

**EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND INTEGRITY OF THE CULTURAL
RESOURCES IN EL PORTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITE, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK,
CALIFORNIA: DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL
REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation report is to provide historical documentation, a description of existing conditions, and an evaluation of the significance and integrity of the cultural resources in El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California (See map at the back of this evaluation). The town of El Portal, a small community of some 700 residents the majority of whom are employees of the National Park Service or Yosemite Concession Services, is located in the administrative site. Comprising some 1,200 acres of land on both the north and south sides of the Merced River and California State Highway 140 at El Portal, the administrative site consists of eight principal geographically-separated developed areas that are generally scattered along the north side of the highway and both sides of the river. These areas, and their present-day common administrative designations, extending generally from west to east are: Railroad Flat, Sand/Gravel Quarry, Yosemite Research Center, Rancheria Flat, Merced Flat, Abbieville, Village Center (including a commercial services core), and Old El Portal.

It is intended that the report will provide the National Park Service (NPS) with the necessary information to make a recommendation regarding the eligibility of El Portal's cultural resources for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (as outlined in the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's procedures 36 CFR 800 and described in National Register Bulletin No. 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria of Evaluation*; National Register Bulletin No. 16, *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms: Part A, How to Complete the National Registration Form*, and *Part B, How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*; and National Register Bulletin No. 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*.

RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK

During January 12-22, 1998, Harlan D. Unrau, Historian, Denver Service Center, Resource Planning, traveled to El Portal, California, to collect historical documentation and conduct a reconnaissance of the administrative site and each of its principal developed areas. Project orientation, as well as site reconnaissance, was provided during a walking tour and group meeting discussion led by Mark Butler, Resource Management, Yosemite National Park, on January 13. Persons participating in the meeting and walking tour included Sam Hayes, Chair, El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee, Historical Sub-Committee; Sarah Williams, planning manager, Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department; Scott Pinkerton, a local historian associated with the Mariposa Heritage Press and the Mariposa County Historical Society; a representative from State Senator Montieth's Office; several Yosemite National Park staff members; and G. Frank Williss, Technical Expert, 106, Denver Service Center.

During the trip, research was conducted in the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey records at the Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department, Mariposa, California, with the aid of Williams. Additionally, research was conducted in the following repositories: (1) Mariposa County Public Library; (2) Mariposa County Historical Society with the aid of Pinkerton; (3) Yosemite Research Center (El Portal) with the guidance of Laura Laird, park archeologist; (4) Park Research Library (Yosemite Valley) with the guidance of Linda Eade, park librarian; and (5) Park Archives (El Portal) with the guidance of James Snyder, park historian.

During the trip, Unrau held a meeting with Sam Hayes. Additionally, three Mariposa residents were interviewed via telephone: Leroy Radanovich of the Mariposa Heritage Press; Ralph R. Mendershausen, a professor at Merced College who administered the county historical sites survey conducted during 1980-81; and Robert Babcock, a local historian and former long-time resident of El Portal.

Issues related to the project were also discussed with Yosemite National Park personnel David Forgang, museum curator, and Don Fox, landscape architect.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION

NATIVE AMERICAN OCCUPATION¹

According to archeological work done in the 1960s by Robert J. Fitzwater, there were at least two distinct non-Caucasian cultural groups that occupied the El Portal area in prehistoric times. The earliest deposits, called the Crane Flat Complex, represent Yokutsan peoples who may have been in El Portal as early as 1200 B.C. It is suggested that the second group came from the north about 1250 A.D., reaching the Fresno River approximately 450 years ago. While moving southward, they displaced the Yokutsan and occupied the El Portal area. This latter group is thought to be the ancestors of the Southern Sierra Miwok who lived in the El Portal area until the 1940s.

El Portal lies within the territory occupied by the Southern Sierra Miwok. The language of the historic Southern Sierra Miwok had two major dialects, one centered on the Merced River drainage, and the other in the Mariposa Creek, Chowchilla, and Fresno River drainages. The major difference between the dialects is that the Merced River (including El Portal and Yosemite Valley) Miwok use a retroflex "s" as the reflex of Proto-Sierra Miwok "s," while speakers of the Mariposa-Chowchilla dialect use "h".

The El Portal area in Merced River Canyon was the site of a number of permanent Miwok villages. C. Hart Merriam, who conducted fieldwork in the Yosemite region during the early 1900s, located, named, and described 16 villages in Merced Canyon between the Cascades and Ferguson Station, six miles below El Portal.² In an article entitled "Indians of Yosemite" that was published in the *Handbook of Yosemite National Park* in 1921, A. L. Kroeber observed that the majority of the Indians from Yosemite Valley, some of whom worked for the government and local

¹Material for this section is derived primarily from U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal, Yosemite National Park, California*, by Craig D. Bates and Karen P. Wells, 1981, pp. 1-24, and James Law, *Memories of El Portal* (Mariposa, California, Mariposa Heritage Press, 1993), pp. 18-27. Further information on prehistory may be found in several surveys in *United States of America before Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Application for License For a Major Unconstructed Project, El Portal Project, FERC #3581, SWRCB #27981*, Prepared by Keating Associates, Placerville, California, 1984 (copy in Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park), and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Inventory--Nomination Form, "El Portal Archeological District," Prepared by Kathleen Moffitt, Archeologist, and Keith M. Anderson, Regional Research Archeologist, Western Archeological Center, National Park Service, July 22, 1976 (Listed August 18, 1978).

² C. Hart Merriam, "Indian Village and Camp Sites in Yosemite Valley," *Sierra Club Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 2, 1917, pp. 217-20.

residents, often spent the winter months in the El Portal area "in order to avoid the heavy snows of the 4,000-foot altitude of Yosemite."³

Available documentary sources indicate that there was greater contact between the early inhabitants in Yosemite Valley and El Portal than with people to the south, north, and present-day Mariposa County area. Contact with the Central Sierra Miwok was limited. Apparently, the Sierra Miwok distrusted the Southern Miwok, who had the reputation of being adept at the art of supernatural poisoning.

Although it is known that Indians occupied the present-day Rancheria Flat area at El Portal during the 1850s-80s, little information concerning their activities is available. During the 1903-15 period, which is the first for which there is any great amount of data, the Indian people, who lived at scattered sites in the Merced River Canyon, earned a living in various ways while maintaining some traditional folkways. A few individuals stayed at the El Portal Rancheria south of the Merced, mostly in tents. Some traditional handicrafts continued to be undertaken. For example, women commonly wove baskets and did beadwork, which was sold to local Anglo-Americans. During the autumn season, women picked acorns, which were then prepared in bedrock mortars before being dried and cooked. At least one Indian lady performed laundry services for local Anglos, and one Indian homesteaded in the area. Some Indian men worked in the Hennessey garden, while one sold apples from his orchard to local Anglos, often taking bacon in exchange. Other Indian men were engaged in tracking and in various facets of the mining and logging industries.

Indian celebrations lasting two or three days were held in El Portal during the early 20th century. Indian people from the immediate area, as well as areas as far away as Mono Lake east of the Sierra Nevada, arrived on horseback to participate in handgames and other activities.

By the 1930s, most of the Indian people at El Portal had moved to the area near Crane Creek. Indian Flat (near the present-day Cedar Lodge several miles down the Merced River from El Portal) was briefly occupied in the 1930s by Native American people. About 1935, there were a few Indian children in the El Portal school. Some of the El Portal people moved to Yosemite Valley to live on a permanent or part-time basis to take advantage of employment opportunities with the National Park Service. Many of these people continued to return to El Portal for the winter months. In referring to the Indian village in Yosemite Valley in January 1930, Superintendent Charles Goff Thomson observed:

The Indian colony divides somewhat into a summer and winter population dwindling considerably as per the attached winter census. Some Indians went out this fall (probably because of our closing down work) and are living in Mariposa, at Indian Flat, and in the San Joaquin Valley.⁴

³ A.L. Kroeber, "Indians of Yosemite," in Ansel F. Hall, comp. and ed., *Handbook of Yosemite National Park* (New York, G. F. Putnam's Sons Knickerbocker Press, 1921), p. 62.

⁴ Charles Goff Thomson to Horace M. Albright, January 9, 1930, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park.

The only known official allotment of land to Indian people in El Portal was a 30-acre parcel allotted to John Wilson on February 17, 1917, by President Woodrow Wilson. This allotment was held in trust by the federal government, and some years after Wilson's death, his granddaughters, Minnie Wilson Karamanos, Marion Wilson Lucero, and Mildred Wilson Segura Bautista, were granted Fee Patent 1137608 in February 1953. The following year, Mildred and Minnie granted title to ten acres of the land to Marion. Afterward the three sisters sold the bulk of the remaining property to Raymond and Gertrude Cruikshank. The rest of the land was acquired by a non-Indian during the 1970s.

After World War II, a few of the El Portal Indians lived along Crane Creek. By the late 1940s, however, the last vestiges of an Indian settlement at El Portal had been abandoned.

EARLY ANGLO-AMERICAN OCCUPATION

The earliest documented Anglo-Americans to enter the El Portal area were Anglo-American traders and miners that arrived during the middle of the 19th century. The following are biographical summaries of the most significant early traders and miners to enter the area.

JAMES SAVAGE

The first documented Anglo to enter the El Portal area was James Savage, who established trading posts at Horseshoe Bend and at the confluence of the south and main forks of the Merced River, several miles below El Portal (present-day California State Historical Site No. 527) about 1849-50. Early in 1850, the post was attacked by Indians. While the Mariposa Battalion, with Savage as commander, pursued the attackers the following year, the men probably reached the El Portal area on their way to the Yosemite Valley. According to Lafayette H. Bunnell's *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian War of 1851 Which Led to that Event*, Savage stated:

Last year while I was located at the mouth of the South Fork of the Merced, I was attacked by the Yosemite Indians, but with the Indian miners I had in my employ, drove them off, and followed some of them up the Merced River, into a canyon, which I supposed led to their stronghold, as the Indians then with me said it was not a safe place to go into. From the appearance of this

rocky gorge I had no difficulty in believing them. Fearing an ambush, I did not follow them.⁵

Based on this description, it is likely that Savage traversed the El Portal area, possibly reaching the present boundary of Yosemite National Park, where the canyon deepens and the talus increases.

ROSE AND SHURBON

Two prospectors, Rose and Shurbon, excited by descriptions of the region from members of the Mariposa Battalion, passed through the El Portal area on their way to Yosemite in 1852. They were approached by Indians while camped somewhere in the vicinity of El Portal in May 1852. According to Bunnell, the two men commenced their prospecting activities on the south fork of the Merced. Then

passing over the divide on the old trail, [they] camped for the purpose of testing the branches leading into the main Merced. While at this camp, they were visited by begging Indians; a frequent occurrence in the mining camps of some localities. The Indians appeared friendly, and gave no indications of hostile intentions. They gave the party to understand, however, that the territory they were then in, belonged to them, although no tribute was demanded. The miners comprehended their intimations, but paid no attention to their claim, being aware that this whole region had been ceded to the Government by treaty during the year before. Having ascertained that they were a part of the Yosemite Band the miners by signs, interrogated them as to the direction of the valley, but they refused to answer or pretended not to understand. The valley, however, was known to be near, and no difficulty was anticipated when the party were [sic] ready to visit it, as an outline map, furnished them before starting, had thus far proved reliable.⁶

⁵ Quoted in Lafayette H. Bunnell, *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian War of 1851 Which Led to that Event* (Chicago, Fleming H. Revell, 1880), p. 34. Also see, *Mariposa County General Plan, Document I, Policies and Standards*, 1980, pp. 132-33, and Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, 1981-82, "Savage's Trading Post Site," Prepared by Barron Brouillette, June 16, 1981 (Survey records are located at the Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department, Mariposa, California).

⁶Bunnell, *Discovery of the Yosemite*, p. 274.

JOHN R. HITE

Prospecting in the El Portal region continued during the 1850s and 1860s. In 1861, John R. Hite, with the aid of an Indian woman who became his common law wife, discovered what would become known as the Hite's Cove Mine, several miles up the the south fork of the Merced River. By 1868, the mine had a 20-stamp mill employing 45 people. In May 1873, the Hite's Cove Trail to Yosemite Valley was opened. Later in 1924, a forest fire destroyed all surviving mine buildings at the mine site.⁷

JAMES A. HENNESSEY

James A. Hennessey, a native of Ireland, was reportedly forced out of town by the Vigilance Committee of San Francisco during the 1850s.⁸ Arriving in the Hite's Cove area, Hennessey was employed briefly by John R. Hite at his mine. During the early 1870s, Hennessey commenced development of a ranch consisting of a garden and orchard in the present-day area of Merced Flat at El Portal, later constructing a two-story frame building on his property to accommodate Yosemite-bound travelers. The farm, located at the present site of the trailer park at El Portal, featured an orchard of fruit trees, berries, grapes, and a vegetable garden. Additionally, Hennessey raised chickens which he regularly sold to the residents in the settlements at Hite's Cove, Wawona, Yosemite Valley, and Bodie. Hennessey transported the produce from El Portal on a mule and sometimes brought back manure for his farm on his return trips. During the early 1870s, Hennessey determined to improve the road to Bodie, and he made some improvements on 45 miles of the embryonic roadway before abandoning the project. Hennessey's trail to the valley crossed the Merced River to the south side of the river and climbed the canyon wall to intersect with the Mann brothers' trail from Wawona to Yosemite Valley.⁹ This trail was used in the winter because of its lower elevation and because it was relatively free of snow. However, its popularity diminished quickly

⁷ *Mariposa Gazette*, June 19, 1968, and May 1873; Shirley Sargent, *Mariposa County Guidebook* (Yosemite, California, Flying Spur Press, 1984), p. 13.

⁸ Ralph Rene Mendershausen, *Treasures of the South Fork* (Fresno, California, Panorama West Books, 1983), p. 54.

⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite: The Park and Its Resources, A History of the Discovery, Management, and Physical Development of Yosemite National Park, California*, by Linda Wedel Greene, 3 vols., September 1987, Vol. I, p. lii. Also see Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "Hennessey Ranch," Prepared by James Law, June 9, 1981.

with the opening of the Coulterville and Yosemite Turnpike (Coulterville Road) and Big Oak Flat Road in 1874 and the Mariposa (Wawona) Road in 1875.¹⁰

In 1881, the Hennessey farm was the subject of a lengthy article in the *Mariposa Gazette* written by a visitor to the farm. The article stated:

We, in company with our lady and a portion of the smaller fry of our family, last week paid a short visit (four days and nights only) to our friend Hennessy's [sic] whose romantic garden spot is located on the south bank of the main Merced River, seven miles from Hites Cove and about 14 miles below the hotels in the Yosemite Valley. Mr. Hennessy [sic] has under cultivation about nine acres, from which he produces the choicest fruits and vegetables, which find a market principally in Yosemite Valley and Hite's Cove. Mr. Hennessy's [sic] place proper contains about fifteen acres, which was no doubt once an island of the river, and in its original state was covered with boulders of rocks, which when removed are converted into fences. The water of the river is easily led to any point desired. The extensive garden and orchard gives steady employment to two or three men most of the season. Mr. Hennessy's [sic] place is an asy- [sic] to the weary. He is exceedingly hospitable, and being an old citizen and miner his domicile is never without company. He has a decrepit, aged mother who is helpless and requires the attention of someone most of the time. The cottage home is quite comfortable in all its appointments; but the great desideratum necessary to make life happy, which Mr. Hennessy [sic] does not seem to have is an industrious life partner who will save the fruits of his toil, and which would amount to an independence in a few years. Mr. Hennessy [sic] extended to us a welcome which we shall never forget, but live with a hope that we may be able some day to repay. His generosity was not passed undeeded by our lady, who, to not forget, carefully put under seal nearly one hundred cans, consisting of blackberries, peaches and plums, which will be delightful to the taste during the fall and winter season. We also desire to express our thanks to Mr. Bennie Treloar, the gentlemanly assistant of Mr. Hennessy [sic], for his kind attentions paid us while there. He is an excellent gardener, and quite indispensable to Mr. Hennessy [sic].¹¹

According to the *Mariposa Gazette* of June 10, 1883, Hennessey was listed as owing "Possessory right to 40 acres of land situated on the left bank of main Merced River about 1 1/2 miles below the mouth of Crane Creek well known as Hennessy's Ranch." The assessed value of the property and the taxes levied on it consisted of the following: "value \$850; improvts. thereon \$800; less mortgage of

¹⁰VOLPE National Transportation Systems Center, *The Merced Canyon Travel Corridor, Yosemite National Park, California: A Determination of Eligibility for Listing on The National Register of Historic Places*, Prepared for Yosemite National Park, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, July 1997, pp. 6, 17.

¹¹ *Mariposa Gazette*, July 23, 1881.

John R. Hite, \$850; value of personal property after deductions \$235; total tax \$7.15; poll tax \$4, delinquent; collector's cost \$1.50."¹²

On December 17, 1887, the mortgage on the ranch was foreclosed, and John R. Hite acquired the house, corral, barn, orchard, and outbuildings.¹³ By March 18, 1889, the ranch belonged to Augustus. H. Ward, who had extensive mining and real estate interests in the area.¹⁴ Soon thereafter Hennessey moved to San Francisco where he engaged in mining stock speculation ventures. On November 4, 1908, Hennessey, despondent as the result of financial reverses, lack of employment, and marital problems, committed suicide.¹⁵ A few fruit trees and possibly some remnants of rock walls are the only extant remains of the once flourishing Hennessey farm.

LEONIDAS G. WHORTON

Born in 1827 in Hall County, Georgia, Leonidas G. Whorton was one of seven children of Jacob and Nancy Lett Whorton. The family later moved to Cherokee County, Alabama. Whorton left for California between 1850 and 1852, perhaps traveling by way of the Helena, Montana, mining region. Arriving in the Yosemite area in the company of James McCauley and Jimmy Ferguson, Whorton went to work for John R. Hite about 1865-66. By 1868, he was operating a saloon at Hite's Cove. Between August 7, 1876, and June 10, 1882, he served as Justice of the Peace in Number 3 Township in Mariposa County. In 1879, Whorton was listed as the locator of the "Potosi Mine, a quartz vein, located on the north side of the main Merced River, opposit [sic] the lower end of Hennessy's Ranch." In 1884, Whorton was assessed for 80 acres of land "situated on North Fork of Merced River just below the mouth of Crane Creek, well known as L. G. Whorton's Ranch," and on April 18, 1885, he was granted this property which comprised much of the present-day Old El Portal area. By the time of his death (he was murdered by Abel Mann at Cascade Falls in Yosemite Valley following a family quarrel that may have been precipitated by Whorton's excessive consumption of alcohol) on April 4, 1887, the land was "partly enclosed and has thereon a dwelling house and other

¹² *Ibid.*, June 10, 1883.

¹³ Certificate of Sale Ledger, 1887 (Book A154), Collections, Mariposa County Historical Society, Mariposa, California, and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, p. 242.

¹⁴ Dick Shaffer, "A Synopsis of Local History," July 21, 1952, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park, and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, p. 242.

¹⁵ *San Francisco Call*, November 6, 1908, quoted in U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal*, by Bates and Wells, pp. 29-30. Also see, Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 9-17.

improvements of small value.” While developing his property, Whorton continued to expand his entrepreneurial interests, including a partnership in the Lake House at Mirror Lake in Yosemite Valley, and to conduct mineral prospecting operations in the El Portal area. In 1887, for instance, he was listed as the locator of the Southside mining claim, a quartz claim located “150 yards below the Hennessy Garden, on the Southside, of the Main Merced River, and running in a South Easterly direction fifteen hundred feet. . . .”¹⁶

A. H. WARD

A. H. Ward, who had extensive mining and property interests in the Mariposa County area, eventually acquired the majority of Whorton’s interests as well as adjoining lands along the Merced River. During the late 1880s, Ward promoted construction of a wagon road to Yosemite “through the upper end of the canyon, leaving the town of Mariposa and running NE to the river at a point several miles below” present-day El Portal. After Mariposa County contributed \$75,000 for the road project, the California state legislature passed a bill authorizing payment of \$50,000 toward the cost of construction. After it was realized that the total cost of the construction would not exceed \$75,000, Mariposa County rescinded the state bonds already passed. Thus, the county assumed the total cost of construction without state assistance.

During 1903-04, Ward played a significant role in the establishment of an electric power plant on the Merced River, eventually becoming president of the Merced River Electric Company. Although a 1903 register of mining claims in Mariposa County listed Ward as having a San Francisco address, an interview in the *Merced County Sun* implied that Ward was living in the El Portal area at the time.¹⁷

It is possible that Ward was the person of “Italian” ancestry who was known to have purchased and operated the former Hennessey ranch between 1906 and 1909. Ward was assisted by William Sell, Sr., who supervised the Indians that worked in the gardens. Two men, one named Maris and the other, Al Sleeper, sold produce from Ward’s ranch in Yosemite Valley.¹⁸

¹⁶ Laurence V. Degnan to Douglas H. Hubbard, February 24, 1956, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park; Assessment Roll for the County of Mariposa for the Year 1868, Proceedings in the Justice Court of No. 3 Township of the State of California, Mariposa County, Jury Book: Juror #58, 1876-1885, p. 192, Assessment Book of Mariposa County, 1884, and Probate File, Collections, Mariposa County Historical Society; Lloyd W. Brubaker, ed., *Guide to the Pioneer Cemetery*, by Laurence V. Degnan and Richard R. Jackson (Yosemite National Park, Yosemite Natural History Association, 1972), p. 6; and *San Francisco Call*, April 6, 1887.

¹⁷ May S. Corcoran, “The Yosemite Valley Road,” *Merced County Sun*, February 14, 1916.

¹⁸ Shaffer, “A Synopsis of Local History,” and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of ElPortal*, by Bates and Wells, pp. 31-34.

After the failure of the aforementioned wagon road project, Ward played a major role in the establishment of the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company in 1902. The company would later build a railroad from Merced to El Portal and then a wagon road from El Portal to the Yosemite Valley.¹⁹

Ward was also involved in the naming of El Portal. According to an interview that was published in the *Merced County Sun* on February 14, 1916, Ward stated:

At the time we were to decide upon a name . . . about a hundred were offered--Indian, Spanish and English and every other kind. I thought of the large granite bluffs at the opening of Yosemite Canyon, at the back of my place which I had always called my gateway, and which were really the entrance to the canyon, and I went to Mr. Forbes of the Baron-Forbes of Mexico, for many years official court reporter in San Francisco, and told him of my gateway and asked what would be an appropriate Spanish name. 'El Portal, the entrance,' he said.²⁰

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF EL PORTAL AREA

RAILROAD INDUSTRY

After the failure of the aforementioned wagon road project, Nathaniel C. Ray, superintendent of the Merced Gold Mining Company at Coulterville, proposed construction of a railroad from the San Joaquin Valley to Yosemite Valley. Then he interested Ward and two Oakland financiers, John S. Drum and Thomas Prather, in the project. Thus, these men incorporated the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company on December 18, 1902. The purpose of the railroad was to provide quick and relatively inexpensive transportation to Yosemite Valley from the San Joaquin Valley and other parts of California. After incorporation, a three-year delay in the construction of the railway ensued while Ward, Drum, Prather, and Ray attempted to secure the right-of-way for the railroad directly up the Merced River Canyon through Yosemite National Park lands to Yosemite Valley.

In 1864, the State of California had been granted guardianship over the Mariposa Grove and Yosemite Valley by Congress. In 1890, Yosemite, including the El Portal area, was designated a national park, except for the Mariposa Grove and Yosemite Valley which remained under state control. In 1905, Yosemite Valley and the

¹⁹U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal*, by Bates and Wells, p. 33.

²⁰Corcoran, "The Yosemite Valley Road," *Merced County Sun*, February 14, 1916.

Mariposa Grove were receded from state control to the federal government, thus becoming part of the national park under federal jurisdiction. At the same time, the park boundaries were reduced in size to allow for mining and timber development. As a result, the El Portal area was removed from the park.²¹

Thereafter, the railroad company filed an application with the Department of the Interior for permission to construct a railroad through the lands of the Sierra Forest Reserve to the new western boundary of the park just east of El Portal. The department granted the application, and, on September 5, 1905, entered into a contract with that company providing for, among other things, the payment of \$1,000 per year for this privilege. The department reserved the right to reassess that rate in future years and also required the company to permit use of its equipment and right-of-way for transport of such persons, firms, or corporations as the Secretary of the Interior might designate.

By September 1905, survey work was completed for the new railroad, and grading began from Merced, the line's western terminus. By October, construction was proceeding at a rapid pace, with the first carloads of rail arriving in November. The most difficult portion of the work involved the stretch from Merced Falls eastward, which ran mostly through the rough and steep Merced River Canyon, where roads and trails had to be built to transport supplies and equipment and blasting and drilling were necessary to clear a roadbed. Only pack horses could be used to reach some of the work sites, and often materials had to be lowered by rope from the canyon rim. On April 25, 1907, the rail line extended nearly to the national park's western boundary, at which point the company established a railhead which it named El Portal.

The extension of the line into Yosemite Valley halted because of steep grades, the government's reluctance to sell the right-of-way, and opposition to spoiling the beauty of the park. Although the company never acquired a right-of-way through the park, it did spend \$73,260 to build a dirt wagon road that led up the Merced River Canyon from El Portal to intersect with the Coulterville Road that led to the valley. The route of this wagon road would later become the Arch Rock entrance to the park.²² The first train from Merced arrived at El Portal on May 15, 1907, and the California Camera Club was the first large party to use the recently-completed railroad, traveling from Merced to El Portal on June 2 on their way to Yosemite Valley for a two-week excursion.²³ The railroad located its headquarters in the new Merced depot and built a smaller, rustic station at El Portal that also served as a ticket office and freight storage building. A second and larger depot would be constructed at El Portal in 1909.

²¹ *Mariposa County General Plan, Document I, Policies and Standards*, 1980, pp. 134-35.

²² VOLPE National Transportation Systems Center, *Merced Canyon Travel Corridor*, pp. 6, 17.

²³ LeBreton, Albert, "The Camera Club's Yosemite Outing," *Camera Craft: A Photographic Monthly*, XIV (July 1907), pp. 301-09.

The completed tracks, consisting of 63.5 miles of straight line and 32.9 miles of line with curves, had a maximum grade of two percent. The estimated total cost of construction, according to the Interstate Commerce Commission, was \$3,356,492. An inventory of the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company holdings in 1916 included six steam locomotives, 193 freight cars, 5 passenger cars, 4 work cars, and one Pierce-Arrow rail auto. Until the early 1920s, a train turntable at the eastern terminus of the railroad at El Portal was used to turn the trains. A large covered train shed 125 feet in length was constructed next to the station in 1921. After the addition of the train shed, complete trains were turned on a "Y" or turning track that was constructed at what is now known as Railroad Flat, several miles west of the station. The trains were turned around on the "Y" and then backed to the El Portal station.²⁴

TOURIST INDUSTRY

EL PORTAL STAGE LINE

A short battle for the tourist trade ensued between the new railroad and the previously unchallenged horse-drawn stages to Yosemite Valley, but the faster rail line appeared to be preferable to most visitors. In 1907, D. K. Stoddard, a stage coach operator in Merced, moved his Yosemite Transportation Company to El Portal and carried train passengers into the valley on horse-drawn stages under a five-year contract. The company constructed a complex of buildings to the east of the Hotel Del Portal in the vicinity of present-day Eagle Peak and Crane Creek Roads in Old El Portal. The upper buildings were the stables for the stage and freight wagon horses, while a lower building provided space for the stages, a paint shop, work shops, and an office. The blacksmith shop was located a short distance above the stables. A boarding house was located a short distance above the stables on the upper road (present-day Foresta Road; the road is the site of the original Yosemite Valley Railroad bed), and farther up the hill the company had a rooming house. The railroad bought the stage line in 1911 and began using automobiles on a limited basis the following year. The road from Foresta to El Portal was completed in 1913, the first year that automobiles were permitted to enter Yosemite National Park. Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane granted the Yosemite Transportation Company permission to use autos, and in November 1913 the first regular auto

²⁴ The best sources for information on the historical development of the Yosemite Valley Railroad are Hank Johnston, *Railroads of the Yosemite Valley* (6th ed., Yosemite National Park, Yosemite Association, 1995) and *ibid.*, *Short Line to Paradise*, "The Story of the Yosemite Valley Railroad," (Rev. 2d ed., Yosemite, Flying Spur Press, 1971). Also see, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, pp. 389-90, and Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 3-8, 53-60.

stage made the run from El Portal to the valley.²⁵ By the spring of 1914, the company had added three new auto stages.²⁶

DEL PORTAL HOTEL/EL PORTAL INN

The first accommodations to serve tourists at El Portal comprised a tent camp that the Yosemite Valley Railroad established in 1907 north of present-day Foresta Road just uphill from the present Village Center in Old El Portal. Construction of the four-story Del Portal Hotel (located east of the tent hotel on property now covered by residences on Cedar Lane and Buckeye Road) was completed in 1909 at a cost of some \$50,000. The hotel was built on property that Ward leased to William Sell, Sr., a former employee of Hennessey who built and operated the hotel. The completed hotel, designed to cater to well-to-do excursionists to Yosemite who arrived at El Portal on the evening train and had to stay overnight before continuing on to the valley, featured hot and cold water, electric light, steam heat "and every accessory for the comfort and convenience of guests." It had a large lobby, an office, two dining rooms, a music room, barber shop, pool room, bar, and a large kitchen on the ground floor. The upper floors comprised more than 100 guest rooms and bathrooms. A wide covered porch extended the length of the ground floor. On the east end of the building stood a loading ramp where tourists boarded horse stages for the trip to Yosemite Valley. The hotel had the form of a U, with the front facade facing south. The two wings of the hotel, each having the same height as the front of the building, had gable roofs. A patio with lawns, flowers, and a fountain filled the space between the two wings.²⁷

The Del Portal Hotel, and the stage line between El Portal and Yosemite Valley, were leased by the Yosemite Valley Railroad to the Desmond Park Service Company, the park concessioner, in 1916. On October 1, 1917, the Desmond Park Service Company moved its general office staff and records to the Hotel Del Portal. On October 27, 1917, a fire, starting from a defective attic flue, destroyed the hotel and its contents. In April 1918, a less elaborate, two-story, 20-room structure, known as the El Portal Inn, was constructed to replace the hotel. Located near the

²⁵U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal*, by Bates and Wells, p. 37; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. pp. lii, 516; and Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 61-63.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷ Joseph Anthony, "Small Things in the Yosemite," *Out West Magazine*, (July, 1908); Corcoran, "The Yosemite Valley Road," *Merced County Sun*, February 14, 1916; O.W. Lehmer, *Yosemite National Park: Open all the Year Round*, 1912, n.p.; and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, pp. 513, 516, and Vol. II, p. 713. Later, David Curry successfully sued the railroad company, forcing it to institute a daylight train from San Francisco so that passengers could stay in Yosemite the same night. Also see Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "Hotel Del Portal," Prepared by Jim Law, June 24, 1981.

location of the first tent accommodations, it was operated by the Yosemite Terminal Company, a subsidiary of the Yosemite Valley Railroad, the Desmond Company having failed in early 1918. During the early years of World War I, train travel declined as people had less money to spend on trips and expensive accommodations. Automobile use also continued to increase, thus affecting El Portal's tourist lodging business. The advent of the auto stage in 1913 had already lessened the hotel's trade, enabling tourists to go directly from the train at El Portal to Yosemite Valley for night. Capitalizing on this, the rail line developed a lucrative auto-ferry business as ramps were constructed in both Merced and El Portal.²⁸

In July 1932, the El Portal Inn was destroyed by fire. A new motor hotel, constructed along the north side of California State Highway 140 to accommodate the growing number of automobile tourists, was completed by December 1932. The building, which remains extant, was a two-story structure having 14 rooms, a lobby, and kitchen. The Yosemite Valley Railroad leased management of the hotel to Ben and Dolly Gardner, who operated the tourist accommodations until 1946 (Ben died in 1943).²⁹

The El Portal Motor Inn, as it came to be called, was managed by William and Adaline Brantley from 1946-64. In 1948, a coffee shop, bar, and cabins were constructed near the hotel to accommodate the growing number of tourists. Additional bungalows were constructed in 1955 to accommodate increasing auto tourists.³⁰

TIMBER INDUSTRY

In 1910, the Yosemite Lumber Company was established to harvest the timber resources in the El Portal area. The new corporation was headed by F.M. Fenwick, former manager of the Hammond Lumber Company of San Francisco and one of the most prominent lumber operators on the Pacific Coast. The new company initially purchased some 10,000 acres of timberland between El Portal and Wawona known as the "Minor Tract," after Isaac Minor, an elderly San Francisco lumber king. In 1911-12, the Yosemite Lumber Company constructed a sawmill and company town

²⁸ Shaffer, "A Synopsis of Local History," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal*, by Bates and Wells, p. 37; and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, p. 713.

²⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II., p. 987; Law, *Memories of El Portal*, p. 46; and Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "El Portal Hotel," Prepared by Jim Law, June 22, 1981, and "Hotel Del Portal (Site)," Prepared by Jim Law, June 24, 1981.

³⁰ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. III, p. 1038; Law, *Memories of El Portal*, p. 46; and Individual Building Data, Hotel, Building No. 762, El Portal, Yosemite National Park, September 1960, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park.

at Merced Falls and a 7,800-foot incline up the side of the mountain on the south side of the Merced River across from the Village Center of present-day El Portal. Some 25 miles of logging track extended from the top of the incline across the Wawona Road to Empire Meadow. The crest of the incline was 3,100 feet above the Merced River, and the maximum grade of the incline was 78 percent. A steam hoist at the peak of the incline was the motive power for its operation. Six car loads of logs could be lowered in one hour, averaging 6,500 board feet of lumber per car. The incline connected with the Yosemite Valley Railroad by crossing the Merced River on a trestle and approaching the railroad on a "Y". The first trainload of logs went to the Merced Falls mill on July 28, 1912. By 1921, the total cut of lumber on the south side of the Merced reached some 60,000,000 board feet.³¹

When the timber supply on the south side of the river dwindled during the early 1920s, the incline was moved by 200 men at a cost of some \$500,000 several miles downriver to the north side of the Merced above Incline (across California State Highway 140 from the present-day Indian Flat Campground) in 1923-24. At the present time, the route of the incline on the south side of the river is barely discernible because of tree growth, and only a few remnants of the incline remain near the top of the peak.

New tracks were laid for an 8,400-foot incline. The company cut 75,000,000 board feet of lumber annually during the mid-1920s and employed as many as 1,000 people at the Merced Falls mill and in the woods. In 1913, land in the Foresta region was sold to a Mr. Davis who had a 7-mile road constructed connecting Foresta and El Portal. Completed on August 25, 1913, at a cost of \$25,000, 80 men worked on the road averaging construction of some 500 feet of roadway each day. This road enabled transport of cut timber from Foresta to El Portal where it could be loaded onto railroad cars for haulage to the mill.³²

Railroad traffic was curtailed in November 1927 when the Yosemite Lumber Company, which had provided a major portion of the railroad's revenue, closed its mill because of a decreasing market. In December 1928, the Sugar Pine Lumber Company of Pinedale purchased the Yosemite Lumber Company's assets and briefly resumed operations. With the onset of the depression, however, the Merced Falls lumber mill closed for a five-year period.

A new Yosemite Sugar Pine Lumber Company was established in July 1935 to restart logging operations in the El Portal region. Lumber operations continued until November 1942, when the last train load of logs rolled to the mill.³³

³¹ Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "Yosemite Lumber Company Logging Incline, South Side of Merced River," Prepared by Jim Law, June 19, 1981.

³² Shirley Sargent, "Foresta Chronology," n.d., Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park; Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 82-107; and Records of the Mariposa Historic Sites Survey, "Jim Law Home," Prepared by Jim Law, June 18, 1981, and "Yosemite Lumber Company Logging Incline, North side of the Merced River," Prepared by Jim Law, June 20, 1981.

³³ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, p. 714, and Johnston, *Railroads of the Yosemite Valley*, pp. 125-73.

MINING INDUSTRY

BARIUM

Barite was discovered in quartz veins on the north side of the Merced River about one mile downriver from present-day El Portal during the early 1880s. In 1910, the El Portal Mining Company, which had acquired the property, including the former Hennessey ranch from Ward, worked the deposits, producing barite ore. During 1914-16, the Barbour Chemical Company operated the site. The operation was sold to Western Rock Products in 1916. For a period, the company reportedly used convict labor from San Quentin, secured at a minimal fee, to operate the mine. In 1927, the Yosemite Barium Company took over operation of the deposit, and from 1930 to 1948, the National Pigments Company operated the mine under the Baroid Sales Division of the National Lead Company.

In 1927, development of a barite deposit south of the river was commenced by drifting and stoping. The aforementioned National Pigments Company purchased the deposit in 1928, and the National Lead Company began operations in December 1928 after purchasing the mill site and barium mine on the north side of the Merced. Under the leadership of Earl H. Murchison, manager, and Adger Smith, mill and construction foreman, the company constructed a new mill, as well as houses for mine workers, at Rancheria Flat on the north side of the river. Murchison was chairman of the Mariposa Mine Operators Association and was quick to recognize the American Federation of Labor in May 1937 in preference to the Congress of Industrial Organizations, thus precluding the development of labor difficulties that plagued many western mining operations during the Depression.

During the late 1920s, a gabled white frame mine superintendent's residence (the extant structure is still referred to as the Murchison House and presently houses the Yosemite Research Center) was constructed on a knoll along the north side of California State Highway 140 across the river from the new company mill. A small garage (still extant although modified) was constructed near the Murchison House, and a small white frame office building (still extant) was constructed downhill from the superintendent's residence to serve the needs of mine management. A wooden footbridge was constructed across the Merced River below the Murchison House to provide access to the mill, but the bridge was destroyed by the flood of December 1937, leaving only some remnants of its abutments that remain extant.³⁴

During the 1910-48 period, approximately 398,613 tons of barite ore was removed from the mines. During its peak years, the company produced some 15,000 tons of barium annually and employed about 35 men at the mill, which was superintended by Bud Odgers. Peak ore production occurred in 1944. This production constituted

³⁴ Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "Murchison House," Prepared by Jim Law, June 20, 1981.

73 percent of the California barite production at that time. The barium mine, which was the first and for a long period the only barite mined commercially in California, became an important shipper on the Yosemite Valley Railroad, its deposits providing 96 percent of all barites used in California oil drilling operations. Drillers used the heavy metal to "weight" drilling muds to prevent the drills from blowing out of well casings. The mine was also the only deposit in the United States producing commercial shipments of the carbonate named witherite.

Mine works generally consisted of adits and shafts to access the ore bodies. Ore was removed by sloping or caving into lower works. The main adits and shafts, some of which are still visible, were at the mine on the north side of the river. Additional adits and shafts at the south mine workings, some of which are still visible, were located in Pigeon Gulch south of the Merced River on Sierra National Forest property. Ore from the south mine was transported to the mill site at Rancheria Flat via side-dump buckets that held 1/2 ton of material on an aerial tram that extended approximately 4,500 feet over the river. The mill building on the north side of the river was a large galvanized structure open on all four sides that covered an area of about 4,800 square feet. At the mill, the ore was processed through a jaw-type rock crusher. From the crusher, the ore went to a cone crusher. From there, the crushed ore went across a vertical agitator, where the heavy barite was separated from the lighter-weight waste ore. The barite proceeded through a ball-mill and was mixed with water. It was then pumped into settling tanks, dried by air and induced steam, and stored in large cylinder tanks for bulk storage. The cylinders were hopper-types set up for bagging the material ready for shipping. The processed ore was transported by the railroad to the San Joaquin Valley.³⁵ In 1960, the mill and aerial tram were razed, leaving the adits as the only visible reminder of the barium mining operations. Although most of the mine tailings have been removed under the auspices of Superfund cleanup operations, scattered remnants of the mining operations are still visible where the barium was loaded onto railroad cars at Rancheria Flat.

TUNGSTEN

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Leland J. Cuneo, in association with the Incline Mining Company of San Francisco, developed several groups of tungsten claims in the El Portal region. Cuneo had two mill sites -- the Donna and the Gary --

³⁵ Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 75-78; Shaffer, "A Synopsis of Local History;" U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, pp. 699-714; Johnston, *Railroads of the Yosemite Valley*, p. 87; Harding Lawson Associates, [Draft] *Site Inspection Report, National Park Service, El Portal Barium Mill Site, El Portal, California*, Prepared for PSOMAS & Associates, Sacramento California, HLA Project No. 28255-4, July 28, 1954, pp. 1-4; and Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "National Lead Mill Site," Prepared by James Law and Ralph Mendershausen, June 8, 1981.

located above the present-day sewage treatment plant in the Railroad Flat area. He constructed a gravity concentrator and rod mill (remnants are still visible) on the Gary about 1952, evidently to serve a tungsten mine near Big Meadow. The company produced and milled some ore at the plant during 1955 before floods washed out the mine roads. The mill also processed gold ore. Low tungsten prices eventually terminated operations of the mill in 1964.³⁶

CEMENT INDUSTRY

The Yosemite Portland Cement Company, incorporated in 1925, opened a lime rock (cement) quarry and crushing mill in 1927-28 at Emory, some 11 miles west of El Portal, and the Yosemite Valley Railroad began hauling the rock from there to the company's Merced mill in February 1928. During the first two years of operation, more than 3,600 railroad cars of ore were shipped yearly to Merced, and the company had a total cement sale of more than 600,000 barrels in 1929. During the early 1930s, the company was forced to drastically curtail production because of the Depression, but from 1937 to 1943 the average yearly quarry shipment rebounded to some 7,000 cars. Profits were still not sufficient to repay the investors, however, and in June 1944 company officials sold the operation to Henry Kaiser who closed the mill and moved the crushing plant equipment to Colombia, South America.³⁷

EL PORTAL TOWN DEVELOPMENT

The town of El Portal, located on hillsides north of the Merced River and west of Crane Creek, emerged as a residential area for railroad workers after 1905 when survey and construction work on the Yosemite Valley Railroad began.³⁸ The El Portal Post Office was established in May 1907 in the town's first train depot, and Bertran K. Young, a former Santa Fe Railroad employee from Stockton who was the

³⁶U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, p. 987, and Vol. III, pp. 1038-39.

³⁷ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Late Aboriginal and Early Anglo Occupation of El Portal*, by Bates and Wells, pp. 42-43; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, p. 714; and Johnston, *Railroads of the Yosemite Valley*, pp. 117-20.

³⁸ For more information on the historical development and layout of the village, see Interview with Jim Law, July 15, 1981, in the Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey.

first station agent at El Portal, was appointed as the town's first postmaster.³⁹ When a new train depot was completed in 1909, the post office was moved to that facility. Four railroad employee houses, three of which remain extant, were constructed in what is now known as the Village Center about 1908-9. The one-story, two-bedroom, frame buildings with covered front porches extending their full width are located north of Foresta Road on the north side of the Village Center and are still used as residences.⁴⁰ The railroad company constructed a two-story frame store (presently located on the south side of the Village Center) near the Del Portal Hotel around 1909, replacing an earlier tent store. In 1910, the first El Portal elementary school was established in a railroad-owned cabin uphill from the depot. Two years later, the school was moved into a permanent one-story frame building in the upper end of El Portal on the left side of present-day Foresta Road a short distance north of the boarding house of the Yosemite Transportation Company.⁴¹ The store ceased to operate in 1915 when its contents were moved to the Hotel Del Portal as a cost-cutting measure. When the El Portal Inn was constructed in 1918, the original two-story store building was moved down the road near the inn to again serve as a store. After the third hotel was built along the highway in 1932, a new store was built to the west of the hotel by the aforementioned Gardners in 1934. The old store was then moved to its present location on the south side of the Village Center, where it served as the post office from 1946 to 1967 and until recent years its bottom floor housed the town's Mariposa County branch library.⁴² El Portal continued to grow as a result of the area's expanding railroad, lumber, mining, and tourist industries.⁴³ The most comprehensive description of early El Portal appears in a report prepared by Edward T. Rose, State Sanitary Inspector, California State Board of Health, on September 6, 1915. According to Rose, the town of El Portal consisted "of one hotel (Hotel Del Portal)" as well as "a number of cottages and tents used as dwellings and several buildings used as stable, garages, etc."

Rose continued with a detailed description of conditions in the rapidly-expanding town. His findings include the following observations:

1. Population

³⁹ H.E. Salley, *History of California Post Offices: 1849-1976* (La Mesa, California, Heartland Printing and Publishing Company, 1977), n.p., and Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 30, 49-51.

⁴⁰ Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Houses in El Portal," Prepared by Jim Law, June 22, 1981.

⁴¹ Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites, "The Second School House in El Portal," Prepared by Jim Law, June 25, 1981.

⁴² Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 47-48, and Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, "El Portal Library," Prepared by Jim Law, June 19, 1981.

⁴³ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, pp. 516-17; Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 29-39; and *Merced Sun-Star*, February 11, 1967, in Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey.

"The population during the winter months will probably not average more than one hundred people daily. During the summer months, however, thousands of tourists and others who visit Yosemite Valley by train, pass through the town and as the automobile stages, rarely, if ever, enter the Valley at night practically all spend at least one night at the hotel."

2. Water Supply

"The water supply for the town is obtained from Crane Creek. An inspection was made of this creek, for a distance of several miles above the town, no sewers or toilets were found in the vicinity of creek. At Foresta, a small camping place located on the creek, about seven miles from El Portal, it was found that some of the campers were washing their clothes in the creek also that the waste water from the cook's tent was being discharged into the creek and that several of the tents were located directly on the bank of the creek within a few feet of the water. These matters were taken up with the owner of the property, who stated that these conditions would be remedied at once."

"Cattle have access to the water in the creek in numerous places throughout the mountains."

3. Sewage Disposal

"All premises in the town, with the exception of the hotel and three or four of the cottages are provided with vault privies, practically all of which are open to flies and in many instances are in dilapidated and filthy condition. I was informed that the sewage from the hotel discharges directly into the Merced River at a point about two hundred yards above the Railway Station. Owing to the high water in the river, the outlet pipe could not be seen. The sewage from the cottages having water flush toilets discharges into a dilapidated wooden cesspool, located on the bank of the river about one hundred feet from the water. The effluent from the cesspool discharges through a three inch pipe into a small stream of water and ultimately reaches the river. The waste water from the hotel laundry also discharges into this cesspool."

4. Garbage Disposal

"There is no general system for the collection of disposal of the garbage, rubbish, etc. In a number of instances, it is allowed to accumulate in the premises. In the majority of cases, however, it is deposited on the bank of the Merced River, which from the Railway Station to a point about a quarter of a mile below the same, is used as a general dumping place."

5. Hotel Del Portal

"This hotel is a three story frame building, having accomodations [sic] for about two or three hundred people. The interior of the hotel in general, is kept in clean condition. The floor in the kitchen is constructed of concrete and the doors and

windows in the dining rooms and kitchen are screened against flies. Modern plumbing facilities are provided."

"The shed in which the ice cream is manufactured, is located at the rear of the hotel. It has an earth floor and is not properly enclosed or screened against flies. Numerous flies were noticed on the walls and ceiling and on the ice cream utensils."

"The garbage receptacles provided for the hotel consist of three covered metal cans and a number of open wooden barrels and boxes. The greater part of the garbage, etc., being kept in the open wooden receptacles. The numerous flies which infest the open garbage receptacles have access to the ice cream shed mentioned above."

"I was informed by Mr. F. A. Cline, manager of the hotel that the garbage and rubbish is removed daily, some of the garbage being used for hog feed and the remainder, with the rubbish, etc., being dumped on the bank of the Merced River, where it is burned frequently. An inspection of the dump, however, failed to show any sign of burned refuse, in fact there was a large accumulation of garbage, rubbish and filth of every description from the hotel on the bank of the river within one hundred feet of the water and a few hundred feet from a number of the occupied cottages. This accumulation of filth was swarming with flies and a number of hogs owned by the hotel were feeding on the refuse."

"There are a number of hog pens owned by the hotel, located directly on the bank of the Merced River, about one quarter of a mile below the hotel. These hog pens are in filthy condition, and the twenty or thirty hogs in the same have access to the water in the river which is used for domestic and drinking purposes by the City of Merced and several small towns below El Portal."

"There are a number of tents in connection with the hotel, which are used as sleeping quarters by the employees. These tents are located on the hillside several hundred feet from the hotel. No toilet facilities are provided, other than those in the hotel. The grounds around the tents are in places littered with rubbish, old rags, paper, etc."

"The hotel laundry is located several hundred feet down the hill from the hotel, near some of the occupied cottages. It is built of rough lumber and old canvas. The wooden floor is rough and worn making it almost impossible to keep it in clean condition. The Chinese employees, cook, eat and sleep in the laundry. The toilet facilities provided consist of one vault privy, which is partly enclosed with old canvas. This privy is in filthy condition and is swarming with flies."

6. Stables

"The stable owned by the Yosemite Transportation Company has an earthen floor and is kept in clean condition. At the time of this inspection ten horses were being kept in the stable. The manure is removed daily, some of it being used in the hotel garden and some of it being dumped on the bank of a ravine about one thousand feet from the stable. This manure is spread out to dry in the sun, in order to prevent the breeding of flies. Very few flies were noticed around this manure."

"There are a number of cottages and tents located near the stable, which are occupied by employees of the Transportation Company. The grounds around the same are in places littered with garbage and rubbish. The toilet facilities provided consist of a number of open vault privies."

8. Railway Station

"The toilet facilities provided at the Railway Station consist of two vault privies which are located on the bank of the Merced River, about one hundred and fifty feet from the Station. They are not properly enclosed or screened against flies and are in filthy condition."

"The river bank adjacent to the Station is littered with garbage, old rags, old shoes and rubbish of every description. Numerous flies were noticed in the above privies and on the accumulation of garbage, rubbish, etc."

"At the time of this inspection, a work train was on one of the sidetracks not far from the Station. The garbage, etc., from this train was being emptied on the bank of the river."⁴⁴

Despite the generally-deplorable conditions that Rose described, the town of El Portal continued to expand, in part because it was near the center of the industrial section of the county and in part as a result of the influx of National Park Service and park concessioner employees.⁴⁵ A sense of the town's development during the 1920s and 1930s can be found in the reminiscences of Carl Salmi, son of a skilled carpenter responsible for construction of many of the early foot and horse bridges and comfort stations in Yosemite National Park. The younger Salmi worked in the park as an unskilled laborer while in high school and college and lived in what is now known as Old El Portal from 1929 until the late 1930s. His reminiscences include the following observations:

At the end of 1929, after I had been two years in the Park, we moved our tent west to El Portal, just outside the park. The Park Service wanted all employees who were not permanent Civil Service employees to move out of the park. This was the beginning of much shifting. . . .

In El Portal the Gardners owned the hotel and store and were in charge of the whole parcel of railroad land. We and the others had to get permits from the Gardners to live on railroad land. There was no rent; you just needed permission from the Gardners to live there. You could build whatever you wanted; a rag house, a wooden house, or a frame house. Nobody had enough money to build a real house so they built tent houses, which eventually evolved into nice little homes.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Donald B. Tressider, "The National Parks: A Public Health Problem, With Particular Reference to Yosemite National Park" (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Medicine, Stanford University, 1927), pp. 16-24.

⁴⁵ For more information on the town's expansion, see Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 41-51.

After a year in El Portal, Dad began to build a wood frame house way up on the hill, not on railroad property.⁴⁶ We were to spend two more years in the tent as the house went up. The hill land belonged to the Stanislaus National Forest, which was headquartered in Sonora California. We had to pay a rent of \$15.00 a year for the special use permit. The permits presumably were for summer homes, but people lived there all year long, and the forest officials didn't care. However, we had to adhere to certain rules, to their code for construction. We had to clear all brush within maybe 30 feet of the house, probably because there were many forest fires at that time. I lived there 'til 1938 or 1939.

The house consisted of just a kitchen with a bed in it where Dad slept, a separate bedroom, a service porch, and a porch under the roof that was later enclosed with wall and windows. At first there was just an outdoor john; then a lean-to bathroom was built off the service porch. Dad built a garage further up the hill from lumber salvaged from one of the buildings the contractor sold off after building Wawona tunnel.⁴⁷

Aside from the residential expansion of the Old El Portal area during the 1920s and 1930s, houses were constructed in other parts of the town to accommodate the growing population. For example, four houses were built in the Merced Flat area of the former Hennessey ranch to provide residences for railroad section crew members. This new residential area became known as "Abbyville," or "Abbieville," apparently receiving its name from a blacksmith at the barium mine named "Abbey" who lived nearby.⁴⁸

Many of the current residential structures in what is now called Old El Portal date from the 1920s and 1930s, although most have been modernized or remodeled. The sizes and conditions of the residences vary widely, ranging from old structures in generally poor condition to large, relatively new homes with modern amenities. Some have been moved to their present locations from various places such as along Crane Creek and the former Hennessey ranch. In many cases, materials for construction of the buildings have been scavenged from various sources.⁴⁹ According to the Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey, the

⁴⁶ The upper 12 residences above the power line in present-day Old El Portal were located on U.S. Forest Service land. The residences below the power line were located on Yosemite Valley Railroad (later National Lead Company) land. Telephone interview with Robert Babcock, Mariposa, California, January 20, 1998.

⁴⁷ Richard Howard O'Connell, comp., *Building Yosemite: A Personal History of its Paths, Bridges, and Buildings, 1927-1933*, by Carl Salmi, 1993 (Copy in Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park).

⁴⁸ Telephone interview with Robert Babcock by Cathy O'Brien, n.d., Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey.

⁴⁹ Interviews with John McDaniel, n.d.; Clyde Gann, September 30, 1981; Andy Anderson, October 1, 1981; Pauline Landy, January 6, 1982; Laurel Anderson, n.d.; Robert Babcock, February 3, 1982; by Cathy O'Brien, Records of the Mariposa County Historic Sites Survey.

buildings in "old El Portal" comprise some 85 structures built after 1905. They "are largely one story bungaloes which have been added onto over time with a variety of materials and styles that is somewhat breathtaking." The records state that "taken in themselves, the houses of Old El Portal are sometimes quaint, sometimes ramshackle; but it is definitely an area with distinct charm." The records indicate that some of the extant residences "used part of a hotel foundation for a patio," while "some have no concrete foundation." One house "has a basement ceiling formed by dynamite crates." More "than one house in El Portal grew up around a tent, with canvas still intact. Over time second, and sometimes third, roofs have been added."

The records note that the "village has seen various elements of change." "Some structures and portions thereof remain in their original condition while most have been subjected to structural additions and improvements as well as changes to surrounding roads and utilities."⁵⁰

Symbolic of the town's expansion was construction a new frame schoolhouse on a hill above the town in 1930, as well as construction of the aforementioned new hotel and market along the highway in 1932 and 1934, respectively.⁵¹ The school building, which remains extant although converted for use as a community church in 1967-68, served as the town's educational center until 1962, when the present school at Rancheria Flat was opened.⁵²

DECLINE OF THE YOSEMITE VALLEY RAILROAD AND EL PORTAL

During 1923-26, construction of the Exchequer Dam east of Merced Falls by the Merced Irrigation District and completion of the All-Year Highway from Merced to the west boundary of Yosemite National Park had a significant impact on the operation of the Yosemite Valley Railroad and El Portal. The dam harnessed the waters of the Merced River and rerouted them in the canals of the irrigation system, requiring the relocation of 16.7 miles of rail line and the construction of five large bridges and four concrete-lined tunnels between Merced Falls and Detwiller at a cost of some \$5,000,000. In 1926, the final section of the All-Year Highway was completed from Briceburg eastward. Opening of the highway on July 31 cut drastically into the business of the railroad as the Yosemite Transportation Company began offering bus trips beginning at Merced at lower rates than the rail fare, thus reducing the railroad's profitable passenger and auto-ferry business. Hence, the

⁵⁰Records of the Mariposa Historic Sites Survey, "Old El Portal," Prepared by Ralph R. Mendershausen, February 8, 1982, and "El Portal (Old El Portal Village), Prepared by Scott L. Carpenter, April 5, 1982.

⁵¹U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol III, p. 1038, and Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 65-74.

⁵²*Ibid.*

Yosemite Valley Railroad asked the Interstate Commerce Commission to fix prices, but the government agency refused the request. By 1927, passenger revenue from the railroad had dropped 38 percent and continued to decrease steadily, aided in part by the onset of the Depression and World War II. Several disasters also contributed to the financial demise of the company: the burning of the main office in Merced in 1929; the widely-reported Yokum train wreck of 1930; and the flood of December 1937,⁵³ which washed away bridges and portions of the highway in the El Portal area and destroyed some 30 miles of track.

In October 1934, a group of bond holders incorporated the Yosemite Valley Railway Company, and in December 1935 the new company took over operation of the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company as bankruptcy receivers. Traffic improved as the Sugar Pine Lumber Company resumed its Merced Falls operation, and mail and tourist revenue began to climb with improving economic conditions. In 1940, however, the Sugar Pine Lumber Company sold its major holdings to the government and began closing out its timber operations. The Merced Falls lumber mill shut down at the end of 1942. The Portland Cement Company was disbanded in June 1944, when the company sold its quarry and plant at Emory to Henry Kaiser who terminated the operation, thus resulting in the loss to the railroad of a 25-car-per-day customer. Regular mail service over the rail line was cancelled by the U.S. Navy in 1943. On August 31, 1944, the Yosemite Valley Railway trustees applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) for permission to abandon the line, and that body approved the recommendation on February 28, 1945. The National Lead Company, dependent on the railroad for shipping of barium from El Portal, was the only significant protestor against the abandonment. Meanwhile, the Machine Tool and Equipment Company of New York took control of the railroad and its assets through bond purchases and announced its intention to scrap the line. Another disastrous flood on February 2, 1945, guaranteed the railroad's demise, and on June 28, 1945, the ICC formally approved final abandonment of the line. The rail line was sold for the bond holders on the steps of the San Francisco City Hall on September 7, and the last run to Merced occurred on August 24, 1945. The engine, cars, buildings, and other materials were disposed of by the Machine Tool Company, and the track and ties were removed under contract.⁵⁴

ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF EL PORTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITE

After the railroad was abandoned in 1945, the El Portal Mining Company obtained title to the former railroad lands in the town of El Portal. The El Portal Mining

⁵³ Major floods devastated the El Portal area during 1861-62, 1867, 1871, 1950, 1955, and 1964. For more information on this topic, see Law, *Memories of El Portal*, pp. 108-14.

⁵⁴ *Mariposa Gazette*, August 22, 1957, and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. I, p. 513, and Vol. II, pp. 714, 961-62.

Company, a subsidiary of the Baroid Sales Division of the National Lead Company, owned the El Portal barium mine properties and continued mining operations until 1948.

During the spring of 1956, the National Park Service, as part of its Mission 66 program, determined to establish limitations on development in Yosemite Valley, develop El Portal as the park's operating base, and remove from Yosemite Valley all facilities that served the park operation as a whole, including employee housing and support facilities for both the Park Service and the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. This was intended to enhance park administration, provide for better resource management and protection in Yosemite Valley, and reduce congestion in the valley.

During the spring of 1956, the NPS investigated various areas outside the park that might be used for establishment of a park administrative site. These areas included El Portal, the U.S. Forest Service area north of El Portal lying between Moss Creek and the west park boundary, and several properties in the Big Meadows area. After a field inspection on April 5, 1956, Superintendent John C. Preston recommended to Lawrence C. Merriam, Regional Director, Region Four, that the Park Service acquire "all of El Portal now largely held in three ownerships and comprising 980 acres more or less, exclusive of Forest Service lands." According to statistical data compiled by the Park Service, El Portal was an unincorporated town of some 300 persons. Community operations included a U.S. post office, a county-operated grade school, a community-operated community hall built with volunteer labor and supplies, and a water system financed by assessments and owned by leaseholders. Business operations in the town included a Standard Oil Company bulk receiving and storage facility, a Standard Oil Company service station, a grocery store having an off-sale liquor license, and a hotel, motel, cafe, and "on-sale" bar. There were approximately 100 leaseholders (various documents list different numbers of leaseholders) in the town. All of these were privately owned residences on leased lands. No land was owned other than that by the El Portal Mining Company, the U.S. Forest Service, non-Indian owners of a one-time 30-acre Indian grant, and the Las Mariposas Land Company. The Las Mariposas Land Company holdings consisted of the service station, a small cafe, motel, and four lots with residences, each having an estimated value of \$15,000. The El Portal Mining Company owned about 10 company employee residences, each valued at approximately \$15,000. In addition, the company had sub-leased land from the National Land Company for operation of the barium mines and mill. The tungsten mill in the Railroad Flat area consisted of ten mill sites of 5 acres each which were owned by a Mr. Garibaldi of San Francisco and managed and operated by Messrs. Cuneo and Jones.⁵⁵

As the Park Service moved toward acquisition of El Portal, local residents expressed concern as to the impact of this development on their properties. On April 23, 1957, Regional Director Merriam discussed the problem in a letter addressed to NPS Director George B. Hartzog:

⁵⁵ Memorandum, Superintendent, Yosemite to Regional Director, Region Four, April 23, 1956, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1956, Yosemite National Park Archives, El Portal.

The local people, many of whom as you know are employed within the park by the Government and the concessioners, occupy homes they have bought or built on ground leased from the El Portal Mining Company or the Forest Service. The small businesses, such as motel, recreation center, service station, restaurant and other types, likewise occupy land which they used on a lease basis from the mining company or the Forest Service. Some of the leases are coming up for renewal right along, and naturally the lease holders probably all of whom have heard rumors of our proposal, are concerned as to their tenure and the procedure under which their leases would be administered if the Government takes them over.⁵⁶

In November 1957, the National Park Service prepared guidelines, planning schedules, and priorities necessary for implementation of the Yosemite Mission 66 program, primarily as it affected Yosemite Valley and El Portal. According to the statement, El Portal would "be established and developed as an operating base and administrative unit to serve the Park." The community would be "planned to be conducive to town living with all community facilities for park and concessioner employees." The "entire area" would be "zoned, designating commercial areas, residential areas, and utility and maintenance areas." Among the park facilities to be constructed at El Portal were: (1) water and sewer systems; (2) an incinerator; (3) a trailer camp for use by employees of the contractors, NPS, and park concessioner during development and after completion of the El Portal area; (4) approximately 45 housing units (25 single family and 20 apartment units) and a 50-person dormitory; and (5) heavy equipment, warehouse, sign, paint, carpenter, electrical, and plumbing shops, and a storage compound for vehicles, equipment and supplies. In addition, the Park Service would assign a residential tract to the Yosemite Park and Curry Company concessioner who, in turn, would arrange for construction, financing, and assignment of quarters for company employees. A storage compound would also be located at El Portal to provide for yard storage of vehicles, supplies, and equipment that did not require cover, as well as a warehouse building for long-term bulk storage.⁵⁷

Public Law 85-922, enacted on September 2, 1958, authorized "the Secretary of the Interior to provide an administrative site for Yosemite National Park, California, on lands adjacent to the park." Section 1 of the law stated that its purpose was to "enable the Secretary of the Interior to preserve the extraordinary natural qualities of Yosemite National Park, notwithstanding its increasing use by the public" by establishing "an administrative site in the El Portal area adjacent to Yosemite National Park, in order that utilities, facilities, and services required in the operation

⁵⁶ Memorandum, Regional Director to Director, April 23, 1957, Central Files L1425, El Portal Project, 1957, Yosemite National Park Archives.

⁵⁷ Conrad L. Wirth, Director to H. Oelmann, Executive Vice President, Yosemite Park and Curry Company, November 22, 1957, and attached "Yosemite Park and Curry Company Planning Schedule - Yosemite National Park, Mission 66 Program," November 20, 1957, and "National Park Service, Planning Schedule - Yosemite National Park, Mission 66 Program," November 20, 1957, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1957, Yosemite National Park Archives.

and administration of Yosemite National Park may be located on such site outside the park." The law authorized the secretary to acquire approximately 1,200 acres of "non-Federal land, interests in land and appurtenances thereto." The secretaries of Agriculture and Interior were authorized to arrange and effect "mutually satisfactory transfers of jurisdiction over land administered by each in the El Portal area." The lands acquired by or transferred to the Secretary of the Interior would "not become a part of Yosemite National Park, nor be subject to the laws and regulations governing said park, but the Secretary of the Interior shall have supervision, management, and control of the area and shall make and publish such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary and proper for its use and management." The secretary was also granted authority to grant "nonexclusive privileges, leases, and permits for the use of land in the area and enter into contracts relating to the same, subject to the limitations and conditions applying to the similar authority provided in section 3 of the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), as amended (43 Stat. 235, 16 U.S.C., 1952 edition, sect. 3)."⁵⁸

On December 1, 1958, the National Park Service acquired approximately 972 acres of land, including its interests in all commercial and residential leases, at El Portal from the El Portal Mining Company for the sum of \$300,000. The leases reportedly included 73 leases for residences on numbered lots, most having garages and a few having tool sheds. After an inspection of the recently-purchased property by Acting Park Forester Robert H. Sharp and Supervisory Park Ranger James L. McLaughlin on February 2, 1959, the NPS announced that all residences at El Portal had electricity and water connections, each had an individual septic tank as there was no community sewage disposal, and most had butane installations. Until recent years, no stone work had been permitted as part of residence construction. However, stone or masonry chimneys had been constructed in recent years on five houses. The residential leases were for five years with a clause calling for removal on 60-day notice. The town comprised an unincorporated fire district possessing one good fire truck, and it had a community water system drawing water from Crane Creek with provision (via a pump house) for drawing water from the Merced River in periods of low water.

The inspectors found that the acquisition included six commercial leases: (1) a hotel, 12 double cabin motor court, coffee shop and bar, garage, paint shop, and library leased to W. E. Brantley; (2) a food market and apartment above leased to W. A. Neubert; (3) a lease to the Standard Oil Company of California for bulk plant and cottages; (4) a lease to Standard Stations, Inc. for a service station; (5) a lease for a 2,400-square-foot concrete building with Arthur A. Sellenrick; and (6) leases to the Baroid Sales Division of the National Sales Company. In addition, the acquired property included 16 grants or easements of rights of way.

The NPS inspectors found that six residential structures were constructed on the lands leased to the Baroid Sales Division of the National Lead Company during the

⁵⁸U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite*, by Greene, Vol. II, pp. 987, 994. Also see Public Law 85-922, 85th Congress, H.R. 12281, September 2, 1958, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, Public Law 85-922, Bill H.R. 12281, 1958, Yosemite National Park Archives.

mining operation of that division. These structures were constructed by National Lead Company employees in what is known as the Abbieville area. The lessees or their successors in interest were advised by letter from the National Lead Company prior to October 17, 1957, to remove these structures by March 31, 1958, but the lessees had not complied with the company. Apparently all of these structures were erected on verbal agreement between representatives of the National Lead Company and its employees. The Abbieville area had two separate water systems, each using an electrically driven pump.

The NPS inspectors noted several business leases for numbered lots in Old El Portal. On Lot No. 93 a two-story structure owned by D.D. Shepherd had a post office on the lower floor and an apartment on the upper floor. On Lot No. 100 a concrete block structure constructed for community hall purposes by the town residents as a community operation was located on land leased to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The NPS inspectors observed that some improvements were located on National Lead Company leased lands constructed and used by the company. These included a baroid ore reduction plant that was being removed; a small inclined railway from the mine head to the highway; several buildings at the mine on the south side of the Merced River; three Redwood stave water tanks at the baroid ore reduction plant; one residence, garage, and office building adjoining Highway 140; three residences and one large corrugated iron garage on the Rancheria Flat hilltop; one lapped board residence in poor condition at Rancheria Flat; and a rifle range, including several target frames and a small shed, at Rancheria Flat.

The inspectors noted various easements and rights of way for roads and public utilities at El Portal that were let to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, Mariposa County, A-1 Television and Radio Service; and the State of California. The El Portal Mining Company had installed on its lands at Rancheria Flat a separate business water system consisting of two 10,000-gallon wood water tanks drawing water from a well. In times of low water, this system was tied in with the community owned and operated water system that supplied domestic water to the residences on El Portal Mining Company leases from two 10,000-gallon water tanks located on company lands.⁵⁹

On June 22, 1960, approximately 200 additional acres for the administrative site were acquired by the Park Service from the U.S. Forest Service via a cooperative agreement that was formalized by a public land order. During the late 1950s and

⁵⁹ Department of the Interior, Information Service, "National Park Service Announces Purchase of Land for New Administrative Site Outside Yosemite Boundary," For Release, November 5, 1958; and Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of El Portal Mining Company, March 5, 1958, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1958; Report on Possessory Rights Certificate of Inspection and Possession (and attachments), February 2, 1959, and Memorandum, Regional Chief of Lands, Region Four to Director, February 10, 1959, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1959; and Memorandum, Superintendent, Yosemite National Park to All Former Tenants of the El Portal Mining Company, El Portal, California, December 8, 1958, and Letter, G. L. Carter, Trust Officer, American Trust Company to U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Attention: Superintendent, John C. Preston, February 20, 1959, Central Files (L 1425), El Portal Permittees, Yosemite National Park Archives.

early 1960s, the NPS also acquired 101 acres of unpatented lands for the administrative site.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the National Park Service issued an informational sheet dated June 1, 1959, establishing the policies for the management and control of the administrative site, use of residential and commercial properties within its boundaries, and the proposed general development of the area.⁶¹ During the spring of 1960, the National Park Service announced that its plans for El Portal contemplated

a modern community of approximately 1500 population which will be planned conducive to town living, with all necessary community facilities for Government, concessioner, contractor and public utility employees. The entire area acquired by the Service has been zoned, designating commercial, residential, utility and industrial area. The National Park Service investment in the area will approximate \$6,500,000, with additional substantial investment by Park concessioners, public utility companies, post office, church, Forest Service guard station and supporting activities.

By April 1960, work was underway to develop the El Portal Administrative Site. According to Superintendent Preston, this work included the following projects:

Cleanup of area, including razing of the old barium ore reduction mill, eliminating various dumps and collections of debris.

Purchase and rehabilitation of four National Lead Company residences, including modernization of water and sewer systems.

Construction of first section of employees' trailer camp, of which 62 sites are completed and presently available, with eight additional sites to be available in the near future.

Completion of the water, sewer, and electric distribution system and the Service building.

Construction of a bridge across the Merced River at the west end of the site to provide the key link in the community circulatory road system.

Conversion of all commercial leases in the area to Park concessioner contracts.

⁶⁰ Memorandum, Regional Chief of Lands, Region Four to Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, January 16, 1959, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1959; and Letter, Keith Neilson, Acting Superintendent to Harry Grace, Forest Supervisor, U.S. Forest Service, December 20, 1960, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1960, 1961, Yosemite National Park Archives. For more information on this topic, see *Merced Sun-Star*, November 5, 1958.

⁶¹ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Yosemite National Park, California, "Informational Sheet Concerning Residential Permits and Business Concessions, El Portal Administrative Site," June 1, 1959, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1959, Yosemite National Park Archives.

Conversion of all residential leases to Park Special Use Permits so that all existing residential leases will ultimately pass into the hands of Park-connected employees.⁶²

During 1960-61, 20 new single-family residences (3 bedroom, 1-1/2 baths), residential water and sewer systems, and residential and access roads were constructed in the Rancheria Flat area of El Portal. The first section of the Trailer Village in Merced Flat was completed and all sites were occupied. A second section of the Trailer Village was completed during summer of 1961. In addition, the NPS secured necessary water rights on Moss Creek, ensuring an adequate water supply for the growing town.⁶³

An article in the National Park Service's *National Park Courier* on September 7, 1961, described the improvements at El Portal. According to the article,

. . . . Already, the area has become a secondary base for Park operations. Virtually all of the 100-odd homesite lessees in the area are either Service, concessioner, or contractors' employees or others engaged in work directly related to park activities. Supt. Preston conceived the idea of acquiring El Portal and developing it as an operating base and administrative site. Enthusiastically endorsed by the MISSION 66 staff and the Director, it gained a major assist when former Secretary Seaton gave the proposal his blessing and the backing of the Department, and Secretary Udall gave it early approval. Fortunately nearly all the lands needed were owned by the El Portal Mining Company, holder of 972 acres. Also, Service need for this property coincided with the company's desire to dispose of it, as no further commercial mining existed in the area. . . .

Sixty employees and the trailers they occupied in the Valley have already been relocated at the El Portal Trailer Village; the remaining 15 trailers will be removed when additional sites become available. That is a relatively temporary measure, of course; when enough permanent employee housing has been developed at El Portal, much of the trailer village will be converted for park visitor use.

. . . . With completion of 20 NPS residences at El Portal in June, 15 old, substandard residences have already been eliminated from the Valley. . . . the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., is now working on a program for concessioner employee housing at El Portal.

⁶² Letter, John C. Preston, Superintendent to Lewis A. Thomas, Field Representative, U.S. Office of Education, April 25, 1960, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1960, 1961, Yosemite National Park Archives.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, and Keith Neilson, Assistant Superintendent to Lewis A. Thomas, Field Representative, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, September 26, 1960, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1960, 1961, Yosemite National Park Archives.

Long an offense in eyes and nose, the incinerator, valley dump, and adjacent unsightly storage buildings in the Valley are also to go. A contract for replacements at El Portal has been let and the new modern incinerator is slated for completion next March.

New El Portal facilities will replace all these: Service automotive and equipment repair shops, carpenter, plumbing, paint, and sign shops; Government barns, corrals, tack room, warehouse, storage and equipment sheds, the park jail, morgue, and outdoor storage space. Virtually all office functions except the immediate offices of the superintendent and division heads will be based at the new administrative site.

A new sewage treatment plant has already been built at El Portal, as has the first stage of a modern water and sewer system, to be extended ultimately to serve the whole community. Part of the new circulatory road system including a handsome new bridge across the Merced River, has been completed.

Two months ago, the Office of Education advised the Service that the \$261,900 estimate for the new El Portal elementary school and teacherage had been approved. School and 4-unit teacherage will be ready for school bells come the fall of 1962.⁶⁴

During the early 1960s, three pieces of railroad rolling stock and equipment were acquired by the National Park Service and moved to their present location in the Village Center at El Portal to serve as part of a Yosemite National Park transportation exhibit. The three pieces of rolling stock, each of which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, included Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6; Track Bus No. 19, Hetch Hetchy Railroad; and Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15.⁶⁵

In 1966, the Yosemite Valley Railroad stationhouse, water tanks, and turntable at Bagby, 30 miles west of El Portal, were moved to their present location adjacent to the aforementioned pieces of railroad rolling stock as part of the transportation exhibit in the Village Center at El Portal. Relocation of these structures was carried out prior to the inundation of Bagby by the raising of Exchequer Dam and the

⁶⁴ "El Portal Improvement Benefits Bringing Big Changes to Valley," *National Park Courier*, September 7, 1961, p. 10.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Inventory--Nomination Form, "Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6," Prepared by Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian, National Park Service, Western Regional Office, January 27, 1976 (Listed January 30, 1978); *ibid.*, Inventory--Nomination Form, "Track Bus No. 19, Hetch Hetchy Railroad," Prepared by Merrill Ann Wilson, Historical Architect, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, May 1976 (Listed May 22, 1978); and *ibid.*, Inventory--Nomination Form, "Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15," Prepared by Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian, National Park Service, Regional Historian, June 21, 1977 (Listed May 22, 1978).

expansion of Lake McClure. The three structures were listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 13, 1979.⁶⁶

On February 1, 1966, the NPS granted a permit to the General Services Administration to construct a new post office in the Village Center area at El Portal. The new facility, which still serves as the town's post office, was opened for business in 1967.⁶⁷

According to a memorandum entitled "El Portal Administrative Site Facts," dated August 4, 1967, total acreage of the El Portal Administrative Site amounted to 1,112.8 acres (1,099.3 acquired by exchange or purchase and 13.5 acquired by donation). The estimated population of the town was 700. Acreage that was subject to development for housing, commercial activity, and utility use totalled 215. The Trailer Court included 11 acres that had been developed into 61 sites with water, sewer, power, and telephone connections, and 11 acres as yet undeveloped but nevertheless adequate for an additional 61 sites. Residential house development covered 142 acres. Of this amount, 45 acres covered the existing area of old housing development [Old El Portal] consisting of 89 housing units, and 22 acres covered the existing government housing area that included 24 houses with space for an additional 24 houses and 10 apartment units. Existing structures in the community included:

- 89 privately owned houses
- 25 government owned houses
- 2 duplex teacherage quarters -- Mariposa County
- 1 government owned store on concession
- 1 government owned garage on concession
- 1 U.S. Post Office
- 1 community building owned by the Veterans of Foreign Wars
- 1 government owned hotel building on concession
- 1 government owned restaurant on concession
- 12 government owned motel cabins on concession
- 1 Standard gasoline station
- 1 Standard Oil bulk plant
- 1 government owned abandoned school building
- 1 public school plant operated by Mariposa County
- 1 large incinerator (Railroad Flat)
- 1 historical exhibit consisting of Old Bagby R.R. station, R. R. Engine, Caboose and Baggage Car. Several early style motor vehicles.

⁶⁶U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Inventory--Nomination Form, "Bagby Stationhouse, Water Tanks, and Turntable," Prepared by Leslie Starr Hart, Historian, and Merrill Ann Wilson, Historic Architect, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, July 1976 (Listed April 13, 1979).

⁶⁷ Permit, Contract No. GS-09B-5845, February 1, 1966, Central Files (L1425), US Post office, GS-09B-5845, Yosemite National Park Archives.

1 modern trailer court with 61 trailer sites. Sewer, water and power. 14 government trailers and 47 private trailers. 30 Y.P. Co. employees, 8 contractor and 17 NPS now occupy space.

The water system at El Portal consisted of a distribution system throughout the area. The source of the water was Moss Creek. Water was stored in four tanks -- one 20,000-gallon tank above the incinerator at Railroad Flat; one 100,000-gallon tank above the government residential area at Rancheria Flat; one 500,000-gallon tank in the upper part of Old El Portal; and one 100,000-gallon tank above Old El Portal.

NPS development expenditures to date amounted to \$2,240,080. Major roadwork included construction of the Merced River bridge on the west side of the administrative site, and minor road projects included Trailer Village roads, new residential and access roads, the incinerator and dump roads, reconstructed old residential roads, and a school access road, parking, and sidewalks in Rancheria Flat. Utility development included reconstruction of utilities for three old mining company residences in Rancheria Flat, installation of utilities in the Trailer Village and Rancheria Flat residential areas, construction of a new water system and sewer system for the Rancheria Flat area, installation of utilities for the new incinerator, and construction of a new sewer system for the Old El Portal area.

Building projects undertaken by the NPS at El Portal to date included rehabilitation of the three old mining company residences in Rancheria Flat and construction of the new residences in Rancheria Flat, a Trailer Village laundry service building, and the incinerator at Railroad Flat.⁶⁸

During the 1970s, development of the El Portal Administrative Site continued. In September 1976, for instance, a new sewer facility at Railroad Flat went into operation. The \$12 million plant replaced a 42-year-old facility in Yosemite Valley.⁶⁹

Other developments at El Portal during the 1970s and early 1980s included conversion of the El Portal Hotel and adjacent motel units for Park Service use in 1975.⁷⁰ In June 1980, three mobile-office units were installed just south of the post office in the Village Center to provide temporary office space for Park Service

⁶⁸ Memorandum, David deL. Condon, Asst. Superintendent to FILES, August 4, 1967, Central Files, L1425, El Portal, No. 4 (Administrative Site), 1965-67, Yosemite National Park Archives. In 1968, the NPS issued a Special Use Permit for a storage area for the state's sand supply below Foresta Road bridge at El Portal. David deL. Condon, Assistant Superintendent to Jack C. Smith, Dist. Ranger, Sierra National Forest, March 25, 1968, Central Files, L1425, El Portal Project, 1968 thru 1972, Yosemite National Park Archives.

⁶⁹ *Fresno Bee*, August 15, 1976, in Newspaper Clippings, Vol. 24, p. 65, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park.

⁷⁰ *Mariposa Gazette*, June 5, 1980, p. 131, in Newspaper Clippings, Vol. 24, p. 65, Park Research Library, Yosemite National Park.

fiscal, planning, and other administrative personnel. Later in 1983-84, the El Portal Hotel building was converted for use as office space by the Yosemite Institute.⁷¹

The *General Management Plan, Visitor Use/Park Operations/Development* for Yosemite National Park in September 1980 proposed a variety of projects for the continued expansion and development of El Portal.⁷² In July 1981, the Park Service unveiled a plan entitled, *El Portal Comprehensive Design, Yosemite National Park/California*. The document described existing development within the El Portal Administrative Site as follows:

Housing, which is scattered in several locations, consists of privately owned homes on leased lots, some standard government rental housing, trailers, and rooms in an old hotel/cabin complex.

A few residents run commercial establishments that serve the community and park-bound visitors. In general, however the population of El Portal is currently too small to support commercial and public services, so residents must travel to other towns, or to Yosemite Valley, for shopping and other activities. . . .

Basic utilities are in place and adequate to serve an expanded community. A modern sewage treatment plant began operation in 1977 [1976]. The National Park Service is currently drilling wells to convert the domestic water system from a surface source to a groundwater source. Once this is accomplished, the existing Moss Creek intake will be available for irrigation water. Treated effluent from the sewage treatment plant from the sewage treatment plant may also be available for irrigation. Water, sewer, and power lines will be extended to building sites above the town center when they are developed, and may be extended to an area on the south side of the river, if it is determined to be suitable for development. All other developable sites already have lines in place.

Existing development included a solid waste transfer station, sewage treatment plant, open air storage, and settling ponds at Railroad Flat. The Rancheria Flat area included 28 residential units, a school, sports fields, and tennis courts. A sand and gravel quarry operation was located below Rancheria Flat on the south side of the river. The Trailer Village in Merced Flat included 88 units. The Village Center included a restaurant, post office, market, gas station, seasonal housing, community hall, transportation exhibit, and temporary NPS offices. Above the town, the old school which had been converted into a community church in 1967-68 was also providing space for a pre-school. Just west of the Village Center was a bulk oil storage and transfer facility and a telephone building. Old El Portal consisted of approximately 90 residential units.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1980, in *ibid.*

⁷² U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan, Visitor Use/Park Operations/Development, Yosemite National Park, California*, September 1980, pp. 47-48.

The design plan included a prospectus and a site plan. According to the prospectus, development of El Portal was

conceived by the National Park Service as a joint venture between government and private enterprise. The nature and scope of this project -- the development of an entire community for some 2,000 residents, with park offices and workshops, commercial establishments, professional and government services, and recreational amenities -- are conducive to combined public and private investment.

In keeping with this concept, the park offices and maintenance facilities are proposed to be leased under long-term contracts from private owners. Employees' residences are expected to be private, marketable properties, giving park employees the opportunity to purchase their own homes and build equity through their investment. El Portal's designation as an administrative site allows for a number of innovative contractual and financial arrangements to be pursued for carrying out these proposals. . . .

El Portal will be a model of efficient land use, aesthetic quality, and energy and water conservation. Serving as both the administrative headquarters and a gateway for visitors to Yosemite National Park, it will be built around a town center providing a variety of services to residents and tourists. A mixture of housing types will make home ownership an attractive and feasible option for many park employees. With this stable population supporting business, new employment opportunities will be created, and residents will enjoy the amenities of a diverse and self-sufficient community.

The site plan noted:

The town will be concentrated on the north side of the river, set back from the highway along a secondary access road. Medium- and high-density development will make it possible to accommodate a sizable portion of the park community and to achieve energy efficiency and economy of construction. The buildings will be sited on the south-facing slopes to maximize winter solar gain and to provide the best possible visual separation from the highway.

Community facilities, commercial establishments, and the park's administrative offices will be consolidated into a compact, energy-efficient complex. This town center will be oriented primarily to the community, but it will have a separate front entrance to the commercial area for park visitors.

A variety of housing types will reflect the varied incomes, life-styles, and family arrangements of employees.

The residential area east of the town center will be expanded with additional housing in keeping with the individualistic character of the existing private houses.

New townhomes at Rancheria Flat will create a medium-density family residential area near the school and community recreational facilities.

High-density terrace housing on the steeper slopes above the town center will provide homes close to community activities for singles and seasonal employees.

The trailer village will continue to fill the need for affordable housing. Spaces inside the floodplain will be phased out if private rental spaces become available west of El Portal. In the future, if this area is needed to provide a major parking area for the Yosemite Public transportation system, the entire trailer village will be phased out.⁷³

In 1985-86, a document entitled, *Planning and Design for Specific Areas, El Portal and Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park, California* (generally referred to as the ROMA study) was prepared under contract for the Park Service. The study included lease regulations for the Village Center and Rancheria Flat, guidelines for selection of a developer/lessee and development proposals for the Village Center and Rancheria Flat residential development, a design manual and architectural guidelines for the Village Center, and cost estimates for the development of the Village Center and Rancheria Flat areas.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the federal government grappled with various issues relating to the privately-owned homes at El Portal. In 1985, for instance, the National Park Service began permitting the private homeowners to construct foundations under their residences, thus reversing policies that had been established in 1958.⁷⁵

In 1986, Congress authorized the NPS to grant long-term leases (up to 99 years) to qualified individuals or organizations at El Portal. This authorization addressed a long-continuing point of contention between the federal government and some El Portal residents who lived in privately-owned homes on land leased from the National Park Service. From 1958 to 1968, the NPS had granted 30-year leases to owners of private residences. Later in 1968, Congress had authorized the NPS to lease lands to concessionaires for up to 55 years.⁷⁶ Although these actions were designed to ameliorate difficulties with private homeowners, the problems would continue to fester.⁷⁷

⁷³U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *El Portal Comprehensive Design, Yosemite National Park/California*, July 1981, pp. 1-7 (Copy of plan may be found in the Yosemite National Park Archives).

⁷⁴U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Planning and Design for Specific Areas, El Portal and Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park, California*, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service - Western Region, Work Directive No. 1-0002-83-13 (ROMA Study).

⁷⁵ Personal interview with David Forgang, Museum Curator, Yosemite National Park, January 20, 1998.

⁷⁶ Historical File, "El Portal - Towns," Collections, Mariposa County Historical Society, and "Timeline - El Portal," *The El Portal Guardian*, n.d., p. 15.

According to a *Yosemite National Park Housing Management Plan*, approved in May 1988, 24 new one- and two-bedroom apartments in the Rancheria Flat area were nearing completion. This was the first phase of a new park employee housing construction program. Construction plans were under development by the park and the Denver Service Center for a second phase of construction at Rancheria Flat involving 32 one- and two-bedroom apartments. The park was planning to eliminate trailers in poor condition, both government and privately owned, in the Trailer Village during the next five years through attrition. In keeping with the park's general management plan, it was expected that the Trailer Village, located in a 100-year flood plain, would be eliminated by the year 2000.⁷⁸

In 1992, the National Park Service prepared a document entitled, *Yosemite Valley Housing Plan, Yosemite National Park, California: Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the General Management Plan*, which made proposals for continued development of the El Portal Administrative Site. Since its release, this planning document has been the focus of considerable controversy. Meanwhile, some 14 new residential units have been constructed in the Rancheria Flat area, and a new maintenance/warehouse facility has been opened at Railroad Flat.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Yosemite National Park Housing Management Plan*, May 17, 1988.

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Yosemite Valley Housing Plan, Yosemite National Park, California: Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the General Management Plan*, 1992, pp. 19 ff.

DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS (See Maps and Photographs at the back of this Evaluation)

This section provides an overview of the existing conditions of eight principal geographically-separated developed areas in the El Portal Administrative Site which covers approximately 1,200 acres along both the north and south sides of California State Highway 140 and the Merced River in the vicinity of El Portal, California, just outside the western boundary of Yosemite National Park. The developed areas in the administrative site are located on the north side of the highway and on both sides of the river. The present-day administrative designations of the areas are: Railroad Flat, Sand/Gravel Quarry, Yosemite Research Center, Rancheria Flat, Merced Flat, Abbieville, Village Center (including a commercial services core), and Old El Portal.

RAILROAD FLAT

Railroad Flat is the westernmost developed area in the administrative site. It is reached by exiting Highway 140 at Foresta Road which crosses the Merced River over a modern road bridge and then follows the north shore of the river generally eastward toward the Rancheria Flat area. Spur Road branches off of Foresta Road just north of the bridge and extends around the west and north sides of the maintenance/warehouse facility constructed during the 1990s and the sewage treatment plant that was completed in 1976. The site also contains a solid waste transfer station and settling ponds associated with the sewage treatment facility. All traces of the Yosemite Valley Railroad "Y" that were once located in this area have been obliterated by modern construction. Remnants and debris associated with the 1950s-era Cuneo tungsten mill may still be seen behind a wall on the north side of Spur Road across from the sewage treatment plant.

SAND/GRAVEL QUARRY

An active sand/gravel quarry that has been in operation for some 30 years is located along the north side of Highway 140 to the east of Railroad Flat and south of the Merced River across from Rancheria Flat. No known cultural resources are located at this highly-disturbed site.

YOSEMITE RESEARCH CENTER

The Yosemite Research Center area is located on a knoll on the north side of Highway 140 overlooking the Merced River. A narrow road exits the highway and extends up the hill past a small historic National Lead Company office building, which has been converted for National Park Service use, to a parking lot on the east side of a gabled white frame house that was constructed in the late 1920s for Earl H. Murchison, the superintendent of the company's barium mine operations. Known as the Murchison House, this structure has been converted for office space by the national park's Yosemite Research Center. Both the Murchison House and the office building are in good condition and retain their historic architectural appearance. A small structure that was originally constructed by the National Lead Company to serve as a garage (but which has been modified by the NPS for use by the Yosemite Research Center) is located below the Murchison House and adjacent to the parking lot.

Abandoned adits and stopes associated with National Lead Company barium mine operations on the north side of the Merced River to the east of the Rancheria Flat area are still visible from the Murchison House. These features, along with adits on the south side of the river below the Murchison House, are the only visible remnants of the mining operations that were conducted on both sides of the river beginning in the 1880s with the exception of some tailings in the Rancheria Flat area. The National Lead Company mill in the Rancheria Flat area on the north side of the river and the aerial tramway that connected mining operations on both sides of the Merced were razed by the National Park Service in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A wooden footbridge constructed across the Merced River below the Murchison House during the late 1920s provided access to the company's mill on the other side. The flood of December 1937 destroyed the bridge, leaving only remnants of its abutments that are still visible.

RANCHERIA FLAT

The Rancheria Flat area is located on the bluffs on the north side of the Merced River just above Foresta Road. The area consists of NPS-constructed apartments, townhouses, and single family residences for park employees, as well as a school, tennis courts, and sports fields, that have been built during the 1960s-90s. The area features modern paved streets and utility systems and gives the appearance of a modern residential community. Remnants of an abandoned sewage treatment plant are located south of the intersection of Foresta and Rancheria Flats roads.

Although the majority of the buildings in the Rancheria Flat area have been constructed since the early 1960s, the area features three historic National Lead Company white frame houses that were constructed for mining company employees

during the late 1920s. The three structures, which retain their historic appearance and are in good condition, are located on the east side of River View Road, south of Barium Mine Road, and continue to serve as residential dwellings.

ABBIEVILLE

Abbieville, consisting of three relatively modern residential structures that exhibit varying vernacular architectural styles and three mobile homes, is accessed by Abbieville Road that exits from Highway 140 to the east of the Yosemite Research Center. This area, which features unpaved roads, is located on the south bank of the Merced River just to the west of the Trailer Court located at Merced Flat. A short dirt/gravel road connects Abbieville and the Trailer Court.

MERCED FLAT (See Map of Merced Flat Area on following page -- Map from Assessor's Map Book No. 6, Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department, Mariposa, California).

Once the site of the Hennessey ranch, this site, just north of Highway 140 on the south side of the Merced River and to the east and south of Abbieville, was developed as a Trailer Court, with paved roadways and modern utility hookups, by the National Park Service during the 1950s and 1960s. The Trailer Court, which may be reached by a road exiting off the highway, has undergone some expansion in more recent years, and today it contains approximately 85 trailer sites. The Trailer Court lies in the flood plain of the Merced River, and many of the trailers are in deteriorating condition. A few fruit trees and some scattered rock wall remnants are all that remain from the historic Hennessey ranch period. Today, a NPS-constructed (ca. 1960) concrete block laundry/office building and one old frame house of undetermined age that is in poor condition are the only permanent structures in the Trailer Court area.

VILLAGE CENTER

Located on the north side of Highway 140, and accessed via El Portal Road from the highway, this area, known variously as the Village Center or Town Center, contains a variety of historic and modern structures that serve as private residences, commercial establishments, and office space for National Park Service and Yosemite

Institute personnel. Several buildings serve to provide social and public services for the community.

A modern telephone building and an operating bulk oil storage and transfer facility (elements of which may date back to the 1930s) are located on the south side of Foresta Road at the west edge of the Village Center area. The Yosemite Valley Railroad stationhouse (currently used by the Yosemite Institute), watertanks, and turntable, which were moved from Bagby to the site in 1966 to constitute part of the Yosemite National Park transportation exhibit and were later listed in the National Register of Historic Places, are located along the north side of Foresta Road at its intersection with El Portal Road. Adjacent to the Bagby buildings are three pieces of railroad rolling stock -- Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6; Track Bus No. 19, Hetch Hetchy Railroad; and Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15 -- that were moved to the site during the early 1960s to serve as part of the transportation exhibit and were subsequently listed in the National Register. A recently-constructed wooden office building, constructed in a style that is compatible with the Bagby Stationhouse, is located to the north of the station building.

An area, generally referred to as the Village Center or Town Center proper, lies to the east of the intersection of Foresta and El Portal roads. The town's modern post office, opened in 1967, is located on the south side of Foresta Road just to the east of the intersection of Foresta and El Portal roads. South of the post office is a temporary NPS office consisting of several mobile units installed during the early 1980s. A structure that historically served as an oil company dormitory and now houses the NPS Human Resource Office is located on the north side of Foresta Road at its intersection with Chapel Lane, across from the post office. Behind this structure is a highly-modified structure that once served as an adjunct to the oil company building. These two structures, as well as several modern dwellings along the west side of Chapel Lane, serve as the western perimeter of the Village Center proper.

A parking lot is located to the east of the post office on the south side of the Village Center proper, and the ca. 1954 concrete block Carroll N. Clark Community Hall is located to the east of the parking lot. A modern structure (ca. 1950s) that houses the El Portal Interagency Fire Station is located to the east of the community hall. A historic two-story store/library building, which has been located at several sites in El Portal during its long history, is located to the east of the fire station. Although the store building lacks integrity of location, it retains its historic architectural appearance. A modern building that houses the Yosemite-Sierra Interagency Fire Station is located to the east of the store.

Three houses constructed by the Yosemite Valley Railroad for employee residences in 1908-09 are located on the north side of the Village Center proper. Although somewhat modified, these three buildings retain much of their historic architectural appearance and remain in their original location.

Several scattered modern residential structures dot the edges of the Village Center proper.

The historic schoolhouse that was constructed in 1930 is located on a hill above the Village Center, accessed by the aforementioned narrow, winding Chapel Lane. Although converted for use as a community church in 1967-68 and still serving as a preschool, the structure is in good condition and retains its historic architectural appearance.

The commercial core of the Village Center area is located south-southeast of the Village Center area along the north side of Highway 140. The commercial structures include the El Portal Market, a building constructed in 1934 that continues to serve as the town's grocery store and retains its historic architectural appearance, and the hotel, a building constructed in 1932 that has been converted for use by the Yosemite Institute but nonetheless retains its historic architectural appearance. Adjacent to the hotel is a white frame garage structure that dates from the early 1950s. The commercial core also contains a series of motor inn bungalows that stretch along the highway as well as up the hill behind and to the east of the hotel building that have been converted for use by NPS seasonal employees. A modern building to the east of the bungalows houses the NPS special use office, and a modern Chevron gas station is located to the east of the special use office. A transportation exhibit shelter (ca. 1964) housing a variety of historic vehicles is located behind the service station.

OLD EL PORTAL (See Map of Old El Portal Area on following page -- Map from Assessor's Map Book No. 6, Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department, Mariposa, California).

Located on the hillsides to the east of the Village Center, the Old El Portal area, a heavily forested enclave that constitutes the easternmost developed area in the El Portal Administrative Unit, consists of approximately 90 privately-owned residential structures located along narrow, winding, mostly paved streets on land leased from the National Park Service. Originating as a residential area for railroad employees after completion of the Yosemite Valley Railroad to El Portal in 1907, the village expanded during subsequent decades as a result of the region's expanding railroad, tourist, mining, and timber industries, as well as the influx of National Park Service and Yosemite National Park concessioner employees. The earliest elements of many of the extant structures date from the 1920s and 1930s, but most have been modernized, remodeled, modified, and enlarged in recent decades, and modern utility systems have been constructed to service the area. The sizes and conditions of these residences vary widely, ranging from old structures that are in generally poor condition to large, relatively new homes. Thus, the residential structures in the area exhibit a wide variety of vernacular rustic architectural styles that reflect the individual tastes of their owners.

EVALUATION

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the documentary research and site reconnaissance of the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, conducted by Harlan D. Unrau, Historian, the National Park Service concludes that the following properties (listed by present-day NPS designated areas) meet the standards and criteria for significance and integrity necessary for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

Yosemite Research Center

Murchison House (Ca. late 1920s-early 1930s) -- Yosemite Building No. 700 -- Criteria A, B, and C

Office (Ca. late 1920s-early 1930s) -- Yosemite Building No. 702 -- Criteria A and C

Rancheria Flat

Three National Lead Company Residences (Ca. late 1920s-early 1930s) -- Yosemite Building Nos. 703, 704, and 705 -- Criteria A and C

Village Center

Store (Ca. 1909) -- No assigned Yosemite Building No. -- Criteria A and C

Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences (Ca. 1908-09) -- No assigned Yosemite Building Nos. -- Criteria A and C

School (Ca. 1930) -- No assigned Yosemite Building No. -- Criteria A and C

El Portal Market (Ca. 1934) -- Yosemite Building No. 761 -- Criteria A and C

El Portal Hotel (Ca. 1932) -- Yosemite Building No. 762 -- Criteria A and C

This evaluation is based on the application of National Register Criteria A, B, and C as outlined in the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's procedures 36 CFR 800 and described in National Register Bulletin No. 15, *How to Apply the National*

Register Criteria of Evaluation, and National Register Bulletin No. 16, Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms: Part A, How to Complete the National Register Nomination Form, and Part B, How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form.

As part of this evaluation, the El Portal Administrative Site, and its various geographically-separated developed areas, were evaluated under the criteria for significance and integrity necessary for listing in the National Register as historic districts (known as a rural historic landscape) as defined in National Register Bulletin No. 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*. Based on this evaluation, the National Park Service concludes that neither the administrative site as a whole nor any of its geographically-separated developed areas meet the standards for criteria for significance and integrity necessary for listing in the National Register as a historic district.

CURRENTLY-LISTED NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES

Four properties in the Village Center area are currently listed in the National Register under Criterion A. These properties and their dates of listing are: (1) Bagby Stationhouse, Water Tanks, and Turntable, April 13, 1979; (2) Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6, January 30, 1978; (3) Track Bus No. 19, May 22, 1978; and (4) Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15, May 22, 1978. Because the Bagby railroad buildings were moved to their present location during the early 1960s, they were qualified for listing under Criterion Consideration B, Moved Properties.

The El Portal Archeological District was listed in the National Register under Criterion D on August 18, 1978.

ANALYSIS

SIGNIFICANCE

To be determined eligible for listing in the National Register, districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects must possess integrity and under the following criteria:

Criterion A -- The site must "be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;"

Criterion B -- The site must "be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;"

Criterion C -- The site must "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;"

Criterion D -- The site must "have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history."

To be determined eligible for listing in the National Register, a historic district, known as a rural historic landscape (one of the categories of property qualifying for listing), must possess significance under at least one of the National Register criteria. As defined in National Register Bulletin No. 30, a rural historic landscape is "a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features."

INTEGRITY

To be listed in the National Register, a property, according to National Register Bulletin No. 15, "must not only be shown to be significant under the National Register criteria, but it also must have integrity." According to National Register Bulletin No. 16, Part A, integrity is defined as the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period." To determine whether historic properties retain integrity and address the question of whether they possess physical features that convey their significance, the National Register recognizes seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity. The seven aspects include: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. To retain historic integrity, a property, according to National Register Bulletin No. 15, "will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects."

According to National Register Bulletin No. 30, the historic integrity of a historic district, known as a rural historic landscape, "is the composite" of the seven aforementioned qualities. Historic integrity "requires that the various characteristics that shaped the land during the historic period be present today in much the same way they were historically." Integrity may be "lost due to the cumulative effect of relocated and lost historic buildings and structures and the "disappearance" of features "that defined historic land uses." The "final decision about integrity is based on the condition of the overall property and its ability to convey significance." The "strength of historic landscape characteristics and the nature, extent, and impact of changes since the periods of significance are important factors to

consider." Integrity "depends to a substantial degree on the area's historic contexts." This information "indicates the extent of integrity that can be expected for a particular type of historic property given the unique aspects, cultural and natural, of the area and the condition of comparable properties."

BUILDING EVALUATION

Five buildings -- Murchison House and Office in the Yosemite Research Center area and Three National Lead Company Residences in the Rancheria Flat area -- qualify for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. They qualify for listing under Criterion A, because of their association with the significant National Lead Company barium mining operations at El Portal. The buildings qualify for listing under Criterion C, because they embody the distinctive architectural characteristics associated with mining-related residential and management structures during the late 1920s-early 1930s. In addition, the Murchison House also qualifies for listing under Criterion B, because of its association with Earl H. Murchison, National Lead Company superintendent of at El Portal.

The buildings retain a fairly high degree of the seven aspects of integrity, although the interior of each of the structures has undergone some modifications and rehabilitation for various adaptive uses. However, the buildings retain the essential exterior architectural characteristics associated with their periods of historical significance.

Three buildings -- Store, School, and El Portal Market -- in the Village Center area qualify for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. They qualify under Criterion A, because of their association with the socio-economic development and expansion of the town of El Portal. The Store qualifies for listing under Criterion C, because it exhibits the architectural characteristics associated with an early 20th-century commercial building type. The School and the El Portal Market qualify for listing under Criterion C, because they embody architectural characteristics associated with a 1930s-era public and commercial buildings construction type. The School and the El Portal Market retain a fairly high degree of the seven aspects of integrity, although the interior of each of the structures has undergone some modifications and rehabilitation for various adaptive uses. The exterior of the Store has undergone some alterations. However, each of the three buildings retain the essential exterior architectural characteristics associated with their periods of historical significance. Although the Store retains a fairly high degree of six of the seven aspects of integrity, it is located at its third site in El Portal. Thus, it does not possess the aspect of location. Because the building has been moved, it qualifies for listing under Criterion Consideration B, Moved Properties.

Three buildings -- Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences -- in the Village Center area qualify for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. These buildings qualify for listing under Criterion A, because of their association with the

development of the railroad industry at El Portal. They qualify for listing under Criterion C, because they exhibit the architectural characteristics associated with an early 20th-century railroad employee residential building type. The three buildings retain a fairly high degree of the seven aspects of integrity. The interior of each of the structures has undergone some modifications and rehabilitation, and their exteriors have undergone some alterations. However, the buildings retain the essential exterior architectural characteristics associated with their period of historical significance.

One building -- El Portal Hotel -- in the Village Center area qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. This building qualifies for listing under Criterion A, because of its association with the development and expansion of the tourist industry at El Portal. It also qualifies for listing under Criterion C, because it embodies architectural characteristics associated with a 1930s-era commercial buildings construction type. This building retains a fairly high degree of the seven aspects of integrity, although its interior has undergone some modifications and rehabilitation for various adaptive uses. The exterior of the building, however, retains the essential architectural characteristics associated with its period of historical significance.

HISTORIC DISTRICT EVALUATION

The Village Center and Old El Portal areas appear to qualify for listing in the National Register as historic districts under Criterion A, because they are associated with development and expansion of the railroad, mining, timber, and tourist industries at El Portal, as well as the town's socio-economic development and expansion. Although the two areas retain a high degree of the aspects of location and setting, they do not possess a high degree of the aspects of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Thus, the two areas do not qualify for listing as historic districts because they lack sufficient integrity.

The historic integrity of the Village Center area has been reduced significantly as a result of the obliteration of most of the features associated with the significant railroad, mining, timber, and tourists industries at El Portal (with the exception of the aforementioned buildings that are recommended for listing in the National Register) and by modern development, construction of new buildings, and substantial alteration of other buildings and structures. Thus, the Village Center area does not possess a high degree of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and it does not possess a significant concentration or linkage of resources related to the land use patterns associated with its period of significance.

The historic integrity of the Old El Portal area, while retaining some characteristics of a quaint rural residential community, has been reduced significantly by the substantial modernization, alteration, and remodeling many of its older residential structures and by the construction of many newer homes interspersed among the

older structures. Furthermore, the area's residential structures present a wide variety of building styles and conditions, ranging from older structures in generally poor condition to relatively newer homes with modern amenities and architectural characteristics. Thus, the area does not retain a high degree of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and it does not possess a significant concentration or linkage of resources reflecting the ambience of an early 20th-century rural residential community.

Modern development has obliterated virtually all vestiges of historic integrity in the Railroad Flat, Sand/Gravel Quarry, Rancheria Flat, Abbieville, and Merced Flat areas of the El Portal Administrative Site. Among the significant developments in these areas that have compromised their historic integrity and their disqualification for listing in the National Register as historic districts are the following:

Railroad Flat -- removal of historic features and construction of modern maintenance/warehouse facility and sewage treatment plant

Sand/Gravel Quarry -- Currently active quarry operation

Rancheria Flat -- removal of most historic features and extensive modern residential and community-related development and infrastructure

Abbieville -- installation of mobile homes

Merced Flat -- removal of most historic features and construction of modern Trailer Village

CRITERION D

The El Portal Archeological District was listed in the National Register under Criterion D on August 18, 1978. It is recommended that the registration form for the district be reviewed, revised, and updated to reflect current available archeological data and the archeological discoveries made since the date of listing.

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MAPS

1. U.S. Department of the Interior. Geological Survey. "El Portal Quadrangle, California-Mariposa Co., 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic)."

Map shows boundary of El Portal Administrative Site, location of eight geographically-separated developed areas within administrative site, and location of buildings/structures recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

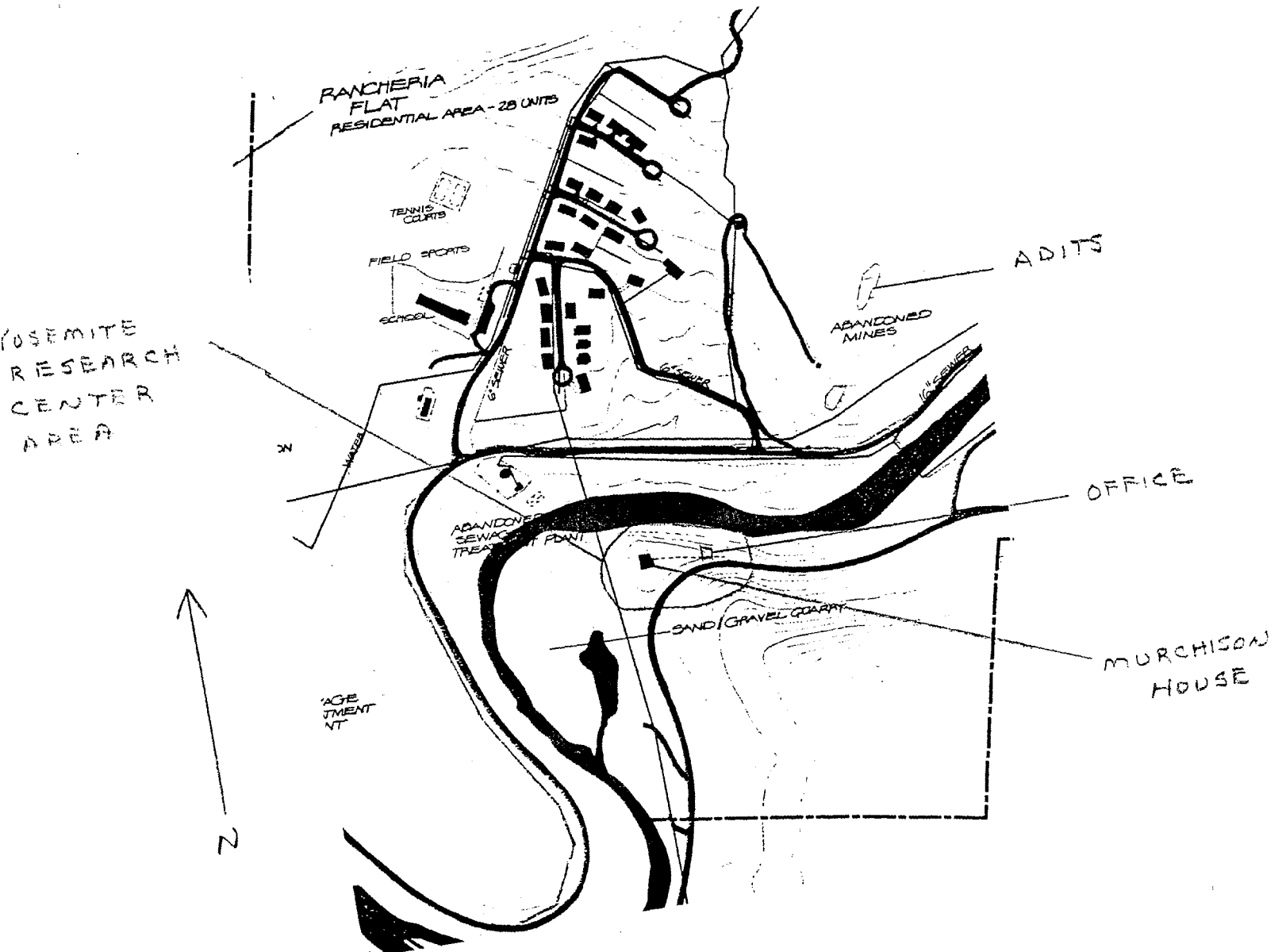
2. Sketch Map, Yosemite Research Center Area (Excerpt of Map from U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *El Portal Comprehensive Design, Yosemite National Park/California*, July 1981).

3. Sketch Map, Portion of Rancheria Flat Area Showing Location of Three National Lead Company Residences (Excerpt of 1979 Map from Assessor's Map Book No. 6, Mariposa County Planning and Buildings Department, Mariposa, California).

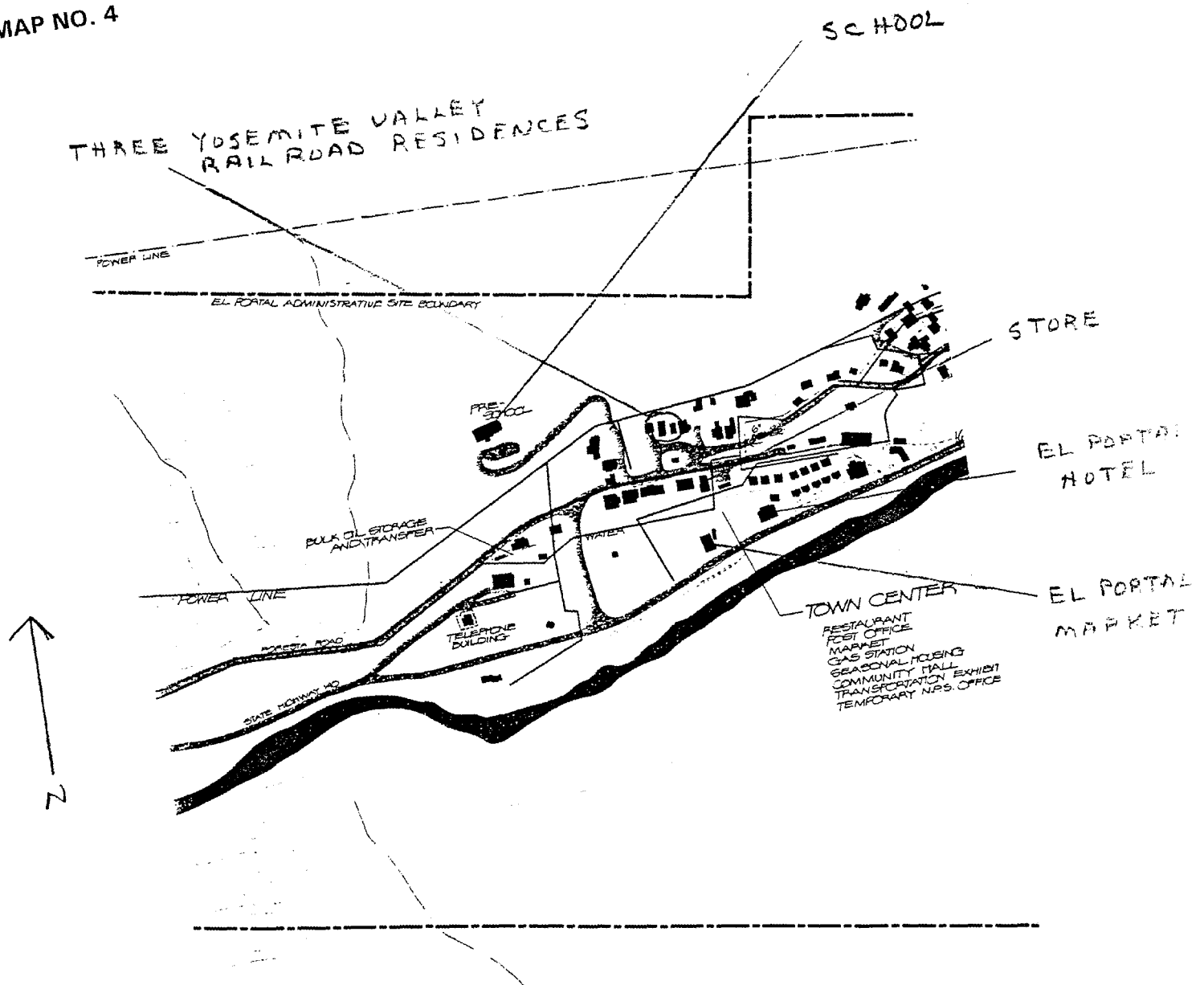
4. Sketch Map, Village Center Area (Excerpt of Map from U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *El Portal Comprehensive Design, Yosemite National Park/California*, July 1981).

MAP NO. 1

MAP NO. 2



MAP NO. 4

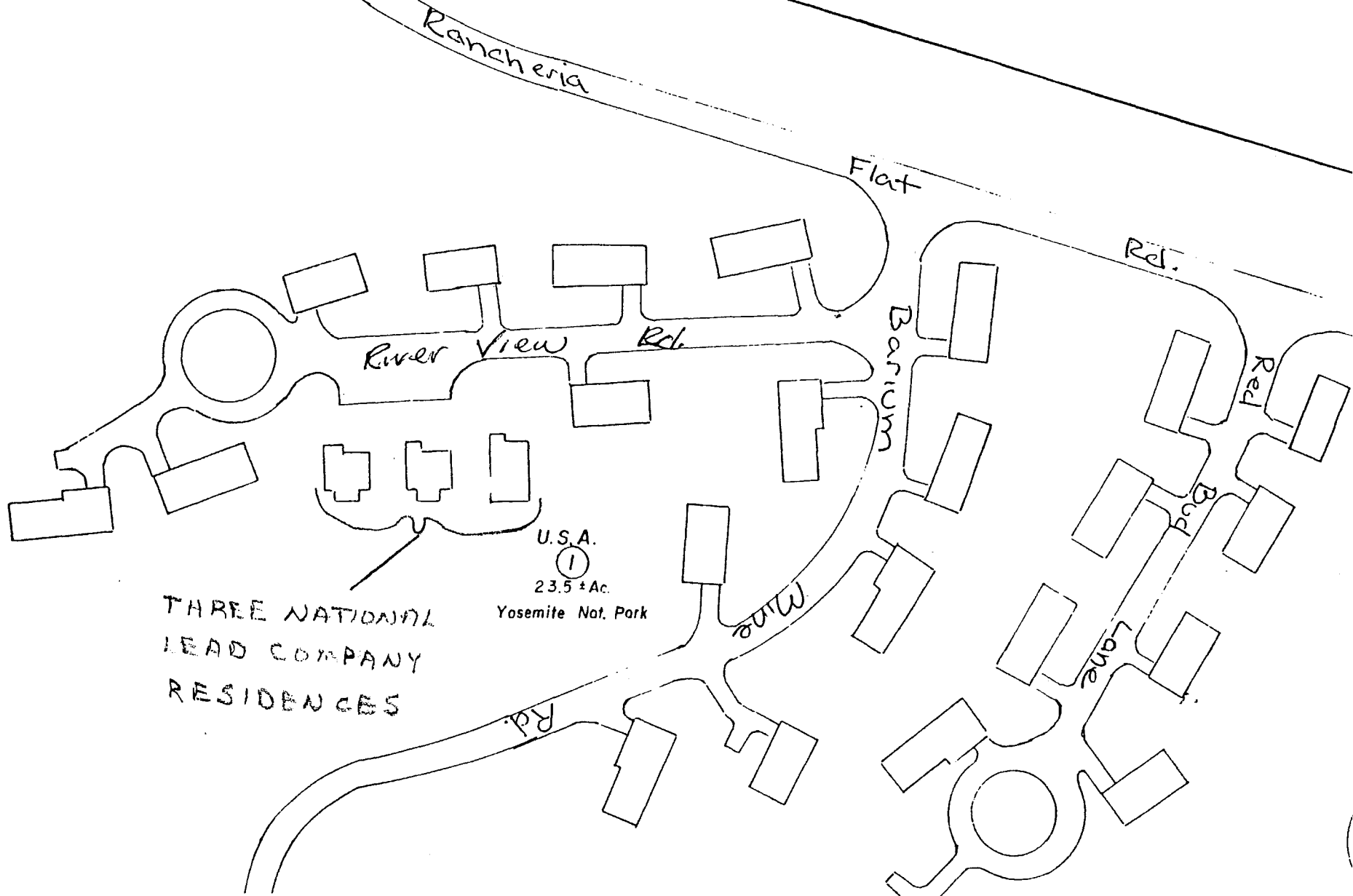


PORTION EL PORTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SITE, Y. N. P.
(RANCHERIA FLAT AREA)

N →

230

MAP NO. 3



PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph No. 1 -- Bagby Stationhouse, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 2 -- Bagby Water Tanks, Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6, and Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 3 -- Bagby Water Tanks, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 4 -- Hetch Hetchy Railroad Engine No. 6, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 5 -- Yosemite Valley Railroad Caboose No. 15, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 6 -- Bagby Turntable, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 7 -- Bagby Turntable, Foresta Road, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 8 -- Office (foreground) and Murchison House (background), on knoll above California State Highway 140, Yosemite Research Center Area.

Photograph No. 9 -- Murchison House, Yosemite Research Center Area.

Photograph No. 10 -- Office, Yosemite Research Center Area.

Photograph No. 11 -- National Lead Company Residence (Yosemite Bldg. No. 703), River View Road, Rancheria Flat Area.

Photographs Nos. 12-13 -- National Lead Company Residence (Yosemite Bldg. No. 704), River View Road, Rancheria Flat Area.

Photograph No. 14 -- National Lead Company Residence (Yosemite Bldg. No. 705), River View Road, Rancheria Flat Area.

Photographs Nos. 15-16 -- Store, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 17 -- Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 18 -- Westernmost Residence of Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences, Village Center Area.

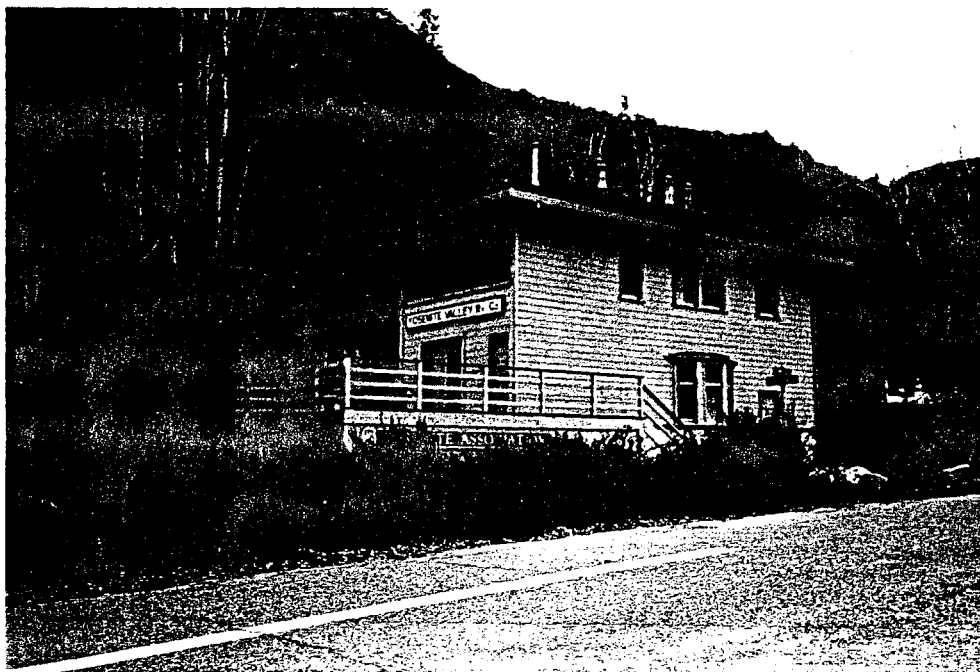
Photograph No. 19 -- Middle Residence of Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences, Village Center Area.

Photograph No. 20 -- Easternmost Residence of Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences, Village Center Area.

Photographs Nos. 21-23 -- School, Village Center Area.

Photographs Nos. 24-25 -- El Portal Market, California State Highway 140, Village Center Area.

Photographs Nos. 26-28 -- El Portal Hotel, California State Highway 140, Village Center Area (No. 26, Front [south] Facade; No. 27, East Facade; No. 28, Rear [north] Facade).



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 1



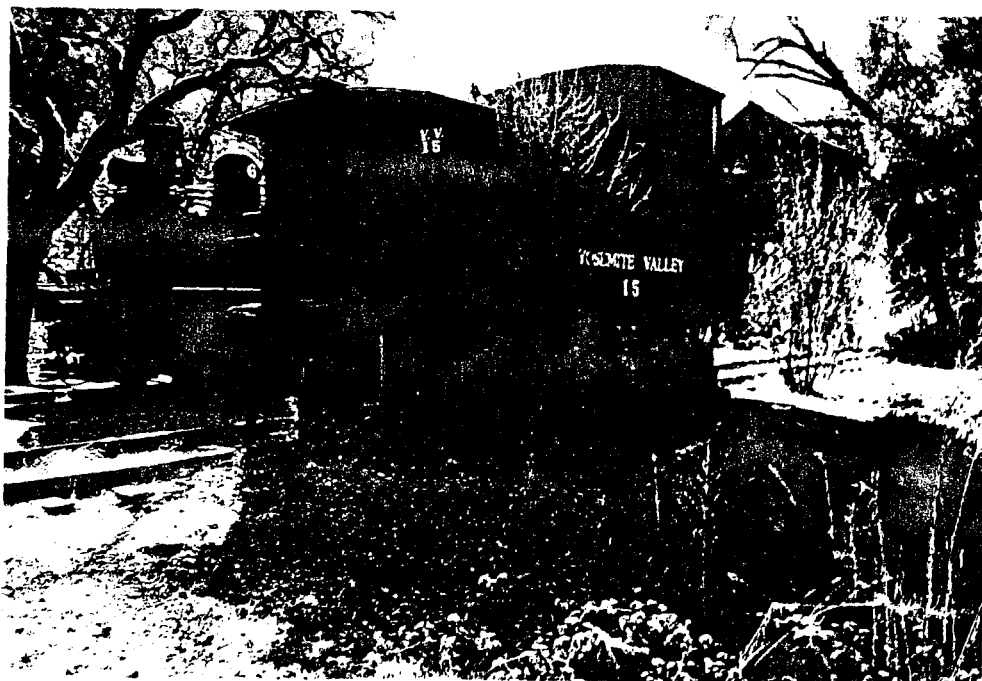
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PHOTOGRAPH NO. 3



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 4



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 5



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 6



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 7



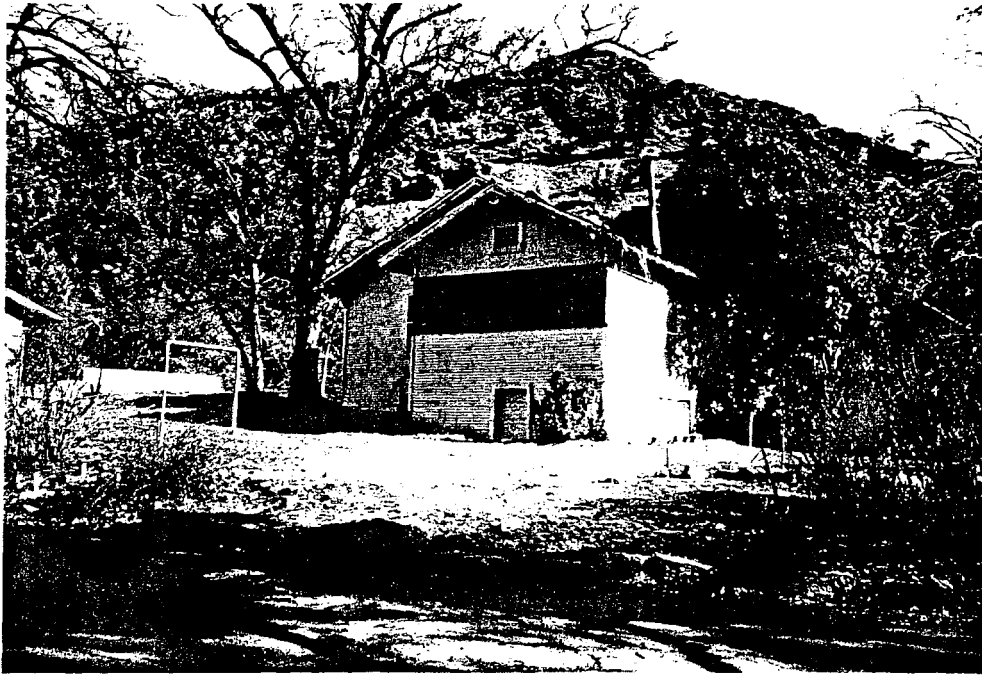
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PHOTOGRAPH NO. 11



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 12



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 13



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 14



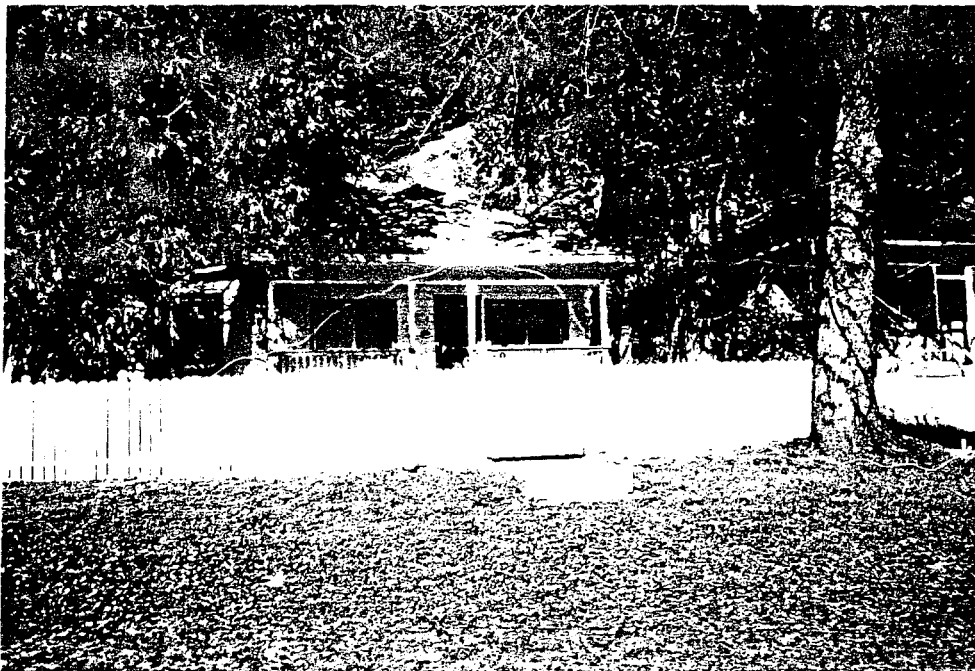
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PHOTOGRAPH NO. 16



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 17



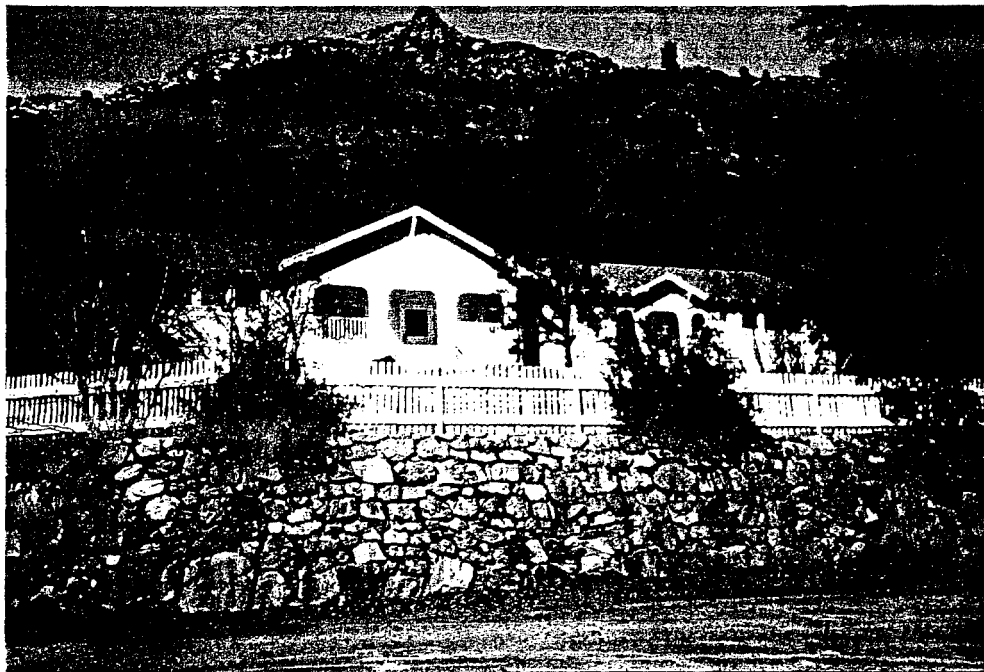
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PHOTOGRAPH NO. 19



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 20



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 21



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 22



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 23



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 24



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 25



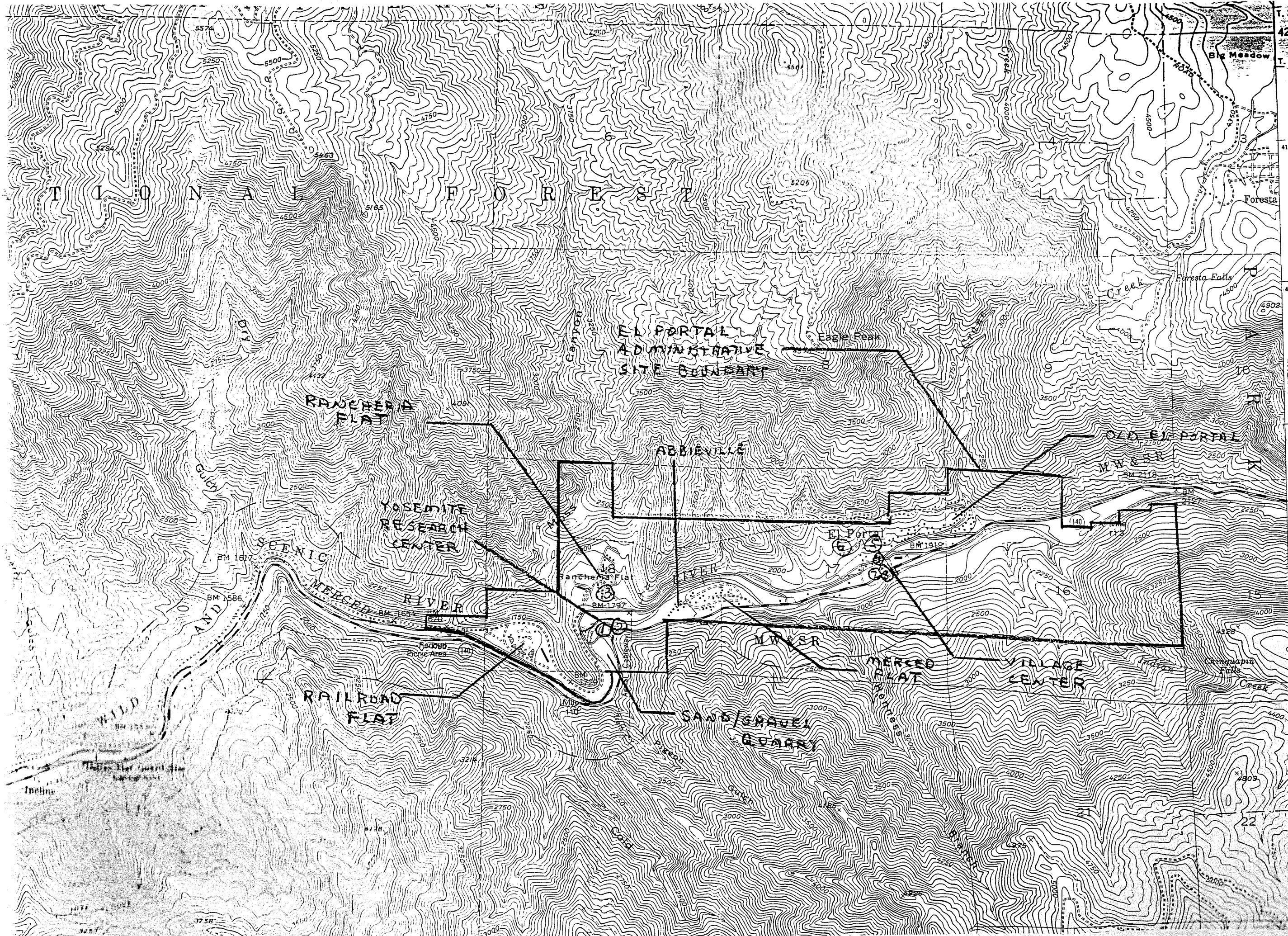
PHOTOGRAPH NO. 26



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 27



PHOTOGRAPH NO. 28



- ① MURCHISON HOUSE
- ② OFFICE
- ③ THREE NATIONAL LEAD COMPANY RESIDENCE
- ④ STORE
- ⑤ THREE YOSEMITE VALLEY RAILROAD RESIDENCES
- ⑥ SCHOOL
- ⑦ EL PORTAL MARKET
- ⑧ EL PORTAL HOTEL

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

P.O. BOX 942888
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001
(916) 853-8824 Fax: (916) 853-8824
calshpo@mail2.quiknet.com



February 8, 1999

REPLY TO: NPS980810A

Raymond K. Todd, Project Manager
National Park Service
Denver Service Center
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
DENVER CO 80225-0287

Re: Determination of National Register Eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site,
Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.

Dear Mr. Todd:

Thank you for submitting to our office your December 29, 1998 letter and supporting documentation in response to questions raised in our letter of September 24, 1998 regarding the determination of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility for structures located at the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County. The determination of eligibility evaluation is designed to provide the National Park Service (NPS) with historical documentation on the site, as well as a description of existing conditions and evaluation of the significance and integrity of the cultural resources located at the site.

As a result of our review of the supplemental documentation, we can now concur with the NPS that the following structures are eligible for inclusion on the NRHP at the level of local significance under criteria established by 36 CFR 60.4:

- The Murchison House - Criteria A, B, and C
- The Office in the Yosemite Research Center - Criteria A and C
- Three National Lead Company Residences (Buildings 703, 704, and 705) - Criteria A and C

All of these structures have strong associations with the development and operation of the National Lead Company, a barium mining company that at its peak in the 1940s produced 73% of all the barite in California. The barium mine was the first and, for a long period, the only mine of its kind in the state. The structures also appear to retain most of the architectural elements of design, materials, workmanship, and setting associated with their historical period of significance (1928-1947). In addition, the Murchison House is associated with Earl H. Murchison, the manager of the National Lead Company's mining operations and chairman of the Mariposa Mine Operators Association, an influential organization in the local mining industry during the historic period.

We also concur with the NPS that the following structures in the Village Center area are also eligible for inclusion on the NRHP at the level of local significance under criteria established by 36 CFR 60.4:

- The Store - Criteria A and C
- Two Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences (easternmost and westernmost structures) - Criteria A and C
- One Yosemite Valley Railroad Residence (middle structure) - Criterion A
- The School - Criteria A and C

- The El Portal Market – Criteria A and C
- The El Portal Hotel – Criteria A and C

We agree with the NPS's assessment that all of these structures have strong associations with the development and growth of the railroad, timber, mining, and tourist industries in El Portal area as well as the town's socio-economic development and expansion. All of the structures (with the exception of the middle structure in Yosemite Railroad residence complex) also appear to have largely retained the integrity of design, materials, workmanship and setting associated with their historical period of significance.

We appreciate the efforts of the NPS to respond to our questions regarding the eligibility of these structures. We are also encouraged to note that the NPS is pursuing the development of National Register nomination for the aforementioned properties and that usage of OHP property evaluation forms by NPS will be forthcoming in future evaluations of properties under its jurisdiction.

Thank you again for seeking our comments on your project. If you have any questions, please contact staff historian Clarence Caesar at (916) 653-8902.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by

Daniel Abeyta, Acting
State Historic Preservation Officer

H32 (DSC-PM)
YOSE 504-15

DEC 20 1988

Mr. Daniel Abeyta
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 943896
Sacramento CA 94296-001

Dear Mr. Abeyta:

Reference: Yosemite National Park, Pkg. 504, Valley Implementation,
PT 15

Subject: Determination of National Register Eligibility for El Portal
Administrative Site

Thank you for your letter dated September 24, 1988, commenting on the National Park Service's determination that 12 properties within the boundaries of the El Portal Administrative Site were eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. We are writing to clarify the issues that you raised.

Enclosed are 28 photographic prints of the historic properties in the El Portal Administrative Site that you requested to replace the photocopied prints that we supplied.

More detailed documentation for the 12 properties will be developed when National Register nomination forms are prepared. Based on information currently available, we feel that the following should provide sufficient additional information for purposes of a determination of eligibility:

INTEGRITY

The exteriors of each of the 12 properties, with the exception of the store in the Village Center, possess a generally high degree of each of the seven aspects of integrity as recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) These structures retain a substantial degree of visual integrity and historic character. The structures exhibit a strong sense of architectural design and a positive relationship to their site locations. Changes that are apparent are generally limited to features such as minor changes in windows, minor inconsistencies in siding, modified details and finishes, and other changes that are generally reversible. Several structures have non-historic additions, but these are generally architecturally appropriate. The exterior changes are not visually intrusive and thus, they do not destroy the structures' historic integrity.

Although the store has been moved twice, its exterior exhibits a relatively high degree of the aspects of design, materials, and workmanship. The covered porch on the east side of the store structure and the stairway on the west side of the building are recent (i.e., non-historic) additions.

The Murchison House has undergone some exterior modifications, such as relatively inconspicuous aluminum window changes and enclosure of the original pillared front porch to provide additional office space, but the structure retains a substantial degree of integrity and historic character.

The Three National Lead Company Residences have undergone various exterior changes, such as relatively inconspicuous aluminum window changes, porch railings, and basement walling, but each of the structures retains a substantial degree of integrity and historic character.

Although the exteriors of the Three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences in the Village Center have been modified, they (particularly their front [south facing] facades) nevertheless exhibit a high degree of integrity. When they were constructed in 1908, the three houses were built alike. They were one-story frame buildings having covered front porches that extended the full width of the building. Additions and/or modifications to the structures that have impacted the exterior integrity of the residences since the historic period include:

- (1) a room with fireplace has been added to the east side of the easternmost of the three residences.
- (2) a fireplace has been added to the east side of the westernmost of the three residences.
- (3) a two-story addition has been added to the rear portion of the residence in the middle.

These exterior modifications, with the exception of the two-story addition to the middle residence, are generally compatible with the historic architectural characteristics of the residences.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MINING-RELATED STRUCTURES

The Murchison House and office at the Yosemite Research Center and the Three National Lead Company Residences at Rancheria Flat all have similar exterior architectural characteristics that are representative of mining company-constructed residential and management structures of the late 1920s-early 1930s era. Each of the structures has clapboard siding painted white, and, with the exception of the office, all have gable roofs.

The Murchison House, the most elaborate of these structures, has wide clapboard siding and a pillared front porch that has been enclosed to provide additional office space. The structure has two chimneys, one of brick and a larger one of stone. The gable extends over the original (now enclosed) front porch, but the rear portion of the structure is covered by a separate perpendicular gable.

The Office at the Yosemite Research Center is a small utilitarian clapboard-sided structure downhill from Murchison House.

The Three National Lead Company Residences at Rancheria Flat are white clapboard-sided dwellings with gable roofs.

NON-HISTORIC INTERIORS

The interiors of the 12 properties are considered non-historic for various reasons. These include:

1. The interior of the Murchison House at the Yosemite Research Center has been modernized and converted to office space for National Park Service employees.
2. The interior of the office at the Yosemite Research Center was converted to office space for National Park Service employees during the late 1950s to early 1960s and is presently used as storage space by the National Park Service.
3. The interiors of the Three National Lead Company Residences at Rancheria Flat have been rehabilitated and modernized to serve as residences for National Park Service employees. While some historic features have been preserved during the rehabilitation efforts, much of the historic integrity of the interiors has been lost.
4. The interior of the bottom story of the store in the Village Center has been altered on several occasions to serve as a post office and library. The upper story has been modified to serve as an apartment. More recently, fire damage affected the integrity of the interior. At the present time, portions of the structure are used as storage space by the National Park Service.
5. The interiors of the three Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences in the Village Center have been rehabilitated to serve as modern private residences. When they were constructed, each of the residences had two bedrooms, a living room, pantry, kitchen, and half-porch in the back. While some historic features have been preserved during the rehabilitation efforts, much of the historic integrity of the interiors has been lost.
6. The interior of the school in the Village Center was rehabilitated and converted for use as a community church during 1967-68. In recent years, the interior of the structure has undergone further rehabilitation/modification efforts to provide facilities for a preschool.
7. The interior of the El Portal Market in the Village Center retains much of its historic appearance, but some alterations have been made to accommodate modern grocery store amenities and facilities.
8. The interior of the El Portal Hotel in the Village Center was rehabilitated and converted to residential space for National Park Service employees and Yosemite Institute personnel during the late 1950s to early 1960s. During the mid-1980s, the structure's interior underwent further modification when it was converted to office space for the Yosemite Institute.

Finally, we discussed the question of using the forms found in the Office of Historic Preservation's "Instructions for Recording Historical Resources" for the preparation of determinations of eligibility with Dr. Hans Kreutzberg of this office. As indicated to Dr. Kruetzberg, we have not used this format in the past, including several completed this year. However, we will use them in further submittals.

We look forward to your response to our determination of eligibility for El Portal. Please refer any correspondence to:

Stanley T. Albright
Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite National Park , CA 95389

If you have any questions, please call Park Archeologist Laura Kirn at 209-379-1840 or Frank Williss at 303-969-2269.

Sincerely,

Raymond K. Todd

Raymond K. Todd
Project Manager

cc:
Yosemite, Galipeau, Kirn, w/o enclosure

bcc:
DSC-PM, Todd, w/o att.
DSC-RP, Williss, w/o att.

PM:FWilliss:jdp:12/28/98:2221:elpodoex.doc

OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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NO	DATE	NAME	INITIALS	REMARKS
		GOV.		
		Dept. Supt.		
		Ch. Strategic Plan		
		Ch. GMP		
		Safety Officer		
		Admin. Officer		
		Ch. Interpretation		
		Ch. Education		
		Ch. Research		
		Ch. Planning		
		Ch. Facilities		
		Ch. Maintenance		
		Ch. Security		
		Ch. Transportation		
		Ch. Information		
		Ch. Public Affairs		
		Ch. Special Projects		
		Ch. Volunteer		
		Ch. Youth		
		Ch. Senior		
		Ch. Disability		
		Ch. Other		

E WILSON, Governor



September 24, 1998

REPLY TO: NPS980810A

Stanley T. Albright, Superintendent
 Yosemite National Park
 P.O. Box 577
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK CA 95389

Re: Determination of National Register Eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County.

Dear Mr. Albright:

Thank you for submitting to our office your August 6, 1998 letter and supporting documentation regarding your determination of eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County. The determination of eligibility evaluation is designed to provide historical documentation on the site, as well as a description of existing conditions and an evaluation of the significance and integrity of the cultural resources located at the site.

You are seeking our comments on your determination of the eligibility of 11 properties located within the existing El Portal Administrative Site for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in accordance with 36 CFR 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. These properties include the following:

Our review of the submitted documentation leads us to make the following comments regarding its content and the conclusions reached in your determination of eligibility for the aforementioned properties:

- o Despite your conclusion that all of the 11 structures meet the six or seven aspects of integrity, you do not specify how these structures meet those aspects of integrity, or which of the aspects of integrity they meet.
- o More detailed information is needed to explain how the structures "embody the distinctive architectural characteristics associated with mining-related and management structures during the late 1920s - early 1930s..." What are those characteristics? In the case of these structures, how many of these characteristics have been retained since the historical period of significance?

- o You mention that all of the structures have undergone varying levels of exterior modification and alteration, yet no details as to the nature or extent of these alterations is provided. Are the existing doors, windows, exterior siding, decorative detail, or roofing materials historic? What non-historic elements, if any, have been introduced. Why are the interiors of these structures considered non-historic by the researcher(s)?

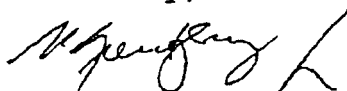
The use of appropriate historic resources inventory property forms would have enabled the researchers to provide much of the information requested in the previous paragraphs. You will find enclosed a copy of our historic inventory forms booklet "Instructions for Recording Historical Resources" (March 1995). Within this document you will find the instructions for completion of two forms (the "Primary Record" form and the "Building, Structure, and Object Record" form) that form the basis for the submission of building record and evaluation information to our office.

In addition, the photocopies of the photographs taken of the structures did not provide the clarity of detail desired to make a conclusive visual evaluation of the structures. Clear and concise photographs, when coupled with detailed and specific information on the aforementioned historic resources inventory property forms, provide our office with an evaluation tool and historical record that enables our office to make a sound evaluation of a property's eligibility for inclusion on the NRHP.

Please respond to our questions regarding your determination of eligibility conclusions for the aforementioned structures at your earliest possible convenience. We also request your cooperation in providing us with completed and detailed historic inventory property forms and clear photographs for each of the eleven structures listed in your previously submitted documentation. We will ensure a swift response to your request for a determination of eligibility for these structures once this information is received.

Thank you again for seeking our comments on your project. If you have any questions, please contact staff historian Clarence Caesar at (916) 653-8902.

Sincerely,



Daniel Abeyta, Acting
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

AUG 6 1998

H22 (DSC-PM)
X H32
YOSE 703-06A

Ms. Cheryl Widell
State Historic Preservation Office
Office of Historic Preservation
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 943896
Sacramento, California 94296-001

Dear Ms. Widell:

Reference: Yosemite National Park, Pkg. 703, Employee Housing
PT 06A

Subject: Determination of National Register Eligibility for El Portal Administrative Site

Enclosed for your consideration under 36 CFR 800. (c)(2) is the "Evaluation of Historical Significance and Integrity of the Cultural Resources in El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California: Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places" by Harlan D. Unrau.

We evaluated resources in the administrative site both individually and as historic districts. It is our conclusion that the Murchison House and Office in the Yosemite Research Center area, three National Lead Company Residences in the Rancheria Flat area, Store, and the school, El Portal Market, three Yosemite Valley Railroad residences, and El Portal Hotel in the Village Center area are significant under Criteria A and C and meet the integrity criteria necessary for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The El Portal Village Center, Old El Portal, Railroad Flat, Sand/Gravel Quarry, Rancheria Flat, Abbievielle, and Merced Flat areas do not possess a high degree of location and setting, workmanship and feeling, and do not qualify for listing as historic districts.

If you concur in this determination, please sign in the space provided on the next page and return the letter to:

Stanley T. Albright
Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

If you have any questions, please contact Frank Williss of this office at 303/969-2269 or Park Archeologist at 209/379-1840.

Signed

Raymond K. Todd
Project Manager

Enclosure

I CONCUR

California State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

cc: (all w/o enc.)
Supt., Yosemite
Yosemite-Galipeau, Laird, Butler

bcc:
DSC-PM-Todd, w/o enc.
DSC-RP-Williss, w/o enc.

PM:FWillis:jdp:08/05/98:2221:ELPORTAL.DOC

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL.....

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OLD STORE - POST OFFICE
LIBRARY

Merced Sun-Star Sat., Feb. 11, 1967

General store built in 1912 (according to article. Jim Law says 1909)

Postal Service began in El Portal in 1907. First post office was located in a temporary station and freight office of the Yosemite Valley Railroad and was later moved into the new train depot when it was completed in 1908.

In 1946 Postmaster Dean Sheppard moved his office from the depot of the defunct railroad into the former general store building which it occupied until 1967. Mr. Sheppard bought the store. Two years after the post office was moved, the railway depot was destroyed by fire.

The store was moved twice before landing in its present location near the El Portal fire house.

At present the building houses the El Portal Library, and is owned by Mrs. Carroll Clark. Mr. Clark was postmaster from 1956.

Living quarters are in the upper story and are presently occupied by employee of Yosemite Nat'l. Park.

Interview with Paulene Landy - Lot # 6 Jan. 6, 1982

Mrs. Landy has lived in the area for 30 years. Originally the house was a one bedroom, kitchen and bath. A dinning room and large living room has been added.

This house sits on the old foundation of the back entrance to the kitchen and storeroom of the Del Portal Hotel (Bob Babcock)

This house was built by Bill Stepheson a truck driver. A family named Jackson bought the house from Stepheson, Mrs Landy bought the house from the Jacksons.

Building materials wer manly confiscated from the Park. The house is of wood frame construction with brown shingles outside. Hotel foundation is used as patio.

Other Information

Mr. McClease built the Savage house at the same time Wawona Tunnel was built. He worked on tunnel. (Wawona tunnel built 1933)

At Indian Lodge (now Cedar Lodge) there was a wooden platform out over the river where dances were held. It was quite a swimming area also.

Marty Warren's family started Indian Flat.

Interview with Willie Livingston - Lot # 18 January 10, 1982

Originally the Harry Reeves house. Mr. Reeves, who was an exofficial for Santa Fe in Arizona came to El Portal at the age of 72 as a prospector. He and a partner stored their ore around the place in big sacks. When the 1937 flood came all the ore was washed away. After that, Reeves had to get a job with the Park Service. He was a pipe fitter and was in charge of mule train working on Big Oak Flat Road and working on air lines in tunnel. (Andy Anderson & Clyde Gann)

The house started out as a tent then walls were added around tent using whatever materials available. Scrap lumber, dynamite boxes, railroad ties, tarpaper, etc. was used. Estimated date of construction of "tenthouse" is somewhere in the early 1930's. The house started out as one room, with other rooms added on one at a time.

The house now has two bedrooms, dining room, kitchen, living room & bath. During remodeling Mr. Livingston has found canvas inside wall of bathroom and 1930's vintage newspapers in wall of back building which is now an apartment. This apartment was formerly a beauty shop then a tool shed.

Over the years during different remodelings, the house acquired three separate roofs, then a section was cut out of the center and one whole roof put on to cover the other roofs when an upstairs bedroom was added. The evidence of this can still be seen today.

China from the Del Portal has been uncovered in yard.

Mr. Livingston told me that when his father (Bill Sperry) owned the house it was registered with the Mariposa County Historical Society. However, this has been checked out and there is no record of this at the Historical Society.

Other Information

Greg Hernandez and Jerry Thompson did a report (with pictures) of the barium mines when they were in high school. This is supposed to be the only such report made. Mr. Hernandez and Mr. Thompson agreed to get a copy of the report to me.

Mr. Mid Masse y of State Farm Insurance in Mariposa had an old map of El Portal with original owners names. This map hung on the wall of the insurance office.

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Interview with Nancy Savage - Lot # 37, January 25, 1982

This house was built by Fred McCleave, who was a blasting foreman on the Wawona Tunnel in 1933. It started out with two rooms, a kitchen and living room. Later on Mr. McCleave added two bedrooms, dining room, living room, and basement with extra bedroom.

The house is of wood frame construction. There is no foundation under half of the house. The inside still has the original plywood ceiling and walls. All ceilings throughout the house are very low as Mr. McCleave was short (5ft. 3in). The ceiling in basement is built with dynamite crates.

There was an unattached apartment outside which is now a laundry room.

During some remodeling Mr. Savage found a large plywood menu from a hamburger stand which used to be near the top of Briceburg.

Mrs. Savage said Clyde Gann would have more information on the house.

Interview with Gerry Eickenhorst - January 7, 1982

INDIAN LODGE
(Now Cedar Lodge)

Gerry Eickenhorst worked there in the 1940's. Indian Lodge is an old establishment built around 1927. Years before that the site was an Indian village.

Sandor & Sue Denby bought the place in 1942. They came from San Francisco. Sammy, their son managed the place. There was a restaurant, a 12 room lodge with a large lobby. The lobby had a double fireplace that opened into a dining room. There was a grocery store, post office, gas station and garage for minor repair.

After World War II the place was expanded with more cottages. Gerry Eickenhorst and Bebe Cline managed the restaurant after war.

During the war Kaiser bought the Cement Plant and he housed the men, some with their families, in 12 cabins. This was a great help as the place was having financial difficulties.

The restaurant burned down in the 1950's and the Denby's went broke so the place was sold at Sheriff's sale. The name was changed to Cedar Lodge in the late 1950's or early 1960's.

None of the original buildings are left. Some say the restaurant that is there now used to be the garage as there is a hollow place in the floor where the grease pit used to be.

Mr. Bob Babcock said that Tidewater Associated Oil Company built Indian Lodge.

Fauline Landy said that there used to be a wooden platform out over the river where dances were held. It was quite a swimming area also.

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
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Interview with Gerry Eickenhorst - Lot "11 (Forest Service Land) 1/7/82

House built in 1930's by Cliff Marsten. House was part of the original "dirty dozen", Original number of lot was #3.

The house is of wood frame construction. Any remodeling was done some time ago so Mrs Eickenhoush knows nothing of original construction or condition of house.

Information from Bob Babcock on Jan 10, 1982.

This house predates 1929.

Jim West original builder, he was a powder monkey, then it belonged to George Jeffery who was road foreman in Park in 1929.

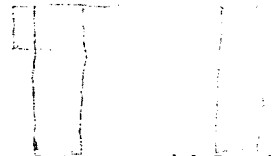
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Interview with Andy Anderson - Lot #9 - October 1, 1981

H. S. "Andy" Anderson was born in Portland, Oregon. He left home when he was 15½ and came to San Francisco to find work. Starting in 1927 he would come to El Portal and work seasonal jobs. When the jobs were over he would hop freights to wherever to find jobs elsewhere. Some of the jobs he had were road work, truck driver, building of the awahnee, warehouse, Oak Flat Road, Stone mason for the three tunnels on that road, and he worked at Whitewolf until it closed due to the war effort.

In 1931 he married and moved to El Portal to stay. He and his wife lived in two 12 x 14 connecting tents. A couple of years later he raised walls to about waist level. Little by little he would raise the walls until he had just a tent roof. He says tent is still in walls. When building a roof he used 1 x 6 boards six inches apart and 2 x 2 rafters. The roof had shingles he hand split himself at Wawona. Later he had to tear this apart and build a stronger roof and change the pitch. The house today has shingles on roof and outside walls. Over the years he has enlarged the house quite a bit, adding bedroom and porch. The house inside is very unusual and rustic. There are hugh exposed beams he got from tearing down an old water tank at Alameda. Beams are something like this.



Hanging from them and on top of them are various artifacts he has displayed. These include a carbide light from a truck, various old lanterns, tools, buck saw, flight officers leggings from 1918, kitchen utensils, etc. There are even two preserved or petrified looking cats. The house was build over the old ash dump from the Hotel Del Portal and he found these cats in the ashes. The floors in the house are mostly cement with one small section in the living room still wood, which he is planning to repair soon. Part of a floor in a shed outside is made from the tressle from incline #1 on south side of river. The materials for building the house was mostly scrap from the park or wherever he could find it. He used discarded lumber, packing crates, and even binding plates which hold bundles of lumber together. In his bathroom he has an ornate toilet from the Hotel Del Portal. Outside there is an extensive amount of rock wall which he has built over the years. There is also a cement block from the Hotel Del Portal.

Other information

The Ruth Beckwith house was built by Lolly Gardner for Tom Dempsey and Frank Asman who was a Justice of the Peace at one time. She built it for them to be sure they had a place to live. The house was intended just for their lifetime but it is still there with new additions to it.

Where Cedar Lodge is was once called Indian Lodge.

Marty Warren and Mrs. J. Freitas has information on Indian Flat.

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL

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Interview with Andy Anderson Continued.

Behind Anderson's, across from his garden is a natural wood house which was built by a man named Beck who worked for the railroad.

Andy pointed out Pauline Landy's house which sits on foundation of El Portal Hotel. Cement walkways, etc still there. House built by Bill Stepheson a truck driver.

Harry Reeves (next to Beckwith house now Livingston's in Gann notes) was 72 when he came into El Portal as a prospector. He and his partner stored their ore in big sacks. When the 1937 flood came, all their ore was washed away. After that Reeves had to get a job with the Park Service. He was a pipe fitter and was in charge of a mule train working on Big Oak Flat road fixing air lines.

House above Andy's with high white garage was built in 30's by a carpenter, name not remembered.

Next to that house is a very large house which is now owned by the head bellhop at Awaknee Hotel. John Hanson a former postmaster at Park used to own it. It started out as a two room cabin but today is quite large and is suppose to be fantastic inside.

Holiday house was long and slender. Shirley Barnes a truck driver was the first tenant after the R. R. people built it in 32 or 33.

Frank Caril house across from Holiday house now owned by someone else.

Ben Gardner: Dolly's husband ran the town. He was constable, Justice of the Peace and held all the leases for the El Portal Mining Co. A very large man he had the power both physically and with authority to settle disputes that couldn't be settled any other way. He also had the store his wife had built for him.

Tot Lot Area

Jim Murphy house now being remodeled by present owners.

Directly across from Tot Lot sign is a long narrow house, dark brown in color which used to belong to the Doc Phillips family. This house was the only house on the right side of the road when Mr. Anderson came to El Portal. One of the Phillips daughters married a Babcock.

Down road from Old Phillips house before the road starts down the steep grade to highway was the stables. On left was tack room.

Green house across from Tot Lot is old one built by a carpenter - name not available at this time.

Park Service Archives

From The National Parks, A Public Health Problem, By Donald Bertram Tresidder
June, 1927

This book was not published, but it's typewritten pages with copies of letters and some pictures is leather bound.

A letter talks about water and sanitation problems of the Hotel Del Portal. The letter is dated Sept. 6, 1915 and is addressed to the Calif. State Board of Health.

His description of the Hotel Del Portal: a 3 story frame building, having accommodations for about two or three hundred people. Kitchen floor constructed of concrete. At rear of hotel is shed where ice cream is manufactured.

F. A. Cline, Manager of hotel.

Hotel also had hog pens, tents for employees, hotel laundry made of rough lumber and canvas, stable owned by Yosemite Transportation Co. (10 horses at date of letter).

1907 Railroad constructed.
1915 Motor coaches replace stagecoaches.
1926 All year highway completed.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Fresno Bee July 22, 1958 (underlined is headline)

Congress Action is awaited on Park Changes.

Tells about moving park admin. headquarters from park to 1,200 acres outside park to El Portal.

Fresno Bee, Sunday Aug. 24, 1958

Congress OKs El Portal For Yosemite Use - \$5,000,000 Project.

Park Service has option on 1,200 acres and funds have been allocated for purchase of El Portal Mining Co. land. Part of Mission 66 program in Yosemite to relieve congestion on valley floor and do away with outmoded buildings. 100 unit trailer park, sewage plant, 35 single family homes and two apartments with 10 units each be built, along with new school and a possible high school.

Merced Sun-Star Friday, Feb. 27, 1981

The El Portal Hotel Burned down in 1932. Dolly Gardner was the Proprietress. She had the new El Portal Hotel built which still stands on Highway 140. She supervised construction of the hotel and dining room and eventually added several cabins. She also built a grocery store which was run by her husband until 1943.

100 Years in Yosemite by Carl F. Russell

Chronology 1907

Yosemite Valley Railroad opened to public.
Del Portal Railroad Hotel at El Portal.

Short Line To Paradise & Railroads Of The Yosemite Valley By Hank Johnson

Hotel Del Portal had 100 rooms, 30 with bath, and dinning room seated 115 persons. It was completed in 1907 at a cost of \$50,000. A fire on Oct. 27, 1917 completely destroyed the hotel. (RR's of Yosemite Valley)

Hotel burned to ground in 1919. (Short Line to Paradise)

The 20 room two-story El Portal Inn, completed in April, 1918 had replaced the ill-fated Del Portal Hotel.

1921 Large covered train shed erected, it adjoined the El Portal station and was 125 ft. long.

Mariposa County Guidebook By Shirley Sargent

Rancheria Flat:

Early Indian settlement. At least one white woman, James Hennessey's mother, was buried there. (Jim Law disputes this) (He identified Chief Deck's grave) A "Y" train turn around used to be there. A barium mine was discovered in the 1880's but not developed until 1910. Heavy production between 1927 and 1948. John B. Lemberg was murdered ther in 1897.

Hennessey's Ranch:

15 acre produce garden. About 1868 James A. Hennessey began the enormous job of clearing land, moving tons of rock and digging irrigation ditches. Transported by pack trains, his produce supplied Wawona, Yosemite Valley and even Mono Lake settlers. His name, often corrupted to Hennes, is on a trail, the ridge south of this canyon and a fire lookout atop it.

Clearing House Mine:

Across the river are various buildings left from the Clearing House Mine, 4th largest producer in Mariposa County. It was named because the mine was a clearing house for gold bullion in the 1907 panic when clearing house certificates were in circulation. More than \$3,500,000 was taken out in the mine's 72-year history. It closed in December 1937 after a flood washed out the railroad.

Mariposa County Guidebook Con't.

Incline # 2:

The visible scar rising to the northern mountaintop was a logging incline for the Yosemite Sugar Pine Company from 1924 to 1942. Loaded log cars, hooked to a hugh cable, decended by gravity, pulling up empty ones at the same time.

Incline # 1:

By stopping and looking carefully at the brushy mountainside south of the river, a cleared scar, now the route of a TV cable is visible. From 1912 to 1923, the 7800-foot long incline lowered logs, cut from forests south of it, 3100 feet down to El Portal. Parts of it had a 78% grade and any passengers had to sign releases before the thrilling ride. Every board, pane of glass and nail used in building the Glacier Point Hotel in 1916-17 was carried up the incline, then to Chinguapin where materials were loaded on freight wagons for the final haul to Glacier Point.

Mariposa Gazzette, Sept. 4, 1958

1910 depot construction began and a "Y" was constructed 2½ miles west of El Portal where incoming train would turn around and back into the depot.

Merced Sun Star, Wed. Nov. 5, 1958

El Portal Land Purchase For Use As Yosemite Admin. Site.

972 acres of land at El Portal purchased.

Acquisition of Approximately 101 acres of Unpatented land will also be involved.

200 additional acres for new Admin. Site.

Other articles are being copied and mailed to me. Don't know if they will be of any help.

RICHARDSON'S (EMORY) CEMENT PLANT *

The Yosemite Portland Cement Corp. was organized in February, 1925 by a group of San Joaquin Valley financiers headed by A. Emory Wishon of Fresno, who was also vice-president and general manager of the San Joaquin Light and Power Corp.

The Yosemite Valley Railroad put in a small yard at the quarry and crushing plant site which was named Emory in honor of the founder.

* Railroads of the Yosemite Valley by Hank Johnston

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL

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Interview with Clyde Gann- Sept., 30, 1981, Lot #39

Mr. Gann (77 years) was born in Green Mountain, Mariposa County. Old homesite now under water. There is a dam there now and where the gates are, there are Indian Grinding rocks used where the post of the gate is imbedded.

Mr. Gann moved from Wowona to El Portal in 1937. He had a variety of occupations working for the Barium Mine, Cement quarry, Park Service & Curry Co. He also was a foreman in the CCC at their camp at Crane Flat. He worked on the rock facing on the tunnels on Tioga Road.

Gann House

When he moved to El Portal in 1937, he purchased the house for \$500.00 from Harry Jenson who was a heavy equipment operator in the park. The house is of wood construction and at present time has asbestos siding. It has a double roof due to the fact that Mr. Gann built a second roof over the old one, thus changing the pitch of the roof. When Mr. Gann moved in there was only one door and two very small windows. He added two double glass doors in the living room and has added larger windows. The house is a two bedroom, one bath, kitchen and living room. When he moved in there was a screened porch with canvas hanging down. There is an old shed out back made of bat & Board.

Other information from Mr. Gann

Dean Sheppard bought store building for Post Office.

Where power line crosses road from Ganns, there is a dirt road, Indian Village was there.

Harry Reeves tent house (next to Beckwith house). House was built around tent. Mr. Reeves was a former big-shot with Santa Fe in Arizona. He worked Big Oak Flat Road, then for Curry Co. Willie Livingston now owns house.

Lois Smiths house - Owned first by Bob Lake Then Tom Reynolds Then Lois Smith.

Pauline Landrys house sits on old foundation of El Portal Hotel.

House from Crane Creek sits on stable foundations. Stable belonged to El Portal, old horse shoes still can be found.

The Hugh Carter House, Laurel Anderson House, and house to left of Anderson house was original lot numbers 1, 2, and 3.

Second school site was between and in front of his house, Woods, and Laurel Andersons.

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL

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Interview with Dollie Gardner - Sept. 24, 1981

Dollie (Haigh) Gardner was born in Coulterville. Her family came there from England during the gold rush. Mrs Gardner came to El Portal from Stockton (she was a teacher) in 1929. She managed the Hotel El Portal & Inn. (She called it). This would be the 3rd hotel after the tent hotel and the Hotel Del Portal. The 3rd hotel burned in July of 1931. The upstairs portion was a complete loss. However, the dining room and part of the porch was not damaged severely. She contacted a carpenter from Oakland Named Joe Ryan, and a house mover (name not remembered) and had what was left of the number 3 hotel moved to the present site, cribbing and all.

Mr. Ryan hired local out of work people to remodel and build the present hotel. The hotel was of wood construction outside with redwood shingles. (Redwood shingles no longer there) The inside walls were of plaster. A fireplace was also constructed. In the dining room there were six tables seating four each. There also was a horseshoe shaped counter with 10 stools. (Counter left from #3 hotel and no longer exists.) The hotel had 13 bedrooms. Number 13 was her room at left of lobby.

In the basement was a Johnson Ray System furnace.. Standard Oil from El Portal delivered the oil. A Mr Knowles was manager of Standard Oil at the time. Mrs Gardner stated that the hotel was the only place on the highway with steam heat. The building still uses steam heat today.

Mr. Ryan started construction in September 1932 and an open house was held Thangsgiving week of November 1932. Mrs Gardner designed and did the blueprints herself. The total cost to Mrs. Gardner of moving and construction was \$15,000.

She lived in El Portal for 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ years, then moved to merced after her husband died. She resides in Merced today and is 92 years of age.

Her brother Avah Haigh (Toots as he was called) ran a pack train from Coulterville to the railroad cook shack in El Portal delivering meat.

The hotel is presently owned by the Yosemite Institute and is used as a residence for N.P.S. employees.

In 1934 She had the present grocery store constructed, which was run by her husband.

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
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INTERVIEW #2 with Lolly Gardner Nov. 5, 1981

Frank Greeley was assistant of Joe Ryan (Carpenter of hotel).

Cross Lumber delivered lumber for hotel and also did construction of roof.

Johnny Allen - head plumber from Yosemite did plumbing. Construction of the hotel was done by out of work local people who lived in tents in what was then called El Portal Hollywood Heights (El Portal site). Mr. Gardner was carrying \$3000.00 on the books of the grocery store. This money was deducted from the labor of the locals who had been laid off at the park.

Flastering of the hotel was done by a firm in Merced and one of these men also built the fireplace.

Plumbing fixtures were shipped from San Francisco by the firm Lunning, Carrigan & Hayden. They were shipped to Merced then put on the Yosemite Valley Railroad then delivered to El Portal.

She also built coffee shop which was used as library after she left El Portal. The coffee shop was between the store and hotel.

Furniture for hotel bought from the firm Beck & Hill in Emeryville. Shipped to Merced, put on Y.V.R.R. into El Portal. Carpets came from same furniture company.

Bedding, blankets & pillows came from Walton-Moore Wholesale House in San Francisco. Shipped to Merced then Y.V.R.R.

Asman-Dempsey house (Now Beckwith) built in late 30's for Asman & Dempsey who were plumbers who worked in Yosemite. Then retired. They were previously from San Francisco. Dempsey worked on hotel after Ben Gardner died, Asman became Justin of the lease. Gardner was not constable as Andy Anderson stated Jim Kirk was. Mrs. Gardner gave Harry Reeves the money to build the Dempsey-Asman house.

She also built apartments & house between store & Hotel (Behind on flat) She later tore these down and moved materials to Merced and built apartments there which is still there. Site of house is now parking lot. Coffee Shop was between store & present hotel.

ISTORIC SITES SURVEY
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Home interview with Mrs. Minnie Gallagher Nov. 3, 1981

Mrs. Gallagher is the present owner of Clearing House. Most buildings, including cookhouse were built in the late teens.

Cookhouse no longer there as it burned down. There used to be 15 or 20 houses there.

The post office fell down in 1970. Someone has stolen the sign from her. The place has been stripped by relic hunters.

She has pictures of the house there and also one of train coming into Clearing House.

She wanted only overall pictures from distance. She is embarrassed at the condition of the buildings. I wasn't able to comply with her wishes as highway across river is too dangerous.

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
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Interview with Mrs. Bob Babcock 2/3/82 Lot # 63

Doc Phillips House
(Now owned by Dean Glenn)

Mrs. Babcock's father Arthur Carl "Doc" Phillips built this house in 1930. Mrs. Babcock was then four years old. Her family came to live in El Portal when she was six months old. Before the house was built the Phillips lived in the yellow railroad house. Mr. Phillips worked for the railroad from 1925 until his death in 1941.

The whole community turned out to help build the house. The ladies cooked chicken while the men did the work with plenty of "refreshments" on hand. Except for the windows the house was completed in one day. This is the only time Mrs. Babcock could recall where a house was built by community effort. The house was built with three bedrooms. Mr. Phillips added another bedroom at a later time. (There were eight children, Mrs. Babcock being the 7th) They also built a dining room-living room combination and a kitchen. This house was the only house on that side of the road for some ti

The house is of wood frame construction. The lumber used was new being trucked in by Cross Lumber Company of Merced. The house is now owned by Dean and Karen Glenn.

Other Information

When Mrs. Halstead came to El Portal to live, she came in on a donkey.

The railroad at one time owned all the land from the Post Office up to the Forest Service boundary.

Davies Flat: Named after a man who worked for the railroad. The railroad had about five houses there.

REED was the name of the photographer who built Carter's house. His first name is forgotten as everyone referred to him as "Old man Reed."

Eugene Folly was the name of the man who built Laurel Anderson's house. He was a photographer and had a printing shop which he ran from the house. He also wrote the El Portal news for the Mariposa Gazette.

Interview with Laurel Anderson - Lot #3 (Forest Service Land)

According to Andy Anderson and Clyde Gann, this is one of the oldest houses in El Portal. Originally the Lot was #2.

It is of wood frame construction. The outside is covered by green wood shingles. House used to sit on tent platform, but had to be raised and foundation put down. When original part was raised one of the walls fell in so it was replaced with new wall with bay windows which came from Curry Co.

The house started out as a one room cabin, then living room, two bedrooms and separate kitchen was added.

The inside living room walls and ceiling have original Beaver board.

1930 newspaper was found in flooring in one room. Newspaper was used as insulation. While I was there we found a 1952 newspaper in dining room floor. The newspaper was a Merced Express.

Herbert Hoover supposedly spent night there on trip to Yosemite.

Ms. Anderson thinks her yard might have been dump for El Portal. She has found an old letter opener, metal ashtray with flower design, metal toy train engine and milk bottle.

Pre-dates 1930
Date of construction ~~not known~~.

The house was built by Eugene Folly. He was a photographer and had a printing shop which he ran from the house. He also wrote the El Portal news for the "Mariposa Gazette". (Mrs. Babcock)

Interview with John McDaniel - Lot #11

This house used to sit on or near the Trailer Village. This house was moved to its present site in 1948. The house now sits on the old site of the El Portal Hotel. The top step of the basement of hotel is in his back yard.

Originally the house was a two bedroom, one bath with kitchen and small living room with one closet. The house is still sitting on railroad ties which will soon be replaced.

During remodeling Mr. McDaniel found a 1950 L.A. Times. Also found in the house was a 1951 postage stamp.

Mr. McDaniel has remodeled the house quite a bit inside. Also an eight foot extension was added on in the back after the house was moved to present site. Mr. McDaniel has rewired and replumbed the house and has added a solar hot water heater, storm windows and solar screens on the windows.

This house is owned by Dennis Parrish of Camino.

Mr. Bob Babcock had information to add to this. This house and the house next to it both were moved from the trailer park. One of the houses sat where the entrance to the trailer park is now, and the other one sat where the garden is on Space A-1. This would put them next to each other.

The other house which sits next to Mr. McDaniel is also owned by Mr. Parrish of Sonora. The house is rented by Mr. Steve Speltz and the lot number is 11-A.

Mr. Babcock gave a name of M.K. Millry associated with one of these house. Whether he was original owner of house or worked for the railroad was unclear.

From another conversation with Mr. Babcock, it was learned the house was built not by the railroad but by the M.K. Mittry Construction Company. After the 1937 flood this company rebuilt the highway. The McDaniels house was the one that sat where the entrance to the Trailer Village is now, and the house rented by Mr. Speltz was located on the site of #A-1 garden.

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El Portal, Ca. 95318
379-2352

Interview with Olive Longenbach - Lot #1 Oct. 27, 1981

Mr. Longenbach (now deceased) came to El Portal in 1957. Olive wasn't able to come until 1967 when a school teaching position became available.

Longenbach's is one of the three railroad houses built in 1909 (?). It has original walls inside dining room. Small boards like this  Mr. Bill Wagner built the existing living room in the 60's. He also put in windows on a utility porch which is in the back. When he tore into one wall he found a board with a 1906 or 1909 date on it. Mrs. Longenbach is not sure.

The Longenbachs had all the ceilings lowered two feet throughout the house.

The house is the standard frame construction, two bedroom, one bath, kitchen and living room. The only additions seem to be the living room in front, utility room, and possibly porch.

Interview with Mary Tanner - Lot #2 Oct. 1, 1981

She doesn't know how old her house is. Faith Garibotti of Faith Haven Motel would know. She had house built. Mrs Tanner got the house from Sid Daugherty. Mrs. Tanner came to El Portal in the early 40's and lived in what is now the woods house - she claims it was the site of the second school. (Not according to Clyde Gann).

The house she has now she got in the early 60's. Originally it was a two room cabin of wood frame construction with plastered walls inside. New rooms, porch, and outbuildings have been added.

Mrs. Garibotti was contacted and she says house is 30 years old.

There was an archaeological study done on Mary Tanner's site a few years ago. It is titled "The Mary Tanner Archaeological Site". Mr. Scott Carpenter of the Park Service has this information.

Other Houses She Suggested

Doug Whiteside - beyond Carters place, it has appartments.

Nancy Nuberts - beyond Whitesides than a house between Whitesides & Nuberts, just where you start up to make the turn to the old dump. One of the Nuberts had the grocery store for awhile.

Interview with Ruth Murphy Beckwith, Lot #17 Nov. 4, 1981

C. O. Brown

She came to Park about 1951. Worked at Glacier Point, Big Trees, Old Yosemite Lodge the year of the flood, and at the Ahwahnee as clerk & Gift Shop manager.

House was originally a three room cabin with living room, kitchen, and bath.

In the 1950's there were two shacks and Howard Marshall built between the two and made one house out of it. Kitchen was put in between. Jim Ray owned house then. Mr. Bill Kubert acquired house after Mr. Ray died. Mrs. Beckwith bought house from Mr. Kubert.

This house is the standard frame construction, much changed from the original. Outside the old cement pad of the left and walkway on right is from the Del Portal Hotel.

According to Andy Anderson, and confirmed by Mrs. Gardner this house was built by Dolly Gardner, Mr. Tom Lamprey and Frank Asman, who was Justice of the Peace at the time. She built it because they needed a home. The house was intended for their lifetime, but it is still there with new additions to it. Mrs. Gardner said the house was built in the late 30's.



HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL

Cathy O'Brien

P.O. Box 147

El Portal, Ca. 95318

Oct. 1, 1981

Interview with Ron & Mary Jo White, Lot #3

Built in 1909 by the railroad. (Jim Law) Originally a two bedroom house with white car siding on inside walls (now knotty pine). Outside is redwood siding painted yellow.

Back two bedrooms added 20 years ago. In 1978 extra room, patio, deck, and garage added by Whites.

Rock retaining walls outside. Artifacts found in year: glass canning lids, coke bottle dated Dec., 25, 1923, and a metal dated 1934 by V.F.W.

Jim L O'Brien

Interview on Corbin Cabin Lot #5 Oct., 20, 1981 (Corbin) Oct. 23, 1981 (Brantley)

Jim Corbin now lives here but is selling house. Mr. Corbin could not give information on early history of cabin. It is much changed today.

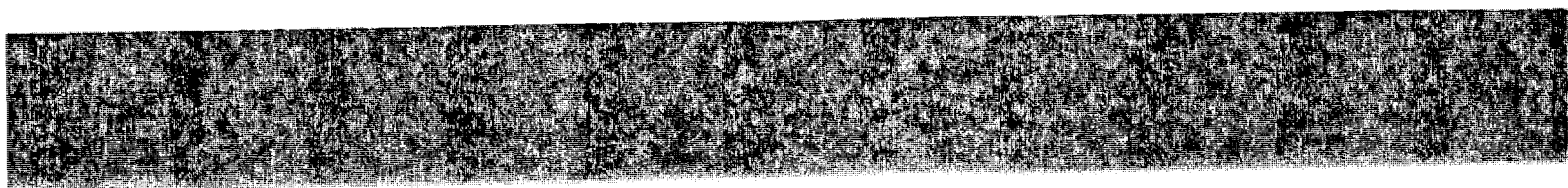
Mr. Robert Brantley who was born in a tent in Yosemite in 1923, across from houses from hospital was a resident of this cabin in 1953. There were two previous occupants before him.

Mr. Brantley says the house was built in 1909 by the railroad. It was built with 1 x 12's, these were the walls inside and out. No 2 x 4's were used. It started out a two bedroom, 1 bath with living room and kitchen. Mr. Brantley recid the house with stronger walls, etc.

His parents built cabins and the El Portal Inn in 1947. His mother came to El Portal in 1909. She was seven years old and lived in a tent across from Community Building.

Mr. Brantley's brother owned one of the Railroad houses but house burned down some time ago. He was an agent for the El Portal Mining Com pany.

Jim Law says that this house was built in 1912 by the lumber company. Mr. McFadden, a lumber co, official lived there. Jim Law lived there at one time also.



HISTORIC SITES SURVEY
EL PORTAL

Gathy O'Brien
P. O. Box 147
El Portal, Ca. 95318

Tour with Jim Law, July 15, 1981 9:30 A.M.

First depot, freight house, and ticket office is where volunteer fire shed is now. (across from library)

White cabins behind hotel was where 2nd depot was located.

3 Houses across from library were built by the railroad in 1909 for RR employees.

First tent store was located across from library at left of McDaniels.

Location of second store at wide part of road on right above library. Store built by R. R. in 1910.

In back of tent store was first tent hotel built in 1907.

After tent hotel, the Hotel Del Portal was built in 1909. The site took in from Rocky Road to Buckeye Road. (Mr Law mentioned going to the ice cream shed when he was a boy. shed behind hotel).

The El Portal Hotel (3rd hotel) was located where tent store was. Built in 1919 the hotel burned in the early 30's.

Present Hotel was built in early 30's.

First school site was located off road where Lee Master house is. Later Jim Law's Mother had a boardinghouse there. The August 13, 1913 flood destroyed the boarding house.

Second school was located at Howard Woods residence. (picture is in Mariposa Gazette, 125 Years of Law & Press).

Third school built in 1930. Now used by two churches and pre-school. Present school built in 1962.

Check Corbin House (Old one)

First Incline: Jim Law was foreman during 1919-1920. He started working there in 1917.

Barium Mill across river from mine.

Site C-4 in Trailer Village is the Hennessey Ranch House site. Two story building. Fruit trees in meadow are over 100 years old.

On flat in front of Ranch house, around fruit trees, was Mrs. Kings boardinghouse for barium mine workers.

Phone Interview with Bob Babcock

tidewater Associated Oil Company built Indian Lodge.

Clarence Hamrick built the Otwell house. He completed it around 1935. It was one of the few houses built with new lumber. George Johnson owned it after that, then Mr. Babcocks parents rented it after that.

Where Lois Smith lives was a home built by Jim Halstead. Mrs. Halsted was the first white woman in El Portal.

Johnnie Wilson: Last Indian of El Portal, lived across river from apple Orchard. His cabin was where Crab apple is. Accross river by trolly, past apple orchard there are two ravines. One has water from Indian Creek, the other a dry ravine to the right and at mouth of ravine sat Johnnie's cabin. Accross from Crane Creek, on the plateau and above is an old Indian cementary. No headstones are left.

Bob Babcock's house: At present this house is vacant. Mr. Babcock is going to retire from the Park Service soon and is moving back to El Portal. Bill Pope built it in 1934. Babcocks bought it from Dolly Gardner in 1945 for \$800.00. In the back yard by the septic tank the old safe from the Del Portal Hotel is buried. Mr. Babcock says he will dig it up someday. The house sits on the front foundation of the Del Portal.

Pauline Landy's house sits on back entrance to kitchen and storeroom.

Andy Hoshler accross from Landy's on hill would have information on El Portal.

When Mr. Babcock was a boy Mrs. Halstead took him and other school children up near the present rifle range one day. On a flat area there somewhere is a gravestone. It is a rock with "FAY" chiseled in it. It is a grave of an Indian baby. The parents didn't know how to make a "D". Mr. Babcock has not been able to find it since.

Near Crane creek in back of Long Whitesides house, up in the rocks is a cave. It has a skinny entrance. It would take a kid to slip in but it has a large room.

There used to be two houses in the Trailer Park. On sat right where the present entrance is. The other sat where the garden is at Space A-1. These two houses were moved and one of them is the McLaniel home in old El Portal. He gave a name of M.K. Millry - must have been one of the owners of the houses or worked for the railroad.

Old Gene Folly place: He was a photographer and artist and had a printing shop in El Portal. Now Laurel Anderson's house.

Carter's house was called the "Goast House" because it was closed up for sometime and was covered up with sheets hanging and covering the windows. The house was built by a photographer who had a studio in the park

Babcock Interview continued.

The man who built the Carter house was named Reed. His first name is no longer remembered due to the fact that everyone referred to him as "Old Man Reed". He was a photographer and had a studio in the Park during the summer. The Carter house is dated pre-1930 because Reed was killed on the Crane Creek Trail by a man who went to prison in 1930 for another crime.

Mrs. Tiscornia has a lot of information about El Portal. She worked in a Boarding House-Hotel when she was a girl in 1904. This Boarding house is now referred to as the old Lustenhoff house and was somewhere in old El Portal. The boarding house was used by the workers for the Lavis Cut-Off.

Maggie King's daughter, Gladys Phillips lives in Mariposa by Stroming Machinery. She has a lot of information about El Portal. Maggie King had a boarding house for Barium Mine workers on the flat in front of where the Hennessey Ranch House used to be.

Vince Ellis aged 80's or 90's lives in Coulterville, and has a lot of information of El Portal.

Mrs. Cunio owned Hodgston Meadow and now lives a Villa Del Rey in Merced. She also may have information on El Portal.

Convict Cave was used as a powder room during reconstruction of Highway 140 after the 1937 flood.

Next to Oak tree by McDaniel house was the site of the hotel after the Del Portal. (Jim Law confirms this.)

El Portal Store: After Ben Gardner passed away his nephew John Raymond had the store. Then Claude Gingrich and Harry Fleming bought from Raymond. Gingrich and Fleming ran it until before war. Then the French Market (Handy Market in Merced) had it and the name of the owner was Gus Taylor. The next was Bill Hubert, then Hugh Carter (Brother-in-Law of the owners of Jack's Market in Mariposa). Now Hugh Carter is part owner. Jim Law used to work in the store. Mr. Babcock jokingly called him the shoe clerk.

Jim Law was Justice of the Peace for years in El Portal.

From Ferry's house to Corns was a huge long building called the Annex. It had rooms for guests. It was the Annex of the Hotel El Portal after the Del Portal. McDaniels house is near this site.

Between present hotel and store was a refreshment stand which was folded up during the winter and opened up again with stools placed about during the summer. It was owned by Lolly Gardner who also had it constructed. She later enclosed it and it then was a coffee shop & beer joint. There was also a service station which Mr. Babcock worked at. Also there was a barber shop and pool room. Apartments were built after 1937, then torn down after World War Two. Mrs. Gardner built apartments in Merced with the El Portal materials.

Interview with Bob Babcock, February 3, 1982

McDaniel house and Speltz house was not built by railroad, but by the M.K. Mitty Construction Company. After the 1937 flood, this company rebuilt the highway. The McDaniels house was the one that sat where the entrance to the Trailer Village is now, and the Speltz house was located at site A-1 garden.

Davis Cut-Off: Turns off the road after Shirley Shargents and went to Crane Flat. Davis was going to build a hotel for tourist but the whole plan fell apart and never amounted to much. Today Cut-Off is used as a side road or fire road today. Foresta townsite was laid out about the same time.

Harry Jesson built Clyde Gann house about 1934.

White house in Trailer Village where Jim Charmers lives now was once occupied by Vic Scholling. Mr. Scholling, when single, lived at Maggie King's Boarding House. When he married his wife Inga, who came over from Sweden he moved into this house. Babcock couldn't remember who built the house.

Abbyville: (Dirt road beyond trailer village going West) Abbyville was named after a Blacksmith for the Barium Mines named "Abbey". (Clyde Gann told me this also). The houses in there were built around 1934-35.

As you enter on the road the first house on right was built by Ollie Arch. The second house was built by Jack Creason. Mr. Creason then sold the house to Babe Harris. Babe Harris's son (Charlie) was once married to Maggie King.

The third house was owned by Lem Barnett. His wife Nona Barnett lives in Cathays Valley (Turn right at Oasis, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile then house on left.) She would know who built this house.

The house Abbey had was across from Illie Arches. Mr. Babcock bought the house from Mr. Muttoughlin for \$25.00 and a valve job on his car. He tore the house down and used some of the materials for the house he now owns in El Portal.

There used to be four houses in the meadow in front of Trailer Village. These houses were used for the section crew for the railroad.

Meadow before phone company building with Cedar tree was called Davis's Flat. Where Cedar tree is was the front yard of a house of a man named Manuel.

Eickenhorst house: George Jeffery owned the house at one time but didn't live in it. He loaned the money to Cliff Marsten so he could buy it. Jefferys was related to the Coulterville Jefferys. His sisters are Mrs. Rust, Mrs. Marsten and Mrs. Jessen.

Some workers who came to the Park after the San Francisco earthquake and built the Curry Dorms, Lewis Mem. Hosp. and the Gov't. Apartments, then moved to El Portal and lived out their lives. Some of their names were Tom Lompsey, John Tragard, and John Asman.

Hugh Kuland (Bob Babcock's father) started the first volunteer fire Dept. and first public water system for El Portal. He was given a document for the Mariposa Co. District Attorney attesting to this. Mr. Babcock has this document. Mr. Kuland was also agent to the El Portal Mining Co. and granted licenses and patrolled area.

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

Ser. No. _____
HABS _____ HAER _____ NR _____ SHL _____ Loc _____
UTM: A _____ B _____
C _____ D _____

IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: National Lead Mill Site.
2. Historic name: National Lead Mill
3. Street or rural address: _____
City El Portal, Calif. Zip 95318 County Mariposa
4. Parcel number: _____
5. Present Owner: Yosemite National Park Service Address: Yosemite, Cal.
City _____ Zip 95389 Ownership is: Public Public Private _____
6. Present Use: None Original use: Milling Barium ore

DESCRIPTION

- 7a. Architectural style: _____
- 7b. Briefly describe the present *physical description* of the site or structure and describe any major alterations from its original condition:

The architectural style of the mill building was a large galvanized structure open on all four sides and covered an area of about 4,800 sq. feet. The products of the mill were shipped on the Yosemite Valley R.R. to Merced. The Y.V. R. R. ceased operations August 24, 1945. The National Lead Co., continued their operations by hauling by truck until the late forties, and at which time they also ceased operation. The mill and equipment was dismantled. So today all that is left is the site where the mill used to be. There is nothing to indicate that a mill was ever there.

Attach Photo(s) Here

8. Construction date:
Estimated 1929 Factual _____
9. Architect As explained a
galvanized steel structure
10. Builder National Lead Co.
11. Approx. property size (in feet)
Frontage 60 Depth 80
or approx. acreage 4800 sq. ft.
12. Date(s) of enclosed photograph(s)

13. Condition: Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Deteriorated _____ No longer in existence no
14. Alterations: _____
15. Surroundings: (Check more than one if necessary) Open land yes Scattered buildings _____ Densely built-up no
Residential _____ Industrial _____ Commercial _____ Other: _____
16. Threats to site: None known _____ Private development _____ Zoning _____ Vandalism _____
Public Works project _____ Other: It is hard to say what the Park Service has in mind.
17. Is the structure: On its original site? _____ Moved? _____ Unknown? _____
18. Related features: _____

SIGNIFICANCE

19. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site.)

The historical and architectural, including dates have already been mentioned. E.H. Murchison was Superintendant for the operations for the National Lead Co. In the mill operations there was Tex Journey, mill operator, Herman Freyschlag, Vic Scholling, and others.

20. Main theme of the historic resource: (If more than one is checked, number in order of importance.)
Architecture _____ Arts & Leisure _____
Economic/Industrial ☒ Exploration/Settlement _____
Government _____ Military _____
Religion _____ Social/Education _____
21. Sources (List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews and their dates).

22. Date form prepared June 8, 1981
By (name) James Law
Organization _____
Address: P.O. Box 83
City El Portal, Ca Zip 95318
Phone: 379-2224

Locational sketch map (draw and label site and surrounding streets, roads, and prominent landmarks):

