

Warner Ranch - Barn-Trading Post  
Near Warner Springs  
San Diego County  
California

HABS No. CAL-425

HABS  
CAL  
37-WARN.V,  
1B.

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

FOLLOWS

HABS  
CAL  
37-WARN.V.  
1B:

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAL-425  
Page 1

WARNER RANCH, TRADING POST-BARN

ADDRESS: Warner Springs, San Diego County, California  
OWNER: Vista Irrigation District  
OCCUPANT: Vista Irrigation District  
USE: Vacant

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Warner Ranch is a Registered National Historic Landmark and California Historical Landmark #311.

It was the focal point for emigrants traveling over the Santa Fe Trail to the California settlements and gold fields from 1844; and it served as a way-station for Butterfield's Overland Mail Company from September 16, 1858, until April, 1861. It was the first well supplied trading post reached by emigrants after the long trek across the southwest deserts. It figured prominently in events incident with the arrival of the Army of the West under command of General Stephen Watts Kearny during the United States war with Mexico and the Battle of San Pasqual which was the sharpest engagement in the conquest of California. During the Civil War, Camp Wright was established on the ranch for the final staging of the California Volunteer Battalion under Colonel James H. Carleton.

The buildings, extant, are of adobe brick and hand hewn timbers put together by mortise and tenon and wood pegs, typical of the early west.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Warner Ranch - legal ranch name "Rancho San Jose' del Valle" - comprising 11 leagues was first granted to Jose' Antonio Bernardino

Pico in 1840,<sup>1</sup> who abandoned it in 1842 due to continuous trouble from Indians. It was regranted in 1844 to Johnathon Trumble Warner, who had become a Mexican citizen for the purpose, and assumed the name of Don Juan Jose' Warner. Complicating the title to the land, the U. S. District Court, on February 23, 1857, surprisingly reversed the Land Commission - and itself - by confirming four leagues of land (Rancho Valle de San Jose') to Silvestre de la Portilla, reinstating his neglected 1834 grant.<sup>2</sup> By this decision the Warner Ranch House and Trading Post, which was erected in 1844, was located 330 feet south of the southern boundary of Warner's property and on that of Portilla, as determined by official surveys which were not made until 1878.<sup>3</sup>

Further detailed historical information and references are included under CAL-424, Warner Ranch, Ranch House.

#### REFERENCES

1. Morrison, Lorrin L. - WARNER, The Man and The Ranch - 1962, p. 17
2. Ibid - p. 75
3. Wright, William Lawton - THE WARNER'S RANCH BUTTERFIELD STATION PUZZLE - Booklet, reprinted from The Westerners Brand Book, Book Nine, Los Angeles Corral - 1961, p. 8

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bancroft, H. H., History of California, Vol. V  
Clarke, Dwight L., Stephen Watts Kearney, Soldier of the West  
Edwards, E. I., Lost Oasis along the Carrizo  
Emory, W. H., Notes of a Military Reconnaissance  
Hayes, Benjamin, Pioneer Notes from the Diaries of,  
Hill, Joseph J., The History of Warner's Ranch and Its Environs  
Hoover and Rensch, Historic Spots in California - 1948 Revised Edition  
Morrison, Warren L., WARNER, The Man and The Ranch - 1962  
Wright, William Lawton, THE WARNER'S RANCH BUTTERFIELD STATION PUZZLE

#### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The surviving buildings at the ranch and trading post consist of a one-story adobe ranch house (CAL-424) and trading post-barn

constructed of hand hewn timber frame with remnants of adobe walls that are covered with board and batten weather boarding.

#### EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - Approximately 46' x 76'. Remnants of adobe walls at south and west sides and the adobe cross wall, approximately 48' from south front, indicate that the building was built in stages at various times and may have at one time served a purpose of greater significance than as a barn. A butt joint on the adobe wall on the west side approximately 15' from the south wall and the difference in texture and erosion of the adobe brick as well as structural variations, also indicate variable construction periods.

Foundation - Field stone

Wall Construction - Sundried adobe brick, board and batten weather boarding, wood frame and shake siding at tack room at northwest corner of building; and board and batten stable lean-to at east side.

Roof - Gable roof, pitched 6 in 12, peeled log rafters 4" plus diameter at approximately 30" o.c. and 1" rived sheathing strips at approximately 16" o.c. Wood shake roof, patched and overlaid with corrugated iron.

#### INTERIOR

Interior Framing - Rough hewn posts and beams with mortise and tennon connections secured with wood pegs and braced with struts and knee braces dapped and pegged. Intermediate posts are two-story with upper posts bearing on  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $10\frac{1}{2}$ " longitudinal girder placed approximately 7'-8", floor to top of girder.

Floor to top of top girder is 14'-9". Floor to top of wall girt is approximately 10'-4".

Row of columns of center bay are 13'-8", center to center.

Flooring - 1 x 6 T&G over sleepers on ground.

HABS  
CAL  
37-WARREN  
IB-

CAL-425  
Page 4

NOTE

Northwest section, approximately 28' x 35', is of wood frame and is laid out for tack room and grooming stables with a mezzanine floor at 8' level.

Prepared by



A. Lewis Koue, AIA  
National Park Service

February 1963

APPROVED:



DATE: February 23, 1963

Charles S. Pope, AIA  
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures  
Western Office, Design and Construction  
National Park Service

REPRODUCED FROM THE  
HISTORIC STRUCTURES DIVISION  
OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Addendum to:  
Warner Ranch, Barn, Trading Post  
San Felipe Road (State Highway S2)  
Warner Springs Vicinity  
San Diego County  
California

HABS No. CA-425

HABS  
CAL  
37-WARN.V  
1B-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California**

HABS  
CAL  
37-WARN.V  
1B-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
WARNER RANCH, BARN, TRADING POST

This report is an addendum to a 4-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

- Location: San Felipe Road (State Highway S-2), ½ mi. East of Highway 79  
Warner Springs Vicinity  
San Diego County, California  
USGS Warner's Ranch 7.5' Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 11.531240.3678015
- Present Owner: Vista Irrigation District, Vista, California
- Present Occupants: Unoccupied
- Present Use: Unused
- Significance: Warner's Ranch is a landmark in the history of the American West. It is strongly associated with important historical themes, including Mexican and American culture contact during the Mexican Republic; the frontier period in American westward migration, trade, and settlement; and the Gold Rush. The geographical importance of the area as an overland migration route during the 19th century and its excellent livestock pasturage were important elements in its development. American Jonathan Trumbull Warner, an early immigrant to Mexican California, originally occupied the valley in 1844 for the purpose of cattle ranching. He later built a trading post to take advantage of the overland migration trade resulting from the Gold Rush of 1848 through the early 1850s. The original adobe portion of the existing Warner's Ranch Barn may be part of that trading post. The building later became a station for the Butterfield Overland mail. In the late 19th century, a wood, peg-timbered barn was built to support large-scale cattle ranching. It was directly associated with the success of two of the largest cattle ranching businesses in Southern California between the late 1880s and 1961. Warner's Ranch was recognized as a site of exceptional importance in American history in 1962, when the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service identified it as a National Historic Landmark.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. PHYSICAL HISTORY

1. Date of erection:

The ruined adobe walls in the western half of the large barn that presently stands to the east of the Warner's Ranch House may be remnants of the Butterfield stage station corral, 1858. These walls obviously pre-date construction of the wooden barn, which has been imposed upon them. They conform to similar style corrals documented at other Butterfield stage stations directly to the east of Warner's in the Colorado Desert and in Arizona by Roscoe and Margaret Conkling who completed an extensive study of all the Butterfield stations in the mid-1930's.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Conklings recorded many other stations in Arizona with open corrals and buildings of stone. Their conclusion is that the Overland Mail Company utilized readily available building materials and techniques, largely based on Mexican folk architectural traditions indigenous to the Southwest to construct stations and corrals. Open air corrals of stone and adobe were a common feature for housing livestock. The adobe walls in the large barn fit into this pattern and are probably the remains of the Overland Mail Company corral.<sup>2</sup> The large wooden barn, while also of substantial antiquity, was clearly built after the adobe walls and is not the type of structure commonly erected by the Butterfield Overland Mail. The best evidence available indicates that with the Vail Ranch operation the Warner's Ranch Barn was built to its present appearance to be used as a large facility to store hay and other feed. The large peg-framed wood barn is not architecturally consistent with Overland Mail station structures and would not have been required during the Downey period when the emphasis was on sheep more than cattle. The Vail operation reintroduced the practice of grazing thousands of head of cattle on the ranch that continues to the present day, requiring a large facility to store hay and other feed.

2. Architect:

No architect is associated with this structure. As with many folk vernacular structures prevailing technology and local custom often dictated the style, method of construction, room placement and orientation of the structure.

3. Original and subsequent Owners:

Please see the discussion of ownership histories provided in HABS No. CA-424, Warner's Ranch, Ranch House.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Available information suggests the Overland Mail Company constructed the adobe corral. Typically, local native American laborers made and built adobe structures. Supplies for the construction would have been found in the vicinity's woods and grounds. Any supplies not found locally, such as hardware, could have been acquired from San Diego or from travelers passing through the area. The wooden barn was probably built by the Vail Ranch. Construction techniques and building materials are consistent with European building traditions.

5. Original plans and construction:

From both the historical and physical evidence of the adobe corral walls and the later wooden construction a fairly clear construction history can be evaluated. The original structure of which portions are still extant was an adobe corral structure. The adobe corral walls are two block wythes wide, and would have encompassed an area approximately 30'x40'.

6. Alterations and additions:

The large peg-framed wood barn most likely dates from 1888 when the Vail operation reintroduced the practice of grazing thousands of head of cattle on the ranch, necessitating a large facility to store hay and other feed. The barn is constructed in a design known as an open central haymow, specifically designed to accommodate the maximum amount of hay and other feed. Physical evidence suggests the barn originally had wood shake siding and roofing. Horse and cow stalls were definitely added after the initial construction of the wood barn; this is evidenced by the wood shake covered walls separating the main body of the barn from the addition and the change in exterior siding to board-on-board vertical siding on the east addition.

In the 1970s, the Vista Irrigation District constructed an inner steel structure to stabilize the barn against the high winds experienced there. Using steel pipe, a center structure was constructed, with wires and cables connecting it to the barn's wooden structure.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Please see the historical context provided in HABS No. CA-424, Warner's Ranch, Ranch House.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

1. Architectural Character

The Warner's Ranch Barn is a very interesting example of an adobe and wood structure, portions of which may date from the late 1840s. The barn's design and construction details show the available craftsmanship and building materials of the period. The physical evidence can be interpreted to show the evolution of additions to the structure.

2. Condition of Fabric

The barn is generally in extremely poor condition. Portions of the building have been lost in the past 33 years since preparation of the original HABS documentation. Currently, large segments of the wood shingle walls have deteriorated due to benign neglect. Other segments of the exterior walls appear to be ready to crumble. The primary cause of the deterioration of the fabric can be directly attributed to the lack of ongoing maintenance to maintain the structure in a weathertight condition. In addition, the harsh weather and strong winds of the area are contributing to the deterioration of the structure. From the north elevation the extent of the wracking of the structure is easily determined. Rain, wind and the occasional snow shower are attacking the structural integrity of the roof and walls. The barn, however, does not have the same rising damp problem as the adobe ranch house.<sup>3</sup>

## B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR

### 1. Overall Dimensions

The building is a rectangle approximately 48' x 76' with a gabled roof and an enclosed shed roof lean-to running the full length of the east side. The three-bay open interior barn consists of the original adobe walled area that has been enveloped by a central gable-roofed structure. The wooden structure extends farther north than the original northern adobe wall. Where the barn extends north of the original adobe wall the haymow or loft begins. The floor of the interior of the barn is three feet below the grade of the road to the south allowing the structure to conform to the gentle slope of the hillside and appear to nestle into the hillside. The change in grade height also facilitated loading hay into the central haymow.

### 2. Foundations

The perimeter foundations are in most areas buried under years of debris. The only visible foundations are a loose pile of granite rocks at the northwest and northeast corners. The foundation at these corners is a composite of local stones such as quartz and granite with no mortar. The stones vary in size but a majority appear to be approximately 18" x 18" x 24". The adobe wall extends along the south wall as a retaining wall 36" to 40" high.

### 3. Walls

The exterior walls are load bearing composed of a combination of wood framing with wood siding or shingles and adobe block. The north wall is almost completely open where some of the exterior framing has fallen away. Some areas have been patched with corrugated metal siding. The majority of the remaining siding is vertical boards butt jointed. The east wall is composed of the shed addition and the visible portion of the original two-story structure beyond. At the north end of the east addition the wall and roof have collapsed, but from about the mid-point through to the south end the addition is still standing and is composed of vertical board siding. The principal structure is sided with 24" shakes lapped 6" to 8". The south elevation is relatively intact with vertical board siding and corrugated metal siding enclosing the hay door. The west elevation is the only exterior elevation where the adobe walls are visible. The vertical board siding covers the middle through the south end of the wall except for where the vertical siding has fallen away. Through the gaps in the siding the adobe block wall is visible. One complete bay of the west elevation is open with no siding. The continuation of the west elevation north of the opening is sided with 24" shakes lapped 6" to 8". The shake siding is failing and now slopes at a lopsided angle, patched with corrugated metal siding.

### 4. Structural Systems Framing (Roof, Wall, Floor)

#### a) Wall

The walls are all load bearing. The adobe, approximately 22" wide, has no skim coat, plaster, or whitewash. The adobe walls are laid in a running bond pattern and are double wyth wide. The heavy timber wood frame structure is eight bays long and three aisles wide. The posts lining the central aisle are tied together with tie beams and knee bracing supporting the roof purlins. Additional tie beams connect the central aisle posts to the exterior wall top plate. Exterior vertical board siding and shakes siding are applied over skip sheathing attached to rough hewn studs or 4" x 4" poles. Newer treated

poles similar to power poles have been added for structural stabilization flanking each side of the opening on the west elevation. In the 1970s, 4" diameter steel posts 8' tall were paired in four bays and were welded to horizontal tubular steel cross members connected to the top of the posts in a pattern similar to a box truss. The posts are cross braced with steel tension rods with turnbuckles. The steel post structure is then lashed with metal wires to the wooden posts and flush girts.

b) Roof

There is no ridge rafter; the roof rafters at ridge apex in a butt joint with a rafter tie. Roof rafters are not of uniform size and vary from a nominal 4"x4" to 4"x6". The roof rafters are very rough hewn. Many of the structural members do not maintain a full nominal dimension through the length of the lumber. The roof rafters have scarfed ends to seat on the 6"x8" roof purlin. The roof rafters are notched to seat on a rough hewn nominally 8"x8" top plate. The top plate is scabbed and spliced together with scarf end joints. Skip sheathing is of rough hewn lumber not of uniform size varying from a nominal 1"x4" to 1"x6". The lumber is rough sawn in the 1x dimension only and not milled along the width; bark remains on some edges. The sheathing is set with a three to four foot spacing. Wire ties have been added as tension elements from the roof purlin to the posts at sporadic intervals. The wire ties have all been added as tension elements to counter the lateral outward thrust of the roof rafters.

c) Floor

1"x6" wood plank flooring running north-south on 8"x8" wood sleepers running east-west, is set directly on the compacted earthen grade. The flooring members of the loft are 1"x4" boards running north-south over floor joists.

5. Porches, stoops  
Not applicable.

6. Chimneys  
Not applicable.

7. Openings

a) Doorways and Doors

(1) North Elevation

One doorway is extant on this façade: a vertical wood plank door for entrance to the tack room. The door is secured in place with three scraps of leather harness as hinges.

(2) East Elevation

Contains one pair of vertical wood plank doors. The doorway centers in the addition and contains a pair of double doors that would have opened into the corral and served as a livestock chute to guide stock into the barn.

(3) South Elevation  
The hay door is the only door on this facade and is currently boarded over with horizontal corrugated metal siding.

(4) West Elevation  
Contains one large scale opening that may have been the main entrance to the barn but no structural elements indicate one way or the other. The opening is over 10' wide and open sill to top plate.

b) Windows  
Not applicable.

8. Roof

a) Shape, covering  
Center gable with shed roof addition to the east. The roof is covered with corrugated metal sheets tied down with pipes and wires. Remains of a wood shingle roof are visible under the sheeting.

b) Cornice, eaves  
Not applicable.

B. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

1. Floor plans

The primary barn structure contains a center aisle with two side aisles. On the east elevation a lean-to addition extends the full length of the barn. The primary barn structure is divided approximately two-thirds / one-third by an adobe cross wall in varying heights from 2' to 8'. The larger portion is the area to the south of the adobe cross wall and is characterized by an adobe retaining wall on the south wall and portions of full height adobe walls on the west wall. This portion of the barn also is a fully open pole barn with no loft areas. Presumably this configuration is ideal for hay storage. The smaller portion of the barn is the area to the north of the adobe cross wall. This area was subdivided on the east wall as three open stalls with a manger on the east wall and two open stalls with one closed stall (which later became a tack room) on the west wall. This area also has a second story loft extending the full width of the barn. The loft floor is level through the central aisle and then slopes down in the side aisles. The slope is purposeful and not the result of excessive settling. The east lean-to is accessible to the main barn structure through a pair of individual board doors in the east wall just south of the adobe cross wall. The lean-to is one open space with the remains of a wooden manger on the west wall south of the doors and wood and steel cow stanchions on the east wall north of the doors.

2. Stairways

The structure has no stairs or ladders still extant and no scars were noticed indicating their former position.

3. Flooring

The flooring is all constructed of wood planking butt jointed on wood sleepers set directly on the compacted earthen grade. The wood planking varies from 4" to 6" wide. The wood sleepers are 8"x8" rough hewn members. The floor has no evidence of any finish or color and has been left in its natural state.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish

The interior walls are primarily adobe block walls that have not been plastered and the interior side of the exterior wood siding. There is no ceiling.

5. Openings

a) Doorways and Doors

There are only three interior doors: the two doors to the east lean-to and the door to the closed stall (tack room). The doors are vertical butt jointed with applied rails and no stiles. The door into the northwest tack room has two metal hasp hinges and a metal throw bolt to secure the door. The doors into the east lean-to have metal hasp hinges and wooden throw bolts to secure the doors. A unique characteristic of one of the lean-to doors is a makeshift self-opener. A length of metal chain has been hung from the top of the door to an adjoining post and counter weighted with a former metal gear salvaged from the ranch.

b) Windows

Not applicable.

6. Decorative Features and Trim

a) Built-in Cabinets

The northwest closed stall which was converted into a tack room contains several wooden saddle racks.

b) Fireplaces

Not applicable.

c) Notable Ornamental Features

The northwest closed stall which was converted into a tack room contains several horse shoes that have been nailed to the walls to serve as bridle racks. The same cattle brands that were used to mark the floor around the hearth were also used in the barn on one of the posts near the entrance to the east lean-to as decorations.<sup>4</sup>

7. Hardware

These features are discussed with each door in the Openings section.

8. Mechanical Equipment

a) Heating, Air-conditioning, ventilation

Not applicable.

- b) Lighting  
Not applicable.
  - c) Plumbing  
Not applicable.
9. Original Furnishings  
Not applicable.

#### Notes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Roscoe P. and Margaret B. Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail 1857-1869*, Vol. 2 (Glendale, Arthur H. Clark Company, 1947).
- <sup>2</sup> It is possible that there may have been some form of roof on the adobe structure, since historian M. L. Walker states that during a smallpox epidemic in the 1860s Indians were cared for on rawhide cots in a large adobe barn near the main house. Quoted in Flanigan, "The Ranch House at Warner's." (*The Journal of San Diego History*, 42 (Fall 1996): 220.
- <sup>3</sup> Rising damp is the terminology used to describe the process by which moisture in the ground seeps up into the adobe from below, eroding the adobe walls from below and undermining their structural integrity.
- <sup>4</sup> Research was conducted at the San Diego Historical Society in an effort to identify the brands at Warner's by comparing them with known brands from the region; however, they do not appear to match known regional cattle brands.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please see Part III of the Warner's Ranch House (HABS Number CA-424) for references and additional information.

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was carried out under a contract with the National Park Service, Pacific Great Basin Support Office, San Francisco, CA. The purpose of the project was to provide updated and expanded architectural descriptions, historical information, and large-format photography of the Ranch House (HABS No. CA-424) and Barn (HABS No. CA-425). HABS documentation was transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1963. Project supervision was provided by Ann Huston of the National Park Service Cultural Resources Team. Additional support was provided by Paul Dorey of the Vista Irrigation District, which owns the property.

The documentation was prepared by several individuals, between November 1996 and February 1997. Philipp Scholz Rittermann prepared large-format photography; Stephen R. Van Wormer prepared written historical documentation; Ione R. Stiegler prepared architectural information; project management and technical editing were performed by William R. Manley.