



VENTURA

a brief history



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Celebrating 150 Years!

A brief history of VENTURA

As we count down to April 2, 2016 – the date we became a city 150 years ago – we as residents can be proud of the many cultures and peoples who have enriched our city as they made Ventura their home – from the indigenous Chumash Native Americans to the waves of Spanish, Mexican, Chinese, European and new immigrants from other states and nations.



From the beginning a place of commerce and encounters

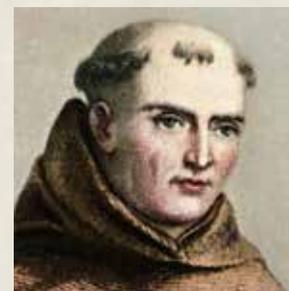
The Chumash provincial capital Shisholop – near the Ventura River mouth – governed a region larger than today's City of Ventura, from the Rincon and Casitas Pass to the Santa Clara River and Saticoy.

Shisholop – meaning “port on the coast” according to Cruzeño Chumash consultant Fernando Librado Kitsepawit – supervised a lucrative trade with the Channel Islands and other regional mainland provinces, maintained sociopolitical stability among its many communities and directed a calendar of seasonal and cosmological cycles and events. The Chumash were fine artisans and adept traders traveling by tomols or canoes.

European voyagers Juan Rodrigues Cabrillo (1542), Sebastián Viscaíño (1602), Gaspar de Portolá (1769) and Juan Bautista de Anza (1776) briefly visited this influential village by land or sea until Chumash residents became subject to foreign colonization in 1782 with the founding of Mission San Buenaventura.

A city of saints and saloons

Saint Serra (1713-1784) founded his ninth and final mission in Ventura, part of a network of 21 Spanish missions in California from San Diego to Fairfield. The monk was originally called Friar Junipero – his name means “juniper bush” or metaphorically “evergreen.” A philosophy professor from the island of Majorca (Spain) turned missionary, he left a complex and controversial legacy in our state.



The Franciscans named their California missions – and the cities that grew alongside them – after saints from their order in the Roman Catholic Church. Serra named the final mission he lived



to see established before his death San Buenaventura or Saint Bonaventura, after a mystic priest who wrote a famous meditative book called *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* or “The Mind's Road to God.”

The city's official name, deemed too long to write out completely on railroad schedules was shortened by half to become “Ventura” – and this nickname has remained in common use today.

Mission San Buenaventura soon became a thriving hub of orchards and gardens watered by a seven-mile aqueduct and the largest ranching operation in California with 10,000 head of cattle and harvesting 9,000 bushels of grain annually. By the 1860s a town had grown around it and Main Street boasted a boardwalk, four stores and six to eight rum shops and restaurants.



Image courtesy of Museum of Ventura County

Ventura's first city council

Ventura city and county government began in and above a liquor establishment.

When our first mayor, Walter Chaffee, wanted to convene a City Council meeting, he had only to leave his general store, cross the street and climb the stairs above Spears Saloon – where Capriccio's Restaurant is located today – to the first offices of Ventura City Hall and, in 1873, the first Ventura County Courthouse.

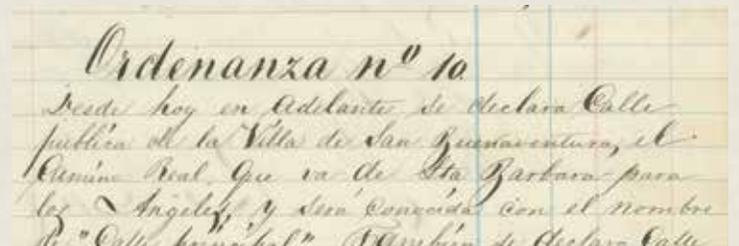


Spear's Saloon, Palm & Main Streets

J.C. Brewster photo c.1882 Photo courtesy of Museum of Ventura County

Then as now, the City of San Buenaventura was a bilingual community. Our second mayor – saloon-keeper Angel Escandon – was Latino. Half the

sindicos or council members spoke Spanish as their first language and the other half spoke English. The minutes of the first meetings – kept today between leather boards in the archives of the City Clerk's office – are written in Spanish in the beautiful cursive handwriting of the day.



That first year of government, Ventura's staff of five spent a budget of \$7,465 – for which residents paid an annual tax of one dollar per head. Council actions that first year included building a public well for \$50 – for which water users paid 25 cents per month – and paving Main Street – then called Camino Real – to the river.

The City of Ventura charged 24 cents per head to check cattle brands during slaughter to prevent cattle rustling, and an entertainment tax of \$2 per billiard table. By fine or 10 days in jail, the City government outlawed cattle driving, horse racing and bull fighting on or near Main Street [\$100 fine], limited milking on the main roads to one cow per family [\$25 fine] and forbade concealed weapons within city limits [\$100 fine].



*Lima beans and oil
– we built this city*

Our city grew rapidly with the establishment of Ventura County, carved from Santa Barbara County in 1873, after an oil boom and “big agriculture” operations such as the 2,300-acre Dixie Thompson Rancho of lima beans, orchards and cattle. These ventures, along with major businesses such as the Hobson Brothers (Meat) Packing Company (the site of today’s Patagonia) brought immigrants, wealth, bridges and roadways to the city, transforming our city’s downtown from 1910 to 1930 into an eclectic architectural mix of red brick storefronts, terra cotta “Beaux-Arts” banks, Victorian-style homes, a Moorish-influenced Bard Hospital and Spanish Revival Ventura Theatre – all crowned by a magnificent new Ventura County Courthouse (today’s City Hall) in 1913.

City Hall – a microcosm of the larger city – is today a meticulously restored historic structure now home to a modern “living” organization whose staff provides valuable services for today’s residents as well as a world renowned Municipal Art Collection and futurist Ventura Commerce Center for business and technology incubators, and educational, cultural and



social service organizations such as Brooks Institute, Turning Point Foundation, Focus on the Masters and Ventura County Ballet.

Through all these years of our history, the City of Ventura has remained an ideal destination for businesses, visitors and residents. A classic Southern California beach town, it is frequently cited as one of the most livable communities in America with miles of uncrowded beaches and bikeways, a commercial harbor gateway to the Channel Islands National Park, and a thriving and rapidly evolving downtown cultural district.



Distinguished schools and area universities have ensured Ventura a culturally rich and highly educated population that provides a skilled and trainable workforce and offers perfect market for upscale retailers, high technology and entertainment with an ever evolving cultural scene.

Ventura’s civic and business leaders continue to pursue ambitious partnerships to ensure that Ventura retains its premier position as an exciting and vital place to work, raise a family and enjoy life.