

***Historical Resources Assessment
Matilija Hot Springs
Ventura County, CA***

Prepared for:
County of Ventura
Watershed Protection District
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

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Resource Identification
Matilija Hot Springs
Ventura County, CA

Resource Name: Matilija Hot Springs
Other names: Ventura Hot Springs; Ojai Hot Springs

Location: 786 and 788 Matilija Canyon Road
Ojai (Unincorporated area)
Ventura County, CA

Classification: Category - District
Ownership - Public
Public Acquisition - N/A
Status – Occupied (Caretaker only)
Accessible - Yes: Restricted
Present Use – Government/Residential (Caretaker only)

Owner of Property: County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Location of Legal Description: County of Ventura Government Center
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Representation in Existing Surveys: County of Ventura Historical Resources Inventory
County Landmark #25
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Section I

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to assess the historical significance of the cultural landscape, buildings, and swimming pool located at Matilija Hot Springs, 786 and 788 Matilija Canyon Road, Ventura County in the Unincorporated Area of Ojai. This report will:

- Identify any buildings or structures on the project site or immediate vicinity that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR), or for designation as local landmarks, or have already been declared or designated;
- Identify relevant literature and source documentation (such as previous historic resources evaluation reports and surveys, and materials maintained by local agencies, historical societies, libraries and individuals) used to develop an historic setting and historic context for the project area, and to determine potential architectural and/or historical significance;
- Provide and evaluate all relevant historic contexts of the site, including but not limited to the post-World War II recreational aspect of the Matilija Hot Springs;
- Provide photographs of all buildings and structures which appear to be 50 years old or older and record architectural descriptions for each. Dates of construction must be established based on official records, or lacking official records, visual or other documentary evidence. The report must assess whether the potential historic resources retain integrity sufficient to convey their association with an historically significant theme; and,
- Evaluate the proposed project for its potential to adversely impact historic resources directly or indirectly, in accordance with the standards and procedures of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Project impacts, both immediate and cumulative, are to be determined and alternatives evaluated. Feasible mitigation measures intended to reduce or eliminate impacts are to be proposed, as necessary and appropriate.

The ultimate conclusions in this report represent the professional opinions of the author and are based on the data that has been found through research of the historical and architectural background of the subject property that was available at the time of preparation, as well as the application of local, state, and federal criteria, and best professional practices. There is no extant historic context statement for the site; therefore much of the research performed for this report is new.

This report has been prepared for the property owner, the County of Ventura, County Watershed Protection District, for the purpose of determining the environmental impact of proposed plans for the site. These immediate plans include:

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- Trimming of an unknown number of oak trees;
- Demolition of the dining hall that is attached to the 1889 [sic] Post Office;
- Sealing and securing all buildings;
- Repairing the pool gate enclosure;
- Disconnecting all electrical connections;
- Correcting building code violations; and,
- Completing and circulating nominations of the old Post Office building for State and/or National Registers of Historic Places.

Future proposed plans for the site include:

- Removal of old metal equipment under pool deck;
- Demolition of pool;
- Demolition of toilet building;
- Approval of interim use of the site for dam removal staging area;
- Replacement of vegetation with native vegetation;
- Restoration of historic buildings; and,
- Creation of historic/interpretive center.

The author is a qualified historian with an educational and professional background in cultural history, property research, and historic preservation. These qualifications include academic degrees in History and Architectural History (Ph.D. and M.A., New York University; M.A., Yale University; B.A., Sarah Lawrence College); training in Historic Preservation (University of Southern California); as well as experience preparing the Historic Structure Report for Mission San Miguel (San Luis Obispo County, CA); and, the presentation and publication of numerous papers and articles on the history and architectural history of present-day California.

The resource to be evaluated is the 9.22 acre site on the north bank of the Ventura River known as Matilija Hot Springs. The site is situated on a portion of Section 29, Township 5-North, Range 23-West, S.B.B. and M. The property is identified by Ventura County as Assessor's Parcel No. 010-0-180-430 (main structures); 010-0-180-440 (hot springs); and, 010-0-180-045 (cold spring).

The entire site – the 9.22 acre Matilija Hot Springs including buildings, structures, and object; the hot water springs; a cold water spring; and easements thereto – is presently listed as Ventura County Landmark #25, having been assigned this distinction by the County Cultural Heritage Board August 7, 1972. The site currently comprises 12 buildings (residence, pool house, bathhouse, Post Office/store/snack bar, dance/dining hall, restroom cottage, guest cottage, five cabins, and storage shed), two structures (observation platform and pool), and one object (well house). Eight of these 15 property features contribute to the fabric of a potential historic district.

Section II

Methodology

In evaluating this potential historic property, codified National, State, and Local criteria were employed, including an analysis of social and cultural significance, as well as specific evaluations as to whether the subject property meets the various requirements for it to be considered historic.

As per the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards, these requirements may include age, rarity of design, significance of an architect, builder, or owner/resident/occupant of the property, as well as how a structure relates to its historic context, the condition of its architectural integrity and whether non-historic alterations can be easily reversed.

For this report physical examination and photographic recordation of each building and structure (to the extent they were accessible and/or safely accessible) and the site in general was undertaken. Site visits were made on June 7, 2012, August 27, 2012, September 13, 2012, and October 12, 2012 when photographs were taken and structures and buildings examined.

Analysis was also made of the contextual history of the site including owners, operators, customers, employees, uses, public events, phases of construction and improvements, scopes of significance, weather events, and environmental occurrences. Various public records were consulted – such as census data, death records, environmental report and fire inspection data, architecture databases, and tax assessment records. In addition, the author consulted archival materials including research notes, magazine articles, newspaper articles and clippings, vintage photographs, directory listings, advertisements, memoirs, official documents – and published texts, books, and guidebooks, as well as telephone, email, and live interviews with persons who possess historic evidence or collections related to the site and persons who inhabited, visited, or worked at the site through the years. All sources are cited in the bibliography.

Section III

Historic Property Regulations

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register is described in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations as,

“...an authoritative guide to be used by federal, state, or local governments, private groups, and citizens to identify the nation’s cultural resources and to indicate what properties should be protected from destruction or impairment.”

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, the resource must normally be at least 50 years of age. Moreover, the resource must possess a quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and/or culture. These qualities may be manifest in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and/or objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and must satisfy at least one of four criteria as listed below.

Criterion A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Criterion B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

Criterion 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

Criterion D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

According to the National Register Bulletin #15 (“How to Apply the National Register Criterion for Evaluation”), the resource must also have integrity to the extent that it “must not only be shown to be significant under National Register criteria, but also must have integrity.” Integrity is the ability of the resource to convey its significance. That is, a resource must not be so altered from the condition during its period of significance that it fails to demonstrate the reasons for that significance.

In addition, a resource should be significant within a historic context to be eligible for listing. Again, per National Register Bulletin #14, historic contexts are,

“...those patterns, themes, or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history or prehistory is made clear.”

The significance of a historic property can be determined only when it is evaluated within its historic context. The resource must represent an important aspect of the area's history or prehistory and still have the integrity to convey that to qualify for the National Register.

The National Register also allows for the establishment of historic districts, where the buildings, structures, objects, and/or landscape may not be eligible for individual listing, but as a grouping, convey both the integrity and context to meet one or more of the four criteria.

California Register of Historical Resources

A potential historic resource must be considered under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to ascertain if it is eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources (California Register). Modeled after the National Register of Historic Places, the eligibility standards of the California Register vary slightly from its prototype. The integrity requirements for the California Register are slightly lower. Also, a resource is posited as historic if it is locally listed (as is the Matilija Hot Springs site) or has been identified as historically significant in a historic resources survey.

Nonetheless, a preponderance of evidence may show a property to have been so significantly altered after being landmarked or identified in a survey that it no longer retains this historic integrity.

The California Register was established in 1992 with Assembly Bill 2881. The California Register, like the National Register, is used by government entities (state and local agencies), private groups, and individual citizens to identify and record historic resources. This is intended to help determine which resources should be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse impacts.

The California Register includes:

- Resources formally determined eligible for, or listed in, the National Register of Historic Places through federal preservation programs administered by the Office of Historic Preservation including,
 - the National Register program;
 - Tax Certification (Evaluation of Significance, part 1, 36 CFR Part 67); and
 - National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106, U.S.C. 470f) reviews of federal undertakings;
- State Historical Landmarks numbered 770 or higher, which are automatically listed;
- Points of Historical Interest recommended for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission;
- Resources nominated for listing and determined eligible in accordance with criteria and procedures adopted by the SHRC, including
 - individual historic resources and historic districts;
 - resources identified as significant in historical resources surveys which meet certain criteria; and

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- resources and districts designated as city or county landmarks pursuant to a city or county ordinance when the designation criteria are consistent with California Register criteria.

Resources eligible for listing include buildings, sites, structures, objects, or historic districts that retain historic integrity and are historically significant at the local, state or national level under one or more of the following four criteria:

Criterion A. The resource is 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;

Criterion B. The resource is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;

Criterion C. The resource 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

Criterion D. The resource has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

The resource must normally be at least fifty years of age. A resource less than 50 years of age may be eligible if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance. While criteria for the California Register are less rigorous with regard to the issue of integrity, there is the expectation that the resource reflect its appearance during its period of significance.

The period of significance is the date or span of time within which significant events transpired, or significant individuals made their important contributions. Integrity is the authenticity of a historical resource's physical identity as evidenced by the survival of characteristics or historic fabric that existed during the resource's period of significance. Alterations to a resource or changes in its use over time may have historical, cultural, or architectural significance. Simply, a resource must retain enough of its historic character or appearance to be recognizable as a historical resource and to convey the reasons for its significance. A resource that has lost its historic character or appearance may still have sufficient integrity for the California Register if, under criterion 4, it maintains the potential to yield significant scientific or historical information or specific data.

Historic Districts are a concentration of historic buildings, structures, objects, or sites within precise boundaries that share a common historical, cultural, or architectural background. Individual resources within an historic district may lack individual significance but be considered a contributor to the significance of the historic district.

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Landmark

As defined by CEQA, historic resources also include properties listed in local registers of historic properties. A local register of historic resources is broadly defined in Section 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 resources are generally identified in at least one of two ways:

1. Historic resource surveys conducted by or for a local agency in accordance with the procedures and standards set by the State Office of Historic Preservation and adopted by that agency. Such surveys must be periodically updated to reflect the most current list of potential historic resources.
2. Landmarks designated under local ordinances or resolutions. These properties are “presumed to be historically or culturally significant” (Public Resources Guide, Sections 5024.1, 21804.1, and 15064.5).

The first Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance was adopted in February 1968. Per Section 1361, the stated purpose of the Ordinance was to,

“promote the economic and general welfare of the County of Ventura by preserving and protecting landmarks and points of interest. . . be they public or private ownership and having a specific historical or aesthetic character or interest.”

The Ordinance was re-adopted in 1973, amended in 1991, and subsequently repealed and reinstated in 2000. This current Ordinance – No. 4225 – amends Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 5 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code, covering Sections 1360 to 1373 of said Code. At present, it endows the County Cultural Heritage Board the authority to designate Landmarks within the unincorporated areas of the County as well as within the boundaries of those incorporated cities whose Councils have authorized the County Board to serve as their Cultural Heritage Board.

Section 1365.5 of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance articulates the following criteria for the designation of a Ventura County Landmark:

Criterion A. The resource exemplifies or reflects special elements of the County’s social, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history;

Criterion B. The resource is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County or its cities, regional history, or cultural heritage of California or the United States;

Criterion C. The resource is associated with the lives of persons important to Ventura County or its cities, California, or national history;

Criterion D. The resource 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;

Criterion E. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master builder or possesses high artistic value;

Criterion F. The resource retains integrity in terms of authenticity of physical identity as established by evidence of lack of deterioration and significant of the characteristics that existed during its period of importance. This shall be evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship.

Integrity

Finally, the importance of any historic property must be evaluated according to its integrity. Applicable to National Register properties, the Secretary of the Interior recognizes seven elements of integrity:

1. **Location:** The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred;
2. **Design:** The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property;
3. **Setting:** The physical environment of a historic property;
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;
5. **Workmanship:** The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory;
6. **Feeling:** A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of particular period of time; and,
7. **Association:** The direct link between an important historic even or person and a historic property.



**Matilija Hot Springs
Site Plan**

Section IV

Site Description

Matilija Hot Springs consists of 9.22 acres containing the former mineral springs resort, County Park and recreation area, public health spa, and private new-age spiritual and yoga retreat center. The entire site—including buildings and structures, the hot water springs, a cold water spring, and easements thereto—is presently listed as Ventura County Landmark #25. These built features date from 1902 to the early 1990s. Most of the buildings are vernacular campground style with board-and-batten or clapboard siding, stone or concrete pier-footings, and expressed structure, save for the 1902 former federal Post Office/store/snack bar building which is constructed in the vernacular style and made of local sandstone.

Non-contributing buildings and structures include three late 1980s/early 1990s cabins (Greene cabin, Powers cabin, and Barton cabin), a dining/dance hall (with severely damaged roof), a well house (in dilapidated condition), and an observation deck. Also non-contributing is a modern-day pre-fabricated shed (which is currently used for laundry facilities).

The eight contributing buildings and structure are:

- Bathhouse (ca. 1920s)
- Historic cabin (early 1900s)
- Restroom cottage (1920s/1930s)
- Guest cottage (1920s/1930s)
- Post Office/Store/Snack Bar (1902)
- Plunge/Swimming Pool (1902)
- Pool House (1969/1970)
- Residence (ca. 1940s/1950s)

Extant contributing landscape features include the following:

- Two blue gum eucalyptus trees (Horticultural Report tree #3 and tree # 4) which were planted east-southeast of the bathhouse ca. 1930, just after the building was constructed;
- One blue gum eucalyptus tree (#7) planted nearby, also ca. 1930;
- A blue gum eucalyptus tree (#2) northeast of the Post Office/store/snack bar, ca. 1930;
- One Canary Island date palm tree (#5) planted east-southeast of the bathhouse planted ca. 1942, which is consistent with the renovation of the building following the 1938 flood;

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- One blue gum eucalyptus tree (#6) north of the bathhouse which also dates to ca. 1942, the same period of renovation;
- A Mexican fan palm tree (#13) planted south of the bathhouse, on the riverbank, ca. 1940, apparently also related to the same post-flood renovations;
- A Mexican fan palm tree (#10) located in front of the historic cabin planted ca. 1940, during renovations following the 1938 flood;
- Two Canary Island date palm trees (#8 and #9) on the pathway between the bathhouse and the historic cabin planted ca. 1940, again, associated with these renovations;
- Two Mexican fan palm trees (#11 and #12) planted in front of and behind the guest cottage ca. 1940, further reflect these renovations;
- A Canary Island date palm tree (#1), also dating to the period of these renovations, was planted at the entrance to the resort ca. 1940; and,
- Two Italian cypress trees (#14 and #15) were planted on either side of the residence entry-walkway ca. 1950, possibly when the building was constructed or later by the park superintendent who is known to have planted other non-native species on the site.

These contributing landscape features will be addressed specifically in a separate section of this report.

The planting of these species—considered exotic by most Americans at the time because of their climatic preferences—is consistent with the ongoing desire to create the environment of a luxuriant tropical oasis at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort, a desire that was common to the phenomenon of California springs resorts.

In addition, various other non-native plants are scattered throughout the site. The date of these plantings are unknown, save the red geraniums around the well house and Virginia creeper growing on the chain link fence south of the pool, which were planted by park superintendent Gene Michalski in the 1950s when the site operated as a County Park.

Summary

With the exception of the non-contributing buildings, object, and structure, the buildings and plunge/swimming pool date to the period of the site's cultural and historical significance, ranging from ca. 1887 until 1972, when the entire 9.22 acre site including easements was awarded landmark status by the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Board. Matilija Hot Springs continued to function as a public health spa until 1988.

From 1988 until 2004 the site served as a private retreat center. Subsequently, the property was privately held for four years until, in September 2008, it was purchased by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, the current owner.

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The grounds today closely resemble their appearance during the period of significance and reflect to this day the historic usage of the site as a health spa and recreational resort destination. The site and context of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort has changed little in past years; it has not been encroached upon by development and, as a district comprised of a collection of contributing buildings and a structure, the property retains a high degree of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Section V

Statement of Significance

Matilija Hot Springs was one of California's famous mineral springs resorts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The facility was primarily known for its healing waters, which were touted in publications and periodicals from coast to coast. So popular was the resort with out-of-town visitors that by the second full season of operation, in 1889, a Federal Post Office was established on the site. A stone building was constructed in 1902 to house this federal office. Ultimately, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort was equally famous for its grand, indoor, heated sulphur/mineral plunge (built 1902), fertile fishing and hunting grounds, luxurious accommodations, and exquisite cuisine served in a dining facility with white linen and sterling service.

Advertised nationally and frequented by visitors from across the country, the Matilija Hot Springs resort and recreation area was served well by the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887 and the Ventura and Ojai Valley Railroad in 1890. From these depots, visitors traveled to the springs proper via coach, whence a visit was likely to last from a week to a month or more.

In June 1897, for example, it was reported that "a jolly party...arrived at Matilija Monday evening" among whom were "Mrs. Anna W. Page of Los Angeles...Mr. and Mrs. I. Newton Wood of Santa Barbara, Mrs. Frances M. Bestow of Winchester, Mass., Edith R. Mills of Denver, Col., Mrs. H.M. Rouse of New York and Miss. F. A. Harrington of Chicago" (*Los Angeles Herald*, June 25, 1897). One can only imagine that, having traveled such distances, these guests would enjoy an extended stay. In the same issue it is reported that "Mr. and Mrs. E.G. Faulkner of Los Angeles are spending a few weeks and Matilija...Mr. and Mrs. Edmund M. Burke...will return to their home tomorrow after a pleasant week spent at Matilija...[and another party] have been camping a Matilija for a number of days" (Ibid.).

Later Matilija Hot Springs benefitted from the advent of the automobile. Indeed, some of the extant buildings reflect this era of the motor court. As automobile travel became available to the average family, day and weekend trips to the springs became more common, although visits of a week or month or more continued as well. People still flocked to the springs for recreational use of the swimming pool and facilities, for fishing in the Ventura River, and for the medicinal and therapeutic benefits of the available mineral baths, massages, and other therapeutic treatments, only now they arrived by automobile, traveling local roads, rather than arriving by rail and coach. Throughout the decades various degrees of accommodations continued to be made available including a full service hotel, furnished cabins with linens and board, cabins without board and tents. Various levels of accommodation and rates were devised to meet the needs of almost any budget.

In 1947 the property was purchased by the County of Ventura for use in relation to the construction of the Matilija Dam. By 1948, the dam complete, the site became a County Park and recreation area. This decision to create a public park on the site is consistent with the

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nationwide post-war turn toward leisure and recreation, and the emerging sensibility that it was the government's obligation to provide such facilities. At this time in U.S. history, "park administrators increasingly expressed the belief that the provision of parks and park facilities was simply accepted as an appropriate government function. In this view communities were expected to include recreational parks along with shops, schools, residential streets, and so on" (Municipal Park System of Rochester, 2003). According to park historian Galen Cranz,

"Park officials around the country adopted this attitude, repeating the claim that they no longer had to justify parks and that recreation had been accepted as an essential of life, like health, education, work, and religion" (Cranz, 1982).

In addition, the nationwide democratization of the automobile during this era facilitated the popularity of these county parks and recreation areas; the impact was no different for Matilija Hot Springs County Park.

For over a dozen years Matilija Hot Springs County Park was overseen by a Ventura County Parks employee who lived at the site with his family. During this period of time, the facilities were the official recreation area for the City of Ojai and families from around the County frequented the Matilija Hot Springs pool for swimming lessons, life guard certification, Red Cross training, swimming competitions, and general recreation.

Subsequently, in 1965, the facilities were leased to Bill and Marcia Olivas (Bill a descendant of Raimundo Olivas) who reverted to its original use as a health and wellness spa. The facilities were severely impacted by the infamous floods of January and February 1969. Bill and Marcia Olivas ran the facility as a hot mineral spring health spa for 22 years, until it was sold by the County in 1988. It was during the Olivas tenure, in 1972, the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Board named the entire 9.22 acre site, its buildings and structures, as well as easements to the springs, County Cultural Landmark #25.

From 1988 until 2004 the facility operated as a spa and retreat center, available for weekend rental by various groups. At this time, the interiors of extant structures were converted to sleeping quarters and new cabins and structures were built to accommodate the reported 200 to 400 guests who sometimes visited the site in a single weekend. The grounds have been closed to the public since 2004.

National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B

Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

Under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, Matilija Hot Springs is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The history of the spa tradition goes back to the ancient Greek and Roman cultures which touted the value of bathing in or drinking the water from mineral or hot springs as a cure for disease. Etymologically the word "spa," in fact, is said to derive from the Latin phrase *sanus per aqua*, meaning "health through water." More likely it originates from the Latin word *spagere*, meaning "to pour forth. (Some claim the word came into

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popular usage after the name of the springs town of Spa, Belgium, but probably the reverse is true and the town attained its name from the presence of the springs.)

Great spas have a long history with many locations becoming quite famous, including Bath, England, for example, Baden-Baden in Germany, and Aix-les-Bains in France. The continuity of the belief in the healing properties of water was manifested in the 19th century European practice of hydrotherapy. The notion of “taking the waters” at mineral springs resorts in the United States was an extension of this. Soon the fad for “taking the waters” had hit the country by storm and every invalid, consumptive, and would-be patient was seeking the water relief for ailments as varied as tuberculosis, psoriasis, and dyspepsia.

Doctors specialized in the water cure with many writing books on how best to utilize the waters depending on ailment. Based on the analysis of their mineral content and/or temperature, certain springs were touted for their benefits for specific ailments. Warm springs, hot springs, cold springs, sulphur springs, alum springs, and soda springs were among some of the categories of waters. And, within these classifications, exact mineral content and temperature further categorized waters. Degree and length of immersion was considered a factor in the cure. For some ailments treatment required a complex calculation of a mixture of soaks in different springs waters for precise periods of time. Drinking the waters was part of the cure and, depending on mineral content etc., certain waters were prescribed to be drunk in particular quantities, at certain times of the day, to effect a cure.

By the 1830s resorts at Saratoga, New York and White Sulphur Springs, Virginia were well-known. Westward expansion fostered discovery and development of springs from Arkansas to Colorado to the Pacific Coast. During the later 1860s, with the expansion of railroads in California, resorts were developed in several counties from Napa to San Diego. By the 1880s, mineral springs resorts were substantial factors in a health boom in California that was inspired by climate and incited by promoters, the railroad, and doctors.

The advent of the field of germ pathology mid-century eroded the general belief in the cure-all properties of “taking the waters,” but spas continued as popular health and recreation centers well after the turn of the century. The health spa and recreation resort at Matilija Hot Springs was no exception. The national significance and popularity of Matilija Hot Springs is evidenced by numerous national advertisements, as well as mention in books, periodicals, and guides. Winslow Anderson, M.D., for example, recommended Matilija Hot Springs water for those “who are stiff-jointed, rheumatic and gouty, or affected with skin diseases, etc.” and for which they would “receive great benefit” (Anderson, 1892, p. 210).

Moreover, the existing site of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is nationally significant under these same criteria for the operation of a Federal Post Office on the site, from July 22, 1889 to July 16, 1916. This represents a local manifestation of the federal presence at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. The Matilija Hot Springs Post Office epitomized the communication system of rural communities with the whole nation.

Also under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is tied to the advent of transcontinental rail travel. Similarly, under the same criterion, the site is noteworthy for its connection to early automobile travel and the primary construction of freeways and roads.

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This was not the first mineral springs resort in the Matilija Canyon; a previous location upriver—originally called Ojai Hot Springs and, later, Matilija Hot Springs (aka, Vickers Springs)—had been established in 1877. It was destroyed by flood waters in 1884. Nor was it the only mineral springs resort in the canyon; Nogales Hot Springs (later renamed Lyons Springs) was established upriver in 1887, and Wheeler’s Hot Springs was established in the early 1890s in the North Fork of Matilija Canyon. Both facilities operated for many years. Nonetheless, Matilija Hot Springs has the distinction of near-continuous operation in the Matilija Canyon over the longest period of time, from 1887 to 2004, albeit to differing degrees, at different periods of time.

Thus, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort represents a significant period in the historic development of Central Coast California and Ventura County in general, and the Ojai area specifically. The reputed medicinal benefits of mineral waters made the resort a popular destination for local citizens as well as tourists.

This is particularly noteworthy in relation to the influx of tourists and visitors from the East and Midwest, many of whom settled permanently in California and Ventura County, thereby contributing to statewide and local expansion and growth. In fact, it is claimed that in the late-19th century many of Nordhoff’s 300 inhabitants were “recuperated invalids from nearly every State in the Union” (Storke, 1891). No doubt many of these settlers, in addition to being attracted by the favorable climate, were also induced by the local availability of therapeutic hot sulphur springs.

As the Matilija Hot Springs County Park, the site reflected the national lifestyle changes made during the post-war period which affected the popularity of recreational parks, facilitated by the democratization of the automobile. Most importantly, the establishment of the Hot Springs County Park coincided with the nationwide post-war shift in attitudes toward the purpose and management of municipal parks; that it was the government’s responsibility to efficiently provide facilities and services to meet the increasing demand for leisure activities. Thus, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is nationally significant as a local manifestation of this nationwide post-war trend toward public recreational parks.

Furthermore, operating as Matilija Hot Springs County Park for over a dozen years and a County-owned private health resort for another 22 years, the site contributed greatly to the post-WWII cultural history, economic development, and expansion of Ventura County. Even today, Matilija Hot Springs is remembered by Ventura County residents for its, health spa, hot mineral baths, as “the place to go in the summer” for the plunge/swimming pool and recreational facilities, and as a popular new-age spiritual and yoga retreat which extended the uniquely transcendent vibe for which the Ojai Valley is renown. Nearly everyone in the region has a fond memory of Matilija Hot Springs and much remains to be learned from their impromptu and informative oral histories.

Thus, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort contributed to state and local economic development, to the early establishment of the tourism industry in Central Coast California and Ventura County, and to the early settlement and later increase in population of the State of California and the County of Ventura. These are further factors for which it is significant under State Criterion A/County Criterion B.

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Additionally, many tourists and visitors were drawn specifically to the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort because of its proximity to the burgeoning village of Nordhoff (later, Ojai), which enjoyed a reputation for being a sanctuary of health and well-being. This reputation attracted spiritual leaders and practitioners from across the country that put down roots in the town, established institutions, and perpetuated the character of Ojai as a haven of spirituality and health. The Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort participated in this distinction with its offering of the “water cure” (including bathing in and drinking the mineral waters), massage and physical therapy and, later, as the site of a new-age spiritual and yoga retreat. Thus, under County Criterion B, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is significant for its contribution to the broad pattern and promulgation of the City of Ojai’s cultural heritage as an oasis of alternative spirituality, health, and well-being.

National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E

Property embodies distinctive characteristics of a type...or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction

For the following criterion categories, the period of significance ranges from the establishment of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort in 1887 until 1972, when the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission assigned the entire 9.22 acre site the distinction of County Landmark #25. Within this period of significance falls the events of the devastating flood of January and February 1969—a notable occurrence in the history of the State of California and Ventura County—which particularly impacted the site.

Under National Criteria C/State Criteria C/County Criteria E, the plunge/swimming pool is eligible as representative of the type “pool.” The present-day plunge/swimming pool is the original and only man-made plunge/swimming pool constructed on the site in 1902. When it was built, and for years after, the plunge/swimming pool at Matilija Hot Springs was advertised as the largest in Southern California. At the time the site earned the distinction of County Landmark the plunge/swimming pool was the oldest continually-operating landmarked pool in the country. The plunge/swimming pool continued to function for approximately fifteen more years, for a total continuous use of over 80 years. Evidence uncovered to date indicates that this is the oldest landmarked plunge/swimming pool in all of the United States.

Likewise, under the same criteria, the historic cabin is eligible as a type for its function as an overnight accommodation facility during the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort. Specifically, the historic cabin is representative of the type “tourist cabin” that emerged nationally with the advent of automobile travel. While a national phenomenon, the historic cabin is linked particularly to early automobile travel in California, the related construction of freeways and roads, and the introduction of the tourist cabin building type. Finally, the historic cabin was present when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

Under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E, the complex of contributing resort buildings and structure represents characteristics of a type, namely the property type “Health Resort.” Distinguishing features of the property type include use, physical features,

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stylistic influences and detailing, locational patterns and periods in which the buildings were erected, and the representation of natural features that were exploited for their economic value. The variety of buildings and structures at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort, built to exploit the mineral water springs, reflect the original use as well as the hydrotherapy practices of their construction period.

The Post Office/store/snack bar functioned as the center of communication between guests at a remote resort and the larger world. Similarly, the extant historical cabin, bathhouse, restroom cottage and guest cottage, residence, and pool house all reflect their purpose in the effective functioning of a “Health Resort.” Despite their many differences, the buildings and structures within the property type “Health Resort” share many associative qualities that demonstrate their related functions. Each building and structure is part of a network created to enable the health spa and recreation resort to properly treat and accommodate its clients. Consequently, the contributing buildings at Matilija Hot Springs served to house or treat clients while a corresponding infrastructure maintained the ability of the resort to carry out such functions.

Concomitantly, under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E, the site of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is a district of historic and cultural import. It is a collection of buildings and a structure that tells a story over a period of time; the national story of 20th century resort recreation. Contributing components— bathhouse, historic cabin, restroom cottage, guest cottage, Post Office/store/snack bar, plunge/swimming pool, and pool house—necessarily participate in the telling of this story. Absent this extant collection of historic components, the story ceases to be told. While some of the contributing buildings are not individually eligible for distinction, taken as a whole they illustrate the culturally and historically important phenomenon of a 20th century health spa and recreation resort.

Under County Criterion E, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is eligible for distinction as a local type of hot springs resort located in Matilija Canyon. As previously mentioned, this resort was not the only one to operate locally, although it was among the first established. Moreover, it was the longest continually-operated facility of its kind in the Matilija Canyon. The local significance of the Matilija Hot Springs health resort and recreation area was codified by the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Board on August 7, 1972, when the site was assigned the distinction of County Landmark #25.

National Criterion D/State Criterion D/County Criterion D

Resource has yielded or has the potential to yield information important to the history or pre-history of the nation, California, Ventura County or its cities

This criterion appears inapplicable to the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

County Criterion A

The resource reflects the county’s social and architectural history

The Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is eligible under County Criterion A for its contribution to social and recreational history of Ventura County and the Ojai Valley. During the County Park period, the pool was the center of activity, hosting swimming lessons, Red

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Cross classes, lifeguard and water safety classes, and general water recreation for County residents. Area college boys served as life guards for the crowds of local swimmers who thronged to the plunge/swimming pool on hot summer days. Each summer from 1953 until 1965, the Ojai Valley swim meets were held at the Matilija Hot Springs County Park; kids from all over Ojai came to compete. During the County Park phase, the extant filtration, gauges, and pump system were installed under the east platform of the plunge/swimming pool.

Present-day interviews with the 1950s/1960s residents and with local residents, who frequented the pool as children, teenagers, and young adults, verify that the extant pool is the same pool that was there in those days. Everyone remembers that the water was ice cold and they remember the concrete partition that separates the shallow children's end from the deep end for adults. They recall that many a day the pool was packed with frolicking swimmers. One interviewee reported that she still has the medals she won at County swim meets.

The plunge/swimming pool was not the only draw for County residents. Kids and county residents were also drawn by the playground (situated behind the guest cottage) and the hamburgers and fries, candy, ice cream and frozen candy bars, pinball machines, and jukebox which were available in the Post Office/store/snack bar. The building was called the snack bar then and was only open in the summer. Sometimes, after hours, the life guards held informal ping pong tournaments on the table there.

The period of significance for the site's contribution to local social and recreational history, under County Criterion A, ranges from the 1953 opening of the Matilija Hot Springs County Park until 1965, when the facilities were reverted to a privately-run health and recreation spa.

Also under County Criterion A, the Post Office/store/snack bar is locally significant for its architectural value. It was built in 1902 during the Creasinger phase of improvements specifically to house the federal Post Office. The Post Office/store/snack bar is an example of turn-of-the-century vernacular architecture created using locally-quarried sandstone.

The Post Office/store/snack bar was specifically identified in the 1972 County of Ventura Historic Landmark nomination. The County Cultural Resources Commission at that time directed that no changes were to be made to this historic building. Although this directive was ignored by the partial destruction of the east wall, this building retains its historic integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and association.

The period of significance for the Post Office/store/snack bar, under County Criterion A, ranges from the date of its construction in 1902 until the date of its designation as a county landmark.

Under County Criterion A, the Matilija Hot Springs is also significant for its connection to the historic floods of January and February 1969, among the worst in recorded history in Matilija Canyon.

County Criterion C

Associated with significant a person

The Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is eligible under County Criterion C for its association with its founder, Abram W. Blumberg (1836-1899). Educated in law and a member of the Iowa bar, A.W. Blumberg had been a town promoter, builder, and businessman in Ogden, Iowa prior to his arrival in California. Some have claimed that Blumberg's subdivision of acreage actually started the town of Ogden (Ventura Star Free Press, May 11, 1939), although this claim is unconfirmed. We do know that he was the second Postmaster of the fledgling mid-western town and was among the first merchants there.

The Blumberg family arrived in California in 1872 in search of a better climate for Mrs. Blumberg's health. They first settled in Los Angeles and moved to Ventura County in January 1874. Mrs. Blumberg, the former Catherine Van Curen (1843-1899), is responsible for naming the town Nordhoff after Charles Nordhoff, the author of the 1873 book *California: For Health, Pleasure and Residence* which inspired her. (Mrs. Blumberg, incidentally, was the sister of Andrew Van Curen, the long-time sheriff of Ojai who, in 1873, built the town's first jail. This building is today on the grounds of the Cold Spring Tavern in Santa Barbara County.)

Blumberg is most famous locally for having built and operated the first hotel in 1874 in the nascent village of Nordhoff. He successfully operated his hotel, which he called The Nordhoff (but later was called Ojai House), until 1877 when he sold it at a tidy profit. In 1887, Blumberg founded Ojai Hot Springs (later re-named Matilija Hot Springs) in Matilija Canyon on the site herein under consideration.

Blumberg operated the springs for over 20 years, during which time he erected numerous cabins, bathhouses, a tent village for campers, and other necessary adjuncts for the successful operation of a health spa and recreation resort. Blumberg became the federal Post Master of the Matilija Hot Springs Post Office in 1887, a capacity in which he served until his death. So profitable was the Matilija Hot Springs resort that, in the early 1890s, his son, Wheeler C., proceeded to establish a second Blumberg hot springs resort, further up the canyon near North Fork.

A.W. Blumberg was so influential in the early physical and economic development of his adopted town that in 1902 the historian J.M Guinn designates Blumberg "the founder of Nordhoff." Thus, under County Criterion C, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is significant for its association with him.

County Criterion F

Integrity: Lack of deterioration and characteristics in terms of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship

Under County Criterion F, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is significant for its level of integrity and extant characteristics reflecting their function within a health spa and recreation resort. The site is well-preserved and possesses a number of different types of resources grouped in their original location. Thus, the property retains an authentic physical identity in location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship, qualifying it for designation under County Criterion F.

Matilija Hot Springs
Satisfaction of National, State, and County Criteria

Criterion Value	National Criterion	State Criterion	County Criterion
Event contributes to broad pattern of history	A	A	B
Health phenomenon of "taking the waters"	✓	✓	✓
Advent of rail travel	✓	✓	✓
Advent of automobile travel	✓	✓	✓
Contribution to economic development		✓	✓
Contribution to the tourism industry		✓	✓
Attracts immigrants who settle permanently		✓	✓
Contribution to the reputation of Ojai Valley as haven of spirituality and health			✓
Characteristic of type or contributor to district	C	C	E
Federal Post Office as event in category politics and government	✓		
Plunge/Swimming pool as type	✓	✓	✓
Tourist Cabin as type	✓	✓	✓
Health Resort as type	✓	✓	✓
Collection of contributors to a district	✓	✓	✓
Hot springs resort in Matilija Canyon as type			✓
Archaeological information for history or prehistory	D	D	D
<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Reflects county's social & architectural history			A
County Park & recreation area	✓	✓	✓
Locally-quarried sandstone construction			✓
Associated with significant person(s)	B	B	C
AW Blumberg "founder" of Ojai per Guinn			✓
Integrity: lack of deterioration & characteristics in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship			F
Retains authentic physical identity in location, design, setting, materials & workmanship			✓

Matilija Hot Springs
Integrity of Contributing Buildings and Structure
As per the U. S. Secretary of the Interior Standards of Integrity

	Location	Design	Setting	Materials	Workmanship	Feeling	Association
Bathhouse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Historic Cabin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restroom Cottage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guest Cottage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Post Office/Store/Snack Bar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plunge/Swimming Pool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pool House	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Residence	✓		✓		✓		✓

Section VI(a)

Individual Records for Contributing Buildings and Structure

Following is a detailed description of contributing buildings and structures and general descriptions of non-contributing buildings, object, and structures. The buildings, object, and structures are keyed by number to the attached site plan.

Building Record: **Bathhouse**

Site plan: #2

Photos: #1a—1c

Date: ca. 1920s
renovated after flood damage ca. 1938
renovated after flood damage 1969/1970
modified ca. 1988

The bathhouse has long been a key building in the operation of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. Estimated to have been built in the 1920s, the expressed wood-frame building manifests the low-pitched gables and multiple roof planes of the Craftsman bungalow style. This was the dominant architectural style for smaller buildings throughout the country constructed during the period from about 1905 until the early 1920s. Having originated in southern California, the style rapidly faded from favor after the mid-1920s with few built after 1930 (McAlester and McAlester, 1984). Consistent with Craftsman building techniques, the 2,016 sq. ft. bathhouse is supported by a concrete slab foundation. The bathhouse has been altered through the years, mostly as a result of flood damage, but also in order to convert interior spaces for new use. Today most interior walls are faced with sheet rock and the concrete floors covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.

As late as 1921 or 1923, the hot sulphur bath tubs were in a little building near the plunge/swimming pool. These are probably the same tubs installed in 1902 by Tom McGuire of the Spear Company (*Ventura Free Press*, April 11, 1902). The present bathhouse replaced this building. It was likely built during the Linnells' tenure; perhaps after a brushfire ca. 1924 destroyed the plunge/swimming pool pavilion. It is not known if the tubs from the former bathhouse were moved to the new hot sulphur bath facility. This premise could be tested with closer examination of the extant tubs, which today rest in brush and undergrowth behind the bathhouse, on the bank of the Ventura River.

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From its construction until 1969, the present bathhouse comprised at least seven individual tub rooms; a women's changing room with a sink and a toilet; a men's changing room with a sink and a toilet; two linen closets; and a main sitting/waiting/reception area. Floors throughout the building were concrete, each tub room with a drain in the center of the floor, and walls were unfinished cedar shingles. Water would be pumped from the hot springs into the cast iron and porcelain footed tubs which were large enough for an adult to lie down full-length within the tub. According to reports, one waited while a tub was filled with water from the hot sulphur spring and then, because the water was so hot, waited until the water cooled before sliding into the tub. At this time the bathhouse did not have showers.

The bathhouse was apparently damaged by the heavy flood season in 1938, as a brochure naming Agnes Woolley proprietor proudly displays a photograph of the bathhouse and boasts of its recent renovations. In the 1940 U.S. Census, a Charles and Agnes Woolley list their residence as "Matilija Hot Springs" and Charles identifies his profession as "resort manager."

In 1954 it was reported that plans were in the works to construct a new bathhouse at the Matilija Hot Springs County Park. However, these plans were never carried out. Rather, throughout the County Park era, during the summer season hot sulphur baths continued to be offered in the same bathhouse. Year-round, the bathhouse tubs were the only bathing facility available to the resident family since there was no bathing facility in the residence at the time. Members of this family recall that Hollywood figures Johnny Weissmuller (1904-1984) and Rory Calhoun (1922-1999) frequented the Matilija bathhouse for the physical therapy of the hot sulphur baths. Art Aragon (1927-2008), a boxer who trained at the nearby Soper's Boxing Camp, came for the same reason, as did Adolph Spreckels II, heir to the sugar fortune, who lived nearby in Ojai, and Sam Hester, who ran the Ojai Honor Farm in the 1950s and 1960s. Each of these men, along with Pop Soper, became friends with the County Park superintendent and his family.

As for female celebrity use of the building and its baths, sometime in the late 1950s Beatrice Wood (1893-1998) and her friends Anais Nin (1903-1977) and Rosalind Rajagopal (1903-1996, wife of Rajagopal Desikacharya and long-term lover of Jiddu Krishnamurti) convinced the County Park superintendent to open the bathhouse for them during the off-season. From time to time, the women would occupy the bathhouse alone for a "spa day" enjoying hot sulphur baths, a picnic lunch, and wine!

During the Olivas tenure (1965-1987), the old tubs in individual shingle rooms continued to be used for hot sulphur baths. Massage and reflexology physical therapy were performed in a separate room. During this period the bathhouse was known as the "health studio." The building was seriously impacted by the floods of January and February 1969. According to an eyewitness, while the building remained intact and stable, water ran a foot deep through the bathhouse, leaving the interior full of mud and silt. In the course of cleaning the building, it was decided to extend a wing on the west end of the bathhouse to accommodate three modern tubs. The proprietor reported at the time that two of these tubs would have the tubes built in so that the "jets will make the whole tub bubble."

Moreover, an outdoor group soaking pool was added on the south side of the bathhouse. This soaking pool was accessed via a man-door near a new utility room in the addition. The

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addition—including the three modern tubs, electrical room, and door on the south elevation of the building are extant. Because the outdoor soaking pool was surrounded by decking, the openings of two original windows adjacent to the deck were reconfigured to be smaller—so that the glazing was higher on the wall—in order to accommodate the privacy of the hot sulphur tub bathers inside. Apparently the bathhouse suffered further flood damage in 1978; although this flood and subsequent repairs remain unsubstantiated at this time.

This outdoor deck and soaking pool do not survive, having been washed down river by yet a later flood in 1995. By this time the interior of the bathhouse had undergone dramatic alteration. The six original tubs were removed and discarded (over the side of the riverbank, where at least three or four still lie rusting to this day), shingle wall coverings were torn out and replaced with sheetrock, concrete floors were carpeted all in the name of maximizing dormitory and sleeping space for attendees of weekend retreats.

Also at this time, every surface of one or two former tub room(s) was covered with tile, thus transforming the space into a very large group shower with three shower heads in the ceiling (at least two for water pumped directly from the hot sulphur springs). According to an eye-witness, a result of the 1995 flood was that mud flowed into the bathhouse through windows and doors, saturating the carpet and seeping into every crevice of the tile. Subsequently, the lower exterior walls of the bathhouse were shored with cement to prevent future flooding. As well, a crude stone and cement wall was built along the riverbank, also to hold back potential flood waters. The bathhouse continued thereafter to function in its capacity as dormitory/sleeping quarters for retreat clients until the property was sold to a private party in 2004.

Although the bathhouse has been altered through the years it retains its integrity as a contributing building. In fact, these alterations and changes are evidence of its ongoing function as the bathhouse at Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort throughout the property's various manifestations. Moreover, despite these alterations, the present building is recognizable as the bathhouse that was built in the 1920s.

Under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the bathhouse is significant as the building in which one took hot sulphur tub baths during the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort. In this capacity, the bathhouse is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century. The bathhouse was built to specifically exploit the mineral water springs and, despite some alterations, continues to manifest its original use as a center of hydrotherapy practices.

Furthermore, under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E, the bathhouse is significant for its link to an historic type that emerged nationally; namely, the type "Health Resort." As such, the bathhouse is significant as a key component of a distinguished entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. In this context, the bathhouse continues to reflect its specific purpose in the effective functioning of a hot springs health spa and recreation resort.

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Finally, the bathhouse was specifically singled out by the County of Ventura Cultural Resource Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park (and during which time the bathhouse was visited by notable persons), and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The bathhouse is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: Historic Cabin

Site plan: #5

Photo: #2

Date: early 1900s
modified ca. 1988/1990s

The historic cabin, located northeast of the bathhouse, appears to have been built in the early 20th century, is a 160 sq. ft. expressed wood-frame building. The building is tucked closely to a small incline on the north side. It is constructed on raised stone piers and wood pilings, leaving a narrow crawlspace beneath the building's wood floors. Fronted by a hinged plywood door, this space today is used for storage.

The wood siding is horizontal reverse board-and-batten, meaning the horizontal narrow boards have wide battens installed over the seams. Such board-and-batten siding was popular at the turn of the century, up until about the 1920s, commonly being used for summer camps, lumber camps, fisherman's cottages and other inexpensive buildings. The south elevation of the historic cabin retains two original wood-framed in-swing casement windows with original latch hardware. These crescent-top casement latches were popularly used from the early part of the 20th century until the 1940s. Small rectangular vent windows are in each the east and west gables. The low-gable pitched roof is composite shingle. A small wooden overhang, topped with composite shingle, shelters the main entrance door.

During the period when the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort was a County Park, this building was used for storage of maintenance equipment and supplies. The function of the historic cabin during the Olivas' tenure is unknown.

The interior of the historic cabin was modified ca. 1988 at which time the north wall was partially extended to create a sleeping alcove; there may originally have been a window in this location. Additionally at this time, a small vernacular in-swing casement window was inserted in the west wall, a new window opening appears to have been cut out of the east wall where there is presently a vinyl sliding window, and the wood floor was carpeted. At the same time, a new ten-pane glass front door was installed; this remains the only entrance/exit. Later, in the early 1990s, the north perimeter of the foundation was lined with concrete to protect against mud and moisture damage. From ca. 1988 until 2004 it was used as sleeping quarters for guests of weekend retreats.

The historic cabin is the single example of its type on the site. It functioned, no doubt, as one of the furnished cottages that were rented out by the day, week, or month in the early 20th century. It may, in fact, be one of the cottages mentioned in the May 3, 1907 *Ventura Free Press* account of the seasonal grand opening of the Matilija Hot Springs resort. The resort was at that time owned by Sim Meyers who is reported to have suffered losses up to \$50,000 in damage from a devastating flood in May 1905, which washed away several cottages, the bathhouse, and stables.

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Myers is reported to have begun repairs immediately following the flood and the 1907 article confirms that new cottages were intact at that time. These cottages were recorded on the site in 1917 (Gidney, Brooks, and Sheridan, 1917, v. 1. p. 458).

Therefore, under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the historic cabin is significant for its function as the building which provided overnight accommodations during the years Matilija Hot Springs operated as a health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the historic cabin is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century. The historic cabin was built specifically to accommodate overnight guests of the hot springs resort and continues to manifest qualities of its original use.

Under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E the historic cabin is significant for its link to the type “Health Resort.” In this context, the building is significant as an important component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Also, under the same criteria, the historic cabin is significant as an example of the type “tourist cabin.” The small size and style of the historic cabin reflect the architectural qualities of overnight accommodation facilities that were popular during the period of early automobile travel. This was the era of the advent of the tourist cabin. In the first three decades of this century, America cemented its love affair with the automobile. “Cabin courts” emerged at this time as a means of providing simple accommodations designed to be automobile friendly, as one could park their automobile next to the individual cabin. These cabins were generally very small, inexpensively-constructed and modest one-room cabins, sans bath; all qualities possessed in the historic cabin.

Analysis of vintage photographs of the Matilija Hot Springs site suggest there may have been a number of these cabins—very similar if not identical in appearance—clustered in the area north and northeast of the bathhouse. As such, this historic cabin at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort is a singular relic representative of an era when Americans vacationed in this rural locale via their new automobiles.

Finally, the historic cabin was present when the County of Ventura Cultural Resource Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park, and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The historic cabin is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Restroom Cottage**

Site plan: #8

Photo: #3

Date: ca. 1920s/1930s

The restroom cottage comprises 210 sq. ft. with an additional 56 sq. ft. porch which runs the length of the west elevation, the location of the building's two portals. The porch is contained by a typical vertical-post wood railing. The expressed wood-frame restroom cottage is supported by formed concrete pier footings. The rectangular building has exposed rafters, one hopper window in each its south and north gable, and a composite shingle roof. There are no windows in the east or west elevations.

The siding on the lower third of the exterior walls is nailed horizontal plank-and-molding, while the upper two-thirds is nailed vertical tongue-and-groove rounded end planks. The building has wood floors and seven fixtures with the men's facility in the south end of the building and the women's facilities on the north. The restroom cottage manifests characteristics of a ca. 1920s/1930s rural cottage namely, wood-frame and nail construction, concrete pier footings, hopper windows, and round-edged vertical wood siding. The restroom cottage does not appear to have been significantly altered. The restroom cottage may have been built during the Linnells' tenure, which ranged from 1920 until 1936.

Under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the restroom cottage is significant for its function as a basic accommodation facility during the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the restroom cottage is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century.

Furthermore, under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E the restroom cottage is significant for its link to the type "Health Resort," as it is an essential component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Finally, the restroom cottage was present when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park, and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The restroom cottage is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Guest Cottage**

Site plan: #9

Photo: #4

Date: ca. 1920s/1930s

The guest cottage comprises 510 sq. ft. with an additional 36 sq. ft. porch on the south elevation, the location of its single entry. The porch is lined by the original x-brace style railing. Originally this porch and railing ran the length of the south elevation; however a portion of the porch was enclosed at some point after 1965 to create an enclosed storage space on the porch's west end. The expressed wood-frame guest cottage is supported by formed concrete pier footings. The rectangular building has exposed rafters and a composite shingle roof.

There is one double hung aluminum replacement window on each the east, north, and west elevations. On the south elevation there is one double hung aluminum replacement window just west of the main and only entry and an aluminum sliding window to the west of that in a portion of the now-enclosed former porch area. The replacement of the original windows with these aluminum sliding types modestly impacts the integrity of the guest cottage. Nevertheless, the integrity of the original window openings has been retained. Wood replacement windows in an appropriate period style would return the fenestration of the guest cottage to its original appearance.

Analysis of vintage photographs reveals that there was originally another entry door on the west end of the south elevation, in approximately the same location as the present-day sliding window. Evidently, in addition to the storage area, a small interior room was also created with the partial enclosure of the porch. This room accommodates a kitchenette with a small oven and range. Logically, the former entry door is currently the door to this additional interior space. Therefore, it is conceivable that this enclosure might be removed and the porch façade could be restored to its original appearance.

Like the restroom cottage, the siding on the lower third of the exterior walls is nailed horizontal plank-and-molding, while the upper two-thirds is nailed vertical tongue-and-groove rounded end planks. This researcher did not have access to the interior of the guest cottage. However, based on correspondence with a former resident of the cottage, it is known that the building has wood floors and two bedrooms separated by a small powder room. Each room has its own sink. It seems that a heating unit of some sort has been installed in the west bedroom, as evidenced by a metal chimney emanating from that space. Two skylights have been added to the north slope of the gabled roof.

The guest cottage manifests characteristics of a ca. 1920s/1930s rural cottage; wood-frame and nail construction, concrete pier footings, and round-edged vertical wood siding. An identical guest cottage which was once situated directly beside this cottage burned to the ground in the late 1960s. This cottage is likely one advertised by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Linnell—who managed the

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resort from 1920 to 1936—which they rented at the rate of \$2.00 per day or \$10.00 per week in 1933.

Under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the guest cottage is significant for its function as an overnight accommodation facility during the years Matilija Hot Springs operated as a health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the guest cottage is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century. No doubt the rent for this (and its sister) facility would have been pricier than that of the more humble historic cabin. This disparity in accommodations is reflected in extant pamphlets and rate charts dating to the 1920s and 1930s, thereby supporting the estimated date of construction of the cottage.

Under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E, the guest cottage is significant for its link to the type “Health Resort.” The guest cottage is significant as an integral component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Finally, the guest cottage was present when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park, and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The guest cottage is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: Post Office/Store/Snack Bar

Site plan: #11

Photo: #5

Date: 1902

The Post Office/store/snack bar is adjacent to the dining/dance hall on the south side of the main driveway. This building is a vernacular construction of green sandstone— quarried locally— which was erected in 1902 specifically to house the federal Post Office. It later housed a store which catered to patrons of the resort and recreation area guests. The 912 sq. ft. building is constructed on a concrete foundation. It has a concrete floor, flat roof, and interior and exterior stone walls. A small kitchen is located in the south end of the building with a Dutch door in the south elevation; it is unclear when the kitchen facilities were installed. Two large plate windows and the main entrance are in the north elevation.

In 1954 the Post Office/store/snack bar reportedly received a “face-lift.” And later, ca. 1988/early 1990s, a portion of the east wall of the Post Office/store/snack bar was removed to provide interior access to the newly constructed dining/dance hall.

The Post Office/store/snack bar was specifically identified in the 1972 County of Ventura Historic Landmark nomination. The County Cultural Resources Commission at that time directed that no changes were to be made to this historic building. Although this directive was ignored by the partial destruction of the east wall, this building retains its historic integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and association.

Because of its role as a federal Post Office, this building is of national import. Thus, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the category “Politics and Government,” and also under State Criterion A/County Criterion B, as a local manifestation of the federal presence at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. The Matilija Hot Springs Post Office epitomized the communication system of rural communities with the whole nation. The period of significance for this eligibility encompasses 1902, the year the building opened as a federal Post Office, through July 16, 1916, when the Matilija Hot Springs Post Office was dissolved.

Architecturally the building conforms to the taste of the Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department, James Knox Taylor (1897-1912). According to National Register Bulletin 13, Taylor believed that “government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities.” Taylor further emphasized the use of high quality construction materials and that buildings should be individually designed and not standardized.

As the only stone construction at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort, the centrally and prominently located Post Office/store/snack bar conspicuously embodies these

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ideals. Such buildings represented the power and presence of the federal government in small communities across the United States. Having such a structure imparted a heightened level of prestige and permanence, particularly in this remote setting. That the building is constructed from locally-quarried sandstone marks the Post Office/store/snack bar significant under County Criterion A, for exemplifying a special element of the County's architectural and natural history.

In addition, again under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the Post Office/store/snack bar is significant for its role as the center of communication and supplies during the years Matilija Hot Springs operated as a health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the Post Office/store/snack bar is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century. The federal Post Office at the Matilija Hot Springs, established in 1889, pre-dates the Ventura County post offices of Camarillo, Moorpark, Oak View, Oxnard, Somis, Lyon Springs, and Wheeler Springs (the latter two locations also in the Matilija Canyon).

Moreover, the Post Office/store/snack bar is significant under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E for its link to the type "Health Resort." In this capacity, the Post Office/store/snack bar is significant as a central component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Finally, as previously mentioned, the Post Office/store/snack bar was specifically singled out by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance for these criteria spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park, and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The Post Office/store/snack bar is a contributing historic resource.**

Structure Record: **Plunge/Swimming Pool**

Site plan: #13

Photo: #6

Date: 1902

The formed concrete plunge/swimming pool was constructed in 1901/1902 as part of the major improvements instituted by S. P. Creasinger. This improvement was initiated shortly after he purchased the property at auction in May 1901 from the estate of Abram W. Blumberg, the founder of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. Work progressed for about six months, for the grand opening of the plunge was April 1, 1902. The plunge decking measures approximately 62' x 130.' The tank proper measures 35' x 100' and is separated by means of a concrete partition into a shallow children's end (measuring approximately 35' x 20') on the west end of the pool which is about three feet deep, and a gradually sloping adults' end (measuring approximately 35' x 80') on the east end which measures nine feet at its deepest. In 1903 the plunge/swimming pool was advertised as the "largest plunge in Southern California" (*Ventura Free Press*, June 5, 1903).

The plunge/swimming pool was at this time filled with hot sulphur springs water the temperature of which was maintained by means of a 10-horse power pool-heater motor. The pool is emptied by means of a drainage outlet low on the east wall of the deep end; it appears the outlet flows directly into the Ventura River. Today the plunge/swimming pool is surrounded by chain link fencing save for the north side which abuts the pool house.

As per an April 11, 1902 article in the *Ventura Free Press*, the work of putting in the great tank was "stupendous" with "giant powder, pick and shovel" employed to move the great boulders and dig the space for the plunge. What this article does not clarify is that the plunge/swimming pool is not wholly in-ground, nor wholly above-ground, but rather built into the hillside so that it appears built-in on the north side but above-ground on the south. The space beneath the decking on the south and east sides once accommodated pumps, the pool-heating motor, 80-horse power gasoline engine for generating electricity, and other maintenance equipment.

The plunge/swimming pool was surmounted by an immense and lavish edifice measuring about 54 feet high, at least 62 feet wide, and up to 130 feet long (reports vary), designed by the well-known Austin and Los Angeles architect Jasper Newton Preston (1832-1922). This "mammoth pleasure pavilion" featured some 76 dressing rooms, men's and women's toilet facilities, incandescent lighting, triple bowling alleys and, over the pool, slides, springboards, swinging rings, trapeze bars, and "other gymnasium accoutrements as are essential in such a place" (*Ventura Free Press*, March 21 and April 11, 1902). The pavilion contained 50,000 feet of lumber with local dealers furnishing much of the material and mill work.

Moreover, Preston's architectural creation was quite elaborately designed, incorporating colored glass windows and "sundry ornamentation such as is found on the other buildings of the kind at other resorts" (*Ventura Free Press*, April 11, 1902). Creasinger advertised the plunge pavilion

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nationally, for example, by taking full-page advertisements in spring issues of *Out West* magazine.

In the early 1920s it is recorded that the plunge/swimming pool was regularly (weekly or monthly) drained and refilled with fresh spring water which was “colder than ice.” (Hot spring sulphur waters were available in tub baths in a little building next to the pool). Sadly the magnificent plunge pavilion was destroyed by fire in 1924, although the plunge/swimming pool survived intact.

Two years later, nine-year-old Joanna Bard (Newton) recalls swimming at Matilija Hot Springs in an outdoor plunge/swimming pool, which had a shallow children’s end and a deeper end for adults. In fact, from that time through the 1930s, each season, Joanna (b. 1917) and her sister Margaret (b. 1928) would swim in the Matilija Hot Springs outdoor plunge/swimming pool, as part of the Hueneme Presbyterian Church youth outings, escorted by Richard Bard, the director of the church (and father of the young girls). Apparently, “Richard Bard loved the place and supported it for years” (interview with Joanna Newton Bard, June 8, 2012). Both women remember the shallow children’s and deep adults’ sections of the pool.

Also during this period, as vintage photographs and eye-witness accounts attest, the south platform of the pool featured a shaded area where parents could relax while their children romped and swam in the plunge/swimming pool. Vintage photographs attest that the pool in use in the thirties is the exact same pool that was constructed in 1902.

When the property was transformed into Matilija Hot Springs County Park, a modern filtration, gauges, and pump system were installed under the southeast end of the decking. These 1950s mechanisms are extant, easily accessed by a small concrete stairway. The pool water was now chlorinated and the pool water monitored by the Park superintendent. The water was still very cold, as the sun was the only source of heating it. Throughout the tenure of the County, various spring boards, diving boards, diving platforms, and life guard chairs were installed, uninstalled, and otherwise moved around the decking of the pool.

During the County Park period, the pool was the center of the health spa and recreation resort. Local college boys served as life guards for the crowds of local swimmers who thronged to the plunge/swimming pool on hot summer days. The County provided swimming lessons—countless present-day Ventura County residents report that they learned to swim in this plunge/swimming pool—the Red Cross held lifeguard and water safety classes there. For a dozen years the pool was host to the annual Ojai Valley youth swim meets.

As with other built features at the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort, effects of the floods of January and February 1969 caused difficulties for the plunge/swimming pool. A mudslide from the hillside north of changing rooms that had been erected adjacent to the plunge/swimming pool after the loss of the plunge pavilion, destroyed these changing rooms, filling the plunge/swimming pool with their rubble, as well as mud, rocks, boulders, and other organic detritus. (This same slide also destroyed the rear of the residence, situated just east of the plunge/swimming pool.)

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In July 1970 the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort reopened but the pool did not reopen until the following year. Although mud and detritus had to be removed from the pool, the *Ojai Valley News* reported that “the pool wasn’t damaged” in the floods and when it reopens “it will look much the same as it did...over 50 years ago” (*Ojai Valley News*, July 22, 1970). Indeed, by May 1971, restoration was complete and the Matilija Hot Springs plunge/swimming pool was opened to the public for the first time in two years.

Still, the facilities were advertised nationally and discussed in guidebooks and manuals specifically for hot springs tourists. For example, a listing in the May/June 1981 issue of *Yoga Journal*—a nationally distributed publication—advertised “Matilija Hot Springs & Health Center...naturally hot [springs]...open daily, massage by appointment.” Moreover, a popular 1985 guide to hot springs in the southwest touted the amenities available at “Matilija Hot Springs” including the plunge/swimming pool filled with unheated, chlorine-treated, tap water (Loam and Sohler, 1985).

In 1987, the *Ventura Star Free Press* would report that “about 100 people visit the springs daily, many from all over Southern California.” Nonetheless, with the lessee Olivas no longer able to pay insurance bills, County officials, worried about liability, asked him to shut down the plunge/swimming pool. Shortly thereafter, the plunge/swimming pool was drained for the last time.

Under National Criterion A/State Criterion A/County Criterion B, the plunge/swimming pool is significant as the apparatus in which one took hot sulphur (and, later, cold river water) plunges during the years Matilija Hot Springs operated as a health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the plunge/swimming pool is linked to the nationwide popularity of mineral springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the early 20th century. The plunge/swimming pool was built to specifically exploit the mineral water springs.

In addition, the plunge/swimming pool is significant under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E for its link to the type “Health Resort.” As such, the plunge/swimming pool is significant as a predominant component of a distinguished entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. Supplementing its original function as a hot sulphur plunge, the apparatus later played a focal recreational and educational role in the social history of Ventura County. It continues to reflect its specific purpose in the effective functioning of a hot springs health resort and later uses as County and privately-operated swimming pool.

Furthermore, under the same criteria, the plunge/swimming pool embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type “pool.” Indeed, originally constructed on the site in 1902, the Matilija Hot Springs plunge/swimming pool is possibly the oldest landmarked pool in the entire country. It appears certain to be the oldest extant plunge/swimming pool in California.

Finally, the plunge/swimming pool was specifically singled out by the County of Ventura Cultural Resource Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

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The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, including the early years when it was an overnight destination resort, the period during which the property was a County Park, and during the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The plunge/swimming pool is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: Pool House

Site plan: #14

Photo: #7

Date: 1969/1970
modified late ca. 1988

The pool house is adjacent to the north side of the swimming pool. This 1,151 sq. ft., one-story building consists of four group dormitory rooms and a small office. Each dormitory room has an exterior doorway facing the swimming pool. These rooms once housed gender-segregated toilets, showers, and changing rooms with lockers. In the late 1980s/early 1990s, these amenities were removed, the walls painted, and floors carpeted in order to convert the rooms to group sleeping quarters. The office is accessible through an exterior doorway on the west end of the building.

A long detached concrete block wall extends to the west of the office. This wall was constructed after 1969 and is today adorned with an improvisational communal mural. While this mural likely dates to ca. 1988/1990s, and therefore is not deemed historically significant, it nonetheless offers visual testimony to the function of the facility during this period of time as a new age spa/retreat center.

The pool house is a concrete block building, erected in 1969/1970. It was constructed after a landslide triggered by the floods of January and February 1969 destroyed a previous pool house building, which had stood in the same location. The current building has a flat roof slanting northward; four domed skylights were installed in the 1990s. There are two conventional windows in the south wall, two in the west wall, and one in the north wall of the office area. On the east wall and north wall, respectively, are two and four small windows high in the walls of the dormitory rooms. This high placement, intended to provide privacy, corroborates the original function of the rooms within as changing rooms.

As evidenced in vintage photographs, although it is smaller than the original, the present-day pool house sits on a portion of the footprint of the original pool house; that is, adjacent to the pool decking on the north side. Consequently, the present-day pool house reflects the appearance of the plunge/swimming pool and pool house area during the periods of significance, when the facility functioned as a hot springs resort, a county park, and a private health and wellness spa. Thus as a surrogate representation of the original pool house, the present-day pool is considered historically significant.

Moreover, while less than fifty years old, the pool house is significant for its connection to the historic floods of January and February 1969. Counting among the worst in the history of California, these floods represent the most recent of numerous damaging weather events to impact the site of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. Thus, the pool house

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stands as record of the resilience of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort and its repeated reincarnation on the heels of a natural disaster.

Additionally, the pool house was a key facility during the County Park phase. During this period, virtually everyone who used the pool also used this building, as it housed changing rooms, rest rooms and showers, and locker rooms. Moreover, the pool house building was present when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission and, thus, counts among the landmarked features.

Under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E the pool house is significant for its link to the type “Health Resort,” as it is a component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Plus, the pool house was present when the County of Ventura Cultural Resource Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the years Matilija Hot Springs of the Olivas tenure, when the Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Assessment: **The pool house is a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Residence**

Site plan: #15

Photo: #8

Date: ca. 1940s/1950s
renovated ca. 1960
partially rebuilt ca. 1970
modified ca. 1990s

The residence is northeast of the plunge/swimming pool and pool house. This 1,086 sq. ft. building comprises a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and one bath. The roofline of the one-story residence is a vernacular ranch style with an asymmetrical single-story, low-pitched gable on the south façade which is a trademark of post-war residential architecture. The ranch home was a popular architectural style from the 1930s through the end of the 1960s which was mostly used for individual residential buildings. The off-center low roof slope of the residence is a nod to the modernist style that flourished in the mid-century United States.

The building is a standard wood-frame construction, with a concrete slab foundation, concrete floors, stucco exterior siding, and a composite shingle roof. The two windows on the south elevation, four windows on the west elevation, one window on the north elevation and two windows on the east elevation are the aluminum horizontal sliding type. The main door on the south elevation is heavy natural wood, unlikely original. There is a wood and paned-glass French door with paned sidelight window on the east elevation and a wood door with plate glass on the west elevation. Also on the west elevation is a water heater closet and circuit box.

During the County Park period, from 1953 until about 1960, the residence was inhabited by the Park superintendent, Gene Michalski and his family (wife Ann Virginia & daughters Monica & Michele). The family lived on Adolph Spreckels II's Ojai ranch from 1960 until 1963, during which time the Matilija Hot Springs residence was renovated; the interior floor plan was modified to add a second bedroom. (Nonetheless, when the family moved back to the park site in 1963 with a new baby girl [Maryann], even the modified residence was no longer large enough for the family so the two older daughters used one of the guest cottages as sleeping quarters. The family continued to reside at Matilija Hot Springs County Park until 1965.)

Later, the rear portion of the residence was destroyed by mudslides which resulted from the historic January and February 1969 floods. This portion of the residence (approximately the area of the rear bedroom) was reconstructed in like style the same year. A fieldstone (or river rock) wainscoting surrounds all sides of the residence. This wainscoting was added by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria in the 1990s to keep mud and water from seeping into the building during winter rains.

Although in altered state, the residence falls within the range of a historic resource. The residence is significant for its connection to the County Park period, when it was the home of the County Park superintendent and his family, and for its connection to the historic floods of

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January and February 1969. Counting among the worst in the history of California, these floods represent the most recent of numerous damaging weather events to impact the site of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. The residence stands as record of the longevity and resilience of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Therefore, under National Criterion C/State Criterion C/County Criterion E the residence is significant for its link to the type “Health Resort,” as it is a component of the distinguishable entity, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Also, the residence was present when the County of Ventura Cultural Resource Commission when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 and, therefore, counts among the landmarked features.

The period of significance spans the period from its construction, when Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa and recreation resort, through the period during which the property was a County Park, until the end of the Olivas tenure during which time Matilija Hot Springs functioned as a health spa.

Finally, the residence was standing as is (absent the stone wainscoting) when the entire 9.22 acre site was declared County Landmark #25 by the County of Ventura Cultural Resources Commission and, thus, counts among the landmarked features.

Assessment: **The residence is an altered contributing historic resource.**

Section VI (b)

Individual Records of Non-Contributing Buildings, Structure & Object

Structure Record: Observation Platform

Site plan: #1

Photo #: N/A

Date: ca. 1988/early 1990s

The observation platform is a vernacular wooden deck measuring 35 by 38 feet, or approximately 1330 sq. ft. It is located northwest of the Greene cabin. The observation platform was constructed by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria ca. 1988/early 1990s.

Assessment: **The observation platform is not a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: Greene Cabin

Site plan: #3

Photo #: N/A

Date: ca. 1988/early 1990s

The Greene cabin is a vernacular wood building supported by concrete pier-footings. It is located north of the bath house. The Greene cabin was erected by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria ca. 1988/early 1990s. It has three wooden steps leading to a small covered porch. The glass double-door in the east wall is the sole entry/exit. The cabin has a composite shingle roof and windows on all four sides.

Assessment: **The Greene cabin is not a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Powers Cabin**

Site plan: #4

Photo #: N/A

Date: ca. 1988/early 1990s

The Powers cabin is a vernacular wood building supported by concrete pier-footings. It is located north of the historic cabin and comprises 240 sq. ft. A stone walkway leads to the single front door in the north wall, which is the sole entry/exit. The cabin is an expressed wood frame construction with plywood walls, wood floor, a rolled paper roof, and windows on all four sides. The Powers cabin was constructed by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria ca. 1988/early 1990s.

Assessment: **The Powers cabin is not a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Barton Cabin**

Site plan: #6

Photo #: N/A

Date: ca. 1988/early 1990s

The Barton cabin is a vernacular wood building supported by concrete pier-footings. It is located north-northwest of the laundry shed. The Barton cabin was constructed by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria ca. 1988/early 1990s. It has four wooden steps leading to a small covered entrance landing. The single front door in the east wall is the sole entry/exit. The cabin has a composite shingle roof and windows on all four sides.

Assessment: **The Barton cabin is not a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Laundry Shed**

Site plan: #7

Photo #: N/A

Date: early 1990s

The laundry shed is a pre-fabricated wood structure situated just north of the restroom building. The single doorway in the west wall is the sole entry/exit. The laundry shed was erected by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria sometime in the early 1990s. It has a corrugated metal gambrel roof and a window in the east wall.

Assessment: **The laundry shed is not a contributing historic resource.**

Object Record: **Well House**

Site plan: #10

Photo #: N/A

Date: pre-1950s

The remains of the well house are located southwest of the guest cottage, near the main driveway. It is today rubble of wood and stone. The date of its construction is unknown. The well house is recorded in photographs from the mid-1950s. It had a stone foundation topped by a wooden frame structure with gabled wood shingle roof. It stood approximately five feet from ground to peak.

While clearly over 50 years old and present at the time the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Board declared the entire 9.22 acre site County Landmark #25, the present condition of the well house and its lack of physical integrity negates its legitimate eligibility as a contributing resource.

Assessment: **The well house is not a contributing historic resource.**

Building Record: **Dining/Dance Hall**

Site plan: #12

Photo #: N/A

Date: ca. 1965

The dining/dance hall is located adjacent to the Post Office/store/snack bar building, on the south side of the main driveway. The space is accessed via the Post Office/store/snack bar building. The 1,206 sq. ft. space is constructed on a concrete foundation, with concrete floor, concrete interior walls, stucco exterior walls, and a flat roof. The space comprises a kitchen area which connects with the kitchen of the Post Office/store/snack bar building. The kitchen area and the main dining/dancing area have windows on the north, east, and south sides. The dining/dance hall was constructed ca. 1965 by Arnulfo Eduardo Echeverria when the property was under Olivas management. The dining/dance hall was severely damaged in 2010 by a tree limb crashing through the roof. Due to the damage sustained in this event, the dining/dance hall does not retain its historic integrity.

Assessment: **The dining/dance hall is not a contributing historic resource.**

Section VII

Contextual Chronology

Though it has never been archaeologically or otherwise confirmed, it is said the Chumash enjoyed the pleasures and benefits of the waters from these springs long before the arrival of Europeans and Americans. It is likely they did, as it is documented that other native peoples considered hot springs as sacred places and believed in the healing power of the heat and mineral waters (Lund, 2000). Credible evidence or no, through the years the notion of the Matilija Hot Springs as a Chumash ritual site has persisted. Reference to this Chumash heritage was employed primarily for promotional purposes, implying added prestige and exoticism if the waters had previously been enjoyed by Native Americans.

Originally called the Ojai Hot Springs Resort, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort was founded January 20, 1887 by Abram W. Blumberg (Plate I) on the former site of a popular campsite for bear hunters. Blumberg is best known for the 1874 construction of the first hotel (the very first building, some say) in the fledgling village that would become Ojai. Thus, Blumberg was a key player in the village's early development. It was Mrs. Blumberg, in fact, who named the little town Nordhoff, after Charles Nordhoff whose writings about the local climate had initially attracted the family to the area. Blumberg and his family had traveled to California from Iowa seeking a climate more suitable to Mrs. Blumberg's health.

Blumberg's hot springs enterprise took off. By the end of the first year of its establishment he had constructed several small furnished cottages, erected tents for camping parties, a stable for horses, a small store, and a building used for an office and dining room. Already the facilities could accommodate up to one hundred guests, in addition to the many tent campers who were responsible for providing their own board. No doubt Blumberg's operation was favorably served by the Southern Pacific Railroad's arrival in Ventura on May 18, 1887— not six months after he opened his resort.

In November of that year, the *Ventura Free Press* described the water from two of the springs at Ojai Hot Springs as hot and "from which the flow of water is copious and apparently never-ending." The water from another spring was described as "tepid and genial" and the water from yet another as "deliciously cool and refreshing." The water from another spring, said the paper,

"is soft and heavily impregnated with sulphur; the taste is pleasant, though the water has the scent of eggs picked too late; the water is soft and pleasant to the touch, makes the skin soft and white and beautifies the complexion. There are other springs of various kinds, in the canyon, which Mr. A.W. Blumberg, the proprietor, will soon put in good shape for the convenience and benefit of his guests" (*Ventura Free Press*, November 11, 1887).

There were apparently a number of bathhouses already constructed on the site, and the waters becoming quite famous, for the paper continues,

"Three commodious bath-houses are insufficient for the guests and several other bath-houses are being built; also additional cottages.

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The waters of these springs are very similar to those of the world-famous ‘Arkansas Hot Springs,’ and possess the curative powers over rheumatism, liver and kidney [sic] complaints, dyspepsia, irritation of the mucous membranes of the stomach, skin diseases, etc. The valley being protected from harsh winds and fogs by the encircling mountains, and rich in grand scenery, makes this healthful resort also one of pleasure to the invalid” (*Ventura Free Press*, November 11, 1887).

Periodic promotional articles in the *Ventura Free Press* touted the benefits of the resort’s waters, the pleasure of a stay at Matilija, and the warm accommodations of its proprietor. So many tourists flocked to the resort that by 1889 Blumberg had opened a federal Post Office on site. Blumberg advertised his springs (Plate II) and other advertisements touted tri-weekly stages to the springs from Ventura. Blumberg improved the furnishings in his hotel and had the springs waters analyzed for mineral content and medicinal properties. In June 1891 it was reported that 77 people were at the springs, and as many more were expected during the next two weeks (*Ventura Free Press*, June 5, 1891). Indeed, the operation was so successful that, in the early 1890s, Blumberg’s son, Wheeler C. Blumberg, opened his eponymous hot springs enterprise further up the Matilija canyon.

By 1892 the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort was listed in Dr. Winslow Anderson’s guide to hot springs health centers in California and the *Los Angeles Herald* was touting the many attributes of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort (Plate III). According to the paper,

“...of all the resorts the Matilija hot springs draws the crowds. This place, which is rapidly becoming famous because of its wild picturesqueness and the curative powers of its mineral springs. [It is] reached by stage or carriage over a good road through one of the prettiest canyons on the Pacific coast. ...by these waters the people come to camp, to fish, and to rest and to grow young. Within a space of perhaps a hundred yards are six or eight mineral springs, varying in properties and in temperature, adapting themselves to the wants and tastes of almost all complaints. One is hot and this affords hot baths for those who like them. Another is cool, and they call this the ‘Fountain of Life’ which makes old people young; another is called ‘Jacobs Well;’ this is for sick people who come from Santa Barbara and other places. Another is ‘Celeste,’ I don’t know what that is for. . . .And still another is ‘Mother Eve,’ for dyspeptics and chronic growlers. There are others without names, good for innumerable diseases.... A. W. Blumberg has built a three-room hotel and a lot of three-room cottages and twenty or thirty one-room tents for the accommodation of visitors.... They can board with him at from \$10 to \$12 per week, they can take a room and board themselves or they can take a tent and ‘camp out.’ There they can fish or hunt as they like” (*Los Angeles Herald*, June 19, 1892).

On August 8, 1894, *The Ojai* reported that A.W. Blumberg still owns the property but it is “ably managed by Mr. and Mrs. P.L. Smith.” An extant advertisement claims the same (Plate IV). According to the *Ojai Valley News*, advertisements also appeared this year claiming that

“the hot mineral baths are the finest known and cure the following diseases: Rheumatism, Catarrh, Erysipelas, Dyspepsia, Chronic Diarrhea, Sore Eyes, Liver and Kidney

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complaint, La Grippe, Neuralgia, Piles, Sick Headache, Cancer, Syphilis [*sic*], and all kinds of Blood and Skin Diseases” (*Ojai Valley News*, 1971).

The official name of the resort continued to be Ojai Hot Springs, although the legal designation of the Post Office was Matilija Hot Springs. Apparently a new Post Office building was built this year (1894), as well.

By 1895 Smith’s lease had expired and A.W. Blumberg was back managing the health spa and recreation resort. On December 15, 1895 the Post Office with all its records and mail matter was destroyed by arson. In addition to the *Ventura Free Press*, the story was carried by Los Angeles and San Francisco papers.

In November of 1896, R. S. Woodruff rented the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. He managed the operation until July 1898 when C.H. Polley took over. On August 5th of that year, the *Ventura Free Press* reported that the “firm of Polley and Burdick” were in control of the business. These partners managed the facilities as a hunting and fishing resort which they advertised in *Out West* and *The Land of Sunshine*, two nationally distributed periodicals catering to the leisured classes (Plate V and Plate VI).

Regrettably, A.W. Blumberg passed away suddenly on September 28, 1899 from a fall while riding his bicycle in Los Angeles. Records indicate that Mr. and Mrs. Charles Polley terminated their lease about one month later, in November. Wheeler Blumberg was appointed Postmaster of Matilija Hot Springs and the facility was rented to J. I. Stewart.

Now known as Matilija Hot Springs, the resort remained quite active under Stewart’s watch until, on May 7, 1901, it was sold at auction to the highest bidder for \$20,000. The purchaser was Mr. S.P. “Barrel O’ Money” Creasinger, a Los Angeles money-lender, real estate broker, and developer. In the deal, Creasinger received 80 acres, including the resort, and an additional 320 acres in the surrounding canyon.

Envisioning a world class mineral springs health spa and recreation resort, Creasinger threatened “to build an electric line from Ventura to the Matilija” if the Southern Pacific Railroad did not improve its service to Nordhoff. And he began pouring money into the hot springs site. From the beginning, according to the *Ventura Free Press*, he planned to build a large plunge bath, but the “great improvement...is the erection of a first-class hotel....It is to be built of green sandstone, of which there is an abundance close to the site and will cost in the neighborhood of \$100,000” (*Ventura Free Press*, September 27, 1901).

This hotel appears not to have been erected, although by March 1902, the sandstone Post Office/store/snack bar had been constructed (presumably with this same local green sandstone), as well as many other improvements. According to the *Ventura Free Press*,

“Ventura county [*sic*] has a fair prospect of becoming one of the great health and summer resorts of California. And Ventura city may be the distributing point, so to speak, for tourists in this section. Few people realize the magnitude of the improvements being made at the Matilija springs, and former patrons of the resort would be amazed at the transformation. Two plunge baths have been completed. They are 42 x 101 feet and are covered by an immense and beautiful building 62 x 115 feet. The building is now being shingled and will be entirely completed in three weeks. It contains ladies’ reception

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room, gentlemen's reception room, 77 dressing rooms, all pleasantly appointed and comfortably furnished. The plunges are equipped with slides, spring boards, rings, etc., for the pleasure of bathers. One plunge is shallow and is especially for the use of children and the timid.

J.N. Preston, of Los Angeles, architect for the buildings, permitted a Free Press representative to examine the plan and explained them in detail. The great plunge building contains 50,000 feet of lumber, local dealers furnished much of the material and mill work.

The first new building completed on the grounds is a stone store 21 x 40 feet which is supplied with a general stock of provisions, etc., for the convenience of campers. Several pretty four room cottages have been erected and will be rented for \$10 to \$12 per week. Furnished tents, including board, baths, and all privileges of the grounds will cost \$8 per week.

Another feature of the new grounds will be a tented city. Furnished tents 10x12 will be rented for \$4 per week and parties will have privilege of baths, and free wood. Those furnishing their own tents will be charged \$1 for the use of the ground and may have all the privileges of boarders and regular campers by paying the additional separate charges.

S.P. Creasinger, who owns the place, informs us that he has invested \$50,000 there this year and he has only started on the development of what is ultimately to be the most attractive resort in the West.

R. Swinney has been put in charge of the place. Mr. Creasinger is endeavoring to arrange with the Southern Pacific for a special train during the summer months. If such arrangements cannot be made, two state lines will be established between Ventura and Matilija, and Nordhoff and Matilija" (*Ventura Free Press*, March 21, 1902).

A front page story in the April 11, 1902 *Ventura Free Press* aptly describes the degree of Creasinger's investment. The paper reported,

"AN IDEAL MOUNTAIN SUMMER RESORT

The Beautiful Matilija Canyon is Now the Most Attractive Spot
for Rest, Health and Pleasure Seekers in Southern California

\$50,000 SPENT THIS YEAR ON IMPROVEMENTS....

S.P. CREASINGER, the Los Angeles man with the reputation for doing big things, is certainly keeping up that reputation by his work at the Matilija hot springs and is dipping deep into that "barrel of money" in this, his latest enterprise. It is a little difficult to tell on paper just what is being done by Mr. Creasinger with the already famed Matilija hot springs, but this much can be said, when the season opens for the rush of people from stores, workshops and farm for the mountains, canyons and swift running streams, the man who makes his destination the Matilija will be lucky indeed.

The springs will be famous for more than its wonderful natural beauties, for Creasinger is painting nature.

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He is now and has been for months putting \$2000 a week into improvements on the property he has acquired. Some one has figured that he will have put \$50,000 into embellishments by the time the season is under way. Perhaps he will have done so. The assertion is made that the amount will be much greater before the new owner is through with his present work. It is well enough known that he never does things by halves and this he is demonstrating every day at the springs to the most casual observer.

It is difficult to tell of the improvements in detail for it is all improvement. There is to be a complete turn-over of everything that the hand of man has had to do with.

Probably the most noticeable of the new things is the great plunge bath and the building. This is the first thing to greet the eye on approaching the resort. The building rears to the height of 50 feet. Its dimensions are 62 x 130 feet. It will contain 76 bath rooms and the necessary toilet rooms for men and women. It will have embellishments of colored glass windows and various and sundry ornamentation such as is found on the other buildings of the kind at other resorts.

The great cement swimming tub within is 60 x 100 feet with any depth of water required. A feature, and a most essential one, is the children's plunge 20 x 40 feet. It is unique in that it is walled off from the main tub where the deeper water is. No plunge has ever before been built just like it in this respect. It is a safety device that all will immediately appreciate, too.

The work of putting in this great tank was stupendous, for room on which to build it is at a premium in this favored spot. Giant powder, pick and shovel and a liberal expenditure of money moved the great boulders [sic], however, and with the expenditure of some \$7000 there now stands one of the finest swimming tanks in the country. It is going to be a drawing card when it is filled with hot sulphur water, along about the middle of May, and it should be. It will not be necessary, for one to go a step further to enjoy natatorial sport and exercise to the fullest.

In the building and over the tank will of course be suspended the diving platforms, the swinging rings and the trapeze bars and such other gymnasium accoutrements are essential in such a place. The whole will be lighted with incandescents. A plant will be put in for the purpose of furnishing lights in plenty for the whole summer city that will string itself out along the noisy river. An 80 horse power gasoline engine will generate electric current.

New cottages have been built and are building. The dining room has been enlarged, the building repainted and repapered, the cuisine already a feature, will be kept constantly up to date. There is nothing in the market that cannot be found on the table, now and in season. The man or woman accustomed to the service of the best hotels and the cooking of their food will find nothing at the Matilija hotel to cavil at. While it is to be understood that though the season has not yet fully opened those who go here may find the best of accommodations. Boarders who take cottages will find rooms as daintily furnished and as well kept as in the prettiest homes, and the wife and daughter of Mr. Creasinger are constantly on the ground to see that the wants of the guests are in no way overlooked, even to the smallest detail.

It has been intimated that there was not sufficient hot water at these Matilija springs. There is and to spare, and of the best. All it needs is development and Mr. Creasinger is developing it. The whole country embraced in the 400 acres owned by him is a bubbling

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mass of minerals springs of all kinds of temperatures and all possible ingredients. The water used at present for bathing is 104 degrees. A new pipeline 1200 feet long has been laid to the spring to convey the water to the plunge. The ground where this spring bubbles up has only been scratched in the past. Water flow can be increased to almost any desired amount, say those who know. Around about the grounds are various fine springs, including the celebrated Mother Eve and the Fountain of Life. Both are noted for cures of ills of mankind, and both are bubbling up a challenge to defend their reputations. It is hard to tell just the number of ailments these waters will cure, but it is certain that nay human will be benefitted by drinking of these waters.

Eighteen men are on the grounds at present working hard. They include carpenters, painters, plumbers and stone masons. A good stone store building has been erected. A find [sic] stone hotel is proposed for the near future – next season, perhaps. Tom McGuire of the Spear Company is putting in all sorts of fancy plumbing, including porcelain bathtubs, piping and other essential features. Every cottage is receiving paint and additions to make it comfortable and beautiful.

When it is ready, people can find anything they want the Matilija springs. Fishing, hunting, romantic walks and mountain climbs, all kinds of baths in all kinds of water and water to drink to suite everybody, horses to ride, bowling, tennis, quoits, croquet, tall-ho rides, and dancing and music without limit.

There was a time when the Matilija hot springs were not easily accessible. They are located in the Matilija Canyon, or more properly Matilija gorge, out of which pours the beautiful Ventura river, almost eighteen miles from the coast, and in the old days it was not an easy matter to reach them.

It is different now. The Southern Pacific has built a branch line from the sea to Nordhoff, and the stage road to the springs is only a few miles. The road is good and level. The springs are in the canyon proper and there are no grades. Indeed, it is just a pleasant ride awheel nowadays.

The gorge is a picturesque and wildly beautiful one. Its altitude is 1,000 feet above the sea and the air is delightfully bracing. The mountains rise above the nook on which the springs buildings are located some 1200 feet, rocky and precipitous” (*Ventura Free Press*, April 11, 1902).

It should be noted that Creasinger’s expenditure of 50 thousand dollars for these improvements, using simple purchasing power calculation, equals approximately \$1.35 million in present day monetary value.

Creasinger advertised his newly aggrandized springs locally with a full description of the amenities available to guests and promoting the natural beauty and favorable climate of the setting. For example, a June 1902 ad (Plate VIIa) proclaims,

“This magic resort is situated in a natural park of some 400 acres, in the Santa Ynez Mountains, Ventura County. As a place to pass a delightful summer vacation it offers facilities unequaled. There is hunting, fishing; dry, bracing air; hot sulphur baths; mineral water to drink; horseback and tall ho riding; bowling alley, ping pong, etc. The beautiful plunge is 50 x 120 feet and cost \$10,000. Separate plunge for children under same roof.

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Every convenience, including postoffice [*sic*], general store, long distance telephone, electric lights, and library. Strictly a temperance resort. No fog. Altitude 1000 feet. Rates for camping \$1.00 per week up; rooms in cottages, with board and mineral water to drink, \$10 per week and up.”

Moreover, like his predecessors, Creasinger appears not to have spared a dime in advertising his world class spa nationally. Full page advertisements touting his improvements were featured in the April, May, and June 1902 issues of *Out West* (Plate VIIb). The resort’s national renown was further underscored by favorable mention in a feature article on Ventura County in the December 1902 issue of the same publication. A spring 1902 advertisement promotes the newly renovated property accordingly (Plate VII).

It should be noted that the architect of the plunge pavilion mentioned by the *Ventura Free Press*, Jasper Newton Preston (1832-1922), was a leading architect in Austin, TX and later in Los Angeles, CA. In Austin he is known for designing the famed Hotel Driskill, Allen Hall at the Tillotson Institute, the Walter Tips Building, the Hannig Building, and numerous county courthouses and hospitals. Another impressive achievement was his service as the juror in selecting the design for the new Texas State Capitol Building in 1881.

Projects for which he is famed in Los Angeles include the San Gabriel Hotel, the Los Angeles High School, and the addition to the Normal School. He also executed residential designs for wealthy clients in Pasadena and Huntington Beach. Highly esteemed, in 1892 Preston was voted by his peers to the Presidency of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and, in 1907, elected to lifetime membership in the group.

The plunge pavilion at Matilija Hot Springs was indeed impressive (Plates VIIIa and VIIIb). Clearly, the involvement of such an esteemed architect at Matilija Hot Springs illustrates the scale of what the resort once was. Although the plunge pavilion was destroyed by fire ca. 1924, its very existence alludes to the significance of Matilija Hot Springs among American hot springs health spas and recreation resorts.

A 1903 advertisement for the grand opening that year on June 6 lists a B. B. Cota as manager. The ad noted that, filled with warm water, the Matilija Hot Springs plunge was the largest in Southern California (Plate IX).

Unfortunately, Creasinger’s business enterprises suffered, leading him to file for bankruptcy in January 1904. It is not known to what degree his investments at Matilija Hot Springs contributed to the bankruptcy but his assets, including the springs, were ordered sold by the Superior Court of Los Angeles County for the benefit of creditors. As it was phrased at the time, “‘Barrel ‘O Money’ Creasinger’s barrel is empty” (*Ventura Free Press*, January 29, 1904).

It did not take long for a new investor to appear. On January 26, 1904 the property was purchased at auction by Sim Myers of Oxnard for about \$12,000 (*Ojai Valley News*, January 30, 1904). Myers also possessed a grand vision and immediately set to making even more improvements. According to a contemporary news account,

“Sim Meyers [*sic*] is doing lots of good work on his Matilija Hot Springs. He has about fifteen men at work and he personally has got down to real hard work laying stone. He has changed the appearance of both springs having built them in in concrete and cement

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and carried off under ground the unsightly waste water. It is about two hundred feet up the side of the mountain opposite the hotel or rather a little farther up the stream. He intends to keep down all the dust, have a fine fire protection and possibly run the dynamo that supplies about 350 lights. He also has built a large stone cellar with a refrigerator to keep his meat, etc. during the hot summer and in fact is preparing to cater to the wants of the most fastidious, whether they go for health or pleasure" (*Ventura Free Press*, April 15, 1904).

Myers held his first grand opening on May 1 of the same year (1904), advertising the event locally in the *Ventura Free Press* (Plate X), and nationally in the magazine *Sunset* (Plate XI).

At the beginning of the 20th century the automobile had entered the transportation market. At this time the increasing popularity and availability of automobile travel enters the story of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort as a plaything of the privileged. The first automobile for the general public was manufactured in 1901; 425 of them sold that year and 5,000 sold in 1904. Apparently some of these earliest automobiles found their way to the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort. This is documented in the *Ventura Free Press* report about the premier grand opening under Myers' aegis. Reported the paper,

"Every available buggy, wagon, carryall, automobile and other wheeled thing was pressed into service yesterday, and everybody who could get out of town and headed for Sim Myers hot spring in the Matilija to assist the genial and wholesouled new landlord of that resort in his opening. . . . There were probably never before so many people in the Matilija and the roads leading to that famous spot was almost once continual string of vehicles. . . . While many attractive additions have been made in the way of new cottages for families, new tent sites and the like, the improvement will continue until nothing will be lacking. Among other pretty features four beautiful rustic bridges span the river about the grounds, adding to the picturesqueness of the picture spot. . . . Every convenience that can be found in a city is to be had at the springs. The table will be especially looked after and the markets watched for all that is best in the way of food. Innocent games and amusements of all sorts, a store for campers, electric lights, telephones, reading-rooms, and every other possible convenience to be had anywhere" (*Ventura Free Press*, May 6, 1904).

Thus, it seems, some of the first private automobiles in the country were used to drive to the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort.

Responding to the popularity of the site, the Southern Pacific Railroad includes Matilija Hot Springs in a full-page ad in the June 1904 issue of *Sunset* (Plate XII).

Torrential rains caused flooding in September of the same year but it was not until March 1905 that "a flood raged through the canyon" causing an estimated \$50,000 damage to the buildings at the site. The *Ventura Free Press* reported that the March 12 storm brought the

"greatest rain since the memorable wet year of 1884....several cottage at Sim Myers, as well as the bath-house and stables had been washed away. . .the bathhouse at the springs is gone and with it fifteen or twenty cottages. Everything is a wreck. The big plunge escaped with but little injury, but aside from this the damage is great and Mr. Myers' loss will reach up into the thousands of dollars" (*Ventura Free Press*, March 17, 1905).

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The *Los Angeles Herald* reported that,

“The work of repairing the damage by high water at Matilija will be commenced at once. The bath house, which was destroyed, will be replaced by a much better and up-to-date building. Expense will not be spared to replace all property destroyed, and May 1st is the date set for the grand opening of the season” (*Los Angeles Herald*, March 31, 1905).

Myers would continue to run the hot springs resort for a half dozen more years, but he would never recover financially from this devastating loss.

In January 1906 it is reported that Myers was successful in his efforts to increase the volume of flow of the hot sulphur springs water to four inches (indicating the size of pipe) and raise the temperature to 166 degrees. Also that month, an article by E.M. Sheridan (with photographs by J.C. Brewster) appeared in *Sunset* praising the attributes of San Buenaventura. Of the Matilija Canyon Sheridan wrote,

“The valley is reached daily by rail from Ventura by the sea. In the fastnesses of the near-by mountains are located the Matilija hot and mineral springs. Wonderful mineral water is found here, and in the summer thousands of people find their way to the springs for rest, health and recreation” (*Sunset*, January 1906).

Indeed, later that year, describing the seasonal grand opening, the *Ventura Free Press* reported that,

“People came and went all day and it is safe to say that fully five hundred people visited the springs....The big plunge was patronized all day and the bowling alley, the courts, the dance pavilion, the library, in fact ever [*sic*] amusement place on the ground had its full share of attention. The dining hall at noon time was thronged, an orchestra playing sweet strains of music [*sic*] while the diners refreshed themselves. And the dinner was a record breaker even at the springs where all the dinners are noted for their excellence” (*Ventura Free Press*, May 4, 1906).

Opening day 1907 was just as popular and even grander, for it was,

“...a little better, a little bigger, a little more complete and thorough and a little bit more enjoyable for the 500 people who attended.... Several strings of trout were shown. By the way, the fishing this year is better than it ever was and a rare sport is in store for the angler this year who put up at Matilija. Mr. Myers prepared himself this year for the floods and was not caught in the raging waters of the river. . . . The waterwheel is in place, the cottages are intact, and the groves are ready for the tent houses” (*Ventura Free Press*, May 3, 1907).

Much information can be gleaned from this short mention. Namely, that hundreds continued to flock to the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort for the season opening day festivities; that, in addition to the great plunge and plunge pavilion and hot sulphur baths, fishing for trout in the Ventura River was major draw; that the danger of floods was an annual concern; and, that in 1906/1907 Myers had installed a waterwheel, presumably replacing Creasinger's 80 horse-power gasoline engine to generate electricity for the site.

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The reputation of the resort was no doubt advanced by continued presence in national media, not the least of an advertisement sponsored by the Southern Pacific Railroad in the June 1907 issue of *Country Life in America* (Plate XIII).

Perhaps some of the popularity of the resort rested in the availability of an amenity not mentioned in these ads. In July of the same year, *The Ojai* reported that Myers was charged with selling liquor without a license and that, “Mr. Myers, not contrary to former charges of like character, offered no defense...” (*The Ojai*, July 27, 1907).

It is reported that in 1908 Myers incorporated the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort with the hopes of raising \$50,000 for further improvements. It appears this scheme may have fizzled as there are no records of improvements being made to the resort in this period.

Opening day 1910 welcomed similar crowds as previous years, perhaps spurred by mention of the springs in *California for the Tourist*, a booklet that had recently been issued by Southern Pacific Railroad and distributed nationally. The booklet listed the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort noting that the facility, noted for “its medicinal drinking waters and hot sulphur baths...in charming mountain surroundings with good accommodations...is reached via the branch to Nordhoff from Ventura on the Coast Line” (*California for the Tourist*, 1910). The Southern Pacific ad is an interesting piece of social history in that it promotes train travel during the era in which automobile travel was becoming increasingly common.

A key player in the democratizing of the automobile, of course, was the Ford Motor Company which sold its first car, a Model A, in July 1903. The company produced 1,700 Model As in this year. In 1909 the company began building its Model T, an economical automobile designed for the average American. By 1920 Ford had sold over a million cars. Employed for special events and outings the automobile had become a substantial component of American recreation culture. An extant photograph of festivities at Matilija Hot Springs, taken around 1910, shows some of these first “gas buggies” to travel to the health spa and recreation resort (Plate XIV).

Apparently these opening day festivities in 1910 were quite an event. An article about them reported that,

“Nearly a thousand people partook of the hospitality of Sim Myers Sunday at the May Day opening of his celebrated Matilija Springs resort. Automobile, bugges [*sic*], carriages, wagons and horsemen were coming and going in and out of the Matilija canyon the entire day. Families took their dinners and enjoyed a day in the romantic stretches of the plunging river, and many partook of the excellent dinner served at the springs hotel, which lasted well into the afternoon in order to accommodte [*sic*] the hungry. The plunge was full the entire day, of course, and the various swings and sports provided were kept busy. Trout fishermen were scattered along the river for miles up and down stream, and everybody caught trout. Altogether it was a great day and a great crowd and Host Myers was everywhere needed and made everybody comfortable. The springs opens under the best auspices in its history and the season promises to be better than ever before” (*Ventura Free Press*, May 6, 1910).

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In 1911, sterling silver souvenir spoons were available at Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort (Plate XV).

The Matilija Hot Springs Stage continued to transport visitors from the depot in Ojai until 1912. In that year the stage was sold, “ending what was for many years the only means of transportation to the area” (*The Ojai*, August 5, 1954). Thus, the advent of the automobile changed the mode in which visitors traveled to the resort and added yet another element of adventure to an outing there. No doubt, as well, the attendance of these vehicles parked at the resort impacted the physical character of the site; reflecting the mood of possibility and freedom ushered in by the advent of the automobile, and imparting an ambiance of modernity.

After ten years of financial hardship due to the damage from the flood of 1904, Sim Myers could no longer keep the enterprise afloat. In 1912 Myers released the property in foreclosure to the Bank of A. Levy of Oxnard. The bank would own the property for over thirty years (1912-1946). Though it consistently leased the facilities to various parties who operated the site as a hot sulphur and mineral springs health spa and recreation resort, in the long run, the investment would prove a financial disaster for the bank.

In 1914, “with the river running higher than ever seen before” floods would “leave Matilija a mess” (*Ventura Free Press*, January 23, 1914). Some reported that these floods were worse than the great flood of 1884, which had destroyed the original Matilija Hot Springs site upstream. One cottage was lost, the stables were swept away, and the roads to the resort were entirely washed out. Repairs were made and the resort was mentioned in two national publications (*The Tourist’s California*, 1914 and *Springs of California*, 1915).

With the telephone increasingly the preferred mode of communication, the Matilija Hot Springs federal Post Office was closed July 16, 1916.

In 1917 it is reported that “great crowds of people from all over the county visit the [Ventura County water resorts] each season....” Of these water resorts, the authors claim Matilija Hot Springs is the “ideal resort for health and recreation” with “thousands going every summer to drink the sulphur hot or cold, and bathe in the plunges fed by the springs. There are cottages for those who want retirement at the springs, and tents for all who prefer to camp out in primitive fashion...” (Gidney, Brooks & Sheridan, 1917). Quite obviously the facilities are being leased or rented, but it is unknown by whom at this time.

Also the same year, the California Mining Bureau analyzed the waters at Matilija finding that the “main sulphur spring has a temperature of 116 degrees and is piped to a large swimming plunge and tub baths. The three smaller springs are used for drinking purposes” (Hamilton, 1917).

For 16 years, from 1920 until 1936, the Bank of A. Levy leased the property to Mr. and Mrs. Joe. S. Linnell who continued to operate the facilities as a health spa and recreation resort. Coincidentally, Mr. Linnell had previously managed the Blumberg hotel in Ojai. He is said to have made “many fine improvements on the property, building a number of comfortable cottages and arranging everything for the comfort of his guests” (Sheridan, 1926, p. 81).

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During the Linnells' tenure furnished cottages were let for \$2 per day and \$10 per week, although a housekeeping tent could be had for half the price. A dip in the plunge/swimming pool cost 25 cents. A brochure from this period advertises first class hotel accommodations (American plan)...large swimming plunge, hot sulphur water tub baths, dancing pavilion, provision store, telephone and daily mail service, seasonal fishing and hunting, and a stable of saddle and pack horses for the enjoyment of the guests (Plates XVIa—XVIc).

From 1921 until 1923, we have record that there was a dance hall adjoining the stone store on the north [*sic*] elevation; to the south [*sic*] was a lawn area for picnics and shade. The dance hall was across from the pool, next to the grocery store. The store was managed by Mr. Ben Cota. There was a two-story apartment building behind the store, on the edge of the creek. Upstairs lived the dining room manager and her teenage daughters who assisted her as housekeeping and wait staff. Downstairs were two rooms occupied by the Chinese cook, named Wong. The dining room at the time was apparently quite tasteful with white linen and sterling service and "tables set in a very elegant style" (*Hot Springs, Cold Springs and Boxing Rings*, 1984).

In an oral interview conducted in 1984, Beulah Maybelle Hudson, one of the daughters of the dining room manager Nelle Rhosa (Baird) Hudson, recounts how in the summer of 1921 she would lay on the floor of the plunge/swimming pool "as the water filled up" and, in this way, she learned to swim. This recollection is important in that it suggests the pool was regularly drained and filled. She recalls that, at this time, the water in the plunge/swimming pool was "very cold spring water" and that the "hot sulphur baths were in a little building near the pool" (*Ibid.*). Beulah's sister Violette managed the pool area handing out swimsuits and towels, and then gathering them in a big basket for laundering. Swimming attire at the time, she recalls, was a "short legged two piece bathing suit" comprising "wool shorts and a halter top with two arm straps" (*Ibid.*).

Hudson's mention of a cabin should be noted as it likely reveals information about the accommodations available at the resort at this time. According to Hudson, "one of the little cabins that had canvas on the top and sides in the summer and then they took off the canvas in the winter and it was a frame cabin" (*Ibid.*). It is unclear what she meant by this description, although, no doubt, it would be of some worth to know.

Another interview, also conducted in 1984, offers further insight into the appearance and function of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort during this period. Bertha Lomongo recalled how, when she was a teenager working at Matilija Hot Springs during the summer of 1923, bathing suits would be hung to dry on the fence that went around a little garden in the middle of the grounds (this fence can be seen in vintage photographs from the era).

"We would go in there at six o'clock in the morning," recounted Lomongo,

"in that old pool, it was covered over it was, they filled it, I don't know if it was once a month or once a week, with water from the river and it was colder than ice. That's where I learned to swim. . ." (*Ibid.*).

In addition, Lomongo remembered,

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“They had these little rooms just before you crossed the river, over to the other part of camp, and they had tubs there and you had to wait until they filled them up, the water was so hot you had to wait until it cooled off before you could get into the tubs. It was really hot. Mr. and Mrs. Linnell had the hot springs then” (*Ibid.*).

Lomango’s recollection is consequential in it tells us that a bathhouse at this time was near the river (no longer near the plunge/swimming pool as Hudson had described just two years earlier) and because it relates that the resort’s facilities continued to straddle the river, presumably by the very same bridges installed under Myers’ tenure. It is not clear where these bridges were located or where on the site Lomango is indicating a bathhouse was located. Given the landscape of the site, it is possible this bathhouse is the same one – or at least in the same location – as the present-day one. Nonetheless, in 1984 Lomango recalled that these bathhouse tubs were the only tubs she knew of and thought that all the old buildings “that used to be up there” on the site had been torn down. Lomango also recalls that there were tent-houses on the site at the time, as well as little two-room cabins.

On a cultural note, Lomango recalled that working in the dining facility at this time were two Chinese cooks, named Jerry and Kwong.

According to the outline of a vintage photograph of the plunge pavilion published in July 1970, the great structure was destroyed “when a brush fire swept down Matilija Hot Springs from the canyon” (*Ojai Valley News*, July 22, 1970). The photograph pictures a 1924 model automobile parked in front of the pavilion, indicating the building was extant that year. This is one year after Lomango’s summer spent at the springs when the plunge/swimming pool was “covered over” and two years before Joanna Bard Newton’s recollection of swimming in the “outdoor” plunge/swimming pool in the summer of 1926. Therefore, the structure was lost sometime between 1924 and 1926. In fact, it was likely 1924 since California was ravaged by the rampant incidence of fires that year, the unfortunate result of two years’ previous draught. To date, official reportage of this brush fire has not been ascertained.

It is believed that athletes from the nearby Soper’s Boxing Camp would frequent the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort to soak in the therapeutic springs and drink the mineral waters. It is estimated that between 1925 and 1957 some 550 boxers trained at “Pop” Soper’s camp, including Ezzard Charles, Joe Louis, Bob Fitzsimmons, James J. Corbett, Max Baer, and Jack Johnson. Probably the most notable was William Harrison “Jack” Dempsey who reportedly visited the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort with some regularity and is said to have taken 50 bottles of Matilija water with him when he left for his famous rematch with Gene Tunney in 1928.

Joe Linnell passed away in 1934. Mrs. Linnell continued to operate the resort for two more years. In 1938, still owned by the Bank of A. Levy, the resort continued operation under the management of Mr. G. E. Mann.

During the devastating rains the night of March 2, 1938 the Ventura River breached its banks and flooded the Matilija rancho just downstream from the hot springs site. The bathhouse at

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Matilija Hot Springs was damaged in this flooding. Subsequently, the bathhouse was renovated and, it seems, a number of palm trees were planted around the site during this period of repair.

It seems that Charles H. and Agnes Woolley were the next proprietors of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort, working in this capacity from some time just after the 1938 flood until sometime around 1944. It may have been the Woolleys who oversaw this flood repair and grounds enhancement, for a brochure (Plates XVIIa—XVIIb) published by them promotes the bathhouse as,

“...recently completely renovated and redecorated where patrons of the resort may enjoy a healthful sulphur bath or an invigorating Scientific Swedish Massage by an experienced masseur, who is prepared to give these Medical Massages on doctor’s prescription to those who wish it. The sulphur water is naturally heated (124 degrees) and is beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, neuritis and arthritis” (Woolley brochure, ca. 1940).

Elsewhere the brochure claims that one may take the waters from the various springs for the treatment of headaches, la grippe, Bright’s disease, kidney and liver complaints, dysentery, constipation, and stomach troubles. And, it invites visitors to participate in a range of recreational activities ranging from horseback riding and swimming, to hunting and fishing.

After the Woolleys, the bank leased the facility to Mr. and Mrs. Ray Robinson, for \$465 per month. The couple are said to have run the property as a hot springs resort “until 1949” (*Ojai Valley News*, October 22, 1999). The accuracy of this dating is not clear, as the County of Ventura purchased the property from the Bank of A. Levy in 1946, presumably as a precaution against liability during the construction of the Matilija Dam.

From its founding, the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreational resort operated as a family vacation locale where a favorite pastime of guests was fishing. The Matilija Hot Springs resort was widely known as an abundant fishing spot, regularly mentioned in fishing and recreation columns in newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Herald* and, as we have seen, national periodicals such as *The Land of Sunshine* and *Out West*.

In fact, it is said that President Herbert Hoover, a California resident and avid fisherman, was once an overnight guest at the Matilija Hot Springs resort with his wife, Lou. As Mrs. Hoover died in 1943, and the President had retired in 1933, it is likely this visit occurred sometime during this decade. This event is yet to be definitively confirmed. However, it is certainly possible because Hoover, known for rigorously guarding his privacy, usually left his calendar blank when fishing, or just noted “gone fishing” without provided more detail than that (Wert, 2012).

The first caretaker of the property under County auspices was Andrew V. McDonald. Mr. McDonald’s exact role is unknown. Nonetheless, we do know that a few years after the dam was completed, the use of the Matilija Hot Springs facilities was converted to a county park. Mr. Eugene (Gene) Michalski managed the Matilija Hot Springs Park for the County of Ventura Parks Service from 1953 until 1965. The activities which took place during this period are recounted elsewhere in this report. Suffice to say, the conversion of the facilities to a public park administered by the County government, is a local manifestation of the nationwide post-war turn

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toward leisure and recreation, and the emerging sensibility that it was the government's obligation to provide community recreational facilities.

After over a decade of operating the facility as a park, the operation was determined to be unprofitable and County officials announced the intention to close it (*Star Free Press*, November 25, 1987). For the next 22 years, the property was leased to Bill and Marcia Olivas during which time the operation of the facilities reverted to a mineral springs health spa and recreation enterprise (Plate XVIII). Guests no longer stayed overnight but still came by the day for the hot sulphur tub baths, recreational dips in the plunge/swimming pool, and physical therapy treatments and massage.

During this time the dining/dance hall was constructed and one of the guest cottages burned to the ground. The devastating flood and consequent mudslide as a result of rain in January and February 1969 occurred in the midst of the Olivas tenure. Repairs from the flood included an addition and modifications to the bathhouse, the construction of the present pool house on part of the footprint of the original pool house, and the reconstruction of the rear (north) wing of the residence. Under Olivas, the plunge/swimming was drained in the winter and refilled by Memorial Day weekend each year.

In 1972 the Cultural Heritage Board of the County of Ventura declared the entire 9.22 acre site, its buildings and structures, as well as easements to the springs, County Cultural Landmark #25. Under term of the County landmark designation, Bill and Marcia Olivas were allowed to continue to operate the health spa and recreational business with the caveat that

“The Cultural Heritage Board need not be contacted each time restoration projects are planned, so long as the work is in keeping with the present theme and being used as a resort. Mr. Olivas stated that the stone house will not be changed” (Cultural Heritage Board, 1972).

This wording by the County Cultural Heritage Board is noteworthy in that it specifically identifies, and acknowledges, the historic significance of the function of the Matilija Hot Springs site as a resort.

Indeed, it did continue to function in this capacity. This is evident in a promotional brochure published by Olivas in 1984 (Plates XIXa—XIXb). And also in the 1985 publication, *Hot Springs and Hot Pools of the Southwest*, which described the facilities as an,

“Older physical health center, located on the ground of a county park in a tree-shaded foothill canyon. Elevation 800 ft. Open all year. Natural mineral water is pumped from a well at 125 degrees and cools as it is piped to the bath house. There are three fiberglass indoor hydropools and one enclosed outdoor [*sic*] hydropool. Water temperature in these pools is maintained at a temperature of 101-105 degrees on a flow-through basis, with no chlorination. There are men's and women's sections in the bath house, each containing three individual bathtubs, which are drained and refilled with untreated mineral water after each use. Bathing suits are option in private rooms and spaces.... Bathing suits are required in the swimming pool and adjoining park. Physical therapy, including massage and reflexology, is available on the premises” (Loam & Sohler, 1985).

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Olivas clearly operated the facility as a mineral springs health spa, celebrating the 20th anniversary of management in 1985 (Plate XX). This same year it was reported that “About 100 people visit the hot springs daily, many from all over Southern California” (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 25, 1987). Nonetheless, later that year Olivas was no longer able to pay insurance bills and fell some \$50,000 behind in rent. The County, increasingly concerned about liability issues related to the Olivas debt, decided to sell the property at auction. The pool was drained at this time, never to be filled again.

On February 2, 1988 Matilija Hot Springs sold for \$546,000 to the highest bidders, Lynda B. Doyce and Fritz Boyce, partners in Syntropic Health Spas, Inc. Boyce pictured erecting two-story, adobe-like buildings—reminiscent of Santa Fe, he said—with plans “to turn the rustic Ojai spot into a ‘world-class health spa’” (*Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1988). Boyce submitted a 52 page proposal for his plans to the County but soon realized that prohibitive County building codes would make it difficult and costly to transform the rustic resort into his envisioned sophisticated spa.

Boyce and Doyce backed out of the deal and the property was back on the auction block. On October 4, 1988 the winning bid of \$400,000 belonged to Brooks Barton, a “New Age” Santa Barbara real estate professional. Calling themselves “friends of the Theosophical Society,” Barton and his wife, Alison Greene-Barton, envisioned,

“...a school at Matilija Hot Springs that would offer seminars on everything from family meditation and modern dance to corporate sales strategies that incorporate New Age techniques (*Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 1988).

During the Barton/Greene-Barton period of ownership, two yurts, three cottages, and an observation platform were constructed, modifications were made to existing structures to convert them to sleeping dormitories (including the bathhouse in which one former tub room was completely tiled for use as a group shower), and a sweat lodge was constructed on the south lawn of the bathhouse.

For sixteen years, the Greene-Bartons operated the facility as a weekend retreat center hosting yoga, dance, clothing-optional, and spiritual and New Age retreats.

On January 10, 1995 overnight rainfall dumped more than a foot of water into the Matilija Canyon. The swollen Ventura River swept away the hot tub and furnishings on the bathhouse deck. The bathhouse was flooded and the Jacuzzis filled with mud. Ditto the Post Office/store/snack bar and dining/dance hall buildings which were both flooded and full of mud.

Subsequently, a rustic stone and concrete wall was built along the bank of the river to prevent such flooding in the future. And the foundations and lower exterior walls of the bathhouse, historic cabin, and residence were shored up with stone and/or cement to protect them from future episodes involving mud and water.

Sephidah Ebrami Homayun and Michael Homayun purchased the property in 2004. The couple personally used the facilities as a private retreat center. Apparently the facilities were also rented

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out, as evidenced by a 2006 classified advertisement which reads,

“MATILIJIA HOT SPRINGS, 9 acres of solitude, including 3 cottages, hot and cold springs. Zoned residential. \$10,000/month....” (*Ojai Valley News*, January 28, 2006).

Finally, on September 23, 2008, the property returned to the ownership of the County of Ventura when it was purchased by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

As this contextual chronology illustrates, the Matilija Hot Springs resort has had a long, colorful, and significant history. Born as a health spa and recreation resort, Matilija Hot Springs was a local manifestation of the nationwide fad for mineral and sulphur springs treatments known as the “water cure” that overtook the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries. The use of the facilities persisted in this capacity until the site was converted to a Ventura County Park in the late 1940s/early 1950s, as part of the national trend of government-sponsored public recreation. The 1960s saw the usage revert to health spa and recreation for a span of more than 25 years. It was during this period that the entire 9.22 acre site—including buildings and structures, as well as easements to the springs—was declared Ventura County Cultural Landmark #25.

Collectively the extant contributing buildings and structure form a historic district of the type “Health Resort.” Associations of significance on the National, State, and/or County level include the 18th and 19th century nationwide craze for the “taking of the waters”; the federal Post Office; the advent of train travel; the advent and expansion of automobile travel; early economic development and population growth of Ventura County, in particular, and the state of California, in general; early development of the tourism industry; local construction techniques and materials; connection with a founder of Ojai and early prominent businessman in the County; and the social history of Ventura County and the Ojai Valley when, as a county park, the site was a local manifestation of the larger nation-wide parks and recreation trend.

Today, the property continues to reflect its original purpose as a health spa and recreation resort. The present appearance of the Matilija Hot Springs site retains its authentic physical identity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Section VIII

Evaluation of Proposed Plans

1. Immediate plans which **will not impact** specific resources or the historic fabric of the herein proposed historic district include:

- Trimming of an unknown number of oak trees;
- Demolition of the dining hall that is attached to the 1889 [sic] Post Office (provided that the opening cut into the historic Post Office/store/snack bar is repaired according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards);
- Sealing and securing all buildings (provided that such action does not negatively impact the integrity of contributors);
- Repairing the pool gate enclosure; and,
- Disconnecting all electrical connections.

As for the immediate plan to complete and circulate nominations of the old Post Office building for State and/or National Registers of Historic Places, it is highly recommended that nominations be completed for the entire 9.22 acre site:

- as a **historic health spa and recreation resort** which reflects the nationwide popularity of mineral hot springs as places for recreation and restoration of health in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, under **National Criterion A** and **State Criterion A**, and ancillary categories of value as articulated in the Statement of Significance;
- as a **historic district of the type "Health Resort,"** reflecting a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, under **National Criterion C** and **State Criterion C**, and ancillary categories of value as articulated in the Statement of Significance.

Since the entire 9.22 acre site is presently recognized at County Historic Landmark #25, it is not necessary to complete nomination forms on the county level. However, it may be desirable to update the 1972 nomination to clarify the historic significance of the Matilija Hot Springs health spa and recreation resort:

- as a historic health spa and recreation resort, under **County Criterion B**;
- as a historic district of the type "Health Resort," reflecting a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, under **County Criterion E**;
- for its contribution to the social and recreational history of Ventura County and the Ojai Valley, under **County Criterion A**;

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for its association with a significant person, namely Abram W. Blumberg, founder and pioneer developer of Nordhoff (Ojai), and for the Post Office/store/snack bar building which is a vernacular construction of Matilija Canyon sandstone, under **County Criterion C**; and,

- for its level of integrity and extant characteristics reflecting their function within a health spa and recreation resort, under **County Criterion F**.

2. Future proposed plans which **will not impact** specific resources or the historic fabric of the herein proposed historic district include:

- Restoration of historic buildings (provided such work considers both *rehabilitation and restoration* in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*);
- Creation of a historic/interpretive center (provided any such creation considers both *rehabilitation and restoration* with the goal toward the adaptive reuse of contributor or contributors and conforms to the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*).

3. Future proposed plans which **may impact** specific historic resources or the historic fabric of the proposed district under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are:

- Correcting building code violations (depending upon the nature and degree of the corrections);
- Approval of interim use of the site for dam removal staging area; and,
- Replacement of non-native vegetation with native vegetation.

The environmental impact with regard to interim use would depend upon the specific use of the site for dam removal staging area, and the extent to which that use might damage or destroy contributing historic resources.

Furthermore, the replacement of extant vegetation with native vegetation suggests that non-native vegetation must first be removed. However, the removal of certain historical landscape features, which were deliberately sown in order to create a specific horticultural setting fit for a hot springs health spa and recreation resort, would negatively impact these historical landscape features and the integrity of the setting. Nevertheless, the health and condition of these landscape features must also be considered; particularly in regard to their potential to cause damage to other, perhaps more significant, historically significant resources.

4. Future proposed plans which **will impact** specific historic resources or the historic fabric of the proposed district under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are:

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- Removal of old metal equipment under pool deck;
- Demolition of pool (plunge/swimming pool);
- Demolition of toilet building (restroom cottage).

Since this assessment has identified potentially significant effects on the historic environment it will be necessary to revise the project plans toward mitigating the effects to a point where (1) clearly no significant effect on the environment would occur, and (2) there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record, that the proposed plans, as revised, might have a significant effect on the environment.

Resolution of adverse effects is often treated by photographing and documenting the contributing features. However, more and more agencies are using non-standard, innovative approaches to mitigating adverse effects. These approaches are commonly referred to as creative mitigation. Examples of creative mitigation include developing educational materials and web sites, developing historic property management plans, and proactively encouraging adaptive reuse.

Thus, since a future proposed plan for this property is the creation of a historic/interpretive center, it is advisable to incorporate the historical associations of this property into that center. These historic associations include, but are not limited to:

- the late 19th and early 20th century American health fad for “taking of the waters” and hot mineral springs spas;
- 20th century resort and recreation history;
- the impact of the railroad;
- early economic development and expansion of Ventura County and the stimulation of the tourist industry;
- the early U.S. Postal Service and the establishment of Rural Free Delivery (RFD);
- site of perhaps the oldest landmarked pool in the United States;
- the early advent of the automobile, the concomitant construction of roads, bridges, and freeways, and the later democratization of automobile ownership and travel;
- local building materials and techniques;
- the formation and establishment of the city of Ojai, development of the Ojai Valley, and their relation to the founder of the Matilija Hot Springs, Abram W. Blumberg;
- the post-war trend toward government ownership and management of recreational parks;
- the history of the California grizzly bear and other native species;

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- native flora and the impact of non-native species;
- the history of the Ventura River;
- the story of the riparian habitat, Southern Steelhead trout, and the Matilija Dam; and,
- the story of water in Ventura County and the import of watershed protection.

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PACIFIC HORTICULTURE

DIVISION OF DELTA-PACIFIC HORTICULTURE, INC.

LANDSCAPE AND AGRONOMY CONSULTANTS

October 17, 2012

Pamela J. Huckins, Ph.D.
78 East Lewis Street
Ventura, California 93001

Subject: Matilija Hot Springs Non Native Tree Species Ages Determination

Pamela:

The assignment was to evaluate the site non native vegetation primarily the tree species to determine any their apparent historical significance. The references for this research were primarily the 2010 Matilija Hot Springs Land Management Plan prepared by the County Watershed Protection Agency and the numerous historical documents that you have acquired and shared as part of your historical preservation research.

The first aspect of this project was to do an resonance of the site to locate the potential significant historical vegetation that determined that only the trees could be of historical value.

The aerial photograph provided in the Matilija Hot Spring Land Management Plan was utilized to map and identify the existing tree locations. There were fifteen (15) trees located and numbered with aluminum tags.

Following this, a Horticulture Tree Evaluation Field Survey was completed for each specimen which provides the biological, physical and aesthetic condition of the tree. Data includes trunk diameter measured at 4.5' above grade and the height and canopy spread. The data is summarized in a 1-5 numerical rating system for vigor, health and aesthetics whereby 1 is the highest rating and 5 the lowest rating. This information is utilized in part for determining the potential tree age as well as provides documentation for considered preservation or removal/ replacement of the specimen.

Pamela J Huckins, Ph. D.
October 17, 2012

Matilija Hot Springs Tree Evaluations and Age Determination

pp 2

Photographs were also taken to document the tree location and condition and are included herein.

Tree Species Summary

- 5 Eucalyptus globulus - Blue Gum
- 4 Phoenix canariensis - Canary Island Date Palm
- 4 Washingtonia robusta - Mexican Fan Palm
- 2 Cupressus sempervirens Italian Cypress

Tree Condition and Approximate Age

<u>Tree No</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Age in Years</u>
1	Canary Isl. Date Palm	Excellent	72
2.	Blue Gum Eucalyptus	Fair	82
3	Blue Gum Eucalyptus	Poor	82
4	Blue Gum Eucalyptus	Fair	82
5	Canary Isl. Date Palm	Excellent	70
6	Blue Gum Eucalyptus	Poor	70
7	Blue Gum Eucalyptus	Poor	82
8	Canary Isl. Date Palm	Excellent	72
9	Canary Isl. Date Palm	Excellent	72
10	Mexican Fan Palm	Good	72
11	Mexican Fan Palm	Poor	72
12	Mexican Fan Palm	Good	72
13	Mexican Fan Palm	Fair	72
14	Italian Cypress	Good	62
15	Italian Cypress	Poor	62

The ages were primarily determined by various dated historical photographs or documents that depicted palm illustrations within the document.. These were further verified by our site location survey.

The basis for condition can be located on the Horticulture Evaluation Field Survey which is provided for all 15 trees.

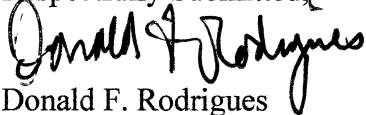
Pamela J. Huckins, Ph.D.
October 17, 2012

Matilija Hot Springs Tree Evaluations and Age Determination

pp 3

Should you have any questions or should you require additional information, do not hesitate in calling me direct.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald F. Rodrigues". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Donald" and last name "Rodrigues" clearly distinguishable.

Donald F. Rodrigues
Horticulture Consultant
ISA Professional Arborist 4816

HORTICULTURE TREE EVALUATIONS

FIELD SURVEY DATA

Inspection Note: The following information was observed on the date (s) indicated herein and should only be considered to be valid at the time of field inspection.

PACIFIC HORTICULTURE CONSULTANTS

HORTICULTURE TREE EVALUATION FIELD SURVEY

PROJECT: <u>MATILISA HOT SPRINGS</u>	DATE: <u>10-12-12</u>	PAGE <u>1</u> of <u>2</u>
LOCATION: <u>MATILISA CANYON</u>	JOB NO:	
CLIENT: <u>Pamela J. HUCKINS</u>	CONTACT: <u>Pamela</u>	
ADDRESS: <u>76 Lewis Street</u> <u>Ventura, Ca. 93001</u>	PHONE: <u>(805) 653-4449</u>	

SPECIMEN DATA		PHYSICAL OBSERVATIONS		MITIGATIONS	
TREE NUMBER	1				
NO TRUNKS	1				
TRUNK DIAMETER	24"				
TREE HEIGHT	40'				
CANOPY SPREAD	40'				
LEANING					
LOW BRANCHES					
TERRAIN Flat-Slope	F				
CROWDED					
Damaged Roots					
Exposed Roots					
Girdled Roots					
Covered Soil / Debris	X				
Trunk Damage					
Buried	X				
Trunk Cavity					
Exudations					
Disease/Insects					
Weak Structure					
Branch Cavities					
Weak Crotches					
Twig-Branch Dieback					
Sparse Foliage					
Chlorotic					
Wilt					
Abnormal foliage					
Deadwood					
Insects/Mites Present					
Disease Present					
Stress					
Poor Form					
Obstructions					
POTENTIAL HAZARD					
Dead Tree					
VIGOR 1-5	2				
HEALTH 1-5	2				
AESTHETICS 1-5	2				
REMOVE TREE					
PRUNE					
DEADWOOD					
WATER-FERTILIZE					
INSECT-DISEASE TREAT					
REMOVE BASAL SOIL/DEBRIS					
OTHER					

Measured Canopy Spreads on Back →

HORTICULTURE TREE EVALUATION FIELD SURVEY

PROJECT: <u>MATILISA HOTSPRING</u>	DATE: <u>10-12-12</u>	PAGE <u>2</u>
LOCATION: <u>MATILISA CANYON</u>	JOB NO:	
CLIENT:	CONTACT:	of <u>2</u>
ADDRESS:	PHONE: ()	

SPECIMEN DATA	SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>		SPECIES: <u>WIRSHINGTONIA KALUSTA</u>	
	TREE NUMBER	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
No TRUNKS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TRUNK DIAMETER	14"	10"	20"	21"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"	14"
TREE HEIGHT	40'	47'	45'	40'	131'	100'														
CANOPY SPREAD	15'	16'	17'	15'	3'	2'														
LEANING																				
LOW BRANCHES																				
TERRAIN Flat-Slope	S	S	S	F	F	F														
CROWDED																				
Damaged Roots																				
Exposed Roots																				
Girdled Roots																				
Covered Soil / Debris																				
Trunk Damage																				
Buried																				
Trunk Cavity																				
Exudations																				
Disease/Insects																				
Weak Structure																				
Branch Cavities																				
Weak Crotches																				
Twig-Branch Dieback																				
Sparse Foliage																				
Chlorotic																				
Wilt																				
Abnormal foliage																				
Deadwood																				
Insects-Mites Present																				
Disease Present																				
Stress																				
Poor Form																				
Obstructions																				
POTENTIAL HAZARD																				
Dead Tree																				
VIGOR 1-5	2	3	2	3	2	4														
HEALTH 1-5	2	2	2	2	2	4														
AESTHETICS 1-5	2	3	2	2	2	4														
REMOVE TREE																				
PRUNE																				
DEADWOOD																				
WATER-FERTILIZE																				
INSECT-DISEASE TREAT																				
REMOVE BASAL SOIL/DEBRIS																				
OTHER																				
COMMENTS																				

REPRESENTATIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

PACIFIC HORTICULTURE CONSULTANTS



Entry Sign- Hot Springs History

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 1

By: D. F. Rodrigues



Canary Island Date Palm No. 1



Blue Gum Eucalyptus No. 2

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 2

By: D. F. Rodrigues



**Blue Gum Eucalyptus No. 3 & 4
Canary Island Date Palm No. 5**



**Blue Gum Eucalyptus No. 6 & 7
Basal Trunk View**

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 3

By: D. F. Rodrigues



Canary Island Date Palms No. 8 & 9



Blue Gum Eucalyptus No. 6 & 7 Upper Canopy View

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 4

By: D. F. Rodrigues



Mexican Fan Palm No. 10



Mexican Fan Palm No. 11

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 5

By: D. F. Rodrigues



Mexican Fan Palm No. 12

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

Exhibit No. 6

By: D. F. Rodrigues



Mexican Fan Palm No 13

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

Date: 10-12-12

By: D. F. Rodrigues

Exhibit No. 7



**View Top of Italian Cypress
No. 14 & 15.**



**View base of Italian Cypress No. 14 & 15 & Canary Island Date Palm No. 1
Photos provided by Pamela J. Huckins, Ph.D.**

FIELD PHOTO REPORT

Project: Matilija Hot Springs

Subject: Site Tree Survey

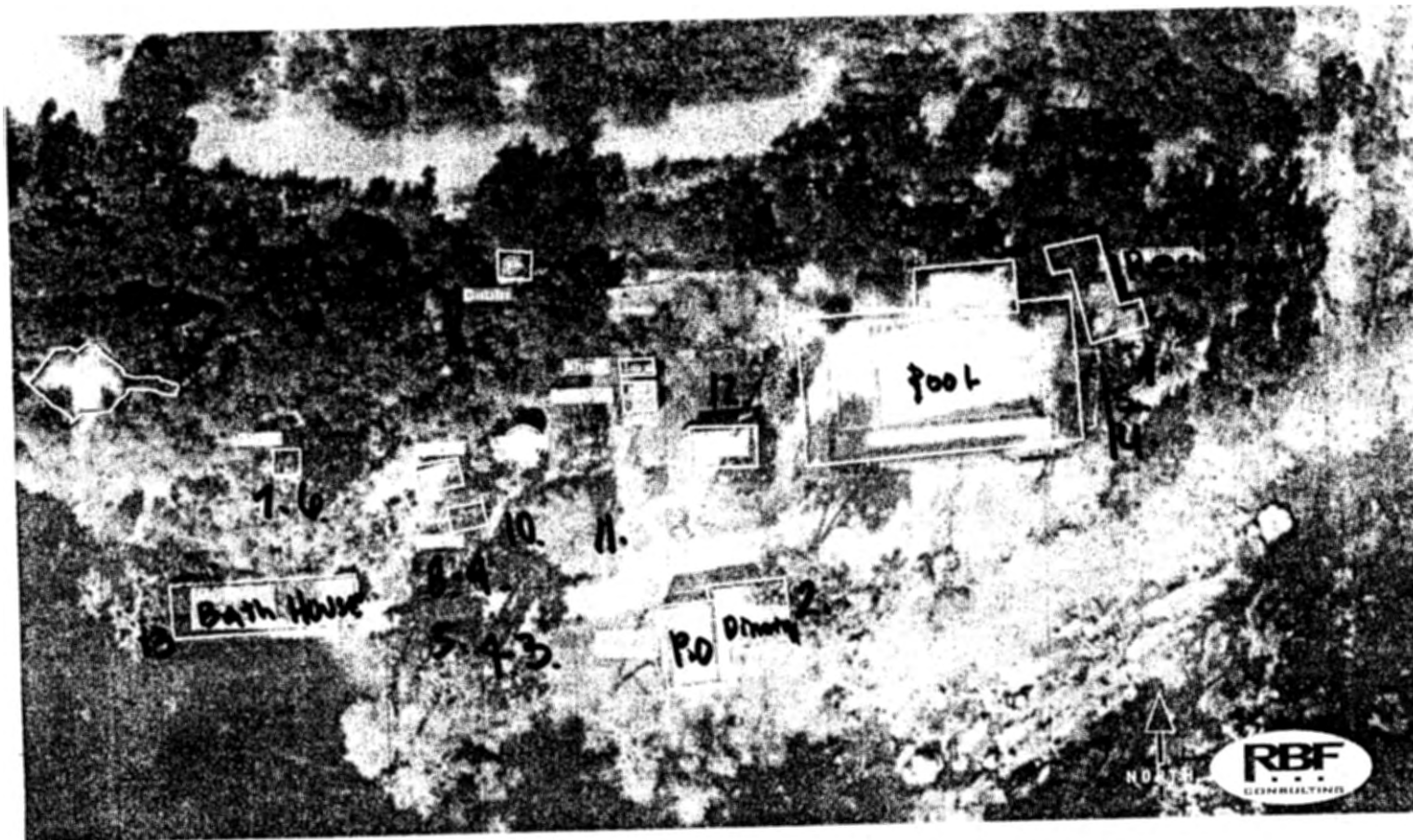
Date: 10-12-12

By: D. F. Rodrigues

Exhibit No. 8

SITE MAP, TREE LOCATIONS AND FIELD
SPECIMEN NUMBERING SYSTEM

PACIFIC HORTICULTURE CONSULTANTS



TREE LOCATION AND NUMBERING MAP 10-12-12

Pacific Horticulture Consultants
1000 Wood Stock Lane
Ventura, Ca. 93001

***Historical Resource Evaluation
Matilija Hot Springs
Ventura County, CA***

Photographs & Plates



Photo #1a Bathhouse, ca. 1920s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #2
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



Photo #1b Bathhouse, ca. 1920s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #2
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



Photo #1c Bathhouse, ca. 1920s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #2
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



Photo #2 Historic Cabin, early 1900s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #5
(Pamela J. Huckins, August 27, 2012)



Photo #3 Restroom Cottage, ca. 1920s/1930s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #8
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



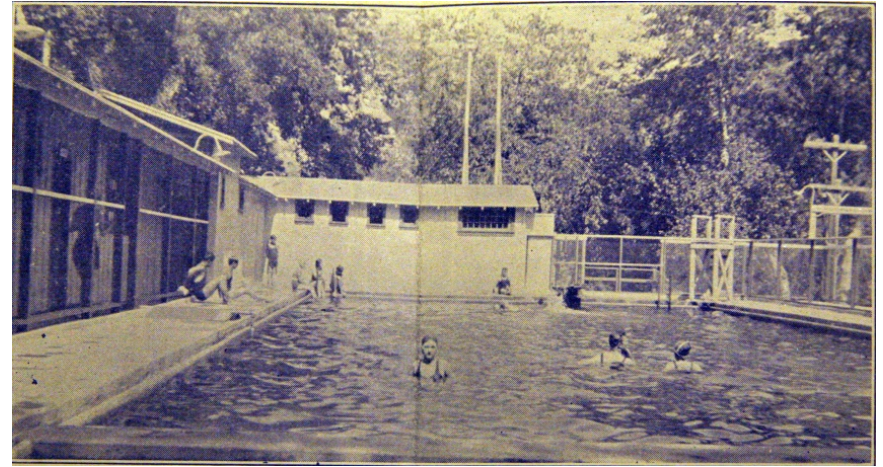
Photo #4 Guest Cottage, ca. 1920s/1930s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #9
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



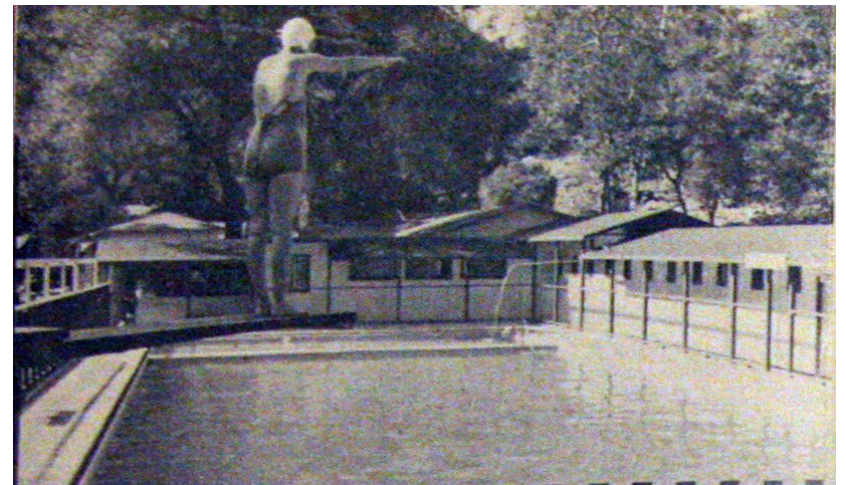
Photo #5 Post Office/Store/Snack Bar, 1902
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #11
(County of Ventura, Watershed Protection District, September 30, 2010)



Photo #6 Plunge/Swimming Pool, 1902
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #13
(Brian Fortune, FVP Images, June 6, 2012)



Plunge/Swimming Pool, ca. 1933
Matilija Hot Springs
(Promotional Brochure)



Plunge/Swimming Pool, ca. 1940
Matilija Hot Springs
(Promotional Brochure)



Photo #7 Pool house, 1969/1970
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #14
(County of Ventura, Watershed Protection District, September 30, 2010)



Photo #8 Residence, ca. 1940s/1950s
Matilija Hot Springs
Site plan #15
(<http://www.wilde-wilde.com>)



A.W. Blumberg

Plate I
A.W. Blumberg
(Gidney, Brooks, & Sheridan, 1917, p.748a)

MAY 8, 1891.

11

THE OJAI HOT SPRINGS

MATILJA CANYON.

A. W. BLUMBERG, Proprietor.

FIFTEEN MILES FROM VENTURA. FOUR AND HALF FROM NORDHOFF
UNITED STATES MAIL STAGE EVERY DAY EXCEPT SUNDAY.

Any one who is sick or wants an outing should go to the Ojai Hot Springs. The mountain scenery is the grandest on the coast, and the climate preferable to the far famed Ojai. There are many springs of Mineral and ordinary water, all as soft as rain water. The hot mineral baths are the finest known. The spring "Fountain of Life" is the great system regulator. It will cure the worst cases of dyspepsia, kidney, liver or bowel complaint, constipation and general debility. The spring "Mother Eve" will cure scrofulous and blood diseases, Bright's disease, dropsy, cancer, etc., and will break up an attack of malarial fever, pneumonia or la grippe. Physicians say that the waters from the above named springs are the best they have ever used. The hotel accommodations are good, with good home cooking and home-like people. A fine trout stream runs through the place and there is plenty of game close by. Rates, \$12 per week, including baths. Furnished rooms and tents to rent. For particulars address MATILJA, Ventura County, California.

Plate II

Advertisement, Ojai Hot Springs
(Ventura Free Press, May 8, 1891)



Plate III
 “Fountain of Life” and “Mother Eve” springs
 Matilija Hot Springs
 (Terry Hill collection)



Plate IV
Advertisement: Matilija Hot Springs
(David Mason and the Ojai Valley Museum)

MATILIJA

HOT SPRINGS













IDEAL HEALTH & PLEASURE RESORT

SCENERY & CLIMATE UNSURPASSED

SPLENDID HUNTING AND TROUT FISHING

NATURAL HOT (104°) & COLD MINERAL-SULPHUR SPRINGS

BATHS

LIVER, KIDNEY, BRIGHT'S DISEASE, RHEUMATISM, SKIN DISEASE PERMANENTLY CURED

MODERN CONVENIENCES FOR GUESTS & CAMPER'S

GROCERY STORE

PUBLIC TELEPHONE SERVICE

15 MILES FROM VENTURA
4 MILES FROM O.V.R.R.



MATILIJA, VENTURA CO. (AL. POLLEY & BURDICK PROPS)

Plate V
 Advertisement for Matilija Hot Springs Resort
 (Out West, July and August 1899)

Matilija Hot Springs

— POLLEY & BURDICK, Proprietors

These justly celebrated Sulphur-Mineral Springs are the nearest and easiest reached Springs in the Ojai Valley, 15 miles from Ventura and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Nordhoff, the terminus of the Ojai Valley Railroad. 1100 feet above sea level. For a through trip to the Springs from Los Angeles take the 4:30 p.m. Southern Pacific Santa Barbara train, arriving at Nordhoff 8:15 p. m. where the Matilija Stage meets the train.

Hunters for Deer

And other game, in the "Upper Ojai," should make their headquarters at these springs. Post Office, Public Telephone, Supply Store, Dining Room, Plunge Bath, etc., etc.

Rates Reasonable. Address,

POLLEY & BURDICK,

See July LAND OF SUNSHINE.

Matilija, Ventura Co., Cal.

Reliable help promptly furnished. Hummel Bros. & Co. Tel. Main 509

Plate VI

Advertisement for Matilija Hot Springs
(Land of Sunshine, August 1899)

BEAUTIFUL MATILIJA SPRINGS

The Beauties of Matilija Springs, near Nordhoff, in Ventura County, cannot be told in words or in photographs. It must be seen to be appreciated. **Altitude 1000 feet.** Bubbling curative springs, tumbling waterfalls and towering cliffs. Air bracing and **free from fogs.** Far enough from the sea to get its ozone freed from the chill of a direct **ocean atmosphere.**



By the Creek

An Ideal
Winter and
Summer
Resort

A Place
to Rest
—
The Best
in the
West

Under the vigorous inspiration of the new owner, Mr. S. P. Creasinger, the Los Angeles capitalist, this famous resort has had a thorough rejuvenation, and has been put under new management. Just recently Mr. Creasinger has purchased additional land adjoining Matilija, which now gives him a **beautiful forest park of 400 acres.**

THE ACCOMMODATIONS are ample. There is a general store where all necessities can be purchased. One may obtain rooms in cottages, California houses or tents, while in the upper part of the cañon fine shady grounds have been set apart for campers. There is a large dining-room with excellent table service (and at Matilija one has an appetite). **RATES** are from \$10 to \$25 per week for room and board, but one may obtain a tent or one may rent grounds for camping for \$1 a week and up.

Matilija Springs can be reached by Southern Pacific trains to Nordhoff, via Ventura, thence by a charming stage ride of 5 miles.

ADDRESS: MATILIJA, VENTURA COUNTY, CAL.
OR S. P. CREASINGER, 218 S. BROADWAY, LOS ANGELES

Matilija Hot Springs

6/27/02
VENTURA COUNTY, CAL.



This magic resort is situated in a natural park of some 400 acres, in the Santa Ynez Mountains, Ventura County. As a place to pass a delightful summer-vacation it offers facilities unequalled. There is hunting, fishing; dry, bracing air; hot sulphur baths; mineral water to drink; horseback and tally-ho riding; bowling alley, ping pong, etc. The beautiful plunge is 50x120 feet and cost \$10,000. Separate plunge for children under same roof. Every convenience, including postoffice, general store, long distance telephone, electric lights and library. ~~Strictly a temperance resort. No fogs.~~ Altitude 1000 feet. Rates for camping \$1.00 per week up; rooms in cottages, with board and mineral water to drink, \$10 per week and up. Address J20 2t

S. P. R. R. to Nordhoff.
Stage 5 miles, fare 50c.

MATILIJA HOT SPRINGS, Ventura Co., Cal.

Plate VIIa
Advertisements for Matilija Hot Springs
(Museum of Ventura County)

Plate VIIb
Advertisements for Matilija Hot Springs Resort
(Out West, April, May, and June 1902)



Plate VIIIa
 Plunge Pavilion, 1902 (destroyed 1920s)
 (Jackson, 2006, p. 100)

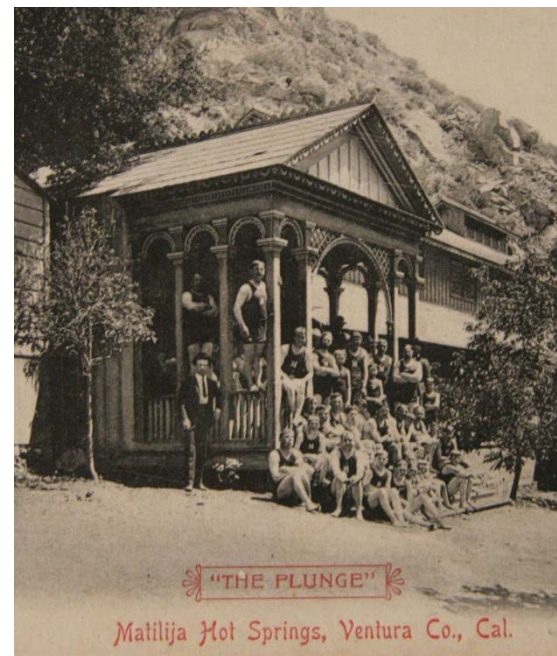


Plate VIIIb
 Plunge Pavilion Porch, 1902 (destroyed 1920s)
 (Terry Hill Collection)



Plate IX
Advertisement, Matilija Hot Springs
(Museum of Ventura County)

GRAND OPENING—*

May 1, 1904

Open Winter and Summer

A beautiful five mile ride from Nordhoff through the Ojai Valley in the old-fashioned stage coach

FARE 50 CENTS

RATES: { Board at Hotel, per week . \$12 and up
{ Furnished Tents per week \$2.50 and up
{ Special rates for Camping Privileges

Sports and Amusements.

Trout Fishing,
Hunting, Riding,
Camping, Childrens'
Warm Plunge, Large
Swimming Plunge,
Bowling, Croquet,
Billiards, Pool, Gymnas-
ium, Dancing Pavilion,
Music, Etc, Magnificent
Scenery and Sublime
Climate.

Accommodations

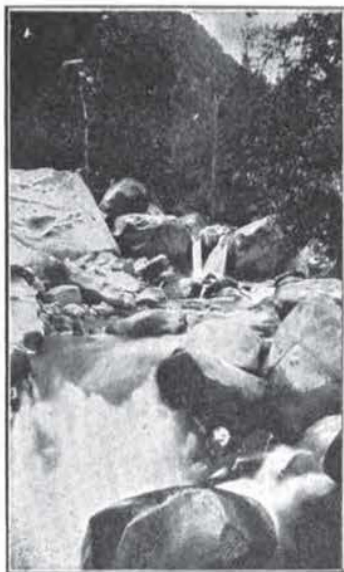
First Class Dining Room
Cottages, Tents, Electric
Lights, Regular Post-
office, Long Dist. Phone.,
General Store, Livery
Stable, Free Library and
Reading Room, Barber
Shop, Public School, Hot
Sulphur Bathes, Medicinal
Waters to Drink. No
Fogs, No Winds.

Matilija

Ventura Co. Ga

Plate X

Advertisement, Matilija Hot Springs
(Ventura Free Press, April 22, 1904)



Twin Falls, Matilija Hot Springs

Matilija Hot Springs

VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Located in Matilija Canyon, on the U. S. Pine Mountain Reserve, 16 miles from the coast, altitude 1100 feet.

**Most Famous Pleasure and Health
Resort in Southern California
Climate Unequaled**

Regular Post Office, Long Distance Telephone, General Supply Store, Electric Lights, Livery and Feed Stable, Cottages, Tents, Warm Swimming Plunge, Hot Sulphur Baths, Medicinal Waters to Drink, Trout Fishing, Hunting, Grand Mountain Scenery.

NO FOGS—NO WINDS

Take Southern Pacific train via Ventura to Nordhoff, thence a five mile ride in the old fashioned stage coach

Rates for Board and Room, \$12.00 per week and up

SIM MYERS, Proprietor

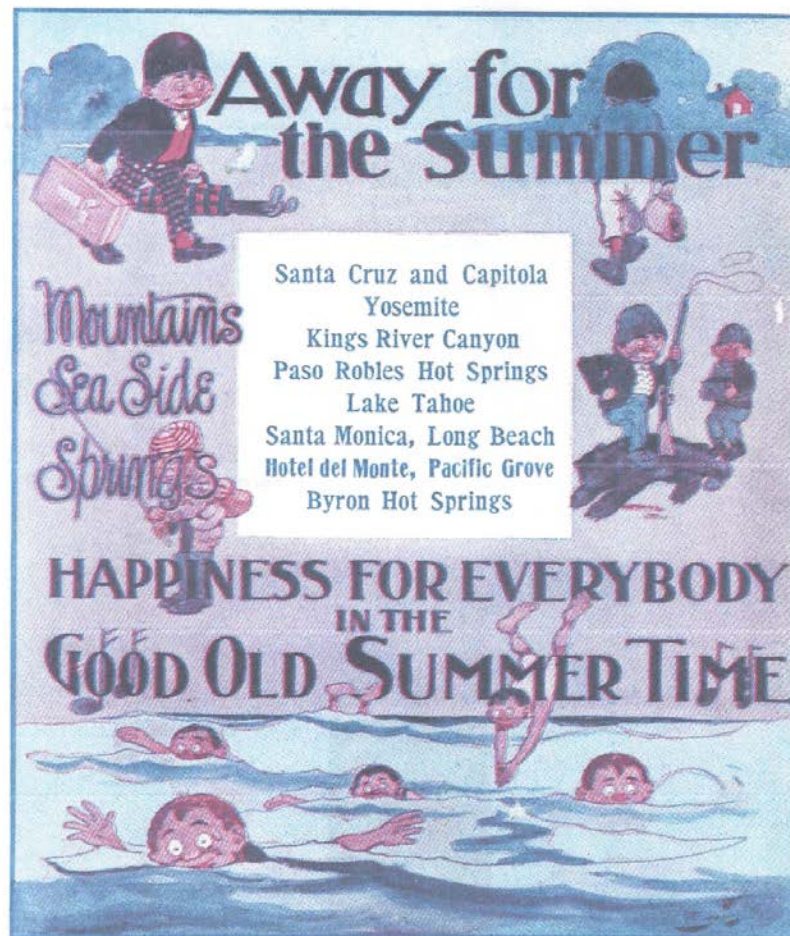
MATILIJIA, CALIFORNIA

Printed matter at Southern Pacific Information Bureau, 613 Market Street, S. F., or any Southern Pacific Agent

Plate XI

Advertisement, Matilija Hot Springs

(*Sunset*, May 1904)



Or shall it be Aetna Springs, The McCloud River, Shasta Springs, The Giant Forest, Hotel Vendome, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo Hot Springs, Napa Soda Springs, Klamath Springs, Crater Lake, Calaveras Big Trees, Howell Mountain or Matilija Hot Springs; or any one of numberless other attractive resorts in the mountains or by the sea shore.

For Details apply INFORMATION BUREAU, 613 Market Street, San Francisco

Or to any Agent **SOUTHERN PACIFIC**

IN WRITING TO ADVERTISERS PLEASE MENTION SUNSET

Plate XII

Advertisement, Southern Pacific Railroad

(Sunset, June 1904)

Road of a Thousand Wonders Through a Land of Hot Springs



Southern Pacific through California and Oregon

Many a Ponce de Leon has found health and joy along the Road of a Thousand Wonders, between Los Angeles, California, and Portland, Oregon, with its more than a hundred mineral spring resorts. Here, as at Paso Robles Hot Springs, are the best equipped establishments in America for hydropathic treatment; Byron, Bartlett, Matilija, Paraiso, Gilroy, Alum Rock and Congress (San Jose), Witter, Aetna, the Geysers, Napa and many others form a chain of wonderful resorts amid charming environment. Low rates are in effect this summer over the Road of a Thousand Wonders from the East. For a beautiful book with a hundred California and Oregon pictures in four colors and a copy of *Sunset*, Magazine of the Wideawake West, send 15 cents to Chas. S. Fee, Passenger Traffic Manager, Southern Pacific Co., Dept. A, Flood Building, San Francisco, California.

Plate XIII

Advertisement, Southern Pacific Railroad
(*Country Life in America*, June 1907)

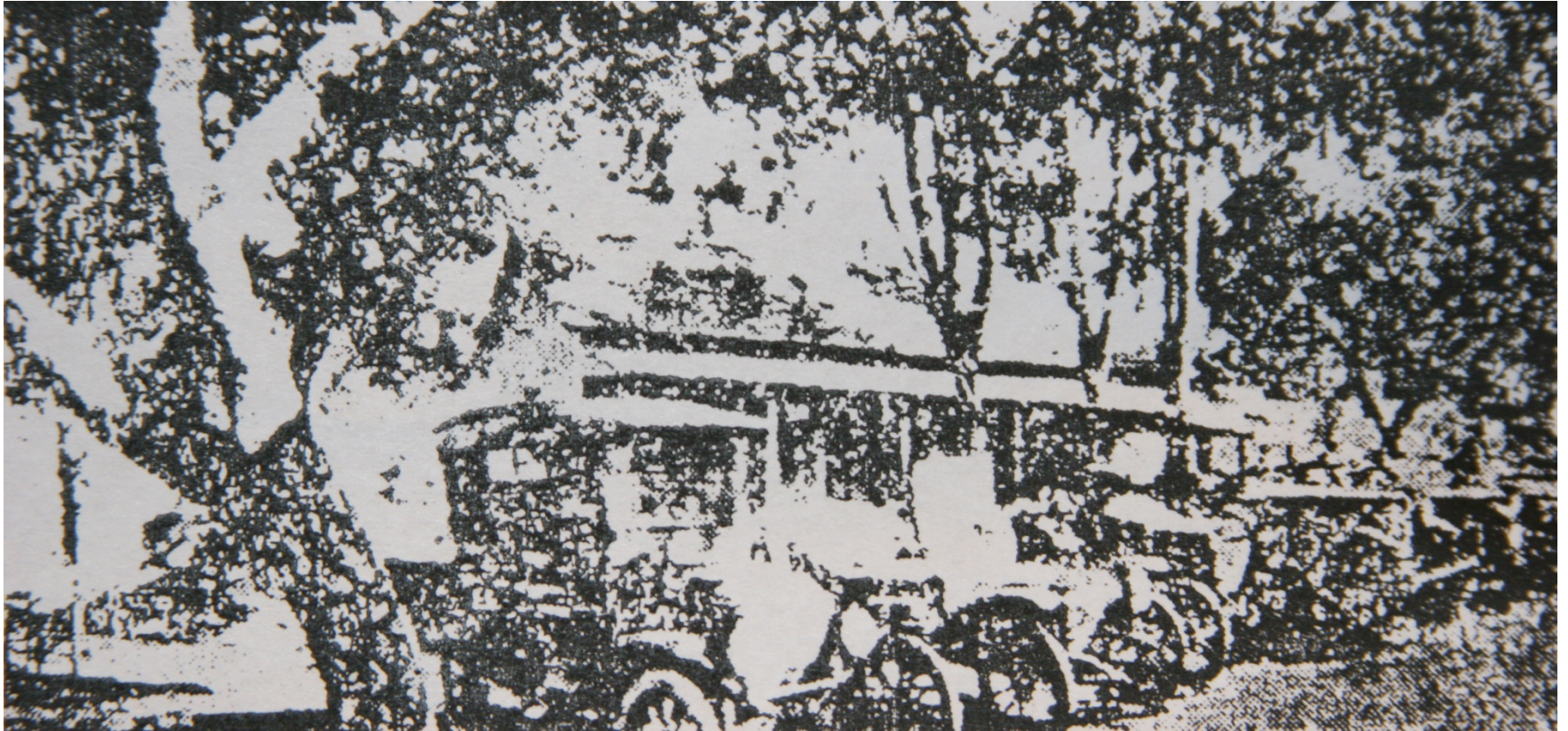


Plate XIV
“Gas buggies” at Matilija Hot Springs, May 1910
(*The Ojai*, August 5, 1954)



Plate XV
Sterling silver spoon
Tourist's souvenir from Matilija Hot Springs, 1911
(Private collection)



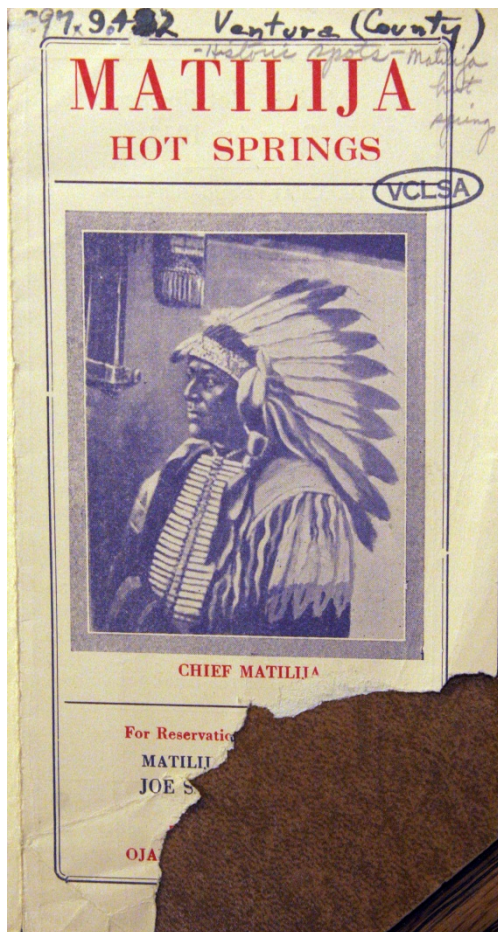


Plate XVIa
Promotional Brochure (front flap and inside), Matilija Hot Springs, ca. 1933
(Museum of Ventura County)

Matilija Hot Springs Rates for 1933

MEALS AT POPULAR PRICES

ROOMS	Day	Week
Single	\$1.00	\$ 6.50
Double	1.75	12.00

Housekeeping Apartments,

Furnished	2.00	10.00
Additional Beds	1.00	5.00

Housekeeping Tent, ~~Constitution~~

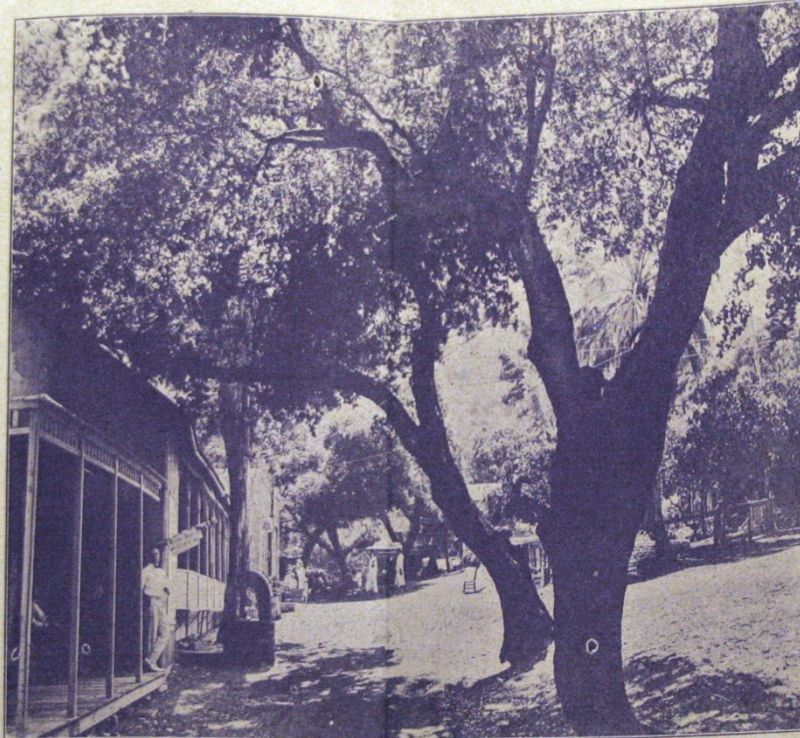
Two Persons	1.00	5.00
Each Additional Person	.75	2.50
Camping, per car	50c	per day.

BATHS:

Plunge, 50c;	Own Suit, 35c
Your Own Suit and Towel,	25c
Hot Sulphur Tub Baths	.50
Ten Baths	\$3.50
Temperature of Tub Baths, 104 Degrees.	

Reasonable Cases not Ad-

Exit Depot at Fifth
ly at 8:15 a. m.



The Entrance to and Main Grounds of THE MATILJA HOT SPRINGS now open the year around.
A pleasing and facinating place to spend a week, a month or longer vacation. The most famed resort
in the mountains of Southern California, where the climate is ideal both summer and winter.

THE SPRINGS

MOTHER EVE cures Headaches, La Grippe and Bright's Disease.
THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE cures Kidney and Liver Complaints, Dysentery,
Constipation, and all Stomach Troubles arising from Indigestion.
HOT SULPHUR water tub baths cure the worst cases of Rheumatism and Skin
troubles.

ANALYSIS BY WADE & WADE,

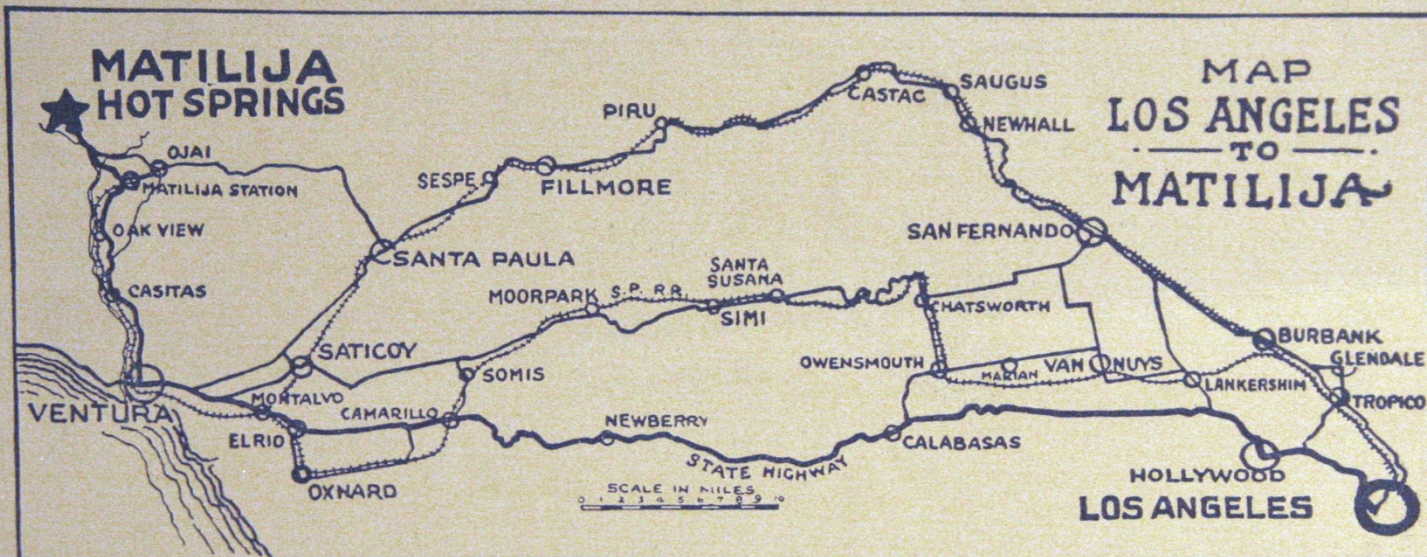
Analytical Chemists, Los Angeles, California.

ANALYSIS OF WATER, GRAINS PER U. S. GALLON

FOUNTAINS	Calcium carbonate	Magne- carbonate	Sodium carbonate	Sodium Chloride	Silica	Calcium Sulphate	Sodium Sulphate	Total Water	Sulphur Gas
Fountain of Life	1.30	.11	5.20	15.00	1.10	2.90	1.00	22.71	1.30
Mother Eve	5.65	3.56	.....	3.52	1.00	3.63	.....	10.07	.90
Hot Sulphur Water	15	1.18	6.56	1.60	1.60	.....	1.00	12.09	.33

Plate XVIb

Promotional brochure (back), Matilija Hot Springs, ca. 1933
(Museum of Ventura County)



The above map shows the three paved highways leading from Los Angeles to Ojai and the Matilija, all beautiful scenic drives, and easily reached by auto.

Plate XVIc
 Promotional brochure (back flap), Matilija Hot Springs, ca. 1933
 (Museum of Ventura County)



Above is the bath house, which has recently been completely renovated and redecored, where patrons of the resort may enjoy a healthful sulphur bath or an invigorating Scientific Swedish Massage by an experienced masseur, who is prepared to give these Medical Massages on doctor's prescription to those who wish it. The sulphur water is naturally heated (124 degrees) and is beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, neuritis and arthritis.

ANALYSIS OF WATER

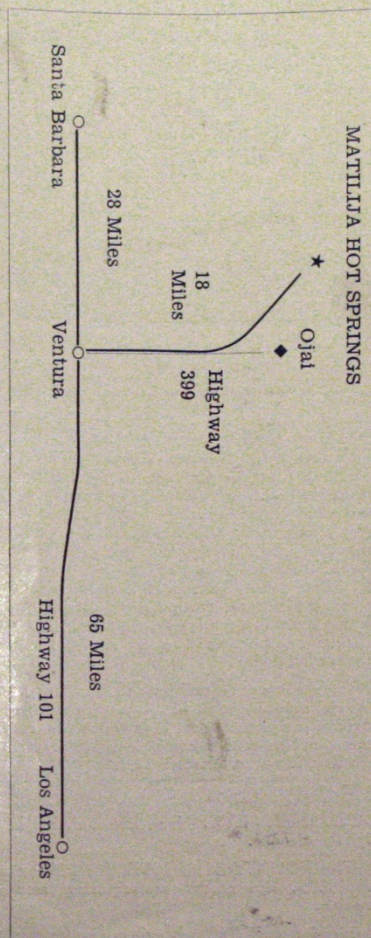
—GRAINS PER U. S. GALLON.

(Analysis by Wade and Wade, Analytical Chemists,
Los Angeles)

Fountains	Calcium Carbonate	Magnesium Carbonate	Sodium Carbonate	Sodium Chloride
Fountain of Life	1.30	.11	5.20	13.00
Mother Eve	1.66	3.36	3.12	
Hot Sulphur Water	.15	1.18	6.56	1.60

Fountains	Silica	Calcium Sulphate	Sodium Sulphate	Total Solid Matter	Sulphur Gas
Fountain of Life	1.10	...	...	22.71	1.30
Mother Eve	1.00	3.63	2.90	10.07	.90
Hot Sulphur Water	1.60	...	1.00	12.09	.33

Above is map showing the accessibility of MATILIJA HOT SPRINGS to main points on coast route from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara. Southland outdoor enthusiasts may reach this delightful health resort over smooth, paved, scenic drives. From Santa Barbara an alternate route, Gaiter Pass (not shown on map), shortens distance to 35 miles.



MATILIJA HOT SPRINGS



CHIEF MATILIJA

For Reservations Call or Address

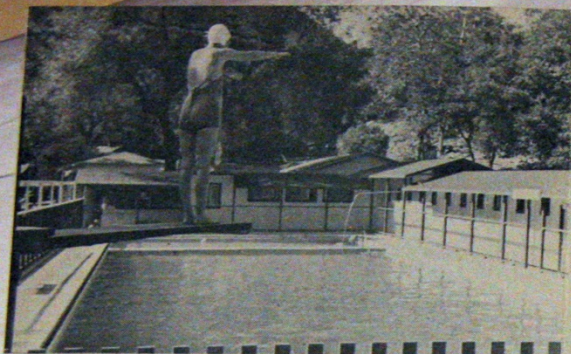
MATILIJA HOT SPRINGS

Agnes E. Woolley

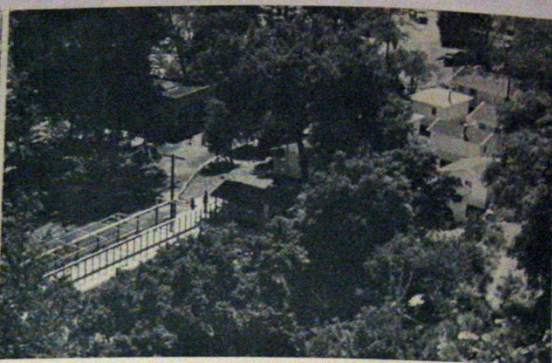
OJAI (Ventura County), CALIFORNIA

Telephone Ojai 7683

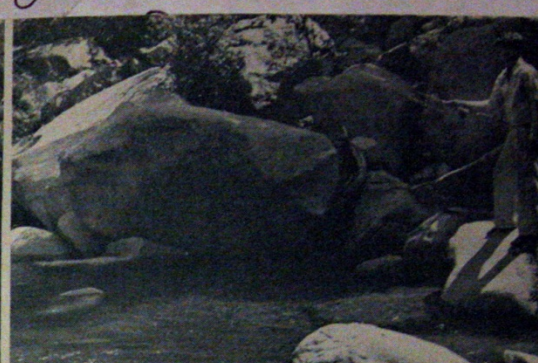
Plate XVIIa)
Promotional brochure (outside), Matilija Hot Springs, ca. 1940
(Museum of Ventura County)



A large Open Air Plunge, 40 by 90 feet, 3 to 9 feet deep is available to all resort visitors. A knee-deep separate section for the youngsters is included in the sulphur-water plunge as seen in the background.



Located in the valley between two majestic mountains, a portion of Matilija Hot Springs Resort may be seen here with its modern cabins to the right, the swimming pool (hidden partially by trees) in the foreground, and the provision store and lunch room in the background.



Many limit catches of trout have been caught in pools immediately adjacent to Matilija during fishing season. This stream runs directly through the camp.

FISH AND HUNT

◆ Matilija Hot Springs Resort is located at the fork of two famous trout streams. Guests have taken limit catches of fish within a half mile of their cabins.

◆ In the deer season, the Resort's all year facilities are used by hunting parties who pack or hike into the surrounding peaks for deer.

BATHE AND RIDE

◆ After a day in the open, a hot sulphur tub bath or swim in the pool is very refreshing, or if you prefer to make swimming your main activity, there are excellent facilities for the enjoyment of that popular sport at Matilija. Saddle horses and pack animals are available at reasonable rates.

ACCOMMODATIONS

◆ The Sulphur baths are open all year with cabin and lunchroom accommodations. Furnished cabins equipped with innerspring mattresses, electricity and gas for cooking, all new linen and bedding. Under new management, the accommodations are greatly improved. Reservations should be made in advance accompanied by a deposit which will be credited. Address:

MATILIJIA HOT SPRINGS RESORT
Ojai, California Agnes E. Woolley Phone Ojai 7683

DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

◆ Matilija Hot Springs Resort is located in the far-famed Matilija Canyon eighteen miles in the mountains back of Ventura, the county seat of Ventura County, and is reached over a fine paved highway up an unusually beautiful scenic drive from the ocean. The Springs lie ninety miles to the west from Los Angeles and thirty-five miles east from Santa Barbara. The resort has newly constructed furnished cottages, camping privileges and there is a large swimming plunge, hot sulphur water tub baths, provision store, lunch room, telephone and daily mail service.

◆ With extraordinarily good hunting and fishing in their seasons, the Matilija Hot Springs Resort provides an ideal spot for both recreation and pleasure. The entire camp is fully electric lighted. Elevation is one thousand feet.

THE SPRINGS

◆ MOTHER EVE, for headaches, la grippe, Bright's disease.

◆ The FOUNTAIN of LIFE, for kidney and liver complaints, dysentery, constipation and stomach troubles.

◆ HOT SULPHUR water tub baths are the best thing for rheumatism, etc.

RATES

NEW, MODERN CABINS, HEATED

	Per Day	Per Week
Two Persons.....	\$3.00	\$15.00
Four Persons.....	5.00	25.00

Weekly rates include use of plunge.

HOUSEKEEPING CABINS

Single or double to accommodate two or more persons. Completely furnished, including dishes:

	Per Day	Per Week
Two Persons.....	\$3.00	\$15.00
Additional Persons.....	1.50	2.50
Double Cabins (for 4).....	5.00	25.00
Additional Persons.....	1.50	2.50

Weekly rates include use of plunge.

HOUSEKEEPING CABINS

Furnished except bedding and dishes:

Two Persons, per week.....\$5.00

OVERNIGHT QUARTERS

	Per Day	Per Week
One Person.....	\$1.50	\$7.50
Two Persons.....	2.50	12.50

Weekly rates include use of plunge.

CAMP GROUNDS: By the day.....25c

TRAILER SPACE: Per day.....75c

HOT SULPHUR TUB BATHS: Each.....35c

PLUNGE: Your suit and towel.....25c

Extra charge for our suit and towel.....15c

Tubercular and objectionable cases not admitted.

Meals, sandwiches, soft drinks, beer and groceries at reasonable prices.

Winter Rates from October 1 to May 1

Plate XVIIIb

Promotional brochure (inside), Matilija Hot Springs, ca. 1940
(Museum of Ventura County)

Announcing The Opening Of
MATILJA HOT SPRING
AND
HEALTH CENTER

Under The Management Of
Bill and Marcia Olivas

HEALTH CENTER

HOT MINERAL BATHS

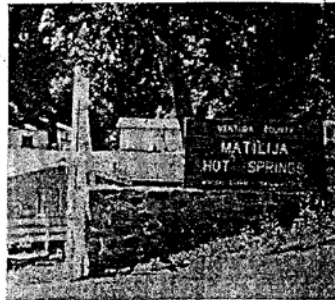
Ladies Section and Men's Section

ARTHRITIC THERAPY

MASSAGE

EXERCISE GYM

Male and Female Attendants



RECREATION

FREE PICNIC AREA

LARGE PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL

Children 25c Adults 50c

SNACK BAR

HIKING - FISHING

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

6 Miles Northwest of Ojai on Maricopa Hwy. 33

Phone 646-2212

Plate XVIII

Grand Opening Advertisement, Matilja Hot Spring and Health Center, 1965
(David Mason/Ojai Valley Museum)

1984 Brochure of Matilija Hot Springs
(front)

ACCOMMODATIONS

Due to limited accommodations at the Spa we will be happy to make reservations at near by resorts, camping areas, fine hotels or motels in Ojai.

RECREATION

The Matilija Hot Springs is situated in the beautiful Ojai Valley on the edge of Los Padres National Forest . . . an ideal headquarters for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, golf, tennis or just a much needed rest and relaxation. The beach and water sports are only 20 miles away at Ventura. We are just 75 miles away from Los Angeles.

RATES

Baths	\$ 2.50
Jacuzzi Whirlpool Baths	\$ 3.50
By Appointment in Advance	
Massage with Bath	\$15.00
Hydro-Therapy	\$15.00
Reflexology with Bath	\$10.00
(All prices subject to change)	

BATH HOUSE HOURS

Matilija Bath House is open the year 'round from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Evening appointments - 646-7667.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Other services at Matilija Hot Springs include a picnic area with barbecue facilities. We hope that your visit to Matilija will be enjoyed by every member of your family.

Bill and Marcia Olivas
Owners

Matilija Hot Springs

And Health Center

OJAI, CALIFORNIA 93023



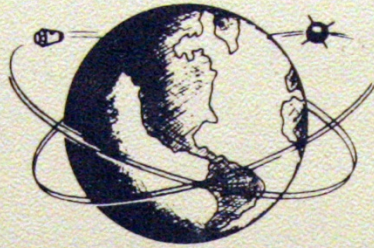
"Chief Matilija"

Maricopa Hwy. 33, 6 miles N.W. of Ojai
in Ventura County

PHONE (805) 646-7667

"Health Spa of the Chumash Indians"

Plate XIXa
Promotional brochure (outside), Matilija Hot Springs and Health Center, 1984
(Museum of Ventura County)



A WORLD OF HEALTH AND PLEASURE waits for you at Ventura County's only Health Spa. Plan a visit in the very near future to **Matilija Hot Springs**, the Spa of the Chumash Indians in days gone by. The natural hot mineral waters from Mother Nature's formula of 26 different minerals are piped to our bath house where skilled and trained attendants are on duty to serve your every need.

Recommended by many leading physicians, osteopaths, psychiatrists, and chiropractors who realize the value of this type of therapy either after medication or prior to same. Many testify to their beneficial powers and their effect on arthritis and related diseases, high blood pressure, sore muscles and joints, relaxation, or just the everyday need for general physical reconditioning and improvement.



SERVICES AT MATILIJA



JACUZZI WHIRLPOOL BATH units have been added to the famous rejuvenating mineral waters of Matilija. The Jacuzzi aerates the surging thermal water and puts that extra vitality into your bath.

MASSAGE must supplement your conventional or whirlpool bath to obtain the maximum benefit from the thermal waters.

REFLEXOLOGY — We have added the service of Reflexology, a particular form of Compression Massage. The foundation theory of this work has been built up entirely on the opinion of practicing physicians who have observed the remarkable results obtained by manipulation through the nerve endings of the soles of the feet.

OUTSIDE POOLS are open during the warmer season. An Olympic size swimming pool as well as a special children's pool is very popular at a nominal fee.



Plate XIXb
Promotional brochure (inside), Matilija Hot Springs and Health Center
(Museum of Ventura County)



Matilija Hot Springs

"Health Spa of the Channel Indians"

--- HOT TUB BATHS ---

Natural Mineral Hot Waters, Private Tubs, Jacuzzi Whirlpools & Massage Therapy
Open Daily 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.

OUR 20th ANNIVERSARY 1965 - 1985

Dear Friends:

Although Matilija Hot Springs was founded in 1871, we have had the pleasure of serving you since 1965.

You have made it possible to make Matilija one of the foremost spas in the country. We now have a restaurant that is becoming very popular by your word of mouth. Soon, we will be starting on our new addition to the Bath House.

We invite you to help us celebrate our 20th year at Chief Matilija's Health Spa relaxing in a peaceful atmosphere right on the Matilija stream and health-giving waters.

Love,
Bill & Marcia Olivas

P.S. During 1985, every 20th, 200th and 2,000th customer will receive a 20th Anniversary gift from us to show our appreciation for your good faith in us.

Bill & Marcia

--- GOOD FOOD --- CHIEF'S TEEPEE RESTAURANT

Spanish - Western D-D-2
Steaks - Chili - Sea Food - Soups - Salads - Sophie's Famous Homemade Pies

OPEN: Fridays through Mondays 5 - 9 p.m.

Lunch: Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Matilija Hot Springs - 788 W. Hot Springs Road,
4 Miles N.W. of Ojai, on the Matilija Highway, Santa SB

RESERVATIONS: 646-7667

Plate XX

Twentieth Anniversary Promotional material, Matilija Hot Springs, 1985
(David Mason/Ojai Valley Museum)