

It was a picturesque life... The aroma of it lingers there still; industries and inventions have not yet slain it; it will last out its century... so long as there is left standing one such house... — Helen Hunt Jackson, 1884, *Ramona*



The *Camulos Campanero*

Fall 2012

*Newsletter of the Rancho Camulos Museum
Ventura County's Only National Historic Landmark*

RCM'S SMALL ADOBE NEARS COMPLETION FOR USE AS NEW VISITOR'S CENTER

by Judy Triem

The interior of the small adobe is nearing completion and will give the museum its much-needed highway presence in the form of an attractive visitor's center. Built in 1920 by Ygnacio "Nachito" del Valle, the Spanish style adobe building, designed around a courtyard, is ideally suited to serving both the public exhibit spaces as well as administration and docent activities. Tours will originate from the visitor center and exhibits on transportation history in the valley and a media presentation will introduce visitors to the ranch.

Major progress has been made on restoring the small adobe in recent months. A new electric underground line to the building and the installation of new wiring and recessed fixtures in preparation for exhibit space in the large public rooms of the visitor center are some of the most recently completed projects. New support beams in the former living and dining rooms have been added and insulation put into the ceiling and walls. New wall board has been reinstalled in the ceilings and walls. The remaining adobe walls are being replastered to create the original plaster finish. The final steps will include the finished carpentry, restoration of hardwood floors, addition of new vinyl flooring and painting.

The museum has applied for a Phase II grant to the Newhall Foundation to cover the cost of a new septic tank, heater/air conditioner, landscaping and security system. Greg Pierson Construction is overseeing work on the small adobe interior. Members of the Small Adobe Committee who have overseen this project are Dianne Cox, Maria Christopher and Judy Triem.

HISTORY OF SMALL ADOBE

Not unlike Rancho Camulos' large adobe, the small adobe has its own fascinating history. The structure was built by Ygnacio "Nachito" del Valle around 1920. Ygnacio was the youngest son of Ygnacio and Ysabel del Valle, born at Camulos in 1871. His full name was the same as his father's, Ygnacio Ramon de Jesus Eleodoro, but he was usually called by his nickname "Nachito."

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Top: Front of Small Adobe. Middle: Interior courtyard. Bottom: Back of Small adobe (with interior courtyard)

Nachito attended primary school at the ranch until high school when he went to St. Vincent's High School and College in Los Angeles, founded in 1865. Today, St. Vincent's is known as Loyola High School. Graduating from St. Vincent's in 1884 at the young age of 14 with a Spanish major, Nachito attended Santa Clara College where other members of his family had attended and graduated.

By 1900, Nachito had relocated to Los Angeles working as a bookkeeper for the Forster family. Later, he opened an office in Los Angeles as an oil broker. He married Mary Prendergast, of Irish and Celtic descent from New York City in 1906. The couple had no children. Mary worked in Los Angeles as a probation officer.

In 1908, Nachito and his brothers Ulpiano and Reginaldo incorporated Camulos as the Del Valle Company and Nachito became secretary/treasurer of the company. Juventino del Valle had been managing the ranch until his death in 1919. Soon after, Nachito became ranch manager and moved to the ranch with his wife Mary. Also moving to the ranch around the same time was Nachito's sister Belle and her husband Charles Cram. Apparently both families living in the main house made it difficult, so Nachito built the small adobe around 1920. The ranch was sold to the August Rubel family in 1924.

After his move from Camulos, Nachito and his wife Mary searched for a site to build a replica of the ranch house where Nachito was born. The *Los Angeles Times* in an article around 1925 stated:

Y.R. del Valle is to reproduce the famous Camulos Ranch House in the Riviera, a residential area completed in west Los Angeles. . . . To those who know California it is doubly interesting because of the fact that in all California there is but one Camulos. . . . to bring to this section even a copy of this famous home is an art effort in architectural copying that is to be highly commended.

This home still stands in what is now referred to as Pacific Palisades and is located at 13515 D'Este Road.

Prominent Santa Monica architect John Byers was selected to do the work on Nachito and Mary del Valle's new home. Byers had been designing and building several adobe homes in the area and may have even been responsible for designing the first home Nachito built at Camulos. No plans have surfaced as yet to confirm that Byers built the small adobe.

Nachito del Valle died unexpectedly of a heart attack on February 27, 1930. Years later in 2001, an owner of the replica "Camulos" penned a letter to writer Cecilia Rasmussen at the *Los Angeles Times* after reading an article she wrote about Rancho Camulos. In it he stated:

In the 1970s I owned a house in Pacific Palisades It was a very unusual house with false chimneys on the roof and a wide stairway that led to an unusable attic area. My wife and I became curious and decided to find out more about the history of the house. We discovered that it was built by a member of the del Valle family in the 1920s and

was an accurate replica of the Ventura County ranch house. We also found that the del Valle's sold the house to one of the famous movie stars of that era, Lionel Atwell. During his ownership, it was "the" place to be invited to a party. During our ownership my wife and I visited the original house whereupon we decided to name our house "Ranchito Camulos" which is its name today. When we moved to Newport Beach, we sold the house to Mr. and Mrs Mel Frank, a well known movie producer who was best known for his "Road" pictures with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby as well as the famous movie "A Touch of Class."

The Rubel family continued to use the small adobe as a home for the ranch manager or bookkeeper and over the years many people held that role. One of the last to serve as bookkeeper was Peter Rubel, a cousin of August Rubel. ■

RCM LAUCHES CAMPAIGN TO FUND FINISHING TOUCHES ON NEW VISITOR CENTER

Both Federal and private grant monies from the Newhall Foundation have made possible the earthquake retrofitting and the exterior work. More funds are needed, however, to paint and furnish each of the rooms, estimated to cost \$15,500. We are looking for sponsors for the following rooms:

• MAIN ENTRY/EXHIBIT ROOM	\$5,000
• GIFT SHOP/EXHIBIT ROOM	3,000
• MUSEUM MANAGER'S OFFICE	2,000
• DOCENT ROOM	2,000
• LIBRARY/ARCHIVES/MEETING ROOM	2,000
• KITCHEN, BREAK-ROOM, BATHROOM	1,000
• COURTYARD	500

A special plaque with donors names will be located in a prominent location in the museum visitor center.

To contribute to the **RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM VISITOR CENTER**, please contact Susan Falck, Museum Manager, at: info@ranchocamulos.org, or (805)521-1501.



SUSAN FALCK, Ph.D., joined Rancho Camulos Museum in late July as Site Manager, replacing Dr. Jim McGowan, who accepted a full-time teaching position at Napa Valley College. Dr. Falck completed her dissertation, entitled “Black and White Memory Making in Postwar Natchez, Mississippi, 1865-1935,” at University of California, Santa Barbara earlier this year. Much of Dr. Falck’s research focused on the growth of heritage tourism and antebellum house museums in Mississippi, and she brings that passion and interest for public history and museum work to her new position at Rancho Camulos Museum.

According to Susan, “I was familiar with Rancho Camulos and the Ramona story, a tourist phenomenon which bears strong similarity to the intense interest Americans had in discovering the myths and truths of the Old South in the decades following the Civil War. It’s fun to learn about a new aspect of heritage tourism that’s located close to home. I see tremendous potential at Rancho

Camulos to develop the site as a magnet for those interested in discovering Southern California’s past.”

An early priority for RCM’s new site manager is to develop a membership campaign and increase usage of the site for special events. “Much of the historic preservation work we want to accomplish at Rancho Camulos is dependent on establishing a steady stream of income,” according to Susan. To learn more about membership opportunities see page 4. ■

Fifth Annual Ramona Days Festival Entertains and Informs...



Connie Tripp as H. H. Jackson.

On September 29, 2012, Rancho Camulos hosted more than 800 guests interested in celebrating “all things Ramona.” Rancho Camulos was credited as the home of *Ramona*, the fictional heroine of Helen Hunt Jackson’s bestselling 1884 novel.

Visitors were entertained by the Hemet, California-based Ramona Players who performed vignettes from the Ramona

pageant dating back to the 1920s, flamenco dancers, children’s activities, living history demonstrations and guided tours of the adobe and grounds. Many thanks to the RCM docents who made the event such a success.

Book Your Next Special Occasion at Rancho Camulos!



Couple by the old winery door.

Looking for a unique and scenic venue to stage a special event for family, friends or your business or philanthropic organization? Rancho Camulos is an ideal and memorable location to host a wedding, a small or large benefit dinner, club luncheon, bridal shower, family reunion, corporate picnic, meeting or retreat.

Events can be staged either on our lovely outdoor grounds or

inside our quaint 1930s school house, where audio visual equipment can be used to facilitate group presentations. For more information, please call (805)521-1501, or e-mail info@ranchocamulos.org. Put your imagination to work and let Rancho Camulos make your next special occasion unforgettable.

RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM

P.O. Box 308 Piru, California 903040
info@ranchocamulos.org / www.ranchocamulos.org

HOURS

Saturdays, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Group and school tours arranged by appointment.
 The museum is located on Hwy. 126, approximately 3.5 miles west of the Los Angeles/Ventura County border

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MISSION STATEMENT

Rancho Camulos Museum is a 40 acre National Historic Landmark situated within an 1800 acre working ranch. It is the best remaining example of a Spanish-Mexican rancho in its original rural environment and is noted for its literary significance as the setting for Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel Ramona. The Rancho Camulos Museum is dedicated to researching, collecting, preserving and interpreting the diverse cultural heritage and agricultural history of Southern California from 1853 to 1943. Through the restoration of its buildings and grounds, Rancho Camulos seeks to connect the past with the present by offering programs that will educate and enrich audiences of all ages.

Take Good Care of Southern California History – Become a Museum Member Today!

As a Rancho Camulos Museum member your contribution helps to preserve and restore an invaluable piece of southern California history and Ventura County's only National Historic Landmark. As a member you receive free museum admission, a quarterly newsletter, museum store discounts, and V.I.P. invitations to special events hosted at Rancho Camulos. Plus, you'll have the chance to network with a dynamic and friendly group of members, docents and community leaders committed to safeguarding this national treasure. Complete and mail the form below, and begin taking advantage of the many benefits of membership.

RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the form below to join or renew your membership. Send it with your tax-deductible check to:

RANCHO CAMULOS MUSEUM, P.O. BOX 308, PIRU, CA 93040.

Circle membership level requested. Thank you!

COMPADRE \$40 Quarterly newsletter; 10% discount on gift shop purchases; individual admission,	VAQUERO \$125 All of the above plus a copy of Helen Hunt Jackson's <i>Ramona</i> and four guest passes.	PATRON \$500 All of the above plus a 25% discount on site use for up to 30 guests.
FAMILIA \$50 All of the above plus admission for immediate family members.	RAMONA CIRCLE \$250 All of the above plus a framed Rancho Camulos print.	FUNDACION \$1,000 All of the above plus a 25% discount on site use for up to 60 guests and acknowledgement in visitors center.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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I AM ALSO INTERESTED IN
BECOMING A DOCENT!

Rancho Camulos Museum
P.O. Box 308 ~ Piru, CA 93040

