Regarding buildings & miscellaneous history at 10205 Suey Creek Road:

The word ‘suey’ , pronounced ‘sway’ in Suey Creek is a Native American name meaning “the place of the grasses”. Several portions of the original dirt road crossed through the creek and ran through the ranch – and would sometimes flood during the rainy season. Suey Creek Road was re-built in the 1970’s and the unused original portions abandoned, but several areas of the original road can still be seen. There were no bridges then, and just a few ranches here. Wagons & later cars, just drove through the creek.

1) As you enter, the old building on the right is called a “line shack”. I’ve researched some of the San Luis Obispo County Historical sources but never found a picture of this structure. We believe it was built in the late 1800’s or early 1900’s, as some of the siding widths are 24 inches or more. It was used to house cowboys overnight when cattle were moved from one ranch to another. This area was the confluence of the Rancho Nipomo which was right across the street (whose owner was the brother of Richard Henry Dana, author of “Two Years Before The Mast”) , the Huasna Rancho to the East, and the Suey Rancho to the South. There would be one or more of these shacks built along a line of travel between ranches (hence the word ‘line shack’). There was water at the creek for the cows & horses, and a spring fed the line shack (still does) from a spring upstream. The hose bib on the front porch post still works: the water that comes from the hose bib is directly from the spring. If you look inside, you’ll see 2 windows placed very high up on the wall. Not sure it’s the case here, but many of the old structures placed windows up high in the walls to protect the occupants from attacks of one kind or another. We thought this would make a wonderful guest cottage.

2) Main house: the site where the main house stands was where the horse barn was located when the Baker family bought the property from the Black family (a pioneer family from the Santa Maria area) around 1938. The Bakers had the adobe designed and built for them about 1940-41. There was no electricity here then- the Bakers had a generator which was located in the garage, where the family room is at the present time. The building is a concrete post and beam structure with adobe infill. If you look closely at the exterior, you’ll see a large concrete beam that encircles the top perimeter of the building, and is supported by concrete posts at corners and other locations. The sloped hallway is the result of finding a huge boulder during construction, too large to be moved. They left it and built around and over it. The blocks are real adobe, made from local clay, just as in Mission and Rancho times. Until about 2003, the spring also fed the main house; it was our water supply until the well was hooked up to the house. Ray and Marie Baker lived their entire lives in this home, and passed it on to their son, Robert Baker, who, now 96, still lives locally in a care facility. Bob told us a lot about his parents’ home. The ranch contained about 960 acres at one time. Both Ray and Marie Baker were accomplished horse-persons, and used horses to manage their cattle here on the ranch. Ray quit his job as the Vice-President of a bank to fulfill his dream of owning acreage and running cattle. He dry-farmed hay and other grasses on some of the upper meadows for his cattle. Bob Baker told us that his mother, Marie, collected the stones for the front patio on horseback, from local streams and quarries. She would carry the stones in special leather bags on horseback, making hundreds of trips over time to collect all the stones. Marie also loved to play the piano & entertain the neighbors. The white built-in ‘Myrna Loy’s’ leading into the dining room were inspired by a Life Magazine interview with film star Myrna Loy at her home. Marie loved Myrna’s built-ins so much she had them copied for this home. Marie’s favorite color was red, and we still find remnants of red paint in the house.

3) Horse barn, at the East side of the causeway. As mentioned above, the current horse barn was moved by Ray Baker & his son Bob to its present site across the causeway. The original barn was reconstructed with all original materials (Mr. Baker salvaged anything he could), and is on the left-side of the current barn structure. Mr. Baker later built the tack room on the right-hand side. You can see the difference in siding and construction techniques. Mr. Baker also built the causeway using work horses and a drag to pull fill dirt down the hill to cover over and fill the culvert pipe. He never had a tractor here, but was rumored to have had an old Model T Ford with a Ruxtel axle, which geared it lower for pulling loads.

Out beyond the barn towards our “bone pile” we found a few remnants of an out- house, (a two-seater), the seat portion we kept as a conversation piece. Behind the barn is a Dutch door that accesses a room that was used for keeping bridles, saddles and related equipment for tending their horses. The center section of this barn was used to store hay. We were told that Marie Baker liked her buildings looking rustic, and that Ray liked them painted. Marie got her way with the South side of the barn as the boards are unfinished, and Ray won out on the balance of the building, painting it white. We have honored their tradition and kept it as we found it.

4) Cow barn, North of the house, next to the small metal building. Mr. Baker built this barn from salvaged beams that he acquired when he worked for Pacific Gas and Electric. It’s essentially a wood post and beam structure with rough-sawn siding. He kept his cows and calves here, and later put in the concrete floor. It had electricity at one time, but it wasn’t working when we purchased the ranch.

5) Forge Building: small metal building across from cow barn: Ray Baker built this building in 1955 to contain his forge equipment, and it was in an advanced state of decay when we bought the property in 2002. It too, was built with posts & beams. We rebuilt the foundation and exterior walls, rebuilt the porch and overhang, added electrical, insulation and drywall to make it a tool-storage/workshop area. Ray used the forge to make the metal hardware on both the large and small gates seen around the ranch property. You can see some of his work in the latch on the front sliding door on the left-hand side of the cow barn. We still have the forge blower and some of the tools used in the original building.

6) Sheds: The lean-to sheds were used for storing firewood, as wood-burning stoves and fireplaces were used to heat the entire house. We converted the middle one to a winery/cooler building and for storing

wine barrels for aging wine. The building section with the gable roof was one of two chicken coops that were on the property, the other one was falling down when we purchased, and had a history of being

ravaged by bears who ate both the chickens and the eggs. I remodeled it for my wife’s garden shed, keeping as much of the original coop as could be salvaged.

You may see the numbers “96” carved into wood or concrete around the property: this was Ray’s cattle brand, and stood for 960, that being the number of acres he ultimately purchased for running his cattle ranch. Ray bought the ranch in several parcels, over a number of years. His son, Robert Baker, told us that his father first worked as the vice president of a bank in Santa Maria, but did not like being indoors. He then worked for PG&E for a number of years until he built up his cattle herd. Both he and Marie loved nature, and being outside was what made both of them happy. Marie continued to teach school in Santa Maria for many years after they moved into the adobe.

This area was also a favorite of the Chumash Indians, who fished along the creeks and collected acorns for their food. Many neihgbors report having found mortars and pestals and other Native American artifacts along Suey Creek, where they camped and stayed, fishing and collecting grasses .