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Historic Preservation Treatment Plan for the Nacimiento Ranch House, Camp Roberts

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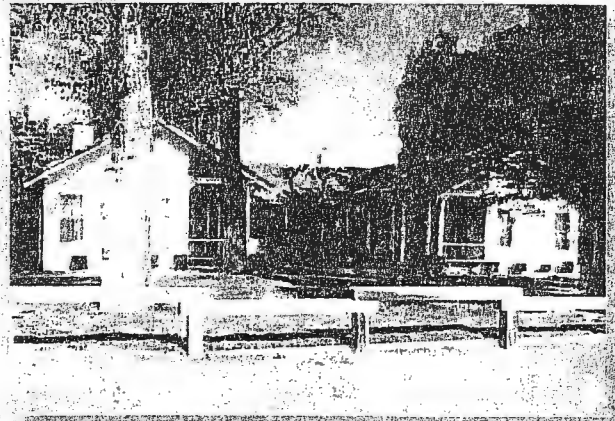
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Historic Preservation Treatment Plan for the **Nacimiento Ranch House** Camp Roberts, California



Prepared for:



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Sacramento District
Environmental Division

and



California Army National Guard

Prepared by:



Jones & Stokes Associates, Inc.
Sacramento, California

May 1999

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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION TREATMENT PLAN
FOR THE NACIMIENTO RANCH HOUSE,
CAMP ROBERTS, CALIFORNIA**

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Historic Preservation Treatment Plan for the Nacimiento Ranch House, Camp Roberts, California

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The objective of the Historic Preservation Treatment Plan (HPTP) for the Nacimiento Ranch House is to develop management recommendations and maintenance guidance for the Nacimiento Ranch house—a property that has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—in compliance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and U.S. Army Regulation 420-40. The work was prepared by Jones & Stokes Associates for the California Army National Guard and undertaken under contract DACW05-95-D-0003 with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Sacramento District.

The Nacimiento Ranch house is located at Camp Roberts Army National Guard Training Site in San Luis Obispo County (Figure 1). Built in 1928 by Isaiah Warren Hellman, Jr., the ranch house is situated along the southeast bank of the Nacimiento River, approximately 5 miles west of the main gate of Camp Roberts. The Nacimiento Ranch house has been determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under criterion C, for its distinctive representation of the Spanish Eclectic style of domestic architecture in California. The ranch house is currently used by the California Army National Guard (CA ARNG) as a visiting officer's quarters.

The HPTP is designed for use primarily by building managers, civil engineering staff, housing personnel, environmental staff, and others with building management responsibilities. The general purpose of the HPTP is to offer guidance on how the ranch house may be maintained to preserve and/or restore its historic integrity to the maximum extent practicable. Additionally, this report describes previous studies conducted on the Nacimiento Ranch house, the study methods used for this project, the historical setting and history of the ranch house, and the appearance of the ranch house before and after ownership of the property was transferred to the Army.

REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

As a unit of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), Camp Roberts must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations, 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 800. Section 106 requires that federal

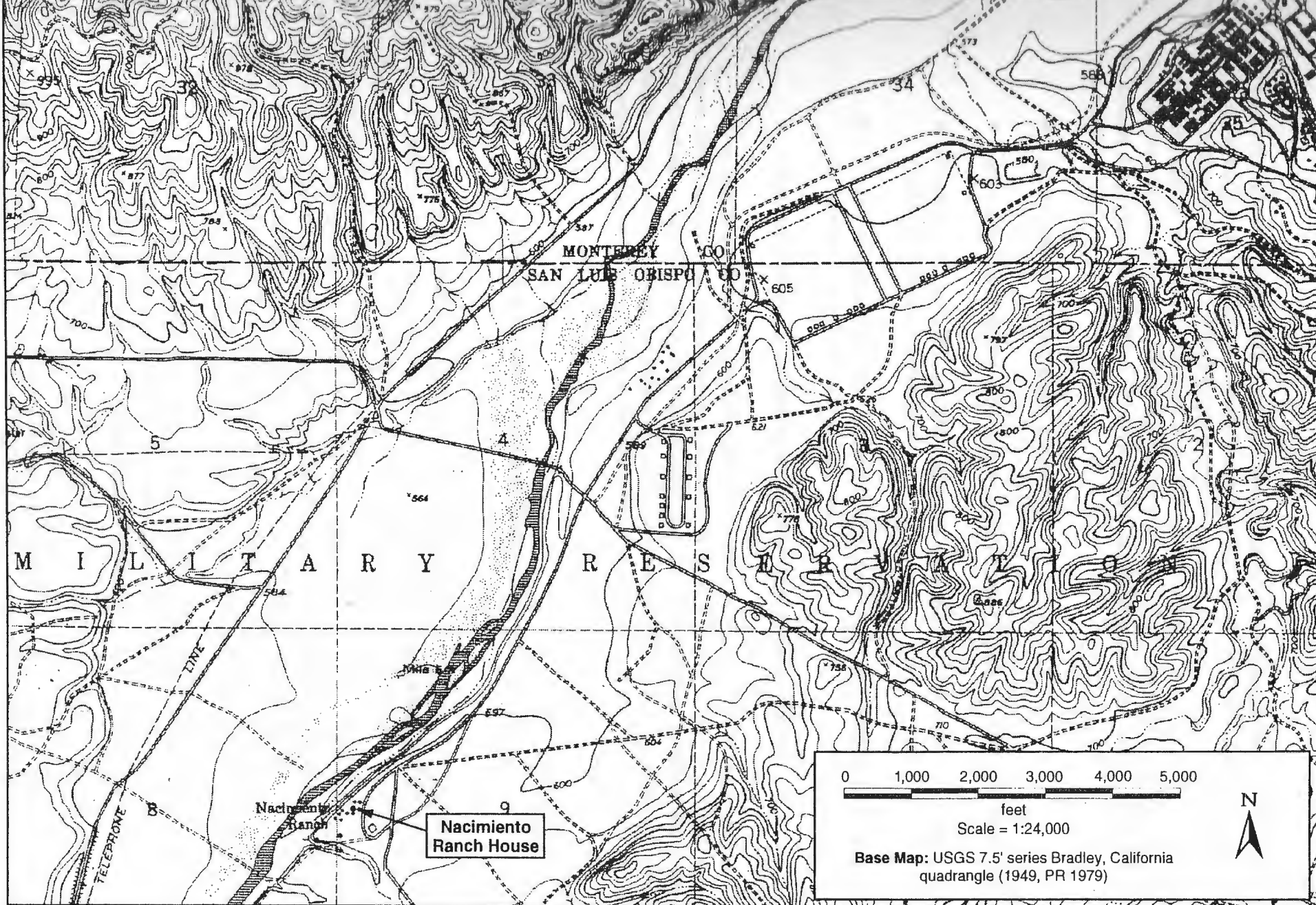


Figure 1
Location of Nacimiento Ranch House

agencies take into account the effects of their actions on properties that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). To determine whether an undertaking (i.e., the action) could affect NRHP-eligible properties, archeological, historical, and architectural properties must be inventoried and evaluated. Any given undertaking may be judged by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to have “no effect”, “no adverse effect”, or “adverse effect” on historic properties. The Section 106 review process is implemented according to the following five steps:

- identify and evaluate historic properties;
- assess the effects of the undertaking on properties eligible for listing in the NRHP;
- consult with the SHPO and other agencies to develop an agreement that addresses the treatment of historic properties;
- receive comments from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on the agreement or results of consultation; and
- implement the project according to the conditions of the agreement.

As a result of a federal undertaking to demolish a large portion of the buildings at Camp Roberts, the Army has taken measures to comply with the first step of the Section 106 process by identifying and evaluating historic properties at the base. In 1988, Breschini and Haversat conducted a partial inventory of architectural properties at Camp Roberts. This inventory was followed by an evaluation of the built environment at the base, which was completed in 1997 by Jones & Stokes Associates.

Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act

As a unit of the DOD, Camp Roberts must also comply with Section 110 of the NHPA. The intent of Section 110 is to ensure that historic preservation is fully integrated into the ongoing programs and missions of federal agencies. For historic properties that are currently being used and are eligible for listing in the NRHP, Section 110 requires that agencies use these properties in a manner that does not cause significant damage to or deterioration of the property. If the use of the property requires that the property be modified, such modifications should be consistent with the recommended treatments in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Projects with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (National Park Service 1995). To use historic properties effectively, agencies should:

- identify those program activities that presently involve the use of historic properties and ensure, to the maximum extent possible, that such activities continue to maintain such properties in active use, provided the activities are not causing damage to or deterioration of such properties;

others with building management responsibility regarding the protection or treatment of the Nacimiento Ranch house;

- coordinating historic preservation planning requirements with the base's mission and land use requirements;
- assigning responsibility for recognizing and maintaining cultural resources in compliance with legal requirements for historic preservation;
- promoting education concerning cultural resources throughout the base; and
- introducing measures to increase public awareness of the base's historic properties.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In 1988, Breschini and Haversat conducted an inventory of architectural properties at Camp Roberts. The Breschini and Haversat (1988) cultural resources management plan (CRMP) included a partial inventory of architectural properties at the training site. This report consisted of a field inventory and archival research of building records. Because many of the buildings were similar, the inventory and evaluation grouped the structures into categories by major building type. A sampling of the buildings present at Camp Roberts was documented on early historic building inventory forms from the California Department of Parks and Recreation. One summary form was completed for the entire facility; the remaining 31 forms inventoried individual representative buildings or groups of buildings. Among the buildings inventoried in this report was the Nacimiento Ranch house, CA-Slo-1173-H. Breschini and Haversat concluded that the ranch house appeared to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under criterion C. The study determined that the ranch house was historically and architecturally significant because it was originally a part of the Nacimiento Ranch complex and because it was architecturally unique to the base. The Breschini and Haversat report also found that no other building or structure at Camp Roberts appeared eligible for listing in the NRHP.

In 1997, Jones & Stokes Associates conducted an evaluation of the built environment at Camp Roberts to comply with Section 106 of NHPA; the evaluation was triggered by the Army's undertaking to demolish a large portion of the buildings at the base. All buildings and structures that were more than 50 years old were inventoried and evaluated for listing in the NRHP. In addition, temporary buildings and structures constructed between 1939 and 1946 were documented as being exempt from Section 106 of the NHPA under the nationwide Programmatic Agreement for Temporary World War II Buildings (WWII PA) and, therefore, not eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Jones & Stokes Associates study concurred with the Breschini and Haversat report (1988a) that the Nacimiento Ranch house appears to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under criterion C for its distinctive representation of the Spanish Eclectic style of domestic architecture in California.

METHODS

The methods employed in the development of the HPTP for the Nacimiento Ranch house involved archival research, interviews, and an architectural inventory conducted by the Jones & Stokes Associates team (Leslie R. Fryman, architectural historian, and Monte Kim, historian). The research themes used to establish a comprehensive historic context for the Nacimiento Ranch are temporal and include the following: Spanish exploration and the establishment of missions, secularization and the rancho period, and the Hellman dude ranch.

Archival Research

In addition to reviewing the Breschini and Haversat CRMP (1988a) and the 1997 Jones & Stokes Associates built-environment evaluation, the Jones & Stokes Associates team contacted the San Luis Obispo County Historical Museum for historical information on the Nacimiento Ranch house and conducted research at the following repositories: California State Library, for county maps and secondary sources on the history of the Nacimiento Ranch and the surrounding area; U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Sacramento, for township plat maps and files on land status and use records; and the Camp Roberts Museum and Archives, for photographs and primary source documents on the history of the Nacimiento Ranch.

Interviews

The Jones & Stokes Associates team also conducted informal interviews with individuals in the area regarding the history of the Nacimiento Ranch and the ranch house. On October 23, 1998, the team interviewed Shirley Tharledson, whose grandfather (Eli Wright) was foreman of the ranch during the 1920s and 1930s, and Wallace Ohles, a local historian in the San Miguel area. A telephone interview was also conducted on November 5, 1998, with R. E. ("Dutch") Wilson, whose father was the foreman of the Nacimiento Ranch under Isais William Hellman, Sr.

Architectural Inventory

On October 23, 1998, the Jones & Stokes Associates team conducted an architectural inventory of the Nacimiento Ranch house. Photographs of the exterior and interior of the ranch house were taken; a scaled floor plan of the house was prepared; and a detailed inventory was made of the building's interior and exterior condition, features, and landscaping.

HISTORY OF THE NACIMIENTO RANCH

Spanish Exploration and the Establishment of Missions

As part of the plan to explore and occupy Alta California, Franciscan friar Junipero Serra was sent from New Spain up the Pacific coast by ship to establish missions in California. The first was founded in San Diego in 1769. A handful of soldiers, ranchers, and miners settled near the missions, but the northern lands remained sparsely settled well into the 19th century (Meyer and Sherman 1991). Beginning in the 16th century, Spanish explorers forged trails through the southwestern United States, paving the way for settlement.

In 1769, Gaspar de Portola—then Governor of Lower California—embarked on an expedition in search of the Monterey Bay, along with Fathers Juan Crespi and Francisco Gomez (Thompson and West 1883). On September 21, 1769, the Portola expedition camped along a river just north of present-day Paso Robles. Father Crespi named the river “Nacimiento,” apparently believing that he was near “a very large arroyo, whose source [*nacimiento*] was not far off” (Gudde 1969). When members of a subsequent expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza came to the same river and camped near the current project area in 1774, they also referred to the river as the Nacimiento. The de Anza party, however, associated the word “nacimiento” with “the Nativity” (another meaning of the Spanish word), perhaps because the actual source of the river was farther away than the previous expedition had realized (Gudde 1969). From the Nacimiento River, the de Anza expedition continued to Mission San Antonio and then on to Monterey (Bolton 1930).

Mission San Antonio de Padua was established on July 14, 1771, on the eastern bank of Mission Creek in the San Antonio Valley of southern Monterey County. The original location, 1.5 miles south of the present location, was abandoned in 1773 because of drought. Houses of wood and mud, as well as a large village of tule and poles, were built for the soldiers. Ditches were constructed from the creek to irrigate cultivated fields. In 1778, an adobe house was built on the San Antonio River. During the 1820s, construction activities increased at the various outposts of Mission San Antonio. At San Benito, Mission San Antonio’s stock-raising operation, an adobe house and livestock corral were constructed, and at Los Ojitos and Rancho San Miguelito—both cattle outposts of the mission—new adobe houses were built. In addition to raising cattle, outposts such as San Miguelito produced agricultural products such as beans and corn. By 1835, the holdings of Mission San Antonio included vineyards, orchards, buildings, corrals, and fields at 10 associated outpost ranchos: San Carpofo, San Bartolome, El Tule, San Lucas, San Benito, San Barnabe, San Miguelito, Los Ojitos, San Timoteo, and San Lorenz (Englehardt 1929).

Mission San Miguel Arcángel was founded on July 25, 1797, and became one of the most productive of the California missions in food and livestock. The mission used the vast surrounding acreage, which extended as far north as San Bartolome. To the east and west, it had access to land that would later include El Rancho Nacimiento (Englehardt 1929).

Secularization and the Rancho Period

Soon after Mexico gained independence from Spain, the new government began taking steps to suppress the powers of the priests and the wealth of the missions. The strong anticlerical political climate in Mexico, as well as the push by residents in California to open up all land to settlement, culminated in the confiscation of mission funds and property and the secularization of missions in 1834. Secularization succeeded in placing missions at the same level as parish churches and making mission lands available for settlement (Robinson 1948, Pitt 1971, Bean 1973).

Secularization opened the way for the Mexican government of California to distribute mission lands in the form of land grants. In San Luis Obispo County, the Mexican governor of California made 43 grants (Ohles 1997). One of these land grants was El Rancho Nacimiento, which was part of the earlier mission lands of San Miguel. In 1844, El Rancho Nacimiento was granted to local Christianized Native Americans, along with the land grants of Las Gallinas and La Estrella, with the intent that they would occupy the land within 1 year. This requirement could be met by constructing a house or corral, introducing livestock, or planting an orchard (Ohles 1997). Lacking proper training and the necessary means to engage in the private cultivation of land and livestock, the San Miguel tribe found it difficult to meet the requirements for property ownership established by the government. Many members of the tribe simply fled in an attempt to disassociate themselves from mission life and refused to return to lay claim to the property. As a result, the mission and the adjoining arid land of El Rancho Nacimiento were abandoned (Blomquist 1943).

On June 13, 1846, William Reed, Petronilo Rios, and Miguel Garcia petitioned Governor Pio Pico for a land grant that included the San Miguel mission, El Rancho Nacimiento, and La Estrella. The petition stated that the three partners were interested in the property not only because the “Ex-Mission of San Miguel” contained “some habitable rooms where families can lodge”, but also because the property comprised “a tract of land sufficient to raise cattle and yield crops” (“Unclassified *Expediente* Number 294”). Additionally, Reed and Rios “planned to raise sheep and harvest the timber near Cambria”, a part of the former mission lands included in the grant (Krieger 1988).

In July 1846, Governor Pico granted the former mission lands to Reed and his two partners. Although Miguel Garcia renounced his right to the property on September 11, 1846—purportedly because of personal conflicts with Rios—the other two partners did take possession of the land. The Rios family moved into a large, one-story adobe house on La Estrella, approximately 6 miles east of the mission on the Estrella River. William Reed and his family had apparently been living in the San Miguel mission since 1845 (Ohles 1997).

By fall 1847, questions arose concerning the validity of Reed’s title to the former mission and El Rancho Nacimiento. The priest in the area, as well as local Native Americans, claimed that they still had a legal right to the property. They argued that the grant was invalid because it was signed by the Mexican governor after the American military began its occupation of California on July 7, 1846—the day Commodore John D. Sloat took control of the presidio at Monterey. Although Reed’s grant clearly shows that it was signed by the Mexican Governor in Santa Barbara on “July 4, 1846,” other claimants to the property later testified to the U.S. Board of Land Commissioners that

the grant had been antedated and that it had actually been signed after July 7, 1846. Robert Becker, in *Diseños of California Ranchos*, attempted to reconstruct the event using circumstantial evidence:

The Rev. Jose Miguel Gomez, the minister of the church at San Luis Obispo, testified that he was visited there twice by Governor Pico during the month of July, 1846; the first time when the governor was on his way to meet General Castro [at Santa Margarita, a few miles north of San Luis Obispo], and the second time upon his return with news of the American occupation. Father Gomez also stated that Reed made his request to the governor after the latter's meeting with Castro; that the governor told Reed that he had no time for such business; and that Reed followed the governor to the south, returning some days later with the signed papers. If this testimony is true, the papers must have been antedated, for Pico and Castro did not meet until July 12.

Ultimately, the Board of Land Commissioners accepted Gomez' testimony and invalidated Reed's claim to the land. Reed, however, never lived to discover the outcome of the litigation, for in 1849 he and his entire family were murdered by deserters from a regiment of volunteers from New York. When the board made its decision in 1853, the only original grantee left was Rios, who decided not to appeal the decision (Becker 1964). El Rancho Nacimiento, consequently, reverted to the public domain, with no new record of ownership of the property appearing until 1860 (Blomquist 1943).

In 1858, the Surveyor General's map shows that the only house in the current project area on the eastern edge of the Nacimiento River was "Palmer and Jones' House", located approximately 0.25 mile northeast of the Nacimiento Ranch house (Stanley 1976). In 1860, however, county records reveal that George Flint paid \$7,240 in taxes on El Rancho Nacimiento, indicating that he had owned the property since at least 1860 and that he possibly had leased at least part of the land to Palmer and Jones (Angel 1883). It is estimated that the ranch at that time included 36,400 total acres and that, by 1861, there were 15,000-16,000 sheep on the property (Brewer 1974).

Sometime after 1860, ownership of the Nacimiento Ranch changed hands. In October 1871, records show that a Robert G. Flint paid \$3,750 in gold coin to William Pinkerton for a parcel of land at the Nacimiento Ranch (Ohles 1997). During the 1870s, Flint built a wooden ranch house on the eastern side of the Nacimiento River. The house was located on a flat piece of land approximately 100 feet above the river. He also constructed a stable, barn, granary, corrals, store rooms, and a rodeo ground and planted an orchard and a garden plot. Also on the ranch were a post office and a school (Stanley 1976). In 1879, Flint expanded his real estate holdings by purchasing land on the San Juan rancho from Drury W. James. When Robert Flint died in 1885, ownership of the ranches was divided between his two sons. Robert Flint, Jr., (age 15) received the San Juan Ranch and George B. Flint (age 13) took control of the Nacimiento Ranch. George Flint also received 2,750 head of cattle and \$3,401 in cash (Ohles 1997).

In addition to raising cattle, George Flint began leasing out parcels of the Nacimiento Ranch to grain farmers. The Paso Robles Record notes in an article titled "Farming the Nacimiento" (January 20, 1895):

The Nacimiento ranch, lying near San Miguel, owned by G. B. Flynt, is being subdivided and leased for grain farming. Among those who have leased tracts of this ranch are Frank Smith, Davis Brothers, A. B. Fancher, Z. A. Edrington, R. Kirk, and D. B. Shaw. The last named is a larger farmer from near Shandon, and he expects to sow about two thousand acres. This move on the part of the Young proprietor of that ranch shows business shrewdness, as it has been demonstrated that the stubble after the removal of a good crop of grain will afford more feed for stock than the natural growth of the soil without cultivation. The farming of this large tract will add much to the business of San Miguel.

By May 1895, however, the Paso Robles Record reported that Flint had "neglected to settle some bills" owed to his former manager, and that "the entire estate" was being "transferred to his wife and the cash assigned to Dr. Steiner, of Paso Robles" (May 25, 1895). The dispute was ultimately settled on August 20, 1896, when the Superior Court dismissed the case (Ohles 1997).

George Flint was also involved in a legal battle with San Luis Obispo county officials over several "obstructions" (i.e., gates) that he had placed across a section of the old El Camino Real that traversed his ranch. County authorities and citizens in the area complained bitterly about the impasse in the road and they criticized the board of supervisors for its failure to take immediate action against Flint. As the June 8, 1895 issue of the Paso Robles Record observed: "The citizens of that section are unable to see why it should take three or four months to remove obstructions from a road that has been traveled ever since the Mission Fathers first passed through this valley." It was not until March 1896 that the county finally succeeded in gaining the right-of-way to travel unimpeded across Flint's ranch (Ohles 1997).

During the final months of the dispute with the County of San Luis Obispo, Flint sold the Nacimiento Ranch to A. F. Benton, an Australian rancher who owned a considerable amount of land near Atascadero and in the northern areas of the county. Benton, however, only held the deed to the ranch for a few months before selling it in 1896 to a German-born immigrant, John Heinrich Baron von Schroeder (Ohles 1997).

In addition to the 36,500-acre Nacimiento Ranch, von Schroeder owned the Eaglet Ranch southwest of Atascadero and property in Paso Robles, Morro, and San Simeon. Financial reversals, however, forced von Schroeder to sell the ranch to Isais William Hellman, a Jewish financier from San Francisco, for \$350,000 in 1910 (Ohles 1997).

Hellman Dude Ranch

Isais William Hellman was the founder of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, which opened in Los Angeles in March 1871. He became the primary stockholder of that organization and later

started a branch in San Francisco. In 1893, Hellman also organized and became the president of the Union Trust Company, which merged with Wells Fargo Nevada National Bank in 1924 (Cozzens and Davis 1911).

Hellman purchased the 35,000-acre Nacimiento Ranch for \$1 per acre in 1910 from Baron J. H. Schroeder (Angel 1883, Cozzens and Davis 1911). The ranch produced cattle, mules, horses, and hogs, as well as agricultural products such as wheat, barley, and alfalfa. At the time that Hellman purchased the ranch, there were three large barns, a blacksmith shop, an implement shed, and a stallion barn with stalls on the estate (Ohles 1997).

Between 1910 and 1920, the ranch prospered under the management of Fred Bixby, superintendent of the ranch, and Steve Wilson, foreman (Wilson 1993). A large part of the commercial success of the ranch during this period can be attributed to an effective marketing campaign developed by Bixby to lease land within the estate to seasoned farmers and ranchers. As Bixby put it in a 1910 article published in the *San Miguel Sentinel*:

The land will be leased to experienced farmers, with families, who will live on and cultivate the land for a term of years. They will be assisted in every way by the Nacimiento ranch company to successful and profitable farming, stock raising and fruit cultivation. Practically all the land from the stone house, three miles from San Miguel, to Bradley, has already been leased to families, principally from Southern California, who have taken advantage of liberal terms offered by the company, and who will almost immediately take up their abode on the land.

Bixby stated further that

the company is prepared to spend vast sums of money to accomplish results. The development of water will receive prompt attention. . . . A new pumping plant will be built at once in close proximity to the main ranch house, capable of irrigating 1,000 acres of alfalfa.

Bixby also told the *San Miguel Sentinel* that “live stock—horses, mares, mules, and bulls will be, in fact are being, shipped in. The first carload of horses and mares have already arrived and been unloaded here in San Miguel and taken to the ranch, another shipment will follow” (Ohles 1997). By the end of 1929, more than half the assets of the ranch (\$116,562) had been invested in livestock (Nacimiento Ranch Papers 1929).

Although cattle made up the bulk of this investment, ranchers placed greater personal value on horses. In ranching culture, the personalized attention granted to horses was fairly typical. As Fred Bixby’s daughter, Katharine, observed: “. . . yesterday’s relationship between horses and people” involved “working cooperatively to accomplish something purposeful in an environment where each was dependent on the other” (Hotchkis 1971). At the Nacimiento, as on other ranches, ranchers depended on horses to assist them in the business of cattle raising. The close working relationship between ranchers and horses is also alluded to in the 1929 Nacimiento Ranch Papers, where it lists virtually all of the ranch’s 108 horses by name. Most names were fairly typical, such as “Chester” and “Nellie.” Some names, however, were more exotic and reflected the influence of

Spanish culture—for example, “Flaco” (skinny). Others suggested an attempt, perhaps, to keep track of the lineage of certain yearling mules, as with “Louise”, “Julia”, “Louise Julia”, “Julia Louise”, and “Louise Julia Louise”, all of which were the offspring of one particular mare (Nacimiento Ranch Papers 1929).

Isais William Hellman died on April 9, 1920. His son, Isais William Hellman, Jr., who served as bookkeeper for the ranch, died the following month on May 10, 1920. From 1920 to 1940, the Nacimiento Ranch became part of the Hellman estate (Ohles 1997). Isais Warren Hellman, son of Isais William Hellman, Jr., served as manager of the estate until the late 1930s. He was also the director and president of the Wells Fargo Bank & Union Trust Company in San Francisco and later served as the director of the Farmers and Merchants National Bank in Los Angeles (Marquis 1949). During this period, Eli Wright served as foreman and general manager of the ranch, and for a few years after the death of Isais William Hellman, Jr., Fred Bixby assisted with the management of the estate (Tharledson pers. comm.). Under Wright’s management, a cofferdam and a large reservoir were constructed and the ranch maintained its own butcher shop.

Eli Wright and his family initially moved into the wooden ranch house that George Flint had built in the 1870s. In 1928, Isais Warren Hellman tore down the Flint house and constructed the present ranch house, apparently on the same site (Ohles 1997, Tharledson pers. comm.). Located on the eastern side of the Nacimiento River, the modern, concrete ranch house incorporated Spanish Colonial Revival and Bungalow architectural features into its U-shaped plan. The ranch house contained six bedrooms, two bathrooms (one on each wing), a living room, dining room, laundry room, and kitchen. Around the ranch house were two barns, a corral, a covered concrete water trough, a water tower, an ice house (which also housed an electric generator), a bunkhouse, and a “Club House”, which was used by the Hellmans for entertaining. Landscaping around the ranch house included oak and eucalyptus trees, as well as scotch broom bushes, Shasta daisies, and Cecil Brewer roses (Tharledson pers. comm.)

The new ranch house provided housing for Isais Warren Hellman (during his visits to the ranch), Eli Wright and his wife Ida “Hortense” Wright, and their daughters Katheryn and Doris. Hortense, along with one of her daughters, did the chores for the ranch house and the “Club House”, as well as the cooking for the men at the ranch (Tharledson pers. comm.).

During the late 1930s, Edward Hellman Heller, a cousin of Isais Warren Hellman, took control of the ranch with plans to sell it to the government (Ohles 1997). Eventually the Nacimiento Ranch passed into a Wells Fargo trust, and in 1940 the ranch was finally sold to the Army (Stanley 1976). At that time, the ranch reportedly included 35,791 acres. In addition, small holdings totaling 2,350 acres within the ranch belonged to Southern Pacific Milling Company, G. Thornburg and Irene V. Carpenter, E. D. and Emile Kruse, Emile Rothe, and F. H. Newlove. A tract of land east of the Salinas River belonging to the B. F. Porter estate contributed 6,300 acres, for a total of approximately 44,400 acres for the newly formed Army installation, Camp Roberts.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NACIMIENTO RANCH HOUSE

Exterior

Built in 1928, the Nacimiento Ranch house is one story in height and has a U-shaped building plan, which surrounds a small exterior courtyard. The building is constructed of board-formed concrete, with white paint applied on the exterior walls. The walls surrounding the courtyard, however, are constructed of both board-formed concrete (up to a height of 11 feet) and tongue and groove siding (upper walls and ceiling). It has a medium-pitched roof with gable wings at the north and south ends of the building. Beneath each gable is a small wooden vent. The roof is clad with regularly laid, red pantile ceramic tiles and has a 2-foot unenclosed eave overhang with exposed beams and roof rafters. At the southwest end of the house is a large, rectangular, concrete, exterior chimney against the eave wall. In the central block is a small concrete chimney for the kitchen stove.

The front entry is situated in the central block and opens directly into the kitchen. Two additional entry doors are located in the north and south wings of the house. These two doors open into bedrooms from the porch around the central courtyard. Originally, there were three doors in each wing that all opened, bunkhouse-style, into individual bedrooms and into the dining room, but five of these doors were subsequently sealed with concrete and plastered over. At the rear of the building is one 30-inch by 80-inch door that opens into a small hallway/pantry adjacent to the kitchen. It has a brass door knob and door plate and a 2/2/2/2-light fixed window in the upper half of the door. Access to this door is facilitated by three concrete steps and a landing.

All of the fenestration for the building consists of 2/2-light double-hung wood-sash windows with formed concrete window sills. Most of the windows measure 30 inches by 60 inches. Smaller windows range from 30 inches by 44 inches (as in the kitchen and bathroom in south wing) to 20 inches by 44 inches (bathrooms in north wing) and 24 inches by 44 inches (laundry room). Under most of the windows—near the lower edge of the exterior walls—are decorative iron foundation grills (Figure 2).

The wrap-around porch surrounding the courtyard also is constructed of poured concrete. It measures 7 feet 5 inches in width and the surface is grooved to give the appearance of large tile squares. Located near the main entrance is the ranch brand, the Section symbol, engraved into the concrete of the porch (Figure 3). The Section symbol was patented and first used by George B. Flint on February 16, 1886, and was subsequently adopted by Isais William Hellman after he purchased the Nacimiento Ranch in 1910 (Wilson 1993).

At the outer edge of the porch, there are 18 wooden posts measuring 6 inches by 6 inches with corbelled caps (seven per wing and four along the central block), which form a colonnade roof over the porch. The posts are connected with two 4-inch by 4-inch wooden railings. At the ends of the porch (beneath the gables) are sections of painted wood lattice. There are three light fixtures hanging from the ceiling and a decorative wrought-iron wall sconce near the main entrance along the south wall of the porch. There are three sets of concrete steps (two steps in height) for each section of the porch.

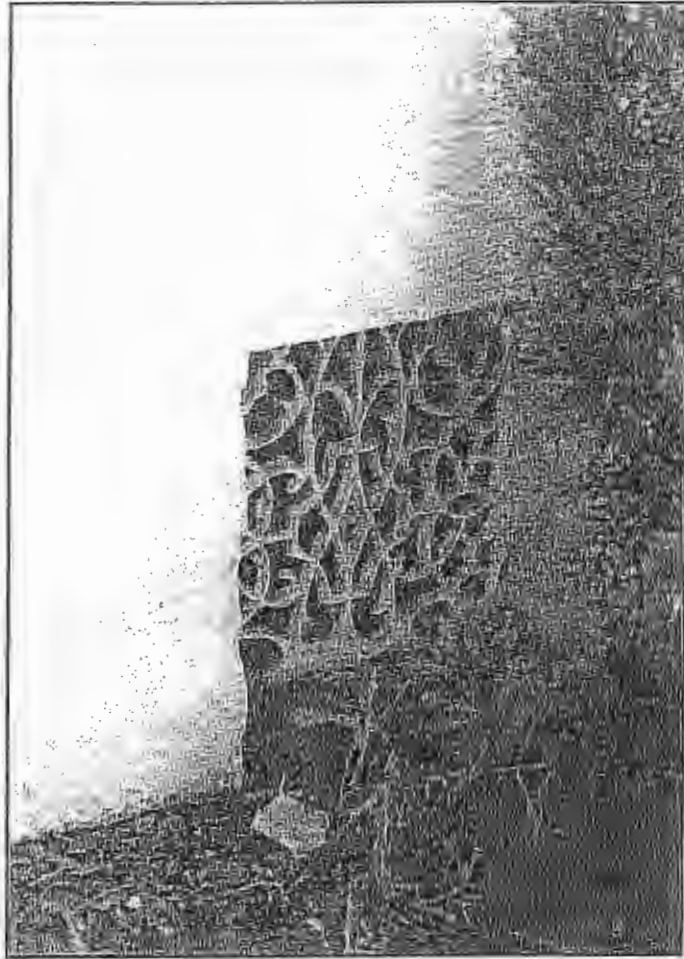


Figure 2. Decorative Iron Foundation Grill

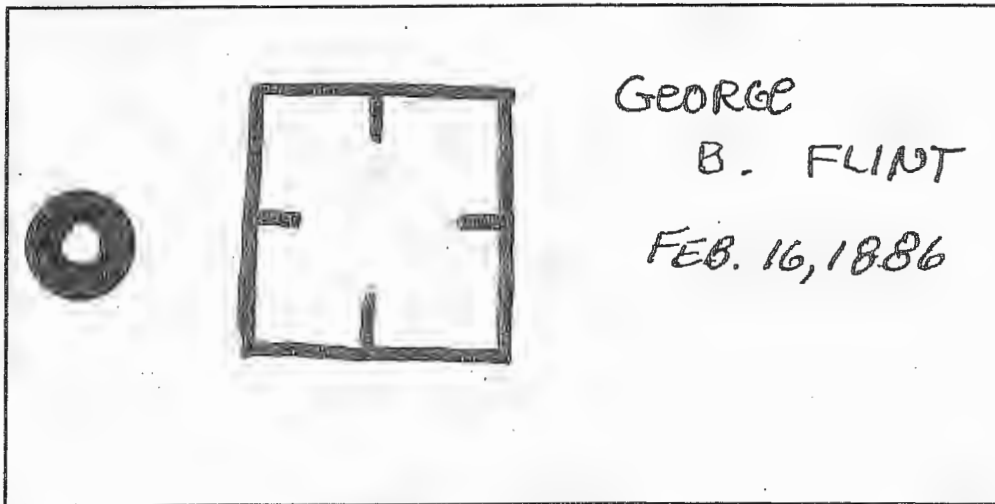


Figure 3. Section Symbol

Exterior Modifications since 1940

Since the purchase of the Hellman estate by the Army in 1940, few architectural modifications have been made to the exterior of the Nacimiento Ranch house. The most apparent change involves the sealing off of five doorways that originally opened into the central courtyard. These doorways (two on each wing of the building) are now enclosed with board-formed concrete. Minor modifications to the exterior include the addition of aluminum-framed window screens and the replacement of some of the decorative iron foundation grills with less ornate ones.

Exterior Setting

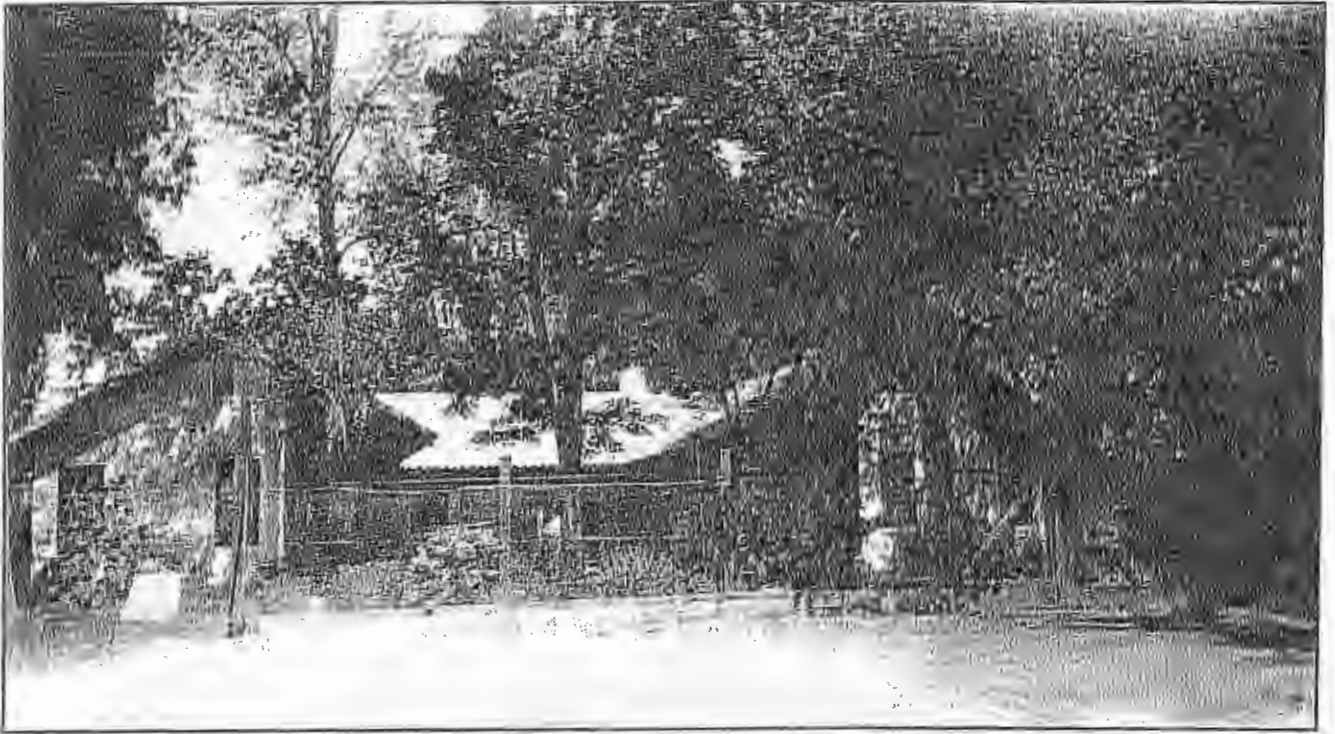
Before 1940, the Nacimiento Ranch house was surrounded by a complex of outbuildings and livestock barns. South of the house were a bunkhouse, a small barn, a livestock corral, and a water tank and pumphouse (Tharledson pers. comm.). To the southeast was a large hay barn or cattle barn. North of the ranch house was the "clubhouse", a detached version of a den or recreation room where the ranch owners entertained their guests. The clubhouse pre-dated the 1928 ranch house (Wilson pers. comm.) and may have served a similar function as part of the earlier ranch complex.

During the 1930s, landscape plantings around the ranch house were denser and larger than the present landscaping, particularly along the north and south sides of the house and in the rear. Plantings at the front of the house included various shrubs in the center of the courtyard, Cecil Brewer roses along the front of the porch, a pomegranate tree at the northwest corner of the house, and oak trees throughout the front yard (Figure 4). Original plantings at the rear of the house included Shasta daisies, scotch broom, and eucalyptus trees (Tharledson pers. comm.). With the exception of the oak trees in the front and the eucalyptus in the rear, most of these original plantings have been removed (Figures 5 and 6).

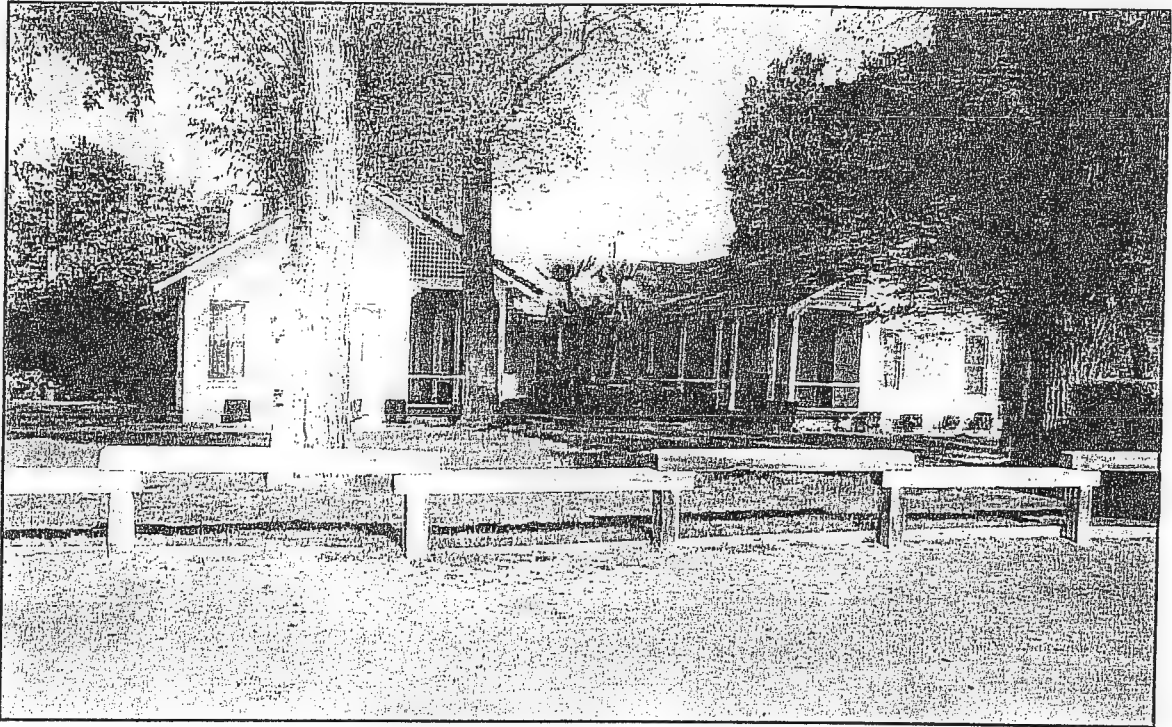
Although the overall appearance of the ranch house has been significantly altered by the removal of the surrounding complex of buildings and much of its original landscaping, its setting is still essentially that of a rural ranch. Although the only remnant of the original outbuildings is a concrete watering trough for horses, the only modern structures constructed at the site are a small World War II-era pump house and a modern water tank at the location of the original well.

Interior Description

The interior plan of the building has a central block with a dining room, living room, kitchen, and pantry and two wings containing sleeping areas and bathrooms. The south wing has two bedrooms and one bathroom, whereas the north wing is currently divided into three bedrooms and one bathroom. All of the rooms originally had painted plaster walls and lathe and plaster ceilings. The floors have a subflooring of tongue and groove fir covered with linoleum or carpeting. The main sources of lighting throughout the house are hanging electric light fixtures (Figure 7).



**Figure 4. Historic Photo Showing Landscaping
in Front of the Nacimiento Ranch House**



**Figure 5. Current Landscaping
in Front of the Nacimiento Ranch House**



**Figure 6. Current Landscaping
in the Courtyard of the Nacimiento Ranch House**



Figure 7. Original Interior Light Fixture

In the kitchen, a modern electric stove has replaced the hotel-style range with a trash burner and plate shelf that Hellman bought for \$625 in 1928 (Nacimiento Ranch Papers 1929). Above the stove is a built-in vented hood. Also in the kitchen are a porcelain sink, wooden cabinet, numerous cupboards, and an enclosed "ventilated" storage area that keeps produce cool. Next to the kitchen are the laundry room and pantry.

In the dining room are two large, built-in wooden bookcases against the wall adjacent to the kitchen. In the living room is a large fireplace faced with stones arranged in an arch around the opening of the fireplace. Above the fireplace is a simple, shelf-type wood mantle piece.

Interior Modifications since 1940

One of the most significant alterations to the interior involves the removal of the wall between the two middle bedrooms in the north wing of the house (Figure 8). As a result of this modification, the original four bedrooms have been combined into three. Striped wallpaper and acoustic ceiling tiles have replaced the painted plaster walls and the lathe and plaster ceiling in the three bedrooms in the north wing. A second major alteration in the north wing involved the conversion of the bathroom nearest to the northwest corner of the building into a walk-through closet. The other bathrooms in the house have been renovated with modern toilets, sinks, bathtub, shower, and Formica-top vanities. Modern linoleum has been installed in the bathrooms and kitchen, wood parquet floor tiles have been placed over the dining and living room floors, and shag carpeting currently covers the fir subflooring throughout the rest of the house. In the living room and dining room ceilings, "decorative" 4x4 stringers have been added and made to look like vigas.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NACIMIENTO RANCH HOUSE

Character-Defining Elements

This section summarizes the key elements that define the architectural character of the historic Nacimiento Ranch house.

The exterior architectural elements include:

- U-shaped building plan with central, open courtyard;
- gable roofs on the north and south wings;
- red, ceramic roof tiles;
- painted, board-formed concrete walls;
- double-hung wood-sash windows; and
- decorative, cast-iron foundation grills.

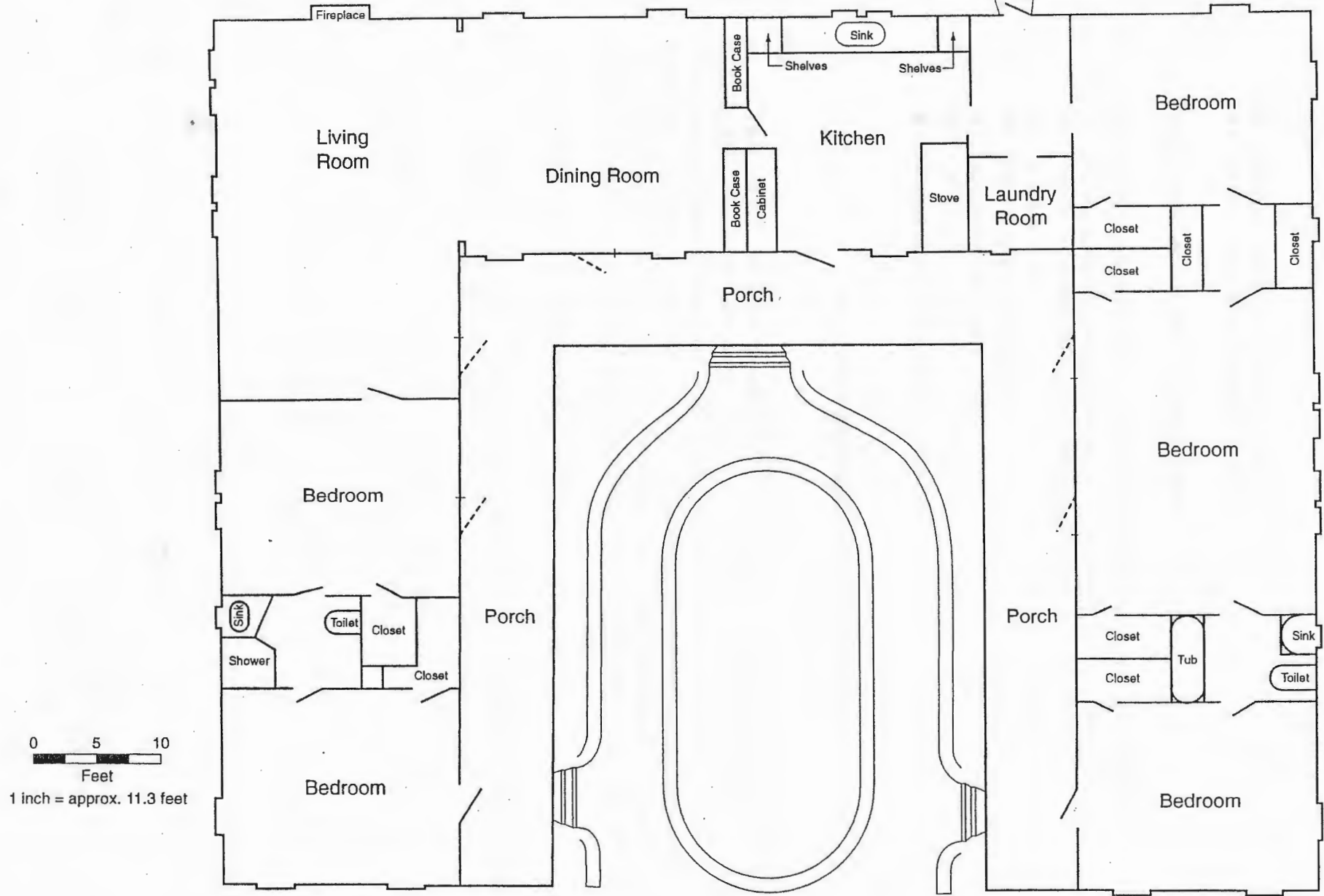


Figure 8
Floor Plan of Nacimiento Ranch House

The exterior setting includes:

- oak trees and grass in the front yard and
- a corral-style fence around the front yard.

The interior architectural elements include:

- wooden cabinets, shelving, and vented produce pantry in the kitchen;
- swinging wooden door between the kitchen and dining room;
- built-in wooden bookcases in the dining room;
- fir subflooring;
- lathe and plaster ceilings;
- painted concrete/plaster walls;
- a large fireplace faced with rocks; and
- hanging frosted light globes (Figure 7)

PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report presents specific preservation recommendations for the Nacimientto Ranch house. These recommendations are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings. In arriving at these recommendations, the Jones & Stokes Associates team has made an effort to develop guidance that is practical and feasible for Camp Roberts personnel to implement. The recommendations are classified into three categories:

Category 1—This work should be addressed immediately.

Category 2—This work may be included in the next scheduled major maintenance or renovation work for this building.

Category 3—This work could be handled when funds become available for restoration activities, above and beyond regular maintenance activities.

Category 1 Recommendations

Category 1 recommendations are chiefly maintenance needs that should be addressed immediately or recommendations to address the maintenance needs of irreplaceable features. The following are Category 1 recommendations for the Nacimientto Ranch house:

- Consult with a building contractor to determine the cause of cracking in the wall at the southwest end of the house. This cracking may have been caused by historic seismic activity in the area, although it is more likely the result of a gradual settling of the house

foundation. Failure to seal the cracks will cause the current condition to worsen and may eventually lead to serious structural damage. All necessary repair work will retain the original appearance of the building.

- Examine the building for termite and dryrot damage. Although no damage was apparent at the time of this survey, a qualified building inspector will be enlisted to examine the building for termite and dryrot damage. Any necessary repair work will be done to match appearance of the building before the repair work.
- Inspect the roof for leaks or damaged ceramic tiles. Broken tiles will be replaced with identical or similar tiles to maintain consistency in the appearance of the roof.
- Inspect plumbing for leaks. If plumbing fixtures such as sinks, toilets, bathtubs, faucets, or handles need to be replaced, use items similar in appearance to those produced in the late 1920s or 1930s. Manufacturers and supply companies such as Renovator's in New Hampshire, Caldwell Builders in San Francisco, The Old House Parts Company in Maine, Historic Home Supply Corp. in New York, and Restoration Works in New York offer many acceptable replacement fixtures. See Appendix A for addresses and telephone numbers of these firms.
- When the fiberglass shower stall in the south wing of the building needs to be replaced, remove the unit completely and replace it with a cement-type shower pan and tiled walls (using tiles similar in design to those used during the late 1920s and 1930s). Additionally, a shower rod and curtain be used instead of a glass door.
- Inspect the glazing and condition of wood window sashes. Broken or cracked window panes will be replaced immediately to prevent moisture damage to the wood sash. If it becomes necessary to replace an entire window, in no case will wood sashes be replaced with aluminum-framed windows. Modern *Thermaglass windows that duplicate the design and appearance of historic, double-hung wood-sash windows are available through architectural restoration and renovation mail order companies. Many local woodworking companies will custom-make wood-sash windows to requested specifications.
- Remove the air conditioning unit from the window of the bedroom at the northwest corner of the building. A swamp cooler unit inserted into the wall of the living room near the fireplace at the west end of the building would be more in keeping with the original appearance of the building. Once the unit is removed, the window will be restored to its original appearance.
- Inspect the fireplace and clean the chimney regularly.
- Inspect doors for damage caused by loose hinges. If exterior doors need replacing, use only solid-core doors compatible with those of the late 1920s or 1930s. In the interior, the swinging door between the kitchen and dining room will be carefully maintained because it is a character-defining element of the house. If this door must be replaced, use

only a similar, swinging-type door. Possible resources for acceptable doors include Caldwell Builders in San Francisco, The Old House Parts Company in Maine, and the Historic Home Supply Corp. in New York (Appendix A).

- Cracked or broken light fixtures will be replaced with salvaged or reproduction fixtures similar to those made during the late 1920s or 1930s. Many lighting shops have such reproductions or deal with companies that manufacture them. Companies dealing with salvaged or reproduction lighting fixtures include American Home Supply in California, St. Louis Antique Lighting Co. in Missouri, and Historic Home Supply Corp. in New York (Appendix A).

Category 2 Recommendations

Category 2 recommendations represent fixable problems that may be addressed during the next major renovation of the ranch house. The following are Category 2 recommendations for the Nacimiento Ranch house:

- Restore the setting of the house with more landscaping—perhaps oak trees, scotch broom, Cécile Brünner roses, and Shasta daisies, which were all part of the original landscape design during the 1930s. These plants, shrubs, and trees should do well in this setting because they are acclimatized to the area.
- To restore the multi-entrance, bunkhouse appearance of the building's facade, the five sealed entry doors that open onto the front porch will be reopened, finished in keeping with the original entrances, and equipped with solid-core wood doors.

Category 3 Recommendations

Category 3 recommendations constitute a "wish list", representing restoration activities that are needed to augment the historic value of the ranch house but are not necessary for the utility of the building. The following are Category 3 recommendations for the Nacimiento Ranch house:

- Remove the acoustic drop ceiling in the living room/dining room and the bedrooms in the north wing and restore the original painted, plaster surface (as in the bedrooms in the south wing).
- Remove wallpaper completely and replace with painted, plaster walls.
- Remove shag carpeting throughout the house and refinish original fir flooring. Finished wood flooring can be covered with large area rugs.
- Restore period furniture.

- Replace the current electric range with an older gas stove.
- Restore the integrity of the exterior setting through the reconstruction of outbuildings and structures associated with a ranch complex (e.g., a barn, bunkhouse, and corrals).

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Appendix A. List of Companies Dealing with Salvaged Fixtures or Reproductions

American Home Supply (lighting and hardware)

P.O. Box 697
Campbell, CA 95009
(408) 246-1962

Caldwell Builders (Salvage merchants for doors, bathroom fixtures, and lighting fixtures)

195 Bayshore Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94124
(415) 550-6777

Crown City Hardware Company

1047 North Allen Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91104-3298
(818) 794-1188

Historic Home Supply Corp. (Salvage merchants for bathroom fixtures, doors, knob sets, and lighting fixtures)

213-215 River Street
Troy, NY 12180-3809
(518) 266-0675
email: homesupply@earthlink.net
www.homesupply.com

The Old House Parts Company

24 Blue Wave Mall
Kennebunk, ME 04043
(207) 985-1999
email: restoration@oldhouseparts.com

Renovator's

P.O. Box 2515
Conway, NH 03818
(800) 659-2211

Restoration Works (bathroom fixtures)
810 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14202
(800) 735-3535

St. Louis Antique Lighting Co.
801 N. Skinker Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63130
(314) 863-1414