

**INTENSIVE PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE VISTA
CANYON RANCH STUDY AREA, SANTA CLARITA, LOS ANGELES
COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

An intensive Phase I archaeological survey was conducted for the Vista Canyon Ranch study area, an approximately 200-acre property surrounded by development and located adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita in northern Los Angeles County, California. This involved a review of existing published and unpublished references on local prehistory, ethnography and history, and an intensive, on-foot survey of the study area. No sites had been previously recorded within the study area but it had not been previously surveyed in its entirety. Existing records indicate, however, that the study area was a portion of the Mitchell Ranch, which was first settled in 1860. In addition to the location of three early structures (a cabin, adobe and two story house), the study area also included the Mitchell family cemetery, used between 1905 and 1959. Two sites were recorded during the survey. The first site, given the temporary designation VC-1/H, has two components. It includes a prehistoric (aboriginal) site interpreted as a low-density habitation or camp. The Mitchell family cemetery, which contains at least 20 internments, is located in the approximate middle of the prehistoric site. The second recorded site, VC-2H, is the location of the original Mitchell homestead/ranch headquarters. Although no structures still exist on-site, eight archaeological features were observed within this site, including evidence of the location of the original adobe, built in the mid 1860s. It is recommended that the Mitchell cemetery be preserved intact. Following CEQA, Phase II test excavations and determinations of significance are recommended for the prehistoric component of site VC-1/H, and for site VC-2H.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to a request from Impact Sciences, Inc., an intensive Phase I archaeological survey was conducted by W&S Consultants for the Vista Canyon Ranch study area. This property is located adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita, in northern Los Angeles County, California (Figure 1), and is surrounded by existing development, and adjacent to SR 14. The survey of this study area was conducted in August, 2008. It was intended to identify all cultural resources (prehistoric and historical archaeological sites) within the study area.

This document summarizes the background research conducted as part of the study; outlines the field techniques employed to intensively survey the parcel; describes the results of the survey; and makes final recommendations for the study area. We begin with a discussion of the background studies, before considering these additional topics in turn.

2.0 BACKGROUND STUDIES

2.1 Project Location and Environment

The study area consists of approximately 200 acres and is bisected by the Santa Clara River. The property is located south of the Antelope Valley Freeway (SR 14), east of Mint Canyon and west of Sand Canyon, in the Santa Clarita Valley, CA (Figure 1). The study area is currently and primarily undeveloped land and surrounded on all sides by development. Residential land uses are present to the east and west and south, with SR 14 being located to the north. Additional commercial and residential uses are located immediately north of SR 14.

The property includes the sandy bottom of the ephemeral river, a small elevated terrace on the NE side of the property, and a larger elevated terrace that forms the southern half of the study area. Environmental conditions have been altered substantially by historical use of the property, including cultivation, grading and residential uses.

2.2 Ethnographic Background

The Santa Clarita region, including the study area, appears to have been inhabited during the ethnographic past by an ethnolinguistic group known as the Tataviam. Their language

is believed to represent a member of the Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family (King and Blackburn 1976). In this sense, it was related to other Takic languages in the Los Angeles County region, such as Gabrielino/Fernandeño of the Los Angeles Basin proper, and Kitanemuk of the Antelope Valley.

The Tataviam are thought to have inhabited the upper Santa Clara River drainage from about Piru eastwards to just beyond the Vasquez Rocks/Agua Dulce area; southwards as far as Newhall and the crests of the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains; and northwards to include the middle reaches of Piru Creek, the Liebre Mountains and the southwesternmost fringe of the Antelope Valley (ibid; Kroeber 1925; Earle 1990; Johnson and Earle 1990). Their northern boundary most likely ran along the northern foothills of the Liebre Mountains (i.e., the edge of the Antelope Valley), and then crossed to the southern slopes of the Sawmill Mountains and the Sierra Pelona, extending as far east as Soledad Pass (Earle 1990:94). Ethnographically, at least, the Tataviam do not appear to have controlled the Leona Valley or areas to the north, with the Elizabeth Lake area proper a zone of uncertainty.

Known Tataviam villages during the historic period include: piʔirukung and ʔakavaya, both near modern Piru; tsavayu(ʔu)ng, San Francisquito; etseng, kuvung and huyung, on Piru Creek above Piru; tochonanga, near Newhall; kwarung, Elizabeth Lake; and tsawayung, near Castaic Junction. At kamulus, near modern Rancho Camulos, a mixed Chumash-Tataviam population lived (King and Blackburn 1976:535-6). Because the name kamulus is unquestionably Chumash and not Tataviam, however, the toponym has been viewed as problematical (Johnson and Earle 1990:197); that is, as not reflecting the original (Tataviam) name for this village. Regardless of original name, however, the Spanish missionary Señan, writing in 1804, indicated that the Chumash inhabitants of the village of sécpey had migrated to kamulos, accounting for this admixture (Señan 1962:15). Sécpey is now known as Sespe, near the modern town of Fillmore.

Culturally-speaking, the Tataviam were in most respects similar to their Fernandeño and Chumash neighbors, to the south and west, respectively (King and Blackburn 1976). In this sense, they were hunters-gatherers, with subsistence emphasizing yucca, acorns, juniper berries, sage seeds and islay. Game was also hunted, with small animals, such as rabbits/hares and rodents, probably representing more significant contributions of meat protein than larger game, such as deer.

Little is known of Tataviam social and political organization. Based on analogies with surrounding groups, however, it can be suggested that they were organized in a series of tribelets, similar to the naciones described by Earle (1990) for the Antelope Valley, and found to be characteristic of much of California aboriginal socio-political organization (cf. Kroeber 1925). The tribelet represented an autonomous land-holding unit, minimally controlled by a head-chief or big-man. They usually included one large, 'capital' village, sometimes occupied year-around, and a series of smaller, seasonally inhabited hamlets. Whether the Tataviam may have had exogamous clans and moieties, like the Cahuilla and Serrano to the east, is unknown. However, it is estimated that the Tataviam population was less than 1000 people at the time of Euro-American contact, and that only two or

three of the largest villages throughout their territory were inhabited at any given time (King and Blackburn 1976).

It is also likely that Tataviam religion followed the patterns of their surrounding neighbors. In this case, shamanism would have functioned as the central element. This posits a direct and personal relationship between each individual and the supernatural world, with this relationship enacted by entering a trance or hallucinatory state (usually based on the ingestion of psychoto-mimetic plants, such as jimsonweed or native tobacco). Shamans, per se, who were considered individuals with an unusual degree of supernatural power, served as ritual specialists: ceremonies and rites were infrequent in occasion and limited in type. Perhaps most importantly, shamans served as healers or curers, with the etiology of disease as well as its cure held to lie in the supernatural world. Shamans are also known to have produced the rock art of this region (Whitley 1992), which depicted the hallucinations and spirits they observed in their vision quests.

Although the Tataviam were one of the earliest groups contacted by Spanish missionaries, with a number of their villages described by members of the Portolá expedition of 1769, a general lack of information on this group exists because, by 1810, all Tataviam had been baptized at Mission San Fernando and were quickly absorbed by other groups through intermarriage (King and Blackburn 1976). Their descendants, however, continue to reside in the region.

2.3 Archaeological Background

Archaeologically speaking, more information is available on the Santa Clarita area, although here, too, less is known than for many of the surrounding regions of southern California. In general terms, the prehistory of this inland area appears to parallel that of the Santa Barbara Channel/southern California coastal zone, with William Wallace's (1955) cultural historical framework appropriate as a chronological system of reference (McIntyre 1990).

Correspondingly, the earliest evidence for human occupation of this region corresponds to Wallace's Early Millingstone Period (or, alternatively, the Early Horizon), dated from about 7000 to 4000 years before present (B.P.). This represents a period during which subsistence and adaptation are said to have emphasized the collecting and processing of hard seeds, with inland artifact assemblages, correspondingly, dominated by mullers and millingstones known as manos and metates. Evidence for an Early Millingstone occupation of the Upper Santa Clara Valley region is, admittedly, very limited, and has been found at only two sites. Both of these are located near Vasquez Rocks, with temporal attribution based on the presence of a small number of Olivella barrel beads (McIntyre 1990). Such bead types have subsequently proven unreliable temporal indicators, throwing doubt on human inhabitation of this region before about 4000 years ago. Further, recent excavations at one of these putative early locales, the Escondido Canyon Site, failed to uncover evidence for occupation prior to about 2700 years B.P. (Love 1990).

The second temporal unit in Wallace's chronology is the Intermediate Period (or Middle Horizon), dated from 3500 to 1500 years B.P. It is marked by a shift to the mortar and pestle, with an increased emphasis on hunting and hunting tools in artifact assemblages. Population appears to have increased during this period, with more temporary camps founded. Evidence for Intermediate Period occupation of the Upper Santa Clara Valley region is substantial, in that it has been found at a number of sites and has been based on radiocarbon, obsidian hydration and typological dating (McIntyre 1990). The Agua Dulce village complex, for example, includes occupation extending back to the Intermediate Period, at which time population of the village may have been 50 or more people (King et al n.d.). Furthermore, the Intermediate Period appears to represent a time during which a substantial exploitation of mid-altitude environments first began, with considerable use, for example, of portions of the nearby Hathaway Ranch (located to northwest of the study area) beginning at this time.

Assuming that the Upper Santa Clara River region was first significantly occupied during the Intermediate Period, as existing evidence now suggests, a parallel can be drawn with the inland Ventura County region, where a similar pattern has been identified (Whitley and Beaudry 1991), as well as possibly the Antelope Valley and western Mojave Desert (Sutton 1988a, 1988b). In all of these areas a major expansion in settlement, the establishment of large site complexes, and an increase in the range of environments exploited, appear to have occurred sometime roughly around 3000 years ago. Although most efforts to explain this expansion have focused on very local circumstances and events, it is increasingly clear that this was a major southern California-wide occurrence, and therefore that explanation of it must be sought at a larger level of analysis.

There is continuity in the inland regions between the Intermediate Period and subsequent times, labeled the Late Prehistoric Period, lasting from 1500 years B.P. to historic contact, at about 200 years B.P. Site complexes first occupied in the Intermediate Period continued to be inhabited, although they increased in size, with more specialized and diversified sites added to the kinds of sites present. In fact, the principal distinction between Intermediate and Late Prehistoric sites in the inland regions is a change in certain diagnostic artifact types (notably, projectile points, with a shift from spear points to bow and arrow points). This change in fact may not signify consequential changes in culture, adaptation or subsistence, although the trends begun in the Intermediate accelerate over time during the Late Prehistoric. For example, a large number of Late Prehistoric Period sites are known from the Upper Santa Clara River/Agua Dulce region (cf. McIntyre 1990), with the Agua Dulce village complex estimated to have grown to a population of 200 to 300 people around A.D. 1500 - 1600 (King et al n.d.). Sometime during this period the Tataviam can be hypothesized to have occupied this region, although it is likely that they may have appeared somewhat earlier. However, the important point is that, during the Late Prehistoric Period, the patterns of lifeways recorded for the ethnographic period were fully in operation.

During the Historic Period, the aboriginal population appears to have dropped considerably. This, without doubt, can be attributed to the effects of missionization and

its attendant relocation of the aboriginal population to centralized locales, along with the depredations of introduced Old World diseases. The Upper Santa Clara River region appears to be one of those inland zones, like the Antelope Valley to the north, that quickly and completely lost its aboriginal population. In particular, the aboriginal population from the Upper Santa Clara Valley was moved into Mission San Fernando, in the San Fernando Valley, and the area was effectively depopulated.

2.4 Historical Background

As noted previously, Euro-American mention of the upper Santa Clara River Valley region first occurred in the chronicles of the Portolá expedition of 1769, which passed through the San Fernando Valley to Newhall, then to the Castaic Junction area, and then down the Santa Clara River, to Ventura, on its way to Monterey (Bolton 1971; Boneau Companys 1983; Brandes 1970; Cleland 1940). Portolá, in fact, camped at the confluence of the Santa Clara and Castaic Creeks - modern Castaic Junction - and suggested this locale as an appropriate spot for a mission. Portolá described Castaic Junction as follows:

The country...is delightful and beautiful in the plain, although the mountains that surround it are bare and rough. In the plain we saw many tall and thick cottonwoods and oaks; the watering place [Castaic Junction] consists of an arroyo with a great deal of water which runs in a moderately wide valley, well grown with willows and cottonwoods. We stopped on the bank of the arroyo, where we found a populous village in which people lived without any cover, for they had no more than a light shelter fenced in like a corral...As soon as we arrived they gave us many baskets of different kinds of seeds, and a sort of sweet preserve like little raisins, and another resembling honeycomb, very sweet and purging, and made of the dew which sticks to the reed grass. It is a very suitable site for a mission, with much good land, many palisades, two very large arroyos of water, and five large villages close by.

(Bolton 1971:153)

This description, which bears the ledger entry of Tuesday, August 8, 1769, apparently describes a temporary, late summer encampment of Tataviam, judging from the description of the corral-like huts of the village's inhabitants.

Although the Upper Santa Clara Valley region was traversed by a number of Spanish explorers in subsequent years, it initially remained isolated due to rugged topography, even though Portolá had suggested it as a locale for a mission. With the establishment of Missions San Buenaventura, in 1782, and San Fernando, in 1797, late-18th century historical events largely occurred in areas to the west and south of the Upper Santa Clara Valley proper, particularly inasmuch as the Camino Real - the Spanish Royal Road - was eventually established through the Conejo Corridor rather than down the Santa Clara Valley.

However, as the missions increased in size and their herds grew, it became necessary for many of them to establish mission ranchos, or estancias, to allow their cattle to graze some distance from the mission vineyards and fields, per se. With this geographical expansion of mission influence and activities, the Upper Santa Clara Valley region became important, if not pivotal, in a number of events central to the development of southern California. San Francisco Xavier served as the estancia for Mission San Fernando. It comprised the upper reaches of the Santa Clara Valley down to Piru (Cleland 1940; Perkins 1957; Smith 1977) - essentially what would become the Newhall Ranch - and was established in 1804, a few years after the founding of the mission itself. The headquarters of Estancia San Francisco Xavier was constructed at Castaic Junction, on a bluff overlooking the confluence of the Santa Clara and Castaic Creeks from the south. Eventually it was raised from the status of Estancia to Asistencia, or sub-mission.

The Asistencia de San Francisco Xavier represents the first European settlement of the Santa Clarita region. During this period, its primary function was as a ranching and perhaps agricultural out-station, although it undoubtedly served as a religious outpost as well. Placed at the location suggested for a mission earlier by Father Crespi of the Portolá expedition, it consisted of two rectangular adobe buildings, measuring 105 by 17 feet and 107 by 22 feet, respectively, in size, one of which included a tiled sacristy (Reynolds 1992:17). Eventually a third adobe structure, referred to as the "Old Milk House", was constructed downhill from the main structures, an undated photo of which was published by Perkins (1957:112).

William Lewis Manly, for reasons discussed below, provided a description of the Asistencia in 1849. At that time it was no longer an adjunct to Mission San Fernando but had transferred in ownership to Antonio del Valle when the Asistencia's land was granted as Rancho San Francisco to del Valle by Governor Alvarado in 1839. Notably, Antonio del Valle had served as majordomo and later administrator of Mission San Fernando and its lands from 1834 to 1837, and the family had made supplications to the governor in 1835 and 1837 to obtain a grant in the Santa Clara Valley (Newhall 1958:36; Perkins 1957). When finally awarded, the rancho contained slightly more than 46,000 acres which, as Smith (1977) acknowledges, was just under the maximum of 11 square leagues then legally allowed.

Manly's description pertains to the period when the Asistencia buildings served as a ranch headquarters for one of a number of del Valle's properties, while he and his family continued to live in Los Angeles. Manly described the Asistencia, his first sighting of California mission architecture, as follows:

A house on higher ground soon appeared in sight. It was low, of one story with a flat roof, gray in color, and of a different style of architecture from any we had ever seen before. There was no fence around it, and there were no animals or wagons or persons to be seen...but a mule tied to a post told us there was some one about...The house...was built of sun-dried bricks about one by two feet in size, and one end was used as a storehouse...down the hill...[was a]...small, poorly, fenced field which was sometimes cultivated.

(Manly 1924:178-179)

In 1845 the rancho passed to Antonio del Valle's son, Ygnacio. Ygnacio del Valle ultimately became a prominent politician in southern California, serving as Alcalde (mayor) of Los Angeles during the Mexican period, as a member of the Territorial Deputation when California was admitted into the Union in 1850, and in the State Legislature. Forced to fight off efforts by Pedro Carrillo to obtain the western portions of Rancho San Francisco, Ygnacio built a corral at Camulos (the approximate site of the Chumash-Tataviam village of kamulus) in 1841, and finally the Camulos Adobe in 1864, as well as one of the first commercial wineries in the state in 1867 (Smith 1977). The Camulos Adobe, which then became the del Valle family home, was visited by Helen Hunt Jackson in 1882, and served as the setting for her famous early California novel Ramona. (The D.W. Griffith film "Ramona", starring Mary Pickford, was also filmed at the adobe in 1911).

However, prior to the development of Camulos, the Del Valle ranch headquarters remained at the old site of the Asistencia de San Francisco, above Castaic Junction. Furthermore, it was to the Asistencia that the lead group of the Manly-Walker party - the "Death Valley '49ers" - first emerged out of the wilderness from their efforts to cross the Mojave Desert (Manly 1924:178-179). Manly's description of the Asistencia's buildings, quoted above, represent not only his first sighting of California mission architecture, but his first encounter with civilization, after his harrowing escape from Death Valley.

Following established California agrarian practices, Rancho San Francisco was employed by the del Valles primarily for raising cattle, although Mexican law also required the establishment of an orchard and other agricultural endeavors to validate a land grant (Smith 1977). Perkins (1957:107), for example, recorded that del Valle raised 600 head of cattle on the ranch and planted wheat in a marshy area below Camulos. Notably, however, the original diseño or land grant map for Rancho San Francisco, drawn in 1843, labels the Santa Susana Mountains and hills, south of the Santa Clara River and west of Castaic Junction, as lomas esterilas, "sterile hills" (Smith 1977: frontispiece; Johnson and Earle 1990: Figure 2) which, presumably, was of marginal use to them.

Rancho San Francisco is, ultimately, the origin for the Newhall Ranch and the Newhall Land and Farming Company. Because the history of this ranch is very well documented, with complete published accounts provided by Newhall (1958), Perkins (1957), Reynolds (1992), Rolle (1991) and Smith (1977), we provide only a brief summary here.

As is discussed below, del Valle sold the majority of Rancho San Francisco in 1865 for \$1.25/acre, retaining only 1500 acres around Rancho Camulos. This 1865 sale was precipitated by the discovery of tar seeps in Pico Canyon, immediately to the south of the original land grant, where oil had been discovered in 1859. The purchasers of the ranch were Thomas A. Scott and Thomas Bard, representing the Philadelphia and California Petroleum Company. Because they believed that ranching and oil were incompatible activities, Scott and Bard subsequently sold 39,503 acres of the ranch to Henry Mayo Newhall, a San Francisco financier, in January, 1875, for \$2.20/acre (Newhall 1958;

Rolle 1991; Smith 1977). According to Thompson and West (1880:104), shortly thereafter Newhall placed 7000 acres of the ranch under cultivation for wheat and barley, and raised 700 head of cattle and 10,000 sheep. Headquarters for the ranch was adjacent to the Asistencia, in the area of the modern Magic Mountain parking lot.

The town of Newhall was created the following year, as a result of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company's move to place a rail line down the Santa Clara Valley to the coast at Ventura. Although the original development was unsuccessful - due to frequent sandstorms the town's six buildings and name of Newhall were moved three miles to the south in 1878, with the original townsite becoming known as Saugus - ultimately the rail line provided an outlet for the agricultural and ranching products of the ranch, and greatly stimulated oil production in the immediate area (Franks and Lambert 1985:7). For obvious reasons, both circumstances stimulated the commercial development of the Newhall Ranch.

Henry Mayo Newhall was thrown from his horse on the ranch and died, in San Francisco, in 1883. The ranch then passed to his heirs. According to Rolle (1991:145), the Newhall financial empire subsequently went into decline, coming close to liquidation in 1930. At that point Athol McBean, son-in-law of William Mayo Newhall, was appointed chairman. McBean reorganized the Newhall Land and Farming Company and, aided by a restitution award of three-quarters of a million dollars resulting from the Saint Francis Dam catastrophe (see below), moved the ranch and company back onto sound financial footing. The company has continued as the major agricultural/ranching and land development entity in the region to the present time.

The upper reaches of the Santa Clara Valley also figured in three other important episodes in southern California history, two of which are landmarks in the economic history of the state. The first of these is the discovery of gold. Although the history of gold discovery and exploitation in California is often linked with James Marshall's 1848 discovery of gold in John Sutter's Coloma mill-race, it is a well-known fact that gold was found earlier in California 1842, in Placerita Canyon, by Francisco Lopez, Manuel Cota and Domingo Bermudez (Smith 1977; Outland 1986; Reynolds 1992)—a short distance west of the current study area. But it is by no means clear that even this well-documented incident represents the first true discovery of gold in the state. Instead, a variety of lines of historical evidence suggest that gold may have been mined in the Santa Clara Valley region one to three decades earlier (e.g., see Clark 1970:176).

According to an account published by Outland (1986), a local tale indicates that a group of about 20 men, led by one Santiago Feliciano, left Mission San Fernando in 1820 to explore the Castaic region. After reaching the Castaic Junction area, they headed up Hasley Canyon, and traveled up it about 10 miles. There they discovered gold, and a mining camp, "San Feliciano" (from which San Feliciano Canyon apparently gets its name), was born. The region from San Feliciano to Soledad Canyon was subsequently prospected and mined (mostly for placer deposits) for a number of years, with little record of these efforts presumably resulting because of the legal complications involved in recording gold claims in Mexican California: while the granting of land for agricultural

purposes could be effected by the Governor of California, the recording of a gold claim under Mexican law required a trip to Mexico City, an effort none were apparently willing to gamble.

Although, as Outland notes, there is no clear verification for this tale (which ultimately derives from the prominent early settler and local historian S.P. Guiberson), there is nonetheless fairly strong evidence that the Placeritas discovery in 1842 was by no means the first in this region (Smith 1977; Outland 1986; Clark 1970). In 1832, for example, Ewing Young discovered an old ore smelting oven in San Emigdio Canyon (Outland 1986), suggesting that gold mining in the area had occurred for one or two decades prior to the 1842 event, and a number of other sources indicate that the presence of gold in the area was known at least a few years prior to the famous 1842 Placeritas Canyon incident (Smith 1977:32-33), in which gold was discovered by Francisco Lopez.

Lopez's discovery is often trivialized as accidental: a fortuitous event resulting from digging up a wild onion. In fact, Lopez had been educated at a mining college in Mexico City, and was known to have been systematically prospecting the region prior to the 1842 discovery. As the uncle of Antonio del Valle's widow, he had leased portions of Rancho San Francisco for cattle, and was headquartered at the old Asistencia. There is every reason to assume, thus, that this "official" discovery of gold resulted from intentional prospecting activities, carried out by the then-resident of the Asistencia.

Be this as it may, the 1842 discovery did have one important repercussion: it caused Lopez to continue to look further afield for gold, resulting in his second gold discovery of the state in San Feliciano Canyon (Perkins 1958). In turn, this led to the granting of Rancho Temescal to Lopez and Jose Arellanes, in 1843. This grant included most of Piru Creek, as well as Placerita and San Feliciano Canyons, and totaled over 13,000 acres. Apparently, the legality of this grant under Mexican law has always been a point of some question for, as noted previously, the Governor of California only held the right to award agricultural but not mining grants. However, Thompson and West (1886:74) record that the area was worked by miners from Sonora, Mexico, between 1842 and 1846, at which time they returned to Mexico, and that they extracted between six and eight thousand dollars of gold per year during that period. Nonetheless, about a dozen years later, Rancho Temescal was acquired by Ygnacio del Valle and added to his Rancho San Francisco holdings.

Thus, not only was this region the first in California in which gold was discovered, it was also the first where true oil drilling occurred (Smith 1977), which was the second historical event of statewide importance in the region. This led to discoveries of oil on Rancho San Francisco and, ultimately, throughout the Santa Clara Valley region. This first major discovery of oil resulted when Ygnacio del Valle sold the majority of his Rancho San Francisco holdings to Thomas Bard, representing Senator Thomas A. Scott, in 1865. Seven weeks later, the first oil well came in on the south side of the Santa Clara River, on property acquired by Bard, near the del Valle adobe (Smith 1977). This discovery was instrumental in the regional oil boom that ensued.

Following the discovery of oil in the valley, and with the depletion of the (relatively small) placer gold deposits in the region by the 1880s, the Upper Santa Clara Valley region became renowned both for its oil and (ultimately) for its citrus crops.

The third local event of historical importance was the collapse of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's St. Francis Dam and the resulting flood of the Santa Clara River Valley on March 12 and 13, 1928. With the failure of dam close to midnight on March 12, water raged down San Francisquito Canyon to Castaic Junction, which it effectively leveled, and then on to Fillmore, Santa Paula and ultimately to the Pacific, causing great loss of life and destruction along the way. At Castaic Junction, the only survivor of the flood was George MacIntyre, son of the owner of MacIntyre's motel and gas station. George was washed northwards by a great arc of the floodwaters, towards Castaic Canyon, where he was able to grab hold of a power pole and avoid drowning; the bodies of his father and one brother were found in Santa Paula; another brother's body was never recovered. All told, at least 336 known deaths were caused by the flood, 101 individuals were missing and can now be presumed dead, 909 homes were destroyed, and countless acres of orchards were flattened (Outland 1963).

Within the larger Newhall Ranch at Blue Cut in Ventura County the flood waters rose to the level of the highway. The restriction of the Santa Clara River stream course at this spot momentarily bottled the flood, resulting in a temporary upsurge of waters against the flood current, creating a whirlpool. An Edison Company work camp of tents housing 150 men had been established at the railroad siding of Kemp, immediately east of Blue Cut, which was inundated by the upsurge. When the flood waters receded, 84 of these men had been drowned by the catastrophe (Outland 1963:106-107).

In retrospect, it is interesting to note that the Newhall Land and Farming Company had independently hired Harmon Bonte, a consulting engineer, to review the suitability of the Saint Francis Dam in 1924, prior to its construction. Arguing against LADWP's William Mulholland, Bonte contended on the part of his clients that the conglomerate bedrock at the proposed dam site was unfit for dam anchorage. His report was widely published after the disaster, as an indictment of Mulholland's engineering studies (Outland 1963:43), and no doubt contributed to Mulholland's subsequent decision to retire from professional and public life.

The Vista Canyon Ranch study area itself falls outside of the original Rancho San Francisco/Newhall Ranch boundaries, is upstream of both the gold discovery at Placerita Canyon and the floodwaters that came down the San Francisquito. It did not play a direct role in any of the historical events associated with the Newhall Ranch. It nonetheless has substantial history, primarily associated with Col. Thomas Mitchell, who settled in the area in 1860.

Thomas Finley Mitchell was born in Virginia, subsequently moving to Texas where, in 1852, he served under Sam Houston in the Texas Mounted Volunteers. He went to California shortly thereafter, spending approximately eight years in the northern California mining districts. In 1860 he moved to the vicinity of Soledad and Sand

Canyons—the current study area—to start a cattle ranch. Initially he transported a dismantled miner's cabin down from Tehachapi and erected it on his property. A few years later he married Martha Taylor, from Arkansas by way of San Gabriel, and built a more commodious adobe (Figure 4), about 40 feet from the original cabin (Perkins 1961). The adobe was 60 by 45 feet in size and redwood shingled (Worden 1997).

Although Mitchell's ranch initially was isolated from historical activities and even traffic, two events made the Santa Clara Valley/Soledad Canyon area around his ranch central to subsequent settlement and use. The first was the discovery and exploitation of copper and then gold further upstream in Soledad Canyon, at Ravenna and beyond, in the Acton area. Combined with growing trade from eastern California (especially the Cerro Gordo camp in Inyo County), this led to the establishment of a toll road up the valley. Whether it crossed Mitchell's property is uncertain, but possible. Perhaps even more importantly, the route for the railroad from southern to northern California went up the valley in order to avoid the steep grades near the Grapevine. The railroad was completed in 1876 (Perkins 1961), and a short section of it crossed his property. A siding called Humphrey's was located outside and immediately SW of Mitchell's property. This became a minor focus for development in the area.

Eventually Mitchell increased his holdings to nearly a thousand acres, raising cattle, producing honey, and farming. With increasing population, and thus children, in the valley, the Sulphur Springs School District was founded, circa 1872. The school opened initially in the kitchen of the Mitchell's adobe, was taught by Mrs. Mitchell, and was the first school building in the Santa Clara Valley area. Circa 1885 the student population had outgrown the single room and a wooden schoolhouse was constructed at Sulphur Springs, on land donated by Mitchell (Worden 1997). The Sulphur Springs school location falls outside (east) of the study area.

Mitchell built himself a proper two-story wooden house in 1888 (Figure 5), using the old adobe as a guesthouse and storage room. By 1919, the adobe had deteriorated substantially, and its bricks were re-used as an addition on the original miner's cabin (*ibid.*). (In 1986 the remaining bricks were removed from the property and the school was reassembled at Heritage Junction in Hart Park, Newhall.) Mitchell died in 1907 (Perkins 1961). He can be considered one of the earliest and most prominent settlers in the Sand/Soledad Canyons area. Following his death, his ranch continued to be operated by his descendents, including his son-in-law, Walter Murphy.

In addition to the original miner's cabin, adobe, two-story wooden house, and likely a number of outbuildings, a family cemetery was also present on the Mitchell Ranch. This was used to inter the Mitchell family, and their friends and neighbors (Rismanchi 1998).

3.0 ARCHIVAL RECORDS SEARCH

An archival records search of the Vista Canyon Ranch study area was completed by the California State University, Fullerton, Archaeological Information Center (AIC) staff to determine whether any prehistoric or historical sites were known on the property, and/or whether all or portions of it had been previously systematically surveyed by archaeologists.

A complete copy of the records search is included as Appendix A to this report. In summary, eight previous archaeological surveys had covered small portions of the study area, but no sites had been discovered or recorded within it or in the immediate vicinity.

The 1900 and 1940 San Fernando 15' topographic quadrangle (and its 1941 reprint) were examined to determine if there is evidence of early use of the property. The 1900 quad shows a single structure on the Mitchell Ranch, probably the two-story home. Another structure to the NE appears to be the Sulphur Springs school, outside of the current study area. This structure is still present on the 1940 quad (and is also shown on the 1988 photo-revision of the 1960 quad).

In summary, the records search indicates that the study area has no known sites but has never been fully surveyed. Both the historical background study and the examination of the early maps indicate that the study area should contain historical resources: remnants of the Mitchell ranch, and the Mitchell family cemetery.

4.0 SURVEY METHODS

The intensive Phase I survey of the approximately 200-acre study area was conducted on August 2008, with Joseph M. Simon conducting the field study.

Field procedures involved walking the property in transects spaced at approximately 10 – 15 meters intervals. The ground surface was examined during these transects to identify evidence of prehistoric and historical sites. For prehistoric sites such evidence might include surface artifacts, dark organically rich midden soils, fire-cracked rock resulting from earth ovens and roasting pits, and shell and bone that might represent remnants of dietary remains. Alternatively historical remains in the form of metal, glass and ceramic, as well as structure foundations and pits, were also considered possible finds within the study area.

During the survey special attention was paid to geomorphological conditions that affect the preservation of archaeological remains. Road or bank-cuts that expose subsurface stratigraphy, for example, along with stable geomorphic and depositional environments were carefully examined for evidence of cultural remains. Furthermore, rodent backdirt piles were carefully examined inasmuch as they can reveal the presence of buried archaeological deposits.

5.0 FIELD RESULTS

Field conditions for the intensive Phase I survey of the Vista Canyon Ranch study area were good. It currently consists of disturbed terraces above the Santa Clara River. With the exception of a vegetated area in the SE (which includes some standing oaks and introduced grasses), there was little remaining natural vegetation. A substantial amount of illicit dumping has occurred on the property. Further, a residential compound/equipment storage yard is present on the western side of the study area. This includes a board and batten, gable front house. This structure is not located on any of the historical topographical quadrangles, and appears to have been moved onto the property at a later date.

Groundsurface visibility overall was very good throughout the study area.

Two archaeological sites were identified on the property (Figure 2; Appendix B). These have been given the temporary designations of Sites VC-1/H and VC-2H. They may be described as follows:

Site VC-1/H:

The first recorded site contains both a prehistoric and historical component. It is located on an E-W trending river bench lying immediately N of the Santa Clara River bed and S of Hwy. 14. The prehistoric component consists of a low-density scatter of lithic flakes. We observed five primary quartzite flakes; three primary basalt flakes; and 10 secondary jasper flakes. We also noted about 30 pieces of fire-affected rocks. These artifacts were found in an area measuring about 245 m by 95 m in size. Based especially on the presence of fire-affected rock (resulting from camp-fires and stone boiling), the site appears to represent a small, low-density prehistoric habitation.

The historical component is located in the approximate middle of the prehistoric site, and is unrelated to it. It consists of the Mitchell family cemetery and is surrounded by a chain link fence, creating an enclosure that is 20 by 18 m in size. We observed evidence of 20 internments, with 14 containing still visible headstones. (Additional burials may be present, but not visible from surface evidence). The dated graves range from 1905 to 1959. The marked graves have small concrete headstones with hand-stamped aluminum name-plates. The visible inscriptions were as follows:

1. Van G. Steere, Spanish American War Veteran: 1874-1941
2. George Walters: 1874-1940
3. Hiette Baby: ?
4. Luther Bill: 1903-1959
5. Martha T. Mitchell, 1847-1905
6. Thomas F. Mitchell, 1827-1907
7. Mexican Baby: ?
8. Dyer Baby: ?
9. Helvey Baby: ?
10. Joseph Youngblood: 1948
11. C. Perry Dyer: 1848-1925
12. Leroy Insley: 1925-1941
13. Frank A. Mitchell: 1870-1950
14. Oscar C. Mitchell: 1905-1954

The Mitchell and Dyer families in particular were important early settlers in this portion of Santa Clarita. They still have descendants in the area, and the cemetery is still being maintained, as it was weed free. With the exception of the cemetery itself, the prehistoric component of the site also appears intact.

VC-2H:

The second site recorded within the study area is the Mitchell family homestead, founded in 1860, and located in the SE corner of the study area. It covers an area estimated at 300 by 185 m in size. Although no structures are still standing in this site area, we observed eight archaeological features, at least some of which may date to the period of the early homestead. These features are as follows:

Feature 1: Railroad tie corral with hog wire fencing (approx. 40 m. E/W x 80/60 m. N/S).

Feature 2: Alignment of wood fence posts with a few remaining strands of machine made barbed wire (approx. 60 m. in length). Fence posts include milled and natural wood.

Feature 3: Cinder block foundation that is three courses high with internal re-bar (8 m. E/W x 14 m. N/S).

Feature 4: Roughly rectangular area of melted adobe bricks and historic trash (approx. 22 m. E/W x 12 m. N/S). Historic trash scatter (medium to high density) includes bottle glass (amber, amethyst, brown, clear & olive green) ceramic fragments, window glass (opalized), hole-in-top can fragments, tin can fragments, barbed wire and assorted fragments of sheet metal and iron. This appears to be the location of the early adobe.

Feature 5: Milled lumber corral with hog wire and chain link fencing (30 m. N/S x 15 m. E/W) and two concrete foundations located approximately seven meters south of the corral enclosure. The western concrete foundation measures approx. 7 m. E/W by 3 m.

N/S and the eastern concrete foundation measures approx. 5 m. E/W by 8 m. N/S. Both foundations consist of formed and poured concrete footings that are 4 to 6 inches wide. Exposed aggregate in the concrete foundations appears to be locally derived from the Santa Clara river channel.

Feature 6: Abandoned gravel railroad bed with a low-density scatter of iron railroad spikes and rail clips.

Feature 7: Roughly rectangular grove of historic palm trees (10 m. N/S x 25 m. E/W).

Feature 8: Historic trash scatter and a large artificially leveled dirt pad (10 m. x 10 m.) that is at the approximate location of a mapped historic structure (1900 Fernando, CA 15' min. USGS quadrangle & 1940 San Fernando, CA 15' min. USGS quadrangle.) Trash scatter includes iron fragments, ceramic fragments, window glass (opalized) and steel water pipe. This may have been the location of the two story house built in 1888, which no longer exists on the property.

Overall the site contains a medium to high density scatter of historic trash including bottle glass (amber, amethyst, brown, clear & olive green) ceramic fragments, window glass (opalized), hole-in-top can fragments, tin can fragments, barbed wire, galvanized steel water pipes, milled lumber fragments and assorted fragments of sheet metal and iron.

Site VC-2H, as the documentary evidence indicates, is part of the homestead of Thomas Mitchell, an important early settler in the region. The site was founded in 1860 and was used in recent times. Although none of the original structures associated with the early occupation of this site are still standing, archaeological features and deposits are still present and may be significant.

6.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An intensive Phase I archaeological survey was conducted for the Vista Canyon Ranch study area, Santa Clarita, northern Los Angeles County, California. This involved an on-foot survey of the approximately 200-acre property and a review of written and unpublished documents on the archaeology, history and ethnography of the region. No cultural resources of any kind had been previously recorded in the study area, but background investigations indicated that the property was part of the the 1860 homestead of Thomas Mitchell, an important early settler in the Soledad Canyon area, and includes the Mitchell family cemetery, used from 1905 to 1959.

Two sites were discovered and recorded within the Vista Canyon Ranch. Site VC-1/H, located on the N side of the river, contains the historical Mitchell family cemetery. This itself sits in the approximate middle of a prehistoric archaeological site, which appears to represent a low-density habitation or camp. Site VC-2H, found at the SE extreme of the

study area, is the Mitchell Ranch homestead. Although it lacks standing structures, we recorded eight archaeological features, at least some of which appear to be historical in age, including the location of an adobe built in the mid-1860s.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the presence of archaeological sites VC-1/H and VC-2H, the development of the Vista Canyon Ranch study area has the potential to result in adverse impacts to significant cultural resources. We recommend first that the Mitchell family cemetery be preserved intact. It should be noted that the project as designed does preserve this site. We also recommend that Phase II test excavations and determinations of significance be conducted at the prehistoric component of site VC-1/H and at historical site VC-2H. This should be designed to determine the size, nature, uniqueness and extent of these two sites/site components, so that final management recommendations for their disposition can be made.

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**9.0 APPENDIX A:
ARCHIVAL RECORDS SEARCH**

**10.0 APPENDIX B:
SITE RECORDS**

**PHASE II ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATIONS FOR THE VISTA
CANYON PROJECT AREA, SANTA CLARITA, NORTHERN LOS ANGELES
COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

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6 March 2009

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

A Phase II archaeological test excavation and determination of significance was conducted for the prehistoric component of site VC-1/H (temporary designation), within the Vista Canyon project area, City of Santa Clarita, northern Los Angeles County, California. Testing included the hand excavation of sixteen 1x1 meter test pits along with surface collection and mapping, and an analysis of the recovered archaeological assemblage. This site proved to contain a subsurface archaeological deposit; it represents a small campsite; and it is believed to date from approximately 4000 - 1500 YBP. It is recommended that the site be preserved in open-space; if this is not feasible, Phase III data recovery (salvage excavations) is recommended to mitigate adverse impacts to this cultural resource resulting from development.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary and Background to the Project

At the request of Susan Tebo, Impact Sciences, Inc., Camarillo, California, a Phase II archaeological test excavation and determination of significance was conducted at site VC-1/H (temporary designation). The site is located within the Vista Canyon project area, City of Santa Clarita, northern Los Angeles County, California (Figures 1 and 2). This archaeological study was intended to determine the size and significance of the prehistoric archaeological component of this site and thereby to provide baseline data from which an assessment of potential adverse impacts to this cultural resource could be made, and to develop final management recommendations for its treatment.

This study was conducted by W & S Consultants during December 2008 – January 2009. David S. Whitley, Ph.D., and Joseph M. Simon served as principal investigators for the project. This report was prepared by Whitley. Randy Folkes, representing the Fernandeano-Tataviam Tribe, served as Native American monitor for the project.

The remainder of this chapter provides environmental and cultural background to the prehistory of the region, including a summary of previous archaeological research conducted in this region; and descriptions of the site considered in this study. This is followed by the field methods used, along with summaries of the field results. We then turn to an assessment of the recovered artifact assemblage, and certain of the analytical conclusions derived therefrom. We conclude with final recommendations for the cultural resource considered during this Phase II study.

1.2 Environmental and Cultural Overview

1.21 Site Description & Environmental Background

Archaeological site VC-1/H is located on the north side of the upper Santa Clara River, on a small knoll across from the mouth of Sand Canyon, in northwestern Los Angeles County, California (Figure 2). The site was first recorded by W&S Consultants in 2008, and it contains both a prehistoric and historical component. It is located on an east-west trending river bench lying immediately north of the Santa Clara River bed and south of Hwy. 14. Site elevation ranged from about 1520 to 1570 ft a.s.l., with the higher area towards the north side of the site.

The prehistoric component, as initially observed during the Phase I survey, consisted of a low-density scatter of lithic flakes. At the time of discovery, five primary quartzite flakes, three primary basalt flakes, and 10 secondary jasper flakes were seen on the site area. About 30 pieces of fire-affected rocks were also noted. Overall site size was estimated at

about 245 m by 95 m in size, judging from the distribution of these surface artifacts. Based especially on the presence of the fire-affected rock (resulting from camp-fires and stone boiling), the site was interpreted as a small, low-density prehistoric habitation locale (i.e., a campsite).

The historical component of VC-1/H is located in the approximate middle of the prehistoric site, and is unrelated to it. It consists of the Mitchell family cemetery and is surrounded by a chain link fence, creating an enclosure that is 20 by 18 m in size. Evidence of 20 internments, with 14 containing still visible headstones, appear to be present at this cemetery but additional burials may be present, and not still visible from surface evidence. The dated graves range from 1905 to 1959. The Mitchell and Dyer families in particular were important early settlers in this portion of Santa Clarita. They still have descendants in the area, and the cemetery is still being maintained, as it was weed free.

With the exception of the immediate area of the cemetery itself, the prehistoric component of the site appeared intact at the time of the Phase I survey. The current Phase II testing program exclusively considered the prehistoric site component, with the historical cemetery intended for preservation.

Although historic and recent land-use changes have altered the environment considerably from what existed during prehistoric times, at least four major plant associations probably characterized the region containing the site during the aboriginal period. These are chaparral, coastal sage scrub, southern oak woodlands, and riparian associations (cf. Muntz 1974).

The chaparral association covers steeper slopes with poorly developed soils and xeric conditions. It includes the following species: California sagebrush (Artemisia californica), white sage (Salvia mellifera), black sage (S. apiana), purple or white-leaved sage (S. leucophylla), California encelia (Encelia californica), California buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum), chamise (Adneostoma fasciculatum), buckbrush (Ceanothus cuneatus), scrub oak (Quercus dumosa), toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia), mountain mahogany (Cercocarpus betuloides), lemonade sumac (Rhus integrifolia) and sugar sumac (R. ovata).

The coastal sage scrub community is the climax community for portions of inland-coastal southern California. It is generally composed of coast buckwheat (Eriogonum cinereum) and wild buckwheat (E. fasciculatum), along with black sage (Salvia apiana), common hazardia (Haplopappus squarrosus), prickly phlox (Leptodactylon californicum), yucca (Yucca whipplei) and California sagebrush (Artemisia californica) as major constituents. This is a particularly common association on the slopes in the general vicinity of site VC-1/H.

Although both of the above plant associations were undoubtedly of subsistence importance to the aboriginal population of the region, the third association, the southern oak woodland, may have been of primary significance in the inland zones adjacent to the

coastal strip. This results because of the great importance placed on the acorn as a food staple by Native Californians (Kroeber 1925), and the rarity of this resource on the coastal side of the Santa Monica Mountains. The association is characterized by the coast live oak (*Quercus lobata*) and the valley oak (*Q. agrifolia*), but also would have included various species of native grasses. Although currently restricted in distribution, this association is present in Placerita Canyon, on the south side of the Santa Clara River, downstream from site VC-1/H.

The fourth and final plant association consists of riparian habitats, which are localized and poorly diversified woodlands found in areas of perennial moisture. They include such species as arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepsi*), mule fat (*Baccharis glutinosa*), willow dock (*Rumex salicifolius*), swamp knotweed (*Polygonum coccineum*), nettle (*Urtica holosericea*), cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*) and rabbitsfoot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*). Though this plant association is limited in distribution, it can still be considered to have had significant economic importance in aboriginal times, especially in terms of the acquisition of raw materials for items like baskets, cordage and netting. Riparian habitat is present in the Santa Clara River, and once was probably common in the immediate vicinity of the site.

1.22 Ethnographic Background

The Upper Santa Clara Valley region was inhabited during the ethnographic past by an ethnolinguistic group known as the Tataviam. Their language is a member of the Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family. In this sense, it was related to other Takic languages in the Los Angeles County region, such as Gabrielino/Fernandeño of the Los Angeles Basin proper, and Kitanemuk of the Antelope Valley.

The Tataviam are thought to have inhabited the upper Santa Clara River drainage from about Piru eastwards to just beyond the Vasquez Rocks/Agua Dulce area; southwards as far as Newhall and the crests of the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains; and northwards to include the middle reaches of Piru Creek, the Liebre Mountains and the southwesternmost fringe of the Antelope Valley (ibid; Kroeber 1925; Earle 1990; Johnson and Earle 1990). Their northern boundary most likely ran along the northern foothills of the Liebre Mountains (i.e., the edge of the Antelope Valley), and then crossed to the southern slopes of the Sawmill Mountains and the Sierra Pelona, extending as far east as Soledad Pass (Earle 1990:94). Ethnographically, at least, the Tataviam do not appear to have controlled the Leona Valley or areas to the north, with the Elizabeth Lake area proper a zone of uncertainty.

Known Tataviam villages during the historic period include: pi?irukung and ?akavaya, both near modern Piru; tsavayu(?u)ng, San Francisquito; etseng, kuvung and huyung, on Piru Creek above Piru; tochonanga, near Newhall; kwarung, Elizabeth Lake; and tsawayung, near Castaic Junction. At kamulus, near modern Rancho Camulos, a mixed Chumash-Tataviam population lived (King and Blackburn 1976:535-6). Because the name kamulus is unquestionably Chumash and not Tataviam, however, the toponym has

been viewed as problematical (Johnson and Earle 1990:197); that is, as not reflecting the original (Tataviam) name for this village. Regardless of original name, however, the Spanish missionary Señan, writing in 1804, indicated that the Chumash inhabitants of the village of sécpey had migrated to kamulos, accounting for this admixture (Señan 1962:15). Sécpey is now known as Sespe, near the modern town of Fillmore.

The Tataviam, culturally-speaking, were in most respects similar to their Fernandeano and Chumash neighbors, to the south and west, respectively (King and Blackburn 1976). In this sense, they were hunters-gatherers, with subsistence emphasizing yucca, acorns, juniper berries, sage seeds and islay. Game was also hunted, with small animals, such as rabbits/hares and rodents, probably representing more significant contributions of meat protein than larger game, such as deer.

Little is known of Tataviam social and political organization. Based on analogies with surrounding groups, however, it can be suggested that they were organized in a series of tribelets, similar to the naciones described by Earle (1990) for the Antelope Valley, and found to be characteristic of much of California aboriginal socio-political organization (cf. Kroeber 1925). The tribelet represented an autonomous land-holding unit, minimally controlled by a head-chief or big-man. They usually included one large, 'capital' village, sometimes occupied year-around, and a series of smaller, seasonally inhabited hamlets. Whether the Tataviam may have had exogamous clans and moieties, like the Cahuilla and Serrano to the east, is unknown. However, it is estimated that the Tataviam population was less than 1000 people at the time of Euro-American contact, and that only two or three of the largest villages throughout their territory were inhabited at any given time (King and Blackburn 1976).

It is also likely that Tataviam religion followed the patterns of their surrounding neighbors. In this case, shamanism would have functioned as the central element. This posits a direct and personal relationship between each individual and the supernatural world, with this relationship enacted by entering a trance or hallucinatory state (usually based on the ingestion of psychoto-mimetic plants, such as jimsonweed or native tobacco). Shamans, per se, who were considered individuals with an unusual degree of supernatural power, served as ritual specialists: ceremonies and rites were infrequent in occasion and limited in type. Perhaps most importantly, shamans served as healers or curers, with the etiology of disease as well as its cure held to lie in the supernatural world. Shamans are also known to have produced the rock art of this region (Whitley 1992), which depicted the hallucinations and spirits they observed in their vision quests.

1.23 Archaeological Background

Archaeologically speaking, more information is available on the Upper Santa Clara River area, although here, too, less is known than for many of the surrounding regions of southern California. In general terms, the prehistory of this inland area appears to parallel that of the Santa Barbara Channel/southern California coastal zone (cf. McIntyre

1990), with William Wallace's (1955) cultural historical framework appropriate as a chronological system of reference.

Correspondingly, the earliest evidence for human occupation of this region corresponds to Wallace's Early Millingstone Period (or, alternatively, the Early Horizon), dated from about 7000 to 3500 years before present (B.P.). This represents a period during which subsistence and adaptation are said to have emphasized the collecting and processing of hard seeds, with inland artifact assemblages, correspondingly, dominated by mullers and millingstones known as manos and metates. Evidence for an Early Millingstone occupation of the Upper Santa Clara Valley region is, admittedly, limited, and has been found at only two sites. Both of these are located near Vasquez Rocks, with temporal attribution based on the presence of a small number of Olivella barrel beads (McIntyre 1990). Such bead types have subsequently proven unreliable temporal indicators, throwing doubt on human inhabitation of this region before about 4000 years ago. Further, recent excavations at one of these putative early locales, the Escondido Canyon Site, failed to uncover evidence for occupation prior to about 2700 years B.P. (Love 1990). Although it is thus likely that this region was used during the Early Millingstone, problems with site preservation or low population numbers have limited our evidence.

The second temporal unit in Wallace's chronology is the Intermediate Period (or Middle Horizon), dated from 3500 to 800 years B.P. It is marked by a shift to the mortar and pestle, with an increased emphasis on hunting and hunting tools in artifact assemblages. Population appears to have increased during this period, with more temporary camps founded. Evidence for Intermediate Period occupation of the Upper Santa Clara Valley region is substantial, in that it has been found at a number of sites and has been based on radiocarbon, obsidian hydration and typological dating (McIntyre 1990). The Agua Dulce village complex, for example, includes occupation extending back to the Intermediate Period, at which time population of the village may have been 50 or more people (King et al n.d.). Furthermore, the Intermediate Period appears to represent a time during which a substantial exploitation of mid-altitude environments first began, with use, for example, of the river corridor within the Newhall Ranch beginning at this time. It is likely that the movement of Takic peoples into the region may have occurred at this time.

Assuming that the Upper Santa Clara River region was first significantly occupied during the Intermediate Period, as existing evidence now suggests, a parallel can be drawn with the inland Ventura County region, where a similar pattern has been identified (Whitley and Beaudry 1991), as well as possibly the Antelope Valley and western Mojave Desert (Sutton 1988a, 1988b). In all of these areas a major expansion in settlement, the establishment of large site complexes, and an increase in the range of environments exploited, appear to have occurred sometime roughly around 4000 years ago. Although most efforts to explain this expansion have focussed on very local circumstances and events, it is increasingly clear that this was a major southern California-wide occurrence, and therefore that explanation of it must be sought at a larger level of analysis.

There is cultural continuity in the inland regions between the Intermediate Period and subsequent times, labeled the Late Prehistoric Period, lasting from 800 years B.P. to historic contact, at about 200 years B.P. However, despite this continuity there is increasing evidence for important changes of certain kinds. The most significant of these involved population sizes: many Intermediate Period villages were abandoned roughly between AD 1000 and 1200. It is not yet clear whether this reflected a reduction of total population numbers or instead just a redistribution of the existing population into fewer but larger villages. What is clear, however, is that while known Late Prehistoric Period villages are often found at existing springs, the early Intermediate Period sites occur at locations that currently lack water. Moreover, it is clear from paleoenvironmental reconstructions that world climate has experienced a period of drought for the last 800 years. It is highly likely that the onset of this cycle of drought contributed to the changes seen in the Intermediate to Late Prehistoric periods transition.

During the Historic Period, the aboriginal population appears to have dropped even more. This, without doubt, can be attributed to the effects of missionization and its attendant relocation of the aboriginal population to centralized locales, along with the depredations of introduced Old World diseases. The Upper Santa Clara River region appears to be one of those inland zones, like the Antelope Valley to the north, that quickly and completely lost its aboriginal population. In particular, the aboriginal population from the Upper Santa Clara Valley was moved into Mission San Fernando, in the San Fernando Valley, and the area was effectively depopulated.

CHAPTER 2

FIELD METHODS

Phase II archaeological fieldwork at site VC-1/H was intended to establish the boundaries as well as the significance of the prehistoric component of this site, and to thereby provide baseline data from which a determination of the ultimate disposition of this cultural resource could be made.

Procedures followed in the collection of data useful for establishing the nature and significance of the site included mapping, surface collecting of artifacts lying on the ground surface, and test excavation of pits to establish the presence or absence of a subsurface archaeological deposit, as well as to characterize such a deposit if found to be present.

In order to determine the maximum areal extent of the site, the initial field procedure was to locate, map and collect all surface remains present on the ground surface. In order to identify all such remains, the general area of the site was walked by crew-members spaced in approximate two meter intervals. Identified artifacts and archaeological indicators were then marked with flagging tape. Surface remains found within an area of approximately 3 meters-square in size (i.e., within a circle with a one-meter radius) were

treated as discrete artifact associations and collected as clusters. A WAAS-corrected GPS was subsequently used to map all remains or clusters of remains, which were numbered and collected by these provenience points.

Sixteen 1x1 m test pits were hand excavated on the site. Excavation units were designated numerically. Each unit was dug with pick, shovel and trowel in arbitrary ten centimeter spits or levels. Spoils from each of these levels was screened through one-eighth inch mesh. All artifacts and archaeological indicators were collected and bagged by unit level. In the initial excavated units, digging was continued for approximately 50 cm beyond the apparent termination of the cultural deposit and/or an auger was excavated in the bottom of the pit, in order to obtain a clear indication of the soils stratigraphy present. Subsequent to stratigraphic definition and profiling, excavation was continued through two culturally sterile levels (i.e., 20 centimeters), or until parent material was encountered.

CHAPTER 3

FIELD RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

Using the procedures outlined above, Phase II fieldwork at site VC-1/H resulted in the collection of a moderately-sized assemblage of archaeological remains. In the next chapter we discuss the recovered archaeological remains from this site in detail, including a summary of the laboratory procedures by which this collection was processed and analyzed, a review of the site assemblage in typological terms, and an outline of certain of the analytical concerns and conclusions the collection allows us to draw. However, prior to considering the artifact collection in specific terms, below we present a summary of the field results in a more general sense, particularly in reference to the size of the surface manifestations of the site, the presence/absence of subsurface remains, the nature of the soils present, and what these features imply about each cultural resource.

3.2 Surface Collection

The surface collection resulted in the identification of 74 archaeological specimens (stone tools and pieces of lithic debitage) on the groundsurface of the site area. These were mapped and collected from 59 data points (Figure 3). The distribution of surface artifacts was constrained to the N/NW by Highway 14, which likely removed the northern portion of the site, and to the S/SE by the Santa Clara River bed. The dimensions of the extant surface component of the prehistoric site measured 210 m E-W by 140 m N-S. This essentially conformed to the top and brow of the landform, along with the western and southern foot and toe-slope of this knoll.

The overall size of the surface component was 29,400 meters square. Note that this resulted in a very low surface artifact density: 0.002 artifacts per meter square, or one

artifact per every 397 square meters. Note further that there was a concentration of surface artifacts near the SE limit of the site area (surrounding test pit #11). As discussed below, this portion of the site consisted of a midden patch, and thus a concentrated living area within the site.

3.3 Test excavations

As noted above, fieldwork at site VC-1/H also involved the hand excavation of 16 1x1 m pits (Figure 4). Note that the landform containing the site is a bedrock supported knoll, and that this bedrock varies irregularly in depth, in some cases day-lighting on the knoll and, in others, allowing for moderate soil development—generally along the southern toe slope of the knoll. The top of the knoll, in contrast, lacks any source for deposition. Soils in this area are typically deflating and thin.

With the exception of Unit 11, discussed below, soils on the site were essentially uniform. The A Horizon (topsoil) is silty sand that is Munsell Dark Brown in color (10YR3/3). The contact between the A and C horizons was gradual, indicating in-place soil development. The C Horizon (parent material; i.e., decomposing bedrock) is an ancient weakly cemented alluvium (sandstone) composed of gravelly silty sand, with some carbonates. This was Munsell Brown (10YR5/3).

Using these soil descriptions for reference, the excavation unit results can be summarized as follows:

Unit #1: This was dug to 60 cm depth. The C Horizon was encountered at about 40 cm. A small quantity of artifacts (N = 46), primarily lithic debitage, was present to bedrock, with a slight increase in numbers near the base of the deposit (including extending into the disturbed upper portions of the C Horizon). This is the result of the downward movement of the coarse fraction in the soil, partly due to rodent activity, in part to gravity, lower into the profile and into the C Horizon.

Unit #2: Excavated to sterile bedrock at 50 cm depth. A small quantity of artifacts (lithic debitage and one animal bone fragment, N = 24) was recovered to the sterile alluvium.

Unit #3: Excavated to 50 cm, with the C Horizon encountered at 40 cm. A small quantity of artifacts (lithic debitage, N = 25) was present to 40 cm depth.

Unit #4: This unit was hand excavated to 60 cm. The A Horizon extended to 50 cm depth. It contained eight pieces of debitage, all found above 40 cm depth, and is on the margins of the archaeological deposit.

Unit #5: Excavated to 35 cm depth, where the C Horizon was encountered. Four pieces of debitage were recovered in the top 20 cm of the deposit, indicating that this pit was at the edge of the archaeological deposit.

Unit #6: Dug to 40 cm depth (limit of A Horizon), with three pieces of debitage recovered. Again, this unit is peripheral to the deposit.

Unit #7: Excavated to 50 cm depth, where the C Horizon was encountered. Total of 22 artifacts (primarily lithic debitage) recovered above C Horizon.

Unit #8: This pit was taken to 30 cm depth, where ancient alluvium (C Horizon) was encountered. Six pieces of debitage were recovered above 20 cm in depth, indicating that the unit was marginal to the archaeological deposit.

Unit #9: Dug to 50 cm depth, with the C Horizon encountered at 40 cm. A Horizon had five pieces of debitage above 30 cm and, again, the unit is at the deposit edge.

Unit #10: Sterile alluvium encountered at 50 cm depth, where excavation was terminated. Cultural remains consisted of 59 specimens (mostly debitage) in A Horizon, from 0 - 50 cm depth.

Unit #11: This was dug to bedrock, encountered at 80 cm depth. Soil conditions were slightly different here than elsewhere on the site, due to the presence of a soft silty sand midden (organically enriched) soil. This A Horizon extended to 35 cm depth, and it was massive in structure. A weak B Horizon consisting of clayey silty sand was present from 35 – 70 cm depth. This was sub-angular in structure. Both of these horizons were Munsell Very Dark Grayish Brown (10YR3/2), as a result of the human introduction of ash and charcoal into the soil. Ancient alluvium was encountered between 70 – 80 cm in depth, with a wavy contact. This was massive and indurated and is Munsell Light Yellowish Brown (10YR6/4) in color.

This unit alone contained 1715 archaeological specimens—more than the remaining fifteen pits in combination. Note however that a substantial portion of these specimens (36%) may represent naturally introduced faunal remains: small mammal bones probably resulting from recent animal burrows in this deep soil. Nonetheless, this pit was located in an area of intense prehistoric occupation.

Unit #12: Excavated to the top of the ancient alluvium at 20 cm depth, with seven pieces of debitage encountered from 0 - 20 cm, thereby suggesting it is at the margin of the deposit.

Unit #13: Dug to sterile alluvium at 20 cm. This pit contained just four archaeological specimens, indicating that it is on the edge of the archaeological deposit.

Unit #14: This pit was excavated to ancient alluvium, encountered at only 20 cm depth. Although shallow, the pit contained a total of 54 archaeological specimens.

Unit #15: Sterile alluvium was encountered at 30 cm depth in this pit, with archaeological specimens (N = 11) restricted to the top 20 cm of the soil.

Unit #16: The final pit on the site was also dug to 30 cm depth, where the C Horizon was encountered. Archaeological specimens (N = 5) were limited to the top 20 cm of the unit. Both Units #15 and 16 appear to be at or near the boundaries of the archaeological deposit.

These excavation results suggest the following. First, as noted above, soil depth varies dramatically, and over short distances, on the site, due to irregular underlying bedrock. Second, the intact archaeological deposit is not then strictly continuous over the landform but instead consists of a series of four more-heavily occupied zones, within the larger site area as a whole, each surrounded by peripheral (very low artifact density) zones of soil deposit. The locations of intense occupation and greater deposition consist of the areas of Units #1, 2 and 3, and the areas immediately surrounding units #10, #11, and #14.

Third, overall site area is calculated to be 210 m E-W by 115 m N-S. Note that the northern side of the site was truncated by Highway 14, and hence it is unclear how large it may once have been. Nonetheless overall size for the extant deposit can be estimated at about 24,150 meters square.

Fourth, and finally, the area surrounding Unit #11 warrants mention. This is located immediately alongside the stream channel, on a low terrace and, as noted above, it consists of a patch of organically enriched midden soil. This measures about 20 m E-W by 25 m N-S. There is evidence for soil development over time at this location (a weak B Horizon from about 35 to 70 cm in depth), indicating some time depth to this location, despite the preservation of the organic component of the soil.

CHAPTER 4

ARTIFACT ASSEMBLAGE AND ANALYTICAL CONCERNS

4.1 Introduction

Although the general patterns of artifact distributions, enumerated in the previous chapter, provide important information relative to the size and nature of site VC-1/H, proper determination of the significance and scientific importance of this resource can only be obtained with a more intensive analysis of the recovered artifact assemblage. Accordingly, in this chapter we consider the assemblage in some analytical detail, and what it implies about the site as well as aspects of the prehistory of the region. We begin by detailing the laboratory procedures followed in the processing and curation of the recovered remains. Subsequently we outline the taxonomic system employed to categorize and classify the artifact collection. This is followed by a typological summary

of the artifacts and archaeological indicators recovered from the site, and an interpretation of its age and function.

4.2 Laboratory Procedures

Following the completion of the Phase II fieldwork at VC-1/H, the recovered artifact assemblage was taken to the W & S Consultants' laboratory for washing, processing and analysis. After each specimen was washed and labeled, metrical and typological analyses were performed. We provide measurements and weights for the various artifacts and archaeological indicators in the site catalog (Table 1). In order to facilitate typological comparisons between this site and others from this same region, we have employed a standardized taxonomic system. We describe this classificatory system in some detail below.

4.21 Taxonomic and Analytical Considerations

In considering the artifacts recovered from the Phase II investigations at site VC-1/H, we employ a morphological stone tool typology first published by Whitley et al (1979) and now widely used in the region. This affords a number of advantages. First, because of its widespread use (e.g., Johnson 1979; W & S Consultants 1984, 1989a, 1989b) it permits easy comparability between existing studies. Second, because it is morphologically rather than functionally based, it provides greater objectivity in taxonomic assignments. Specifically, it avoids the dangers inherent in inferring dubious functional purposes for stone tools that may have had multiple uses, and that often exhibit little in the way of formal attributes. In the inland southern California region, in particular, it is increasingly clear that most sites are characterized by expedient or casual tool assemblages, probably reflecting the fact that the sites resulted from dispersal phase activities that little emphasized formal patterns of behavior (W & S Consultants 1989b). Thus, a typology based on the elucidation of tool manufacturing stages, rather than one assuming final function of the implements, stands less chance of leading interpretations astray. However, this is not to imply that functional interpretations are unwarranted or undesired. Such is not the case; instead, it is simply to emphasize that functional interpretations must be made somewhat independent of - and therefore including other lines of evidence from - the typological assignments alone.

The morphological typology employed here is based on four major categories of stone artifacts (cf. Whitley et al 1979). These are: (i) groundstone implements; (ii) core/cobble tools; (iii) flaked stone tools; and (iv) tool manufacturing waste, or debitage. Groundstone implements are tools that have been pecked and/or ground into shape. They include manos (or mullers) and metates (or basal grinding slabs), along with mortars, pestles, basket hopper mortars, stone bowls and comals (or griddles). Although there is a general association between groundstone artifacts and plant grinding, pulping and processing, as in the case of manos, metates, mortars and pestles, this is not invariably so:

stone bowls and comals, for example, had other uses, with certain kinds of bowls, in particular, sometimes reserved for ceremonial purposes.

Groundstone artifacts are usually (but not invariably) made of coarsely grained lithic materials. Metates, for example, are often made from sandstone or grano-diorite; bowls and comals are typically manufactured from steatite (soapstone or talc schist). In the Santa Clara River drainage, Sierra Pelona schist is a particularly common material for flat slab or shallow basin metates, and this is not steatite-grade talc schist. Manos, however, were often derived directly from river cobbles of appropriate size, so that quartzite is a common material source, as are sandstone and granodiorite.

Core/cobble tools are generally large, bulky implements made by the re-use and/or modification of a river cobbles and lithic cores. They include 'hammerstones', 'choppers' and 'scraper planes'. Hammerstones are usually unshaped or minimally shaped, roughly fist-sized, stones that exhibit characteristic battering and pounding scars, but often otherwise lack modification. Choppers are cobbles or cores that have been unifacially or bifacially flaked to create a relatively sharp edge. Scraper planes are high-backed, unifacially flaked tools that are usually 'biscuit-shaped' in plan, with edge angles near perpendicular, and with heavy use-scars along their convex face.

All of these tools were apparently employed for heavy pounding, scraping and/or battering tasks. There is a frequent association of core/cobble tools with groundstone artifacts (specifically manos and metates) in the nearby Conejo Corridor region (Whitley 1979b), suggesting that the two categories may have been functionally related; that is, that core/cobble tools may have served as part of a plant acquisition and processing toolkit. This is supported in reference to the scraper planes, in particular, which are argued to represent special yucca processing tools (Kowta 1969; Salls 1985). Further, this suggests in turn that the core/cobble tools were part of a woman's plant gathering toolkit (W & S Consultants 1989b).

Flaked or chipped stone tools are secondary reductions from cores and cobbles. That is, they represent tools manufactured from flakes struck-off the primary sources of lithic materials. These flakes may be used without modification as 'utilized flakes'; they may be bifacially flaked; or they may be unifacially flaked. It is apparent that the majority of the flaked or chipped stone tools in the region are either utilized flakes with no modification, or have edges that have been flaked unifacially or bifacially, but exhibit little or no effort for further edge modification or shape regularization (W & S Consultants 1989b). Again, this further emphasizes the casual or expedient nature of these tools, and also implies that they may have been used for a variety of tasks with little functional specialization.

Correspondingly, the majority of the chipped stone tools from this region are what we have defined as biface or uniface 'edges', and they may have been used for any number of general cutting, scraping and abrading tasks. Of course, occasional projectile points and drills represent special types of bifaces with specific and known functions, whereas

biface 'knives' (large leaf or knife-shaped tools) are presumed to have been used for cutting and piercing/stabbing tasks.

Generally, chipped stone tools were made from material with particular flaking characteristics; specifically, those subject to conchoidal fracture. Crypto-crystallates such as chert, chalcedony and jasper, therefore, are common raw materials, but fused shale, quartzite, cherty-siltstone, rhyolite, andesite, basalt and occasionally obsidian may also be present in a collection. Because small hand specimens of rhyolite, andesite and basalt are often only distinguishable with petrographic analysis, unless otherwise noted we treat them all as "fine-grained volcanics". And, as we have recently discovered (W & S Consultants 1991b), "fused sandstone", resulting from contact metamorphism between Miocene Conejo Volcanics and sedimentary beds, was also a lithic material of common use in the region. Because of its similarities to fused shale (based, of course, on similar metamorphic origins), it has often been mistaken for this latter material. This would be inconsequential, save for the assumption that the putative fused shale has its sole origins in Grimes and Happy Camp Canyons, north of Moorpark along the southern edge of the Santa Clara River Valley. Instead, it is apparent that a number of fused sandstone quarries are present in the nearby Conejo Corridor; that their respective lithic materials are widely mis-recognized as fused shale; and that, therefore, lithic exploitation was probably much more widely ranging than the often inferred simple exploitation of major quarries at Grimes Canyon might suggest (W & S Consultants 1991b).

The final category of stone artifacts is what can be considered lithic waste or debitage. It includes spent cores, waste flakes, and angular shatter. There are a number of different kinds of cores and flakes, and the presence of these varieties at a site tends to signify different types of tool reduction or manufacturing techniques. For example, the presence of large numbers of secondary and tertiary flakes usually indicates that chipped stone tool manufacture occurred at a locale, whereas primary flakes alone might be associated with the making of the cruder chipped stone tools, or might be expected at quarries where only the preliminary stages of tool manufacturing were conducted. Similarly, relatively large proportions of tertiary flakes correlate with habitation/campsites, in that tool maintenance and finishing occurred at these locales. Furthermore, because different lithic materials tend to correlate with different categories of tools, the material present in the debitage collection can also be a clue to a site's function. Quartzite and other 'crude' lithic materials, for example, are often found where core/cobble tools are manufactured, whereas crypto-crystallates tend to occur where chipped stone tools are manufactured. And, in a general way, there is an association between these last materials, chipped stone artifacts, and habitation sites (W & S Consultants 1989c).

In addition to the lithic tool typology, other classes of artifacts may be present at southern California sites. Dietary remains, in the form of shellfish and faunal bones, are sometimes present, as are ornaments, usually in the form of shell beads. Faunal remains, in particular, entail a series of analytical problems and issues, however, and therefore warrant some discussion. The most important analytical concern is the taphonomic history of the collection. That is, because bones may occur naturally in the subsoil – especially bones of small mammals such as pocket gophers and ground squirrels that

commonly reside and die in burrows – it is not always a straightforward process to determine which specimens in a faunal collection are truly archaeological and which are present as the result of normal animal activities. This problem is compounded by the fact that certain of these same burrowing animals may have been employed as parts of the prehistoric aboriginal diet. Furthermore, domestic dogs and wild coyotes may take or leave bones on sites, while large mammals can die on them after their prehistoric occupation. And, in the case of caves and rockshelters, a very wide range of animals may have lived and died in these sheltered habitats, or have been dropped there by other non-human predators.

Because of these confounding factors we have developed a series of short and general guidelines to aid in determining which specimens are most likely 'cultural', in the sense of having resulted from aboriginal behavior, and which bones are most probably unrelated to the archaeological remains and therefore only within the archaeological deposit due to serendipitous circumstances. In terms of positively determining that a given bone was brought onto a site by human agency we consider the following as useful criteria: (i) butchering and cutting marks; (ii) evidence of burning and charring; (iii) knowledge of the habits of a given species, indicating a low probability of its remains being naturally interred in a particular type of deposit; and (iv) ethnographic information concerning the diet and butchering habits of local aboriginal groups. Information counting against the inclusion of a given bone in a reconstruction of prehistoric diet includes: (a) knowledge concerning the behavior of a given species, indicating a high likelihood of natural deposition in the type of deposit in question; (b) 'freshness' of the bone; (c) absence of butchering marks and burning, or the presence of modern saw-cut marks; and (d) ethnographic data discounting the use of that species by local groups.

Thus, a cut long bone of a deer or a charred rabbit femur both would be considered most probably as 'cultural' specimens, and of course any marine mammal or fish bones could only have been deposited in an archaeological deposit by human activities. By contrast, pocket gopher and ground squirrel bones would be considered with suspicion if derived from an open-air deposit, particularly if they lacked any evidence of butchering or charring.

A second important issue concerns species identification; specifically the problems that complicate it. As is typical of the sites in the region (cf. Reynolds 1978), the large majority of archaeological faunal collections are composed of very small fragments, resulting from a heavy processing of the bones (probably by breaking and smashing) to extract the marrow. The result is faunal collections that are very difficult, if not essentially impossible, to speciate, especially since there are few articulations upon which to base a positive species identification. Consequently, we typically organize faunal specimens into a series of size categories that provide some idea of the probable species (or range of species) from which they were derived. Except in cases in which the bone is so fragmentary so as to preclude any categorization whatsoever, unspciated bone is assigned to an appropriate size grouping; where possible, the skeletal element is also identified as well. The size categories, with the range of species potentially observable in

southern California sites along with certain of their live weights (cf. Reynolds 1978), are as follows:

Small mammal:

Pocket gopher (2.5 - 8.8 ozs)
Kangaroo rat (1.6 - 2.7 ozs)
Harvest mouse (0.3 - 0.6 ozs)
Dusky-footed woodrat (8 - 13.75 ozs)
Meadow mouse (1.5 - 3.5 ozs)
Audobon cottontail (912 gms)
Brush rabbit (1.25 - 1.8 lbs)
Ground squirrel (0.2 - 0.5 lbs)
Western grey squirrel (average = 1.75 lbs)

Medium mammal:

Black-tailed hare (4.4 - 6.1 lbs)
Grey fox (7 - 13 lbs)
Coyote (20 - 50 lbs)
Domestic dog
Raccoon (1.8 - 22.2 kg)
Badger (3.6 - 10 kg)
Striped skunk (6 - 14 lbs)
Bobcat (15 - 35 lbs)

Large mammal:

Mule deer (125 - 200 lbs)
Guadalupe fur seal (50 - 100 lbs)
California sea lion (males to 600 lbs, females to 400 lbs)
Grey wolf (60 - 100 lbs)
Horse Domestic sheep Domestic cow

Finally, we are careful to recover, process and catalog all modern or contemporary 'artifacts' recovered during excavations. Such items are important not for any intrinsic reasons, but instead because they provide a clear sign of soil disturbance, typically within the last 100 years.

4.3 Artifact Assemblage: VC-1/H

The artifacts from VC-1/H are summarized in Table 1. A total of 2082 archaeological specimens was recovered from the site. Seventy-four of these were found on the site surface, with the remainder from the test excavations. The vast majority of the recovered remains—fully 82% of the total—was recovered from Unit #11. As noted above, 36% of the specimens from Unit #11 are unburnt small mammals bones that may in fact be natural rather than cultural in origin, hence the size of the assemblage from this pit may

be inflated by naturally introduced materials. Still, and despite this possibility, the midden patch surrounding Unit #11 was clearly the focus for prehistoric occupation at the site.

We discuss the artifact assemblage below, in terms of major artifact classes.

4.31 Lithic Tools

Groundstone artifacts

A total of six pieces of groundstone was recovered from site VC-1/H. Five of these are manos or mano fragments, all of which are bifacially ground; one is a uniface metate. Two of the manos are volcanic; two are grano-diorite; one is made of schist. The metate, in contrast, is volcanic tuff. All of these materials are locally available, although the volcanic tuff not immediately so.

The presence of this groundstone is indicative of plant processing activities at this site, most likely hard-seeding grinding. Notably absent are mortars and pestles, typically used for acorn processing. This absence likely reflects the fact that acorns were not a significant component of the subsistence practices at this site, but whether this further reflects environmental, temporal or adaptive factors is uncertain. For example, acorn exploitation may have been seasonal and practiced at nearby Placerita Canyon, but not at this specific location.

Core/cobble complex tools

Twelve core/cobble complex tools were found at the site. Seven of these are worked artifacts, per se; the remainder are cores and, thus, strictly are a kind of debitage. Four of the worked artifacts are hammerstones. All of these are Type 1 unmodified cobble hammerstones (ibid:15), with three made from fine-grained volcanics and one from quartz. While quartz is the most common mineral on earth, and is locally available in cobble form in many sedimentary deposits, it is somewhat unusual as a tool stone on southern California archaeological sites. The presence of quartz in the core/cobble complex assemblage, however, is mirrored in the debitage collection (below), and is apparently a specific characteristic of sites along this stretch of the Santa Clara River.

Two of the core/cobble complex tools are Type 2 cobble scraper planes (ibid:19). One of these is made from rhyolite, and the other from quartzite. As noted above, scraper planes appear to have been used for pulping purposes, most likely of agave. A third type of core/cobble complex tool from the site is a uniface cobble chopper, made from volcanic stone. This too was likely used for heavy pulping and pounding tasks. These heavy pounding tools further emphasize the importance of plant processing at the site.

The five cores are all Type 1 multiplatform cores (ibid:24), and thus show no evidence of systematic lithic reduction. Four of these are fine-grained volcanics and the fifth is jasper. Although lithic reduction was then somewhat unsystematic on the site, at least with respect to the primary stage of stone flaking, the jasper originates on the Mojave Desert and was an imported material. In some cases, in other words, "foreign" raw materials were brought onto VC-1/H for lithic production.

Flaked stone tools

Ten flaked stone tools were recovered from site VC-1/H. These include five projectile point fragments; three biface fragments; and two unifaces.

Four of the projectile point fragments are all made of jasper—a desert lithic resource. The fifth is fused shale, the closest source of which is to the west, near Fillmore. Three of these are tip fragments, one is a mid-section, and the fifth is a base. Although the tip and mid-section fragments are strictly all untypeable, they are clearly atlatl as opposed to smaller arrow points, based on their thickness and/or width. This means that they all apparently pre-date 1500 YBP, when the bow and arrow were introduced into the region.

The basal point fragment, made of jasper, supports this age assignment. It is the flat-based tang of an Elko Corner-Notched atlatl dart. This point type dates between 3500 – 500 YBP (Justice 2002:304), and Elko points are common in the Mojave Desert to the east.

The projectile points recovered from the site suggest a series of useful implications. First, they represent 36% of the formal tools in the site assemblage, demonstrating the importance of hunting in the prehistoric activities conducted at this location. Second, that four of the five are jasper, and that the identifiable point type is an Elko series point—a desert rather than coastal point type—further emphasizes the connection between the site inhabitants and the Mojave Desert, rather than the coast. Third, the other point fragment, made of fused shale, also indicates trade to the west, suggesting that the trading network was varied. Fourth, three of the five points were recovered from the site groundsurface; the other two from the excavation of Unit #11, with the Elko point fragment recovered at the 60 – 70 cm level. This last circumstance suggests that the site is entirely or primarily Middle Period in age, since Middle Period artifacts occur throughout the site's stratigraphic sequence.

The other flaked stone tools consist of three miscellaneous biface fragments, and two uniface edges. All are made of jasper. The biface fragments are characterized as "miscellaneous" because, in this instance, they are all so small that it is impossible to determine whether they are fragments of formal tools or parts of biface "edges." The unifaces, in contrast, are all just "edges;" that is, otherwise unshaped flakes that have been flaked along a single working edge. These kinds of tools represent casual craft activities using expedient tools, probably for a single use. It then does not appear that any specialized craft activities occurred at this site.

Lithic Debitage

As is almost invariably the case, lithic debitage—waste flakes and shatter resulting from stone tool manufacture and maintenance—constituted the large majority of the recovered artifact assemblage. A total of 1215 pieces of debitage (exclusive of cores) was recovered from the site. By rank order, the lithic materials present included the following:

Jasper	N = 703, 58% of debitage total
Fine-grained volcanics	N = 393, 32%
Quartz	N = 41, 3%
Chalcedony	N = 26, 2%
Obsidian	N = 24, 2%
Less than 1%:	
Fused shale	N = 11
Chert	N = 11
Rhyolite	N = 4
Quartzite	N = 1
Glass	N = 1

The glass appears to be modern and intrusive, with its flaked appearance most likely due to trampling.

A series of observations result from this debitage assemblage, all of which correlate with comments made earlier with respect to the formal flaked stone tools. First, the dominance of jasper, a Mojave Desert lithic resource, confirms the link between the site's prehistoric occupants and areas to the east. Second, this conclusion is further emphasized by the presence of a small but significant quantity of obsidian. The closest obsidian source is Sugarloaf Mountain in the Cosos, north of Ridgecrest, and it is another Mojave Desert lithic resource. Third, the presence of the obsidian signals that the site occupants participated in long distance trade. Fourth, the obsidian trade between Coso and areas to the west primarily occurred during the Middle Period, and effectively terminated by about AD 1200. Given the presence of the obsidian at the site, in significant even if small numbers, this supports the Middle Period age assignment inferred from the projectile points. Fifth and last, fused shale is also present, indicating access to and use of lithic resources to the west—in historical Chumash territory. Importantly, however, the debitage includes over twice the quantity of long-distance traded obsidian, coming from Coso roughly 140 miles away, in comparison to the fused shale from the Fillmore area, about 35 miles west. Cultural factors, most likely a tribal boundary, appear to have heavily influenced the nature of the prehistoric trading network.

The debitage can also be considered with respect to manufacture stages. By stage of production, the following tabulations resulted:

Primary flakes – 3% of debitage total
Secondary flakes – 58%
Tertiary flakes – 35%
Angular shatter – 4%

The low proportions of primary flakes and angular shatter indicate that very little primary production occurred on the site. The preponderance of secondary and tertiary flakes, in contrast, signals the importance of final tool manufacture and maintenance. Both of these activities are characteristic of habitations and campsites.

4.32 Other formal tools

A small quantity of additional formal worked artifacts were recovered from the site: three stone ornaments, and two bone tools. The stone ornaments are all made from talc schist—steatite. Steatite-grade talc schist is present in the Sierra Pelona Mountains in the Agua Dulce region, a relatively short distance northeast of the site.

The three ornament examples from VC-1/H include a fragment of a thin-walled tubular bead, a large flat disk bead fragment, and a broken but drilled flat blank. This last specimen may be part of a larger pendant, or instead an example of a bead that was broken in the manufacturing process, prior to final shaping. If the last circumstance was correct, this would indicate that bead production occurred at this location. Although three additional talc schist fragments were recovered from the site, these appear to have been water-rounded and are probably just "float" steatite that is present in the stream bed, because of the upstream source of this lithic material. The more likely interpretation of the third ornament specimen, in other words, is that it is a pendant fragment.

Although shell beads are often temporally diagnostic, these steatite beads unfortunately are not. Hence they have no temporal implications for the site.

The two bone tools are both small fragments of bone awls, probably made from a deer cannon bone. They are indicative of basket weaving, further pointing to the wide range of activities that occurred at this location.

4.33 Faunal remains

A relatively large collection of faunal remains—animal bones—was recovered from VC-1/H. This totaled 725 pieces weighing 79.4 gm. As noted above, animal bone from sites in this region typically was heavily processed—broken up—for marrow extraction, making speciation impossible in most cases. We have used inferred animal size groups to categorize the faunal remains instead, with only Large and Small mammals represented at this site. For the large mammal class, there were 31 specimens weighing a total of 17.8 gm. Four of these (1.6 gm) were burnt. For the small mammal class, there were 694 specimens weighing 61.6 gm. Note however that unburnt small mammal bones in

archaeological sites are especially problematic because they may represent recent intrusive rodent remains, not evidence for prehistoric subsistence. Burnt small mammal bones, which is much more likely to be truly archaeological in origin, included only 64 specimens weighing 6.9 gm—about 10% of the overall total.

Despite this uncertainty, there is clear evidence for the acquisition and use of both large (most likely deer) and small mammals (probably rodents and smaller hares) at the site. The animal bone suggests a generalized foraging pattern rather than any kind of specialized hunting strategy. Further, the large mammal bone consists almost entirely of long bone shaft fragments. This suggests that butchering occurred off-site, where the carcasses were discarded, with the meat brought back to the habitation.

4.34 Miscellaneous remains

Note above was the fact that three unworked pieces of talc schist were also recovered from VC-1/H. In addition to these items, 109 fragments of ocher were collected. Most of these were rounded, perhaps water rounded and collected from the adjacent streambed where they may occur as float material. Alternatively the rounding may have occurred from use: rubbing as an application technique for body paint.

4.4 Age and Function of VC-1/H

The age of VC-1/H can be established with a series of lines of evidence. First, all five of the recovered projectile points are atlatl dart fragments and thus pre-date 1500 YBP. One of these fragments is the base of an Elko Corner-Notched point, dated specifically at 3500 to 1500 YBP. Second, a small but significant amount of obsidian was recovered. Almost all obsidian from this portion of southern California dates before about AD 1200, at which point the desert to inland obsidian trade essentially terminated. The presence of obsidian on the site therefore also suggests that it is Middle Period or older in age. Third, a weak B Horizon has developed, in place, in the midden surrounding Unit #11. Although rates of soil pedogenesis vary, even within a give region, the B Horizon is indicative of older (on the order of one or more thousands of years) rather than younger soils.

The combination of these three lines of evidence suggests that site VC-1/H is Middle Period in age, dating between 4000 and 800 YBP, and probably 4000 to 1500 YBP. Although it is possible that more recent occupation occurred on the site, we found no affirmative evidence of this possibility during the test.

Functionally, site VC-1/H is best interpreted as a small habitation or campsite. This is indicated by the diversity of artifact types, which includes hunting tools (projectile point) and evidence (faunal remains), evidence of lithic reduction (cores, debitage and hammerstones) and especially tool finishing and maintenance (secondary and tertiary flakes, bone awls), in addition to plant processing artifacts (groundstone, scraper plane). Judging from the preponderance of manos and metates (as opposed to mortars and

pestles), hard seeds as opposed to acorns appear to have been the focus of the prehistoric diet at the site, augmented by unspecialized mammal hunting.

Given its size and the relatively low subsurface density of artifacts, site VC-1/H appears to have been occupied by a small group of individuals (perhaps a single extended family), sporadically for a long period. Logically, the site would have been used seasonally as a dispersal phase camp. This last conclusion is supported by the negative archaeological evidence at the site, which includes the absence of features like housepits, hearths and burials. VC-1/H, then, is likely one seasonal component of the early prehistoric settlement system for the upper Santa Clara River drainage.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary and Conclusions

Phase II archaeological studies were conducted at at prehistoric archaeological site VC-1/H, within the Vista Canyon project area, Santa Clarita, northern Los Angeles County, California. This Phase II fieldwork involved mapping, the surface collecting of groundsurface artifacts and archaeological indicators, and the hand excavation of test pits on site VC-1/H, along with laboratory processing, cataloging and analyses of the recovered artifact collection.

Site VC-1/H was found to be a small campsite located on a knoll and low terrace on the north side of the Santa Clara River. The site area was determined to be 215 m E-W by 115 m N-S, or about 24,150 meters square, and the site includes a subsurface deposit that ranges from about 80 to 20 cm in depth. Based on the recovered artifact assemblage, the site appears to represent a Middle Period settlement dating from circa 4000 to 1500 YBP. It further appears to have been seasonally occupied by a small group of people, whose subsistence practices emphasized plant foods, probably hard seeds, and a generalized hunting pattern. Trade goods at the site indicate that its occupants were primarily linked to the Mojave Desert region to the east/northeast, with much less interaction with groups at a closer distance downstream, to the west.

5.2 Final recommendations for site VC-1/H

Archaeological site VC-1/H contains an intact subsurface deposit and artifacts that hold the potential for contributing to our understanding of the prehistory of this portion of California. Construction or development on this site therefore has the potential to result in adverse impacts to significant cultural resources. We recommend that any such adverse impacts be mitigated by avoidance and preservation. Should this be unfeasible, we recommend that a Phase III data recovery (salvage excavation) be conducted on the site.

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