

Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of August 25, 2025, Item 6a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning

I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant: County of Ventura
Resource Management Agency, Planning Division
800 S. Victoria Avenue
L #1740
Ventura, CA 93009

Property Owner: R H Smith Family
P.O. Box 25010
Ventura, CA 93002-2250

II. REQUEST:

A request to designate the Day Ranch House, formerly located at 7620 Telephone Road, Ventura, CA 93003 (unincorporated Ventura County), as Ventura County Point of Interest No. 16. (Case No. CH25-0034).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

7620 Telephone Road, Ventura, CA 93003 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 131-0-050-150

The subject property consists of a 77.28-acre parcel in the Agricultural General Plan land use designation and the Agricultural Exclusive Zone. The property historically contained a main residence (built in 1881 or 1882), barn (built c. 1940), and two garage buildings (built c. 1935). Several modern temporary buildings and structures were built on the property after 1990, including a fruit stand, storage units, and green houses. In 2017, the residence and garage buildings were demolished following a period of vacancy and deterioration. Today, the property is used for growing strawberries. Figure 1 shows the vacant residence circa 2005, and Figure 2 shows the residence during its demolition in 2017.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance No. 4604 (Ordinance) Section 1366 provides for the designation of Cultural Heritage Sites by the Cultural Heritage Board where the property owner has no objection to a site's designation. CHB staff identified the former Day Ranch House as appearing eligible for Point of Interest designation. The extant barn at the subject property still appears to retain integrity and would continue to be considered a potential Cultural Heritage Site.¹

¹ An improvement, natural feature, or site of historical, architectural, community, or aesthetic merit which may meet the criteria specified in the Cultural Heritage Ordinance and has not yet been officially designated.

Figure 1 – Day Ranch House with Barn in Background, circa 2005



Credit: Stephen Schafer

Figure 2 – Day Ranch House Undergoing Demolition, 2017



Credit: Anthony Plascencia, VC Star

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

In August 2015, San Buenaventura Research Associates completed a Historic Resources Report (Historic Report) for the subject property; this report was updated in October 2015 (Exhibit 1).²

According to the Historic Report, the western portion of the Santa Clara Valley, including the site of what would later be known as the Day Ranch, was originally two land grants: Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy and Rancho Ex-Mission Buenaventura. Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy was granted to Manuel Jimeno Casarin in 1843 by the Mexican government as a reward for his services. Rancho Ex-Mission San Buenaventura included the foothills of Sulphur Mountain to Santa Paula Creek and was owned and managed by the San Buenaventura Mission. The Mission built a granary and a cattle outpost, supported by labor from the nearby Chumash villages of Mupu and Sisa.

In the 1850s, Thomas Wallace More and his brothers purchased Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. According to the California Agriculture Census, by 1860, More had become the largest single landowner in Santa Barbara County, which included present-day Ventura County. However, the brothers' partnership quickly dissolved; following a devastating drought in the late 1850s and early 1860s, they were forced to divide and sell the rancho's lands. Family friends of Thomas Wallace More from Ohio, George G. Briggs and his nephew, purchased 15,000 acres of Rancho Santa Puala y Saticoy in 1861. Briggs believed that he could successfully plant fruit on his newly acquired land; he successfully planted a 160-acre orchard near the property's adobe. As the drought persisted, and after his wife's death, Briggs subdivided the land into 150-acre parcels for interested buyers.

James Allen Day, from whom the Day Ranch derives its name, was born in Franklin County, New York on July 3rd, 1828. His grandfather was a pioneer of Welsh descent who settled in Hartford, Connecticut. Day attended school in New York state, later entering the brick manufacturing industry. He married Sarah Jane Warren, and the couple moved to Wisconsin. The family moved to Ventura in 1874 where Day purchased one of George G. Briggs' parcels. Originally, the site was 80 acres when purchased by James Day, and by 1882, the family had built a large, two-story residence, although it was not used as his main residence.

In addition to agriculture, Day entered real estate investment shortly after his arrival in Ventura. His real estate portfolio included over 880 acres of farmland and other properties throughout the City of Ventura. He and three of his business partners built the Masonic Block on Main Street, which still stands as an architectural landmark of

² Triem, Judy, and Mitch Stone, San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Historic Resources Report, 7620 Telephone Road, Ventura, CA*, August 11, 2015 (revised October 29, 2015).

Ventura. In addition, his Ventura house on Poli Street where he lived from 1883 to 1915 is a designated Ventura landmark.

Sarah Day died in 1904, and on January 2, 1915, James Day took his own life. A Ventura newspaper stated that “he had been in pain for many months and discomfort brought on by his advancing years”³. The last owners of Day Ranch, Fred and Grace Smith, were members of a prominent Ventura County family that owned many agricultural properties. They never lived at Day Ranch themselves, as it was one of many investment properties they owned.

In 2017, following an extended period of vacancy and deterioration, the Day Ranch House was demolished, along with two garage buildings. At that time, the property owners were unable to find a buyer willing to purchase and move the house to another location.

Day Ranch

The historical Day Ranch consisted of a main residence, barn, and accessory garages. The main residence, built in 1881 or 1882, was a two-story Italianate style building with a square plan and porch that wrapped across the front and entire west and east elevations.

Italianate-style buildings emerged in the early 1840s and fell out of favor by the 1880s. This architectural style became popular in the United States as people began viewing the past as romantic, prompting them to recreate those same feelings in the present. An Italianate building often includes a belvedere, tall narrow windows, eaves that overhang, and porches on the ground floor. The Day Ranch House included many of these distinctive features; for example, its ground floor porch and long narrow windows could be classified as architecturally Italianate.

There were relatively few changes made to the exterior of the home over the course of its life. The property’s agricultural barn was built in 1940 and was used as a dehydrator building (likely for walnuts). The garages were built around 1935 with gable roofs. However, prior to its demolition, one garage collapsed during a storm due to poor maintenance and dry rot.

VI. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Day Ranch continues to remain a significant property for its reflection of Ventura County’s rich agricultural history. For nearly all of the last 150 years, agriculture has served as a dominant economic resource in Ventura County. The 140-year-old main residence was a vital piece of the County’s history, showcasing unique architectural

³ Ibid.

characteristics of the Italianate style unique to its period. The form of the building, roof shape, decorative designs, and narrow windows were all components of the building's unique characteristics.

VII. STAFF CONCLUSIONS:

The evidence provided in the Historic Report (Exhibit 1) supports making the findings under Ordinance Section 1367(c) that the former Day Ranch House is eligible for designation as a Ventura County Point of Interest. In addition, the evidence provided in the Historic Report supports making the additional designation findings in Ordinance Section 1367-1 as the site has historic character, value, and interest to the general public, there are no foreseeable costs to the County in designating the subject property as a Ventura County Point of Interest, and the designation shall not infringe upon the rights of the Property Owner as the designation does not affect allowable land uses and the Property Owner has not objected to this designation. Moreover, the requested designation is consistent with the CHB's adopted goals for the Cultural Heritage Program for 2025-2026. Therefore, CHB staff recommends the CHB approve the request for Ventura County Point of Interest designation.

VIII. HEARING NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A public notice was sent by U.S. mail to the Property Owner of the subject property not less than fifteen days prior to the date of this hearing (Exhibit 2 – 15-Day Public Hearing Notice). In addition, public notices were sent by U.S. mail to the Property Owner on December 3, 2024, and March 6, 2025, with information on the historical significance of the property and the Day Ranch House's identification as a potential Point of Interest, along with a consent form regarding designation. Staff did not receive a response to either public notice.

No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions regarding designation:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the Property Owner was given a 15-day notice in accordance with Ordinance Section 1366-2, and that the Property Owner has not objected to designation;

3. **FIND** that the former Day Ranch House meets County Point of Interest Criterion 1 as required by Ordinance Section 1367(c), and the additional standards required by Ordinance Section 1367-1 based on the substantial evidence in the staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto; and
4. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-11 (Exhibit 3) approving the designation of the Day Ranch House, formerly located at 7620 Telephone Road, Ventura, CA 93003, as Ventura County Point of Interest No. 16.

Prepared by:



Dillan Murray, Senior Planner
Ventura County Planning Division
(805) 654-5042

Prepared by:



Harrison Dargahi, Intern
Ventura County Planning Division

Reviewed by:



Tricia Maier, Manager
Planning Programs Section
(805) 654-2464

Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Historic Resources Report, October 29, 2015
- Exhibit 2: 15-Day Public Hearing Notice
- Exhibit 3: CHB Resolution No. 2025-11