

Edward Borein, Santa Barbara Carriage Museum

RANCHO MONTE ALEGRE

-EST- 1930
CARPINTERIA, CA



Edward Borein, Santa Barbara Carriage Museum



"Mishopshno" Painting by Ben O'Hara

IN THE BEGINNING: THE CHUMASH INDIANS

Some 9,000 years before lemons and avocados were planted in Santa Monica Canyon, the Chumash Indian tribe had a flourishing civilization in the Carpinteria Valley. The environment of this area, with its mild climate, sufficient water, varied flora and fauna, and abundant food, proved very favorable for development of the Chumash society.

In 1769, the Spanish Portola expedition came west along the beach from the previous nights encampment at Rincon point. The explorers found a large native village on the point of land where Carpinteria Pier is today. The party camped nearby on August 17th. Fray Jaun Crespi, a Franciscan missionary travelling with the expedition, noted that "Not far from the village we saw some springs of pitch. The Indians have many canoes, and at the time were building one, for which reason the soldiers named this town *La Carpinteria* or *The Carpenter's shop*."

The plank canoe, or Tomol, was a unique and important Chumash innovation that was used for fishing and to establish a trading network along the California coast, including the Channel Islands. In order to seal their tomols, they used asphaltum from the tar pits; a naturally occurring petroleum seepage that is still visible today along the bluffs of the Carpinteria State Beach.

Chumash villages generally included well built houses, places for playing games, a temescal or sweatlodge, a ceremonial site or shrine, a nearby cemetery and an area for construction and toolmaking. The houses were round with holes at the tops, constructed of arched poles covered with tule thatch, and fire pits at their centers. While the Chumash were great hunters and gatherers, majority of their diet remained plant based, relying mainly on acorns from coastal live oak trees.

Due to the abundant food and mild climate of the region, the Chumash lived comfortably. This lifestyle led to fine tuning their craft and developing an immense complicated society; developing the Tomol, fine basketry, intricate artifacts (abalone fishhooks, arrowheads, shell beads), as well as mysterious rock paintings on the walls of caves deep in the region.

Ultimately Chumash society was destroyed by the conquering Spaniards and by the establishment of the Missions, where the Indians were forced to live and serve as laborers. Mexican secular administration and annexation of California by the United States further contributed to the conditions resulting in the demise of the Chumash society and culture. Walking under the oaks of Santa Monica Canyon, it isn't difficult to imagine what life was like pre-Mission Period, when the Chumash thrived in the same place we call home today.

THE SPANISH- MISSION PERIOD

When Jaun Rodriguez Cabrillo discovered the Santa Barbara region in 1542, just fifty years after Columbus discovered America, he found only naked Chumash Indians living here. Cabrillo claimed California in the name of Spain. California was neglected for over 200 years. Then in 1769 Spain heard that England and Russia wanted California too. So Spain got busy and built four forts, called presidios, between San Diego and San Francisco. Spanish Franciscan friars came to build a string of mission churches so the native Indians could be converted to Christianity. The mule trail which linked these mission and presidios was *El Camino Real*, The Royal Road. Today we call it U.S Highway 101. The Santa Barbara region was so important, it got one of the four presidios and four of the 21 Franciscan missions. Nicknamed "Queen of the Missions", the Santa Barbara Mission was founded in 1786.



Edward Borein painting

Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821. Twelve years later, the Mexican Secularization Act of 1833 was passed, declaring all Indians within the military districts of San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Monterey were freed from missionary rule and made eligible to become Mexican citizens. This ended mission life in California and introduced Rancho life. Between 1795 and 1846 the Governors of Alta California approved approximately forty land grants for ranches in what is now Santa Barbara County. Many people believe the rancho days were the happiest period in California history.

CALIFORNIA RANCHO DAYS

Words by Thomas M. Storke

The establishment of land grants in Spanish California ushered in the glamorous era of *los rancheros*, the cattle kings. Life under the Dons was casual. It was geared to the sleepy tempo of the ox cart and the softly strummed guitar. Everyone rode horseback. The Indians under mission padres became domesticated labor class to till the fields, orchards, and vineyards. The motto of the times was *Mi Casa es Siya* - My House is Yours. Time was told by the calendar and had little meaning, even to the very aged. What could not be done today could be done *manana*. Every day saw its siesta; every season its fiesta. In California, the cattle king had a leather saddle for a throne, a *reata* for a sceptre, an *adobe casa* for a castle. These are the times that inspired today's celebration of "Old Spanish Days". When the moon is full each August, Santa Barbara still has a Fiesta. For three days there are parades, rodeos, costumes, and music.



Old Spanish Days' Program, 1940

Californians still like to ride. Each spring about five hundred of them ride from rancho to rancho. They visit ranchos from Santa Barbara to Santa Ines. That is why they are called *Rancheros Vistadores* (Ranch Visitors). This is another way in which Santa Barbara shows that it remembers its rancho days more than any other place in California.



Rancheros Brand

CARPINTERIA VALLEY

Pioneers panning for gold in California around 1850 (when it became a state), while more than likely striking out in pursuit of that precious metal, struck gold in the fertile soil of the Carpinteria Valley. The Carpinteria Valley community as we know it today evolved from its agricultural roots. From lima beans to lemons, orchards to Avocados, and now legalized Cannabis, agriculture has really sculpted this small beach town.



Rancho Monte Alegre today, is a prime and intact example of ranch development during period 1880- 1920, when the foothills of Southern California were transformed into a vast citrus growing empire.



The Ayala grapevine or "La Vina Grande", was the largest known in the world. It stood in Old Town between Santa Monica Canyon and Cravens Lane and served as a principle meeting place for valley residents. It stood 9 feet in circumference and produced 10 to 12 tons of grapes each season.



Technological advances introduced the lima bean threshing machine, which replaced the horse in the process. Jack (left) and Niel (right) Bailard are the two young barefoot boys sitting on the wheel of the steam tractor. The Thresher tore the vines apart, opening the pods and separating the beans from the chaff.

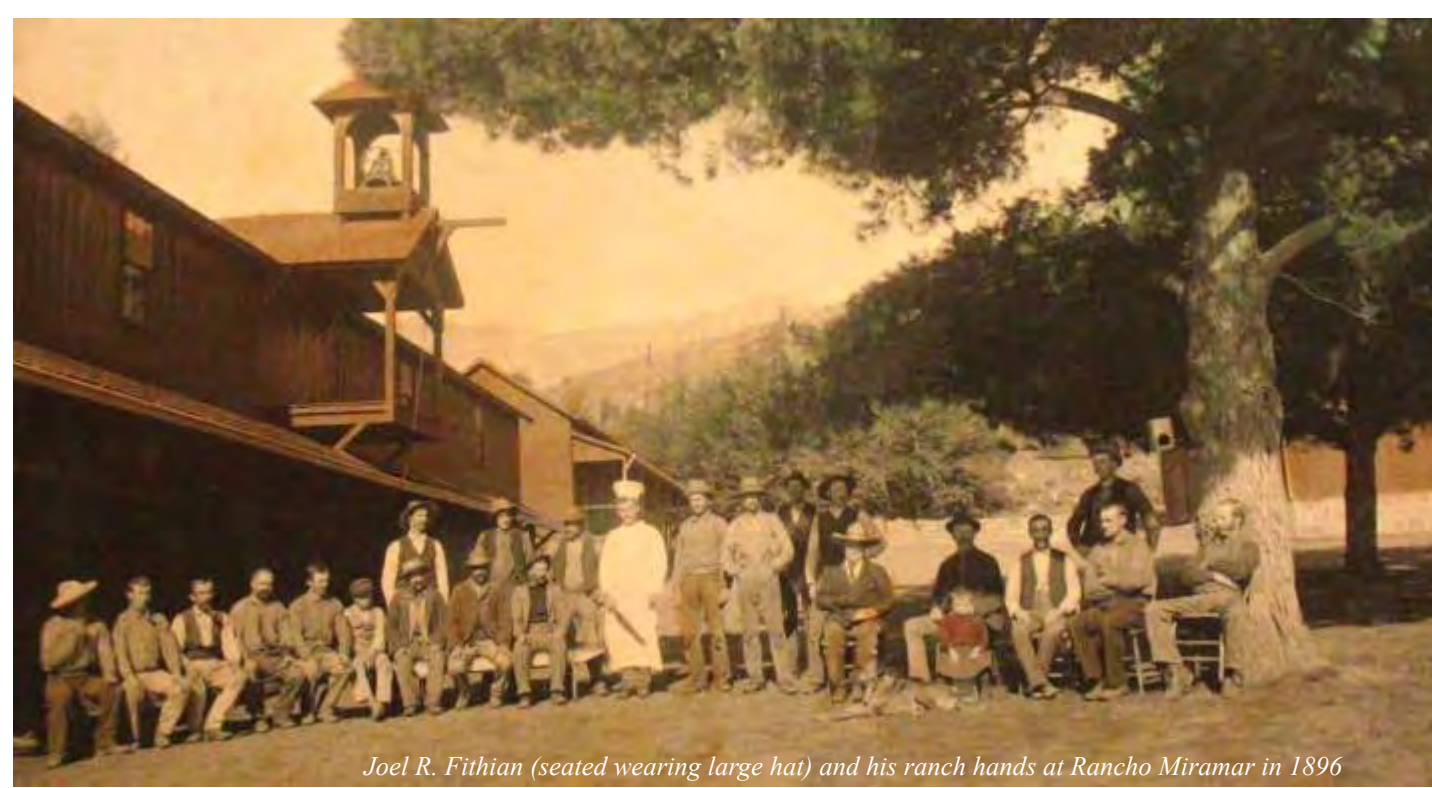


The 1912 grand opening of the Rincon Causeway is shown in this photograph. The ingenious wooden causeway linked Ventura to Santa Barbara through Carpinteria.



The building seen here at Rincon Point on the lower center of photograph is the Maryland Inn, a road-house with a reputation. Rumor had it that bootleg whisky was the beverage of choice here. A wall through the middle of the house divided the building into Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, thus allowing patrons to scamper to the Santa Barbara side of the Inn when the Ventura County Sheriffs arrived; vice versa with arrival of the Santa Barbara Sheriffs.

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Joel R. Fithian (seated wearing large hat) and his ranch hands at Rancho Miramar in 1896



CHARLES HALL

In 1878, Charles Victor Hall purchased the land on Santa Monica Creek he named "*Box Canyon Ranch*," present day *Rancho Monte Alegre*. Hall attended agriculture schools in France and settled in the canyon to try out some things he learned while in school. His first idea was growing tuberoses for the manufacture of perfume. After a few years he could not compete with the price of French-produced tuberoses paying laborers 25 cents/day where California workers commanded \$1.50 per day. Next Hall planted some three thousand olive trees from southern France, 20 acres can still be found on the ranch today. His plan to market the olives for the famous Montecito Olive Mill (of Olive Mill Road) by almost a dozen years. However, the olives were apparently not lucrative enough to satisfy Hall. He then tried Sacilian lemons, mandarin oranges, loquats, apple, horse breeding, and dairy cattle for cheese making. One terrible night in the mid 1880s, a fire broke out in his barn and lost all his horses. According to local historian Albertine Rodrigues, Charles Hall lost all heart in ranching after this and sold *Box Canyon Ranch* to Major Joel Adams Fithian in the early 1890's.

MAJOR JOEL ADAMS FITHIAN



Joel Adams Fithian

Joel A. Fithian was born in 1829 on the old Fithian homestead in Bridgton, New Jersey. By the time he was 20, he owned a plantation in Easton, Maryland. When the Civil War began, he opened a recruiting office and formed the Kearny Guards, which became Company F of the 24th New Jersey Infantry. In 1862 he was elected Captain and soon became Major for the Twenty-fourth Regiment.

In April 1865, Fithian was in Washington D.C., staying at the National Hotel, as was the actor John Wilkes Booth. He remembered that Booth had been a great favorite with the ladies, who vied for his company. On the night of April 14, he was awakened by loud knocking on his bedroom door and the porter shouting, "The President has been shot!". Rushing outside, he found the city in a frenzy, with soldiers and police patrols swarming the streets. Then came the news that Lincoln had died. In an 1872 memoir, Fithian wrote, "Everyone seemed to be awestricken at the calamity - all heads were bowed in submission to the will of God. Many unable to restrain themselves burst into tears. Sleep was impossible. Everyone seemed to be upon the streets."

After the war, Joel became the vice president of one of the largest banks in Richmond, Virginia. On May 3, 1866 he married Fannie B Connolly of New York City. He opened Fithian & Co. Tobacco and became involved in stock operations on Wall Street. Joel and Fannie lived back and forth between New York and France, reportedly visiting Santa Barbara at the start of the land boom in 1885 returning to Europe for the next 7 years.

THE SANTA BARBARA YEARS

The Fithian family had a profound influence on the early development of Santa Barbara's business, cultural, and social institutions. In 1892 Joel A. Fithian arrived in Santa Barbara and stayed in the Arlington Hotel. Within two weeks, bought the 500-acre Ranch up Santa Monica Canyon from Charles Hall. In 1894, at the urging of his sons who wanted to establish a country club in Montecito, Major Fithian purchased three oceanfront parcels of land on Channel Drive and constructed a nine-hole golf course, clubhouse and tennis courts for what is now the Montecito Country Club.

In 1895, he worked with local architect Thomas Nixon to design a four-story French Second Empire office building surrounded by a large clock tower at 629 State Street; the building came to be known as the Fithian Building and the "Lower Clock Building" for its elaborate steeple with two large clocks.



Fithian Building - 1896



Fithian Building - 1925 Earthquake



Fithian Building, Today

In 1896 the major and his son traveled in the south of France and Italy, taking agricultural notes on olives, lemons and other crops. While returning from another trip to Paris in 1898, major Fithian developed pneumonia on the cross country railway trip, and died in Los Angeles, just a days journey from his home. His son, Joel Remington Fithian inherited the ranch at age 26.

In Santa Barbara, flags flew at half-mast at the Fithian Building, City Hall, and the Santa Barbara Country Club. A contemporary wrote, "Possessing the qualities of mind and heart that win and retain friends, he soon became one of the leading citizens of his adopted city." He had great faith in the future of Santa Barbara, and one of his last acts while en route to Santa Barbara had been to call on President Huntington of the Southern Pacific Railroad in New York to urge completion of the Coast Line (the line from Los Angeles to San Francisco had stalled in Goleta in 1887). At the end of the meeting, Huntington had said, "Take my word for it, Mr. Fithian, the work of the gap will be pushed."

The major's 1898 obituary stated, "His belief in the future of Santa Barbara was firm and enduring and was certified by large investments here."

JOEL REMINGTON FITHIAN

Joel R. Fithian is the youngest son of Joel A. Fithian- at the age of 18 was put in charge of the Carpinteria ranch renamed *Rancho Miramar* (*View of the Sea*). For a boy raised and educated mainly in Europe, J.R. Fithian took to the West like a duck to water. Under his stewardship, *Rancho Miramar* grew from 500 acres to over 3,200. There were 20 ranch hands living in the bunkhouse and the work day began with breakfast at 4:30 am. He built reservoirs on the upper ranch and found profit in oranges and lemons.

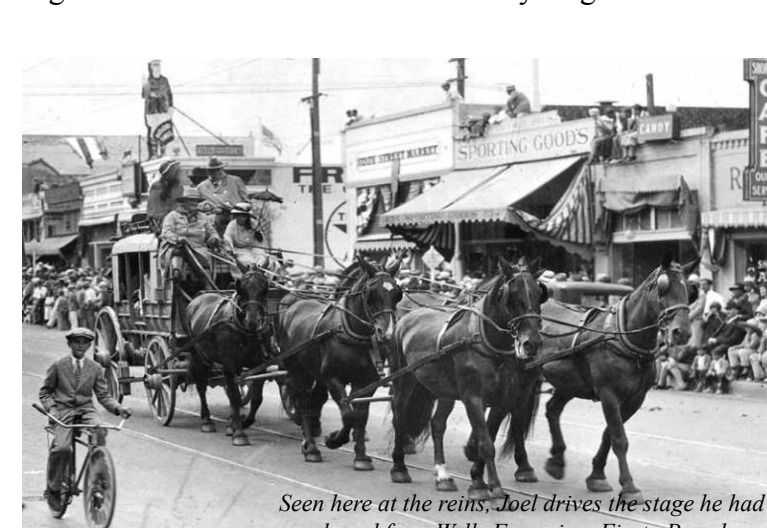
On the last day of December 1900, the gap in the rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco was bridged. While people celebrated the news, the last Wells Fargo stage quietly made its way over the pass, and the stage line shut down. Joel Fithian purchased one of the stages, and the driver, Selin Carrillo, a descendent of the 3rd commandante of the Santa Barbara Presidio, delivered it to Rancho Miramar. The story goes that when Selin sadly turned to go, his life as a stage driver now over, Joel said, "Wait a minute, I thought you and the stage were a package deal." Selin was hired to take care of the ranch coaches and horses and lived on the ranch for the next 45 years.

A year later, J.R. Fithian's passion for the Old California days and his growing collection of horse drawn vehicles inspired him to start a stagecoach service. With the help of Selin Carrillo and Francis Underhill, the three opened a sight seeing stage line called "The Old Time Stage Company" that took patrons from the Potter Hotel up San Marcos Pass to a club house called "the old Prime Place" where hot meals were served by Richard Nye, former proprietor of the Hot Springs Hotel (of which Joel R. Fithian was also part owner).



The Potter Hotel on West Cabrillo Boulevard, seen here shortly after it was completed in 1903, attracted countless visitors to Santa Barbara until it was destroyed by fire on April 13, 1921.

In 1903 Joel married Mary Rathbone Smith. That year President Theodore Roosevelt visited Santa Barbara and Joel R. Remington arranged all his transportation. Four years later, President Roosevelt sent a group of 16 United States Navy battleships around the globe and called it the Great White Fleet. His mission was to make friendly visits to neighboring countries while displaying new US Naval power to the world. In 1908, the Great White Fleet visits Santa Barbara and Joel and Mary were prime movers in the festivities, including a grand parade called the "*Flower Festival*" on Cabrillo Blvd. rounding up many of the local ranches' spring wagons; one covered completely with flowers and accompanied by outsiders in early Spanish dress. This event was such a hit, years later the Fiesta Parade "Old Spanish Days" began; of which Joel Fithian was also an enthusiastic organizer and has been celebrated every August ever since.



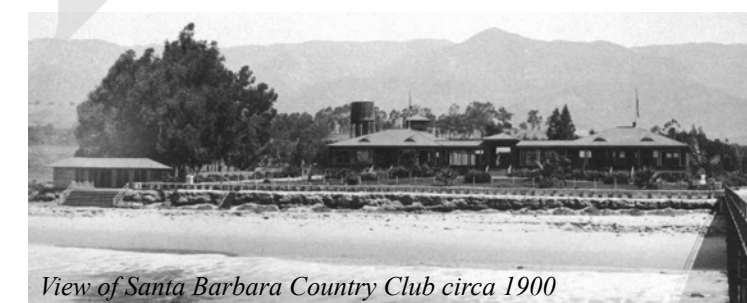
Seen here at the reins, Joel drives the stage, he had purchased from Wells Fargo in a Fiesta Parade



Fiesta Poster, 1954



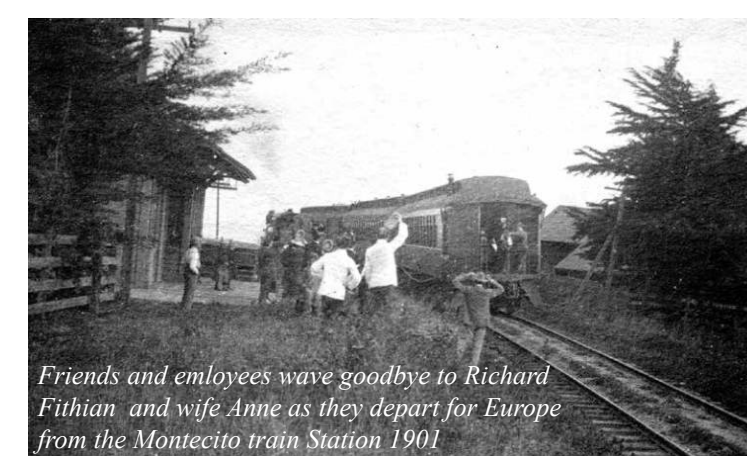
Viva La Fiesta



View of Santa Barbara Country Club circa 1900



The first clubhouse in 1894



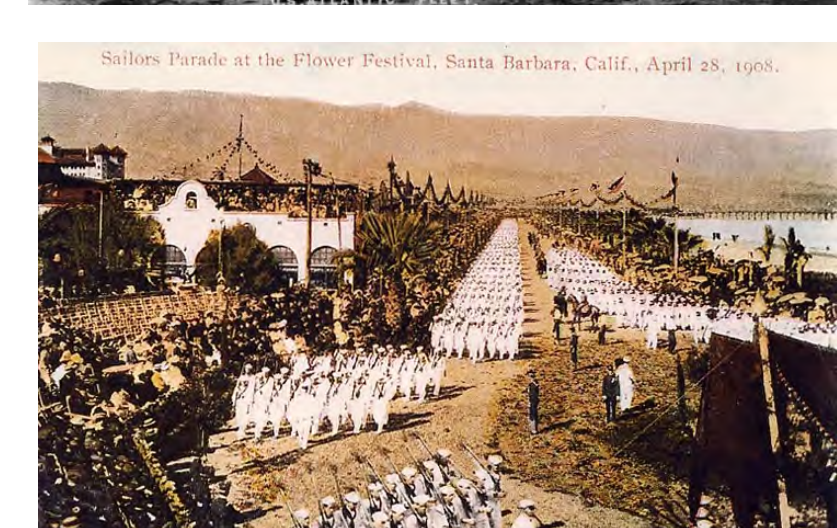
Friends and employees wave goodbye to Richard Fithian and wife Anne as they depart for Europe from the Montecito train station 1901



Joel Remington Fithian



The Great White Fleet, 1907

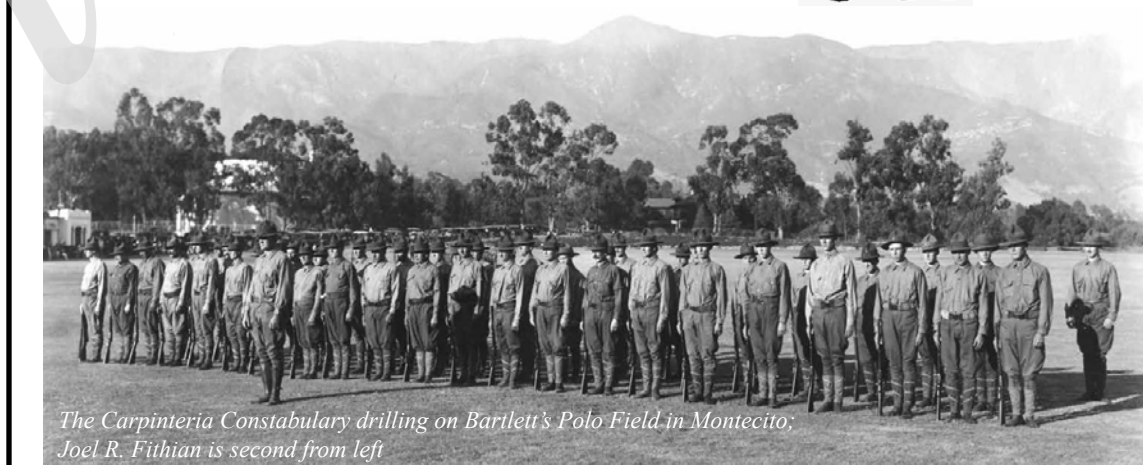


Sailors Parade at the Flower Festival, Santa Barbara, Calif., April 28, 1908.

THE WESTERN WHITE HOUSE

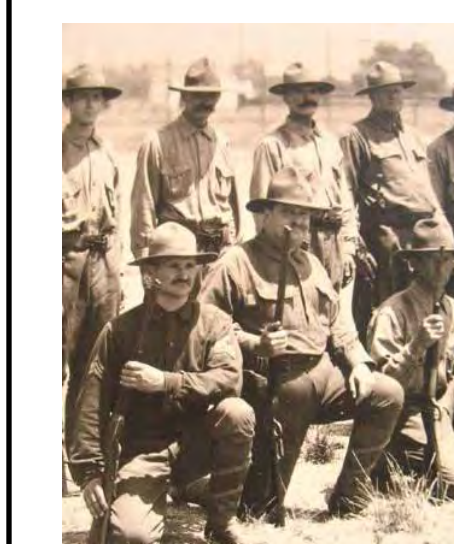
In 1900, Joel's sister Myra married Chester A. Arthur II, the son of Chester A. Arthur who served as the 21st President of the United States from 1881- 1885. They moved from Colorado Springs to Carpinteria, just down the road from RMA to the present day Goodfield Estate; home to the family of Graham Goodfield, owner and operator of Los Padres Outfitters who has had a major part in creating the trails and equestrian paradise of Rancho Monte Alegre today.

THE CALIFORNIA GRIZZLIES

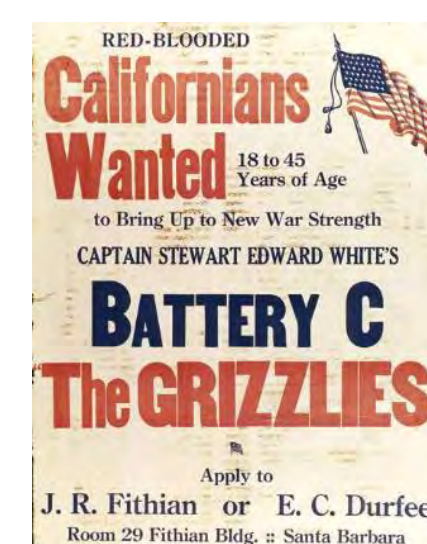


The Carpinteria Constabulary drilling on Bartlett's Polo Field in Montecito. Joel R. Fithian is second from left.

When the United States entered World War I, Joel R. Fithian worked with the Carpinteria Constabulary, and author Stewart Edward White to organize Battery C of the 144th Field Artillery, better known as the "California Grizzlies," an all-volunteer unit that was sent to France in 1918. Fithian himself worked in Army intelligence at the end of the war, because of his fluency in French and German, working primarily in camps where German officers were imprisoned. After the war, Joel R. Fithian raised money to be lent interest free to former members of the Grizzlies and to others who had volunteered from this area. For many years to follow, the Grizzlies held an annual reunion under the oaks in Fithian Canyon.



Joel Remington Fithian (kneeling second from left) drilling with the Carpinteria Constabulary



Recruitment poster from 1917

RANCHO MONTE ALEGRE



By 1930 Joel R. Fithian was so fed up with travelers driving up to his front gate and unloading their luggage, thinkin they were at the Miramar Hotel, he changed the name of the ranch to *Rancho Monte Alegre*.

Following the death of his wife Mary in the early 1930s, Fithian married Irma Baker, who joined him on the ranch with her two children, Benita (later Mrs. Benny Crane) and Bayeux. Joel R. Fithian had always loved children, and in his late 50s and early 60s, he became the father of Joel III and Joan. Unfortunately, he did not live to see them grow up, but died in 1936 at the age of 62.

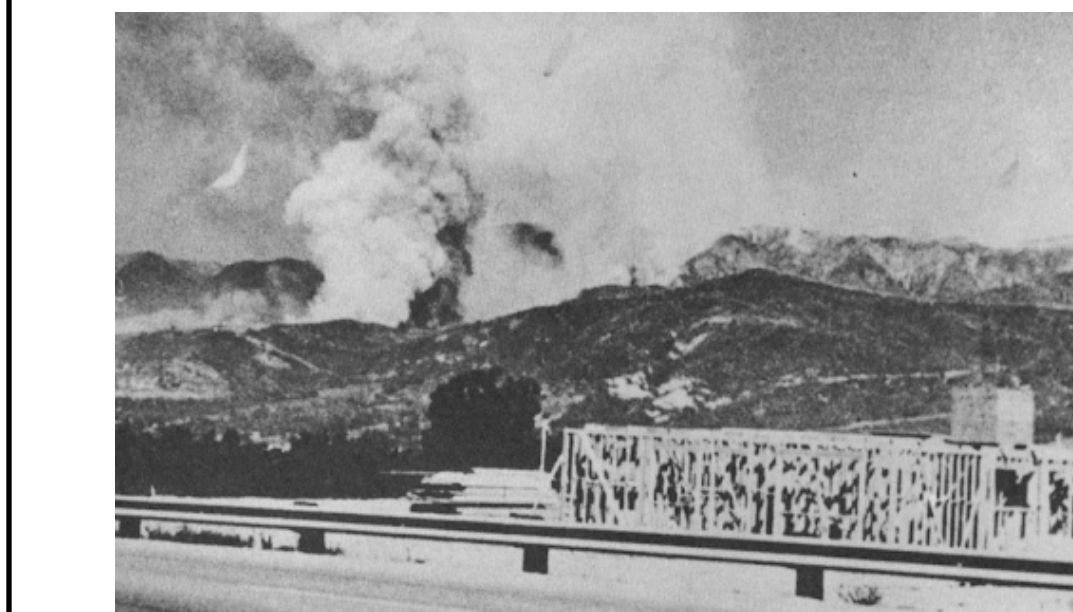
Irma Fithian married Donald Kellogg in the 1940s, and in the early 1950s she converted the lemon packing house on the ranch into her primary residence. Mrs. Kellogg lived here until 1966, when the ranch was sold to Arthur and Rosanne Stegall and their partner Mrs. J. R. Hopkins. Before leaving the ranch, Irma Kellogg gave Joel R. Fithian's collection of early horse drawn carriages to the Santa Barbara Historical Society. Majority of them can be found today at the Santa Barbara Carriage Museum in Pershing Park, below Santa Barbara City College.

ROMERO FIRE 1971



An act of arson, the Romero Fire was started on October 6, 1971, when a man threw an improvised fire bomb onto the steep dry slopes off Bella Vista Drive. The fire was reported about 30 minutes later when the smoke became visible in the hills behind Montecito and Summerland. The Forest Service responded, with the aid of Montecito and Carpinteria firefighters; however it was immediately apparent that the fire had already grown out of control. Aircraft and hand crews were dispatched to hold the fire at the East Camino Cielo fuel gap. However, as the sun set, Santa Ana winds push the fire down the mountainside and across Bella Vista Drive and Ladera Lane, destroying four houses.

By the next morning the fire had burned all the way through Toro Canyon, threatening Carpinteria. With weather forecasts looking good, bulldozers were sent to cut a fire break through Santa Monica Canyon. Unfortunately, the weather predictions were incorrect, and another unexpected windstorm caused the fire to explode eastward toward the bulldozer crews. Few of the operators managed to escape the blaze, but four were killed when the fire trapped them on the ridgeline. A memorial dedicated to the four brave firemen who paid the ultimate price was recently constructed on the western ridge of Santa Monica Canyon in April, 2020.



OLD CALIFORNIA



TONY ALVIS



MEET THE ARTIST
Ben O'Hara was born and raised here in Carpinteria, California. He's an avid surfer, artist, and passionate backcountry explorer. His enthusiasm for the local history and creative mind has made creating this map nothing but a treat, diving into his own local roots and learning more about a very special canyon that he's grown up exploring. It is his hope that this map helps one appreciate the magic this canyon has to offer, and develop a deeper sense of place and understanding of what was here before us. This map is your guide to all that this land has to offer, so take a hike, or saddle your horse, and head up into the hills to find all the hidden gems of beautiful Rancho Monte Alegre!



RANCHO MONTE ALEGRE
1436
CARPINTERIA, CA
TRAIL MAP GUIDE & HISTORY OF THE LAND
BY BEN O'HARA

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Rancho Monte Alegre

	POINT OF INTEREST		PAR+EXTRAVAGANZA
	WELLNESS CABIN		ELEVATION 3700FT.
	HITCHING POST		MAIN ROAD
	RMA SPORTSMANS CLUB		TRAIL
	PICNIC BENCH		PARCEL NUMBER AND ACERAGE

SCALE IN FEET
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