



### Hardison House Stable

Wallace Libbey Hardison was the youngest of eight children, born in 1850 in Canby, Maine. He followed his brother, James Henry, to work the oil fields of Western Pennsylvania, and befriended Milton and Lyman Stewart in 1877. After John D. Rockefeller took control of Western Pennsylvania's oil fields, the Hardisons and Stewarts ventured into the unrealized California oil market. In December 1882 Lyman shipped two drilling rigs to newly discovered oil fields in Ventura County and in April 1883, arrived to arrange oil leases. Wallace joined Lyman in Santa Paula, creating the Hardison & Stewart Oil Company. By 1896, the company was responsible for 15% of all oil production in California. In 1890, they merged their interests with those of Thomas Bard and Paul Calomico to form the Union Oil Company, which eventually became Unocal.

Wallace Hardison's wife Clara and children arrived in Santa Paula in July 1883. A month later, he purchased a ten acre parcel in Santa Paula Canyon from Washington Rhoads at what is now 1226 Ojai Road. The Hardison home, completed in 1884, was designed and constructed by an unknown Pennsylvania architect and builder. The Italianate two-story house with seven bedrooms and two baths - the first home to have indoor plumbing in Santa Paula - was shaded with verandahs, and surrounded by landscaped gardens. The balance of the farm was planted with groves of various citrus.

The stable, according to family lore, was completed in 1885 by Pennsylvania builder Andrew Burroughs, although no documents verify this attribution. The first floor housed horses, carriages, wagons, tack and other equipment. The second floor a large open hay loft with grain feed bins. The exterior siding is a mix of rustic ship lap siding, vertical trim and corner boards. While there are expected Eastlake details including angled tongue and groove paneling under the double hung windows, paneled sliding doors hung on interior tracks, and the door to the stalls with its incised panels and chamfered edges, there is an almost missed subtle playfulness of the detailing. Examining the alternating bands of round and maple leaf shingling, the pattern of the East (front) gable is different on the North and South (end) gables. The ventilated cupola echoes the playfulness with chevron gable boards facing down on the East, North and South sides, but the West (rear) side points up. The shingling is not seen on the 1884 home.

In 1900, Wallace divorced and remarried leaving the farm to his first wife Clara and their children. He moved to South Pasadena, and continued citrus ranching in the San Fernando Valley, and pursued additional business interests. On April 10, 1909, the oilman, agricultural businessman, gold miner, and newspaper publisher was killed when his auto was broadsided by a locomotive. Clara Hardison and the children's descendants continued to live on the property. Their youngest daughter Hope married James Norms Procter and ownership passed down the family. On December 5, 1977, Hardison House was designated Ventura County Landmark No. 35. Hope Hardison Procter lived in the family home until her death in 1983, and her son Robert Procter until 2011. In May 2012, structural engineer Mark D. Baker prepared a report for restoring the stable and home.

In 2013, the Hardison farm was purchased by real estate developer Williams Home, with plans to develop 53 houses. Community members like Amber Mikelson and The San Buenaventura Conservancy achieved a preservation agreement in 2017, to reduce the number of homes to be built and restoring the Hardison Home's exterior. Additionally, the stable, a 1910 residence and a 1920 garage will all be preserved in place within a heritage park easement in the new development.

