

# Los Fierros Hike Guide

**Overview:** The Los Fierros Award was developed to promote interest in Long Beach history within Scouts. This award contains important sites of interest within Long Beach to include ones important to the Tongva (Gabrielino) Tribe, Spanish Colonial, Mexican, and American expansion. This urban hike will introduce Scouts to local history and prompt them to imagine themselves in the same locations 50, 100, 200, and 500 years ago.

Number of Nights	Day Hike
Trailhead Location	Houghton Park, 6301 Myrtle Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90805
Directions	<i>(from the LBAC Scout Service Center)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn right onto Long Beach Blvd</li> <li>• Turn left onto East Roosevelt Rd</li> <li>• Turn right onto Virginia Rd</li> </ul>
Trailhead Distance	3.3 mi. <i>(from LBAC Scout Service Center)</i>
Distance	24.3 mi
Elevation	150 ft.
High Adventure Award	LBAC Los Fierros Award
Water Source	Multiple business locations/parks along route
Bathroom Facility	Multiple business locations/parks along route
Contact	562-400-1901
Cost	\$4 award

## Los Fierros Hike Route

0. Houghton Park: Take a moment to appreciate the cultural history of the vast State of California. Many of us don't spend much time thinking about what happened in Long Beach, much less California, over 500 years ago. The first settlers of California were the Native Americans and the area around Long Beach was the home to the Tongva (Gabrielino) tribe.

The first European settlers to arrive in California were the Spanish. Many of us may not be aware, but Cabrillo and his fellow explorers anchored their ship offshore from present day Long Beach, just 50 years after Columbus discovered America. Cabrillo named the area "Bahia de los Fumos", the Bay of Smokes, after observing the local tribe burn the grass and bush along the shore during one of their occasional rabbit hunts. Spain decided to send Catholic Franciscan priests to California nearly 200 years after its discovery by Cabrillo for the purpose of establishing missions, converting the American Indians, and establishing supply and trading posts for follow-on explorers and settlers. England did not pose much a threat to the Spanish missionaries and settlers following the American Revolution.

California served as a colonial province of the Spanish Empire from 1769 to 1821 and was located on the extreme northern frontier of New Spain. It was far removed from the cosmopolitan center of the empire and missions were established between San Diego and San Francisco. Spain experienced many of the same errors and challenges in New Spain that the English made in the New England Colonies. They could not get enough settlers to come from Spain to settle the territories, they forbid trade with other

countries, did not allow settler representation in their government, and considered settlers born in New Spain to be a lower class. Spain's treatment of its settler citizens in New Spain led to independence and the establishment of Mexico.

Look for a Rancho boundary marker in the planter in front of the clubhouse steps.

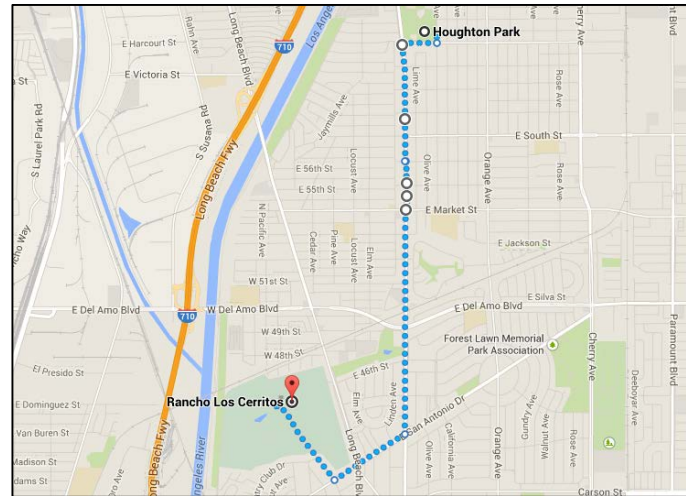
### 1. Rancho Los Cerritos:

- Leaving Houghton Park, follow Atlantic Ave south
- Turn right onto San Antonio Dr
- Turn right onto Virginia Rd

Both Spain and Mexico offered the settlers land grants to establish ranches (ranchos). However, Mexico's rule of California was short lived and lasted from 1821 to 1848. Mexico and the United States entered into the Mexican-American War from 1846-1848 which was prompted by the decision by the citizens of the Republic of Texas to cede from Mexico and join the United States. *"It was on this ranch (Los Cerritos) that one of the battles at the time of the American conquest of California occurred. It is recorded that the Californians under Carillo here met, one night, Col. Stockton's forces which had landed at San Pedro; The Californians, by driving back and forth in the darkness a large herd of horses, succeeded in giving the impression of a much larger force than they really had. Perhaps they were horses belonging to John Temple and Abel Stearns and to the neighboring Dominguez Ranch."* (Bixby-Smith, 1931) The Battle of La Mesa was fought on January 9th, 1847 and resulted in the United States recapturing Los Angeles which had served as the campsite for California forces under General Castro. This was the last military encounter of the war. The Mexican-American War ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and is still in force today. This treaty resulted in Mexico giving up territory, which today includes the States of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming.

The modern story of Long Beach begins with the end of the Mexican-American War when Benjamin Flint joined thousands of Americans in the gold rush to California. He settled in a location called Volcano Diggins which is not far from present day Suttler's Mill, the location of the first gold discovery. His immediate and extended family joined him in 1851 to include Llewellyn and Amasa Bixby from Norridgewock, Maine and Dr. Thomas Flint from Lake Vineyard, Maine aboard the sailing ship SS Crescent City on May 28, 1851. They crossed the Isthmus of Panama by burro and sailed to San Francisco on the SS Northerner arriving on July 7 (53 days of travel). The SS Northerner was described as *"a very poor means of transportation, being much overcrowded, dirty, infested with vermin, poorly supplied with food, and leaking so badly that it was necessary to use the pumps during the entire journey"* (Bixby-Smith, 1931) Llewellyn and Amasa were joined by their brother Jotham in 1852 where they continued to dabble in the search for gold and took local jobs around Volcano as butchers, mule drivers, and store keepers. (Bixby-Smith, 1931)

The brothers returned to Maine on Christmas of 1852 to bring sheep back to California. They took with them the gold proceeds from their business activities and carried their gold (\$3,500 worth) in special buckskin jackets with secret liners. The brothers and cousins returned to California on March 8th, 1853



by rail, horseback, wagon and foot being sure to buy and bring sheep along with them. The financed their trip by selling wool from the sheep. They arrived in San Gabriel with 1,880 sheep, 11 oxen, 2 cows, 4 horses, 2 wagons, 3 dogs, and 4 assistant ranch hands after a 10,693 mile trip that took them eight months.

Rancho Los Cerritos had been part of an original 167,000 acre land grant from Governor Pedro Fages to Manuel Nieto in 1784. This rancho was then divided and passed down to Manuel Nieto's offspring and was eventually sold to Don John Temple. The droughts of 1862-1864 led to the starvation and deaths of thousands of Don John Temple's cattle and forced him to consider selling the rancho. The Flint and Bixby brothers acquired Rancho Los Cerritos consisting of 27,000 acres from Don John Temple in 1866 for \$20,000 in gold (about 75 cents an acre). After establishing the Flint, Bixby & Company, the brothers purchased the Coast Line Stage Company in 1869 and operated a stage route between San Diego and San Jose to transport passengers, mail, and Wells Fargo express. The stagecoach business eventually came to an end due to an expansion of the railroads.

In addition to their cattle business, The Flint, Bixby & Company also established a sugar beet factory in 1870 (the first in California and the United States) but struggled to compete with sugar cane producers. Llewlyn Bixby eventually died in 1896 having made a huge impact on the area that would become Long Beach.

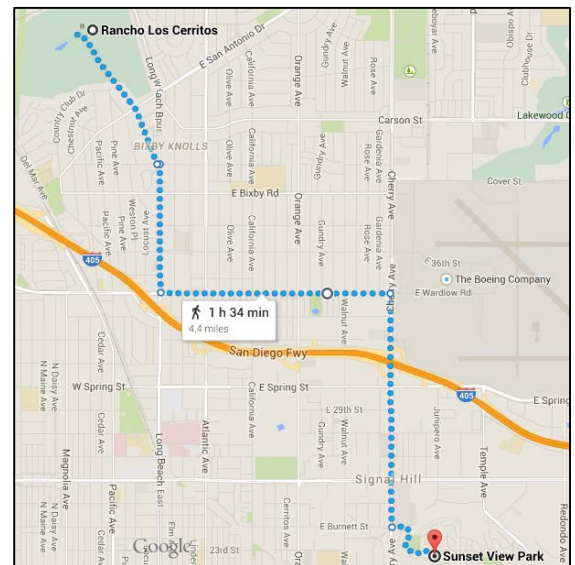
## 2. First Long Beach Bench Mark (Sunset View Park):

- Leave Rancho Los Cerritos on Virginia Rd
- Turn right on Long Beach Blvd
- Turn left on Wardlow Rd
- Turn right on Cherry Ave
- Turn left on Skyline Dr
- Walk into Sunset park at the corner of Skyline and Promontory/Hill.

The first benchmark of Long Beach is surrounded in legend. It is said that the Tongva Tribe used the hilltop in the 1500's to signal to their counterparts on Santa Catalina Island, 26 miles offshore. Spanish settlers became aware of this fact and called the hill "Loma Sental" (Signal Hill) due its use as a signaling station.

The large rock on this hill served as the official survey marker that marked the spot where the Ranchos Los Cerritos and Los Alamitos came together. Riders from the two ranches would rope the rock around a groove worn in the center with their riata to drag it further into each other's territory to enlarge their own.

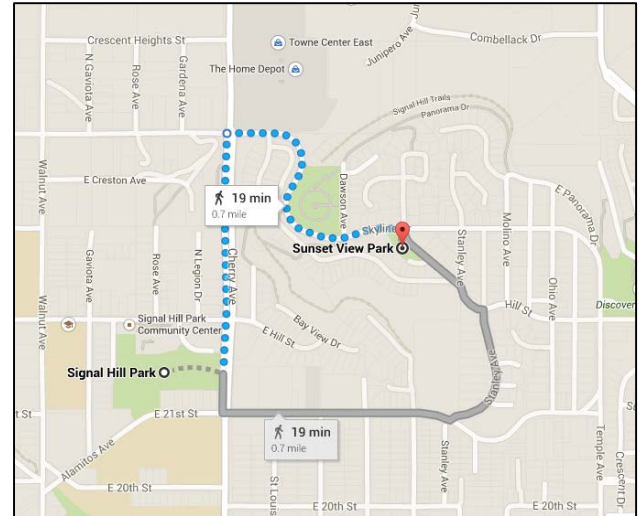
*"Temple and Stearns each augmented and improved their herds of cattle and bands of sheep. Both ranchos raised magnificent saddle horses and the tremendous rivalry between them had to be settled by horse races. The two favorite courses were from one headquarters to the other across the flat country back of Signal Hill or from the top of Signal Hill straight on down to the beach. Everyone stopped work, lined the routes and bet their shirts off." (Bixby-Smith, 1931)*



3. Oil Exploration (Signal Hill Park):

- Return back along Skyline Dr
- Turn left onto Cherry Ave
- Walk into Signal Hill Park at the corner of Hill St

The discovery of oil by the Shell Oil Company changed Long Beach. The population of Long Beach increased from 55,000 in 1920 to 145,000 by 1927. The rate of construction exceeded a million dollars a year each month the year after oil had been discovered. The City of Long Beach received over \$2 million in oil royalties between 1921 and 1941 by leasing access to water bearing land adjacent to the oil fields.

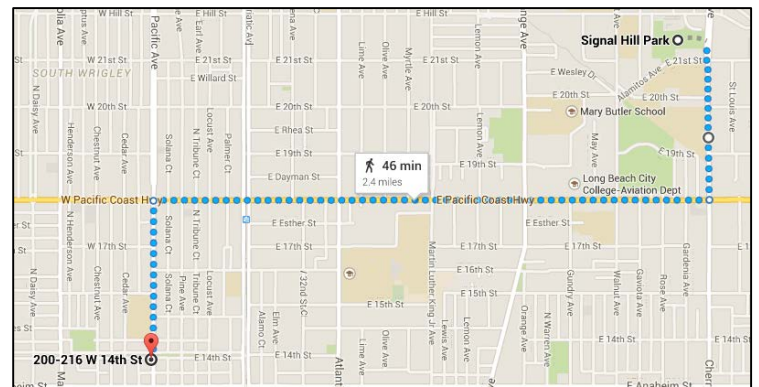


The challenges of oil drilling began to be felt in the 1950s when parts of Long Beach began to sink. Some buildings sank up to 15 feet and had to be surrounded by dikes to keep the water out. A number of high profile lawsuits were brought against the oil companies. Consequently, the oil companies and Long Beach implemented a program to inject seawater into underground oil reservoirs to counterbalance the sinking.

4. Willmore’s Dream:

- Return to Cherry Ave and continue south
- Turn right onto Pacific Coast Highway
- Turn left onto Pacific Ave
- Continue to the intersection with 14th St

The primary activity on the ranchos was raising cattle, sheep, and horses. Trade with the East Coast became important after 1821 when Mexico achieved independence from Spain. Cattle could now be sold for their hides and tallow to support the manufacturing of shoes, clothes, and candles. This trade was supported by the growth of railroads and establishment of the intercontinental railroad in 1870. Area real estate prices and taxes sky rocketed in the 1860s.



William Erwin Willmore, an Englishman, arrived in the area in 1880 and became Long Beach’s first real estate developer after buying 10,000 acres of Rancho Los Cerritos. He oversaw the survey and mapping of the land with the purpose of establishing Willmore City. Two parties of settlers arrived in 1882 and the city became official. Resources quickly ran dry before additional settlers could arrive to stabilize the city and many founders left. Willmore City failed and William Willmore left the area in 1884 for Arizona never to return.

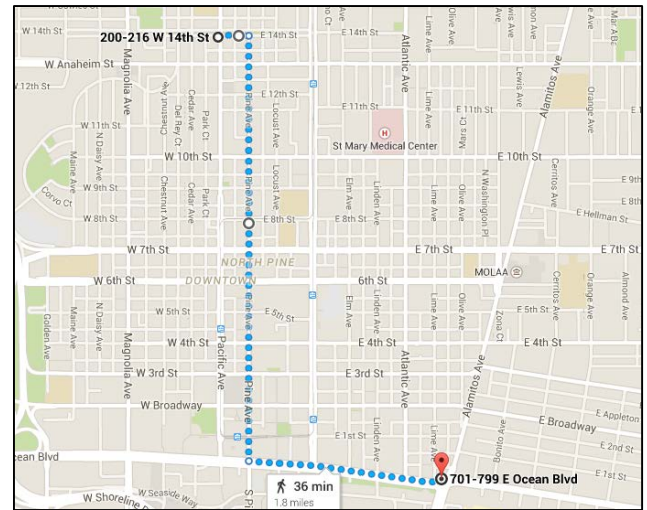


5. Alamitos-Cerritos Divide:

- Return to 14th St and continue east
- Turn right onto Pine Ave
- Turn left onto Ocean Blvd
- Continue to the intersection with Alamitos Ave

A land grant of 300,000 acres was given to Manuel Nieto and were common to the Spanish missions and soldiers that had accompanied soldiers in their journey to protect priests and settlers. Manuel Nietos grant was eventually reduced to 156,000 acres due to conflicting claims with the missions and encompassed the area from the San Gabriel Mission, to the Ocean, from the Santa Ana River to the San Gabriel River.

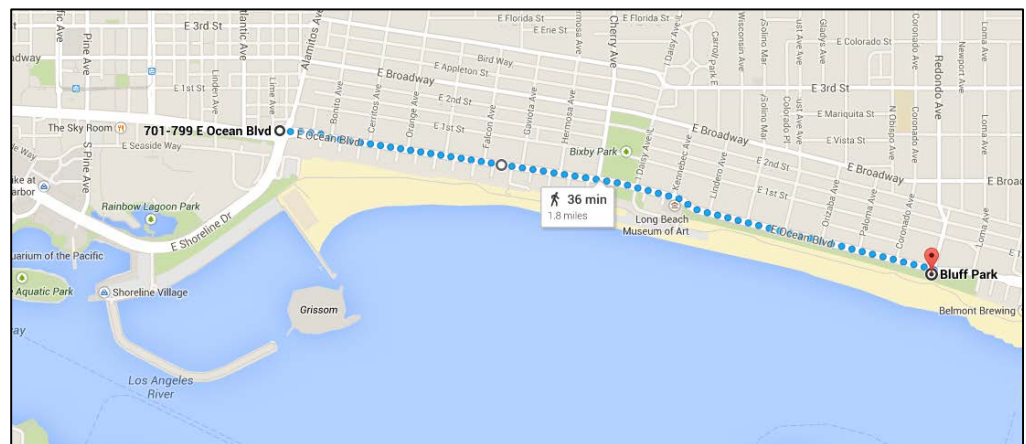
This claim was subdivided into Rancho Los Cerritos and Rancho Los Alamitos by Nieto’s descendants along the line located here. It is interesting to note that the owners of these ranchos, Abel Stearns and John Temple were both from Boston, but were only able to purchase the land as Mexican citizens because they had married Mexican citizens.



6. Bluff Park:

- Continue along Ocean Blvd to the intersection with Redondo Blvd

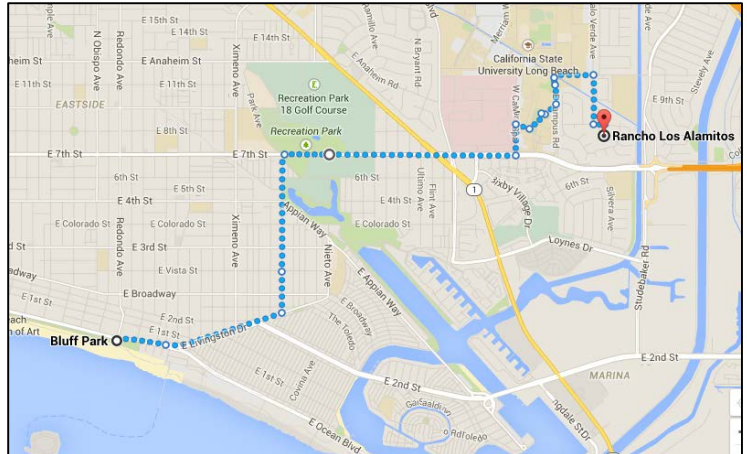
From the very beginning of Los Angeles, San Pedro served as a primary yet desolate port. A hide house existed at this spot in which hides and tallow were collected and exchanged with sailors. Local inhabitants would roll the supplies off the cliff to the sailors below and the sailors would carry their trade items up in return.



Phineas T. Banning, a native of Willington, Delaware landed in California in 1851 and found employment as a clerk with Douglas and Sanford and eventually assumed responsibility for leading the mule trains between San Pedro and village of Los Angeles. Extremely ambitious, he eventually assumed ownership of the stagecoach business. This ambitious entrepreneurial spirit was displayed in the early 1860s when Phineas served as a primary supplier to the Union Army in Southern California as a means to counterbalance the extensive Confederate sympathizers in the area. His efforts brought him wealth and a commission as a General in the California State National Guard Brigade. He later established a railroad to facilitate his business, was elected to the State Senate, and founded the City of Wilmington. He was instrumental in dredging the San Pedro Harbor and building breakwaters to protect the harbor. Phineas’ direct efforts helped accommodate a 700% growth in the population of Long Beach between 1900 and 1910.

7. Rancho Los Alamitos:

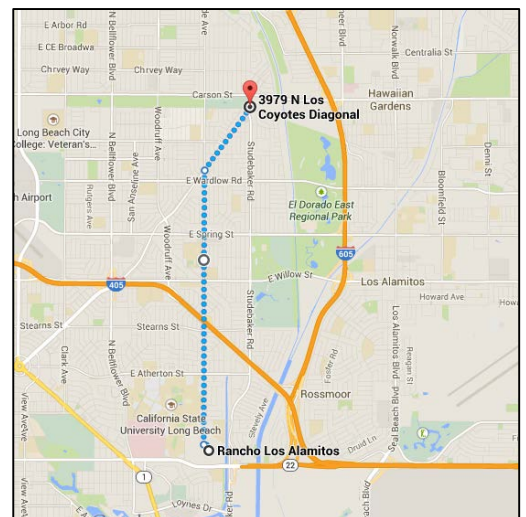
- Continue along Ocean Blvd
- Turn left onto East Livingston Dr
- Turn left onto Park Ave
- Turn right onto East 7th St
- Turn left onto Campus Dr
- Turn right onto E State University Dr
- Turn right onto Palo Verde Dr
- Turn left onto E Bixby Hill Rd



Looking at the trees and greenery here, it is hard to imagine that the area was once dry and arid when the first settlers arrived. When building a home, their first concern was finding a viable water source. Don Abel Stearns purchased the Rancho of 28,000 acres in 1842. The Rancho was built adjacent to a natural spring at the base of a small hill here. The Tongva people had built a village here called Puvunga “The Gathering Place”. The Long Beach Area Council’s Order of the Arrow Lodge is named after this place in their honor. Archeologists continue to find shell fragments in the area attesting to the shell fish that many of the Tongva consumed. The spring ran freely until 1956 when it finally dried up. The eventually dived into three portions and eventually sold for future development. In 1910, Rancho Los Alamitos was divided again with Fred Bixby retaining the original adobe house. He continued to farm cattle, horses, beets, beans, and barley and used the Rancho as headquarters for his business using the Los Alamitos railroad junction to distribute his goods. Fred was very involved in the ranch activities such as branding.

8. Tri-Point Marker (Corner Los Coyotes and Parkcrest, northside of Parkcrest):

- Return back on E Bixby Hill Rd
- Turn right onto Palo Verde
- Turn right onto Los Coyotes Diagonal
- Walk to intersection with Parkcrest St



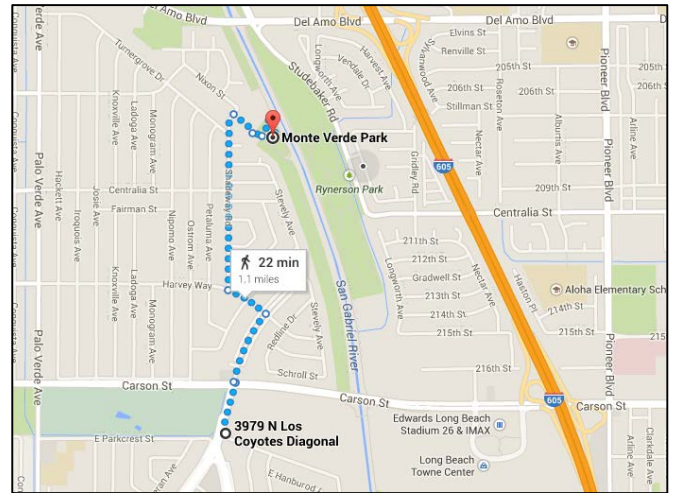
Manuel Nieto’s extensive land holdings were divided into five Ranchos upon his death in 1804- Rancho Santa Gertrudis, Rancho Los Bolsas, Rancho Los Coyotes, Rancho Los Cerritos, and Rancho Los Alamitos. Ranchos Cerritos and Alamitos shared a common boundary marked by the big rock on top of Signal Hill to San Pedro Bay. The Tri-Point Marker identifies the intersection of Ranchos Los Cerritos, Alamitos, and Los Coyotes.

*“Because it was difficult, and a great nuisance to get to town, many titles had not been properly recorded. Landmarks on official surveys, like “a big rock”, “a crooked oak tree”, or “southeast bend of the river” disappeared due to natural events. Property boundaries and proofs of ownership were in constant dispute.” (Hotchkis, 1964)*

9. Monte Verde Park:

- Continue north on Los Coyotes Diagonal
- Turn left onto Harvey Way
- Turn right onto Shadeway Rd
- Turn right into entrance to Monte Verde Park

Sheep were raised on the Ranchos in the same spot where you stand now. “The common herd lived out on the range in bands of about two thousand, under the care of the shepherd and several dogs. These men lived lonely lives, usually seeing no one between the weekly visits of the wagon with supplies from the ranch. Many of the men were Basques. Often there was some mystery about those who took this work – a life with sheep was far away from curious observation, and served very well for a living grave. Every week a man from the ranch made the rounds of the sheep camps, carrying mail, tobacco, food, brown sugar, coffee, flour, bacon, beans, potatoes, and dried apples.” (Bixby-Smith, 1931)

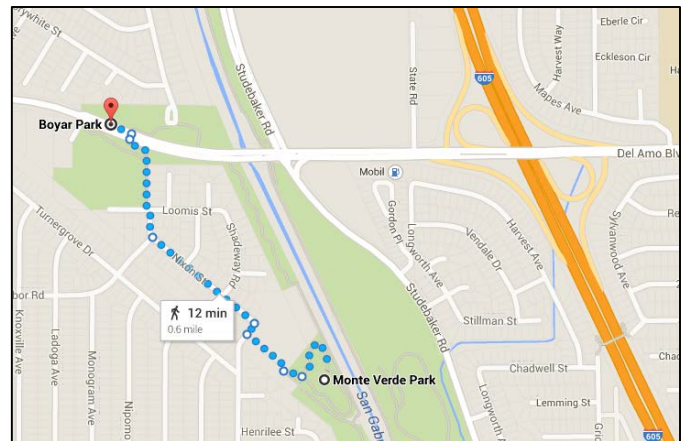


Look for a rancho boundary marker at the southeast corner of the building on a post.

10. Mae Boyer Park:

- Return to Shadeway Rd and turn right
- Turn left onto Nixon St
- Turn right onto Nipomo Ave
- Cut across the park using the paved trail
- Cross Del Amo Blvd using the elevated foot bridge

Two thousand pounds of wool were marketed annually in San Francisco from Rancho Los Cerritos alone. Much of it was shipped via the ports in San Pedro. Estimates put the price of wool at 35 cents a pound in 1860.



“Twice a year, spring and fall, the sheep came to be sheared, dipped, and counted. Shearing began on Monday morning, and on Sunday, the shearers would come in, a gay band of Mexicans on their prancing horses, decked with wonderful, silver trimmed bridles made of rawhide or braided horsehair, and saddles with high horns, sweeping stirrups, and wide expanse of beautiful tooled leather. The men themselves were dressed in black broadcloth, ruffled white shirts, high-heeled boots, and high-crowned wide sombreros which were trimmed with silver braided bands, and held securely in place by a cord under the nose. They would come in, fifty or sixty strong, stake out their caballos, put away their finery, and appear in brown overalls, red bandanas on their heads, and live and work at the ranch for more than a month, so many were the sheep to be sheared.” Look for a rancho boundary marker in the planter in front of the clubhouse.

### Trail Profile / Trail Schedule

Location: Los Fierros

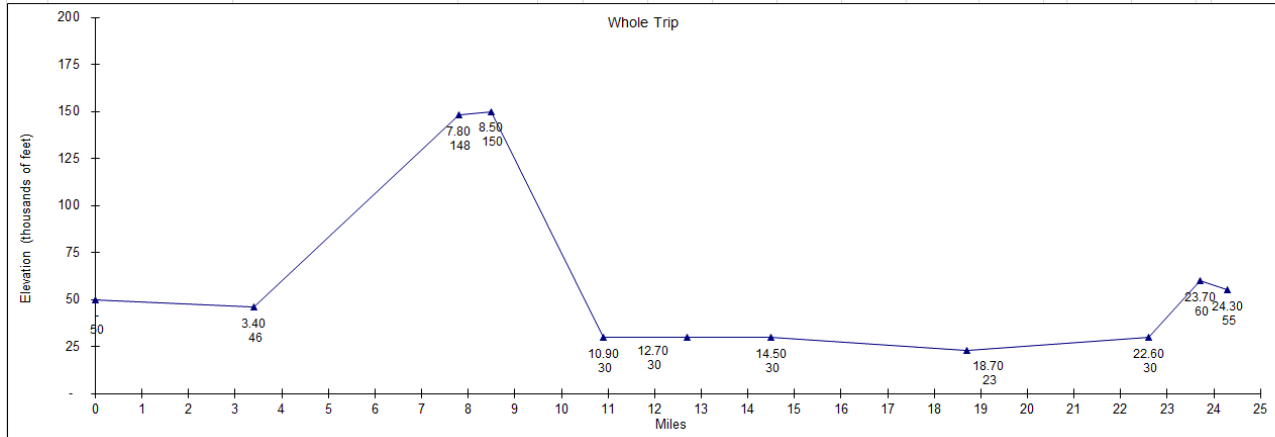
Date:

Attendance:

#### Hike Criteria & Assumptions

mileage with pack	0.00	Per mile pace, with pack	2
mileage with out pack	24.30	Per mile pace, no pack	2.5
total mileage	24.30	Add 1 hour of hiking with pack for elevation gain of	1000
total elevation gain	0,173	Add 1 hour of hiking no pack for elevation gain of	1000

#### Trail Profile



#### Trail Schedule

Leg	Trail Location / Waypoint	With Pack	Elevation		Mileage		Hiking Time			
			Actual At Point	Gain Per Leg	Between Points In Leg	Cum. Trip Total	allowances in minutes for elevation	mileage	total time between legs	accumulative trail time for entire trip
0	33.868295, -118.183214 Houghton Park	No	50							
1	33.839432, -118.195622 Rancho Los Cerritos	No	46	(4)	3.40	3.40	00	82	1 : 22	1 : 00
2	33.798561, -118.163416 Sunset View Park	No	148	102	4.40	7.80	06	106	1 : 52	3 : 22
3	33.796104, -118.169161 Signal Hill Park	No	150	2	0.70	8.50	00	17	0 : 17	3 : 13
4	33.783650, -118.193821 Willmore's Dream (Pacific and 14th)	No	30	(120)	2.40	10.90	00	58	0 : 58	4 : 30
5	33.766388, -118.183356 Ranchos Alamitos-Cerritos Divide	No	30	-	1.80	12.70	00	43	0 : 43	5 : 28
6	33.760786, -118.152839 Bluff Park	No	30	-	1.80	14.50	00	43	0 : 43	5 : 11
7	33.776733, -118.106919 Rancho Los Alamitos	No	23	(7)	4.20	18.70	00	101	1 : 41	7 : 54
8	33.830366, -118.099259 Tri-Point Marker (Los Coyotes and Parkcrest)	No	30	7	3.90	22.60	00	94	1 : 34	9 : 35
9	33.841459, -118.097170 Monte Verde Park	No	60	30	1.10	23.70	02	26	0 : 28	9 : 09
10	33.846481, -118.102080 Mae Boyer Park	No	55	32	0.60	24.30	02	14	0 : 16	9 : 37

#### Topographical maps & sources use to prepare:

USGS Long Beach Quadrangle

#### Peaks Climbed



**Recommended Packing List**

Item	Qty	Notes	Packed?
Class B troop shirt	1	worn	
Socks	3	(1) worn, (2) packed	
Sweatshirt, fleece, jacket	1	Warming layer, packed (consider bringing a second)	
Gloves	1	Pair, packed (season dependent)	
Winter hat	1	Packed (season dependent)	
Pants	1	Worn (season dependent)	
Shorts	1	Worn (season dependent)	
Hat	1	Wide brim preferred	
Shoes	1	Worn, hiking boots	
Daypack	1	Carried	
Water bottle and/or camelback	2	(2) minimum, 3 or more recommended	
Pocket knife and/or multi-tool	1	With Whittling or Tottin Chit	
Sunblock	1	Packed	
Rain gear	1	Gortex shell or poncho	
Sun glasses	1	Recommended	
Flashlight	1	Packed	
Medications, medical form (Part A/B)	1	As appropriate, packed	
First aid kit, personal	1	Packed	
Fire starting materials	1	Packed, lighter, matches	
Camera	1	Recommended	
Map and compass	1	Packed, of route	

**Additional Information:**

<http://www.thebanningmuseum.org/>

[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM888W\\_Anaheim\\_Landing\\_Seal\\_Beach\\_CA](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM888W_Anaheim_Landing_Seal_Beach_CA)

<http://www.thesunshinegrove.net/2013/07/anaheim-landing-our-very-own-water.html>

<http://dominguezrancho.org/>

<http://www.landmarkquest.com/losangeles/ch1167.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_La\\_Mesa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_La_Mesa)

**Bibliography:**

- Bixby-Smith, Sarah. Adobe Days. University of Nebraska Press, 1987 (orig 1931)
- Hotchkis, Katherine Bixby. Rancho Los Alamitos. Balboa, CA. Rancho Los Alamitos Associates, 1995
- League of Women Voters of Long Beach. Long Beach: From Rancho to renewal – A Historical Sketch. Long Beach, CA 1980

**Sponsor:** David W. Bridges of Troop 209, Long Beach Area Council conceived, researched, and developed the Los Fierros award as his Eagle Scout Project. It is a historical sketch of the development of the City of Long Beach beginning with the Tongva Native American Tribe, through the Spanish Land Grants, California Ranchos, Gold Rush, oil discovery, to present day Long Beach. The Los Fierros (branding irons) Award was designed to promote an interest in local history. Many of the location names have changed since this award was first developed in 1972 and sadly many of the rancho boundary markers are missing having been assumed to be stolen by scrappers. The award has since been revised in 1987 and 2015. Troop 209 appreciates the support of the following individuals who made this award possible:

Dr. Frank Hammett  
Mr. Mark Houghton  
Mr. Don Leicht  
Mr. David Mills

Mrs. Roberta Nicholas  
Mr. Don Obert  
Mr. George Salzer  
Mr. Dennis Schrader

Mr. Louis Valencia  
Mrs. Frederica White  
Mr. Steven Wright