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FESS PARKER'S LOS OLIVOS

A charming town made famous by the man who played Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone

By Bob Page

If you have an occasional affinity for going back in time without really going there, jump in your car and make a beeline for Los Olivos.

To describe Los Olivos as unique might not do it justice, but considering the 27 wine tasting rooms, several superb restaurants and a world class hotel, all tucked within the confines of not much more than four city blocks and its 1,000 permanent residents, you've pretty much got the picture.

Add three highly acclaimed and accredited private schools and you've found a treasury in the Santa Inez Valley.

Los Olivos has been on the map since 1887 when land auctions were held in anticipation of the arrival of the Pacific Coast Railway. The town was first named after a nearby ranch made up of 5,000 olive trees.

The Overland Coast Line Stage Coach was established 16 years

earlier in nearby Ballard, but it was the coming of the railroad that created Los Olivos.

Modern day Los Olivos owes its new-found fame to the late, great actor Fess Parker, whose Fess Parker Wine Country Inn and Spa is the heartbeat of the community.

One imagines that its peaceful streets, laid back cowboy culture and the genteel rolling hills surrounding the town appealed to Parker after a successful and rewarding Hollywood career. Los Olivos and Hollywood are as close to absolute opposites as you'll find in Southern California.

Close your eyes and images of the Wild West may come to mind but then you have to square that with today's Los Olivos. You won't find Wyatt Earp patrolling the streets or the Lone Ranger with his great white horse Silver riding up to the Wine Country Inn and Spa, but nothing might be unimaginable in Los

Olivos.

The schools are first class.

The Dunn School and the Midland School both offer college preparatory classes, for boarding and day students, and the Family School, an independent co-educational preschool through fifth grade.

Many of the buildings in town, some of which are representative of Midwestern prairie-style architecture, still stand.

Parker remains very much a revered figure in the town and those who live in Los Olivos speak of him in reverent terms. Rare would be those whom he didn't know by their first names.

Fess, as he wanted everyone to call him, passed away two years ago but not before he turned his inn and spa into a luxurious retreat and the perfect spot from which to shake off the burdens of city life for a few days.

Those of us who grew up watching television in the late 1950s and 1960s remember Fess for his portrayal of frontiersmen Davey Cockett and Daniel Boone. To the millions of young viewers in those days some 50 years ago, including this one, he was an American icon. If you were looking for a hero, Fess would have come as close as anyone.

His Daniel Boone network television series, which he launched in 1964, was one of the highest rated shows of its time. Fess not only starred in it but he co-produced it and directed its most popular episodes.



Bin 2860.



The late Fess Parker with a photo of him as DavyCrockett.

His first foray into the hospitality business was a hotel facing the waterfront in Santa Barbara

But it's the Wine Country Inn and Spa in Los Olivos for which one suspects he was most proud. The facility was known as the Grand Hotel until he purchased it in 1998. The hotel was completely redone and the Champagne Spa and Boutique was added as well as Bin 2860, a wine retail shop whose shelves offer you a plethora of wines from around the world.

The hotel consists of 19 marvelously decorated rooms and suites in two buildings across the street from each other.

In keeping with the hotel's Victorian architecture, the redesign of the hotel which was completed earlier this year was placed in the hands of Shannon Scott who brought in sleeker lines in the furniture while preserving the more traditional moldings and cabinetry.

Scott, whose design firm is based in Los Olivos, said the "important key to our design selections and decisions centered around the focus on using environmentally sustainable materials wherever we possibly could."

Scott's color scheme was to create a clean fresh (lime green, chocolate brown, cream and gold) look, "fairly neutral" she said, "with a splash of the lime green."

It's safe to say she succeeded. The rooms are stunning.



Swimming pool at night.



Guest room.

TRAVEL

The main building includes the award-winning Petros Los Olivos restaurant. The restaurant's cuisine may seem unusual for its setting in a town which looks like a throwback to yesteryear, but its Mediterranean-inspired Hellenic California fare will keep you talking about it for days.

It was Fess' desire to honor the roots of the Santa Inez Valley's still youthful wine region. However, the Inn's wine shop's universal selections of wines range from the great French wine regions of Burgundy and Bordeaux to Rioja of Spain, Germany, Austria, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, South Africa and, of course, the more fabled wines of Napa and Sonoma as well as Monterey and Santa Barbara.

His love for the valley began in 1987 when he bought 714 acres

immediately north of Los Olivos and promptly set about planning and establishing Fess Parker's Winery and Vineyard.

The winery produces award-winning Pinot Noir, Syrah, Chardonnay, Viognier, Riesling and number of blends.

A number of eclectic art galleries dot in and out between the multiplicity of the wine-tasting rooms. One gallery not to be missed is the Wilding Museum of Art, which takes its name from the wilderness that has inspired American artists. The museum offers four exhibitions a year specializing in the art of America's wilderness.

Fess' Wine Country Inn and Spa is the perfect weekend escape and no more than a five-hour drive from San Diego, even with the challenging LA traffic.

Do yourself a favor. Go!



Fess Parker's Pinot Noir.



The Wine Shop Bin 2860

Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa

Address:
2860 Grand Avenue,
Los Olivos, CA 93441

Contact:
(800) 446.2455 or
email: reservations@fessparker.com

Pet Policy:
Pets are not allowed

Rates:
Range from \$345 to \$495;
suites from \$555 to \$705.



Champagne Spa and Boutique.



Swimming pool during the day.