

## The Owners

We are Rick and Tracy Cortez. We are the new owners of the historic Billiwhack Ranch in Santa Paula. We purchased the ranch in December of 2018 after two years of negotiation. The property had been on the market for over 6 years and had multiple failed escrows. The 60,000 sf of old dairy buildings were of little use to farmers and represented a liability. The sellers could not sell the property in spite of lowering the price many times.

Rick's career has been devoted to adaptive reuse of old buildings. He has been doing this work for over 20 years in Los Angeles as well as designing, manufacturing, and installing steel doors and windows of the same type that exist at Billiwhack. His work is known for its habitability, beauty, simplicity, and respect of the original structure. See samples of his work on two 1890's structures, next page.

We are the only buyers that showed interest in saving these structures. Rick is one of very few people who has the ability, desire, and interest for this project. We believed that the county would/could be advocates of the adaptive reuse and repair of this property given its history in the county. Up to this point, our experience has been difficult and time consuming.

County of Ventura  
July 22, 2024  
Cultural Heritage Board Meeting  
Item 6a  
Exhibit 2 – Before Photographs

Billiwhack Ranch

CT1: 759 N Spring Street



Before



After

CT6: 676 N Spring Street



Before



After

## The Project

The property consists of lemon and avocado orchards and 60,000 square feet of buildings originally constructed as a dairy. Construction began in 1926 but not completed when sold in 1928 to another dairy company. The new company completed the buildings and began operating in 1934. The dairy shut down in 1942 after 8 or 9 years of operation. Subsequently, there have been 10 owners, over the next 75 years, none of which used the property as a dairy. Today the county is basing existing use on the very first use because one assessor record in 1954 that calls out the Creamery. This building will always be known as the Creamery but it has not functioned as one for 75 years.

Our Project is the adaptive re-use of the original Creamery building as our main residence and to maintain the two other existing residences. Our exterior modifications to the Creamery building impact 4 existing windows and create 4 new windows. A total of 2.5% of the elevation is altered. All modifications are in keeping with the original design and materials. We have an historic report that recommends the project and finds that all proposed work is in accordance with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards. Report attached.

We were granted a repair permit for a residence that has allowed us to repair the front corner of the Creamery building (see photos next page). We have spent approximately \$750,000 on an historically accurate repair, in both materials and construction methods. We believe the integrity that has been exhibited during this repair should define our commitment to rehabbing all of the buildings with care and consideration.



Before

12/20/2018



Early Demo

09/20/2019



Today



Mid Demo

09/28/2019



Re-built Steel Structure

03/17/2020



First Pour Forming

04/03/2020



First Pour

04/08/2020

# Residence Repair

Accomplished Since Sept. 2019

Billiwhack Ranch



Before



After

# Residence Repair

Billiwhack Ranch

## Zoning Issues

The issue we are faced with, and the reason for this meeting, is the characterization of building H2's damaged area as voluntary. Building H2 is a 2,400 sf historic residence that had extreme deferred maintenance when we purchased the property. Our plan was to perform some initial, surgical investigation to determine the work that was needed to do a light remodel.

The combination of poor design and execution, along with 50 years of deferred maintenance and mud flows from the adjacent hill plus the riding arena, directed water towards the building. The grade crept up through the years and, in the end, was higher than the wood framed floor & walls. Water had been wicking into and up the stucco for years. The studs were rotted out and some completely gone. All the original lathe paper was gone. The floor, just inches above the dirt, was spongy and one could step through it in places. What began as a surgical investigation to determine the scope of work turned into a removal of all of the damaged, non-structural infill and finishes. The original steel structure remains intact and roof tiles were saved.

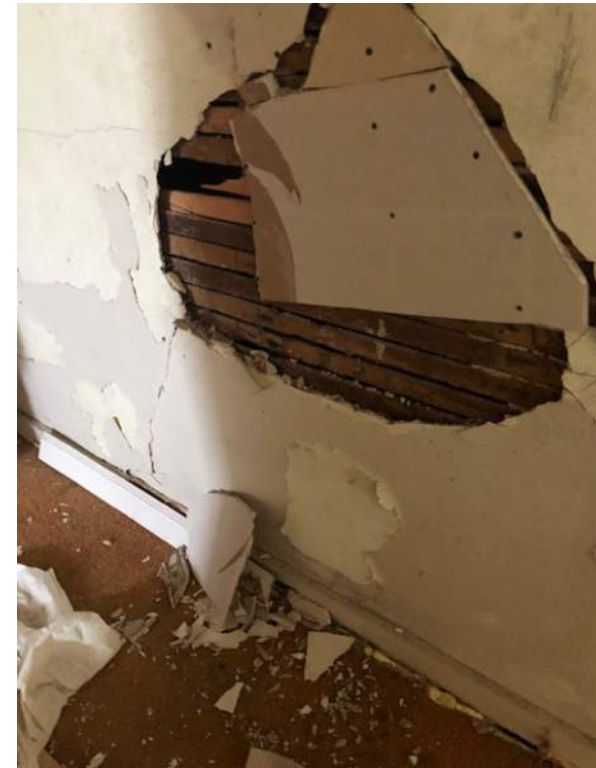
From this work we were developing our scope of work and during that time we were cited. We take full responsibility for state the building is in. Rick has been doing projects of this nature all his working life and it's not in his nature to remove anything authentic & original only to replace it with a contemporary building. We did remove more than 50% of the infill without a permit. We contend, and hope to show, that the non-structural materials that were removed were damaged beyond repair and that the damaged material had zero integrity; that these conditions were created over a long period of time and existed at the time we purchased the property; and that the damage was involuntary.

The VC Non-Coastal Ordinance Division 8, Chapter 1 Section 8113-6.1.1 states: Whenever any such structure is involuntarily damaged or destroyed in whole or in part, the structure may be restored to its original state existing before such removal, damage or destruction. The occupancy or use of the structure or part thereof which existed at the time of the damage or destruction may be continued...



## Building H2

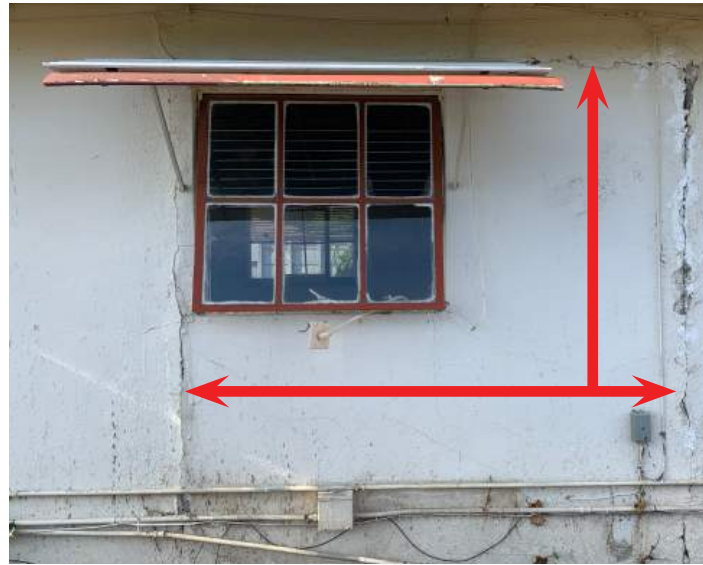
Interior Damage Pre Demo: Floor, Walls, Ceiling (Exposed Damage)  
Billiwhack Ranch



## Building H2

Interior Damage Pre Demo: Floor, Walls, Ceiling (Exposed Damage)  
Billiwhack Ranch





South Side:  
Stress fractures & damage  
visible at each window



**Building H2**  
Exterior Damage  
Billiwhack Ranch



Floor Level



Original Grade



Level Before Cleanup



**Building H2**  
Exterior Damage  
Billiwhack Ranch

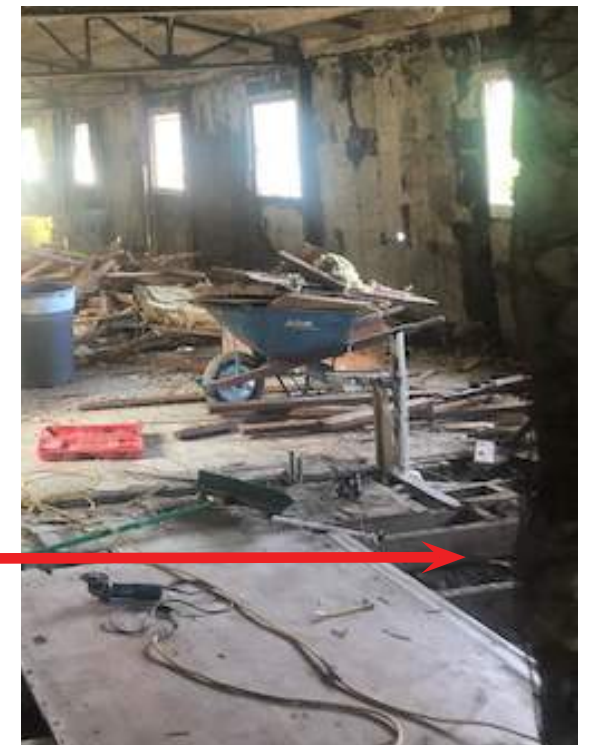


Studs and water membrane gone

Girders laid on dirt



Only stucco remains



Dirt

# Building H2

Interior Damage Pre Demo: Exposed Floors and Walls  
Billiwhack Ranch



## Building H2

Interior Damage Pre Demo: Exposed Floors and Walls  
Billiwhack Ranch