

CENTINELA ADOBE

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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90045

## Centinela Adobe

area

25,000 acres was the approximate size of the two land grants--Aguaje de la Centinela and Sausal Redondo--combined into the Centinela Ranch by the Scotsman, Sir Robert Burnett. Ranch covered the land from the ocean--Playa del Rey and Culver City, to Van Ness Avenue, down to the land that is Redondo Beach and Palos Verdes.

## Ranch Life

From the beginning when Ignacio Machado had some cattle and planted corn and grapes, the land has been cultivated. Robert Burnett raised sheep and planted huge orchards. Daniel Freeman continued this planting and after a serious drought, Freeman converted to dry farming and had nearly 20,000 acres in barley and wheat. The first houses in Inglewood were built in the orchard area--now Inglewood High School site.

## Division and Subdivision

In 1887, Freeman agreed to release land for the City of Inglewood. After the city was established, the ranch was sold in sections until 1912 when the final 5000 acres was sold to the Los Angeles Extension Co. During the 1940's, the last area was subdivided and the Adobe was to be demolished. Under the leadership of Sam Greene, B.K. Richardson, and many other dedicated citizens of Centinela Valley, money was raised to save the old house. After the purchase in 1950, the Adobe was deeded to the City of Inglewood. The Adobe is now managed and shown by the members of the Historical Society of Centinela Valley.

## General Information

Centinela Adobe The three center rooms are the original adobe rooms. Wooden additions were added before the 1890's.

Ignacio Machado built the Adobe in the early 1800's although he did not receive title to the land until 1844. A year later, he traded it to Bruno Avila for a house in the small pueblo of Los Angeles.

## Centinela Ranch Owners:

Ignacio Machado, the builder, in approximately 1830.

Bruno Avila, brother of the owner of Sausal Redondo grant, who lost the ranch for a small debt.

Hilland P. Donsey who bought the ranch at public auction April 9, 1856.

Francis J. Carpenter bought the ranch from Dorsey's widow and sold shortly to a prominent attorney.

Joseph Lancaster Brent who sold the ranch to return to the South as an officer at the start of the Civil War.

Robert Burnett, a young Scottish Baronet interested in farming, gradually bought the lands of the original grants Sausal Redondo and the Centinela. On these 25,000 acres he raised sheep and planted extensive orchards. Burnett lived in the adobe from 1860 to 1873 and finally leased to Daniel Freeman for ten years.

Daniel Freeman continued ranching as Burnett had, and was one of the first to convert to dry farming in Southern California. He completed purchase of the ranch in 1885.

Inglewood, Daniel Freeman gradually released land to the Centinela-Inglewood Land Co. which was organized in 1887 to start a city near Centinela Springs. Large tracts of the ranch were sold until Freeman sold the last 5000 acres to the Los Angeles Extension Co. in 1912. This land was farmed, leased out and had a riding academy on it until the final subdivision in the 1940's. The Centinela Adobe was to be demolished until many interested citizens formed the Centinela Adobe Association and completed the purchase in 1950. It is now maintained by the Historical Society and the Inglewood City Parks and Recreation Department.

### Exterior

Before the freeway, the Adobe was approached by a mile long lane from Florence Avenue. The east side facing the freeway was the front, and near the kitchen was a windmill and a creamery-cooler. Around the kitchen corner on the east stood a brick smokehouse ten feet long and seven feet wide-divided down the center. In later years it was used as a toolhouse and playhouse. When the building began to deteriorate, the bricks were used to build the long barbeque pit still seen in the yard. Recently, the brick foundation of the smokehouse was uncovered. The building still standing at the north end is a bunkhouse now used by the caretakers.

## Sidewalks

Brick sidewalks encircle the ranch house as they did in the early days. In 1966 new curbings were put in by the City and Inglewood Boy Scout Troop #281 camped on the grounds for weekend outings and gradually reset all the bricks. After the brickwork was completed, the Scouts built the shrine under the trees and also built the railroad tie flower bed around the big tree in front of the Adobe. Sidewalks were laid originally by Daniel Freeman. Bricks were used around Los Angeles as early as 1850 and Daniel Freeman had his own brick kilns near the Santa Fe depot. The interior fireplaces have been credited to Robert Burnett.

## Verandas

Early California homes had many covered areas. The kitchen was at one time an outdoor patio. Spanish and Mexican settlers usually cooked on beehive ovens under a ramada. The floor of the east veranda in the Freeman era was wooden with a railing around it covered with grape vines. In the 1950's cement replaced the worn wooden floors.

## Adobe Bricks

We show a modern adobe brick, an old tile brick from the San Diego Mission, and an adobe and straw brick made in 1854 at old Fort Tejon in Kern County.

## Adobe Section

The three room adobe section built in early 1800's by Ignacio Machado. Windows are deep set and the walls two to three feet thick.

## Roof

The roof was originally flat and made of adobe mud and tar (brea) laid over willow poles. Through the crawl hole in the pantry we have seen some places where this roof is intact. The peaked shingle roof was put on at a later date. Square nails were also found in the attic area.

## Additions

The three center rooms are adobe and the kitchen area was an outdoor patio enclosed by Robert Burnett. Major changes were made by Daniel Freeman's son, Archie in the 1890's when he was the ranch manager. A gun room was built on the west veranda off the diningroom, as well as a windmill and creamery, bathroom, hallway and guest room on the south side. The farm buildings were north and west of the house. The freeway side was the front of the Adobe. Harvest and machinery barns were in the Westchester area.

### Age

Guesses as to the age of the Adobe range from 1786 to either 1822 or 1836. In the application of Ignacio Machado for the land of the Centinela in 1835, he stated that he had been on the land for some years and that he had built two houses, corrals and planted vineyards, etc. It is the oldest house in the Centinela Valley and the only adobe in the western part of Los Angeles County open to the public.

### Land Grants

Originally two ranchos: Centinela was 2,200 acres and Sausal Redondo 22,000 acres. The two grants were sold in small sections until 1859 when Robert Burnett began buying the land and combined it all into the Centinela Ranch.

### The Adobe Today

For many years attempts were made to purchase the Adobe, but it was not until December 18, 1950 after the Centinela Adobe Association was formed by interested citizens, that the Adobe was purchased and deeded to the City of Inglewood. Our resident host and hostess occupy the north wing.

#### Living Room

Thick adobe walls two to three feet thick. Deep-set windows and doors.

#### Furniture

None of the furniture is from the original family. Mexican furnishings were very simple. The Freeman furnishings are with a great-granddaughter. Many of our pieces were donated by the Landmarks Club and are of the Burnett-Freeman Victorian era.

Pictures with the velvet mats were purchased for the Adobe by Sam Greene who was called the "Angel of the Adobe".

Victorian Sofa was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Cobb.

Lamp: Tiffany lamp of the late 19th century.

Portrait: Painting is of Grace Freeman Howland, only daughter of Daniel Freeman. She lived in the Adobe as a child and her father gave her the Adobe as a wedding present.

Burnett: The oval portrait and coat of arms on the north wall tell the Burnett story.

### Living Room continued

Registration In the early 1930's, Mrs Martha Crawford was able to have the Adobe registered with the Library of Congress. It is listed as an "Historic Building Worthy of Preservation."

Fireplace Built by Robert Burnett at the time of the Civil War. During the 1930's when this fireplace was repaired, the workman turned all the worn bricks to the inside. This accounts for its newer look.

### Bedroom

Walls The walls are adobe but the south wall has been worked on several times in the past. Seams and rough spot two feet from the fireplace have brick and adobe joining there. Charles Crawford tells of the plaster washing out between them during the rainy weather and having to be replaced every spring. We know there was a two-story house on the south end next to the Adobe, and we believe it was connected by a hallway. This two story addition burned and was never rebuilt.

Closets None of the early Adobes had closets. People used trunks and camphon chests in which to store their clothes. Later, high wooden wardrobes were used.

Victorian Bed Obtained through an aunt of Mrs Margaret Harris, who lived in the Adobe during the 1950's as hostess. Note how short the bed seems. Beds of the Victorian era were shorter than ours today.

Doll and Buggy Nearly a hundred years old. Presented to the Adobe by Florence de Dodson Schoneman (Sepulveda) who died in 1967, at the age of 92. She had been the Madrina of Olvera Street and was related to many of the old California families.

Heater The black movable charcoal heater was used to heat the section of the room too far from the fireplace.

Hearing Aid (on mantel) Made from tortoise shell and sometimes called an ear trumpet from its shape.

Trunk Leather trunk belonged to Ignacio Machado and later to Archie Freeman. The only item from the original family, the trunk was donated to the Adobe by granddaughter, Eleanor de Machado of Santa Barbara.

### Bedroom continued

Hat Box: Man's leather hat box with red satin lining. A removable inner frame makes it possible to carry a top hat on one of the tall beaver hats. Circa 1840 to 1850.

Quilt: Over one hundred years old. Work done by a teacher. Note scraps of school papers and newspaper used for the center of the pieces.

Mannequins: Wedding dress and "Going-away dress" of 1910 era. The black wedding hat belonged to Bill Wallingford's mother. Note purse made of woven black shoes laces.

### Dining Room

Victorian Sideboard: Belonged to Archie Freeman and the only Freeman furniture at the Adobe. Presented by Walter Hellen. The glass and silver Caster came from New Zealand.

Picture-Hair Wreath: Loaned by Clarita Young of Culver City. Painting entitled "Daughter of the Don" by

Hair Wreath: Made from the combings of the hair of members of her family by Manuela Cota Machado. Wreath is made with the fingers into a stitch similar to tatting. Manuela worked on wreath from a young girl until after she was married. When her son, Ernesto, was six, she cut his curls and hung them in the wreath. Note light and dark, fine and unruly hair used in the various stitches.

Chairs: Chairs made with calf skin seats are typical of early rancho furniture. They were found in the marshy land at the foot of the hill where the freeway is now. Skins were cut in long thin strips, soaked in water until soft and then woven. When dry the skin is taut.

Cupboards: The corner cupboards and pass-through into the kitchen are not as modern as we believe. Built at the time of the Civil War. Note deep-set windows and doors of the typical Adobe house. Opposite doors to the verandas give ventilation.

Glassware: Pitchers are from the 2200 pitcher collection of Ethel Bauman of Inglewood.

Banjo Clock: Clock from the old Carnegie Library in Inglewood (demolished)

Visitors: Guest Register-postcards-stationary and booklets..

## Dining Room continued

Photo Albums: Many pictures of the Adobe History and early Inglewood

1. Historical Society of Centinela Valley
2. Centinela Adobe
3. Centinela Ranch and the Freemans 1889
4. Early Inglewood
5. Robert Burnett and Crathes Castle
6. Centinela Days

Originals and copies made by B.M. Guy. of the Historical Society. Many other photographs also contributed by Francis and Gladys Waddingham.

## Kitchen

Original building was the three room adobe section. The early Spanish and Mexican families cooked outdoors in beehive shaped ovens. This was usually under a ramada. The present day kitchen was at first an outdoor patio and was later enclosed by Robert Burnett. The kitchen wing has also been remodeled. After Grace Howland left the Adobe she would never return, as it had been remodeled so many times that it did not seem like her Adobe.

Fireplace: Probably built by Sir Robert Burnett as it is the colonial type of the Eastern United States with its black iron door to hold in the heat. Note the three different ages of bricks, showing this too has been changed at some later date.

Ranch Kitchen: During the Freeman days, the ranch hands were fed on the long porch across the north end of the Adobe.

Kitchen Utensils: Black iron, heavy utensils were used in the early days. Waffle iron used over the open fire donated by B.K. Richardson. Black iron pot with handle donated by Arthur Cobb. The "toaster-like" item is really a kerosene heater for the sad iron.

Pass-through: From kitchen into dining room in early days. The kitchen was panelled because no paint would stay on the walls in later years.

Utilities: Water was always available from Centinela Creek. Daniel Freeman's hydraulic pump brought water up from the stream bed. We do not know when gas was available to the Adobe but electricity was not installed until 1927.



## Pantry

Many older houses had two pantrys. The "wet" pantry has cupboards and a copper sink. Dishes were stored in this pantry. The "dry" pantry was usually a walk in closet with storage shelves for both food and kitchen utensils. The copper sink dates from 1905.

Oval Wooden Bowl The bowl belonged to the Freeman family. It is not a salad bowl but a butter bowl used with a wooden ladel. The excess water and milk is pressed from the butter after it had been churned by hand.

Pitcher Collection More pitchers from the Ethel Bauman collection are displayed in the pantry cupboards.

Skylight Note the skylight is over both pantrys which were inner rooms and needed extra light.

Dry Pantry The dry pantry on the opposite side is used by the residents as their storage as there are no built-in cupboards in the kitchen.

Centinela Adobe Committee 1970

Research: M. Engh-B. Forsyth

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Since the Centinela Adobe was deeded to the City of Inglewood it has received increasing attention. The grounds are beautifully maintained by the resident host and the Parks and Recreation Department. Each time any work has been necessary at the Adobe, special supervision has been given by the members of the Historical Society to see that all work is done to preserve its original character. With the additions and changes which have come through the years, this old home still retains the peace and simplicity of its humble adobe beginnings.