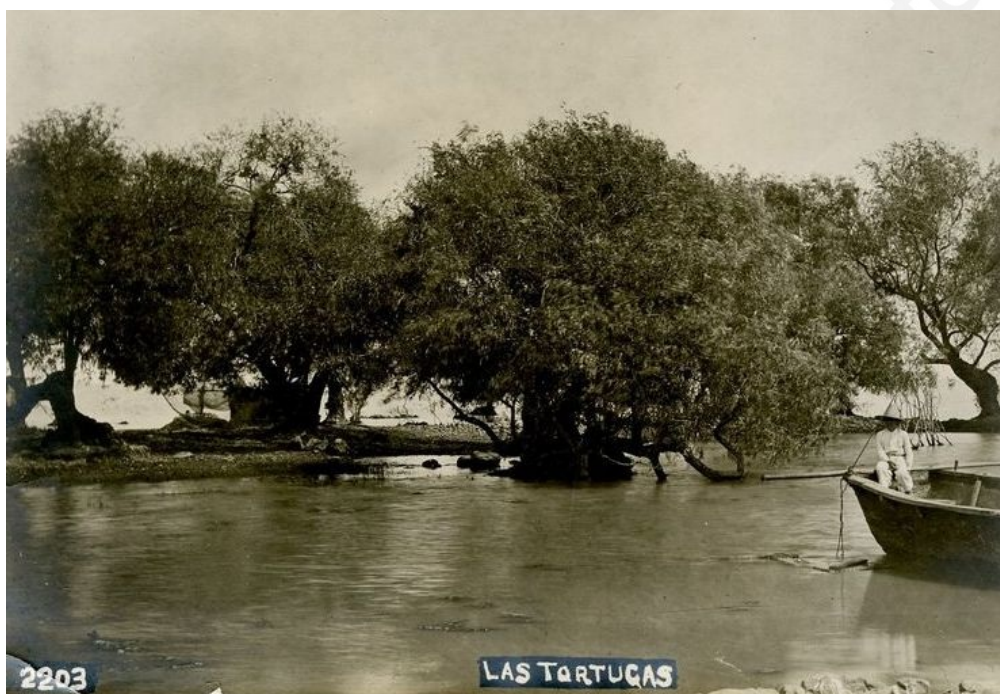


Photographer Winfield Scott, Las Tortugas and Lakeview Gardens

Winfield Scott moves to Ocotlán
Las Tortugas
Lakeview Gardens

Photographer Winfield Scott moved to Mexico in 1895.¹ Employment with the Mexican Central Railroad was a perfect fit for his photography and enabled him to visit many parts of Mexico. In less than two years Scott claimed to have amassed the "the largest and most complete collection of scenes of Mexico and Mexican life,"² a collection which included photographs taken in Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Puebla, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Colima, Veracruz, Morelos, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, Mexico City, the State of Mexico, and Oaxaca.

Scott's home base for most of this time was the "rancho de Pomona" near La Estación de La Trinidad, a railroad station on the Mexican Central Railway, between the cities of Silao and León in the state of Guanajuato.³ This was convenient for the extensive traveling Scott was undertaking, though for part of 1898, Scott lived in Zitácuaro, Michoacán, to manage the "Zitacuaro Land and Colonization Company." He also organized and advertised sight-seeing excursions, including trips on Lake Chapala to visit "Prison Island" (Mezcala Island, sometimes called Isla del Presidio).⁴



Las Tortugas on the shore of Lake Chapala. ca 1905. Photo (slightly cropped) by Winfield Scott.

¹ For a basic biography of Scott, see <https://lakechapalaartists.com/?p=3040>

² Advertisement in Modern Mexico, Jan 1897.

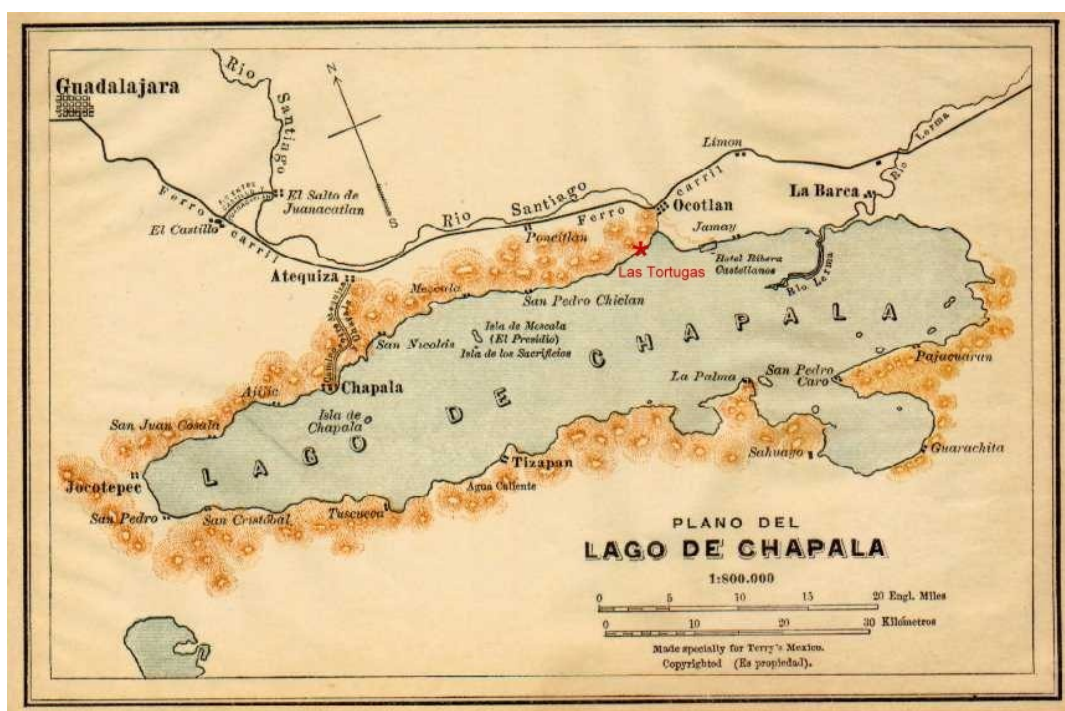
³ Photograph titled "View of the Farm of Winfield Scott at Trinidad, Guanajuato," in Modern Mexico, July 1901, reproduced in Malagon, 198.

⁴ Modern Mexico, Jan 1898; Nov 1898.

In October 1898, Scott, then 35 years old, married 18-year-old Edna Browning Cody in the city of León, Guanajuato. Edna, from Lakeview, Michigan, lived with her parents in the mining camp of Mineral de Cardones in Guanajuato.

Winfield Scott moves to Ocotlán

By 1900, the couple had moved to Ocotlán, Jalisco, the closest railroad station to Lake Chapala. Scott's travels throughout Mexico had enabled him to amass an extensive collection of photographs, and he advertised the sale of "true portraits of the life and landscape of this country of unparalleled picturesqueness." A 1903 list of *Scott's Views of Mexico* (published in Ocotlán) has 2486 numbered titles for Scott's photographs of Mexico, together with a testimonial attesting to their quality from Reau Campbell, of the American Tourist Association, whose landmark guidebook *Campbell's New Revised Complete Guide and Descriptive Book of Mexico* (1899) was illustrated with Scott's photographs.



Location of Las Tortugas and Hotel Ribera Castellanos. Basemap is from 1909 edition of Terry's Mexican Handbook.

Though the precise timing is unclear, Scott soon purchased a tract of land on the shore of Lake Chapala to build a home, start a ranch (Las Tortugas), and with the intention of starting a resort community (Lakeview Gardens).

Early in 1904, the *Jalisco Times* reported that, "W. Scott, the photographer, has moved to his ranchito at Las Tortugas; his nephew, Will Youmans, and wife accompanied him."⁵

⁵ *Jalisco Times*: 9 Jan 1904. The Las Tortugas ranch overlooked the lake. By coincidence (or not?) Ramón Fortuna, the protagonist in [La Canoa Perdida](#)—Ramón Rubín's powerful novel about Lake Chapala—is from "Las Tortugas," a ranch between Chapala and Ocotlán. Fortuna is an impoverished fisherman who supplements a meager income by hunting birds and dreams of buying his own canoe.

Later that year, the same newspaper attributed ownership of Lakeview Gardens to Scott, in a short piece explaining how:

"Dr. William A. Germain, a resident of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has purchased a tract of land on Lake Chapala near the Lakeview Gardens, and will build a winter home there. The Lakeview Gardens are owned by Winfield Scott, the photographer. Dr. Germain will start work on his house next week and expects to have it ready for occupancy within the next three months."⁶

Scott's marriage to Edna ended in July 1904, when Edna obtained a divorce in California. According to Scott's descendents, Edna had tired of life in provincial Mexico, and of her husband's lengthy absences for work, and therefore decided to return to the US.⁷ Edna Cody Scott died in San Francisco in 1957.

Following the divorce, Scott began a relationship with Ramona Rodríguez. The couple had a daughter, Margaret (Margarita), born in 1906. When this relationship ended (sometime before 1920), Margarita was cared for by her father. American poet Witter Bynner, who knew them in the early 1920s, thought that Margaret's mother had died when Margaret was young. But, on Margarita's application for US citizenship in 1968, she stated that her mother had died only eight years earlier, in September 1960.



Winfield Scott with Ramona and Margarita. ca. 1909. Photographer unknown. Source: Malagón, Foto 186.

⁶ Jalisco Times: 4 Nov 1904.

⁷ Beatriz Eugenia Malagón G. 2012. Winfield Scott: retrato de un fotógrafo norteamericano en el porfiriato. p 197 and Anexo 17.

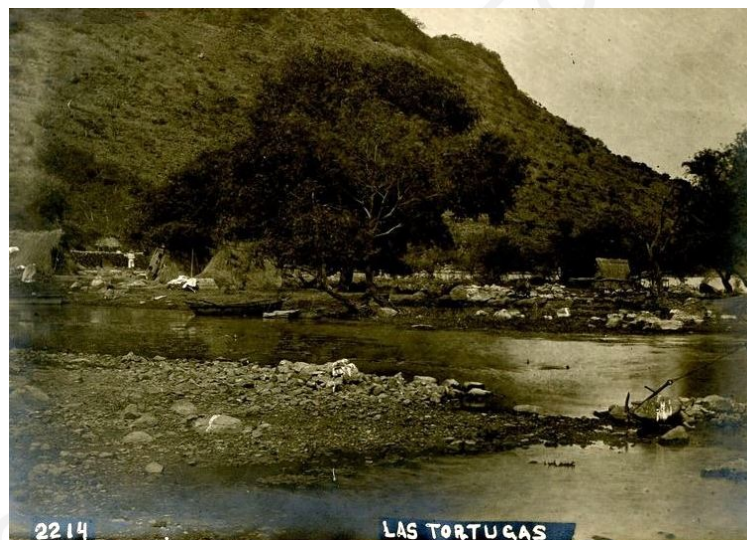
Las Tortugas

The town of Ocotlán, on the eastern bank of the River Santiago (the only river draining Lake Chapala), lies about two kilometers downstream from where the river exit the lake. The railway line through Ocotlán was completed in 1888.



Las Tortugas. Photo by Winfield Scott. ca. 1905.

Scott's home, Las Tortugas, was a short distance southwest of Ocotlán, and on the lakeshore in the adjacent municipality of Poncitlán. A similar distance southeast of Ocotlán, also on the lake (but on the other side of the River Santiago) was the area known as Ribera Castellanos. Ribera Castellanos had been acquired in 1902 by a visionary American entrepreneur Dwight Furness, who planned a modern "summer colony" there, alongside a lakefront hotel.⁸ Construction of the first homes at Ribera Castellanos began in 1904, and the hotel opened in 1906.⁹



Las Tortugas. ca 1905. Photo by Winfield Scott.

⁸ The Mexican Herald: 18 February 1902, 3; 21 May 1902, 2.

⁹ El Paso Times: 9 Aug 1904, 5; The Mexican Herald: 26 Aug 1906, 14.

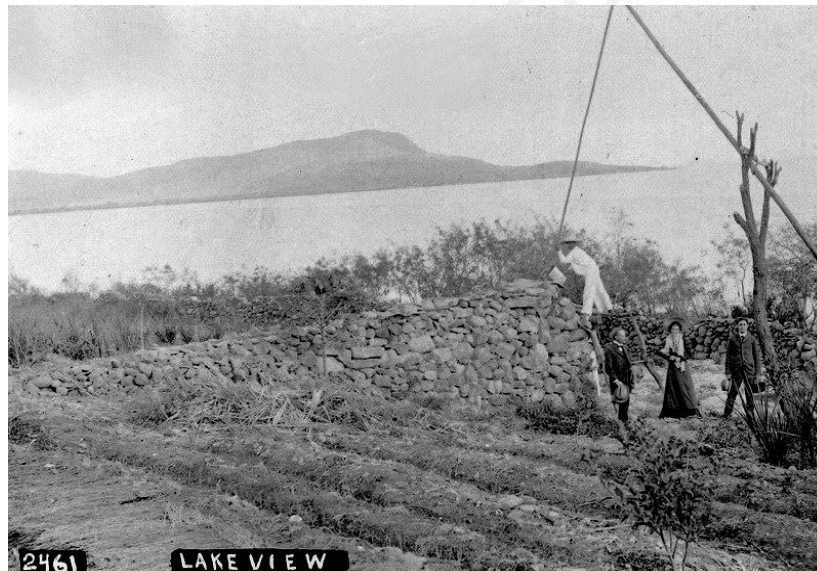
Scott ran his ranch as a productive farm, planting vegetables and fruit trees; some of his produce may well have supplied the rapidly growing needs of Hotel Ribera Castellanos. (More than a decade later, Scott agreed to manage the Hotel Ribera for a few years before continuing his career as a hotelier at the Hotel Arzapalo in Chapala.)

Lakeview Gardens



Lakeview Gardens. ca 1905. Photo by Winfield Scott. Fitzgerald's Guide To Mexico (1907), p 64.

While living at Las Tortugas, Scott continued to harbor a vision to develop and promote Lakeview Gardens. He thought Lakeview Gardens could become an "Inland Sea Boating Club," with a hotel, bathing facilities, bowling alley and other amusement features, as well as rowboats, sailboats and houseboats on the lake,¹⁰ to compete with Hotel Ribera Castellanos.



Lakeview Gardens. ca 1905. Photo by Winfield Scott.

¹⁰ Jalisco Times: 27 Sep 1907.

To that end he repeatedly tried to interest investors from Mexico City in financing further construction, seeking \$30,000 in silver, and offering to sell a 50% stake in his proposed hotel, where the climate was the "best on earth."¹¹ While Scott tried to get his hotel off the ground, guests stayed for \$2.50 or \$3.00 a day at his Lakeview House, which had rooms, cottages and a restaurant.¹²

Scott's desire to develop Lakeview Gardens may well have prompted him to sell all of his photographic plates and negatives to fellow American photographer Charles Betts Waite, based in Mexico City. When the deal was concluded in April 1908, Waite immediately advertised that he now had "the largest assortment of views of any one country in the world."¹³



Lakeview Gardens. ca 1905. Photo by Winfield Scott.

Lakeview Gardens was a sound idea. It enjoyed a more scenic location than Hotel Ribera Castellanos, with good lake access and a similar climate. The major advantage of Ribera Castellanos was that it was on the route from Ocotlán to Jamay and La Barca (now designated Jalisco Highway 11), whereas Lakeview Gardens was reached via a lakeside track which has been little improved to this day.

Sadly, Lakeview Gardens, like so many other grandiose twentieth century development plans for Lake Chapala, was ultimately a failure.

¹¹ The Mexican Herald: 27 Sep 1907, 8; 5 Jun 1909.

¹² Jalisco Times: 31 Oct 1908; 28 Nov 1908.

¹³ The Jalisco Times: 10 April 1908; 24 April 1908.