

Phase II Historic Resources Report 2275 Aliso Canyon Road, Santa Paula Billiwhack Stock Farm and Dairy

11 March 2020

DRAFT

Prepared for:

Tracy and Rick Cortez
3048 North Coolidge Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Prepared by:

 **SAN BUENAVENTURA
RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**
HISTORIC · RESOURCES · CONSULTING
■ 1328 WOODLAND DRIVE ■ SANTA PAULA CA 93060 ■

Executive Summary

This report was prepared for the purpose of assisting the County of Ventura in their compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it relates to historic resources, in connection with the adaptive reuse of two buildings at the Billiwhack Stock Farm and Dairy located at 2275 Aliso Canyon Road in an unincorporated area of Ventura County near the city of Santa Paula (APN 064-0-130-145). [Figure 1]

This property was determined to be a contributor to two NRHP eligible historic districts on the basis of a survey completed by the County of Ventura in 1996. This Phase II report assesses whether the proposed project conforms to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. It also includes an expanded historical narrative for the property.

This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for Tracy and Rick Cortez, and is based on a field investigation and research conducted between November 2019 and March 2020.

San Buenaventura Research Associates provides qualified Historian and Architectural Historian services, in accordance with *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications* (36 CFR 61). The conclusions contained herein represent the professional opinions of San Buenaventura Research Associates, and are based on the factual data available at the time of its preparation, the application of the appropriate local, state and federal regulations, and best professional practices.

Summary of Findings

Overall, this project conforms to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* in terms of the treatment of existing historic fabric and the design of the proposed new construction.

Report Contents

1. Impact Thresholds and Mitigation	1
2. Historic Resources	1
Expanded History of Billiwhack Dairy and Stock Farm	
Historically Associated Individuals	
Period of Significance and Integrity	
3. Contributing Buildings and Structures	11
4. Project Description	14
5. Summary Discussion of Project Conformance to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards	16
Summary Conclusion	

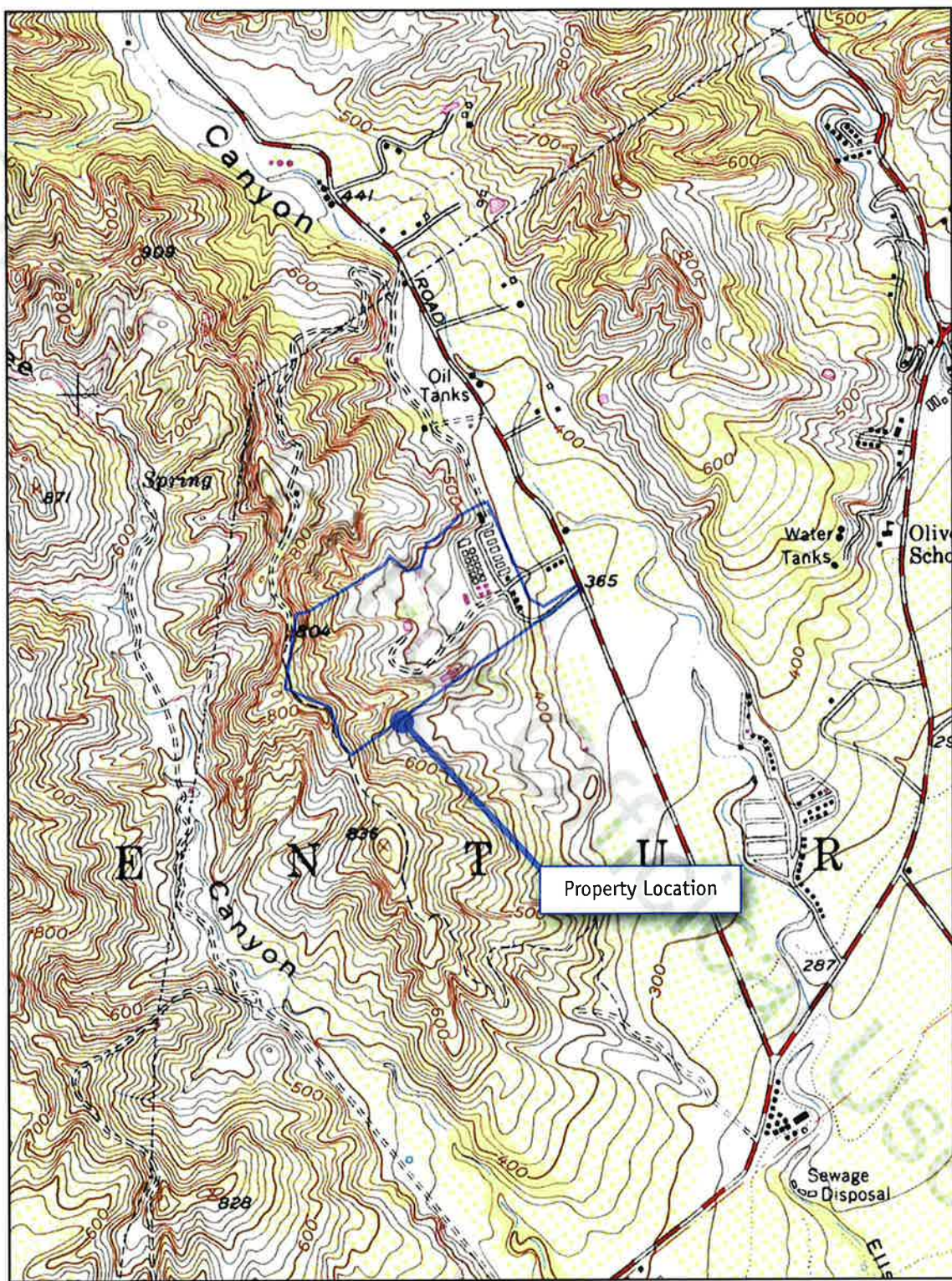


Figure 1. Property Location [USGS 7.5' Quadrangle, Saticoy CA 1951 rev 1967]

1. Impact Thresholds and Mitigation

According to the Public Resources Code, “a project that may cause a substantial change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.” The Public Resources Code broadly defines a threshold for determining if the impacts of a project on an historic property will be significant and adverse. By definition, a substantial adverse change means, “demolition, destruction, relocation, or alterations,” such that the significance of an historical resource would be impaired. For purposes of NRHP eligibility, reductions in a property’s integrity (the ability of the property to convey its significance) should be regarded as potentially adverse impacts. (PRC §21084.1, §5020.1(6))

Further, according to the CEQA Guidelines, “an historical resource is materially impaired when a project... [d]emolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources [or] that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.”

The lead agency is responsible for the identification of “potentially feasible measures to mitigate significant adverse changes in the significance of an historical resource.” The specified methodology for determining if impacts are mitigated to less than significant levels are the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* and the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (1995), publications of the National Park Service. (CCR §15064.5(b)(3))

2. Historic Resources

The entire unincorporated western Santa Clara Valley between Santa Paula on the east and Saticoy on the west was determined eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion A and Criterion C as a rural historic landscape district. This evaluation was made in connection with a comprehensive survey of this portion of the valley conducted in 1996. In this survey, buildings constructed during the period of significance as well as agricultural land with or without buildings was found to contribute to the significance, integrity and eligibility of the district. The significance statement for this survey states,

The western Santa Clara Valley is significant under NRHP Criterion A (events) for its reflection of the growth and development of agriculture during its period of significance (1860-1946). The district illustrates the historical development of agricultural products and farming techniques, and documents the progression of this land use from the dry farming of grains and row crops, to irrigated tree crops and citrus ranching. The district also illustrates the historic use of the land within the adjacent canyons for stock raising and tree crops.

The district is also significant under Criterion C (design) as one of the best preserved examples of a mature Southern California citriculture landscape. The district possesses a significant concentration of buildings, structures, objects and sites related to this land use. The district is important for its representation of the human designed landscape of agriculture in the specific historical form, pattern and arrangement of buildings, structures and objects. Together, these physical elements contribute to the interpretation of citriculture in California. A wide variety of architectural styles and building types from

the period of significance also serve to illustrate the development of agriculture as both family farming and agribusiness enterprises.¹

The project site is also located within a sub-district of this survey documenting the Billiwhack Stock Farm and Dairy. This area was determined to be separately eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A and Criterion C. The district boundaries were described in the survey as “the 70 acres owned by the Held Family and another parcel that includes the original dairy manager’s residence.” The subject of this report is the former 72.72 acre parcel (APN 064-0-130-145), which includes all of the extant dairy buildings. The latter parcel with the residence is under separate ownership and is not a part of this report or project. Note: since the time of this survey a substantial amount of new historical material on the establishment, construction and operation of the Billiwhack Dairy and Stock Farm has become available. This information is found in the ***Expanded History of Billiwhack Dairy and Stock Farm*** following the significance statement in the survey, which follows:

The Billiwhack Stock Farm & Dairy buildings are significant because of the role they played in the history of dairy farming and stock breeding in the Santa Clara Valley. This was the largest dairy farm in the county when it was built by August Rubel between 1925 and 1934. A number of smaller family dairies were established in the area between 1920 and 1950, including the Orr Family’s Orange Grove Dairy and the Golden State Dairy operated by the Lindsey Family, and later by the Pinkerton family. However, no other dairy compared in size to the Billiwhack Stock Farm & Dairy and its “state of the art” buildings. A native of Zurich, Switzerland, August Rubel arrived in Ventura County in 1922, after graduation from Harvard at the age of twenty-three. He and his wife Mary Colgate McIsaac purchased approximately 240 acres of land in Aliso Canyon with the intent of establishing a dairy. Rubel hired Oxnard contractor Adolph Schroeder to construct the dairy buildings. The designer is unknown.

From the start, Rubel envisioned a “state of the art” dairy, including the most advanced buildings and techniques available, and had also purchased the finest holstein herd he could afford. The herd included “Prince Aggie,” a prize bull from Thomas Bard’s Berylwood Ranch near Port Hueneme. Prince Aggie was an undefeated California champion and “the highest yearly record butter bull in the world for his seven nearest dams.”

In 1926 Prince Aggie died unexpectedly at the height of his career. The loss proved disastrous for Rubel, who sold the dairy in 1928 to Ben and Sam Fratkin, operators of the Valley Dairy Company of Los Angeles and El Monte, one of the largest dairy producing companies in the Los Angeles area. The unfinished buildings were not completed until 1934. Billiwhack operated as a dairy from 1934 until about 1943. In 1969 it was purchased by its present owners and is now a citrus ranch. The former dairy buildings are used for storage and various other agricultural related uses.²

The buildings contributing to this eligibility determination are documented as they existed at the time of the Santa Clara Valley Survey in 1995-96 on the survey forms. Changes to these conditions found today will be described in this report.

¹ San Buenaventura Research Associates. *Ventura County Cultural Heritage Survey Phase V: Western Santa Clara Valley*. Ventura County General Services Agency, 1996.

² San Buenaventura Research Associates, 1996.

Expanded History of Billiwhack Dairy and Stock Farm

It is unknown how August Rubel became attracted to the idea of establishing a dairy and stock farm, a business about which he could have had no significant prior expertise, and in part of the country where he had only recently arrived. He purchased ranch land in Aliso Canyon near Santa Paula from the Harvey Marriott family in March 1923, shortly after arriving in the county. This ranch featured an older house in which the family presumably lived. Rubel raised apricots on the property during the first two years in the canyon. A few months later, on June 13, 1923, he purchased an additional nearby parcel of some 308 acres from the Hobson estate. The land was hilly and covered with chaparral. Rubel took the next nearly two years planning a “state of the art” dairy on this land, to include cow stables, a creamery, milker’s dormitory, warehouse, hammer-mill, silos, dormitory, and feed sheds. He built a hilltop log cabin retreat at the top of the property with views in all directions of the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Clara Valley.³

Newspaper accounts of Rubel’s ambitious plans first appeared April 1925, when the *Santa Paula Chronicle* announced in its headlines, “Acquisition of Prince Aaggie of Berylwood for \$110,000 to Prove Nucleus of Famous Herd of Holsteins.” Rubel considered Prince Aaggie to be the finest bull in the United States, an opinion shared by livestock experts. The purchase of this prize animal from Richard Bard’s Berylwood Stock Farm near Hueneme was key to Rubel’s plan to create an instant showcase at his new dairy farm, which he named Billiwhack, a term Rubel described as military shorthand for “my stamping ground” or “the place where I hang my hat.”⁴

The extravagant price paid for a single bull made the headlines, but Berylwood was also the source of the majority of the herd Rubel intended to keep at Billiwhack. The following month Rubel entered into an agreement with Bard to purchase 174 head of purebred Holsteins for \$65,000, along with 2,500 head of poultry, and implements and equipment, for an additional \$175,000. The agreement between Bard and Rubel included a provision for the cattle to be boarded at Berylwood for six months to allow for construction of the new dairy in Aliso Canyon to be completed, beyond which Rubel would be charged \$100 a week until the lease expired the following June. He also took over Bard’s Berylwood dairy, renaming it Billiwhack, even as it continued operating at Hueneme.⁵ [Figure 2]

Coming along with the deal was J. W. Snodgrass, manager of Berylwood for Bard, who had also raised Prince Aaggie. Snodgrass set about expanding the herd, traveling north to Washington and Oregon and east in search of the finest purebred stock he could find to supplement the cattle already purchased from Berylwood. By July the herd had increased to 250 head of Holsteins with plans to increase it to 500 head by fall. That summer, the *Los Angeles Times* reported construction at Billiwhack was underway:

Buildings of concrete and steel are being built at a big expense. They will have accommodations for 500 head and the interior will be inlaid with white glazed tile. Special buildings are being constructed for the forty employees. Each man will have his own room with hot and cold water. In addition to this there will be an emergency hospital completely equipped and there will also be a special hospital for the cattle.

³ *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 4-25-1925.

Brock, A.A. ‘Jim’, “In Fond Remembrance.” Typed manuscript dated 1986; Grant Deed 3-27-1923.

⁴ *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 8-17-1925; *Oxnard Courier*, 4-21-1925.

⁵ *Oxnard Courier*, 4-21-1925.

Rubel Papers on Billiwhack, Rancho Camulos Museum Archives.

When completed, the Billiwhack Ranch will be the showplace of the county and will be visited by stockmen from all quarters.⁶

The virtually self-contained plan brought together the most modern scientific technological and commercial aspects of agriculture then available; it was farming on an industrial scale, a recurring theme in agriculture during the ascendancy of agribusiness during the 1920s. By September work on twenty steel-framed buildings



Figure 2. Billiwhack Stock Farm milk delivery truck and crew, probably 1925 at Berylwood [Ranch Camulos Archives].

was underway by Union Iron Works of Los Angeles and the massive amount of grading on the site required to accommodate the construction was underway, at a cost then estimated at \$300,000. The architect-engineer hired to complete the plans for the new facility was experienced dairy designer Albert J. Mazurette of Modesto. Overseeing the construction was general contractor Adolph Schroeder of Oxnard.⁷

In January 1926 an addition was made to the Creamery building to accommodate a laboratory and construction proceeded into the spring. By April Snodgrass confidently reported that the property would be

⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 7-16-1925.

⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 9-27-1925.

ready to occupy in forty days, allowing the Billiwhack herd still boarded at Berylwood to soon be relocated from Hueneme to its new home in Aliso Canyon. By this time Rubel was already deep into the extended portion of his lease with Bard. The extra expense of \$100 a week was relatively trivial, but Bard was beginning to express concerns about whether the herd would be removed from his property before the lease expired, and about overcrowding at Berylwood as the herd was expanding. In response Rubel announced a reduction sale to dispose of some of the cattle he had only recently acquired. Other recently purchased Holsteins were housed temporarily at the Ventura County Fairgrounds during the winter of 1925-26. Rubel had gone too far too fast. In April he was forced to announce the suspension of construction on all work on Billiwhack, except on a water well, for what he termed a "breathing spell." It was clearly a euphemism for running behind schedule and dangerously short of cash.⁸

For a project already fraught with difficulties, the greatest obstacle was yet to come. In June, Prince Aagie, the prize of the Billiwhack herd, died of an intestinal condition. The fabulously valuable animal was uninsured and thus a total loss. Undaunted, Rubel replaced him by immediately purchasing his offspring, Prince Johanna Segis, from its reluctant owner, a Kansas City cattleman.⁹

Construction at Billiwhack resumed at the end of June 1926, apparently in a last-ditch effort to complete the dairy and cattle pens before Bard insisted once and for all on the removal of the herd from his property. It would not be sufficient. In August the liquidation of the herd was announced for the following month. Some of the cattle would be sold to local dairies while others were shipped off to an auction house in Wisconsin. In the meantime, Rubel spent much of the second half of 1926 in the East, presumably attempting to free up more cash from his father's estate, which was still in the process of settlement. In his absence Rubel left Los Angeles CPA Walter K. Mitchell in charge of dealing with his growing list of dunning creditors, which included general contractor Adolph Schroeder, architect Albert Mazurette, as well as lenders, and a great many tradespeople and suppliers. Rubel shelved the incomplete Billiwhack project, in his mind only temporarily, and retreated to his new home at Rancho Camulos.¹⁰

Efforts to locate a buyer for the property began somewhat in earnest in 1927. Robert Bates, who had been uninvolved with the original purchase, took the lead in seeking out ways to extricate his friend from the financial morass, at first apparently without consulting him. Bates considered that for "as long as Mr. Rubel owns this property, there will always be the danger of his spending more money on it." He was particularly alarmed by Rubel having stated to an Aliso Canyon neighbor his intention to continue the project to completion when he had the wherewithal. In Bates' opinion, "this would be the most disastrous undertaking which he could possibly assume."¹¹

In exploring the options available for disposing of the property, Bates fielded at least two possibilities. The first was as a winter home for the Barnes Circus, an idea August and Mary Rubel regarded a "little short of ignominious" end for their grand plans at Billiwhack. It was rejected out of hand. The other was a donation of the property to the Abraham Lincoln School for Orphaned Boys in Los Angeles. This concept did not advance

⁸ *Los Angeles Times*: 3-15-1926, 4-3-1926, 4-18-1926.

⁹ *Oxnard Courier*, 6-15-1926; *Los Angeles Times*, 6-15-1926; *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 6-15-1926.

¹⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, 9-15-1926.

¹¹ Bates, Robert W. Letters to Frank W. Stafford of Los Angeles, dated 5-23-1927, 5-26-1927. Rubel Papers on Billiwhack, Rancho Camulos Museum Archives.

either, perhaps because Rubel was hoping to get back somewhere around half of his investment in the property, which was estimated to be over \$750,000. A number of other somewhat speculative and unrealistic sale and trade proposals were received, including relocating the Ventura School for Girls to Aliso Canyon, and another that proposed swapping the ranch for a yacht.

While Bates was of the firm belief that Billiwhack was a highly unsuitable location for a dairy, and would never be useful for that purpose, just such a buyer was found in August 1928, when the incomplete dairy was purchased by Benjamin and Samuel Fratkin, experienced dairy operators from El Monte. The owners of the Valley Dairy Company were reported to be "one of the largest distributors of dairy products in the Los Angeles district (with) plans to make more additions to the already large buildings and equipment at Billiwhack." The amount of his original investment Rubel recouped from the sale is difficult to assess, as the contract involved only \$30,000 in cash with bulk of the value represented by a swap for a property the Fratkins owned in Los Angeles.¹²

The new owners incorporated in Ventura County in 1930 as Billiwhack Stock Farm Ltd. with \$1.5 million in capital stock. The corporation's officers were two attorneys from Los Angeles, Leo V. Silverstein and H. William Hess, and Kathleen O'Gorman, Silverman's bookkeeper. The absence of either of the Fratkin brothers on the board suggests the capital required to complete the work at Billiwhack came from outside investors. In early 1931 the Billiwhack operation was declared by the Fratkins to be nearly complete. In addition to finishing buildings started by Rubel, they constructed the originally planned two and three story, forty-four room employee dormitory and swimming pool. The Creamery building was also nearly complete, along with a new water pumping plant. The manager of Billiwhack during this period, when the first milk was finally produced at the dairy, was William Schwindt. The Fratkin brothers operated Billiwhack together until 1940, when Samuel Fratkin left the partnership to open Valentine Dairy on N. Ventura Avenue in Ventura, which he operated until 1956. He and his wife lived at the beach until his death in 1973.¹³ [Figure 3]

Benjamin Fratkin died in April 1942. For a few months his wife ran the dairy, but at the end of the year W.B. Brown, manager of Billiwhack at the time, announced that she was no longer interested in running an operation that had become complicated by wartime labor shortages and high feed prices. The herd was sold to the McGrath estate and milk production at Billiwhack and local delivery taken over by the Golden State



Figure 3. Operational dairy during Fratkin period. Left to right: Overall view from south; east side of cow barns; dormitory building. [Billiwhack home movie, probably c. 1935]

¹² *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 8-24-1928.

¹³ *Oxnard Daily Courier*, 12-8-1930; *Los Angeles Times*, 1-26-1931; *Ventura County Star*, 9-1973.

Phase II Historic Resources Report DRAFT
2275 Aliso Canyon Road, Santa Paula (Billiwhack Stock Farm and Dairy)

Company. This proved to be only a short term arrangement. In February 1943 all of the creamery equipment and the trucks of Billiwhack Stock Farm, Ltd. were sold at auction.¹⁴

At the time of the 1943 liquidation the original 308 acres purchased by August Rubel had been subdivided into several parcels. George Pezold purchased two of these parcel totaling 192 acres in transactions in 1943-44 in pursuit of his plan to turn Billiwhack into a dude ranch. The owner of the Santa Paula Super Market on Main Street, Pezold, planned to use the two-story dormitory as a hotel and the livestock barns were to be converted to residences for workers. How far he was able to advance this plan is unknown, but his dream was not fulfilled due to health issues, and in 1946 he sold the 192 acres to Howard Ferguson. Subsequent owners mainly farmed the property, which was further subdivided.¹⁵ [Figure 4]

From approximately the mid-1950s through the late 1960s the property was owned by the Houston-Fearless Corporation of Los Angeles, manufacturers of photographic equipment for the film and television industry. By



Figure 4. Aerial view of dairy at full buildout (1945).

¹⁴ *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 12-16-1942; *Los Angeles Times*, 2-14-1943.

¹⁵ Grant Deeds, Book 684, page 90; Book 707, pg. 22; Book 753, pg. 360.

Henderson, Mary Alice Orcutt. *Santa Paula 1930-1960*. Images of America Series. San Francisco: Arcadia Publications, 2009.

the late 1950s and into the 1960s the company had branched out into the development of surveillance technology used in the U-2 and SR-71 spy planes, and apparently other aerospace programs as well. The company's activities on the property are presently unknown, but probably included experimentation with advanced camera equipment. During this time period the property acquired a place in local folklore when stories of the former dairy being haunted circulated among the area youth, who were known to snoop around the place in search of the "Billihack Monster." The legend may have been the product of the strangely decrepit, semi-abandoned state of the old dairy combined with the mysterious nature of the activities that took place on the property during the Houston-Fearless Corp. ownership.¹⁶

In 1969 the Held Family Trust purchased the property, which by that time had been reduced to 72 acres and contained the remaining dairy buildings. They apparently converted some buildings into residences, and used the buildings for storage and other uses. One such use was a lease in 1972 to former astronaut M. Scott Carpenter, who operated his beneficial insect breeding company Integrated Biological Control Corp. for a time out of one of the former cowsheds. The feed pens, cow sheds, the dormitory, warehouse and swimming pool

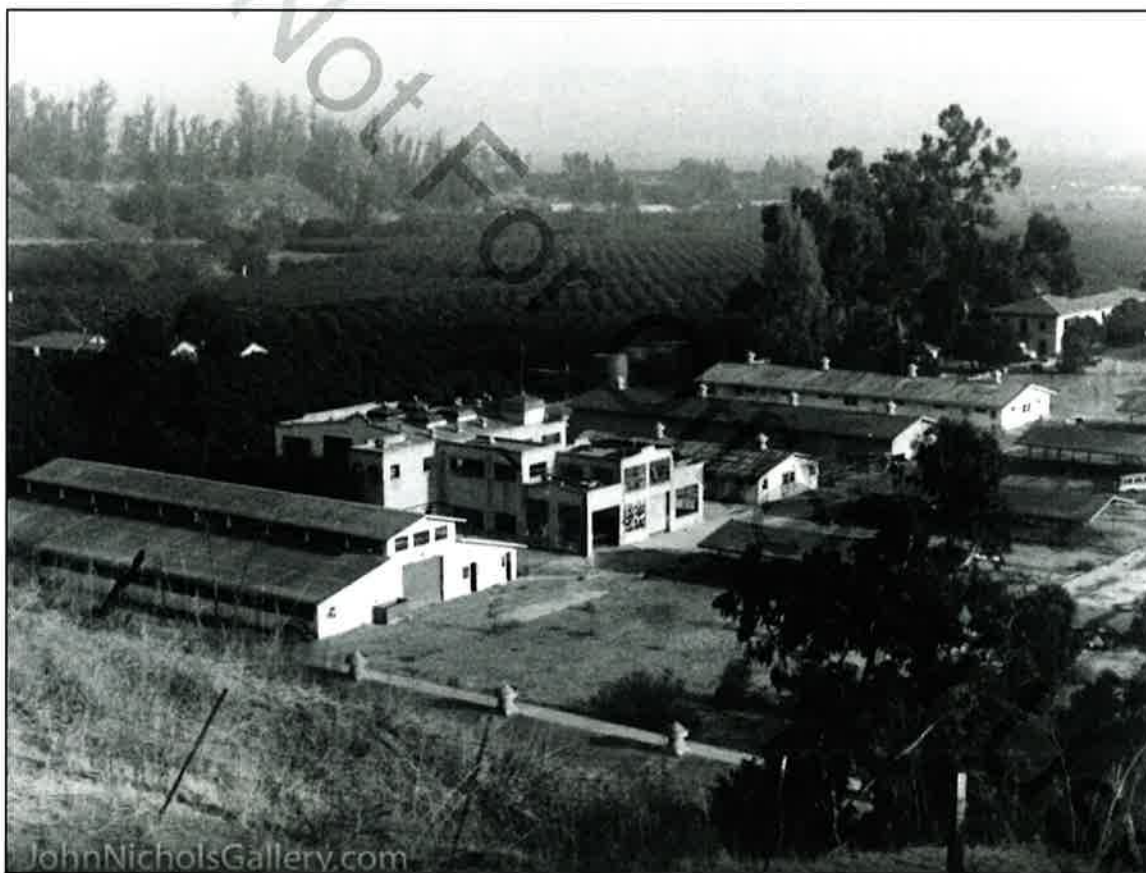


Figure 5. Abandoned dairy buildings viewed from the northwest, probably c. 1970. [John Nichols Gallery]

¹⁶ hf76.com/about_us.asp
Los Angeles Times, 11-4-1964.

were demolished during this period and the land where they were located planted in citrus. The Held Family Trust sold the property to the present owners in 2018.¹⁷ [Figure 5]

Historically Associated Individuals

August Alexander Rubel (1899-1943). Born into a wealthy Swiss-German banking family in Zurich on July 6, 1899, August Rubel's family moved to New York in 1903 where his father Alexander continued the private investment banking business he had established in Zurich. August's mother, Florence Taber Toel, was the daughter of William Toel, a financing intermediary in the international shipping business. Alexander Rubel died unexpectedly at 45 years of age in 1913. The family's assets, valued at more than \$2 million, were left to his wife Florence and her three children. As a minor August's inheritance would be held in trust until he reached the age of 23.¹⁸

At the age of twelve, August Rubel attended St George's School, a private boy's school in Middletown, Rhode Island, one of the top prep schools at the time. He graduated in 1917 at the age of eighteen and joined the Princeton R.O.T.C. Summer Military Camp and then entered World War I as an American Field Service volunteer ambulance driver for the French army from 1917 to 1918, receiving the Verdun Medal and the Citation Croix de Guerre. His mother Florence died in 1917 at the age of 41.

After the war he attended Harvard University graduating in February 1922. He met his future wife Mary MacIsaac while in school and the couple married on December 5, 1922 in New York City. August had taken a job with Standard Oil starting literally at the bottom of the ladder, cleaning out the insides of oil tanks. Mary was unhappy living in New York. When a friend told them about California, the couple decided to head west, arriving in San Francisco aboard the steamer Ecuador in January of 1923.¹⁹

August and Mary purchased an elegant Wills Sainte Claire touring car to replace one that was damaged in shipment, and headed south towards Los Angeles. How they came to stop in Ventura County and drive no farther was pure serendipity. Rubel had two army friends in Ventura County. One was Robert Bates, who also attended Harvard and served as an ambulance driver during the war. Bates sold real estate and would act as the agent for the purchase of Rancho Camulos when Rubel purchased it in May 1924. The other was John Fitzpatrick, whose family owned a ranch in Aliso Canyon near Santa Paula, with a mailing address of Saticoy.

Motoring southbound through the county and noticing a road sign for Saticoy, Rubel recalled sending Fitzpatrick a Christmas card at an address in that county community. He stopped and asked after him. The reunion with his old friend led directly to Rubel's introduction to Aliso Canyon and the purchase of his first land there in 1923. From that first purchase grew his plan to build Billiwhack, a stock farm and dairy to produce milk for the local market. August was just 23 years of age at the time, and Mary was merely 20, but

¹⁷ San Buenaventura Research Associates. *Ventura County Cultural Heritage Survey Phase V: Western Santa Clara Valley*. Ventura County General Services Agency, 1996.

Pasadena Star-News, 6-12-1972.

¹⁸ United States Census.

Sheridan, Sol N. *History of Ventura County, California. Vols. I and II*. Chicago: Clarke Publishing Company, 1926.
New York Times, 9-21-1913.

¹⁹ "Class of 1923, Harvard College," in *The Harvard Alumni Bulletin*. Vol. XXV, no. 1. September 28, 1922. p. 860.

the receipt of half of his inheritance the prior year enabled him to purchase his California properties, including both Camulos and Billiwhack.²⁰

Mary MacIsaac Rubel (1904-1968). Born March 30, 1904, in Boston, Mary MacIsaac was the daughter of James Allen MacIsaac and Elena Maria Dulzaides. James worked as a streetcar conductor in Boston in the early 1900s after settling with his Cuban born wife, who he met while serving in the Spanish American War. Mary lost both her sister and mother in 1910, and the following year when her father was unable to care for the children alone, Mary along with her brother and sister were sent to live with her aunt and uncle, Alice and Herbert Colgate. The Colgates raised all three children. When Mary and August met, Mary had left her adopted home and was living at a boardinghouse in Boston.²¹

Efren Lopez Aldana, Painter. The artist behind the highly intricate and colorful ceiling and wall paintings found in the Creamery building is not definitely known, but may be reasonably credited as the work of Efren Aldana. Born in Zapotlanejo, Jalisco, Mexico in 1895, Aldana arrived in the U.S. in 1927 and was employed by the Fraktins as a sign painter at Valley Dairy in El Monte. After their purchase of Billiwhack in 1928, it appears Aldana became a temporary or occasional resident of the ranch, painting signs and images on building and delivery trucks. It seems he became more permanently located in the area after 1940 and is known to have painted portraits of the Virgin Mary for Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Santa Paula, as well as portrait work and religious iconography. In the only known account of his time in Santa Paula, a newspaper feature in February 1941, he is quoted as having started some "interior decorating" in the Billiwhack residences, but "not much." No mention is made of any other interior work, suggesting that if in fact Aldana was responsible for the painting in the Creamery that it was started after early 1941 and completed before the closure of the dairy in late 1942.²²

Albert J. Mazurette, Architect. The largely self-taught architect and engineer Albert J. Mazurette was born in Detroit in 1888 to French-Canadian parents. His widower father relocated to California in 1900, taking his son first to Stockton and later to Oakland. Studying drawing at Oakland Polytechnic High School would be as close as Mazurette would come to a formal education in design. Employment in planing mills in Santa Clara and Stockton followed his schooling. The latter post initiated his career as a designer, presumably of architectural millwork, under the tutelage of the mill's owner, Stockton contractor and designer R.P. Morrell. He continued this work at an Oakland mill, after which his informal architectural education was boosted by working an additional three years for Oakland bungalow designer Karl H. Nickel, who was also a friend from his youth.²³

Mazurette struck off on his own in 1910, establishing a practice in Oakland specializing in architectural engineering projects, particularly factories, warehouses, and marine structures. In 1914 he added a

²⁰ *Oxnard Daily Courier*, 4-21-1925.

²¹ Rubel, Mary J MacIsaac. Oral interview by Suzanne Lawrence and Cynthia Thompson. Rancho Camulos Museum Oral History Project Funded by the VCCF Heritage Fund, Rancho Camulos Archives, 2002.

²² *Santa Paula Chronicle*, 2-7-1941.

²³ Baker, Joseph Eugene. *Past and Present of Alameda County, California, Volume II*. Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914. p. 370.

Tinkham, George H. *History of Stanislaus County, California With Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present*. Los Angeles: Historical Record Company, 1921, pp. 972-3.

Oakland Tribune, 9-19-1909.

contracting business, the Melbourne Construction Company, to his portfolio. Soon afterwards he acquired a position with the 1915 Pan Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, in which he had an unspecified role in either the design or construction of the fair. Following a brief relocation to San Francisco for this work he returned to Modesto.

With the U.S. entry into World War I in 1917, Mazurette began a series of wartime assignments for the government that would continue to expand his practical background in engineering, including work for an aircraft manufacturer, the construction of ship yards, and being placed in charge of refrigeration for the U.S. Shipping Board in San Francisco. After the war he formed an architectural and engineering partnership in Modesto. However for most of the balance of his career he worked as a sole practitioner with offices located around Northern California, including Oakland, San Francisco, and Eureka, billing himself variously as an architect, civil engineer, and contractor. His work is not well documented but is known to include some residences, particularly early in his career. In 1911, following his employment with Nickel, he designed a bungalow in Oakland for a disabled client that may represent one of the first purpose-built handicapped accessible buildings in the country.²⁴

The bulk of his career was designing and building heavy construction projects. Known projects include an amusement park in Alameda, and in 1922, a milk evaporating plant in Tracy for the General Milk Company of California. As with so many of his other activities, the entrepreneurial designer also served on the company's board of directors. It is conceivable that this latter project was the one that brought him to the attention of August Rubel when he was seeking out a designer for his planned state-of-the-art dairy. Albert Mazurette continued his practice in the East Bay area at least through the 1950s and perhaps until his death in 1978.²⁵

Period of Significance and Integrity

The period of significance for the eligible property was established in the 1996 Santa Clara Valley Survey as 1925 to 1943. This period covers the initial construction of the Billiwhack Stock Farm and Dairy by August Rubel and the period during which it operated as a dairy by the Fratkin brothers. The expanded historical context developed for this report does not suggest adjusting the period of significance to include later periods of development on the property. However the research conducted for this report documents a greater loss of integrity to the property than was assumed in the historical survey. The most significant alteration to the property to have occurred outside of the period of significance was the removal of as many as 12 sheds and barns within the feed lot and the demolition of the dormitory building and pool circa 1970. The dates when the cow barns were altered to accommodate other uses is undocumented, although it might be fairly assumed that this process began during the Pezold ownership of the property (1943-46) and continued afterwards.

3. Contributing Buildings and Structures

Most of the extant buildings on the property were constructed in 1925-26 by August Rubel, although some were not completed until 1931, during the Fratkin ownership. To the extent they are known, historic names will be used for the buildings. Alterations and later uses, where known, will be described. Below is a photograph that corresponds to the descriptions. [Figure 6]

²⁴ http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay_then-now/parsons.html

²⁵ *Building and Engineering News*, 3-4-1922, p. 9.



Figure 6. Oblique Aerial of site, view from south. [Google]

Milker's Dormitory. This single-story building with a rectangular plan features a low-pitched gable roof with deep open eaves. The roof was at one time covered with Spanish tile, which is currently removed and stockpiled nearby. The tile was probably added during the Held Family Trust ownership of the property, when the building was used as a residence. The building originally featured wood sash windows with wide wood casings and was clad in smooth stucco. A shed-roofed carport extended from the west side of the building. All of the walls and the carport were recently demolished due to mud damage from the nearby hillside, exposing a steel frame supporting the concrete roof. [Photo 1]

Calving Barn (Building 6). One of four nearly identical buildings, this single-story building is rectangular in plan with a low-pitched gable roof with moderately deep eaves. The roof and walls are reinforced concrete, the walls are clad with plaster. The eastern and western elevations feature a pair of overhead track barn doors. Dutch doors provided access to the cow stalls on the northern and southern elevations. They are flanked by small raised windows. Four large metal ventilators project above the ridge line. A pipe corral is attached to the southern elevation. [Photo 2]

Milking Barn (Building 5). This one and half-story building is rectangular in plan with a low-pitched shed roofs flanking a gable-roofed monitor. A large opening is centered on the western elevation flanked by overhead track doors with multi-paned steel windows in shed-roofed wings. Multi-pane steel pivot windows are found in the monitor and within the gable end. The interior features tiled walls and patterned concrete floors. [Photos 3-5]

Creamery (Building 4). This one and two-story building features an irregular plan. The roof and walls are reinforced concrete. The walls are clad with plaster. The two main entries centered on the eastern elevation feature a single door topped by a three-light transom flanked by tile set in geometric patterns. The multi-light doors with a arched central horizontal muntin are flanked by raised, fixed side lights. Windows are steel multi-panes with concrete sills, varying in size and configuration from four to sixteen lights, some with pivot openings. The one and two-story western elevation features three, large utility door openings. A small hipped-roof elevator equipment penthouse topped with a wood finial is located at the southwestern corner of the main two-story central mass of the building. Roofs are flat and low-pitched gables with low, stepped parapets with geometric cornice lines. The interior of the building features the extensive use of tile and much stenciling and hand-painted decoration. Known alterations include the southwestern corner of the building, which was substantially damaged by water. The concrete on this wing was removed back to the steel frame recently. The interior of the building once housed many features related to milk processing. Most have been removed, probably in the 1940s, when dairying on the site was ended. [Photos 3, 6-9]

Cow Barn (Building 3). This building is largely identical to Building 6, except for the treatment of the door openings on the eastern and western elevations. These consist of centered overhead track barn doors flanked by entry doors. It is also slightly narrower in plan. It appears to be essentially unaltered. [Photos 3, 10]

Cow Barn (Building 2). This building is largely identical to Building 3, except for the door openings on the western elevation that have been closed and the eastern elevation reconfigured with a centered entry door above a raised porch covered by a shed roof supported by wood posts. The features replaced the centered overhead track barn doors flanked by entry doors found on buildings 1 and 3. The date(s) of these alterations are not known but likely occurred after the dairy uses of the property ceased during the 1940s. [Photo 11]

Cow Barn (Building 1). This building is largely identical to Building 3. It appears to be essentially unaltered. [Photo 12]

Office. This building consists of a main, low-pitched hipped-roofed wing on the west with two intersecting gable-roofed wings forming a U-plan opening to the east. A courtyard between the wings is now covered with a low-pitched gable roof. Windows throughout are steel multi-pane of between eight and twenty lights, fixed and casements. The gable ends of the wings feature triplets of arched windows and curved wing-walls on the interior sides. Two single entry doors are located on the western elevation. This building is thought to have originally served as a ranch office, but has since been converted into a residence. Based on aerial photos, the infilling of the courtyard occurred at some point between 1945 and 1960. [Photo 13]

Warehouse. This building located at the southern edge of the grouping is roughly square in plan and was built into a cut into a slope and consequently is largely underground. Visible above ground is the southern reinforced concrete wall and entry garage door, along with a concrete stairway to the flat concrete roof at the grade level to the north and west. The interior space is supported by concrete mushroom columns. The warehouse was originally connected underground to the dormitory building, which was demolished circa 1970, except for the below grade basement areas. [Photos 14, 15]

Silos. The three identical silo structures are located at the western edge of the grouping, against the toe of a slope. They are circular in plan and perhaps fifty feet in height and covered with conical roofs with cylindrical ventilators centered at the peaks and steel shoots attached to the eastern sides. The building material appears to be hollow clay tile. It is unclear if they were ever used for their intended purpose of storing silage from the nearby hammer mill. They appear to be unaltered. [Photo 16]

Hammer Mill. This large reinforced concrete structure is cut into the hillside to the north of the silos. It features large openings on the eastern elevation, and a stairway on the southern elevation leading to a platform above. It is unknown if the equipment required for it to be used for its intended purpose of milling silage was ever installed. [Photos 17, 18]

4. Project Description

The tables below describe the proposed changes for the two buildings currently proposed for alteration, as well as their purpose in providing for the adaptive reuse of these buildings. The stations listed in the tables are keyed to the architectural plans on the plan sheet noted.

Creamery (Sheet A-9)			
Elevation	Stations	Description	Purpose
—		Raise elevator tower feature by 5 feet.	Tower rotting material, steel skylight
North	C-D	New steel door system in existing window opening.	Provide exterior access to kitchen.
North	E	New steel door system.	Provide direct exterior access to master bedroom on second floor.
North	F-G	Steel door.	Non-original door.
North	G-H	Steel door.	Provide exterior access to living room.
North	J	Replace existing door with steel door. Likely non-original door opening added possibly in 1940s.	Provide exterior access to bathroom.
South	C-D	Replace existing window with double steel door and install steel canopy to match existing canopy between Stations F and G.	Provide exterior access to the dining area.
South	E	Replace roll-up door with steel door.	Provide direct access to elevator. Probable non-original door opening.
South	F-G	New sliding steel door. Original overhead track door retained.	

Creamery (Sheet A-9)			
Elevation	Stations	Description	Purpose
South	G-H	New steel window in new opening.	Provide natural light to library.
South	H-J	New steel window in new opening.	Provide ventilation in new bathroom.
South	J-K	New steel door.	Replace probable non-original door.
West	3-4	New steel door and window system in existing opening.	Provide access to outdoor dining area.
West	3-5	New steel canopy above	To match existing at Stations 4-5. (?)
West	6-7	New steel door and window system to match Stations 3-4.	Doorway apparently enlarged during 1930s to accommodate installation of diesel generator.
West	7-8	New steel windows to match opposite elevation.	Provide light and ventilation to laundry room.
West	9-10	New steel door in existing opening.	Non-original door.
Summary of character defining features: Door and fenestration types, sizes, and locations; plaster-clad concrete walls, parapet details, plan, floor and wall tiles.			

Cow Barn/Building 2 (Sheets A-10/11)			
Elevation	Stations	Description	Purpose
South		Steel doors behind existing Dutch doors, which will be retained in place.	Light and access to proposed work space.
West		Restore elevation to match other barn buildings window and door details. New doors behind overhead track barn doors.	Light and access to proposed work space.
East		Replace existing porch with detail matching western elevation.	Light and access to kitchen space.
Summary of character defining features: Door and fenestration types, sizes, and locations; plaster-clad concrete walls.			

5. Summary Discussion of Project Conformance to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The following is a discussion of the proposed project activities evaluated in terms of their conformance with the *Secretary's of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. It should be understood that the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* are descriptive, not proscriptive in nature. They are intended to provide for a range of design solutions to any given rehabilitation, not to enforce a specific or uniform approach to any given design problem involving historic resources. The Standards are written purposefully to be interpreted both by architects and decision-makers. Accordingly, multiple design solutions can properly be supported by the application of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. The highly interpretative nature of the Standards provides ample grounds for differences of opinion, between professionals who are familiar with their application, and members of the public. Note also that not every standard necessarily applies to every aspect of a project, nor is it necessary to comply with every standard to achieve conformance.

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*

Discussion. A generally accepted principle of historic preservation holds that properties that continue their historic purpose will require fewer alterations to historic fabric than would be required to adapt them to a new use. The historic use of this property as a dairy ceased nearly 80 years ago. Since that time the property has been adapted to a variety of purposes unrelated to dairying or agriculture. The property has also been effectively abandoned for substantial periods of time, which has led to substantial deterioration of the historic fabric. **The future viability of the buildings on the property relies on the introduction of new uses that will retain as much of the remaining historic fabric as can be practically adapted to serve the new use.**

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alterations of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

Discussion. The proposed adaptation of the Creamery and Cow Barn to new uses will retain the form and plan of these buildings as well the spatial relationships that describe their original functions. Alterations to historic features are minimized. Some window openings in the Creamery will be enlarged to provide door openings where required for functional (light and access) purposes. The materials used will match the existing steel window systems. Features to be removed can be reasonably documented to post-date the historic period of the property.

3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

Discussion. The design of features that are proposed to be reconstructed will be based on the available forensic and pictorial evidence of their configurations during the historic period.

4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

Discussion: The period of significance for the property ends in 1943, when it ceased to be used as a dairy. None of the uses of the property after that year were found to be historically significant.

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

Discussion. The proposed project involves minimal alterations to the features of the property that define its historic character and convey its significance as an example of industrial agriculture. Exterior finishes and details will be retained and repaired as needed. In areas where reconstruction is required, the historic materials and finishes will be reproduced.

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

Discussion. The severely water-damaged portion of the Creamery building that was removed will be reconstructed based on measured drawing of the building made prior to the demolition with materials and finishes to match the existing building.

7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

Discussion: This standard is not applicable to this project.

8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

Discussion: This standard is not applicable to this project.

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

Discussion. No additions are proposed. Exterior alterations are limited primarily to the functional requirements of adapting the buildings to new uses. Features to be introduced include the filling of utility and barn doorways with windows and functional entry doors, and the creation of new doorways and windows where required to provide light and access to spaces being adapted to new uses, and canopies over the entries. The new steel frame window and door components will match the historic windows and doors in terms of materials, scale, and the configuration of the lights, but will be subtly different in terms of their profiles (muntin widths and depths). They consequently address the Standard directing alterations and additions to be both compatible and differentiated. The tower above the elevator shaft on the Creamery building is proposed to be increased in height by five (5) feet

while retaining its original plan and roof and finial details. This proposed alteration will not substantially alter the overall historic character of the property.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

Discussion. This standard is not applicable to this project.

Summary Conclusion

Overall, this project conforms to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* in terms of the treatment of existing historic fabric and the design of the proposed new construction.



Photo 1. Milker's Dormitory, viewed from southwest. [9-27-19]



Photo 2. Calving Barn, western and northern elevations. [9-27-19]



Photo 3. Milking Barn, Creamery and Cow Barn (Building 3), viewed from west. [9-27-19].

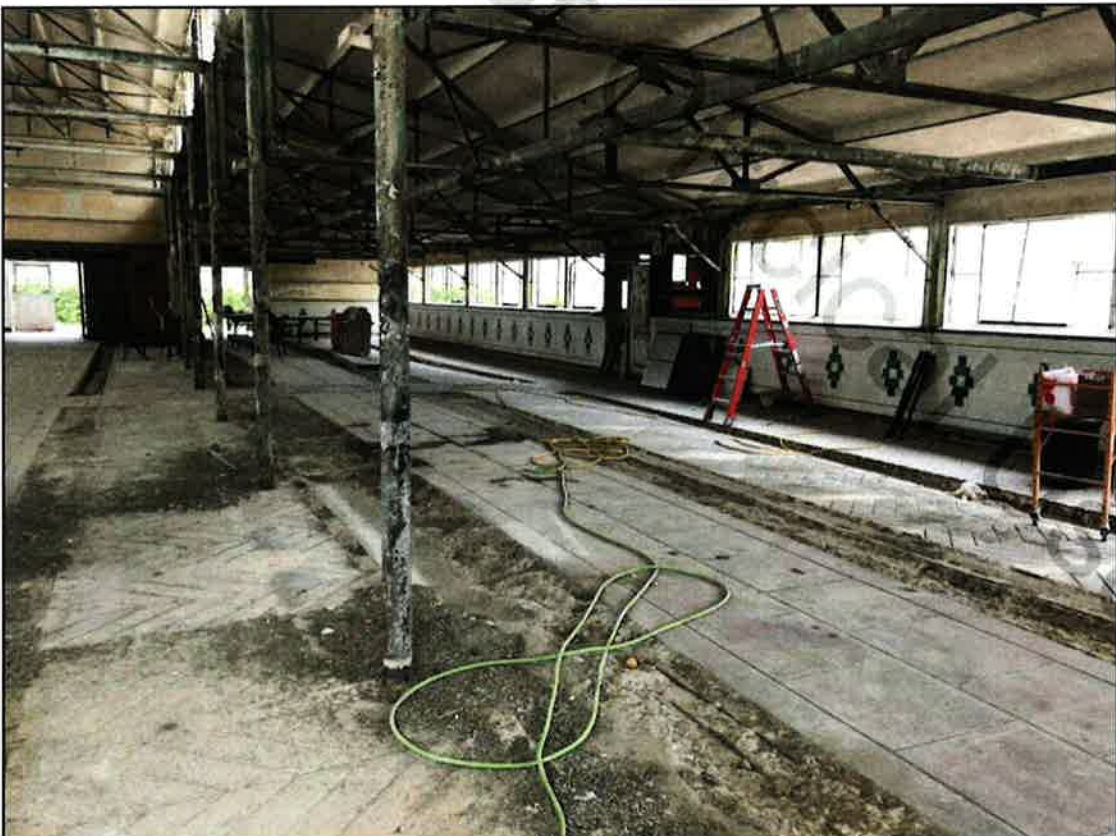


Photo 4. Interior of Milking Barn with wall tile and concrete details. [9-27-19]



Photo 5. Milking Barn interior floor tile and concrete detail. [9-27-19]



Photo 6. Creamery, northern elevation. [9-27-19]



Photo 7. Creamery, interior. Tile and stenciling in milk processing area. [9-27-19]



Photo 8. Creamery interior ceiling stenciling detail. [10-16-19]



Photo 9. Creamery interior ceiling stenciling detail. [10-16-19]



Photo 10. Cow Barn (Building 3), southern and western elevations. [9-27-19]



Photo 11. Cow Barn (Building 2), northern and eastern elevations, altered door and window openings with porch addition. [9-27-19]



Photo 12. Cow Barn, southern and western elevations. [9-27-19]



Photo 13. Office, western and southern elevations. [9-27-19]

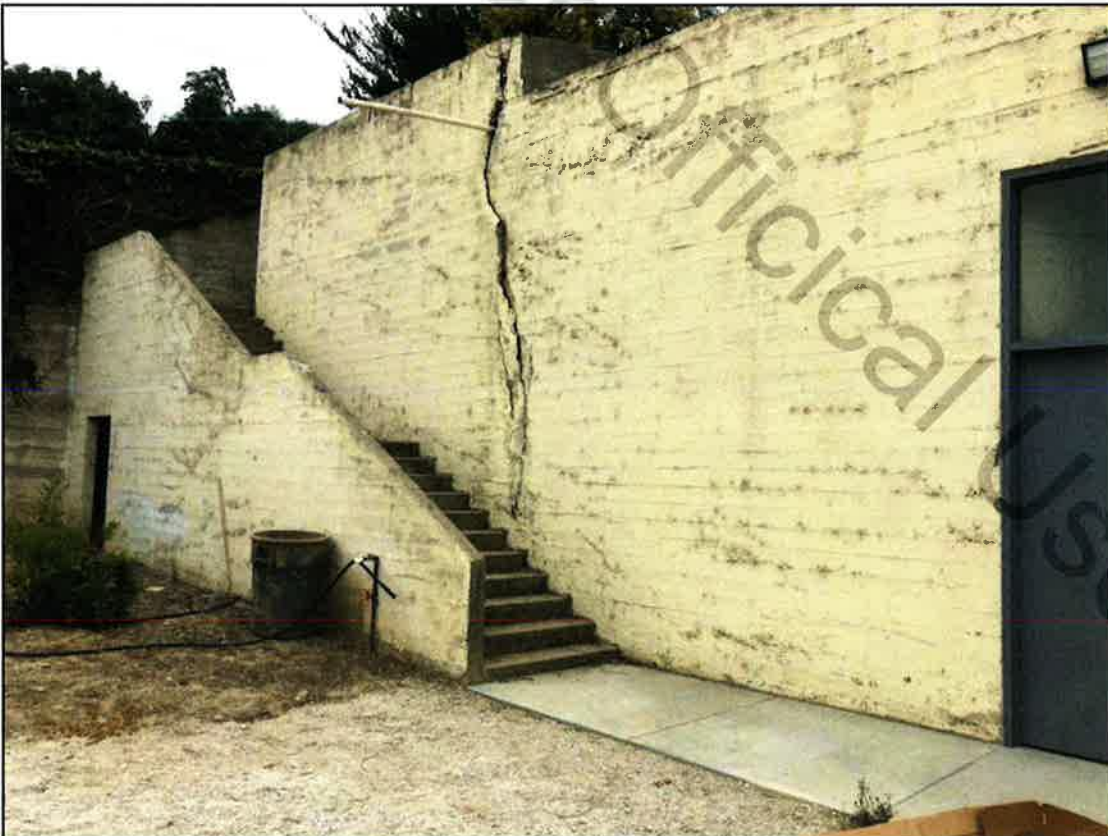


Photo 14. Warehouse, southern elevation. [9-27-19]



Photo 15. Warehouse, interior. [9-27-19]



Photo 16. Silos, viewed from northeast. [9-27-19]



Photo 17. Hammer Mill, eastern elevation. [9-27-19]



Photo 18. Hammer Mill, view from southwest. [9-27-19]

Appendix A

Building Plans

