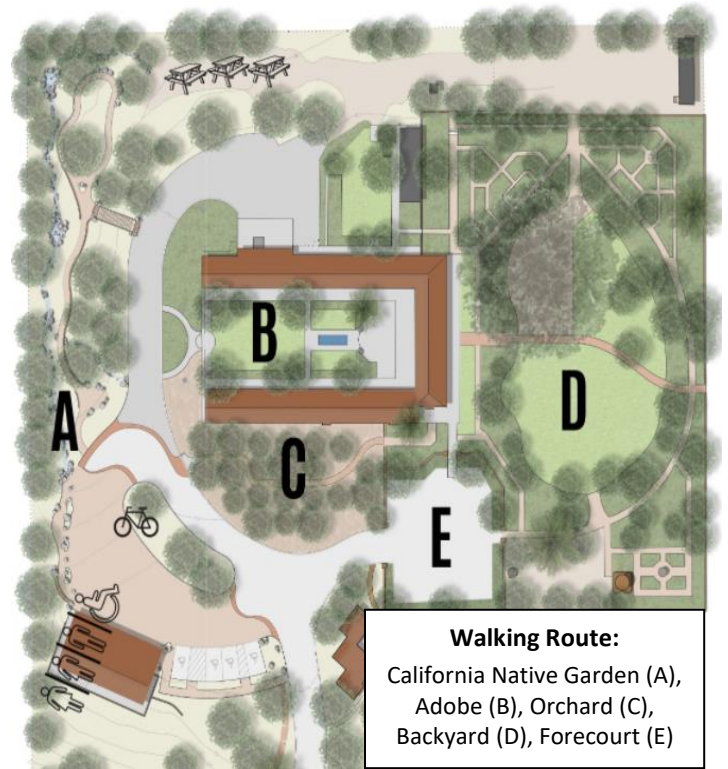


Welcome to Rancho Los Cerritos

Explore the region's cultural and natural history as you stroll the site! Rancho Los Cerritos is located on the ancestral land of the Tongva people, and it was part of a large Spanish land grant. Built in 1844, the U-shaped adobe building has served as a ranch headquarters, an apartment house, and a private home. Today, the adobe echoes with the fascinating stories of all those who have called it home over the years, while the gardens provide space for people to unwind, as well as habitat for native and migratory birds, butterflies, and other critters.

Rancho Los Cerritos is a national, state, and local historic landmark. It is open to the public Wednesdays through Sundays. Admission, tours, and parking are free, thanks to continuous donations. Donations also support the site's innovative exhibits, award-winning education programs, and extensive preservation activities.

Please connect with us on social media and join our email list (www.rancholoscerritos.org) for upcoming events. Membership, site rental, and volunteer opportunity information is available at the Visitor Center.



Walking Route:

California Native Garden (A),
Adobe (B), Orchard (C),
Backyard (D), Forecourt (E)

The California Native Garden (A)



Historic Marker

Near the entrance to the California Native Garden is a plaque commemorating the site's status as California Registered Historical Landmark #978. This portion of the site was originally covered with native grasses and coastal sage scrub. In the 1930s, landscape architect Ralph Cornell installed a garden of native and exotic plants for Avis and Llewellyn Bixby Sr., which helped to prevent erosion caused by rainfall. Rancho Los Cerritos continues to address that issue with our water recapture project, **Looking Back to Advance Forward**.

As you stroll down the dirt path, you will notice several panels that explain how and why the site recaptures rainwater. About ten yards past the first panel, the small tree on your left is a Catalina ironwood. The ironwood's name stems from its dense wood. The Indigenous people of this region – the Tongva – used its trunk and branches for tools, arrow shafts, and canoe paddles. Despite the wood's density, it floats.

The keystone species of this area is the native sycamore, which has distinctive, white-shaded bark. The sycamore's shady canopy is a welcoming respite on a warm day. Along both sides of the path, you will notice tall shrubs with small dark green leaves. In spring, this hybrid Ceanothus is adorned with small clusters of purple-blue flowers. The Tongva used Ceanothus branches as digging sticks. They used Ceanothus flowers, which lather, as soap.



Ceanothus Flowers
in the Spring



Elderberry Tree

On the right at the far end of the loop, a coast live oak provides yet more shade. Since people and oaks tend to thrive in similar environments, acorns have been a dietary staple of civilizations around the world. The Tongva harvested, dried, and ground the acorns into flour. *After circling around the loop, please proceed up the stairs on your left to exit this garden.*

At the top of the stairway, there is an elderberry tree on your right. The Tongva called this the "Tree of Music" because its branches and stems could be made into clapper sticks, flutes, and whistles. The Tongva also used the elderberry's flowers for their medicinal properties and its berries to sweeten food. *Please head next to the adobe.*

As you explore the Rancho Los Cerritos adobe, please stroll the courtyard in a counterclockwise direction and watch your step on the historic brickwork. If you would like to use the ADA lift to access the courtyard, please ask for assistance.

The Adobe (B)

The Rancho Los Cerritos adobe is one of the few remaining examples of Monterey Colonial style architecture in Southern California. The adobe building was constructed by Indigenous laborers as the headquarters for Rafaela & John Temple's cattle ranch in 1844. The two-story main house featured a wrap-around veranda, glass windows, and wooden floors. The adjacent work wings had exterior passageways and dirt floors. The roof was flat and covered with brea (tar). The walls were two feet thick in the work wings and closer to three feet thick on the lower level of the main house. The adobe's sun-dried bricks were made by hand from soil, straw, sand, and water. The house was modernized by architect Kenneth Wing in the 1930s, as a private home for Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr. The renovation incorporated elements of Mission Revival style architecture, including the red tile roof and covered walkways. Plumbing, electricity, heating, seismic retrofitting, and the sunporch were added at that time too.



Courtyard (1872)

Courtyard: As originally constructed, the work wings included a foreman's room, bunk room, and dining room for ranch workers. There was also a blacksmith's shop and several storage rooms for wood, food, supplies, and tools. The main house had a parlor and dining room downstairs, as well as several bedrooms upstairs. The second story and the indoor staircase were unusual features in an adobe. The courtyard gates could be locked at night to provide security. Once a dry dusty workspace, the courtyard was landscaped during the 1930s renovation.

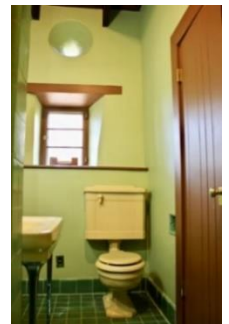
Foreman's Room: Since Rafaela & John Temple lived in Los Angeles, which was a half-day journey by wagon, a *mayordomo* (foreman or manager) was hired to oversee day-to-day operations on the cattle ranch. The 1850 Census of Los Angeles County lists Spanish-born immigrant Jose Simon Roco as the ranch manager. The Census also indicates that Rancho Los Cerritos was home to 16 male laborers, 7 women, and 12 children. This space became a trunk room for storing luggage in the 1930s.

Laundry Room: Margaret & Jotham Bixby moved into the adobe when Flint, Bixby & Co. bought the property in 1866. The Bixbys employed two Chinese-born immigrants, Ah Ying and Ah Fan, as domestic servants at Rancho Los Cerritos in the 1870s, according to the memoir *Adobe Days* (1925) written by Sarah Bixby Smith. Ah Ying & Ah Fan's labor-intensive tasks included laundry and cooking. Newly available factory goods eased the burden, but water still had to be drawn from a well and irons had to be heated on a wood-burning stove. This space became a darkroom in the 1930s for Llewellyn Bixby Sr., who was an amateur photographer.

Storerooms: Two to three dozen people lived on this rancho in the 19th century, and visitors often came to stay for weeks at a time. That is why there were multiple rooms in the work wings to store large quantities of food, extra furniture, dairy equipment, wood, and other supplies. Originally three rooms, this portion of the work wing became two guest suites in the 1930s, each with its own bathroom and closet.

Blacksmith Shop: The funnel-shape vents high in the wall indicate that this space originally served as a blacksmith shop. Since there was no blacksmith listed on the 1850 Census, vaqueros (cowboys) must have forged and fitted the horseshoes. Ranch hands may also have repaired tools, resoled boots, built furniture, and sharpened blades here. In the 1930s, this space became a sitting room with a fireplace and built-in bookshelves. A door in the far-left corner, which is obscured by stacked wooden boards, led to the adjacent bedroom.

Bedroom: During the 1930s renovation, this space became part of a three-room suite for Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr.'s son. It included a sitting room, bedroom, and bathroom. It also featured electricity, plumbing, and heating. The funnel-shaped windows high in the walls demonstrate that this room was once part of the blacksmith shop.



1930s Bathroom



Sunporch (1954)

Library: During the 1930s renovation, three rooms were converted into this large library, where Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr. enjoyed reading, listening to the radio, and doing crossword puzzles. The library books currently on display are part of a non-circulating reference collection, which is catalogued through the Long Beach Public Library. (Appointments can be made to use these books for research.)

Sunporch: Added in the 1930s, this sunporch connected the main house to the library (in the south wing) and provided access to the kitchen (in the north wing). It also allowed for relaxed viewing of the landscaped courtyard in any kind of weather. During the 19th century, the entrance to the main house was through the

central doorway, which leads to the hallway and staircase. The bars that you see on the interior windows of the sunporch indicate that they had been exterior windows prior to the sunporch addition. The fact that these metal bars were not removed during the adobe's renovation attests to the family's appreciation of the home's history.

Parlor: In a 19th century home, the parlor was typically the place for leisure-time gatherings of family members and guests. This Bixbys' parlor of the 1870s featured wallpaper, books, and artwork, as well as a Franklin stove for heat. Starting in the 1880s, small portions of this adobe were rented by folks who worked at neighboring farms and dairies. Manuel & Concepción Liera, one of the tenant families in the 1920s, rented this room and the one above it. The couple's wedding reception was held upstairs in 1924, with electric lighting strung from the Virginia Country Club, where Manuel Liera worked as a groundskeeper. In the 1930s, this portion of the adobe became a two-story living room. The current restoration of this space is funded by Rancho Los Cerritos' **Opening Doors** campaign.

Hallway and Staircase: The central portion of Rafaela & John Temple's adobe was two stories high with an interior hallway and staircase. That type of architecture was familiar to Massachusetts-born John Temple, while the primary building material – sundried adobe bricks – was typical of this region. The bedrooms were upstairs.

Dining Room: Throughout the 19th century, family members and their guests ate meals in this dining room, while ranch workers ate theirs in the men's dining room (north wing). The dining room is furnished as it was in the 1870s. The cooks at that time were Ah Ying and Ah Fan, who were also responsible for laundry (as mentioned above). They used a wood-burning stove in the adjoining kitchen, as well as an horno (adobe oven) in the yard, to prepare meals for the family and the ranch workers. The kitchen doubled as the cooks' modest living quarters (a bunkbed). During the 1930s renovation, a modern kitchen replaced the men's dining room and a butler's pantry replaced the 1870s kitchen. *From the sunporch, head back toward the courtyard gates. The orchard path starts just beyond the wooden caretta (ox cart), which was made by woodshop students at Compton High School.*

The Orchard (C)

Rafaela & John Temple's original garden relied heavily on the fruit trees and vines that could be acquired locally, including mission oranges, lemons, grapes, and pomegranates. In the 1930s, landscape architect Ralph Cornell honored that history by installing an orchard on the south side of the adobe. The orchard's placement ensured that shady fruit trees would help cool this part of the adobe house when the weather turned warm. *The path through the orchard leads to the backyard. Alternatively, you can enter the backyard from the forecourt parking lot.*

Standing sentry to the orchard's entrance are two tropical guava trees. The hedge boundary is formed of sub-tropical guavas. Inside the hedge is a trio of loquat trees, which are native to China. Along the path are orange, avocado, lemon, lime, tangerine, and macadamia trees. Near the gate to the backyard are a sapote (right) and a cherimoya (left). The cherimoya was introduced from South America, while the sapote is native to central Mexico. Oddly enough, the sapote and citrus belong to the same family.



Macadamia Tree



Black Locust Tree

The Backyard (D)

If only these plants could talk! Several of the trees in the backyard were planted when Rafaela & John Temple owned the adobe (1840s-1860s). A couple were planted when Margaret & Jotham Bixby lived here (1860s-1880s). Tenants planted row crops and raised livestock in the backyard to serve their needs (1880s-1920s). Most of the garden reflects the landscaping of Ralph Cornell for Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr. (1930s-1940s). Some of the plants have been added during garden restoration work (1950s-present). *Please begin your clockwise stroll of the backyard at the southern corner of the veranda (covered porch).*

Black Locust: Black locust trees lined the perimeter of the Temples' backyard. This corner of the adobe was shaved in the 1930s to protect this offshoot of one of those 1840s trees. Honoring the garden's history, many more black locusts were planted in the 1930s. *Please head towards the far end of the veranda.*

Wisteria Arbor: There were two grape arbors installed in the 1840s garden, one on either side of the veranda. Long gone by the 1930s, those arbors were replaced with a wisteria arbor. When it blooms each spring, the wisteria's fragrant clusters of purple flowers draw many visitors. Although it provides no fruit, the wisteria is visually reminiscent of those long-ago grapes. *After exiting the arbor, please explore the garden with raised beds.*



Ginkgo Tree

Shade Garden: Raised planter beds were included in the 1930s landscaping plan to provide fresh-cut flowers for Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr.'s home. Some of the beds were dedicated to seasonal blooms, others to roses, which thrive in the sun. Since that time, the ginkgo and fig trees have shaded much of this area, so period-appropriate, shade-tolerant perennials are now planted here. *Please meander through the raised planter beds, then continue your stroll along the dirt path that parallels the country club, which you can find near the ginkgo.*

Virginia Country Club Gate: Standing with your back to the green gate (where the brick path crosses the packed dirt path), you will have a sweeping view of the central lawn and the two-story adobe. This gate served as Llewellyn Bixby Sr.'s personal entrance to the Virginia Country Club, where Bixby was an active member. On your

right is one of three remaining Italian cypresses from Rafaela & John Temple's original garden. Just past the cypress is the immense Moreton Bay fig, an Australian native that was planted here in the early 1880s. *Please continue your stroll along the dirt path.*



Backyard (1872)

Trypot: Under the Spanish and Mexican flags, Alta California's economy was based on cattle ranching, or "the hide and tallow trade." Cowhides were made into boots and other leather goods. Cow fat, or tallow, was rendered in trypots and made into candles and soap. Incorporating the site's history into his landscape design, landscape architect Ralph Cornell placed this 1840s trypot in the 1930s cut-flower garden. The City moved it here. *Look for a path on the left that leads to the sundial that you see beyond the trypot.*



Trypot (1938)

Herb Garden: Planted by volunteers from the Junior League of Long Beach in the 1980s, the herb garden supports our award-winning school tour program. It is divided into four sections (culinary, medicinal, dye, potpourri) to demonstrate useful herbs. The herb garden surrounds the sundial that was dedicated to Jotham Bixby. *Look up to find the water tower.*

Water Tower: Fresh water is central to life. Ranch workers initially pumped water from the nearby river utilizing a water ram. This was effective until a severe drought caused the river level to drop. In the 1860s, a new well was dug. It had a windmill to pump water up to the raised storage tank, or water tower. Rancho Los Cerritos was connected to the City's water system in the 1930s. *Please proceed along the dirt path to find the horno.*



Water Tower (1921)

Horno: The beehive-shaped structure was made of sun-dried adobe bricks in the 1990s. It resembles the horno (oven) that was used for baking here in the 1840s. Rafaela & John Temple's horno was still used by the rancho's cooks in the 1870s; by that time they could also use the wood-burning stove in the kitchen. *Please head back towards the adobe.*

Pomegranates: Three pomegranate trees remain from the Temples' original garden. If you look in the planter bed on your right-hand side where the path angles left, you may spot the reclining trunk of one of them. The Temples' ownership of this property dates to the decade that Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in England (1840s). Interestingly, the people of that era, whom today we refer to as "Victorians," developed a language represented by flowers. To the Victorians, the pomegranate's flower was said to represent "mature beauty." How appropriate for these pomegranates! *The garden exit is near the veranda.*

The Forecourt (E)

The forecourt parking lot was added in the 1930s to accommodate the vehicles of Avis & Llewellyn Bixby Sr.'s guests. To the left of the gate is a plaque showing the 19th century boundaries of Rancho Los Cerritos and its sister site, Rancho Los Alamitos. Both ranchos were originally part of Rancho Los Nietos, which was granted to Spanish soldier Manuel Nieto in 1784, when Alta California was part of the Spanish empire. The tallest tree in the forecourt is an Osage orange, which is native to Arkansas and Texas. The Osage people have long used its fruit for dying textiles. Not commonly found in Southern California, this tree dates to the Temples' original garden. Modern visitors say its fruit looks suspiciously like a "green brain." *Please return this guide to the Visitor Center.*

Thank you for exploring Rancho Los Cerritos today!

Your feedback is valuable: www.RanchoLosCerritos.org/Visitor-Survey