

**Historic Resources Report, Phase 1 and 2
2464 E. Ojai Avenue
Ojai, Ventura County, CA**

14 April 2022

Prepared for:

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Prepared by:



County of Ventura
June 12, 2023
Cultural Heritage Board Meeting
Item 6d
Exhibit 3 – Historic Resources Report, April
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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 proposed development on a 8.72 acre parcel located at 2464 E. Ojai Avenue, in an unincorporated area of Ventura County in the Ojai Valley (APN 028-0-012-130). The property is the location of a residence and associated accessory buildings constructed c. 1915-1927 by the Edward Weist family. These buildings were altered and adapted for use as a convalescent hospital beginning in 1955. Two hospital buildings were added to the property in 1959, and a chapel constructed in 1981. The proposed project involves the rehabilitation of the residential and accessory buildings for residential use and the chapel and two former meeting rooms for public assembly purposes. The two former hospital buildings are not included in the current scope of work. [Figure 1]

This report assesses the historical and architectural significance of potentially significant historic properties in accordance with the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) Criteria for Evaluation, and County of Ventura criteria, and also evaluates the proposed project for compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for 2464 E. Ojai Ave LLC, and is based on a field investigation and research conducted in January 2022.

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

This property appears to be ineligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR, but is eligible for designation as a County of Ventura Landmark. The proposed project was found to generally conform with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

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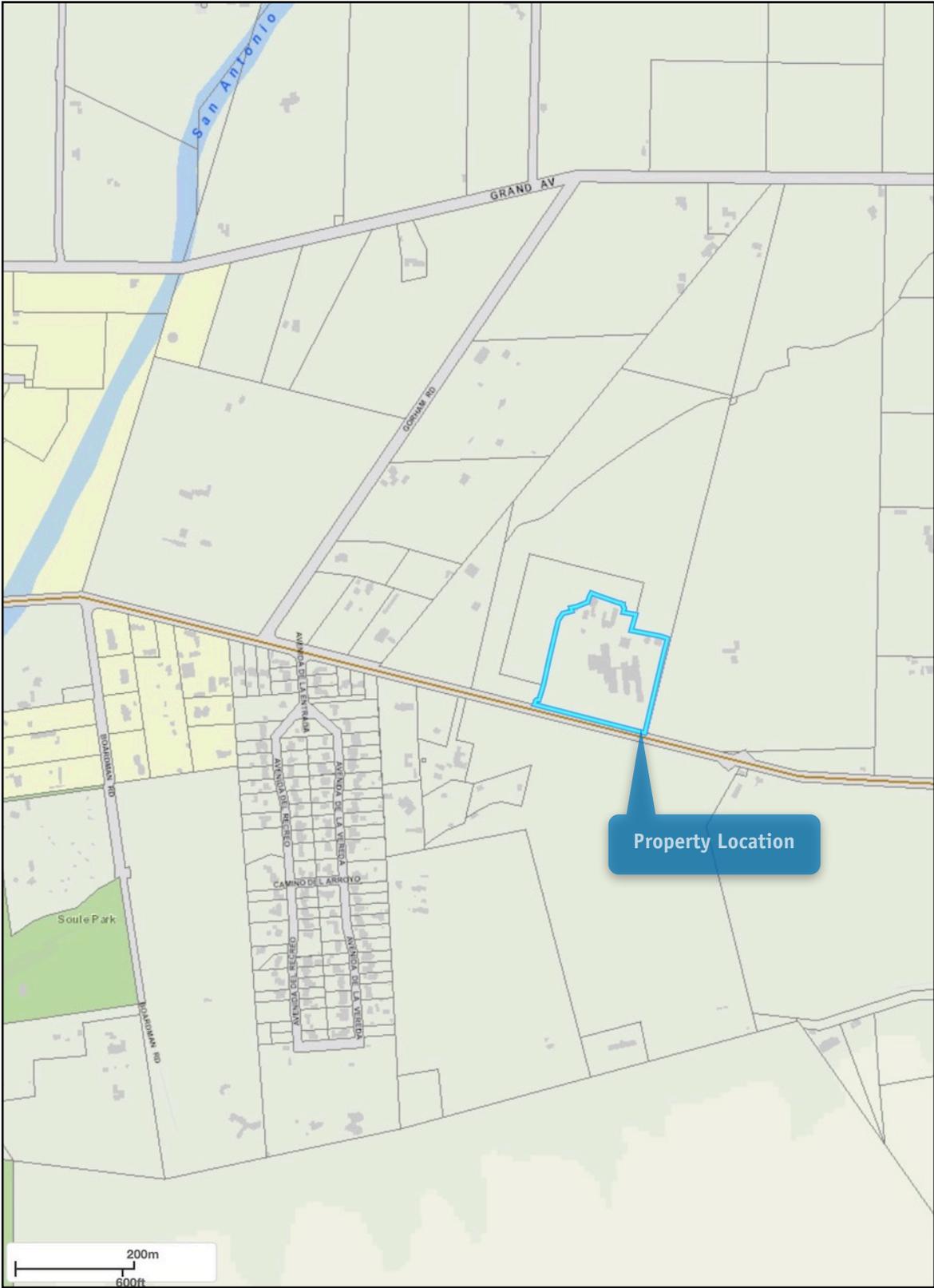


Figure 1. Property Location [Source: County of Ventura]

1. Administrative Setting

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires evaluation of project impacts on historic resources, including properties “listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources [or] included in a local register of historical resources.” A resource is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources if it meets any of the criteria for listing, which are:

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
2. Associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values; or
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (PRC §5024.1(c))

By definition, the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) also includes all “properties formally determined eligible for, or listed in, the National Register of Historic Places,” and certain specified State Historical Landmarks. The majority of formal determinations of NRHP eligibility occur when properties are evaluated by the Office of Historic Preservation in connection with federal environmental review procedures (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966). Formal determinations of eligibility also occur when properties are nominated to the NRHP, but are not listed due to a lack of owner consent.

The criteria for determining eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) have been developed by the National Park Service. Eligible properties include districts, sites, buildings and structures,

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That 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. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

According to the NRHP standards, in order for a property that is found to be significant under one or more of the criteria to be considered eligible for listing, the “essential physical features” that define the property’s significance must be present. The standard for determining if a property’s essential physical features exist is known as *integrity*, which is defined for the NRHP as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.” The CRHR defines integrity as “the authenticity of a historical resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance. Historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register must meet one of the criteria of significance described above and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance.” (National Register Bulletin 15; California OHP Technical Assistance Bulletin 6)

For purposes of both the NRHP and CRHR, an integrity evaluation is broken down into seven “aspects.” 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).

It is not required that significant property possess all aspects of integrity to be eligible; depending upon the NRHP and CRHR criteria under which the property derives its significance, some aspects of integrity might be more relevant than others. For example, a property nominated under NRHP Criterion A and CRHR Criterion 1 (events), would be likely to convey its significance primarily through integrity of location, setting and association. A property nominated solely under NRHP Criterion C and CRHR Criterion 3 (design), would usually rely primarily upon integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

While the NRHP guidelines and the CRHR regulations include similar language with respect to the aspects of integrity, the latter guidelines also state "it is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register." Further, according to the NRHP guidelines, the integrity of a property must be evaluated at the time the evaluation of eligibility is conducted. Integrity assessments cannot be based on speculation with respect to historic fabric and architectural elements that may exist but are not visible to the evaluator, or on restorations that are theoretically possible but which have not occurred. (National Register Bulletin 15; CCR §4852 (c); California OHP Technical Assistance Bulletin 6)

The minimum age criterion for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) is 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, or in terms of the CRHR, "if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance" (Chapter 11, Title 14, §4842(d)(2))

Historic resources as defined by CEQA also includes properties listed in "local registers" of historic properties. A "local register of historic resources" is broadly defined in §5020.1 (k) of the Public Resources Code, as "a list of properties officially designated or recognized as historically significant by a local government pursuant to a local ordinance or resolution." Local registers of historic properties come essentially in two forms: (1) surveys of historic resources conducted by a local agency in accordance with Office of Historic Preservation procedures and standards, adopted by the local agency and maintained as current, and (2) landmarks designated under local ordinances or resolutions. These properties are "presumed to be historically or culturally significant... unless the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that the resource is not historically or culturally significant." (PRC §§ 5024.1, 21804.1, 15064.5)

Ventura County Landmark Criteria

An improvement, natural feature, or site may become a designated landmark if it meets one the following criteria:

1. It exemplifies or reflects special elements of the County's social, aesthetic, engineering, architectural or natural history;

2. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County or its cities, regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
3. It is associated with the lives of persons important to Ventura County or its cities, California, or national history;
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of Ventura County or its cities, California or the nation;
5. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values;
6. Integrity: Establish the authenticity of the resource's physical identity by evidence of lack of deterioration and significant survival of the characteristics that existed during its period of importance. This shall be evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship.

Ventura County Site of Merit Criteria

Sites of Merit satisfy the following criteria:

1. Sites of historical, architectural, community or aesthetic merit which have not been designated as landmarks or points of interest, but which are deserving of special recognition; and
2. County approved surveyed sites with a National Register status code of 5 or above.

2. 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))

3. Historical Setting

This property, consisting originally of 32 acres located on the north side of Ojai Avenue west of Carne Road and east of Gorham Road, was purchased by Edward L. Weist from George H. and Anna P. Holsten in 1913. Holsten was a highly successful citrus rancher and at the time one of the valley's most active landholders and investors.¹ The son of a carpenter, Edward Louis Weist was born in Kansas in 1879, where he was raised, and as a young man worked in banking. He relocated to Southern California c. 1905, first to Los Angeles, and shortly thereafter to Ventura County. Soon after he married Edna Maud Ewing, the daughter of Felix Winfield Ewing, a prominent and affluent lawyer and judge in Ventura, and they settled in Ojai. At first it appears they took up residency at the Foothills Hotel and later in a home in town. Weist continued his career in banking locally with employment as a cashier at the Ojai State Bank, of which his father-in-law was a cofounder in 1907, where he rose steadily through the ranks. By the mid-1920s, he was the bank's president.² He also became involved with any number of other business ventures in the valley in partnerships with other local businesspeople.

It is unclear precisely when the Weists and their two children Arthur J. (born 1906) and Mary Virginia (born 1919) moved to the property they called Arcadia Ranch to the east of the city proper, but by c. 1915 it is known to have featured a small home and stables.³ The success of Edward's banking and business career enabled the family to expand their ranch holding further, including with the purchase of an additional 55 acres from George Holsten in 1924. Two years later Edward and Edna Weist inherited half of the substantial estate of Felix Ewing on his death in 1926, adding a good deal to the family's fortunes. In short order they were planning to build a new home on their ranch. Construction was underway by the summer of 1927.⁴

The 11-room home reflecting their newfound means was reported to cost the then-considerable sum of \$20,000. The architectural style of the residence was described as "of the English farm house type," which was signified primarily by a stucco and faux half-timbered exterior, and organized (rather incongruously, given the style) around a paved central courtyard covered with a pergola. A huge box-beamed living room was a major feature. Also included was a pool house and a number of ancillary buildings. The site design was planned around the numerous large native oak trees found on the property, which originally featured extensive gardens, a swimming pool, and a tennis court. An English-style garden was planted around the home and the balance of the property was planted out in citrus. Some sources attribute the building designs to an English architect, but both the design and construction are most likely the products of Robert Winfield, a prolific Ojai builder of many decades, who later credited himself with both. This is probably the case as Winfield often packaged architectural services along with his contracting. Although it was reported at the time that the

¹ Oxnard Courier, 3-28-1913; The Ojai, 3-6-1926; Ventura County Grantee Index, 137 OR 162.

² Fry, Patricia (revised and updated by Elise DePuydt and Craig Walker). *The Ojai Valley An Illustrated History*. Ojai, CA: Ojai Valley Museum, 2017, p. 180.

³ Oxnard Courier, 5-3-1907.

⁴ Ventura Post, 4-26-1924; Ventura County Star, 2-11-1926.

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original Weist family home was to be demolished to make way for the new one, the older buildings extant today suggest that they were instead retained and relocated elsewhere on the property.⁵

At the same time as their new family home was under construction, Weist was also diversifying his investments into property in the Santa Barbara area, including the purchase of a large parcel of land in Hope Ranch. With his retirement from banking in the 1930s they elected to not remain in the Ojai Valley, and in 1937 sold the Ojai Valley property and relocated to Santa Barbara, where they remained until Edward Weist's death in 1952. After her husband's passing, Edna Ewing Weist returned to the Ojai Valley. She died in 1954.⁶

The property buyers from Edward and Edna Weist in 1937 was a group of investors from Pasadena and Long Beach organized as the Lombardy Corporation. Accordingly, the property would be known locally thereafter as Lombardy Ranch, though the origin of this name is something of a mystery, as none of the identified in-

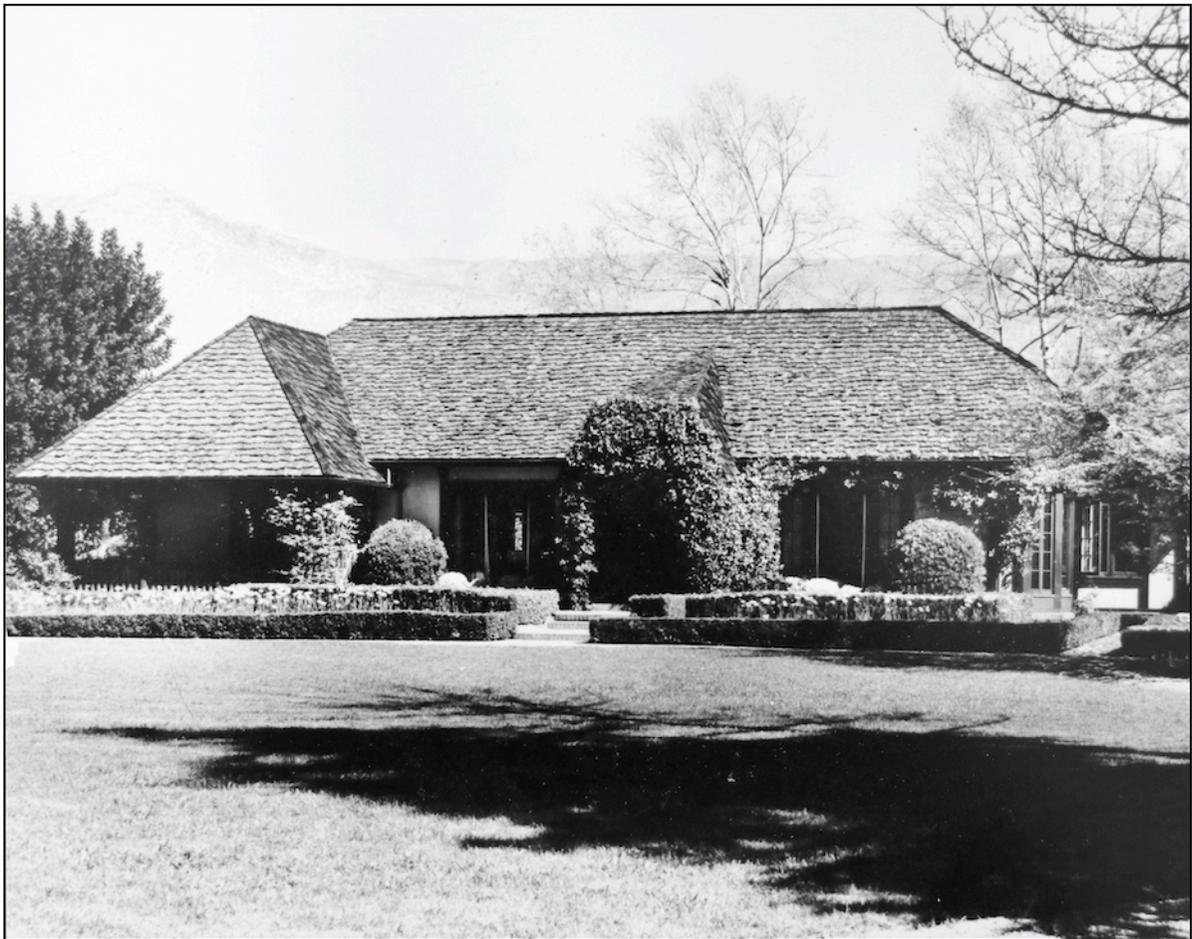


Figure 2. Weist House, southern elevation (Undated historic photo, possibly c. 1955).

⁵ Ventura County Star, 8-26-1927; Ojai Valley News, 1-28-1968.

⁶ Ventura County Star-Free Press, 3-6-1954.

vestors were named Lombardy.⁷ The corporation owners included Guy Rutherford McComb, Neil Ensich, Royal Roberts Bush Jr., and Issac Blair Evans. None of the investors, with the apparent exception of Ensich, were ever full-time residents of the Ojai Valley and seemingly owned the property primarily for use as a getaway home and for the citrus orchard income. McComb was a banker in Pasadena, and Bush and Ensich partners in the R.R. Bush Oil company in Long Beach. Evans was an attorney from Pasadena who died a few years after the property was acquired. The ranching operation was managed for a few years after World War II by the son of Guy McComb, Guy Rutherford McComb Jr., and later by the senior McComb and Ensich. This group made no known alterations to the property during their ownership, with the exception of surveying it in 1951 to create a separate parcel for the orchard and the 8.72 acre parcel on which the residence and other buildings are now located. At the same time Bush sold his share of the partnership to Ensich.⁸

The Lombardy Corporation owned the property until 1955, when it was sold by the remaining Lombardy Corporation partners to the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God, an ancient Catholic order devoted to providing healthcare and social services. The order announced plans to redevelop the property as a convalescent hospital for aged men with longterm, chronic, and postoperative health issues, and as a facility for training novice brothers of the order as nurses. Precisely why the Ojai Valley location was selected by the order is unknown, but proximity to their hospital in Los Angeles was likely a key factor, and the site itself offered some immediate benefits for adaptation to the new use. The large main residence and pool house could be quite readily converted to patient rooms and dormitories for the novitiates, and used until the anticipated purpose-built construction could be completed. Before proceeding, the order first had to overcome resistance to the plan from area ranchers. Their concerns, mainly with water usage, were brought to the County Planning Commission at permit hearings that spring.⁹

Having prevailed over local objections, and with the permit approved by the Planning Commission in June, the order moved forward with adapting the property for the use, which was operated initially as St. Joseph's Convalescent Hospital. The brothers with experience in the building trades took on much of the construction work themselves, with support provided by the St. John of God Hospital in Los Angeles and a charity set up for the purpose. The interim work completed, St. Joseph's was opened officially in May 1956, with Bishop Timothy Manning presiding over the dedication.¹⁰ At the start housing for the brothers and only six patients could be accommodated in the limited facilities, but planning was already underway for the construction of two new, one-story buildings, a purpose-built 28-bed hospital and accompanying dormitory for the novitiates, to be located on the southeastern portion of the property.

Hired to design the new buildings was the Los Angeles architectural firm of Verge and Clatworthy. The son of well-known Los Angeles architect Gene Verge, Eugene E. Verge Jr. was born and raised in Glendale. After serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and graduation from the architecture program U.C. Berkeley in 1948, he entered into an individual architectural practice in Eagle Rock, then in 1953 formed a partnership with Richard N. Clatworthy, a 1950 graduate of the University of Southern California. Little additional information was located on Clatworthy's background. Over the next several decades the partnership, which lasted

⁷ Ventura County Star, 5-4-1937.

⁸ Ventura County Maps of Records, Book 14, Page 68.

⁹ The Ojai, 5-10-1955.

¹⁰ The Tidings: 3-23-1956, 5-4-1956, 5-18-1956.



Figure 3. Interior hallway and nurse's station (undated historic photo, probably c. 1960).

for around thirty years, was responsible for a substantial number of designs for the Catholic Church in Southern California, including churches, schools, and hospital buildings.¹¹

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new buildings, expected to cost \$750,000 to construct, was held in June 1958, with Bishop Manning again presiding. A guest of honor at the event was composer-playwright Meredith Willson, who was just then enjoying the enormous success of his Broadway musical "The Music Man." The reason for his presence was unexplained, though it may be assumed he was contributor, and his collaborator on the book for the show, playwright Franklin Lacey, was then a drama teacher at nearby Happy Valley School. When completed in 1959 the new and expanded hospital featured twenty-two patient beds and housing for thirty brothers. The older buildings on the property could now be used for other purposes, including administration. At the same time a number of landscape features adjacent to the main residence were removed to accommodate the new construction and attendant circulation and parking. Exploring other avenues

¹¹ American Architects Directory, Second Edition. Chicago: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962, p. 725.
American Architects Directory, Third Edition. Chicago: R.R. Bowker Company, 1970, p. 160.
Los Angeles Daily Pilot, 12-18-2012.

to expand, during the mid-1970s new buildings for a retirement center were proposed and approved by the county, but for unknown reasons were never built.¹²

The next major project to advance was the construction of a chapel, an addition to the property anticipated as early as the late 1950s but not undertaken until 1981. The architects hired for the design was the firm of Haynes and Oakley, a partnership formed in Pasadena in 1964 by Paul E. Haynes and David S. Oakley. The older partner Haynes entered into practice in Los Angeles during late 1930s. The younger partner Oakley was a USC graduate in 1957. The firm specialized then, as it does today, in institutional work, particularly hospitals. This is likely how they became known to the Brothers of St. John, rather than through their ecclesiastical work, which did not seem to be a significant part of the practice.

In any case by this time neither of the founders remained active in the firm, which continues today in Sierra Madre as Haynes + Oakley. According to current members of this practice, the lead architect for the chapel design was John Meisenhelder, who joined the practice in 1969 and was the firm's principal at the time. The chapel was expanded in 1998 with the addition of a small side-chapel confessional designed by Ojai architect Joseph Amestoy and Associates. Even as the chapel construction was being completed, the demands on the property were evolving. In 1986 the novitiate was relocated to Los Angeles, which freed up the building constructed for that purpose. It also allowed the west wing of the main residence to be converted to living quarters for the brothers who remained in Ojai, as well as for retired clergy, and the east wing to be converted to senior retirement living.¹³

By 1999 the facility, now operating as St. Joseph's Health and Retirement Center, advanced a plan for a \$7.5 million expansion of the hospital to sixty beds. A major hurdle in this path came about as a result of the property's location within a designated green belt, triggering the need for a majority of county voters to exempt it from the county's agricultural land preservation initiative, SOAR (Save Our Open Space). The ballot measure was overwhelmingly approved by the voters, but the election left the order with a debt to the county of nearly \$100,000 in costs for placing the measure on the ballot, and the project also apparently faced funding issues of its own, and in the end was not further pursued.¹⁴ During the 1990s the order did complete the much less ambitious project of converting the older house and stables into an events center known as Villa Giuseppe.

Also advanced by the Order of St. John at this time was a plan to repurpose the entire facility as an assisted living and memory care center. In 2014 they announced the closure of the hospital for renovations, and the plan to reopen for the new use later that year.¹⁵ The novitiate dormitory building was substantially remodeled to accommodate the assisted living center. The tennis court on the east side of the main residence was removed, replaced by a putting green, and further improvements made to the Villa Giuseppe complex. The swimming pool to the west of the residence had been removed around ten years earlier. The remodeling project was completed in 2015, but the new use proved to be short-lived as the entire facility would be permanently closed in 2020 and the property sold.

¹² The Tidings, 6-20-1958; Ventura County Star-Free Press, 6-10-1958, 12-1-1958.

¹³ Wittausch, William Howard. *Master Plan Design Conference for St. Joseph's Health & Retirement Center*. Santa Barbara: William Howard Wittausch, architect/civil engineer, 1997.

¹⁴ Ventura County Star-Free Press, 8-16-1999; Ventura County Star, 1-4-2003.

¹⁵ Ventura County Star-Free Press, 1-31-2014.

4. Potential Historic Resources

The property consists of ten buildings constructed between circa 1915 and 1982, listed and summarized in Table 1 below and described in this section. The plan reference letters correspond to the site plan included below as Figure 4. General note: Many of the window and door openings on all of the buildings are currently vacant. These building materials are stored onsite for renovation.

Table 1. 2464 E. Ojai Avenue Buildings					
Building Name					
Plan Ref.	Historic	Later/Current	Year Built	Known Notable Alterations	Photo No.
A	Residence	Meeting Room	c. 1915	Stucco exterior.	1, 2
B	Barn/Stables	Meeting Room	c. 1915	Stucco exterior, structural interior.	3, 4
C	Chapel	Chapel	1981	Confessional added 1998.	5, 6
D	Main Residence	Weist House	1927	Various, see below.	7-9
E/F	Recreation Room/Dorm	Pool House	1927	Various, see below.	10-12
G	Garage/Shop	Unknown	1927	Enlargement.	13
H	Garage/Storage	Garage/Storage	1927	None.	14
J	Doll House	Doll House (Office?)	1927	Addition. 1957.	15, 16
K	Hospital	Hospital	1959	None.	17, 18
L	Novitiate	Long-term care	1959	Extensive exterior alterations 2015.	19-22

A. Residence. This single-story residence features an irregular plan and a high-pitched front-facing gable roof with shallow open eaves over the main body of the building, and a low-pitched shed-roofed wing on the western elevation. A louvered wood vent is located in the southern gable end and a larger louvered vent/attic access door is found on the northern gable end. A medium-pitched shed roof projects over the front entry on the southern elevation. The building is clad in stucco over single-wall construction. The extant windows are wood multi-pane surrounded by plain wood casings. According to Ventura County Assessor records, this building was constructed c. 1915, presumably as a residence, and was later converted to use as meeting room by St. Joseph’s. These records indicate that the western wing is an enclosed service porch, an alteration that took place in the mid-1960s. Other unspecified alterations took place during the early 1990s. The date of the

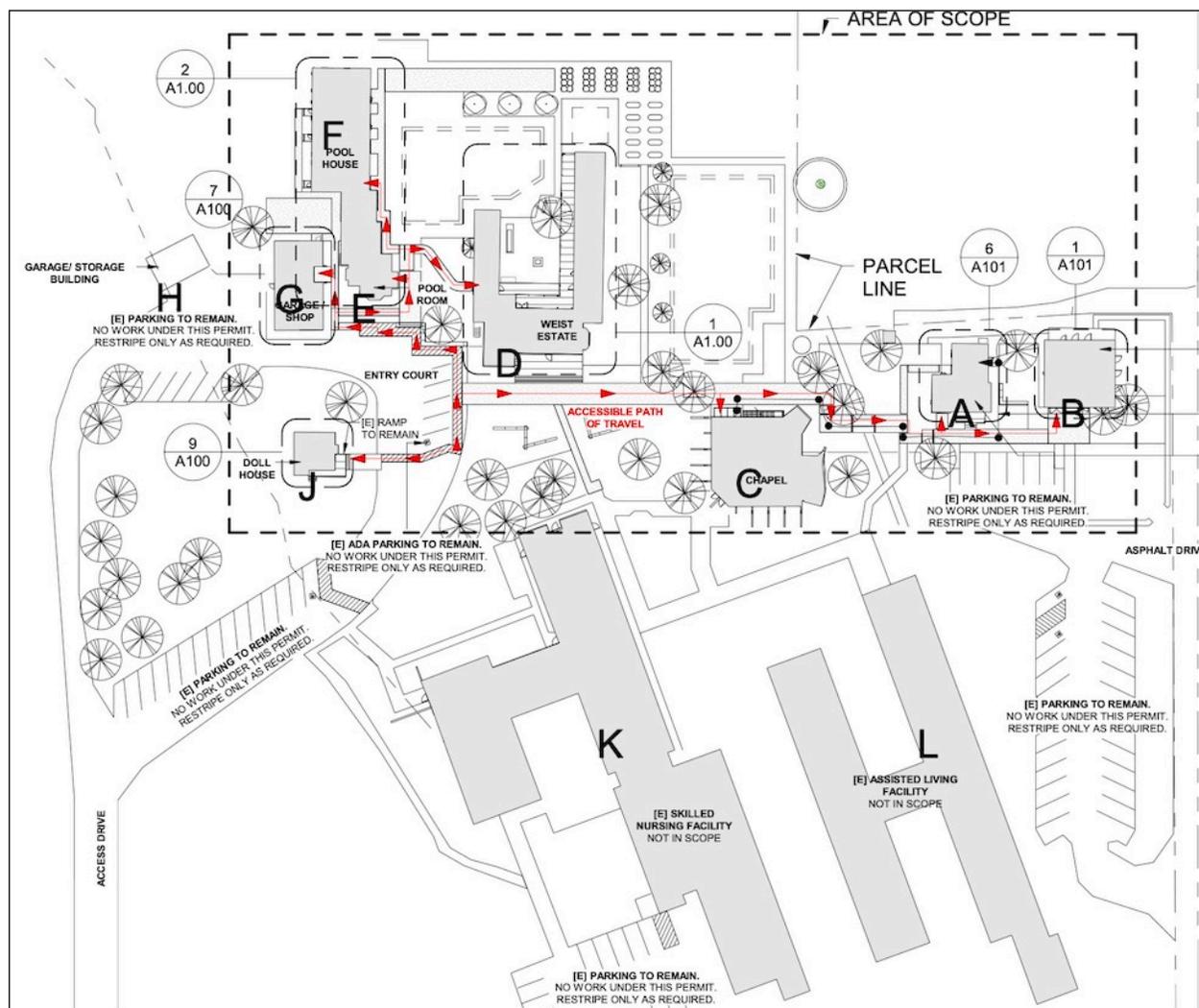


Figure 4. Building Locations (Bestor Architects, 2022).

stucco cladding is unknown, but appears to predate these later alterations and may have occurred with the construction of the Main Residence and related construction in 1927.

B. Barn/Stables. This one and a half-story building features a rectangular plan and a high-pitched side-facing gable roof with shallow, open eaves. Single and double large wood doors with an x-pattern in the lower half are found on the northern and southern elevations. Wood doors with a similar design and two-over-two-light windows in the upper portion of the gable ends presumably originally accessed a hay loft. Windows are multi-pane wood with plain wood casings. According to Ventura County Assessor records, this building was constructed c. 1915, presumably as a barn or stables, and was later converted to use as meeting room by St. Joseph's. These records indicate unspecified alterations took place during the early 1990s. The date of the stucco cladding is unknown, but appears to predate the later alterations and may have occurred with the construction of the Main Residence and related construction in 1927.

C. Chapel. This single-story building constructed in 1981 features a roughly square plan with a truncation of the southwestern corner to form the entry. The roof is a moderately-pitched hip, perhaps better described as a folded shed, supported by a series of angled pylons on the southern and western elevations projecting over the entry at the southwestern corner and terminated at a bell tower at the northeastern corner. Windows are aluminum frame fixed, floor to ceiling, with a tripartite window forming the chancel under the tower. A confessional added to the eastern elevation in 1998 is roughly rectangular in plan but free-form and features inset stained glass windows.

D. Main Residence. This single-story residence constructed in 1927 features a u-plan with wings projecting to the rear (north) forming a courtyard between. The main body of the house features a steeply-pitched side-facing hipped roof with a hipped roof intersecting on the western side projecting over a porch surrounded by a wood porch rail and supported by substantial chamfered wood posts. A smaller gambrel roof projects over a covered entry roughly centered on the southern elevation, supported by wood posts. The two wings are gable-roofed, with the longer, eastern wing clipped with a jerkenhead. Eaves are shallow and open with exposed rafter tails. The southern portion of the residence is constructed on a raised brick foundation that also forms a full-front porch across the southern elevation; the balance is constructed on a concrete perimeter. The residence is stucco-clad and features faux half-timbering details. Windows are mainly wood-frame multi-paned casements. A proportion of the exterior cladding was recently removed down to the studs, particularly on the western wing and the western elevation of the eastern wing.

The residence is known to have been altered in several respects since construction, particularly at the rear, to accommodate the hospital use of the building. Included is the enclosure of an open porch along the western elevation of the eastern wing to form a solarium, and the enclosure of a smaller porch on the western wing. A number of window and door opening were also altered, opened, or closed. Some of these changes are revealed in the exposed framing. The dates of these alterations are undocumented, but Ventura County Assessor records suggest that they took place primarily if not entirely prior to 1964, but some could have been made in an ad-hoc fashion at any time between the 1950s and the 1990s. Historic photos also indicate that the original wood shingle roof was laid in a rustic pattern to imitate thatching, a feature since replaced with asphalt shingles laid in a conventional pattern.

E/F. Recreation Room/Dormitory. This single-story, stucco-clad building with an irregular plan was apparently originally constructed in 1927, probably as two buildings, since joined and connected by a breezeway. The southern portion of the building consists of a wing covered with a front-facing, high-pitched gable roof with shallow eaves and a tripartite bay window. A lower intersecting gable facing east encloses the main entry. This portion of the building, apparently constructed as a recreation room, features a high, opened-beamed ceiling and a fireplace set within an inglenook on the interior. The wing to the south of the breezeway is characterized by two, lower gable roofs stepped back within each other and high-pitched gable dormers on the eastern elevation. The original use of this portion of the building was apparently as cabañas for the pool, formerly located immediate to the east. The northern wing features a high-pitched mansard roof with gabled dormers on the eastern elevation and two entries on the western elevation consisting of intersecting gables forming porches over low concrete stoops and supported by wood posts. Windows are mainly wood multi-pane casements and sash. This wing probably originally functioned as housing for ranch employees and later was used as a dormitory for the hospital.

The full extent of the alterations to this composite of connected buildings or wings is difficult to fully assess as a number of undocumented changes likely occurred when they were adapted for hospital use. Some alter-

ations or infill apparently occurred between the cabaña and dormitory wings. Aluminum windows were added either in new or existing window openings. These later windows have for the most part been removed recently for building renovations, along with portions of the stucco cladding.

G. Garage/Shop. This relatively small one-story, stucco-clad building is rectangular in plan and features a medium-pitched side facing gable roof with shallow eaves. It was constructed in 1927 as a utility building. According to assessor records, at some later date it was converted for use as a combined shop and apartment, presumably for a groundkeeper. The framing suggests at least one expansion of the footprint and other alterations, some of them appearing to be quite recent.

H. Garage/Storage. This small, rectangular plan stucco-clad building constructed in 1927 features a rectangular plan with a medium-pitched side-facing gable roof. Three single-car garages with paneled roll-up doors open to the south and multi-pane windows are seen on the northern elevation. This building appears to be unaltered.

J. Doll House. This tiny, single-story building featuring a roughly square plan was constructed in 1927. It features a steep-pitched hip roof over an eastern wing (the original section of the building) and a mansard roof over the western wing, which according to assessor records was added in 1957. The building is stucco-clad and features faux half timbering and an exterior fireplace chimney of river rock centered on the eastern elevation with entries on either side. A third entry is found on the southern elevation above a brick stoop. The building was presumably constructed as a playhouse for the Weist's younger child, Mary. Though no documentation could be obtained, it was probably later used by St. Joseph's as an office.

K. Hospital (not within current scope of work). This large, single-story Modern style building featuring an irregular plan and stucco over frame and concrete block construction was built in 1959. The roof is flat with cantilevered overhangs forming deep soffited eaves on some elevations. The main entry on the northwestern corner of the building features a stuccoed wing wall and a wall constructed of textile blocks. Windows and main entry doors are aluminum. Room windows are steel fixed and awning-style. This building is largely unaltered on the exterior.

L. Novitiate (not within current scope of work). This large, single-story building featuring an H-plan and stucco over frame and concrete block construction was built in 1959 but its design is currently more reflective of extensive alterations made in 2015 when it was converted to a longterm care facility. At this time a concrete tile hipped roof was added over the original flat roof, two arched, attached entry tower features were added to the eastern elevation and one to the southern elevation of the eastern wing, and an arched arcade was added to the northern elevation of the eastern wing. Many of the steel room windows were retained in this remodeling.

5. Eligibility of Historic Resources

Previous Determinations of Eligibility

This property was evaluated in *Cultural Heritage Survey Phase III — Ojai*, a survey of historic properties within the unincorporated portions of the Ojai Valley completed for the County of Ventura in 1985. This survey assigned a NRHP evaluation code of "4c" to the property, denoting conditional eligibility for listing on the NRHP. This particular code was dropped by the California State Office of Historic Preservation in 2004 and all properties having been assigned a "4" code were reassigned a "7" code, "to signify that these resources need

to be reevaluated using current standards and applying both National Register and California Register criteria.”¹⁶ Notwithstanding this ambiguity, by operation of Ventura County Code, the property is presently considered a Site of Merit. This designation applies to the assessor parcel, but it should be noted that the buildings on the property that were not yet fifty years of age at the time of the survey were not documented or evaluated in this survey, leaving their status as contributors to eligibility unresolved by the survey.¹⁷

National and California Registers: Significance and Eligibility

This evaluation for NRHP or CRHR eligibility considers, building, structures, and objects at least fifty years of age. Building, structures and objects less than fifty years of age may be eligible for the NRHP or CRHR if they can be found to be “exceptional.” While no hard and fast definition for “exceptional” is provided in the NRHP literature, the special language developed to support nominating these properties was clearly intended to accommodate properties that demonstrate a level of importance such that their historical significance can be understood without the passage of time. In general, according to NRHP literature, eligible “exceptional” properties may include, “resources so fragile that survivors of any age are unusual. [Exceptionalness] may be a function of the relative age of a community and its perceptions of old and new. It may be represented by a building or structure whose developmental or design value is quickly recognized as historically significant by the architectural or engineering profession [or] it may be reflected in a range of resources for which the community has an unusually strong associative attachment.” No buildings on the property currently less than fifty year of age appear to rise to the exceptional level.

NRHP Criterion A and CRHR Criterion 1. In connection to its original use as citrus ranch from c.1915 to 1955, this property is generally associated with the historic contextual theme of the agricultural development of the Ojai Valley. This association is only general, and no evidence was located to suggest that it played any important or notable role in this development. In terms of its later use as a convalescent hospital beginning in 1956, the property is associated with the contextual theme of health-seeking that was instrumental in the early settlement of the Ojai Valley from its earliest promotion in the 1870s in the form of resorts and hotels. This theme continued and evolved into the postwar era with the development of numerous retirement communities and assisted living facilities, a trend typified by the establishment of the Grey Gables community in Ojai by Dr. Ethel Andrus in 1954, who a few years later founded the American Association of Retired Persons.¹⁸ The establishment of St. Joseph’s Convalescent Hospital in 1956 is generally associated with this time period and theme, but played no known, important or notable role in this development.

NRHP Criterion B and CRHR Criterion 2. This property does not appear to be closely associated with any individual who made a significant contribution to the historical development of the area, state or nation. Edward Wiest was active in the Ojai Valley community through a number of business ventures and employment at the Ojai State Bank from its inception in 1907 until his retirement and relocation to Santa Barbara in the 1930s. While over that time he rose to be appointed as the bank’s president, he was not one of its

¹⁶ California State Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks & Recreation. *Technical Assistance Bulletin #8: User’s Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historic Resources Inventory Directory*. November, 2004.

¹⁷ Triem, Judith. *Cultural Heritage Survey, Phase III - Ojai*. Ventura: County of Ventura, 1985.

¹⁸ Fry, Patricia (revised and updated by Elise DePuydt and Craig Walker). *The Ojai Valley An Illustrated History*. Ojai, CA: Ojai Valley Museum, 2017, pp. 306-310.

founders. Subsequent owners of the property either were not permanent residents of the Ojai Valley or were not notably active in community affairs.

NRHP Criterion C and CRHR Criterion 3. The property consists of a variety of architectural types and periods, extending from the construction of the first two buildings c. 1915, the construction of the Wiest residence and associated buildings in 1927, and the hospital buildings in 1959. The early residence and barn/stables are stylistically indistinct due to a series of alterations that may have begun in the 1920s in an effort to match them more closely in appearance to the new buildings being constructed. The 1927 construction is generally of the English Revival style, one of the many period revival architectural styles popular during the 1920s. Also known as Tudor Revival, it is loosely based on the medieval English rural vernacular. In this case quite loosely, as the feature of the long wings embracing a courtyard to the rear for instance is more characteristic of the Spanish Revival of the same time period. Some later alterations held to this general architectural scheme by continuing the use of faux half-timbering and stucco cladding that characterize the style, but others departed from this approach with the introduction of aluminum windows and the enclosure of porches with contemporary materials. The 1959 hospital buildings were Modern in architectural style as originally designed. One was altered in 2015 to the Spanish Revival style.

No information was found to suggest that any designer associated with this property should be regarded as a master practitioner in their profession. Robert Winfield, the builder of the 1927 improvements, provided his clients with design services, but was principally known as a building contractor. The Los Angeles architectural firm of Verge and Clatworthy, designers of the Hospital and Novitiate building constructed in 1959 were one of many active in the exceptionally busy postwar period in Southern California, with a specialty in hospital buildings. Though they were a busy and productive practice, no information was found to suggest that they made an influential contribution to their profession.

NRHP Criterion D and CRHR Criterion 4 pertain to archeological resources and consequently have not been evaluated in this report.

Summary NRHP and CRHR Conclusions. The property is generally associated with the historical theme of the agricultural development of the Ojai Valley, and with the theme of retirement and assisted living (NRHP Criterion A and CRHR Criterion 1). However the property made no known notable contributions to these themes and consequently does not appear to be eligible for the NRHP or CRHR.

Ventura County Eligibility

Criterion 1. This property reflects two elements of history: the development of agriculture (c. 1915-1955), and the development of the retirement and assisted living communities in the Ojai Valley (1956-1972).

Criterion 2. As above, the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County history.

Criterion 3. The property is not associated with the lives of persons important to Ventura County.

Criterion 4. This criterion pertains to archeological resources and consequently is not evaluated in this report.

Criterion 5. The property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.

Criterion 6. Integrity: Establish the authenticity of the resource's physical identity by evidence of lack of deterioration and significant survival of the characteristics that existed during its period of importance. This shall be evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship.

1. **Location** (The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.) The property retains integrity of location; the property features have not been moved during a non-historic period.
2. **Design** (The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.) The remaining features conveying the agricultural period (c. 1915-1955) are the Residence (Plan ref. A), Barn/Stables (Plan ref. B), Main Residence (Plan ref. D), Recreation Room (Plan ref E/F) and Garage/Storage (Plan ref H) and Doll House (Plan ref. J). The Main Residence and Recreation Room were moderately altered for the adaption to the hospital use, but continue to convey their historic functions. The Garage/Shop (Plan ref. G) has been substantially modified and enlarged. The remaining features conveying the hospital are the Chapel (Plan ref. C), the Hospital (Plan ref. K), and the Novitiate (Plan ref. L). Of these only the Hospital building is of sufficient age and unaltered from its period of construction.
3. **Setting** (The physical environment of a historic property.) The rural setting in which the property was constructed remains intact from its period of significance.
4. **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.) To the extent that the design integrity mains, the integrity of materials for the builds remain largely intact. Note that recent renovation efforts have resulted in the removal of a considerable quantity of exterior building materials.
5. **Workmanship** (The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory.) The integrity criterion is not applicable.

Summary County Landmark/Site of Merit Conclusion. The property appears to be eligible for designation as a County of Ventura Landmark or Site of Merit as a historic district. The contributing buildings are noted as Map. refs. A, B, D, E/F, H, J and K. However it should be noted that the Ventura County Code does not include a minimum age for eligibility, and thus the Chapel (presently at 41 years of age) can be regarded as a contributor to significance, as it is associated with the historic period of the use of the property as a hospital. An appropriate period of significance for the residential use of the property is 1915 to 1955; for the hospital use, 1955-c.1980.

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

Project description. The proposed project involves the rehabilitation/adaptive reuse of the buildings on the property (with the exception of Buildings K and L, which are not included in this scope of work) for residential and public assembly purposes. The majority of the proposed work involves interior renovations and space reconfigurations that are not covered by this evaluation. The exterior work proposed generally involves the refurbishment of existing doors and windows and the restoration of exterior treatments to their historic appearance, to the degree to which these conditions can be reasonably determined based on historical evidence.

Note that the extensive number of changes made to the property over several decades, the result of its adaptation to hospital use, and the ad-hoc and undocumented fashion in which they occurred, creates considerable degree of uncertainty with respect to determining original spaces, treatments, and architectural details. Historic photographic evidence of these conditions is very limited. Further, a good deal of exterior building fabric has recently been removed in connection with the current renovation efforts. A considerable amount of photographic documentation of conditions prior to the initiation of this work is available. However, it documents conditions as they existed within the last two years, and consequently is of only limited value in establishing the property's appearance during a historic period.

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 citrus ranch and later as a hospital has ceased. The future viability of the buildings on the property relies on the introduction of uses that will retain as much of the remaining historic fabric as can be practically adapted to serve these uses. The renovation of the residence buildings for residential purposes (though they have seen other uses in the interim) is consistent with the approach called for in this standard. Retaining the public assembly use of the Chapel is likewise consistent with this standard.

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. In order to preserve the property's historic character future uses should respect the spatial relationships that describe the historic functions of the property and alterations to historic features should be minimized. The buildings representing the periods of significance should be rehabilitated as nearly as practical and as can be documented to their periods of significance. Replacement materials should match the existing or documented earlier appearances. Features to be removed should be documented to post-date the historic periods of the property. The proposed project generally conforms with this approach.

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 should be based on available forensic and pictorial evidence of their configurations during the historic period. The proposed project generally conforms with this approach.

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

Discussion: The general approach to rehabilitation should be to restore features as they appeared during their period of significance. However it may be appropriate to retain alterations made to the original ranch buildings for adaptation to the hospital use if documentation of the previous conditions are unavailable and these treatments are functionally suitable to the future use. The proposed project generally conforms with this approach.

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

Discussion. Exterior finishes and details should be retained and repaired as needed. In areas where reconstruction is required, the historic materials and finishes should be reproduced to the greatest extent feasible. Where the reproduction of historic materials and finishes are not feasible, the approach should be to utilize materials and finishes that provide a similar appearance. The proposed project generally conforms with this approach.

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 replacement of windows with original materials removed from the buildings should take place, will be repaired and reglazed where feasible. Reproduction of the original design and materials should take place where repair of original materials is infeasible, and replacement with suitable contemporary materials where reproduction is infeasible. The proposed project generally conforms with this approach.

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.

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 and Conditions

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. In order to assure conformance with the Standards, the following conditions are recommended:

1. The restoration and replacement of doors, windows, and other exterior architectural features, shall be based to the greatest feasible extent upon documented historic conditions, forensic evidence, and compatibility with the property's historic architectural character.
2. Prior to the issuance of building permits, final exterior architectural treatments shall be reviewed and approved by a qualified architectural historian for conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.



Photo 1. Residence (Building A), viewed from southwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 2. Residence [Building A], viewed from northeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 3. Barn/Stables (Building B), viewed from northwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 4. Barn/Stables (Building B), viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 5. Chapel (Building C), viewed from west. [12-8-2021]



Photo 6. Chapel (Building C), viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 7. Main Residence (Building D), viewed from southwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 8. Main Residence (Building D), viewed from east. [12-8-2021]



Photo 9. Main Residence (Building D), viewed from north. [12-8-2021]



Photo 10. Recreation Room/Dorm (Building E/F), viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 11. Recreation Room/Dorm (Building E/F), viewed from southwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 12. Recreation Room/Dorm (Building E/F, interior. [12-8-2021]



Photo 13. Garage/Shop (Building G), viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 14. Garage/Storage (Building H), viewed from south. [12-8-2021]



Photo 15. Doll House (Building J), viewed from east. [12-8-2021]



Photo 16. Doll House (Building J), viewed from southwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 17. Hospital (Building K), main entry, viewed from northwest. [12-8-2021]



Photo 18. Hospital (Building K), patient room wing, viewed from northeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 19. Novitiate (Building L), eastern wing, viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 20. Novitiate (Building L), eastern wing, viewed from northeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 21. Novitiate (Building L), southeastern corner of east wing, viewed from southeast. [12-8-2021]



Photo 22. Novitiate (Building L), western elevation of eastern wing, viewed from west. [12-8-2021]