Simi, CA
Forms part of the Strathearn home --now a museum. Built for the Pico brothers in 1800 when they were granted the Simi Grant. Burned by Indians in 1822. Later bought by Jose de la Guerra. Open to the public on Sundays, it is a museum showing much of the early life in Simi Valley.
- 4) EDWARDS ADOBE (1860) This "Yankee Adobe" was built by D.W. Hobson for Thomas More, who had purchased the Santa Paula Land Grant. This fine two-storied adobe was later sold to J. Briggs, who planted a citrus orchard, beginning citrus industry in Ventura County. The ranch is sometimes called the Orchard Place. The Briggs place was sold to the Edwards family. Sam Edwards still owns the old place. He grew up in the adobe. Now clapboards protect the adobe walls.
- 5) LECHLER ADOBES (1876-1881) Built on Lechler Ranch in Oak Canyon by Piru. These two small adobes were built by George Washington Lechler. The first small two-storied home was built by Indian labor. Five years later a second home was built using a rammed earth method of making adobe. It is still the residence of Harry Lechler's sister. Still owned by the Lechler family of Piru. (See Lechler's museum in Piru for fur-

ther details.) A private residence on private lands. Not open to the public.

6) LOPEZ ADOBE (1818)

Built by the padres in Ojai Valley as a fort to keep Indians from raiding mission lands. Owned by the Lopez family, this adobe stands two and one-half miles north-west of Ojai on Highway 33. A private residence, not open to the public. Now owned by Owen Miller of Los Angeles.

7) OLIVAS ADOBE (1851)

This fine two-storied adobe was built by Raimundo Olivas on his vast Rancho San Miguel. Now restored, the old home is open to the public daily and is a fine example of a large rancho hacienda. Once the scene of lavish fiestas, now the old adobe is peaceful and beautiful. It is located in Ventura on Olivas Park Road.

8) ORTEGA ADOBE (1857)

On Main Street, the small tile-roofed home of Emigdio Ortega stands. Now restored by the Ventura Historical Society, it is open to the public daily. It is one of the last examples of a middle class adobe of the mid-nineteenth century. The tiles were once used on the Old Mission SanBuenaventura.

9) REYES ADOBE (1854)

Built by Rafael Reyes in the Cuyama, this fine home may soon be made into a museum. Located on Lockwood Road where it crosses Reyes Creek. Used as a bull ranch to raise fight-bulls for the bull rings of Ventura, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. Private residence, not open to the public.

10) RODRIGUEZ ADOBE (1840?)

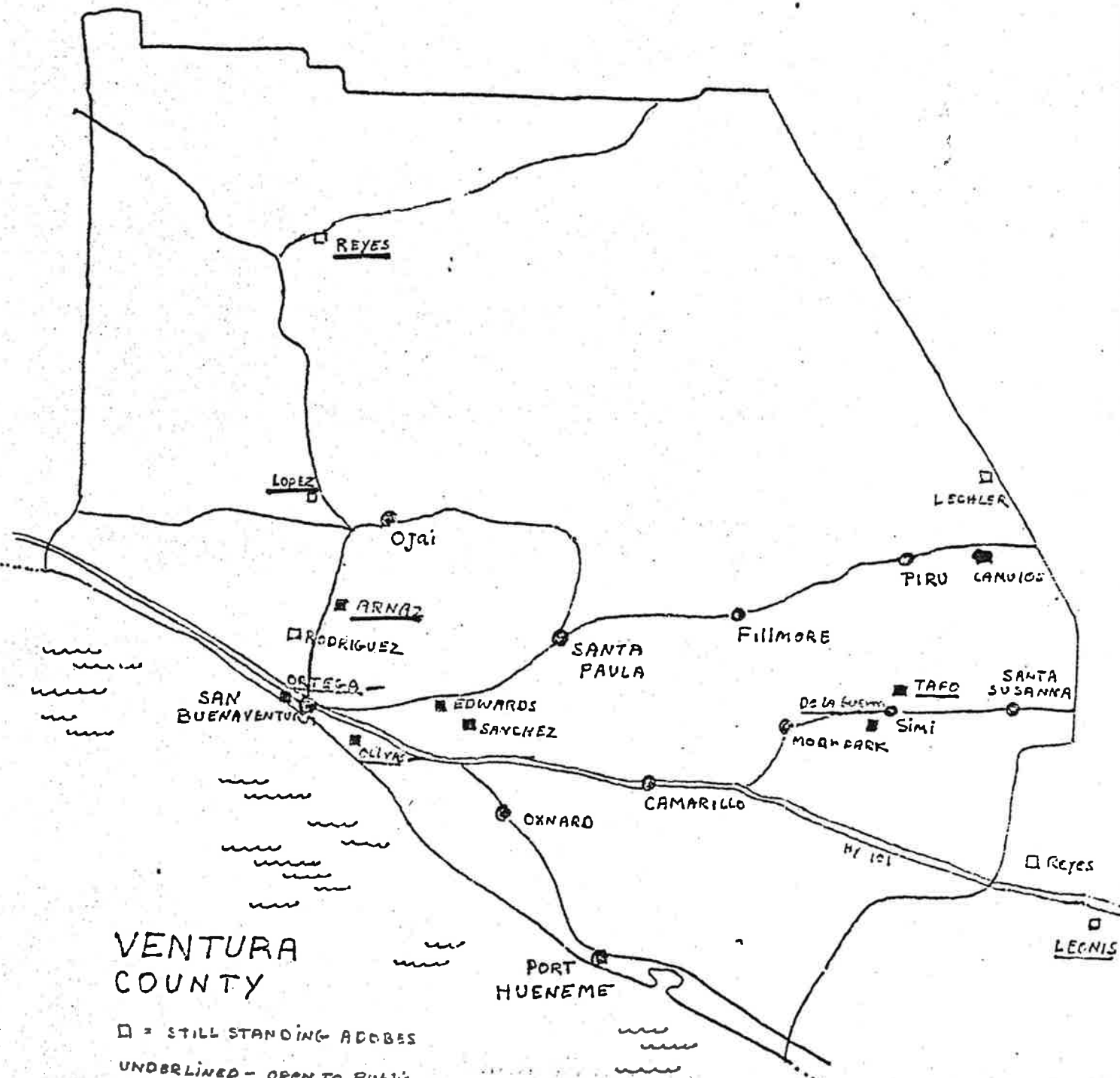
On Shell Oil lease--what was once Taylor Ranch. This fine old home has been restored many times. It was once used as a gun club by the Shell Oil Company. It may have been used by Shell Oil for offices. Private--not open to the public.

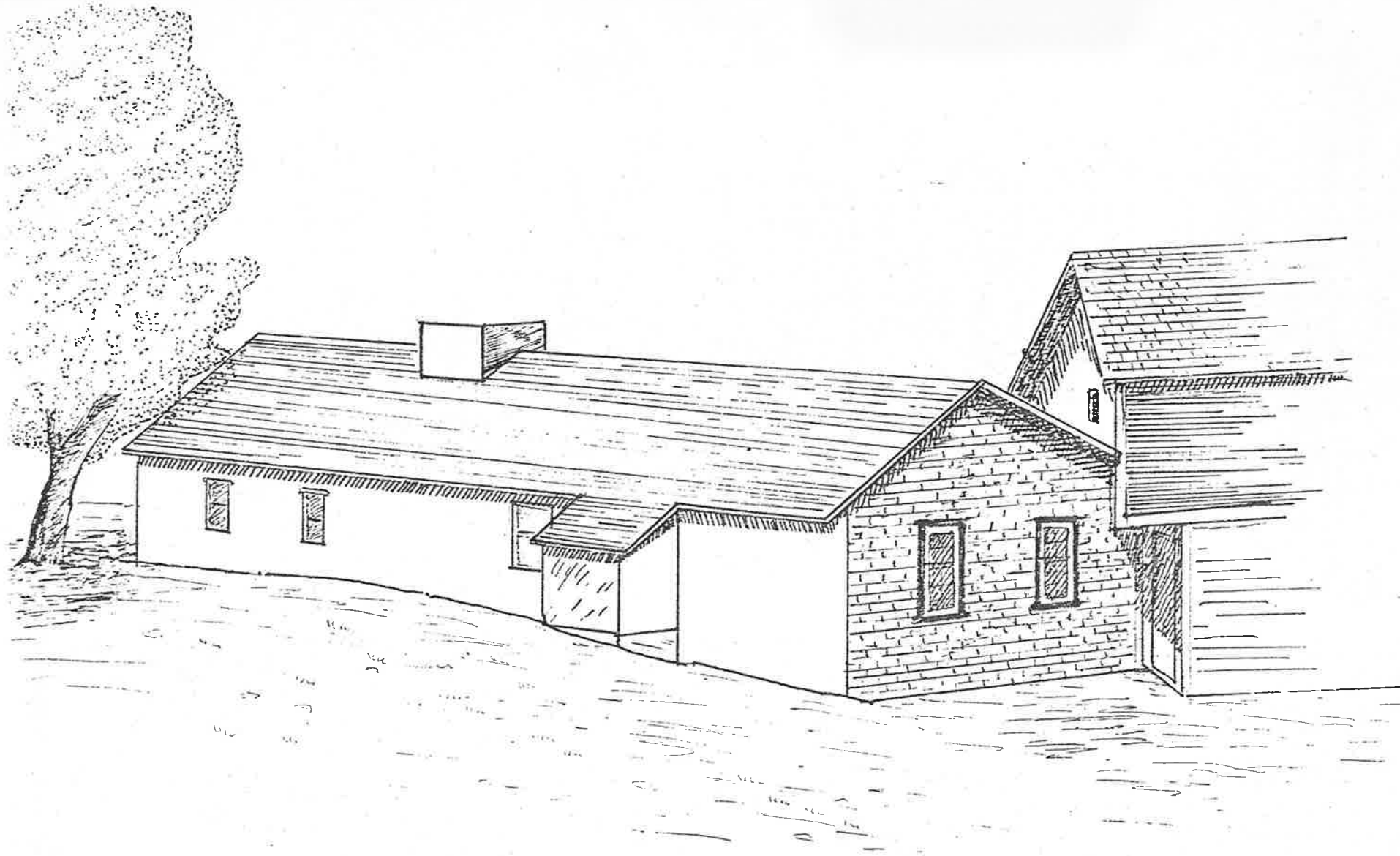
11) SANCHEZ ADOBE (1840)

The old adobe built by Juan Sanchez has been greatly remodeled and bears little resemblance to the one-storied home of the 1840's. Now owned by Lloyd-Butler, the Rancho Santa Clara Del Norte is still a working farm. The two-storied home is a private residence, not open to the public. It is located on Los Angeles Avenue in Saticoy.

12) TAPO ADOBE (1860)

Built by the de la Guerras, the once grand adobe is now a melting ruin on Tapo Canyon Road above Simi. Only about eight feet still stand to mark the site of a two-storied building. A park has been built at the ruin site and is open to the public. No plans are made to restore the hacienda.





REYES ADOBE

BUILT 1854

REYES ADOBE

Lockwood Canyon, California

A private residence not open to the public.

The tall oaks conceal the low one-story adobe from the road but, over a century ago, it was the center of the Reyes Ranch; a ranch that took in much of Lockwood Valley. The creek that flows by the hacienda is named Reyes Creek after the brave pioneers who first settled the northern part of our county. The adobe was built in 1855 and was the main house of the ranch. Jacinto Damien Reyes, the son of the builder of the adobe, wrote of the history of the place:

"My father, Rafael Reyes, was born in Los Angeles in 1834. He was one of a family of five boys and five girls. They owned the Triunfo Ranch, a Spanish grant on which they raised stock. In 1854 feed was short on account of a bad drought, so my father and his brother drove 2000 head of cattle and 1000 horses by way of the Tejon Pass into the head of the Cuyana Valley and settled at the mouth of Reyes Creek. In 1870 my father married Maria Ignacia Ortega at San Buenaventura. I was born in San Buenaventura in 1871.

During the early days my father bred fighting bulls for the arenas. Bullfights were popular in those days, and "El Contesto de Toros"

was usually the featured attraction of every holiday fiesta. Father raised most of the bulls for the bull rings in Santa Barbara, San Buenaventura, Los Angeles and other points all up and down the state. His bulls were famous for their quickness and fighting spirit, and were matched against many a celebrated matador...During my youth I worked as a vaquero among my father's cattle, and it was at this work that I gained a lot of experience that has been valuable since I came into the forestry service in 1900."

Jacinto Reyes was Ventura County's first forest ranger and he spent his entire life in the northern wilderness of the county. Now the adobe forms only one wing of a modern ranch house. The additions were added in this century and are made of wood and concrete blocks. The adobe was purchased a few years ago from the Reyes family by Mr. Leonard Butler. It is still a private residence which stands as a lonely reminder of the pioneers who settled our wild valleys so long ago.

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