

Historic Resources Report 6135 N. Rose Avenue Saticoy, CA

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Prepared by:



Prepared for:

Hollandia Produce
1540 Santa Monica Road
Carpinteria CA 93013

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 a Conditional Use Permit application filing for a property located at 6135 N. Rose Avenue, Saticoy. [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.

This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for Hollandia Produce of Carpinteria, California, and is based on a field investigation and research conducted in July 2011. 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

The property evaluated in this report was found to be ineligible for listing on the NRHP and CRHR. The residence, walnut dehydrator, and shop/storage/equipment shed buildings were found to be potentially eligible for County of Ventura landmark designation under Criterion 1 and Criterion 3. Consequently, these buildings, although not the property as a whole, were found to be historic resources for purposes of CEQA.

Report Contents

1.	Administrative Setting	1
	Ventura County Landmark Criteria	
2.	Impact Thresholds and Mitigation	3
3.	Historical Setting	3
4.	Potential Historic Resources	4
5.	Eligibility of Historic Resources	5
	National and California Registers: Significance, Eligibility and Integrity	
	Properties Less Than 50 Years of Age	
	Local Significance and Eligibility	
	Conclusion	
6.	Selected Sources	8



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

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. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California’s history and cultural heritage;
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, 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 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 State 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 which is found to significant under one or more of the criteria to be considered eligible for listing, the “essential physical features” which 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 as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.” The 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).

The relevant aspects of integrity depend upon the NRHP 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 California Register regulations include similar language with regard to integrity, but also state that “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 which may exist but are not visible to the evaluator, or on restorations which are theoretically possible but which have not occurred. (CCR §4852 (c))

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

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance sets out the following criteria for designation of a Ventura County Landmark:

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.

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. (PRC §15064.5(b)(3-4))

3. Historical Setting

Deeds of record indicate that this parcel of approximately 42 acres was purchased by rancher Ashby C. Vickers in January 1900. The property is located within an agricultural subdivision of Rancho Santa Clara del Norte recorded in 1891 by Antonio Schiappa Pietra and a number of heirs to the related Solari family. (Ventura County Maps of Record; Alexander, 1912)

The nearly 14,000 acre rancho was granted by Governor Alvarado to Juan Maria Sanchez in 1837 for his service to the government at the Presidio of Santa Barbara. The grant was patented to Sanchez in 1869, but subsequent to its purchase by Italian immigrant Antonio Schiappa Pietra and his brother Federico in 1864. A third brother, Leopoldo, joined them in 1866. The Schiappa Pietras were merchants in Ventura and also raised grain and beans on the rancho prior to its subdivision. The land was irrigated from a ditch system created by the Santa Clara Irrigating Company after its formation in 1870, fed from the Santa Clara River. Federico Schiappa Pietra died in 1867 and Antonio in 1895. At the time the parcel was purchased by Vickers it was owned by Leopoldo Schiappa Pietra, heir to the brothers’ holdings. (Cowen, 1977: 91; Triem, 1983: 48; Freeman, 1968: 16-17; Ventura County Deeds of Record)

Now located on N. Rose Avenue, the street on which this parcel is located was for much of its history called Ditch Road, named for the irrigation feature that once ran down its centerline, a portion of the larger diversion system developed by the Santa Clara Irrigating Company. This portion of rural Ventura County is variously referred to in historical records as Del Norte, Saticoy, Oxnard or El Rio, depending on the source and time period.

Ashby Christian Vickers was born in Cape Girardeau, Missouri in 1861 to William and Martha Vickers. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the family relocated to Springfield, Illinois where Vickers grew to adulthood and learned the horse trade. He relocated to Ventura County in 1881 (in some sources, 1883), first working in the livery business in Ventura and later operating his own livery in Santa Paula and Los Angeles. In 1888 Vickers married Addie May Holden of Santa Paula. The couple remained in Los Angeles for a few years, but returned to Ventura County during the early 1890s, at first renting a 350-acre ranch in the Round Mountain area near Hueneme. Vickers purchased a portion of this property in 1903 and expanded his holdings in 1907.

Continuing to increase on his real estate investments, in 1908 Vickers became a founding stockholder in the Oxnard-Simi Land Company with Leon Lehmann of Oxnard. The acreage the partnership purchased included the old Simi Hotel, but the principal purpose of the acquisition was apparently agricultural development. Three years later, the Vickers-Lehmann partnership purchased the Hoffmayer Ranch in the Simi Valley, swelling their holdings in the valley to 720 acres (in some sources, 820 acres). Vickers also leased other properties in the Oxnard/El Rio area, mainly for lima bean cultivation, the dominant cash crop on the Oxnard Plain during this time period. He added 120 acres to his Rancho Santa Clara del Norte holdings in 1912. (Gidney, 1917)

While Vickers was amassing agricultural land in a variety of locations in Ventura County, he and his family evidently continued to live on their ranch in the Hueneme area, until their new home on Ditch Road was completed in 1908. The home was constructed by Oxnard contractor Thomas Carroll at a cost of \$5,000. The name of the architect, if any, is unknown. The property on Ditch Road became the center of the Vickers enterprises for the next several years, and the land planted out in walnut trees. A number of outbuildings, including a walnut dehydrator shed, were constructed.

Ashby and Addie Vickers had six children: Josephine (1889), Gladys (1891), Mattie (1895), Vesta (1903), Ashby Jr. (1909) and Dorothy (1911). Josephine married the well-known Major League baseball player Fred Snodgrass. Mattie married Gus Gleichmann, who also had a brief career in professional baseball, but is better known locally for his family's ownership of the Pierpont Inn in Ventura. After Fred Snodgrass retired from baseball in 1916, the couple returned to California, and the house on Ditch Road occupied by them. Fred and Josephine Snodgrass apparently lived on and operated the Vickers family ranch for three years. They later moved to Oxnard. Ashby and Addie Vickers and their other children moved to Hollywood.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the property seems to have been rented to ranchers outside of the family. Known tenants include Louis Lopez and Mark Reynolds. The home was evidently rented along with the land. During these decades Ashby Vickers appears to have made frequent trips to Ventura County to oversee his local investments, staying mainly at the Pierpont Inn. (*Oxnard Courier*; 3-13-1919, 10-30-1920, 6-8-1926)

By the end of the 1930s the family home was once again occupied by a family member, Ashby Vickers Jr., and his wife Carolyn Bowker of Santa Paula. They married in 1936. During the last years of his life, Ashby Vickers Sr. had been living at the Pierpont Inn, where he died in December 1940. His son continued to live on the ranch on Ditch Road and run the family businesses until 1969. He died in Santa Paula in 1998. The property remained in the Vickers family until it was sold to Keeline-Wilcox Nurseries in 1985. (*Oxnard Press-Courier*, 12-3-1940; *Santa Paula Times*, 10-23-1998)

4. Potential Historic Resources

Residence. This two-story residence features a roughly rectangular plan and a side-facing medium-pitched gable roof with moderately deep, open eaves, knee-brackets and exposed rafter tails. The building is clad in medium wood lap siding. Windows are mainly wide sash units, some with multi-pane upper sashes, with plain

wood casings. The main southern elevation consists of a half-front projecting front porch with squat river cobble columns supporting stout wood posts. The eastern two-thirds of the porch is enclosed, an apparent deviation from the original design. A half-story shed-roofed dormer is located above the porch. Offset to the right is an intersecting second-story gable roof. An exterior river cobble fireplace and chimney are located on the western elevation. A projecting wing on the eastern elevation features a second story sleeping porch enclosed with wood sash windows wrapping the southern, eastern and northern elevations.

This residence was constructed for Ashby and Addie Vickers in 1908. The date of the porch enclosure, the only apparent exterior alteration to the house, is unknown, but records suggest that this change occurred circa 1940 when it became the residence of Ashby Vickers Jr. The house is in generally good condition, although some stones have spalled away from the chimney. The interior of the building has been substantially altered to accommodate its current office use. Two related buildings, a garage and laundry previously located to the north of the residence, have been removed. [Photos 1-4]

Shop/Storage/Equipment Shed. This one-story building features an L-plan. The building is sided and roofed with corrugated iron panels. The roof is a low-pitched gable. It features overhead track doors and wood frame sash windows. Assessor's records indicate that this building was constructed in 1935. It appears to be unaltered and is in good condition. [Photo 5]

Walnut Dehydrator. This one-story building features a roughly square plan and a medium-pitched gable roof with shallow eaves. Siding is board and batten. A small monitor is located on the roof ridge. The building features overhead track barn doors on at least three elevations, and wood frame and aluminum windows within the gable ends. Assessor's records indicate that this building was constructed in 1930. With the exception of the aluminum windows, and perhaps some of the larger wood-frame windows, the building appears to be otherwise unaltered, and is in good condition. [Photo 6]

Greenhouses and Shade Buildings. A substantial portion of the property is covered with greenhouses and shade building serving the nursery operations. These buildings were constructed during the mid-to-late 1980s. [Photos 7-8]

5. Eligibility of Historic Resources

National and California Registers: Significance, Eligibility and Integrity

This property does not appear to be closely associated with any historical event. It is generally representative of the construction of homes and ranches in the Rancho Santa Clara del Norte area after its subdivision in 1891, but played no known, important role in that development (NRHP Criterion A and CRHR Criterion 1).

This property does not appear to be associated with historically notable individuals. Ashby C. Vickers Sr. was a successful rancher, but he appears to be only generally representative of the ranching community in Ventura County during the first decades of the twentieth century and appears to have made no notable contributions to the development of the county. He apparently lived on the property for less than ten years before moving to Hollywood. The property was occupied by his son-in-law Fred Snodgrass, a well-known Major League baseball player for a period of approximately three years. However, this residency occurred after his retirement from baseball and consequently is not associated with his professional career. Ashby Vickers Jr. lived in the home probably circa 1936 until 1969. He ran the family businesses and was involved in a number of agriculture-related organizations. No information was found to suggest that his contributions to agricultural development in Ventura County were historically significant. (NRHP Criterion B and CRHR Criterion 2).

The Main Residence is a good example of the California Bungalow architectural style, but does not typify the the distinctive characteristics of the style, which during this time period was experiencing its full expression. More complete examples of the style generally include highly expressed structural elements and a more deliberate effort to connect the building to the landscape through scale, horizontality, informality of plan, and other architectural devices which are not found in this building. It is therefore more of a good, larger example of a builder-designed or standard plan pattern book home of this period. No architect is known to have been associated with its design. The builder, Thomas Carroll of Oxnard, was skilled but also quite prolific. The other buildings on the property represent common utilitarian design and construction methods. (NRHP Criterion C and CRHR Criterion 3).

It is conceivable that the property may be eligible as a contributor to a historic district composed of similar properties in the Ranch Santa Clara del Norte area, but the study required to support an evaluation on this basis is beyond the scope of this report.

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

Properties Less Than 50 Years of Age

Properties less than 50 years of age may be eligible 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 which 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.” All of the buildings on the property constructed for the nursery operations are currently less than fifty year of age, and none appear to rise to the exceptional level.

Local Significance and Eligibility

Under County of Ventura eligibility Criterion 1, this property potentially “exemplifies or reflects special elements of the County’s social, aesthetic, engineering, architectural or natural history.” It appears to be one of the few surviving ranch homes to be constructed in the years following the subdivision of Ranch Santa Clara del Norte in 1891, and perhaps one of the earliest and best preserved examples. The vast majority of the ranch homes which existed in this area have been lost. Similarly, it may be seen to be “associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County” (Criterion 2). The significant event for this local area would be the agricultural development of Rancho Santa Clara del Norte, of which this property is a scarce surviving example. The property does not appear to be “associated with the lives of persons important to Ventura County or its cities, California, or national history” (Criterion 3); or to represent the “distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction.” (Criterion 5) Ventura County Criterion 4 relates to archeological resources and consequently has not been evaluated in this report.

Although integrity is stated in the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance along with the listing criteria as Criterion 6, the Cultural Heritage Board typically evaluates integrity in a similar fashion to the NRHP and CRHR. The property’s ability to “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" is considerably limited due to the extensive construction large greenhouse and shade buildings on the property during the 1980s, and the loss of numerous other ranch homes in the vicinity. Therefore, its integrity of setting, feeling, and association are substantially compromised. Integrity of design for the surviving buildings on the property appears to be intact, but its historic relationship to tree or row crops no longer exists. The buildings' integrity of materials and workmanship appear to be intact.

It appears that the residence, walnut dehydrator, and shop/storage/equipment shed buildings may be eligible for designation under the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance.

Conclusion

The residence, walnut dehydrator, and shop/storage/equipment shed buildings should be regarded as a historic resource for the purposes of CEQA. However, due to the construction of numerous, large contemporary buildings on the property, the potentially significant resources should be regarded as being limited to the buildings themselves and their immediate vicinities, rather than the parcel as a whole.

6. Selected Sources

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Ventura County Assessors Records.

Ventura County Voter Roles.



Photo 1. Residence, southern elevation. [6-28-2011]



Photo 2. Residence, souther and eastern elevations. [6-28-2011]



Photo 3. Residence, northern and eastern elevations. [6-28-2011]



Photo 4. Residence, western elevation. [6-28-2011]



Photo 5. Shop/storage/equipment shed building, northern and western elevations. [6-28-2011]



Photo 6. Walnut dehydrator, southern and western elevations. [6-28-2011]



Photo 7. Greenhouse buildings, view east facing towards residence. [6-28-2011]



Photo 8. Shade buildings, representative example, viewed from southeast. [6-28-2011]



Photo 9. Oblique aerial. [Google Maps]