

WELCOME



JACINTA CHAVES HOUSE

Prepared by the History Office, Camp San Luis Obispo
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Welcome to the Jacinta Chaves House.

This house was built in 1931 by Jacinta Chaves, the matriarch of the Chaves ranching family. It was part of the ranch acquired through eminent domain proceedings by the United States Army in 1941 when Camp San Luis Obispo was established as a Federal installation.

Today, this historic structure not only serves as distinguished visitors' quarters for Camp San Luis Obispo, but also as a monument to the ranchers and farmers of the Chorro Valley who involuntarily sacrificed their lands and livelihood in order to provide the Army the necessary land for the training of soldiers during World War II. In addition to the Chaves Ranch, the following farms and ranches were absorbed by the camp: Pelucca to the east, Taylor and Mead to the south, Hansen, Tappa, Silveira and Walters to the west, and Guidetti-Gilardi to the north.

The History of the Chaves Family in the Chorro Valley and the Establishment of the National Guard Training Camp (Camp Merriam).

The story of the Chaves family begins on Santa Maria Island, of the Azores Islands Archipelago, Portugal. Jose Antonio de Chaves (born in 1864) and Jacinta Pereira (born in 1866) were born and raised less than two miles apart on the island of Santa Maria and family history indicates that they did know of each other in the "Old Country"

Jose and Jacinta immigrated separately to the United States in the 1880's. After nearly ten years on the east coast of the United States they arrived in San Luis Obispo in 1894 and 1895 respectively. They soon met again and were married at the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa in 1896. Soon, they had five children:

- Maria, born in 1897 and who died in infancy.
- Manuel, born in 1898.
- Mary, born in 1900.
- Antone, born in 1901.
- Anna, born in 1903.

Prior to the Chaves family establishing a ranch in the rural Chorro Valley, they had previously ranched at what was known as, "Monterey Heights", a 65-acre ranch between Cal Poly and what is today Grand Avenue and US Highway 101. They later purchased a 110-acre parcel of the, "Anholm Tract", located roughly where today's Foothill Boulevard meets Santa Rosa Street and Chorro Streets, Steiner Creek and Highway 101. At the end of World War I, the Chaves's bought the 198-acre Bello Ranch from the Mora Family. This ranch was between the Goldtree Station near the, "horse shoe bend", (to the north, San Luis Obispo-Morro Bay Highway, (now Highway 1), to the south and the Cheda Ranch to the east, now part of Cal Poly University and

the California Men's Colony's East Facility. The Chaves Family later acquired the (Pini) Ranch approximately two miles west of their, "Bello/Mora", ranch across what was then the San Luis Obispo-Morro Bay County Road (after 1931, California Route 56 and after 1933, California Highway 1).

Jose and Jacinta, along with son's Manuel and Antone operated a dairy farm until 1929 when Jose passed away. At the time of his death, Jose was considered a prominent member of the area's Portuguese community and was active in the Portuguese religious and social organizations. Soon after Jose's death, the State of California acquired the former Bello Ranch by eminent domain for the establishment of a permanent training camp for the California National Guard. Jacinta, along with her daughter Mary and son Antone were given 30 days to vacate the property.



Figure 1. Camp Merriam (the former Bello Ranch) in 1937. The ranch house, then on the Mainini Ranch, is located on the lower left corner of the picture.

Soon after acquisition by the state, the neighboring Mainini Family acquired the Chaves' Bello Ranch house from the State of California and moved it across the county road. The ranch house was Moved again in 1941 to make way for the new Gate One off of the new four-lane California Highway 1, this historic house now sits between what remains of the old County Road and today's California Highway 1 at the entrance to the California Men's Colony's East Facility.



Figure 2. The former Bello Ranch house today.

The New Ranch House and the Establishment of Camp San Luis Obispo.

After the State acquired the former Bello Ranch from the Jacinta Chaves, farming operations were shifted to the former (Pini) Ranch located two miles west and across the county road. In 1931, Jacinta, along with her brother Manuel Pereira (Perry), (the last name at some point was anglicized to "Perry") built this house on the 375-acre ranch. The house was built with a full basement which included an area for the storage of wine barrels around the entire perimeter of the house. The basement was damaged during the San Simeon Earthquake in 2003.

In addition to the main house, occupied by Jacinta, a second residence was located to the west, approximately where the 223rd Regional Training Institute's motor pool is located. This was the home of Antone, his wife Helene and their daughter Elizabeth (Betty). The ranch's barn was located behind the main house on the other side of the granite outcropping. Between the barn and Antone's house was a bunkhouse for the ranch's hired hands.

For ten years, the Chaves Family operated a dairy as well as raising hogs, alfalfa, oats, potatoes, sugar beets and vegetables (truck farming). Then history repeated itself.

In 1940, it was decided that due to the fall of France to the Germans and an increasingly hostile Japanese Empire, the Army needed to be expanded. This included the mobilization of the National Guard and reinstatement of the draft. The California National Guard's state owned Camp Merriam was selected to be the home for the soon to be mobilized 40th Infantry Division. However, the camp did not have the infrastructure to support the training and housing of a fully manned infantry division and garrison totaling as much as 22,000 soldiers. At most the camp could hold approximately 5, 000 soldiers, a single infantry brigade and one field artillery regiment. The Army began to acquire through eminent domain numerous ranches and farms in the Chorro Valley for the much larger Camp San Luis Obispo as well as land in Santa Margarita for construction of the Salinas Dam, the post's water supply, and other off post training sites.

So, once again Jacinta Chaves and her family were forced to move off their land; this time the Federal Government gave them only ten days to vacate. Jacinta, son Antone and his family not only had to move their family; they also had to find a place to move their dairy herd and other livestock. Family memorabilia was lost in the haste to vacate and nowhere to go. Jose' grape press was sold to Edwin Walters, only to be discovered by Dale in 1988. Dale repurchased grape press from Helen Walters in the 1990's, the dairy cows, which had to be milked twice a day, were herded over the hills to the Turri Ranch in the Los Osos Valley, (owned by cousins of Antone's wife Helene). The cows were entrusted to the Turri Family until Antone was able to reestablish a new dairy farm in the Morro Creek Canyon east of Morro Bay. Fortunately, the Army allowed Antone, and with the help of his father-in-law, Charles Tonascia, to disassemble the barn so that it could be reused.

Jacinta, now homeless and retired, moved to San Leandro to live with her daughter, Mary Gonsalves, until her death in 1946.

Since then this house as served as a senior officers quarters and later a distinguished visitors quarters.

The Hope School

If you look across California Highway One from the Camp San Luis Obispo's post headquarters you will see a small stand of Eucalyptus trees. This was the site of the Hope School which was operated by the Hope School District. It was the typical one room school house that could be found throughout rural California. The school that was built sometime after the Civil War provided elementary level education to the farm families of the Chorro Valley. After completing their primary education (grades 1 through 8), students then attended San Luis Obispo or Mission High Schools. One of Jacinta Chaves' grandchildren that attended Hope School was

Alice Chaves, (Foster). Several prominent San Luis Obispo County ranch family members such as; Edwin and Charlie Walters, Angelo, Peggy, Flora, Mary, Delfina and Henry Mainini, Helene and Charlie Tonascia, Waren Tomasini and siblings, LaVerna, Orvil and Alex Madonna, Joe and John Guidetti and members of the Mora, Silveira and Tappa Family. Hope School garnered its share of local celebrities.

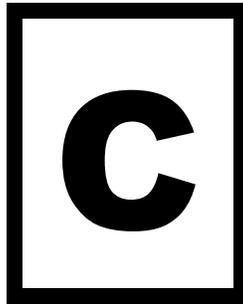


Figure 3. The Hope School, circa 1941.

As a result of the building of Camp San Luis Obispo and the widening of California Highway One to four lanes, the Hope School was moved to Morro Bay in 1941 where it continues to serve as a residence since its relocation.

Acknowledgements

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The "Box-C" registered brand of the Chaves Ranch