

ORTEGA ADOBE

Historic Residence

215 West Main Street - Ventura, CA
City of San Buenaventura
Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Partnerships

Residents of today, surrounded by commodities of our day, have no idea of the hardships gone through by our predecessors..."

-Emilio Charles Ortega, son of builder, 1925.

The Ortega Adobe stands as the sole witness of an earlier era when Main Street was much different than today. In the 1800s, it was typical of the adobes along Main Street. The small community of San Buenaventura reflected the Spanish/Mexican heritage of its early residents.

By the turn of the century, however, most of the adobes had been replaced with the brick and frame structures preferred by the growing population. The Ortega Adobe remained standing due to its continual occupation and the preference of the new Venturans to live in the growing east end of town.

The restored Ortega Adobe Historic Residence is open for your discovery daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For further information, call 658-4726.

Other Historic Sites in San Buenaventura

1. Albinger Archaeological Museum. More than 3,500 years of Ventura history have been revealed at this site. Exhibit, AV shows, the "lost mission," and the oldest standing structure in the County. 113 E. Main Street. Currently closed.
2. Ventura County Historical Museum. The history of Ventura County is depicted in dioramas and exhibits. Gift shop and library. 100 E. Main St. Open Tues.-Sun., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. 653-0323.
3. Mission San Buenaventura. This large stone and adobe church was completed in 1809. Museum is located in the adjacent gift shop. 211 E. Main St. Mission open every day, 7 a.m.- 4 p.m. Museum open every day 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 643-4318.
4. A. J. Comstock Fire Museum. This small wayside museum portrays the history and growth of Ventura's Fire Department. Located in the Figueroa Plaza.
5. San Buenaventura City Hall. Built in 1912 as the County Courthouse, it features impressive marble work and stained glass skylights. Fray Serra statue in front of City Hall was erected in 1936. 501 N. Poli St. Open Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed alternate Fridays. 658-4726.
6. Olivas Adobe Historical Park. Two-story adobe hacienda built by Don Raymundo Olivas in 1847 as the main house of Rancho San Miguel. Visitor center. 4200 Olivas Park Dr. Grounds open daily, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. House open Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. 644-4346.

In 1857 Emigdio Ortega purchased the land that would be home to the Ortega family for more than forty years. Emigdio was a member of a prestigious, pioneering family which explored and settled on the California coast. His grandfather, José Francisco Ortega – discoverer of the San Francisco Bay – received one of the first Spanish land grants in Santa Barbara County and was the first commandante of the Santa Barbara Presidio. José passed through the Ventura wilderness as a scout for the famous Portola expedition in 1769, probably never envisioning that the wilderness he ventured through would one day yield to a growing town, or that his grandson Emigdio would dwell there. Like most Californians of his generation, Emigdio was not a wealthy man. Census records list his occupation as a laborer or vaquero (cowboy).

Emigdio built a 20-by-40-foot adobe home in 1857 on his newly purchased land. To roof the house, he purchased inexpensive discarded tiles from the San Buenaventura Mission, whose roof was destroyed in a major earthquake. In the winter of 1866-87, the Ventura River flooded and destroyed the west half of the Ortega home. Shortly thereafter, two new rooms were added, creating the structure standing today. Emigdio raised eight of his thirteen children in this modest home. Emigdio died in 1896 and the following year his son, Emilio, used the home to start his "Pioneer Ortega Chili" business, believed to be the first commercial food operation of its kind in California. Emilio developed the first roasting process for chilies and originated canned chilies, salsas and Snap-E-Tom vegetable drink.

A recent discovery indicated that another business operated at the adobe in the late 1800s. In 1984 archeologists uncovered the remains of a pottery kiln and many pottery fragments indicating that a skilled potter was making traditional casuelas (crocks) and ollas (pots). Remains of Anglo-style flower pots were also found. By the turn of the century, a small Chinese community was established near the adobe. The Ortegas sold their property to Ung Hing in 1905, and the house continued to be used for a brief time. The City of Ventura acquired the property in 1921. The adobe has been many things to many people: a home, a restaurant, police headquarters, the Ventura Boys Club, and even a speakeasy, according to legend. As you stroll the grounds and explore the building, you're reminded of an earlier era when Ventura was much different than today. Feel for a moment the passage of time and the parade of people that have molded West Main Street to its present appearance.

Ortega Adobe Historic Residence (for floor plan)

Missing room, lost in floods of 1866-67.

Walled-up door.

Two added rooms 1867-1890.

Sala

Porch

Kitchen