

= Rancho Camulos =

Rancho Camulos , now known as Rancho Camulos Museum , is a ranch located in the Santa Clara River Valley 2 @. @ 2 miles (3 @. @ 5 km) east of Piru , California and just north of the Santa Clara River , in present day Ventura County , California . It was the home of Ygnacio del Valle , an alcalde of the Pueblo de Los Angeles and member of the California State Assembly . The ranch was known as the Home of Ramona because it was widely believed to have been the setting of the popular 1884 novel Ramona by Helen Hunt Jackson . The novel helped in raising awareness about the Californio lifestyle and " romanticizing of the mission and rancho era of California history . "

The 1 @, @ 800 @-@ acre (7 km²) working ranch is a prime example of an early California rancho in its original rural setting . It was the source of the first commercially grown oranges in what is now Ventura County , and is one of the few remaining citrus growers in Southern California .

State Route 126 bisects the property , with most of the main buildings located south of the highway , and a few buildings on the north . The main adobe is one of the few extant Spanish Colonial buildings left in the state . Most of the other buildings are done in Mission Revival or Spanish Colonial Revival styles , both of which are derivatives of the original .

Rancho Camulos is designated a National Historic Landmark , listed on the National Register of Historic Places , and is also a California Historical Landmark . Many of the buildings and grounds are open to the public as a museum of this period in California history .

= = History = =

In 1769 , the Spanish Portola expedition , the first Europeans to see inland areas of California , came down the valley and camped by the river on August 10 , exact location unknown but in the area that later became Rancho Camulos . Fray Juan Crespi , a Franciscan missionary travelling with the expedition , named the valley Cañada de Santa Clara .

Originally a Tataviam village named Kamulus (meaning " juniper ") , the area was used by Mission San Fernando Rey de España for growing crops and as a grazing area for livestock as early as 1804 . The population of this relatively isolated area (only traversed by the El Camino Real) , as recorded by William Edward Petty Hartnell during his inspection of the mission in 1839 , was 416 . It was included in the 48 @, @ 612 @-@ acre (197 km²) Rancho San Francisco granted to Del Valle 's father , Antonio del Valle , administrator of Mission San Fernando , by Governor Juan B. Alvarado on January 22 , 1839 , after the secularization of the missions .

After Antonio 's death in 1841 , Ygnacio inherited Rancho San Francisco , but this was challenged in court by his father 's second wife . Nevertheless , by 1853 he constructed a four @-@ room adobe house and a corral at Camulos . By 1857 , the land title dispute was settled , with Ygnacio getting the western portion and the remainder was split among Antonio 's children and his second wife . He purchased back some of the other portions from his family as well as the neighboring Rancho Temescal to the north , and began livestock operations on the expanded area . However , Del Valle and his family did not live on the ranch initially , instead settling in a house on what is now Olvera Street in Los Angeles . The Del Valle family did not move back to Camulos , which he had expanded , until 1861 . During this time , the ranch was overseen by José Antonio Salazar , Ygnacio 's majordomo . Thus , despite its close association with Ramona and Mexican California , the house was constructed after California statehood and the family never lived there under Mexican rule .

In the 1860s , a drought forced Del Valle to sell off much of his land , but Camulos not only survived , but thrived . By the time of his death in 1880 , the house had expanded to twenty rooms and the compound had become a self @-@ sustaining ranch , complete with a brick winery , chapel , barn and workers ' housing . Records indicate that in 1870 the ranch was largest vintner in the area . A stagecoach line opened in 1874 and in 1887 , Southern Pacific ran a rail line past the ranch , including a depot at Camulos , ending the ranch 's isolation .

In 1908 , the Del Valle Company was incorporated by Ygnacio 's children , but by 1924 , the property was sold to August Rübel , a native of Zürich , Switzerland . Upon its sale , the Los Angeles Times lamented that :

An era in the history of California closed yesterday . The Del Valles of Camulos bade farewell to the homestead where they have lived in successive generations since Antonio del Valle . It was the passing of the old regime . They are said to be the last of the old Spanish families who held in unbroken succession to the ancestral acres .

Rübel continued operating the ranch in the same manner as the Del Valles , employing many of same workers . He had served in the American Field Service during World War I and when World War II broke out , he volunteered for active duty again . However , he died while serving in Tunisia in 1943 . After his death , his wife Mary married a man named Edwin Burger , who was not as interested in maintaining the rancho . After Mary 's death in 1968 , Burger closed the ranch entirely , and the buildings and grounds were left untended for years . Rübel 's heirs regained control of the property after the 1994 Northridge earthquake , which had damaged a number of buildings on the rancho .

The Rübel family restored commercial citrus production and set about repairing the earthquake damage . They successfully lobbied to have Camulos listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 . In 2000 , it was further designated a National Historic Landmark . Although the main house was restored in 1996 , funding was not available to restore the smaller buildings until 2006 , with construction completed in spring 2007 . The rancho is on State Route 126 , but little is visible from the highway .

The driveway / parking lot and grounds immediate to the highway were used as a filming location for the 1970 science @-@ fiction television movie The Love War .

= = Agricultural development = =

Del Valle acquired his first Valencia orange seedlings in 1857 from his friend William Wolfskill . The fruit from these trees was the first to be commercially grown in what is now Ventura County , although this was a relatively small scale because the crops had to be taken by wagon to Los Angeles . A Southern Pacific line opened in 1876 seventeen miles (27 km) to the east in Saugus , providing a more convenient form of transport .

However , the primary agricultural product from Rancho Camulos was wine . Ninety acres (360 @,@ 000 m ²) of vineyards were planted in the 1860s and Camulos wines and brandies were known throughout Los Angeles and Santa Barbara . In 1870 , records indicate Camulos was largest of the four vintners in the San Buenaventura Township of Santa Barbara County , with 45 tons (40 @,@ 900 kg) of grapes grown , making 6 @,@ 000 US gallons (23 @,@ 000 L) of wine and 800 US gallons (3 @,@ 000 L) of brandy . In addition to oranges and grapes , the ranch produced almonds , walnuts , apricots , wheat , corn and barley . Rose petals grown at Camulos were shipped to Europe to make perfume .

Over the years , the vineyards were replaced by other fruits . Today , about 600 acres (2 @.@ 4 km²) are under cultivation , most of it oranges , but lemons , grapefruit , and avocados are grown too . This makes Camulos a rare instance of a surviving citrus operation . During the years 1920 ? 45 , the citrus industry experienced a period of great growth , and , in contrast to the natural desert @-@ like conditions of the area , images of " citrus belts " help cement the image of Southern California as an idyllic farmland in the nation 's eye . After World War II , urban development eliminated much of the Southern California citrus production , with the notable exception of the Santa Clara River Valley .

= = Ramona = =

Ramona , published in 1884 , was based in part of some of the experiences that Helen Hunt Jackson had had during her visit to Rancho Camulos in 1882 . Jackson only spent two hours on the ranch and did not meet with Ysabel del Valle , and yet she had a keen eye for details , many of which made it into the book . For example , the altar cloth in the rancho 's chapel had a small tear in it which had been mended ; in the story , Margarita accidentally tears the altar cloth and Ramona resews it together . The book became extremely popular and inspired a great deal of tourism , which

happened to coincide with the opening of Southern Pacific railroad lines in Southern California .

With all of the interest generated by the book , a number of communities declared that they were the setting for the novel in order to cash in on the boom , most notably Rancho Guajome in San Diego County , where Jackson had also visited prior to the book 's publication . However , the location of the fictional Moreno Ranch , " midway in the valley [between lands] to the east and west , which had once belonged to the Missions of San Fernando and San Bonaventura [sic] " corresponds to the location of Rancho Camulos , and the physical description of some of the buildings on the fictional ranch accurately describe actual buildings at Camulos . On the other hand , relative to the other locations in the novel (Ramona 's having been married in San Diego and Alessandro 's family being from the Temecula area) , Camulos seems too distant to be the real location . Unfortunately , Jackson died in 1885 , never having publicly disclosed what locations the book was based on . Historians today are unsure whether Moreno Ranch actually represented a real location .

Nevertheless , by 1886 , the ranch was already considered the setting of the novel . Edward Roberts published an article entitled , " Ramona 's Home : A Visit to the Camulos Ranch , and to the Scenes Described by ' H.H. ' " in the May 13 , 1886 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle . Significantly , he was one of the first to publish an account that blended fact and fiction . The inclusion of his article as an appendix to later versions of the novel only served to cement that association .

The first book solely devoted to Ramona and the ranch was published in 1888 by Charles Fletcher Lummis , a close friend of the Del Valles and who had fallen in love with the teenage Susana Carmen (nicknamed " Susanita ") del Valle . Lummis took photographs of the buildings and published them in his own book , Home of Ramona : Photographs of Camulos , the fine old Spanish Estate Described by Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson as the Home of " Ramona " . He made it clear that the Del Valles were nothing like the fictional Morenos , who treated Ramona poorly , but he too would mix fact with fiction with such statements as , " [the veranda] is about a hundred feet in length and runs from the door of Father Salvierderra 's room to that of Ramona 's room . "

Lummis 's goal was to discourage the novel 's association with other properties , as was Adam Clark Vroman 's Ramona Illustrated : The Genesis of the Story of Ramona , which compared photographs of the rancho 's buildings and environs with text from the novel , as well as photographs from competing locations . By 1909 , George Wharton James could confidently declare that Camulos was the " avowed and accepted home of the heroine " .

Despite the lack of easy access to the ranch and any lodging in the area , tourists flocked to it , and the 1887 establishment of the Southern Pacific line only served to increase that number , with the railroad featuring the ranch in its advertisements in order to distinguish it from its competitors . Although the ranch was not developed for tourism , the Del Valles , with their Californio sense of hospitality , would lodge the visitors , but by October 1888 , it was getting to be so expensive for the family that Reginaldo del Valle pressed upon his mother to stop being so hospitable . The tourists themselves would also be quite a nuisance , and uncouth visitors would steal items from the house as souvenirs , or help themselves to fruit from the orchards .

Naturally , the name Camulos became so tied to the novel that many people began to use it instead of the original " Moreno Ranch " when referring to the novel . An 1897 play based on the book was called , " Ramona , or the Bells of Camulos " . In Virginia Calhoun 's 1905 stage adaptation , characters in the play called the ranch Camulos as well .

Given the general belief that Camulos was indeed the original setting , D. W. Griffith shot portions of his 1910 silent film at the rancho , using the chapel , the adobe and patio , and the nearby mountains as backdrops . Paintings and photographs by noted artists such as Adam Clark Vroman , Henry Sandham (who had accompanied Jackson on her initial tour) , Henry Chapman Ford , and Alexander Harmer of the rancho also illustrated later versions of the novel .

Although tourism brought much difficulty to the Del Valles , they were not above capitalizing upon their newfound fame themselves , branding their wine and oranges the " Home of Ramona Brand " , with their label using the same view of the veranda that had been popularized in postcards . One Tataviam servant girl apparently also made quite a bit of money by pretending to be the real

Ramona and charging tourists for a photograph .

Tourists continued to arrive even after the SP relocated their main line through the Santa Susana Pass in 1903 . Two daily trains made stops at Camulos until the service was discontinued in the 1940s and tourism by automobile became commonplace at this time . After the Rübels took ownership in 1924 , they continued to welcome visitors in small numbers , converting the second floor of the winery into a small museum with artifacts from the Del Valle family . Today , the rancho hosts a " Ramona Days " festival annually in October .

= = Grounds = =

There are fifteen buildings open to the public as part of the Rancho Camulos Museum , all of which were built before 1930 and are still in their original locations . They are mostly built in Spanish Colonial or Mission Revival styles (the latter is derived from the former) , but later buildings were done in differing architectural styles , more representing the period in which they were built . Landscaping features such as lawns , flower gardens , ornamental trees , and walkways separate the residential areas from the working portions of the ranch .

The main adobe , also called the Ygnacio del Valle adobe , is a 10 @, @ 000 square foot (929 m ²) , twenty @-@ room , U @-@ shaped structure . When initially constructed in 1853 , it was an L @-@ shaped four @-@ room house connected with an external corredor (as opposed to an interior hallway) , as is typical of the Spanish Colonial style . It is unusual for its time period because around this time , the Monterey style was in vogue , as is evidenced by contemporaneous buildings in Santa Barbara . Los Alamos Ranch House in Santa Barbara County , and Rancho Guajome Adobe and Las Flores Adobe in San Diego County , all National Historic Landmarks , are built in a similar vein .

The house expanded in several phases . In 1861 before the Del Valle family moved here permanently three additional rooms were added as well as a free @-@ standing cocina (kitchen) . A basement was installed under the new rooms as well . In the 1870s , another wing was added perpendicular to the 1861 attachment . Finally some time after 1895 , one more room was added to the new wing , as well as a breezeway to the kitchen , completing the current shape . Further remodeling done after this time was to the interior only .

The basement of the house initially served as the wine storage area , but in 1867 , a one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ story brick winery was constructed . After 1900 , when wine grapes were no longer grown commercially , this building served as a storage room . Rübél later converted it to a museum for Ramona visitors , complete with Del Valle family artifacts . Currently it is used for farm equipment and automobile storage .

To the west of the main house is a large California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica*) tree that was most likely planted by Juventino del Valle in the 1860s . It measures 25 feet (7 @. @ 6 m) in circumference and its branches spread out almost half an acre (2 @, @ 000 m ²) . It is believed to be the largest Black Walnut tree in the area .

The wooden chapel was constructed around 1867 , replacing a makeshift chapel that had been set up in 1861 . After the secularization of the missions , this chapel became known as the " lost mission " , the only place of worship between Mission San Fernando and Mission San Buenaventura . Directly to the northwest of the chapel is a bell structure which originally containing three bells on a freestanding frame , which were used to call worshipers to Mass . The largest and a second slightly smaller bell were cast at Kodiak , Alaska . The smaller one had previously been used at Mission San Fernando and may have been relocated to Camulos by Antonio del Valle when he was administrator at San Fernando . The third , and smallest bell is missing .

The exact dates of construction of the barn , gas station , and bunkhouse are unknown , but the American Craftsman style of architecture indicates it was between 1910 to 1916 . The barn is located to the northwest of the living quarters , in the main work area . The gas station and bunkhouse are not depicted on the map .

The small adobe , next to the highway , was built by Nachito del Valle . This Spanish Colonial Revial house was constructed around 1920 and was damaged severely in the 1994 earthquake . Since its reconstruction , it has served as the museum 's visitor center .

The schoolhouse , constructed in 1930 , was the last to be built on the property . It was built by Rübel for his and his bookkeeper 's families and designed to match the main adobe .

There are few buildings left on the north side of the highway . The most notable are the wooden Southern Pacific saltbox @-@ style section house and workers ' bunkhouse , both built in 1887 . A train depot and post office both used to exist , but have been torn down . Three extant farmworkers ' bungalows , built by the Del Valle family in 1916 , sit west of the section house .

= = Historic designations = =

United States National Historic Landmark ? added February 16 , 2000

United States National Register of Historic Places ? reference number 96001137 , added November 1 , 1996

California Historical Landmark ? number 553