

Virtual Visit to Rancho Los Alamitos

April 1, 2020

Grade Level: 3-5



THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

A **historian's** job is to study the past. This helps us understand the present and plan for the future. Some historians focus on how things change over time. What's something in your life that has changed over time? Why do you think it's important to understand how and why things change?

The work of historians is powered by **primary sources**. Primary sources are things from long ago (artifacts, letters, photos, diaries, newspapers, maps, and more) that show us directly what life was like then. Historians also use **secondary sources**. These are things created by someone who did not experience a historical event, like an article or book about an event written later.

PART 1: SECONDARY SOURCE ACTIVITY CHALLENGE

Read the following descriptions from secondary sources written by a Rancho historian. Draw what you think the Ranch House at Rancho Los Alamitos might have looked like at two different moments long ago. You can start with a rectangle like the one below and add details you find in the secondary sources. Use your imagination, too!

LATE 1700s & EARLY 1800s

"Sometime between 1790 and 1833, a small adobe (building) was built on the top of the hill at Rancho Los Alamitos. When the Nieto family owned it, this small adobe was probably used to shelter their vaqueros (cowboys) and horses. Most likely, the simple adobe had four rooms and a partial flat tar roof. There may have also been two long, covered porches, down the east and west side of the adobe, or possibly, just on one side."



MID & LATE 1800s

"Sometime between 1842 and 1866, the simple hilltop adobe was repaired and improved. Abel Stearns' workers added a pointed, gabled roof to the flat tar top, and he covered the adobe with wood siding. Stearns lost Rancho Los Alamitos in 1866, and John & Susan Bixby moved in in 1878. They planted trees and shrubs, and added a white picket fence around the adobe."

Go to the next page to continue your virtual field trip!

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PART 2: PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY CHALLENGE

Nice job thinking about all the details in those secondary sources and creating drawings of them! This means you “interpreted” the secondary sources—you thought carefully about what they mean. For historians, their “interpretation” or understanding of the past gets better when they also look at primary sources like the photos below. **What’s similar and different about these three photos? What’s similar and different about these photos and your drawings?** Now you’re thinking like a historian! Great job!

**Front of the
Ranch House
around 1881**



**Front of the
Ranch House
around 1887**



**Front of the
Ranch House
today**