

OLIVAS ADOBE
HISTORICAL PARK



SELF-GUIDING TOUR

Olivas Adobe Historical Park • Ventura, CA

Booklet Price **\$2**

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Formerly bedrooms for a large family, these rooms are now used for docent activities.
(Closed to the public.)

Bedrooms for the Olivas girls
It is thought that the boys lived in the small adobe in the courtyard.

Master Bedroom
Red chest belonged to Olivas Family.

Chapel Room
The family worshipped together, and many weddings took place here. St. Nicholas was the family's patron saint.

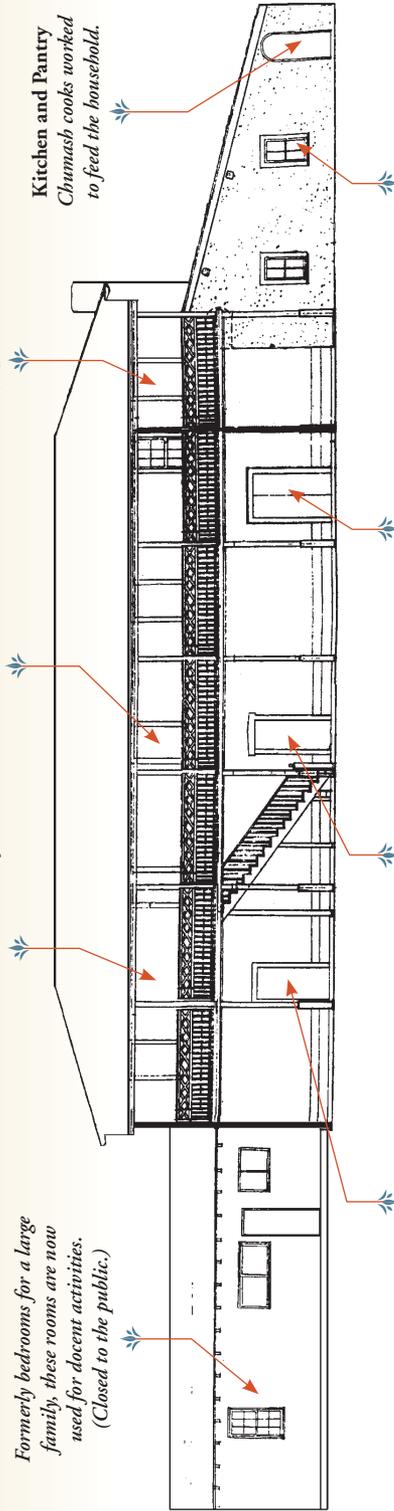
Kitchen and Pantry
Chumash cooks worked to feed the household.

Sewing Room
May have been an extra bedroom.
(Floor raised making the door short.)

Dining Room
Display of "Major" Fleischmann pieces include his 1927 Magnavox radio.

La Sala
Visitors were entertained in the parlor.
All photographs on the walls show members of the Olivas family.

Windows were added in 1914. Kitchen may have once served as a chapel.



OLIVAS ADOBE

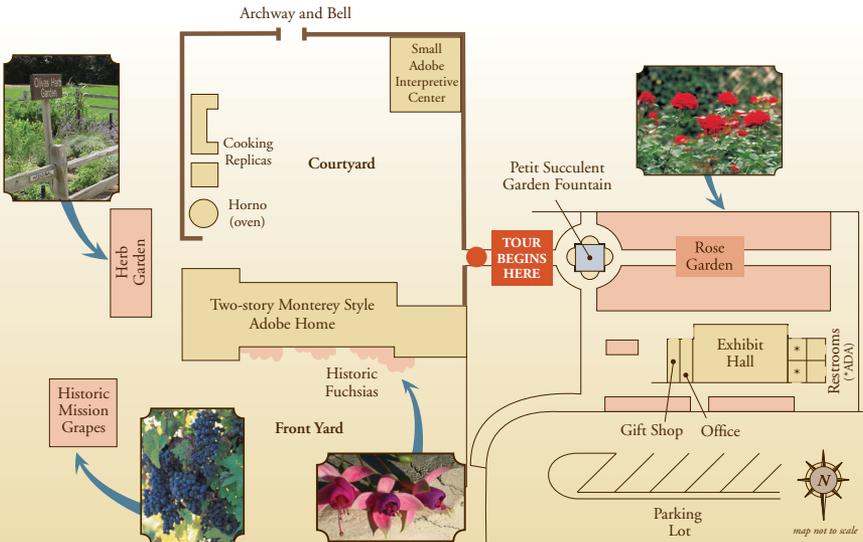
HISTORICAL PARK

¡Bienvenidos! Welcome!

Your visit to the Olivas Adobe Historical Park is an opportunity to imagine life on a working rancho during the late 19th century. We hope you'll consider yourself one of the many honored guests of Don Raymundo Olivas. Walk the grounds and imagine the sights, sounds and smells of a working rancho.

“One of our most pleasant reminiscences of this trip will be the brief visit made at. . .(the) hospitable (Olivas) mansion.”

— From a letter written by a visitor to the Rancho in 1871



*I*n the days when California was ruled by Spain and Mexico, large tracts of land (land grants) were given out to encourage colonial settlement and to reward military service.

In 1841, two soldiers in the Mexican Army, Raymundo Olivas and Felipe Lorenzana, were granted the 4,693 acre Rancho San Miguel. Here, Olivas and Lorenzana raised cattle and sheep, making their fortunes selling beef and mutton to the miners during the Gold Rush of 1849.

In 1847, Don Raymundo Olivas began building his large adobe home. A skilled Chumash Native American leader, Juan Francisco, oversaw construction of the house, directing Chumash workers who formed sun-dried bricks of clay, straw and sand.

“When it was finished...the new house was christened. A large number of people attended. Raymundo Olivas killed three steers for the barbecue. The Indians sang...”

— Fernando Librado, Chumash Elder, 1914



Courtyard

As you enter the courtyard, picture colorful vegetable gardens, fruit-laden trees, a long grape arbor, dogs and chickens, and children playing. Hear the women exchange the news of the day as they grind corn on metates (grinding stones) for tortillas. Listen to the laughter of dusty vaqueros (cowboys) returning from the range.

Imagine the courtyard alive with music and dancing during one of the renown fiestas. Envision the long tables set with beautiful china dishes and filled with savory foods, accented by the ever-present aroma of an open-pit barbecue.

Be sure to examine the working replica of a beehive oven, called an horno: it was used to bake bread and was a common feature in early California. Also take note of the historic herb garden and adobe pit where adobe bricks are still made.

... "Fiestas lasted for a month at a time.... Feasting (was) followed by dancing until the wee hours of the morning."

— Ysobel Peralt,
Granddaughter of Raymundo Olivas



First Floor

✦ The Sewing Room or “El Cuarto de la Costura”

Watch your head! Some people may point to this low doorway as evidence that people were shorter a century ago. Actually, renovations in 1972 added 18 inches of concrete to the floor giving the false impression that the doorway was always this height. Before the renovations, archaeologists excavated this room and discovered a large number of needles near the door and windows, suggesting this was the sewing room.

Imagine women sewing, mending and embroidering in this room—all under the watchful eye of Doña Teodora, Don Raymundo’s wife. Sewing was hard, monotonous work, and required a great deal of time and effort.



✦ The Dining Room or “El Comedor”

This room is believed to have been the main dining room for the Olivas family. However, it is better known as the center of entertainment and dining for Major Max Fleischmann, of the Fleischmann Yeast and Margarine Company. He purchased and restored the Adobe in 1927, using it as a duck hunting lodge. (His photograph stands on the cabinet on the opposite wall, beneath the portrait of his prize hunting dog.)

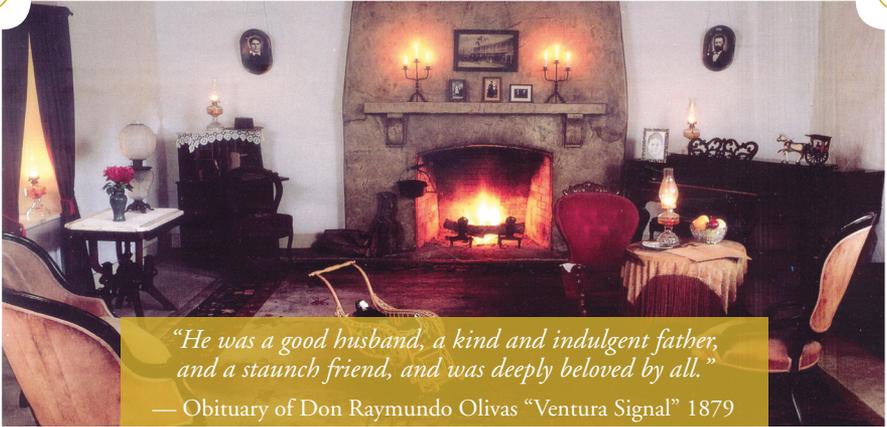
Fleischmann converted the dining room into his trophy room where



“Mr. and Mrs. Fleischmann and their guests always came on Wednesday evening, stayed all night and would shoot ducks.”

Mr. Fleischmann drove a beautiful... expensive car...a Duesenberg convertible....”

— Lyman C. Wright Grounds Keeper,
1930-35



“He was a good husband, a kind and indulgent father, and a staunch friend, and was deeply beloved by all.”
 — Obituary of Don Raymundo Olivas “Ventura Signal” 1879

Fleischmann entertained guests and hunted ducks in the surrounding marshes, where flights of up to 100,000 ducks were common in the 1930s.

Max always insisted that his guests shoot only the legal limit, then set at 25 ducks each. After his death, the Fleischmann Foundation gave the Adobe to the City of San Buenaventura.



🌿 The Parlor or “La Sala”

In this room visitors were greeted and entertained with polite conversation and music. Here Don Raymundo played cards, his daughters conversed with their suitors, and travelers exchanged the latest news, such as the price of cattle and wool, world affairs, and local politics. The barrel piano, a prized possession, was always played for guests. (On weekends, interpreters will often play this restored mechanical music maker for visitors.)



“We were entertained with several airs on a hand organ (barrel piano)... we were delighted with the performance of the little automation dancers and musicians...and had never seen anything so curious before...”

— U.S. Senator Thomas R. Bard, 1867

The tinted photograph on the left wall is of Don Raymundo’s granddaughter, Sarita Olivas, and her husband, Anton Peters. No photographs of Don Raymundo are known to exist.



❖ The Kitchen or “La Cocina”

Much of the cooking was done out-of-doors and the meals of the day would have been prepared by skilled Chumash servants. Beef, mutton, chicken, vegetables and fruits were important parts of the menu, as well as breads and stone ground corn tortillas. This was a room of constant activity. Cooking for so many people—family, friends, servants, and workers—was back-breaking labor. During fiestas, hundreds of meals were served, and the kitchen was a place of nonstop preparations.

“The kitchen is amply big for a moderate-sized hotel. This is well, for their family requires no little room and food.”

— Oakland newspaper letter from a visitor, 1881





Second Floor

❖ The (Girls') Bedroom or “El Cuarto de Dormir”

Don Raymundo's eight daughters slept in this room. It was accepted in those days that more than one person slept in a bed, and custom dictated that daughters slept near their parents. Young marriages were common, so it is unlikely that all eight girls would have been present at one time. Don Raymundo's 13 sons may have slept in rooms enclosed on each end of the balcony or in the small adobe building across the courtyard.

“We were escorted upstairs through bedrooms containing brass bedsteads covered with...quilts and coverlets.”

— U.S. Senator Thomas R. Bard, 1867

❖ Don Raymundo's Bedroom

Items like the trunk at the foot of the bed were brought by sailing ship and traded for hides and tallow (the fat of cattle). This trunk was most likely made in China and given to the Olivas family as a wedding present by friends in Santa Barbara. The hide and tallow trade prospered from about 1820–1849. After the Gold Rush, the importance of the hide and tallow trade diminished and cattle were used for food, much as it is today.

The master bedroom was carefully attended by the servants and family. Here the pacing footsteps of Don Raymundo echoed as he pondered the effects of the floods of 1860 and the terrible drought and economic Depression of 1861–1862. It is believed that Don Raymundo died in this room, on February 24, 1879 at almost 70 years of age.



❖ The Chapel or “La Capilla”

The family chapel was the spiritual center of the Rancho. The holy days of the Roman Catholic Church were celebrated as holidays with prayer and feasting. Weddings, baptisms, and daily prayers made this an active room, where the flicker of votive candles and the hushed whisper of prayer would fill it each night before the family retired.

The large print over the altar is a replica of the original that hung in this room in the 1880s.

“Sunday the priest came out to officiate...hear confessions, etc...in the Adobe Chapel.”

— Consuela Bookman
Granddaughter of Raymundo Olivas

❖ Front Yard

Pause at the grape arbor in the front yard. The historic grapevine is of the Mission variety and is one of many planted by the Olivas family. The Olivas family made a simple red wine from these grapes called “tinto.” A long arbor shaded visitors as they walked from the road to the front door of the house. Three fuchsias planted by Rebecca Olivas de la Riva in the 1890s still thrive.



She and her family were the last Olivases to live in the house. Debts forced them to sell the Adobe in 1899.

“The principal feature is a large trellis-work covering nearly the whole front yard, the trellis being covered by grapevines.”

— “Ventura Signal” January 18, 1879



Photo by: Schafphoto



“A diós, adiós, come again, the
Olivases called as the party drove
(their wagon) away.”

— Myrtle Shepherd Francis
Visitor to the Adobe, 1874

Time Line

HISTORIC EVENTS at the Olivas Adobe

- 1809** — Don Raymundo born in Los Angeles. Youngest of seven.
- 1812** — Doña Teodora Lopez Olivas born in Santa Barbara.
- 1824** — Raymundo joins Mexican Army in California. Stationed at the Santa Barbara Presidio.
- 1832** — Raymundo marries Teodora in Santa Barbara.
- 1841** — Raymundo and Lorenzana given land grant of 4,693 acres by Mexican governor Juan B. Alvarado.
- 1847** — Don Raymundo begins building Adobe with Chumash labor.
- 1848** — End of Mexican–American War. California now part of U.S. Raymundo becomes a U.S. citizen.
- 1849** — Gold Rush. Olivas family grows wealthy on cattle sales to Gold Rush miners.
- 1850** — California admitted as the 31st state (September 9).
- 1861–62** — Drought destroys Southern California cattle industry. Raymundo rebuilds fortune with sheep.
- 1861–65** — Civil War. California remains in the Union. Olivas family members join Union cavalry.
- 1867** — U.S. Senator Thomas R. Bard visits Adobe.
- 1879** — Don Raymundo dies, leaving Rancho to his wife.
- 1881** — Great will case—Rancho divided.
- 1892** — Doña Teodora dies at age 85. Adobe passes to Rebecca Olivas.
- 1899** — Adobe purchased by Mr. Alvord and used as a dairy.
- 1927** — Major Max Fleischmann purchases Adobe.
- 1961** — Adobe given to the City of Ventura.
- 1972** — Olivas Adobe opens to the public as a museum.
- 1974** — Adobe designated as State Historical Landmark No. 115.
- 1979** — Adobe placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Your donations help to restore the Olivas Adobe