

**SECTION 106
HISTORIC RESOURCES REPORT
4268 E. CENTER STREET
PIRU, CA 93040**

February 29, 2008

Prepared for:

Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation
702 County Square Drive
Ventura, CA 93003

Prepared by:



County of Ventura
July 13, 2026
Cultural Heritage Board Meeting
Item 12a
Exhibit 1 – Historic Resources
Report, February 29, 2008

1. Description of Undertaking

This report was prepared for the purpose of assisting the County of Ventura in their compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, in connection with the redevelopment of the property located on 7.99 acres of land located at 4268 E. Center Street, Piru. This project will result in the demolition of an existing farm labor complex constructed between 1927 and 1955. Federal funds will be used to demolish the buildings and to construct 66 new two-story rental units on the property. This project is considered an undertaking in accordance with Section 106 criteria. [Figure 1]

This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for the County of Ventura, and is based on a field investigation and research conducted in February 2008. 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.

2. Administrative Setting

Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that federally-funded agencies "...take into account the effect of [an] undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register." The National Park Service promulgates the criteria and standards for determining eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); the procedures for determining adverse effects on historic resources are contained in the Federal Register at 36 CFR 800 (Protection of Historic Properties). Properties may qualify for NRHP listing if they:

- A. are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

According to the NRHP guidelines, the "essential physical features" of a property must be present for it to convey its significance. Further, in order to qualify for the NRHP listing, a resource must retain its integrity, or "the ability of a property to convey its significance."

The seven aspects of integrity are: Location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred); Design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property); Setting (the physical environment of a historic property); Materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property); Workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory); Feeling (a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time), and; Association (the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property).

The relevant aspects of integrity depend upon the National Register criteria applied to a property. For example, a property nominated under Criterion A (events), would be likely to convey its significance primarily through integrity of location, setting and association. A property nominated solely under Criterion C (design) would usually rely primarily upon integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The minimum age criterion for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR) is

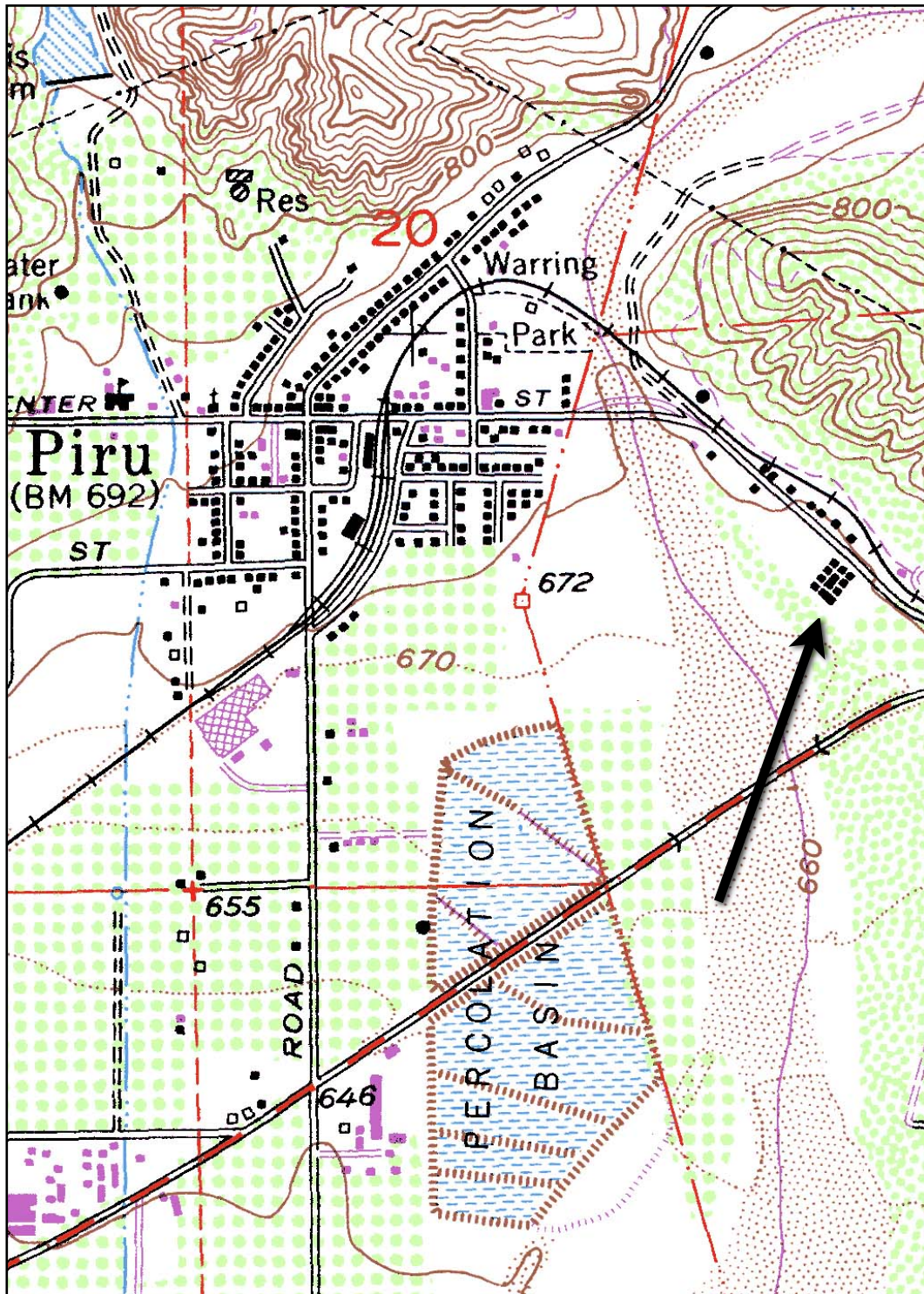


Figure 2. Site Location [USGS 7.5' Quadrangle, Piru, CA, 1952 rev 1988]

50 years. Properties less than 50 years old may be eligible for listing on the NRHP if they can be regarded as “exceptional,” as defined by the NRHP procedures.

The criteria for determining adverse effects on historic resources are established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and by standards published by the National Park Service in connection with the National Register of Historic Places. According to the Act, “An adverse effect is found when an undertaking may alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of a historic property that qualify the property for inclusion in the National Register in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property’s location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. Consideration shall be given to all qualifying characteristics of a historic property, including those that may have been identified subsequent to the original evaluation of the property’s eligibility for the National Register. Adverse effects may include reasonably foreseeable effects caused by the undertaking that may occur later in time, be farther removed in distance or be cumulative.” (36 CFR 800.5 (a)(1))

3. Area of Potential Effect

The area of potential effect is the project site itself (APN 055-0-202-010), and adjacent properties.

4. Description of Location of Undertaking

The 7.99 acre project site contains an unoccupied farm labor camp bounded on the southwest by Piru Creek and on the northeast by Center Street. Southeast of the project site is an agricultural field and northwest of the project site are single family residences. Across Center Street from the project site, are single family residences from the 1910s through the 1950s.

5. Historical Setting

General Historical Context

The eastern Santa Clara Valley was originally part of two land grants, Rancho San Francisco of 48,612 acres granted to Antonio del Valle in 1839, and the 13,339 acres of Rancho Temescal, granted to Francisco Lopez in 1843. A portion of Rancho San Francisco was acquired by Antonio del Valle’s son, Ygnacio del Valle, and these approximately 1,500 acres were established in 1853 as Rancho Camulos, which became an agricultural show-place under the del Valle family’s leadership. Citrus, wine grapes, acres of wheat and corn, almonds and many other agricultural products brought wealth to the east end of the valley. Camulos also became well known as the fictionalized “Home of Ramona” in Helen Hunt Jackson’s best selling book *Ramona* published in 1883. (Triem, 2002: 19-20)

It may have been this book, along with California’s reputation for a mild climate, that brought the ailing David C. Cook from Illinois to California and specifically to the Santa Clara Valley. In April of 1887, Cook purchased the 13,339 acre Rancho Temescal from the del Valle family, owners of Rancho Camulos, who had purchased Temescal Rancho in 1857. He also purchased 80 acres of Rancho Camulos from Ygnacio del Valle. Cook had amassed a small fortune through the publishing of religious tracts, especially Sunday School books at his Elgin, Illinois Cook Publishing Company. In 1888 Cook laid out the Piru townsite and built a depot for the Southern Pacific Railroad and a spur line. At the same time Cook began agricultural development in Piru Can-

yon where he eventually planted 1,500 acres of trees and vineyards. He built a large mansion in 1890 on the hill overlooking the small townsite. Cook thrived in the new environment and as his health improved and with the discovery of potential mineral deposits on the ranch, Cook decided in 1900 to sell the property to a group of Los Angeles oil capitalists for \$500,000, and to return full time to his publishing business. The new owners of Rancho Temescal incorporated as the Piru Oil and Land Company and they, in turn, auctioned off land in the Town of Piru. (Triem, 2002: 55-56)

The land surrounding Piru continued to be used for agriculture as well as oil exploration. Located south of town across the Santa Clara River was the Torrey Canyon Oil Company, one of the largest of several oil companies formed after Piru's founding. The town grew slowly with a population of merchants, agricultural workers or oil workers. The Piru Hotel was established in the 1890s and served tourists and ranchers. During the 1920s the commercial district changed from wood frame buildings to brick. Several more residences were built, perhaps as a result of the establishment of the Piru Citrus Association in 1914, and construction of their new packing house in 1919 at Main Street and Telegraph Road adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The automotive boom of the 1920s brought an increased number of visitors to Piru. Center Street was a portion of the main highway through the valley, and all east-west traffic passed through Piru. Auto-related businesses included an auto court, gas station, automobile agency, and a repair garage. Little growth occurred in Piru after the 1920s. The Piru Lake and recreational area was created in the 1950s in Piru Canyon. Piru has been used as the setting for many movie and television productions. The main local industry continues to be agriculture.

Site-Specific Context

The subject property was originally part of Rancho San Francisco and then Rancho Camulos, owned by the del Valle family until Camulos was purchased by August Rubel in 1924. It is uncertain when the Piru Citrus Association purchased the land, but it was owned by them by 1950 and perhaps earlier. A small house dating from around 1928 was located on the property, but it has since been demolished. This house had apparently had been used for farm labor housing prior to its demolition. (Ventura County Assessor Records)

Prior to the establishment of the Piru Citrus Association, citrus growers in the Piru area took their fruit to the Fillmore Citrus Association's packing house, built in Fillmore in 1897. The continued growth of the citrus industry in the valley led to expansions to the packing house. By 1914 it was decided to establish a separate citrus association in Piru, and five growers in the Piru area broke away from Fillmore to join the new association led by Charles S. Johnson, a former manager of the Fillmore Association, and founding director of the Fillmore Association, David Felsenthal. In the beginning the new organization leased a packing house from the Piru Land and Oil Company. Felsenthal became president, F.S. Chapman, Vice-President; Charles Johnson, secretary and manager. Other directors included Ulpiano F. del Valle; A.N. Davidson and J.H. Alcock. (Merlo: 1997: 17-21)

The Piru Citrus Association joined the Fruit Grower's Supply Company and the Semi-Tropic Fruit Exchange. Member's oranges were packed under their own labels, including the "Home of Ramona," "Piru" and "Mansion" brands.

In 1918 the Piru Fruit Association purchased land and built a packinghouse at Main Street and Telegraph Road, which was completed in 1919. In 1927 the association built three new bunkhouses for workers near the packinghouse. By 1928 it was necessary to build a large addition onto the packing house and the organization joined the Ventura County Citrus Exchange and withdrew from the Semi-Tropic District Exchange. (Merlo, 1997: 25)

During World War II shortages of low-wage, mainly agricultural workers was projected, leading to the establishment of a guest-worker Bracero Program. Created by U.S. Government executive order in 1942, the Bracero Program brought millions of Mexican men to the United States to work on short-term, primarily agricultural labor contracts. It was established primarily because many growers argued that the war would cause labor shortages in low-paying agricultural jobs. Although it was created as a response to wartime labor issues, the Bracero Program remained in place for 22 years.

A farm labor camp was built on Central Avenue by the Piru Fruit Association for its workers in 1950, as a result of the Bracero Program. Prior to that time, three bunkhouses, adjacent to the packinghouse, were apparently the only farm worker housing owned by the company. These three bunkhouses were moved to the present complex in 1950. (Merlo, 1997: 55)

In 1965 the packing house burned to the ground at the hands of an arsonist. The following year a new modern 65,000 square foot packing house, financed by the 50-member cooperative, was built on the site of the original packing house. The building was designed by the Santa Paula architectural firm of Wilson, Stroh and Wilson, and completed in 1967. In 1971 the Piru Citrus Association and the Fillmore Citrus Association merged into the Fillmore-Piru Association to provide "economies of scale, more volume and leverage in the marketplace, and wider grades of fruit to consumers." (Merlo, 1997: 72-74)

Farmworker Housing in the Santa Clara Valley

Farmworkers have been employed on ranches in Ventura County since the 1850s. Since the salaries of farm workers have historically been low, most ranches and agribusinesses have provided some housing for their workers, either in the form of bunkhouses for single males, or individual houses for families. In addition, at least two packing house associations, one in Fillmore and the one in Piru, built housing for farmworkers.

Farm labor was of both the seasonal-itinerant variety, and year-round, and comprised of a wide variety of ethnic groups. The housing was usually segregated between the Mexican, Japanese and Anglo workers. Bunkhouses were constructed for the use of single men. Labor camps, consisting of a large number of small dwellings housed single men, and individual detached dwellings provided housing for families, ranch foremen and labor supervisors.

The five agribusinesses in the Santa Clara Valley provided farmworker housing in amounts reflecting their productive acreage. They include the Newhall Ranch at the far eastern edge of the valley; Rancho Camulos; Rancho Sespe; the Limoneira Ranch and the Teague-McKevett Ranch. All of these ranches were over 700 acres and most were over 1,000 acres in size. (Triem, 1993)

Farm labor camps were built in Fillmore and Piru by the Fillmore Citrus Association and the Piru Citrus Association to house seasonal workers. The associations hired independent labor contractors F & P Growers to operate the camps, acquire the labor and to pay the workers. At Piru the farm labor camp was for single men who were housed in bunkhouses, four beds to a room. They ate their meals at the mess hall and bathed themselves and washed their clothes at the community laundry facilities in the center of the compound. The labor camp was operating from 1950 to 1972 and from 1989 to 2003. Nacho Guevara and his wife Mary, residents of Piru, operated the camp in the later years. Nacho served as cook as well. (Creason, 2/28/08)

6. Historic Resources/National Register Determination

The project site is nearly eight acres in size and was a former farm labor camp operated by the Piru Citrus Association. The cluster of farm labor buildings is located at the southeastern edge of the property. The balance of the property is vacant except for numerous mature trees, mainly California Pepper trees. A large number of wooden fruit packing crates are located along the northwestern end of the property. A total of ten buildings in the cluster forms a rectangular plan. [Figure 2]

Office building. Located at the southwestern corner of the rectangle is the 960 square foot building constructed in 1950 according to Ventura County Assessor records. The building also served as a recreation building, a classroom and a lunch room while it was part of the farm labor camp. The one-story square plan building features a medium pitched gable roof with exposed rafters under the broad overhanging eaves. Louvered vents are located under the gable peaks. The wood double-hung windows have been covered with plywood. There are two entrances, one on the west and one on the east side with five-paneled wood doors. The building is covered with wide horizontal wood siding and rests on a concrete foundation. A 120 square foot addition, designed to match the rest of the building, was made on the north side, probably in 1988. This building has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 1; Map Reference 1]

Mess hall/kitchen. Located behind and at the southeastern end of the cluster is the one-story mess hall, measuring 32 feet by 107 feet and constructed in 1950. This long rectangular plan building features a medium pitched gable roof with exposed rafters under the broad overhanging eaves and measures 32 feet by 34 feet. The main double door entrance and concrete stoop is located on the south side of the building along with two other single five-paneled door entries with projecting casings. The wood casement windows have been covered with plywood. The building is covered with wide horizontal wood siding and rests on a concrete foundation. It has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 2, Map Reference 2]

Bunkhouse building. One of three bunkhouse buildings located along the eastern edge of the cluster, this one story building was constructed in 1950. Designed in a square plan, the building features a medium gable roof with exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. At the end of the gable peaks are horizontal louvered vents. Two single five-paneled doors with concrete stoops are found on the southern elevation and a single entry five paneled door surrounded by projecting casings is located on the west elevation. The wood casement windows are covered with plywood. The building is covered with wide horizontal wood siding and rests on a concrete foundation. It has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 3; Map Reference 3]



Figure 2. Building Locations [Source: Google Earth]

Bunkhouse building. This building is nearly identical to the bunkhouse above and was built in 1950. Designed in a square plan, the building, measuring 32 feet by 34 feet, features a medium gable roof with exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. At the end of the gable peaks are horizontal louvered vents. Two single five-paneled doors with concrete stoops are found on the southern elevation. The wood casement win-

dows are covered with plywood. The building is covered with wide horizontal wood siding and rests on a concrete foundation. [Photo 4; Map Reference 4]

Bunkhouse building. The northern of three building in a row, this one story building was moved from the rear of the packing house to its present site in 1950. Its date of construction is 1927. It is a long rectangular plan building, measuring 24 feet by 48 feet, with a medium gable roof and exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. It features two entrances with concrete steps on the east and west sides of the building. The wood windows are one-over-one double hung with wood casings. The building is covered with stucco siding and rests on a raised concrete foundation. The building may originally have featured wood siding which was stuccoed after it was moved. The building has retained its integrity of design from 1950. [Photo 5; Map Reference 5]

Bunkhouse building. Located along the northern section of the complex, this one-story bunkhouse was built in 1927. It was moved from the rear of the packinghouse in 1950. It is a long rectangular plan building, measuring 24 feet by 80 feet with a medium roof and exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. The southern elevation features two boarded up single entrances with small concrete stoops. Another entrance is located on the western elevation. The wood casement windows have been boarded up with plywood. The building is covered with stucco siding and rests on a raised concrete foundation. The building may originally have had wood siding which was stuccoed after it was moved. It has retained its integrity design from 1950. [Photo 6; Map Reference 6]

Bunkhouse building. Located at the northwestern corner of the cluster is this one-story bunkhouse built in 1927. It is a long rectangular plan building, measuring 24 feet by 48 feet, with a medium gable roof and exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. There are two entrances with concrete steps on the east and west sides of the building. The wood windows are one-over-one double hung with wood casings. The building is covered with stucco siding and rests on a raised concrete foundation. The building may originally have had wood siding which was stuccoed after it was moved. It is nearly identical to the building above. It has retained its integrity of design from 1950. [Photo 7; Map Reference 7]

Washroom/Laundry. This one-story washroom and laundry building was constructed in 1950. It housed fourteen toilets, four urinals, six wash tubs, six basins, two gas heaters and fourteen showers. It is rectangular in plan, measuring 20 feet by 72 feet, and has a medium gable roof with exposed rafters under the overhanging eaves. A short gable wing extends on the eastern elevation to house the gas heaters. The wood casement windows are covered with plywood. There are two entrances on the western elevation and one on the eastern elevation. The building is covered with wide horizontal wood siding and rests on a concrete foundation. It has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 8; Map Reference 8]

Trash enclosure building. Located adjacent to the mess hall, this small 8 feet by 10 feet building features a low gable roof with overhanging eaves. The lower half of the building is enclosed with wide horizontal wood siding while the upper half is screened-in. A single paneled door is located on the western elevation. The building was constructed in 1951. It has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 9; Map Reference 9]

Office building. This small low gable roofed building measures fifteen feet by fifteen feet and is constructed of concrete blocks. A wooden door is located on the southern elevation. It was constructed in 1955 and is located just west of the entrance to the complex. It has retained its integrity of design. [Photo 10; Map Reference 10]

Foundations. Two concrete foundations remain from two bunkhouses constructed 1950. These buildings burned down in a fire set by an arsonist in 2007. [Photo 11; Map Reference 11]

Swimming pool. The swimming pool, constructed circa 1975, is located at the northwestern end of the complex. It has been filled in. [Photo 12; Map Reference 12]

Landscape features. A large number of mature trees are located on the property, including palms and California Pepper trees among others. The most substantial mature trees are the grouping of California Peppers located west of the housing cluster. [Photo 13]

National Register Eligibility

The former labor camp buildings are associated with the development of the citrus industry in Piru and the surrounding area, an event that has made a significant contribution to the history of the Piru community (Criterion A). The labor camp was constructed as a response to the Bracero Program, an important federal program which brought temporary workers from Mexico to the U.S. during the World War II labor shortages. More than four million workers came to the United States under the Bracero Program from 1942 to 1964 and were critical to the economic development of agriculture during this period. The program has been called the largest and most significant U.S. labor guest worker program of the 20th century. (American History, 12/27/2007) It also had a profound impact on Mexican American settlement patterns in the U.S. The Piru Citrus Association took advantage of this program and built labor housing in response to the needs of the workers. In addition, the Piru Citrus Association packinghouse burned down in 1965 and was rebuilt in 1967, therefore making the farm labor camp owned by the association the only historic (fifty years old or older) buildings remaining to represent the historic activities and contributions of the Piru Citrus Association.

The buildings do not appear to be associated with the lives of any significant persons (Criterion B). The farm labor camp, established by the Piru Fruit Association, is important as a scarce example of worker housing representing the important role the farmworker played in establishing citrus as the most important feature of economic development of the Santa Clara Valley. The buildings and the layout of the camp embody the distinctive characteristics of a type or method of construction and the way the buildings relate to one another by function. (Criterion C). Criterion D applies to archaeology and is not relevant to this analysis. The *period of significance* for this property is 1950-1955, the year the camp went into operation and when the buildings were constructed or moved onto the property.

According to the NRHP guidelines, the “essential physical features” of a property must be present for it to convey its significance. Further, in order to qualify for the NRHP listing, a resource must retain its integrity, or “the ability of a property to convey its significance.”

The property retains its integrity of *location* except for three of the bunkhouses (built 1927) which were moved onto the site in 1950 when the rest of the camp buildings were constructed. The buildings *design* and layout of the spaces between buildings has not been altered except for two of the bunkhouses which were demolished. The loss of these two buildings does not compromise the eligibility because the majority of buildings still remain, and the bunkhouses lost were identical to the bunkhouses remaining. The historic *setting* is intact. The camp is surrounded by mature trees and located in a rural agricultural setting. The buildings have retained their original *materials* and *workmanship* from their period of significance (1950-55). The integrity of *feeling* and *association* of the former labor camp site have been partially reduced since the site is presently vacant and the buildings boarded up.

Eligible National Register Properties within the APE

Across Center Street from the project site are a row of 1920s California bungalow residences and a modern residence from the 1950s, most with alterations to siding and windows. One of the buildings at 4227 E. Center Street was listed on the 1987-1988 Cultural Heritage Survey and assigned a National Register evaluation code of 5, significant at a local level because of its stone construction. Only one other building was listed on the survey at 4253 E. Center Street and assigned a National Register evaluation code 6, which is defined not eligible for any designation. None of the remainder of the buildings within the APE were documented in the survey. [Photo 14-16]

None of these buildings appear to be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A (events) because they are not closely associated with any event significant in the history of Piru. They generally represent the residential growth of Piru during the 1920s. They do not appear to be associated with the lives of known persons significant in the history of Piru (Criterion B). They do not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction (Criterion C), but rather are modest examples of their style and period. Criterion D applies to archaeology and is not relevant to this analysis.

Conclusion

The subject property appears to be eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A and C. No other properties within the APE are listed or appear to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

7. Information from Local Organizations

Information was obtained from the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Survey, Phase IV, Santa Clara Valley, 1988 and from the Fillmore-Piru Citrus Association, who provided local contact information. Kenneth Creason, former manager of the Association, was interviewed.

8. Selected Sources

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Creason, Kenneth, former Piru Fruit Association manager, interview by Judy Triem on February 28, 2008.

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/news/pressrelease>, "Smithsonian's Bracero History Project Records Bittersweet History." December 27, 2007.

Merlo, Catherine. *Beyond the Harvest. The History of the Fillmore-Piru Citrus Association, 1897-1997*. Fillmore-Piru Citrus Association, 1997.

Storke, Ada. *A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura, CA*. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1891.

Teague, Charles C. *Fifty Years a Rancher*. 2nd Edition, Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1944.

Triem, Judith. *The Limoneira Company. One Hundred Years of Growing, 1898-1993*. Santa Paula: Limoneira Company, 1993.

Triem, Judith. *Ventura County: Land of Good Fortune*. Northridge: Windsor Publications, 1985.

Triem, Judith. *Santa Clara Valley of Ventura County*. Santa Barbara: The Easton Gallery, 2002.

Triem, Judith. *Cultural Heritage Survey, Phase IV, Santa Clara Valley, 1987-1988*. Ventura County: General Services Agency, 1988.

Ventura County Assessor Records, 4268 Center Street, Piru.

Maps

USGS Maps: Piru Quadrangle, 1900 (rev 1921); 1952 (rev 1988)



Photo 1. Office building, northern & western elevations [16 February 2008]

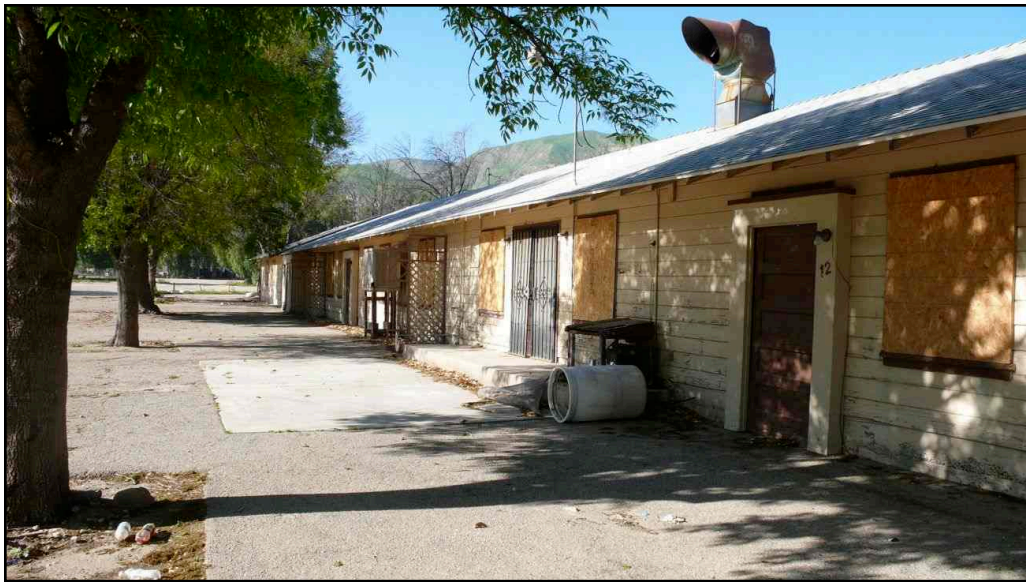


Photo 2. Mess Hall, southern elevation [16 February 2008]



Photo 3. Bunkhouse, western elevation [16 February 2008]



Photo 4. Bunkhouse, western and southern elevations [16 February 2008]



Photo 5. Bunkhouse, western & southern elevations [16 February 2008]



Photo 6. Bunkhouse, southern & western elevations [16 February 2008]



Photo 7. Bunkhouse, southern and eastern elevations [16 February 2008]

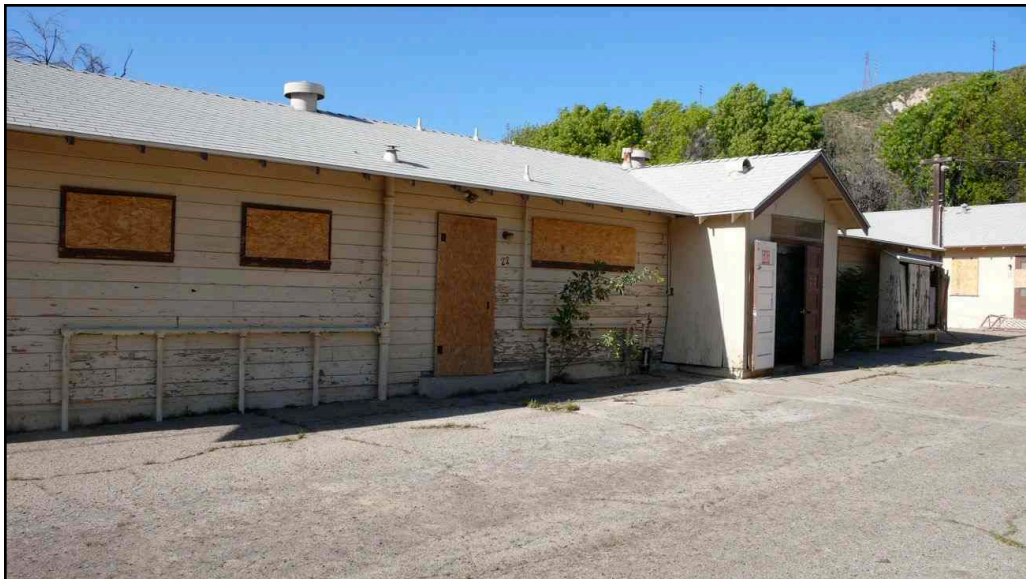


Photo 8. Washroom/laundry building, eastern elevation [16 February 2008]



Photo 9. Trash enclosure building, western elevation [16 February 2008]



Photo 10. Office building, southern elevation [16 February 2008]



Photo 11. Foundations, facing north [16 February 2008]



Photo 12. Swimming pool (filled-in), facing east [16 February 2008]



Photo 13. Pepper trees, facing west [16 February 2008]

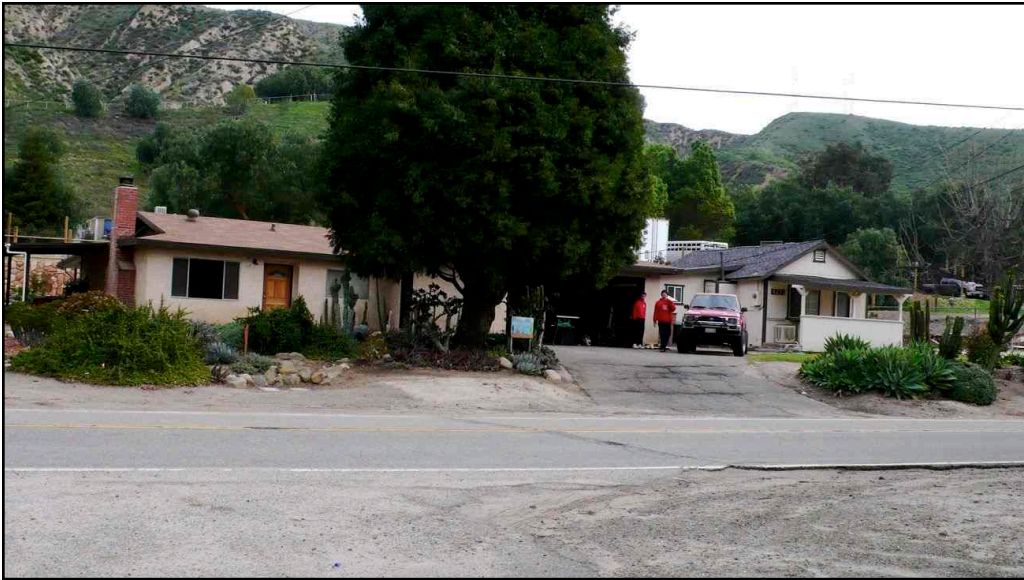


Photo 14. View across Center Street from project site, facing north [21 February 2008]



Photo 15. View across Center Street from project site, facing north [21 February 2008]



Photo 16. Residence west of project site, facing south [21 February 2008]