

HISTORIC RESOURCES IDENTIFICATION
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
Final 6/2/15 – Prepared by Carla Bollinger

Chatsworth Nature Preserve/Reservoir

Why is this individual resource or neighborhood significant? Chatsworth Nature Preserve (CNP) is a representation of San Fernando Valley (SFV)-Los Angeles history from pre-historic through the 20th Century. This is the last remaining opening space, 1325 acres, on the valley floor with rolling hills, native plants and oak trees, a vision of what the SFV once looked like with numerous cultural-historic landmarks.

Native American site from pre-historic Middle Period (1500 – 500 AD), through Pre-Mission period: A Gabrielino and Ventureño-Chumash, historical district

Mission Period: (1769 to 1833-1836) Spanish expedition and establishment of California Missions through the time period the Missions were secularized by the Mexican government.

Mexican Period: (1821-1848) Rancheros, cattle and sheep ranch, Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando, Mexican land grant by Governor Pio Pico to Eulogio de Celis.

Pioneering/Homesteading or American Period: (1848 – early 1900's) Gold discovery north of San Fernando Mission in Placerita Canyon, 1848; California Statehood in 1850; and the Homestead Act, 1862, all contributed to the SFV changes from cattle and sheep ranching to agricultural, dry farming.

20th Century: Owens Valley-Los Angeles Aqueduct, building of the Chatsworth Reservoir, early Movie/TV Filming, and the development of commercial industry and growth of residential development surrounding the CNP-Reservoir.

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Native American Convergence site. The CNP and surrounding area was a convergence location for Ventureño-Chumash, Gabrielino, and Fernandeno Native Americans to gather, trade, inter-marry, and hold ceremonies.

Momonga Village (Fernandeno) or Rancheria de las Piedras (Gabrielino/Tongva)
Location: Northeastern Simi Hills through Santa Susana Pass to Stoney Point on the west, and south to the north end of Chatsworth Reservoir. Momonga Village site is centered in the vicinity of Stoney Point; an extensive area with the exact boundaries unknown with indications it eclipsed the northern area of the CNP. Archaeological sites inside the CNP and in the surrounding area indicate the Native American occupancy.

Ranchos: Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando: The largest land grant in California, 116,858 acres, awarded in 1846 by Governor Pio Pico to Eulogio de Celis, covered the former SFV Mission lands. **Rancho El Escorpion de las Salinas** (salt marshes) in the southern section of the CNP is an extension of the Rancho El Escorpion.

Joaquin Romero owned half of Rancho El Escorpion and the El Escorpion de las Salinas (south end of the CNP). He was a heavy drinker and in 1861 sold his land/cattle/sheep to Miguel Leonis, his ranch hand, for \$100; Leonis allowed him to live on Leonis Ranch until his death. After Leonis' death, his Chumash-Gabrielino wife, Espiritu Chijulla-Leonis, later won back her property, Rancho El Escorpion.

El Escorpion de las Salinas, disputed region with Eulogio de Celis (Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando,) Pierre Domec took possession, "squatter's" property, of a section of the Lake Manor-reservoir where the limekiln is located. Pierre Domec, an industrious French-Basque immigrant, cooper, rancher, and operator of limekilns, was the husband of Maria Dolores, oldest sister of Juan Menendez's mother, Espiritu. Espiritu was the daughter of the last Indian owner, Chief Oden, Rancho El Escorpion.

CA-LAN-651H: Chatsworth Calera, Reservoir Kiln Site: Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #141 (4/27/75); California Historical Landmark No. 911: Chatsworth Calera Site location. The Caldera, limekiln, for industrial processing, vitrifying bricks, for the San Fernando Mission and other buildings in greater Los Angeles.

Ruins of old adobes: In the kiln site: J.P. Harrington Smithsonian Papers 91-31231: Several old adobe ruins were photographed on DWP property inside of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, and on the west side of Valley Circle Boulevard."

Adobes in the limekiln area: Domec's first adobe, and Marcelina and Bernabel Odon; children of Native American Odon Chihuya, born 1797, when the San Fernando Mission is built. In 1839 Odon received his emancipation from the San Fernando Mission and resided at the El Escorpion Rancho. August, 1845, Odon, Urbano and Manuel, are granted partial ownership in El Escorpion Ranch. In 1849, they conveyed part of their ownership to Joaquin Romero (El Scorpion de las Salinas/Scorpion Ranch/Chatsworth Reservoir region.)

Benjamin F. Porter: Eulogio de Celis heirs sold (1874) the Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando Plat to Maclay and George F. Porter; George F. Porter sold a share of his portion to Benjamin F. Porter, his cousin. With a flip of a coin, B.F. Porter became the land owner of Chatsworth-Porter Ranch, 20,000 acres, and George F. Porter, took the eastern section of his portion. The land is predominately dry-farmed. B.F. Porter sold the western end of his property, location of CNP and surrounding area to the San Fernando Valley Improvement Company.

Homesteaders in CNP:

Pierre Domec: Domec “homestead-squatting area” in Lake Manor-Reservoir is located where he worked the Chatsworth Calera/Limekiln, CA-LAN-651H. Circa 1861-62. His homestead area in Lake Manor/CNP, is not recorded in LA City records. His sister, Francesca Domec, homesteaded in Lake Manor with an edge of property in the reservoir. Her property is recorded.

James & Alice Thrasher: One of 13 parcels of land purchased from B.F. Porter/San Fernando Valley Improvement Company (1889 – 1912). The Thrashers dry farmed, wheat and grain, on their land in the Lake Manor-Chatsworth Reservoir location.

Reservoir: Los Angeles City purchased the land in 1913 to build a reservoir in the San Fernando Valley. Work began in July, 1917, to build the “Chatsworth Reservoir”, William Mulholland’s 19th and last reservoir connected with the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The reservoir was placed in service, 1919, to support the agriculture irrigation needs as the principal water storage facility in the western part of the San Fernando Valley. The reservoir held two earth-fill dams, 7,400 acre-feet x 884 feet high water elevation. Improvement occurred, 1930-31, when the dams were partially reconstructed to increase the water level of the reservoir to five feet elevation with increased capacity to 9,840 acre-feet. Later, 1969, the reservoir was drained and put out of service for the purpose of enlarging and upgrading. Because of the 1971 Sylmar 6.6 earthquake, the reservoir dam was declared seismically unsafe in 1972 and financially too costly to repair/upgrade.

Ecology Pond: After the Sylmar Earthquake, 1971, the Reservoir Detention Basin #2 was converted to an Ecology Pond, 30 acres. The Ecology Pond supports migratory birds in the Pacific Flyway during migration periods, and resident birds, all wildlife in the area. The Ecology Pond is adjacent to an oak savanna with both valley and coast live oak on the north side and surrounding grassland, a vital and unique eco-system in greater Los Angeles.

Heritage oak trees (California White Oak *Quercus Lobata* and Live Oak *Quercus Agrifolia*) in the woodland and savannas of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve, approximately 60, estimated to be 200 to 500 years old, are one of the last refuges for oak trees, woodlands and savannas, in the LA-SFV landscape. Oak tree acorns were a main food source for Native Americans, Chumash and Gabrielino/Tongva living in the region.

Eucalyptus trees Albert Workman, Australian immigrant and manager, for Los Angeles Farm & Milling Co. ordered eucalyptus tree seedlings from his native land and planted the trees in the 1870’s. Workman purchased the 9,000 acre ranch and cultivated another 4,000 acres outside of his property. The dry-land wheat farm became a cattle ranch; at its peak had 1,000 cattle. The ranch house, located in the vicinity of VanOwen and Platt, Canoga Park, sold in 1932. The new owners, Colin

Clements and Florence Ryerson, renamed the historic adobe, Shadow Ranch, in tribute to the eucalyptus trees' shadows. Workman most likely planted eucalyptus trees in the Ranch and surrounding area as a wind break, or to make the ranch-farm greener, or he simply missed his native trees. Legend reports Workman planted eucalyptus seedlings on his wedding day.

20th Century film location (1920 – 1960) movies and TV

Early Movie and TV film location from the 1920's through the 1960's. Tess of the Storm Country (1922) starring Mary Pickford, Hell's Angeles – a Howard Hughes film of a WWI aviator cost up to \$4.2 million and had a tragedy of two pilots that crashed and died during filming (1930's) . Western films: Home on the Range (1946), The Man from Rainbow Valley (1946), Out California Way (1946), Susanna Pass (1946) with film/TV stars Monte Hale, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, Gene Autry. The Chatsworth Reservoir became the Sea of Galilee, a 1959 film, The Big Fisherman. TV series, Adventures of Rin Tin Tin (1954) with other TV series-segments were lensed in the reservoir and surrounding movie ranches.

Listed in the County of Los Angeles Significant Ecology Areas (SEA #13): The largest remaining natural area of oak woodlands and savannas, grassland, seasonal wetlands, riparian areas, chaparral, and Ecology Pond. The CNP contains the extremely rare Santa Susana Tarplant. The habitat supports Southern California wildlife from amphibians and reptiles, larger animals, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, and more than 200 species of birds, local residents and migratory. Los Angeles City Council and Mayor signed in 1994, city ordinance, no. 169723, changing the Chatsworth Reservoir, 1325 acres, to Chatsworth Nature Preserve/Reservoir.

A crucial wildlife habitat-corridor with the possibility of CNP being incorporated in the Federal Government's/National Park Service Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study (ROV). If the NPS-ROV extends into the Simi Hills-Santa Susana Mountains and beyond, there will be an opportunity for a possible cooperative partnership with DWP/CNP as a connection with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

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Chatsworth Nature Preserve Coalition: The nomination is consistent with the goals of the CNPC to preserve the natural resources of the site.

Chatsworth Nature Preserve

HCM Application Revisions

Native American Resources

There are five previously recorded prehistoric Native American resources within the boundaries of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve (CNP) property (CA-LAN-249, CA-LAN-251, CA-LAN-418, CA-LAN-652 and CA-LAN-653). However, since the entirety of the property has not been subject to a systematic archaeological survey, this may under represent the actual extent of prehistoric-period sites extant within the CNP. The sites include bedrock milling features and/or prehistoric midden deposits. Only one of these sites (CA-LAN-418) has reportedly been investigated by archaeological excavation (Bob Edberg, personal communication); however, no final report on the findings has been located to date. Therefore, little is known about the age, extent and nature of the prehistoric Native American resources within the CNP.

Ethnographic accounts from the western San Fernando Valley do provide some information on specific Native American places within the modern boundary of the CNP (Harrington 1986:RI. 106). The area of the CNP was occupied by the Fernandeano tribe, who spoke a Takic language related to Gabrielino. The Ventureño Chumash (also known as Eastern Coastal Chumash) were located to the west, and regularly intermarried and traded with the Fernandeano people. To the north in the Santa Clarita Valley was the Tataviam tribe, who also had extensive interaction with the Fernandeano villages of the San Fernando Valley. J.P. Harrington, a linguist and ethnologist for the Smithsonian, interviewed Sétimo Lopez, a Fernandeano informant in 1916. In 1917, Harrington interviewed Juan Menéndez, who was the son of Espiritu, owner of Rancho El Escorpión at today's Bell Canyon.

Harrington and Menéndez, along with their wives Carobeth and Juana, began their 1917 placename field trip at the "luna hill" which was located above and just to the west of an old ranch at the southwest corner of Nordhoff and Canoga streets. The Luna Hill, which contained a distinctive moon-shaped rock outcrop, would be located at the southeastern boundary of the CNP (*see* Figure 2). They followed a passage ("portezuelo") between the Luna Hill to the south, and the "Loma de los Judios" to the north, where there was a cave, now since collapsed. The Loma de los Judios includes portions of the northeastern boundary of the CNP. Harrington and Menéndez continued west through the passage and reached a large lake owned by the city of Los Angeles that had been dammed and was filling with water. This was the recently completed Chatsworth Reservoir, although Menéndez noted that water would naturally collect in this area and it was known by the Spanish name "El Escurpión de las Salinas."

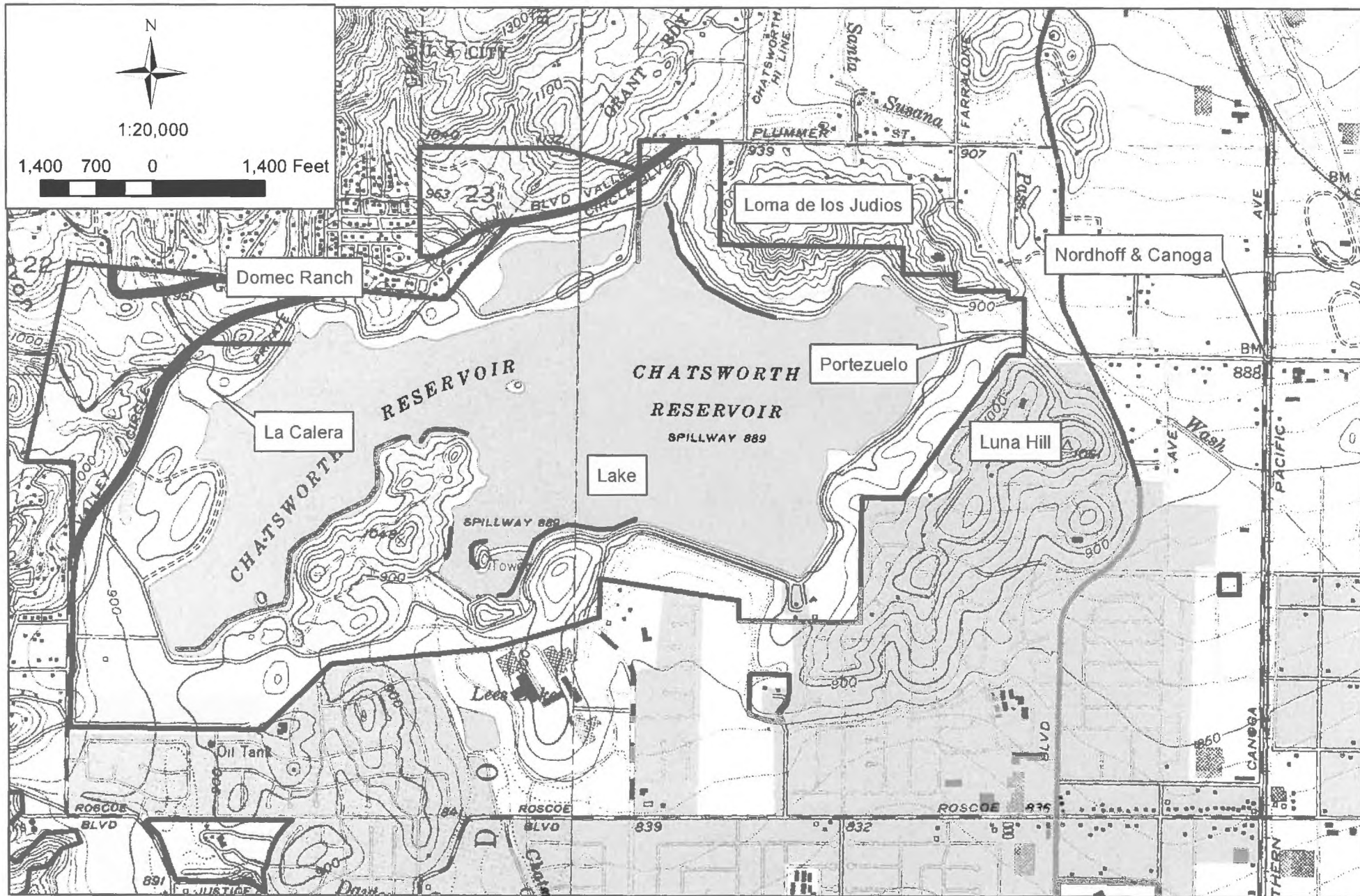


Figure 2 - Harrington Field Trip Placenames



Figure 1 - Chatsworth Nature Preserve Boundary