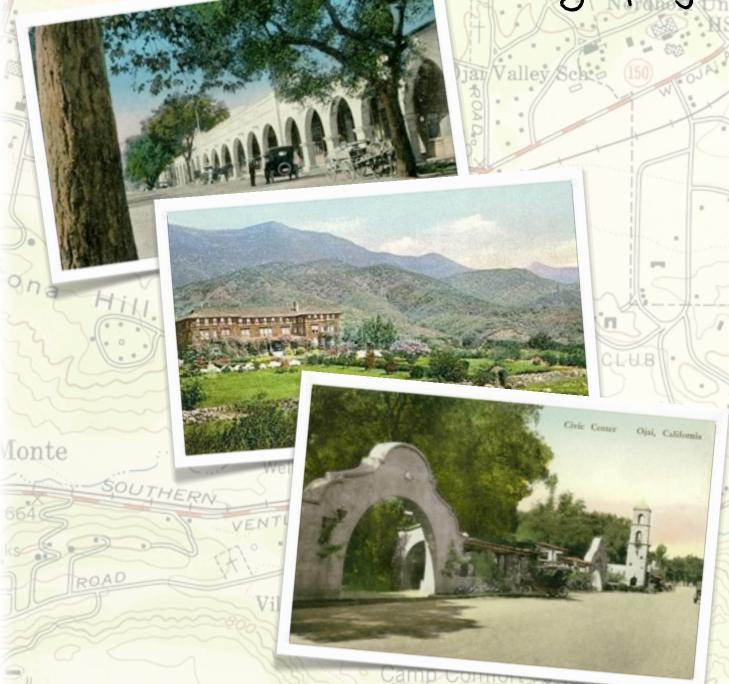
# Historic Context Statement

for the

city of Ojai







May 2009

## City of Ojai Historic Context Statement

## Prepared for

City of Ojai, California Historic Preservation Commission

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May 2009 revised and adopted, June 2011

## Table of Contents

	Introduction What is a Historic Context? Ojai Historic Contextual Periods Ojai Historic Contextual Themes	1 1 1 1
1.	Rancho Era (1837-1874)	5
2.	Town of Nordhoff (1874-1898) A. Commercial and Residential Development B. Resorts and Tourism C. Industry D. Social and Cultural Life E. Education F. Religion and Spirituality G. Architecture	7 7 8 9 9 10 11
4.	Railroad Era (1898-1917) A. Commercial and Residential Development B. Resorts and Tourism C. Industry D. Social and Cultural Life E. Education F. Architecture	13 13 14 15 15 16
5.	Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945) A. Commercial and Residential Development B. Resorts and Tourism C. Industry D. Social and Cultural Life E. Education F. Religion and Spirituality G. Architecture	19 19 21 21 21 22 22 24
6.	Postwar Era (1945-1960) A. Commercial and Residential Development B. Resorts and Tourism C. Industry D. Social and Cultural Life E. Education F. Religion and Spirituality G. Architecture	27 27 27 28 28 29 29
	Selected Sources Maps	31 32

## Introduction

## Introduction

#### What is a Historic Context?

A historic context statement is an organizing structure for interpreting history that groups information about historical resources sharing a common theme, common geographical area, or a common chronology. The development of a historic context is a foundation for decisions about the planning, identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment of historical resources, based upon comparative historic significance within an established framework.

This Historic Context Statement is the second of a three-step process towards the completion of a comprehensive inventory of historic resources within the City of Ojai. The first phase of this project was a reconnaissance level survey of the entire city completed in March, 2009. The third planned phase is an intensive-level survey of historic properties within the city.

## Ojai Historic Contextual Periods

The historic context for the City of Ojai has been divided into five chronological periods, each marked by major historic events which define the social and physical character of the community. The first time period, the **Rancho Era** (1837-1874) is only briefly described in this context statement because no historic resources remain from this period. The **Town of Nordhoff** period (1874-1898) discusses the very early development of the village of Nordhoff, from its establishment until just prior to the completion of the Ventura River and Ojai Valley Railroad in 1898. The third time period, the **Railroad Era** (1898-1917), outlines the changes brought about by the railroad's arrival in the Ojai Valley and the ways this event influenced community development.

The fourth time period, **Nordhoff Becomes Ojai** (1917-1945), addresses the architectural and social transformation of the village, the facelift of the downtown, the name change, and city incorporation. Many key buildings along Ojai Avenue were built during this time period, ushering in a Spanish Revival architectural theme. The final time period described, the **Postwar Era** (1945-1960), witnesses the largest housing and population boom in the city's history. Although other important events have occurred in Ojai since 1960, this context ends in a year reflecting the conventional fifty year limit for considering properties to be potential historic resources.

#### Oiai Historic Contextual Themes

In studying any community, common threads tend to emerge which run throughout its historical development. These threads, usually called "themes" when recounted in a historic context statement, can serve to unite and explain the larger narrative. Further, describing how these themes are woven into a community's history aids in the identification of the physical manifestations of historical events. Within this context statement, each historic period is represented by the recurring themes in Ojai's history, many of which appear in most or all the contextual periods. The themes within each of the time periods reflect not just the history of the community, but the resources that were constructed during this time, with a focus on extant resources.

## Introduction

The **Commercial and Residential** theme discusses the character and distribution of these key development types within the community. This theme provides an overall picture of how the community grew within each time period. The **Resorts and Tourism** theme explains the physical characteristics and social events which attracted visitors to the Ojai Valley, and describes the resources represented by this theme.

The **Industry** theme discusses the primary economic foundation of the Ojai Valley, and related historic resources. Within this theme are the sub-themes of *Agriculture* and *Oil*. The **Social and Cultural Life** theme describes the non-industrial activities of Ojai residents, including recreation, clubs, and literary and artistic groups, and the resources representing this theme. A number of important sub-themes are included within this larger developmental theme. The **Education** and **Religion and Spirituality** themes describe the establishment of the many schools, both public and private in the Ojai Valley, as well as the importance of churches and religious societies to Ojai's development. The **Architecture** theme discusses the wide variety of architectural styles found in each contextual period, as well as the architects who played an important role in defining the Ojai Valley's character.

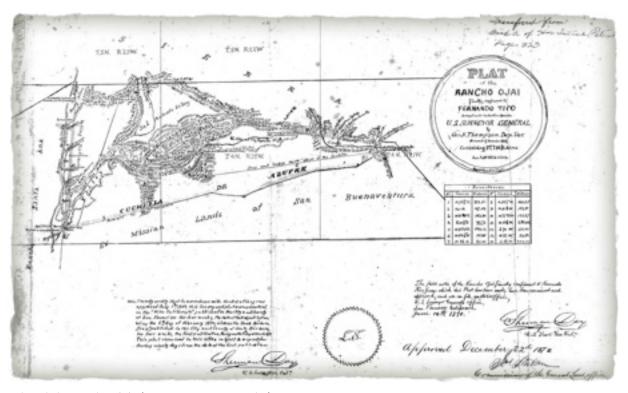
The historic contextual periods, themes and sub-themes, and the resources expected to be found in relationship to each, are summarized in the table below. Each contextual time period in the table is numbered, the themes identified by letter, and sub-themes by small Roman numerals. This organization of periods, themes and sub-themes will assist in subsequent historic property identification processes by providing a method by which the historical significance of individual properties can readily be established. For example, a clubhouse constructed in 1905 could be found to be historically significant under contextual theme 3(D)ii (Railroad Era, Social and Cultural Life, Social Clubs). A property's historical significance may be related to more than one period, theme or sub-theme. In the above example, if the clubhouse is also representative of an architectural style, it could also be found to be significant under contextual theme 3(G).

		Contextual Periods and Resources				
		1 Rancho Era	2 Town of Nordhoff	3 Railroad Era	4 Nordhoff Becomes Ojai	5 Postwar Era
Themes	Sub-Themes	1837-1874	1874-1898	1898-1917	1917-1945	1945-1960
A. Commercial and Resi- dential Develop- ment	i. Winter Residences		homes, commercial buildings	homes, commercial buildings	homes, commercial buildings	homes, commercial buildings
B. Resorts and Tour- ism			hotels, cot- tages	hotels, cot- tages	hotels, cot- tages	hotels, mo- tels, auto courts
C. Industry	i. Agriculture ii. Oil		ranch build- ings	ranch build- ings	ranch build- ings, oil buildings	ranch build- ings, oil buildings
D. Social and Cultural Life	i. Library ii. Social Clubs iii. Tennis Tourna- ment iv. Music Fes- tival		library, ten- nis courts, parks	library, ten- nis courts, clubhouses, parks	library, ten- nis courts, clubhouses, parks, art center	tennis courts, parks, music venues
E. Education			public schools, pri- vate schools	public schools, pri- vate schools	public schools, pri- vate schools	public schools, private schools
F. Religion and Spiri- tuality			churches	churches, centers	churches, centers	churches, centers
G. Architec- ture			Victorian, Folk Victo- rian	Neocolonial, California Bungalow	California Bungalow, Period Re- vivals	Ranch, Mod- ern, Road- side



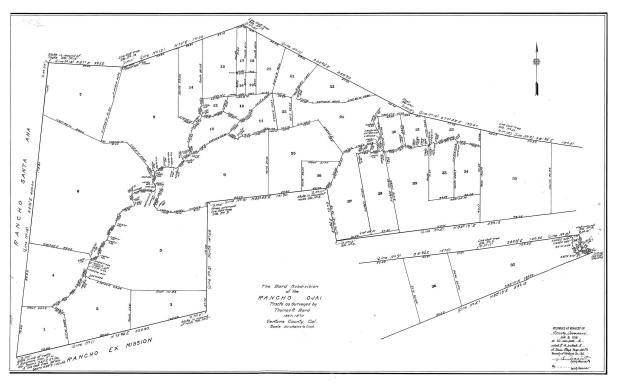
## 1. Rancho Era (1837-1874)

The City of Ojai was carved from portions of the Rancho Ojai, granted to Fernando Tico in 1837 by the Mexican government. Tico was awarded his grant for services he performed at Mission San Buenaventura. Tico built a small adobe residence on his rancho to satisfy the requirements of obtaining the grant. The 17,716 acre grant was purchased in 1853 by Henry Carnes who in turn sold it in 1856 to Juan Camarillo.



Plat of the Rancho Ojai. (Ventura County Recorder)

Thomas A. Scott acquired the rancho in 1864 in hopes of prospecting for oil. Thomas Bard, Scott's representative in California, acted on his behalf. Bard allowed Dr. Isaac Chauncey Isbell and his wife Olive Mann Isbell to live in the Tico adobe for a brief time during the early 1870s. The adobe was apparently located in the vicinity of Bryant Street and is no longer extant. The first large scale subdivision of the rancho, dividing it into 37 large parcels, was undertaken by Bard between 1867 and 1870.

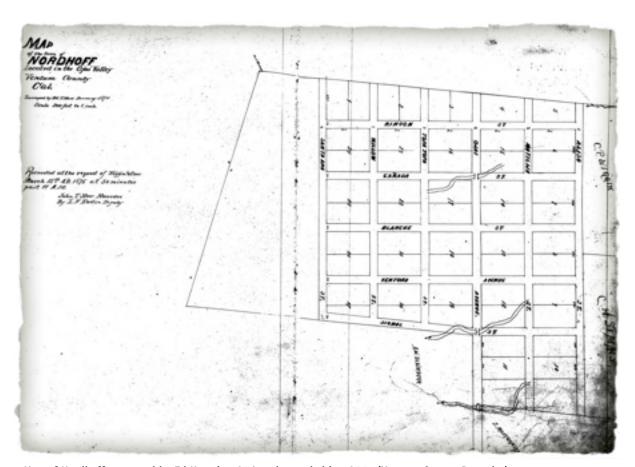


The Bard Subdivision of Rancho Ojai. (Ventura County Recorder)

## 2. Town of Nordhoff (1874-1898)

## A. Commercial and Residential Development

In 1874 Roys Gaylord Surdam, real estate speculator and entrepreneur, obtained several parcels of Rancho Ojai from his friend Thomas Bard and platted the town of Nordhoff on 1,606 acres. The town was named after the writer Charles Nordhoff, who had so effectively publicized California in his popular 1873 book *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence*. The town was surveyed by Ed Hare in January 1874 but not recorded until March 15, 1875. The streets followed a typical Western grid pattern. The townsite boundaries were Santa Ana Street on the south, Aliso Street on the north, Rincon Street on the west and John Montgomery's property on the east. Surdam sold few lots in his new town. John Montgomery was one of the handful who responded to his advertising. Searching for a healthy climate for his wife, he purchased 1,300 acres of Surdam's 1,606 acres, building a house on the eastern edge of the new town site.



Map of Nordhoff, surveyed by Ed Hare in 1874 and recorded in 1875. (Ventura County Recorder)

## Town of Nordhoff (1874-1898)

The "Boom of the '80s" spurred by the arrival of the railroad in Ventura County through the Santa Clara Valley to Ventura in 1887 brought a short-lived upswing in development in areas with direct access to railroad lines. Although access to the Ojai Valley remained limited to a stagecoach, local developers attempted to participate in the boom. The flurry of real estate activity lasted just a few months during the summer of 1887, but several new tracts were opened during this time. The largest was the Stewart's Addition to Nordhoff recorded at the request of George E. Stewart in September 1887. This tract pushed the original townsite north from Aliso Street to Summer Street between Canada Street on the west and Lion Street on the east. Other tracts laid out in 1887 and 1888 included the Fox Tract, Bellevue Tract and Keystone Tract south of Ojai Avenue and east of present-day Montgomery Street. The Wolfe Tract, established in 1888, was the first subdivision north of Grand Avenue.

Through the late 1890s, Nordhoff remained a relatively isolated village, due mainly to limited access via two difficult roads. Creek Road was the main route of travel between Ventura and the Ojai Valley until 1878 when a second road, the Casitas Pass Road (now State Route 150) was built for stagecoaches. This road permitted safer passage between Santa Barbara and the Ojai Valley, compared to the coast road, which was only available at low tide. The Casitas Pass Road was constructed by William McKee, who desired improved access to the Oak Glen Cottages in Ojai, which he had opened in 1873.

#### B. Resorts and Tourism

Surdam advertised Nordhoff in eastern newspapers and proclaimed the area as the "great sanitarium and health resort of California." He offered to provide land for free to whomever would build a hotel, and in 1874 Abram W. Blumberg answered the challenge by constructing the Nordhoff Hotel, later known as the Ojai Valley House, Oakdale Hotel and finally as the Ojai Inn. The large two-story hotel, with several additions, was considered a "first class resort" in the 1890s and was located on Ojai Avenue in the center of town where Libbey Park is today. Other resorts followed,

including the Berry Villa on Ojai Avenue just west of the Nordhoff Hotel, and the Oak Glen Cottages (1874), later known as the Gally Cottages, to the east. Additional resorts near Ojai included Matilija Hot Springs, Lyon's Springs and Wheeler's Springs, established during the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. The Ojai Valley quickly gained a reputation as a resort community, attracting visitors who came to the valley for health reasons. They would also be inspired by the area's natural beauty.



Oak Glen Cottages, circa 1887. (Bancroft Library)

## C. Industry

- **i. Agriculture.** Farming was an attraction for many who settled in the Ojai Valley during the 1870s, when land became available with Bard's 1867-70 subdivisions. Several homesteaders also claimed public lands in the eastern portion of the Ojai Valley and along the foothills. By 1878 ranchers in the Ojai Valley were raising a variety of crops including the dry farming of wheat, barley and alfalfa and irrigated crops, including oranges, fruit trees and vineyards. A partial list of "Farmers on the Ojai," as recounted in the *Ventura Free Press* for May 11, 1878, included:
  - F.S.S. Buckman, has a quarter section of Government land on which is 20 acres of wheat, 20 acres of 5 year old orange trees, 4 of orchard, and 3 acres of strawberries, from which he gets 100 pounds of berries per day, and the yield will soon be double. He has 6,000 trees in his nursery.
  - Nick Walnut, has taken up a 160 acre claim and is clearing off the brush and timber preparatory to putting out a 20 acre vineyard. He has about 10 acres of wheat.
  - G.B. Horn also owns a tract of Government land, and has 12 acres of wheat, 2 of corn, 2 1/2 of beans, 3/4 acre of potatoes and a small orchard and 400 grapevines.
  - W.S. McKee, owns 75 acres and has 35 of it in wheat. His "Oak Glenn Cottage" has a wide reputation. Robert Ayers, owns a fine 304 acre farm, and has 175 acres of wheat, 25 of barley, and 30 head of hogs. Mr. Montgomery, owns a tract of 700 acres, and has a crop of 3 acres of wheat and 2 acres in orchard.

The first citrus planted in Ojai was undertaken by F. S. S. Buckman on his 160 acre ranch east of town in 1872. By 1894 enough citrus was being grown in the valley to form the Ojai Citrus Growers Association. Another crop which gained popularity among ranchers in the Ojai Valley during the 1880s was olives. Seymour Dalton Munger was supposedly the first rancher to plant olives on 40 acres on the eastern end of the valley. By 1892 a number of Ojai ranchers were growing the crop.

- **ii. Oil Industry.** When Thomas Bard purchased Rancho Ojai in 1864 for Thomas Scott, it was with the idea of prospecting for oil in the area. The first well was drilled by Bard near the confluence of San Antonio Creek and the Ventura River, off of Creek Road. This well did not produce commercially, due to problems with the viscosity of the oil and the depth of drilling required. Another well was drilled on the north side of Sulphur Mountain in 1867. This well, referred to as "Ojai Number 6," is considered to be the first commercial oil well in California. Another well was drilled during the 1890s in the Upper Ojai on the Pirie Ranch. Union Oil eventually took over this well and shipped the oil to Santa Paula. The largest production of oil in the Sulphur Mountain area occurred primarily on the south side of the mountain range in the Santa Paula area.
- D. Social and Cultural Life
- **i. Library**. Early attempts at starting a library began during the early 1890s with the formation of a Library Committee which raised funds through candy sales and garden parties. In 1893 Sherman Thacher donated \$500 towards the establishment of a library in memory of his brother George Thacher, who had died shortly after his move to Ojai. Funds were raised from the community to construct the new 14 by 14 foot wooden

## Town of Nordhoff (1874-1898)

board and batten-sided library building in 1893 on the north side of Ojai Avenue, adjacent to the other commercial buildings.

**iii. Ojai Tennis Tournament.** During the 1870s tennis came to the United States from Great Britain, first played on the East Coast as an upper-class sport. It was in the east that Sherman Thacher's brother William got his start in tennis while attending Yale, where he held the title of New England and intercollegiate doubles champion along with two other players. After visiting the valley several times, William Thacher relocated permanently in 1895, and that same year established the Ojai Valley Tennis Club.

The first tennis court in the Ojai Valley was a dirt court laid out at Sherman Thacher's Casa de Piedras School in 1892. The following year the first open tournament was held there, attracting six students and two teachers. A second dirt court was laid out in town on land near the Ojai Athletic Club, located on Ojai Avenue. The new tennis club was open to all residents and visitors and held its first tournament in 1896 when valley residents played Ventura. Each of the following years saw the tournament expand to include Santa Barbara players. (Thacher, 2000: 12-18)

#### E. Education

Public education in Nordhoff began with the first one-room brick school house built in 1874 on the north side of Matilija Street between Signal and John Montgomery's property. This school house was extensively altered into a two story wood-sided residence and is now a bed and breakfast inn. By the 1890s, enough growth had occurred in the town to necessitate a larger school. In 1895 a new two-story wood frame school with four rooms and assembly hall was built on the corner of Ojai Avenue and Montgomery Street.

Private schools established in the Ojai Valley were attracted by the temperate climate, proximity to the national forest, and the area's natural beauty. The first private school to open was at the eastern end of the valley in 1889 when Sherman Day Thacher took in students on his ranch. Born circa 1862 in New Haven, Connecticut, Thatcher graduated from Yale University where his father was a Latin professor. Following graduation, he worked for a business in New York for a year and then decided to attend law school at Yale. Upon completion, he took a job in a Kansas City, Missouri law firm for a brief time in 1887, and found that the practice of law was not to his liking. During this period he supplemented his income with tutoring. Thatcher returned to New Haven and in September 1887 accompanied his ailing brother George to California to live with their brother, Edward, who had purchased a citrus ranch in the Ojai Valley.

Sherman Thacher was immediately enamored with the Ojai Valley. Finding fruit ranching more appealing than the law, he purchased a homestead claim of 160 acres adjacent to his brother Edward's property, borrowing money for the purchase from his brother William. By January 1888 a three room frame house was built on his ranch and an olive orchard planted. In June 1889 Thacher received a letter from an old family friend asking him to tutor his nephew for a year of outdoor life combined with college prep classes. Thus Sherman Thacher began what would be the start of a private boy's prep school at his ranch, which he called Casa de Piedra. Each year brought more students and eventually Thacher hired teachers, cooks and helpers, and constructed classrooms and dormitories.

## F. Religion and Spirituality

As with every new community, churches were among the first buildings constructed in a new town. Nordhoff's first congregation was the Presbyterian Church organized in 1877, although it was not until 1883 that the church building was constructed east of town. It was moved to Ojai Avenue and Montgomery Street in 1900 where it joined with the Congregational Church which had been established in 1888.

#### G. Architecture

The architectural styles present in the Ojai Valley reflect both the changing tastes and the increasing affluence

of its residents, as well as technological innovations and transportation improvements. The architectural styles in the area from the 1870s through the end of the 19th century commonly include Italianate, Stick-Eastlake, Queen Anne Victorian, and the many variants of the Folk Victorian styles. During the pre-railroad era, for the most part these buildings were designed not by architects but by their builders or owners, and constructed of materials which could be obtained locally.



Fox House, 601 Pope Lane. An example of the Italianate mode of the Victorian style probably constructed circa 1885. (San Buenaventura Research Associates)



## 4. Raílroad Era (1898-1917)

## A. Commercial and Residential Development

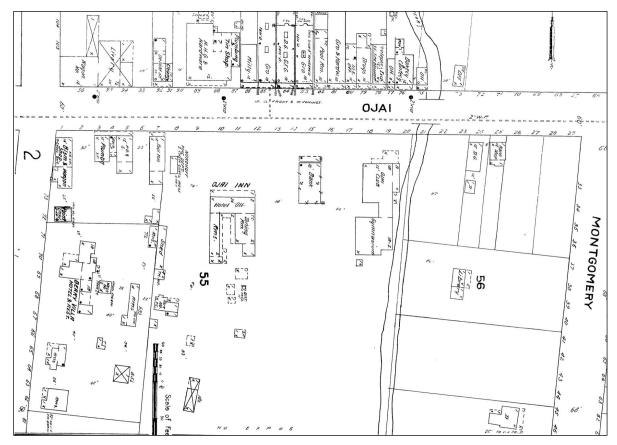
Nordhoff's growth prospects greatly improved with the construction of the Ventura River and Ojai Valley Railroad branch line to the Ojai Valley in 1898, connecting the valley with the Southern Pacific Railroad main line in Ventura. The railroad set the stage for growth by providing easier access for valley farmers, tourists and winter guests alike. Still, Nordhoff's growth proceeded slowly. Additional tracts developed during this time included the Foothills Park Subdivision of 1904, by the Ojai Improvement Company. This tract included a strip of land along what would be called Foothill Road, as well as the site of the Foothills Hotel. In the same area was the Maria McKee Subdivision, created circa 1916. Other tracts which expanded the original town site during this time period included Oak Street Place Tract between Ventura and Lion streets in 1904, the Fair Oaks Tract east of Montgomery Street in 1908, and the Valley View Tract in 1911. The Wierdale Park Tract on Olive Street north of Grand Avenue was laid out in 1910, and the Mountain View Tract was established north of Grand Avenue on Montgomery Street in 1910.

The Ojai Improvement Company was formed in 1900 by residents C.W. Bigelow, W.L. Thacher, H.W. Forster, F.W. Hubby, F.F. Spencer, G.W. Mallory, J.J. Burke, A.A. Garland and John Suess, with Forster and Burke as executive officers. The first task of the new company was to purchase the land that was to become the civic park, including the Ojai Inn, which was then leased out. Other leases of the land went to Sherman Thacher, who built the George Thacher Memorial Library, and to the Ojai Tennis Club, which built four new courts and a clubhouse. By 1904 the land was partially subdivided, allowing Sherman Thacher to purchase a lot on Ojai Avenue and construct the Jack Boyd Club, also known as Ojai Club. That same year the company donated funds to build the first volunteer fire department building on the western end of the property. The Ojai State Bank was built on the property in 1910. (Bristol, 1946: 85-86)

This location quickly became the center of town. The first commercial buildings were built on the north side of Ojai Avenue along with a few scattered commercial buildings on the south side. By 1912 the south side of Ojai Avenue between Signal and Montgomery streets was the location of eight commercial businesses, the Fire Department, clubhouse, and a residence. South of Ojai Avenue on Signal Street was the Berry Villa Hotel and restaurant.

By 1912 Sanborn Maps show that the majority of residences were located on the blocks closest to Ojai Avenue, where the commercial district was located. Homes remained few and scattered. The business district had grown considerably by 1912, reflecting the settlement of the larger Ojai Valley, and a wide variety of services were offered along Ojai Avenue to residents, including a bank, three grocery stores, a print shop, a real estate/insurance office, carpenter and builder, contractor, watchmaker, clothes cleaner, the bakery, sweet shop, billiards hall, garage, blacksmith, three general merchandise stores, a drugstore, barber, and a laundry.

Just west of Signal Street on Ojai Avenue, the commercial area continued with three buildings including a printing shop and an ice plant in 1912. By 1914, J.J. Burke had built a movie theatre, The Isis, on the site of the printing shop. During the 1930s the theatre building was enlarged and today is still used as a movie theatre, called the Ojai Playhouse.



Ojai Avenue, between Signal and Montgomery streets in 1912. (Sanborn Map Company)

i. Winter Residences. In 1904 the Ojai Improvement Company subdivided a strip of land along the eastern side of present day Foothill Road (then Fairview Road) near the Foothills Hotel. A number of wealthy visitors to the hotel purchased parcels and built winter cottages in this subdivision. Among them was Charles Pratt, President of the Standard Oil Company, who hired Pasadena architects Charles and Henry Greene to design an elegant Arts and Crafts bungalow complete with furniture just north of the hotel, where the Pratts continued to take their meals. Other prominent easterners who built in the tract included Edward D. Libbey, who hired Los Angeles architects Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey to design a rustic cottage just south of the hotel in 1907. Two years later the same firm designed a Swiss Chalet style bungalow for the O.W. Robertson family, natives of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It burned down along with the Foothills Hotel in the 1917 fire. Both were rebuilt. In 1913 The W.L. Ladd family of Portland, Oregon, hired the Greene Brothers to design a house on Foothill Road, where the family spent their winters.

#### B. Resorts and Tourism

While the earlier hotels and cottages built in the nineteenth century provided adequate accommodations for the time, it was the completion of the Foothills Hotel in 1903 by the Ojai Improvement Company that firmly established the Ojai Valley's reputation as a resort destination. This rustic yet elegant hotel, located on a hill-

## Railroad Era (1898-1917)

side overlooking the valley, catered to wealthy Eastern clientele, many of whom would construct winter homes in the valley. The three-story hotel quickly became a popular destination and several cottages were built on the grounds to accommodate winter visitors. When the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1917, it was quickly rebuilt.

## C. Industry

i. Agriculture. In 1901 a group of ranchers formed the Ojai Olive Company and a mill was built for extracting the oil near the railroad depot on the northern side of the railroad tracks east of Fox Street. Edward S. Thacher became president of the company along with Thomas Corwin, vice-president, J.J. Burke, secretary and H. Waldo Forster, treasurer and manager. George Bald was in charge of manufacturing the oil. Between 1901 and 1903 11,000 gallons of olive oil were produced. The success of the local olive oil industry is evidenced by medals awarded at the 1904 St. Louis and 1905 Portland World Fairs. The company operated until around 1921. The former mill, located on Bald Avenue, was later converted to a residence.

Oranges became an increasingly important crop in the Ojai Valley during this time period. In 1908 the Ojai Orange Association replaced the earlier Ojai Citrus Growers Association and circa 1910 built a packing house on the east side of Bryant Street adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks.

A booklet on Southern California published in 1914 by the Southern California Panama Expositions Commission described agriculture of the Ojai Valley:

The Ojai Valley contains 17,500 acres of land, over one half rich valley land on which is now growing 700 acres of oranges, 100 acres of lemons, 600 acres of apricots, 250 acres of olives, 1,000 acres of almonds and 2500 acres of grain. Ten percent of the fruit trees were planted in 1913. (Southern California Panama Exposition Commission, 1914)

- **ii. Oil.** During the 1910s and 1920s interest in oil continued and three oil companies, Union, Standard and Shell, built oil storage facilities adjacent to the railroad tracks on the west side of Bryant Street in Ojai. Today only the Standard Oil storage facility remains. Richard Bard, son of Thomas Bard, developed a small oil well on Black Mountain during this period, but it was apparently short lived.
- D. Social and Cultural Life
- **i. Library.** With an eye towards future expansion, in 1904 the library Board of Trustees purchased property on S. Montgomery Street. Four years later, the earlier library building was relocated to this site. In 1916 the Ventura County Library agreed to staff the library and manage the collection.
- **ii. Social Clubs.** Originally known as King's Daughters, the Woman's Club began as a church auxiliary organization in 1899 by the Reverend Thomas Marshall from the Presbyterian Church. The auxiliary worked with the schools by sponsoring domestic training classes for girls and carpentry classes for boys. They also acted as a modern "welcome wagon" by greeting new members of the community. Their fundraising activities included buying eyeglasses for seniors, donating needed equipment to the schools, and city beautification projects.

## Railroad Era (1898-1917)

A clubhouse was built in 1911 with funds donated to the group by Mrs. Josephine Pierpont Ginn, in memory of her late husband. The building was to serve educational and social purposes. Located at 444 East Ojai Avenue, the clubhouse became known as the Ojai Valley Woman's Club in 1915. Over the years the clubhouse was used by the community in times of crises, particularly during the disastrous 1917 fire and the influenza epidemic of 1918. It also housed early church congregations prior to the construction of their own church buildings. (Fry, 1983: 136-137)

In 1903 The Jack Boyd Club House was built on Ojai Avenue adjacent to the barranca, in memory of a Thacher School student who had lost his life to rheumatic fever. The construction was funded by a gift from the boy's family. The club house served as a community center, and when it opened housed a piano, billiard table, games, writing facilities and a great fireplace in the meeting room. It was also used by participants in The Ojai tennis tournament. During the influenza epidemic of 1918 it served as an infirmary, as a disaster center during floods, and during World War II as a USO center. In 1957 this building was moved to Sarzotti Park where it remains today as a community center. (Thacher, 2000: 28-29)

**iii. Tennis Tournament.** By 1898 the tennis tournament had become a statewide event. Also that year the tournament invited public and private schools to compete, allowing one singles and one doubles team from each participating college in Southern California. In 1898 the newly-established Ojai Valley Railroad offered special round trip rates from Los Angeles and from Santa Barbara to the valley, bringing huge crowds to the tournament for the first time.

In 1900 four new courts were built on what is now Libbey Park, located on the south side of Ojai Avenue. A new tennis club house was built in 1901 adjacent to the courts. It was a simple redwood building designed by Edward Thacher.

By 1912 the tennis tournament, by then known as "The Ojai," had grown to 272 entrants, its largest number to date, and was now deemed the largest tournament of its kind in the United States if not in the world. By the time of the 1917 competition, a total of nineteen tennis courts were available to the event within the park and elsewhere in the valley, but the tournament was cancelled that year due to the fires which destroyed some 60 buildings, including the Foothills Hotel. The lack of accommodations during the tournament, as well as the influenza epidemic then sweeping the nation, led to not resuming the full tournament until 1920.

## E. Education

This period was a relatively quiet one for education. The first separate high school building was constructed on Ojai Road in 1909. Prior to that time, the high school was combined with the elementary school. The manual training and domestic sciences buildings were built adjacent to the high school by Charles Pratt, a wealthy easterner who owned a winter home on Foothill Road. In 1911 Walter W. Bristol opened a private school known as the Bristol School in his home on Bristol Road.

#### F. Architecture

The opening of the Ojai Valley Railroad in 1898 provided both an economic spark to the valley, and access to modern building materials. The first decade of the twentieth century was dominated by the Neocolonial and

## Railroad Era (1898-1917)

Colonial Revival styles, direct evolutions of the Queen Anne Victorian style of the late 1890s. These two styles are often difficult to clearly differentiate from one another, particularly when they are treated in the vernacular, as they frequently were in Southern California. By 1910 the classically-derived architectural styles had almost entirely given way to the California Bungalow style. The bungalow form proved especially adaptable, and can be seen in buildings ranging from modest agricultural worker's cottages to costly, large-scale residences. During this period, buildings continued to be constructed largely in Folk interpretations of the more recognized styles, built from pattern books or by local builders.

With the influx of wealthy families into the valley, this period also marks the beginning of buildings designed by trained architects, many of them important California regionalists. Most notable among them are Charles and Henry Greene, designers of the winter homes of Charles Pratt (1909) and William Ladd (1913), and the homes of Edward D. Libbey (1907) and O.W. Robertson (1909) by Myron Hunt and Elmer Gray.



## 5. Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945)

## A. Commercial and Residential Development

Included among the notable Eastern industrialists who vacationed in the Ojai Valley were John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Charles Pratt, secretary of Standard Oil, and Edward D. Libbey, millionaire glass manufacturer from Ohio. Many became regular guests at the valley's resort hotels, but others became sufficiently enthralled by the valley's climate and scenic charms to build winter homes to which they would return annually. Prominent among this latter group was Edward Drummond Libbey. The owner of numerous parcels of land in the valley, Libbey became responsible for permanently altering the character of the town when he persuaded community leaders



Early view of Ojai Civic Park, date unknown. (Ojai Valley Museum)

to execute an architectural overhaul for Nordhoff, transforming the roughhewn town into "a more picturesque stage set for his comings and goings." (Gebhard and Winter, 1977)

In 1917 Edward Drummond Libbey purchased the land west of the barranca and east of Signal Street and created the Ojai Civic Park. The land was subdivided leaving the bank and clubhouse on separate parcels. The remaining buildings, including the hotels, Post Office and commercial buildings were all demolished to create the 7.46 acre Ojai Civic Park. Libbey had hired the San Diego architectural firm of Frank Mead and Rich-

ard Requa to design a Mission Revival style false front for the northern side of Ojai Avenue to connect all the buildings into a unified architectural scheme, and a matching pergola and arches on the southern side of Ojai Avenue as the entrance to the park. The 65-foot tall post office tower with its arches at the northwestern corner of the park was designed to complement the arcade and donated to the community by Libbey. When the arcades were completed in 1917, the name of the town was changed to Ojai, completing the metamorphosis.

In the years following the transformation of the town and the name change, residents began discussing incorporation. A strong desire for a sewer system, better fire protection, and other services a city could provide, led to incorporation on August 5, 1921. Ojai officially became a city of 500 residents. The City Hall during the 1920s was located in a storefront in the Arcade. By 1939 City Hall occupied a separate building just east of the arcade on Ojai Avenue.

The subdivisions recorded during the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century substantially overran the demand for construction. With the growth of the community after 1917, many of these tracts were filled in, and new tracts subdivided.

In 1921 the Van Curen Tract was established along Topa Topa Drive and a number of small cottages designed in Period Revival styles built. The Fair View Tract was laid out in 1923 on Montgomery and Aliso streets. The Waitefield Acres Tract on Fulton Street was laid out in 1924 along with the A.L. Drown Subdivision in 1925 south of Grand Avenue. The Country Club Estates Tract was opened in 1928, which led to the construction of several houses designed by well known architects. The Loma Vista Tract on Montgomery Street and Buena Vista Drive was laid out in 1928. On the east side of town the Galley Ranch was subdivided in 1928 along with Galley Acres in 1935.

Edward D. Libbey established the Maravilla Company to develop the Arbolada (Spanish for "woodland") during the early 1920s. A natural oak-studded area, he first had the remnants of a slaughterhouse removed and then laid out curved, stone-lined streets around the native trees. Wrought iron gates were added to mark the entry to "Arbolada Park." The 500 acre development was laid out in lots averaging one acre in size. Three "spec" houses, called houses A, B and C, were built near each other. Montecito architect George Washington Smith designed the buildings in the rural Spanish Revival style to blend with their rustic surroundings. Smith's young

protege, architect Lutah Maria Riggs, executed the architectural renderings for the homes. (Gebhard, 2005: 57; Mason, 1999: A-3)

Until this time, Creek Road, the valley's primary access, was a narrow, dusty dirt road which crossed over San Antonio Creek numerous times and consequently was subject to frequent washouts. By 1910 a number of culverts over the creek had been installed, but it remained a troublesome, if scenic, access point to the valley. In 1917 a new highway, known commonly as the Grade Road, was completed, relegating Creek Road to secondary status. The Grade Road became part of the state highway system in 1933, with the completion of the Maricopa Highway (State Route 33).



Page from a brochure advertising Arbolada Park, circa 1920.

## B. Resorts and Tourism

During this period, the influx of "old money" from the East began to define the physical character of the Ojai Valley as well as its social institutions.

Wealthy part-time Eastern residents rapidly recreated the infrastructure of high society within the isolated environs of the Ojai Valley. Part and parcel of this development was the construction of the Ojai Valley Inn and Golf Course, established by Libbey in 1923 as a private club. In keeping with the theme of first class architecture, the Inn was designed by noted Los Angeles re-



Post card view of the Hotel El Roblar, 1920s.

gionalist Wallace Neff. The Foothills Hotel was joined by the El Roblar Hotel in 1920. Designed by Richard Requa, the hotel was constructed by the Ojai Hotel Company organized by Libbey.

#### C. Industry

**i. Agriculture.** Although few singular events defined agricultural development in Ojai during this period, the years 1920-45 marked an unprecedented era of expansion for the citrus industry statewide, increasing the total volume of production in California nearly 150 percent. This growth resulted in the establishment of the verdant "citrus belts" along the foothills and the transformation of the entire economic, social and physical character of the Southern California region. The Ojai Valley fully participated in the citrus boom. Between 1909 and 1945, citrus shipments from the Ojai Valley increased nearly sevenfold, and by the mid-1920s, the valley was producing 15-20% of the entire Ventura County citrus crop. (Bristol, 1947: 44; Fry, 1983: 211-212)

## D. Social and Cultural Life

i. Library. By 1917 when the Arcade was built by Edward Libbey and the downtown was being transformed, a new larger library in a more suitable design to complement the new Mission/Spanish Revival style of the town was discussed. Libbey suggested a new site at Ventura Street and Ojai Avenue. However, it wasn't until 1927 that the Ojai Improvement Company began a fund raising campaign to build a new library. Within one month nearly \$20,000 was raised among Ojai and Ventura County residents, and the lot Libbey had originally suggested as a site for the library was donated to the cause by his estate after his death in 1925. Santa Barbara architect Carleton M. Winslow designed the building, which was completed by local contractor Sam Hudiburg in 1928. The original library built in 1893 was moved for the third time from its previous location on Montgomery Street to its current location at Lion and Aliso streets in 1938, where it served as the Boy Scout clubhouse, and later as the Girl Scout clubhouse. (Fry, 1983: 121-122)

## Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945)

ii. Social Clubs. During the 1920s and 1930s a number of small arts, music and theater groups formed and held meetings in local halls, churches and private homes. These groups included the Community Chorus, The Community Players, the English Folk Dance Society, the Community Orchestra and the Arts and Crafts Group. Recognizing the need for a central place for the arts, Dr. Charles Butler brought the various groups together to talk about the construction of a community center. In 1936 the Art Center Committee was formed to raise funds, with Dr. Butler as chairman. Over the next three years, \$15,000 was raised. The site of the city's original library on Montgomery Street was purchased and the library building moved. The design for the new Art Center building was completed by local architect Austen Pierpont. Ground was broken in July 1939 and the project completed in November 1939.

**iii. Tennis Tournament.** The fires of 1917 had destroyed much of the housing the tournament relied upon to accommodate players and spectators, leading to the following year's tournament being played in Los Angeles, and a scaled-back event in 1919. With the reconstruction of the Foothills Hotel and other buildings lost to the fires, "The Ojai" resumed at full strength in 1920 and regained its important place in the calendar of community events. In 1927 William Thacher retired as Ojai Tennis Club president, leading to a succession of presidents drawn from the business community and faculty at the Thacher School. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the tournament continued to attract top talent from around the country. During this period, traditions arose around the tournament, including annual community dances held on the courts, and the serving of fresh-squeezed Ojai orange juice from a kiosk built in the park for the purpose. The tournament was again cancelled during World War II (1943-46) but would resume afterwards. (Thacher, 2000: 38-44)

#### E. Education

By the 1920s a new high school was needed to accommodate the growing population. The Nordhoff Union High School was constructed in 1929 in the Spanish Revival style on El Paseo Road behind the former high school building. Santa Paula architect Roy C. Wilson designed both the high school and the Nordhoff Union Grammar school. The new larger elementary school building was built on Montgomery Street and Ojai Avenue in 1927 on the site of the wooden school house constructed in 1895, which was moved to the rear. In 1937 a wing was added to the school along with an auditorium and the 1895 school house was demolished. The building now serves as the district administration offices.

The Bristol School, begun in 1911, lasted until the Ojai Valley School opened adjacent to the property on El Paseo Road in 1923. Founded by Edward Yeomans, who had been involved with the progressive schools movement in the Midwest, the school was located on land donated by Edward D. Libbey. The first building was designed by Los Angeles architect Wallace Neff. The Villanova Preparatory School opened in 1924 on North Ventura Avenue, southwest of town, as an Augustinian school under the direction of Father John Howard. In 1941 a private nursery and kindergarten was established on the east side of town by Monica Ros. With the exception of the Bristol School, all of these schools remain in operation today.

## F. Religion and Spirituality

The first Catholic Church in Ojai, a wooden building located on Ojai Avenue at the corner of Blanche Street, was built in 1905. It was destroyed in the fire of 1917 and rebuilt in 1918, designed in the Mission Revival

## Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945)

style by architects Frank Mead and Richard Requa. The City of Ojai purchased the church building and adjacent rectory in 1993, converting them into the Ojai Valley Museum in 1996. This building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

On the same block as the Catholic Church, at the corner of W. Matilija and N. Ventura streets, was the Nordhoff Baptist Church, established in 1909. Services were held in the former Christian Church building. The building burned in the fire of 1917 and was rebuilt the following year in the same location. This building was enlarged and altered in 1949. The Baptists moved to a new church building on Grand Avenue, having sold the building during the 1970s to the World University which presently occupies it.

In 1930 the Presbyterian congregation built a new large Spanish Revival style church designed by Santa Barbara architect Carleton Monroe Winslow. Their old 1880s Victorian-style church was moved by the Nazarene congregation to its present location on Montgomery and Aliso streets in 1930. It presently serves as an office.

The Foursquare Church was established during the 1930s and occupied the former Free Methodist Church on N. Montgomery Street. This church building is still extant. The Holiness Church was founded in 1885 and occupied a wooden church building on E. Topa Topa and Ventura streets during the 1920s, and probably earlier. In 1937 the building was either enlarged and altered, or a new building constructed, to accommodate a larger congregation. Today the Ojai Valley Wesleyan Church occupies the building.

Other smaller churches have held services in Ojai over the years, some in private houses, schools, or club-houses, prior to building a church of their own. The above-mentioned churches are discussed in this context because, for the most part, the actual church buildings remain.

Because of its isolation, natural beauty and favorable climate, the Ojai Valley has attracted many non-mainstream religious and spiritual groups. In 1924 Albert P. Warrington, head of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Hollywood, moved his followers from the growing Hollywood community to the peaceful environment of the Ojai Valley. He had founded the Institute in Hollywood in 1912 with the guidance and direction of prominent early Theosophist Annie Besant. He built the new Institute on a 115 acre hillside location at the western edge of the Ojai Valley. Between 1924 and 1928 an auditorium, library and eleven residences designed in the Spanish Revival style were built on the heavily landscaped grounds with a pond and breathtaking views of the Valley. Los Angeles architect Robert Stacey-Judd designed the library and auditorium building. Additional housing has been added to the site over time.

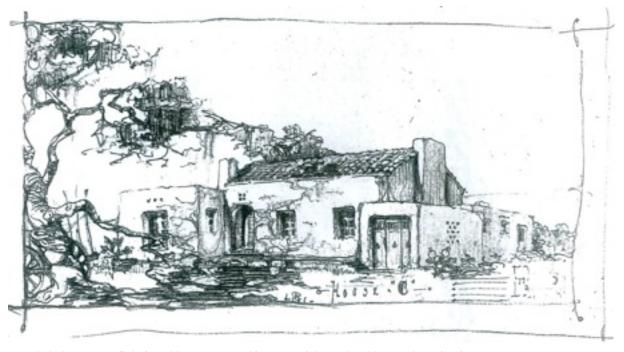
The Theosophist's tenets embrace freedom for individual search and belief and the promotion of the brother-hood of man. The Theosophists today promote their tenets through their educational programs at the school, their bookshop, and library. The name Krotona was taken from the city of Crotona, Italy, a community established by the teacher-philosopher Pythagoras. Annie Besant purchased several hundred acres on the west side of Krotona and brought Jiddu Krishamurti to Ojai during the 1920s as the new prophet. Krishnamurti was discovered as a child when Besant was in India in 1909 and was chosen by the Theosophists to become a "World Teacher" in the tradition of Buddha or Christ.

A promotional pamphlet from the 1930s proclaimed the Ojai Valley as one of the world's four great centers of Theosophy and introduced Krishnamurti as an international teacher, author and philosopher. He appeared for many years at Starland, the annual encampment under the oak trees in Meiners Oaks. In 1930 Krishnamurti broke with the Theosophists, feeling that the path to truth could not be found in any one organization or individual but through oneself. He continued to lecture throughout the world and established the Krishnamurti Foundation and Library at the east end of the Ojai Valley at *Arya Vihara*, meaning "noble monastery." Both Krishnamurti and the Theosophists drew many people to the Ojai Valley, some of whom settled there. (Triem, 1985: 125)

#### G. Architecture

This period includes the later, mature phase of the California Bungalow style and the transition into the historic period revivals, principally the Mission, Spanish, and English revival styles, after 1920. The period revival styles, particularly the Spanish Revival, dominated all others throughout Southern California during the 1920s and 1930s. Although smaller homes and buildings continued to be designed by local builders and other non-trained designers, this period was characterized by the increasing employment of important regional architects to design key buildings and residences in the Ojai Valley. Notable among these were Wallace Neff, George Washington Smith, Carleton Winslow, Paul R. Williams, and Robert Stacy-Judd. This period is also marked by the introduction of the work of important local architects, chiefly Roy C. Wilson of Santa Paula and Austen Pierpont of Ojai.

Born in Los Angeles in 1891, Austen Pierpont came with his family to Ojai that same year, where his father Ernest built a house for his family adjacent to the Thacher School. The Pierponts built a hotel and cottages on



Arbolada House "C" designed by George Washington Smith, rendered by Lutah Maria Riggs.

## Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945)

their 40 acre ranch to house visiting Thacher students parents. Upon graduation from Thacher School in 1909, Pierpont attended Stanford University where he studied engineering until a severe eye hemorrhage forced a year of rest and changed his intention to obtain a degree in architecture from Cornell University. Instead he studied economics at Stanford as well as managing Ventura's Pierpont Inn, built by his mother in 1910. In 1919 Pierpont attended the New School of Social Research in New York City. He returned to 0jai in 1921.

During the early 1920s Pierpont launched his architectural career by designing and building his own English style stone residence adjacent to the Pierpont cottages. He completed numerous residential commissions during the 1920s and 1930s, for which he received several awards. From the early 1920s through the 1960s, Pierpont designed the majority of new buildings and additions to older buildings on the Thacher



Drews Residence, Eucalyptus Street, Austen Pierpont, 1929. (San Buenaventura Research Associates)

School campus, including the Science Laboratory (1936), the Middle School Dormitory (1937), and the Lamb Auditorium (1959).

Pierpont's buildings during the 1920s and 1930s were designed in the popular Spanish and Monterey revival styles of the period. During the postwar years, he adopted the warmer, more accessible form of Modernism which came to be associated with California, and which spawned the California Ranch House. During his lengthy career some of his most notable public buildings include the Ojai Art Center (1934) and the Ojai Festival Bowl in Libbey Park with Roy C. Wilson (1954). In 1969 Pierpont designed a new entrance to Libbey Park including a paved courtyard with benches, walls and planters. Austen Pierpont died in 1975 at the age of 83.

Roy C. Wilson, Sr. was born in 1887 in Fremont, Kansas. His family moved to the Highland Park area of Los Angeles in 1900. As a youth he was employed as a draftsman for local architect Edwin C. Thorne. Later he moved to Berkeley to take classes at the university. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake cut short his education, but the rebuilding efforts provided him with practical experience. He was drawn back to Southern California, and in 1911 married Agnes Thorne, the daughter of his mentor.

Roy and Agnes Wilson came to Santa Paula for the first time in 1914, purchasing 40 acres of oaks and sycamores adjacent to the Santa Paula Creek. Wilson opened an architectural practice and began receiving his first commissions in the late 1910s. By the early 1920s he had designed several residences and had received three

## Nordhoff Becomes Ojai (1917-1945)

major commissions: a residence for Limoneira Company President, C. C. Teague; a large dormitory and recreation building for the Limoneira Ranch, and the Limoneira Company Headquarters in town. His gregarious nature coupled with his strong business sense brought his firm many important commissions throughout his over fifty year career as the first licensed architect in Ventura County. Commissions included a large number of schools and businesses, as well as churches and private residences. His firm designed the Nordhoff Union Grammar School in 1927 along with the Nordhoff Union Hight School in 1929. Wilson had a strong interest in art and promoted this interest by presenting works of art commissioned from local artists and sculptors to several of the schools designed by his firm. Roy Wilson died in Santa Paula in 1974.

## 6. Postwar Era (1945-1960)

## A. Commercial and Residential Development

Following World War II, a building boom occurred in Ojai with the opening of both large and small subdivisions primarily east and north of town. The population of the city grew from 500 in 1921 to 2,519 in 1950. A larger number of residences were built during the late 1940s and 1950s than any other previous period in Ojai's history. The new tracts included Sarzotti Park Tract in 1947; Del Prado Tract No. 1 and McMillan Manor Tract in 1951; the Mercer Tract No. 1 in 1953 and No. 2 in 1955; and the Grandview Tract in 1954. On the west side of town the Ojai Terrace subdivision was built in 1954. Although the Arbolada was laid out in the 1920s,



Ojai Avenue, 1947. (Pomona Public Library)

it developed primarily during the 1950s. The same was true for the Country Club Estates area. Other types of housing became prevalent following the war, including apartment buildings.

During the postwar era, commercial development pushed west along Ojai Avenue between Ventura Street and Topa Topa Drive. Buildings constructed along the south side of Ojai Avenue during this period include the Security Pacific Bank, Bayless Market, a restaurant and liquor store. Commercial development on the far

western end of Ojai began during this period with the construction of a Shell Oil gas station at the "Y" (Ojai Avenue, El Paseo Road and Canada Street). The Ojai Rancho Motel was built at 615 W. Ojai Avenue west of town. In 1959 the Ojai Valley Community Hospital opened on the Maricopa Highway. The following year the "Y" shopping center opened across from the hospital on Maricopa Highway to service the large tract of homes built in the Ojai Terrace subdivision in 1954.

## B. Resorts and Tourism

With the renewed availability of gasoline following the war, more people than ever traveled by automobile, and tourism took on an entirely different character. The auto court and motel concept of accommodation rose swiftly in popularity and began to supplant traditional resort hotels. Auto courts first appeared in Ojai during the late 1940s. Local directories in 1948-49 listed the Valley Outpost Lodge on Mallory Way and Blairs Court at 255 S. Montgomery Street. Hotels listed that year included the Ojai Manor on Matilija Street; El Roblar on Ojai

## Postwar Era (1945-1960)

Avenue; Ojai Valley Inn and the Pierpont Cottages and Hotel. The Ojai Valley Inn, which had closed during the Great Depression and was used to house the military during World War II, reopened to a newly mobile public. A pool, riding trails and stables were added.

#### C. Industry

**i. Agriculture.** The Postwar era marked a decline in the citrus industry regionally, as agriculture was replaced rapidly by suburban development in much of Southern California. Ventura County in general, and the Ojai Valley specifically, were largely protected from these trends and maintained a viable citrus throughout the Postwar Era.

## D. Social and Cultural Life

**iii. Tennis Tournament.** After being cancelled during wartime, the tournament resumed in 1947, and has been played ever since during the month of April. It remains a big draw, attracting tennis fans from around the country to watch upcoming young talent play in some of the best amateur intercollegiate and interscholastic tennis events in the nation. Many of these players have gone on to play successfully in the U.S. Open, Wimbledon, the French and Australian opens. Some well recognized names who have played in "The Ojai" include Alex Olmedo, Billy Jean Moffitt King, Arthur Ashe, Stanley Smith, and Tracy Austin.

**iv. Ojai Music Festival.** The forerunner to the Ojai Music Festival was a series of chamber concerts held in 1926 at the Foothills Hotel, sponsored by Bostonian Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and Ojai resident Frank Frost. At the time it was considered to be one of the most important musical events on the West Coast, filling 500 seats at every performance. The 1926 concerts were one-time events, however, and twenty years and World War II intervened before a music festival returned to Ojai, this time through the vision of John Bauer. The first festival held in 1947 included theater, dance and opera, along with music. (James, 1995: 13-16)

The Ojai Festival continued to be held annually in the Nordhoff Auditorium, and as attendance grew, other venues including the Ventura College auditorium, were added. In 1952 the first concert was held outdoors in Libbey Park, then called Civic Center Park.

In 1954 Lawrence Morton became the first artistic director of the Ojai Festival. Morton continued to bring top musicians and conductors to the festival, combining the classical tradition with modern and avant garde composers. The festival was attracted by the possibilities of establishing a permanent location in the park which could accommodate their steadily growing audience, but the park lacked the necessary facilities. This led to the venue which became the Libbey Bowl being built in stages between 1954 and 1957. The design was completed by Ojai architect Austen Pierpont and associate architect Roy C. Wilson of Santa Paula. The final design for the bowl came through the architect's committee, which included Pierpont, Wilson, and architect Chalfant Head. The plans included a stage, shell, storage room, dressing rooms and stage lighting.

Lawrence Morton brought close friend Igor Stravinsky back to the festival in 1955 and 1956, and also brought Aaron Copland to conduct the festival in 1957, 1958, and 1976. The French composer Pierre Boulez appeared

## Postwar Era (1945-1960)

in 1966 and 1970. The Ojai Music Festival came to be associated with the best in classical as well as modern music, known for its willingness to experiment with new sounds.

#### E. Education

With the growth of subdivisions east of town primarily during the 1950s, the new Topa Topa Elementary School was built on Mountain View Avenue in 1957. Matilija Junior High School was built in 1959 on Maricopa Highway. Nordhoff High School moved into the junior high school building in 1966, with the junior high taking over the old Nordhoff High School building on El Paseo Road.

## F. Religion and Spirituality

With the overall growth of the community during the Postwar Era came the establishment of new church congregations, and the construction of new churches for existing congregations. Churches built during this period included the Church of Christ and Foursquare Church on N. Montgomery Street (1950 and 1953, respectively), the First Baptist Church on Grand Avenue (1955), and a new building for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints congregation on San Antonio Street (circa 1962).

#### G. Architecture

The Postwar Era marks the introduction of Modern architecture to Ojai, along with a number of notable regional architects who designed in the style, including valley residents Rodney Walker and Chalfant Head, and Los Angeles architect Harwell Hamilton Harris. Arguably the single-most significant example of postwar Modern architecture in Ojai is the Moore House on Foothill Road, designed by influential modernist Richard Neutra in 1951. Ojai architect Austen Pierpont continued his career into the postwar era, shifting his designs towards modernism to suit the changing tastes of the period.

In addition to high-style modern design, the postwar era was characterized by the architecture of the single family residential subdivision. As distinguished by the practice prior to World War II, when homes were generally constructed either individually or in small numbers, the pattern of residential development in the postwar era would be the mass production of tens or even hundreds of homes at one time, based on a limited number of plans and architectural treatments. The architectural style of the suburban tract home is broadly classified as the Ranch Style, referring to the common characteristics of informality of plan, low-slung scale, and the employment of naturalistic building materials. When the architectural treatments of these homes included references to historical styles, such as Colonial or Cape Cod, they are often classified as Minimal Traditional style. In addition, some Ranch Style designs made direct reference to Modern architecture, although typically in its more populist form. A substantial number of residential subdivisions were created in Ojai during the Postwar Era, exhibiting both the distinctive land use patterns and architectural designs of the period.

Custom homes built during this time period typically reflected similar architectural approaches, although the postwar architectural styles they represent are often more fully-developed than the tract homes of the period. Examples of these homes can be found throughout the city, but are concentrated in the Arbolada, and along Foothill Road, Country Club Drive, N. Signal Street, and Grand Avenue, among others.

## Postwar Era (1945-1960)

The architecture of the postwar period is also characterized by commercial buildings constructed with the express purpose of addressing a more mobile public. Variations on Roadside architecture include shopping malls, service stations, and other varieties of strip commercial architecture in which parking lots and signage played an important role in their design. Examples include a service station constructed in 1959 at 1020 Ojai Road, the Capri Hotel and adjacent bowling alley on Ojai Avenue (1960 and 1961, respectively), and the Ojai Rancho Inn on Ojai Avenue (1955).

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Maps

Plat of the Rancho Ojai, confirmed to Fernando Tico, 1868, approved 1870.

Bard Subdivision of Rancho Ojai, 1867 to 1870.

Map of the Town of Nordhoff, surveyed 1874, recorded 1875.

Map of Town of Nordhoff, 1897, compiled and mapped, J.B. Waud, Surveyor, Ventura, CA.