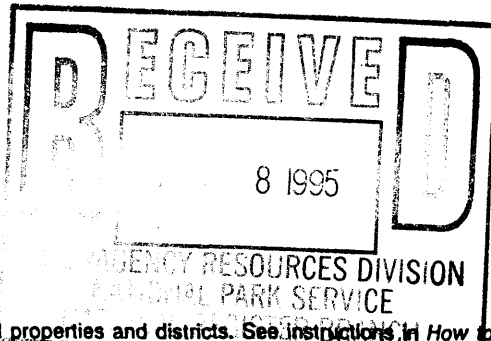


1554

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Weedpatch Camp

other names/site number Arvin Federal Camp/Sunset Labor Camp

2. Location

street & number 8305 Sunset Blvd. not for publication

city or town Bakersfield vicinity

state California code CA county Kern code 029 zip code 93307

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Harold Almy Deputy SHPO 11/30/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson B. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

1-22-96
Date of Action

Weedpatch Camp
Name of Property

Kern County, CA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social: Meeting Hall

Government: Post Office

Education: Library

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Weatherboard

roof asphalt

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Agriculture
- Politics/Government
- Social History

Period of Significance

1936-1946

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Works Progress Administration

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Lamont Woman's Club, Lamont, California

Woodpatch Camp
Name of Property

Kern County, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	11	326570	3899250
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret P. Lutz, President

organization Lamont Women's Club date May, October, 1995

street & number P.O. Box 543 telephone (805) 845-4101

city or town Lamont state CA zip code 93241

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Housing Authority of the County of Kern

street & number 525 Roberts Lane telephone (805) 393-2150

city or town Bakersfield state CA zip code 93308

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Weedpatch Camp, Kern County, California

The three buildings that remain from the Weedpatch Camp are the post office, community hall and the library. All three are one-story, utilitarian in design, with few stylistic details. They were built by the W.P.A. in 1935. Today they are in a fenced off area near the main gate of the Sunset Labor Camp in rural Kern County. The remainder of the buildings at the camp are newer, frame buildings built on the old tent pads originally placed there in the 1930s. While the historic buildings have suffered some deterioration, they still maintain the integrity necessary to convey their significance. Also within the boundaries is a non-contributing three bedroom double-wide mobile home just to the left of the entrance gate.

The post office is a two part building with distinctive sections at front and rear. The front consists of a small, square section clad in board and batten siding. The roof is hipped and covered with asphalt shingles. A portion of the roof extends over the front door to provide a small porch overhang. Windows are six over six double-hung. Attached to the rear is a gabled, metal roofed rectangular metal building originally used for housing at the camp. In 1938 or 1939, this building was attached to the post office to enlarge it. The enlarged building was used as a clinic/hospital, with the post office functioning as such only a few hours a day.

The library is a rectangular wood frame building with horizontal board siding. The asphalt shingle roof is front gabled in form with double vents at the front and rear. Windows are two-over-two. A porch supported on four, evenly-spaced narrow square posts extends across the front of the building.

The community hall was the scene of church services and all social activities such as dances, parties, and meetings. It is a building with two sections. The main section is clad in board and batten siding with horizontal wood siding near the side gabled roof. There is a clerestory row of windows in this upper, horizontally sided segment. Six light double casement windows are on either side of the main entrance door. There is a small overhang serving as a porch. The west end of the building has a shed roof section that is also clad in board and batten siding. Asphalt shingles cover the roofs of both sections. This building has an open beam ceiling, wood floors and a small stage.

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Section number 8 Page 1

Weedpatch Camp, Kern County, California

The Weedpatch Camp is significant for its Depression-era association with the Farm Security Administration's efforts to improve the plight of migrant farm workers, many of them from the Dust Bowl. The camp is located near Bakersfield, which has become a center of California's "Okie" culture, particularly Country and Western music. The camp, which offered health care, schooling and laundry facilities in addition to clean, safe housing, was a welcome haven for farm workers and their families. It was one of 28 camps set up in California by the federal Farm Security Administration as an alternative to privately owned camps that were often unsanitary, in disrepair and lacking in facilities.

The migrants who came to California from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Missouri and lived at the Weedpatch Camp brought with them their religious culture, a unique language pattern, their music, and food representative of their regions. They also brought with them strong ethical and work values from the rural south, west to California. The Weedpatch Camp provided a solid start for many of these migrants, who represent an important social group in California's history.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2
Weedpatch Camp Kern County California.HISTORY OF THE "WEEDPATCH CAMP"
Partial Source
Children of the Dust Bowl
By Jerry Stanley

Between 1935 and 1940 over one million people left their homes in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Missouri to escape the wind, dust, and drought and set out for California on what was referred to then as the "Mother Road", Route 66. They left their homes to find a better life for their families in California, where they heard there was a lot of work to be found picking crops, and where no one ever went hungry.

The Arvin Federal Camp, or the "Weedpatch Camp" began preparing for these "Okies" as they were being called in 1935. The land was leased to the United States Department Agriculture by Miss Bertha Rankin. A Managers house was built along with sanitary units, showers and laundry facilities, and spaces marked out for tents. These migrants were eager to settle at this camp because it was a clean and safe place to live. Safe because almost as soon as they crossed over the California border, they were ridiculed, rejected and shamed. They learned the word "Okie" meant they suddenly were lower class people and scum. "Weedpatch Camp" was no paradise, but for the families who settled there, it was a vast improvement over the "squatter" camps and their life on the road.

In 1936 this camp housed about 300 people in one room tin cabins and tents. It cost \$1.00 a week to live there. The first report recorded by the camp manager was for the week ending January 4, 1936. In this log was entered the daily goings on at the camp, including work assignments and illnesses.

On July 24, 1937, Miss Rankin executed and delivered a Mortgage to the Bank of America National Trust. This property was deeded to the United States Department of Agriculture on August 9, 1938 for the sum of \$1200.00.

In 1936 a newspaper reporter named John Steinbeck became interested in the plight of the "Okies." He stayed near the "Weedpatch Camp" in the neighboring community of Weedpatch, California, and began gathering material for his controversial novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." Within weeks this novel hit the best seller list and by the end of the year, 500,000 copies had been sold. Although this book was once called an "obscene work of fiction," banned, and taken off Library shelves, today many Teachers at Schools and Universities call this book the "greatest American novel ever written." It won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize. The movie rights were bought and some of the footage for the movie were filmed at the "Weedpatch Camp." The buildings which were partially shown were

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3
Weedpatch Camp Kern County California

built by the W.P.A. and the men who lived at the Camp over sixty years ago.

Families at that time were large, and many of the residents of the Camp were children. At school they were regarded by their teachers and fellow students alike as stupid and retarded, and were taunted by the clothing they wore which was ragged or ill fitting. Many went to school bare footed.

In 1939 newly elected Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Leo B. Hart became interested in the plight of the students from the Camp. He knew that given a chance, these children could be adjusted into society. He visited with these children regularly in a field adjacent to the Camp. The situation got so bad that teachers and other parents did not want these "Okie" children in the public schools. In 1940 Mr. Hart determined that these children should have their own school. He leased a ten acre site of land from the Federal Government for \$10.00. The school started with two condemned buildings and fifty poorly clad and undernourished children. The children picked cotton that summer and on a September morning, the children started building their own school next to the Camp.

Out of this they learned plumbing, electrical wiring, and a dozen other useful trades. They planted their own garden, and raised their own livestock. They also learned the skills of butchering. They had their own kitchen, and along with all of this they learned History, Geography, Math and Science. and even shoe cobbling. The girls took Chemistry and learned how to make their own face cream, rouge and lipstick. A C-46 Airplane was bought and converted into a school room. They even built their own swimming pool. Teachers from other schools became interested in this school, and volunteered their time to work at the "Weedpatch School" evenings and on weekends.

In 1944 Kern County residents were clamoring to get their children enrolled in the "Okie School." Also in 1944 the Arvin Federal Emergency School ended and was absorbed by the Vineland School District. In 1952 an earthquake destroyed all but one of the original buildings. The School was rebuilt and today it still stands next to the Camp, and is known as the Sunset School. It still teaches the children of the migrant workers who live at the Camp.

The Children who lived at the Weedpatch Camp and attended the "okie" school are now Teachers, Principals, business owners and although many moved to other areas they are upstanding members of their communities.

The Weedpatch Camp became the Sunset Labor Camp. On February 6, 1958 it was taken over by Kern County and on May 24, 1965 it was deeded over to the Kern County Housing Authority.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Weedpatch Camp Kern County, California

Wooden frame buildings have replaced the tin buildings and tents, but the original Post Office, the Library and the large Community Building still are there in a fenced off area. They are in remarkably good condition but the Kern County Housing Authority plan to restore them to their original condition as closely as possible. This Camp now houses migrant workers from April to September.

Former Lamont Librarian Mrs. Doris Weddell became fascinated with this period in our History. She started collecting books, photographs and newspaper articles. Memorabilia was also donated to her by visitors to the Dust Bowl Room at the Lamont Library. In the past year attention to the Dust Bowl Era has grown by leaps and bounds. The Dust Bowl Collection is being used more and more by teachers, students and historians and is getting world wide attention. Those migrants who came to California during the 1930's and 1940's are coming back to where it all began, and many who re-visit the Weedpatch Camp say they find their visit a "Cleansing experience." Today they are proud to be called "Okies."

This is the sixth year the Dust Bowl Festival will be held in Lamont. It is planned for September 9, 1995, and will again feature tours of the Camp, bands, old cars, and food. The people who come to this festival enjoy seeing the displays, and meeting old friends whom they have not seen in years. This year the Lamont Post Office is issuing a Dust Bowl Stamp. It will go on sale on September 9, 1995 and will be sold nation wide.

We are also planning a large celebration in 1996. Since the "Weedpatch Camp." became operable the first week in January 1936, this will be their sixtieth anniversary.

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Section number 8 Page 5

Weedpatch Camp Kern County, California

LIFE AT THE WEEDPATCH CAMP

Life at the Weedpatch Camp was a mixture of hard work, play and learning. Men, women and children (when they were not in school) were sent out daily to work in the fields, orchards and the packing sheds. The men and women were also asked to help keep the camp clean.

They had weekly dances, talent shows, and pot luck dinners. Many of these functions were open to the public. This gave members of the surrounding communities a chance to see that these migratory workers were not "stupid Okies" as some had made them out to be, but displaced American citizens looking to find a better life than the one they had left behind.

The camp personnel gave craft lessons, sewing lessons and had a wood shop for those interested. It is reported they had one of the best baseball teams in the area and played against many of the farm teams. At one time they even had a donkey baseball game.

The children were sent to Vineland School, and when the Sunset School was established, they attended that School.

Their other needs were taken care of also. There was a nursery where working mothers could leave their babies and small children. This left the mothers free to work along side their husbands in the fields and help boost their income, which made for better living conditions. There was also a clinic and a well baby clinic where medical care was given to both young and old alike.

There were Church services every Sunday for all who wished to attend.

The Weedpatch Camp not only provided a safe, clean haven for these migrants, it gave them back their self esteem. As Mrs. Blankenship wrote, "we worked together, we laughed together, and we cried together." They formed a bond that time could not erase, and many have kept track of one another over the years. Many former camp inhabitants look back on their time at the Weedpatch Camp with many good memories.

FOOTNOTE: A good portion of the filming of the movie, "The Grapes Of Wrath" was done at the Weedpatch Camp. This was established in the book THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF JOHN STEINBECK, WRITER BY Jackson T. Benson. Page 410

The only other Labor Camp that we are aware of is in Shafter, Ca. This is also managed by the Housing Authority of the County of Kern.

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6Weedpatch Camp Kern County CaliforniaTHE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN REGARD TO THE CAMP
THE FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

As the migrants came into California in the middle thirties, they congregated in "squatter camps" along the side of roads, on the banks of canals or close to a town where they could obtain water and supplies. These were not healthy living conditions. The mortality rate among small children and infants was high and many were suffering from malnutrition and rickets. Tuberculosis was prevalent among young and old alike. Many parents did not know where to turn for help.

The Farm Security Administration was already starting to construct labor camps because, with a few exceptions, the camps managed by the farmers were not too much better than the "squatter camps."

The winter of 1937 and 1938 was especially severe in California. Rivers and creeks over-flowed their banks washing out squatter camps and flooding farm camps. Families were forced to flee, often abandoning what few possessions they had. Hundreds were left without food or water. Private groups and Government agencies rushed to their aid. The F.S.A. intensified their efforts to get the camps built, and launched an emergency program along with medical care.

One of the important discoveries the F.S.A. made was that when the migrant family was "taken off wheels" their annual income increased 20%. This was because most of their income went for gas while they traveled from place to place looking for work.

Because of this discovery, the F.S.A. provided cheap, clean, generally well managed camps. They had tent platforms, metal buildings and sanitary facilities.

The Weedpatch Camp was one of these camps. Beside the qualities just mentioned, they had bath and laundry facilities, a good recreational program, and schooling available for the children. They also governed and policed themselves. This was made possible due to the efforts of their Camp Manager, Tom Collins to whom John Steinbeck dedicated his book, "THE GRAPES OF WRATH." Mr. Collins was sympathetic to the plight of the migrants. He did not see them as un-educated dirt farm To him they were "colorful relics of the nation's rural past." He treated these migrants with care and dignity.

In 1939 Tom Collins supervised the set up of one complete mobile

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Section number 8 Page 7

Weedpatch Camp Kern County, California

camp. The State Department of Public Health followed the lead of the F.S.A. and put four more mobile health units in the field.

These camps were the federal government's answer to the problem created by the Dust Bowl Migration. They were clean, safe havens to a multitude of migrants. They also gave the children of these migrants a chance to grow up in a better world than the one they had left. These children of the Dust Bowl Camps are the teachers, community leaders and business owners of our community today.

The period of significance has been ended at 1946, fifty years ago, although the camp continued to be associated with Dust Bowl migrants until the late 1940s.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Nine Page One
Weedpatch Camp Kern County, California

Stanley, Jerry Children Of The Dust Bowl
Crown Publishers, Inc. 1993

Ferguson, Jack E. Camp Arvin: A short description of the Camp;
Its founding, people, and its social and administrative organization.
1935-1939.
Term paper/ Sacramento State College May 15, 1958 unpublished.

California State Chamber of Commerce Migrants: A National Problem and
Its Impact. 1940 Unpublished.

Gregory, James American Exodus
Oxford University Press, New York 1989

Stein, Walter J. California And The Dust Bowl Migration.
Greenwood Press Publishing Division, Westport Conn. Pgs. 166-189.

Collins, Tom Arvin Federal Migration Camp: Camp Reports.
1936, Unpublished.

Steinbeck, John The Grapes Of Wrath
Viking, 1939.

Benson, Jackson T. The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer.
Viking 1984 Page 410

McWilliams, Carey Ill Fares The Land
Little, 1942

Steinbeck, John Their Blood Is Strong.
Simon J. Lubin, Soc. of California 1938

Anderson, Nels Men On The Move Section on Labor Relations, W.P.A.
Washington D.C. Pages 310-311
Published: University of Chicago 1940

Taylor, Paul Lange, Dorothea 1939 American Exodus
New York Arno Press 1975

These are some of the most relative sources of information about the unique place in history held by the "WEEDPATCH CAMP.": They are taken from a Bibliography of over 150 titles utilized in our research for the project.

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Section number Nine Page Two
Weedpatch Camp Kern County, California

Attached is the Bibliography from Jack Ferguson's Term Paper. This was done while he was at Sacramento State College, and it was not published. May 15, 1958.

Also attached is the Bibliography for the magazine articles, and newspaper clippings pertaining to the Federal Government and Farm Security Administration involvement in the camps, and articles about life in the camps.

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Section number Ten Page One

Weedpatch Camp Kern County California

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The Boundaries are shown on the enclosed scale map.

Attached is also an area plot plan with the significant buildings shaded in red, and fences added.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundary is one of convenience, drawn to include the remaining historic resources for the camp and their immediate setting.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

Weedpatch Camp, Kern County, California

Photo log

Photographer: Randy Coates

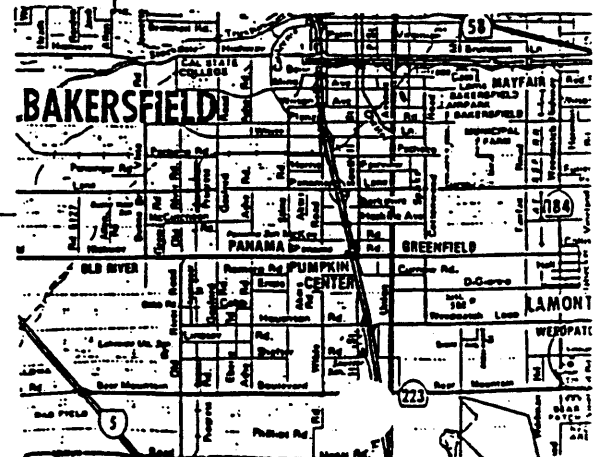
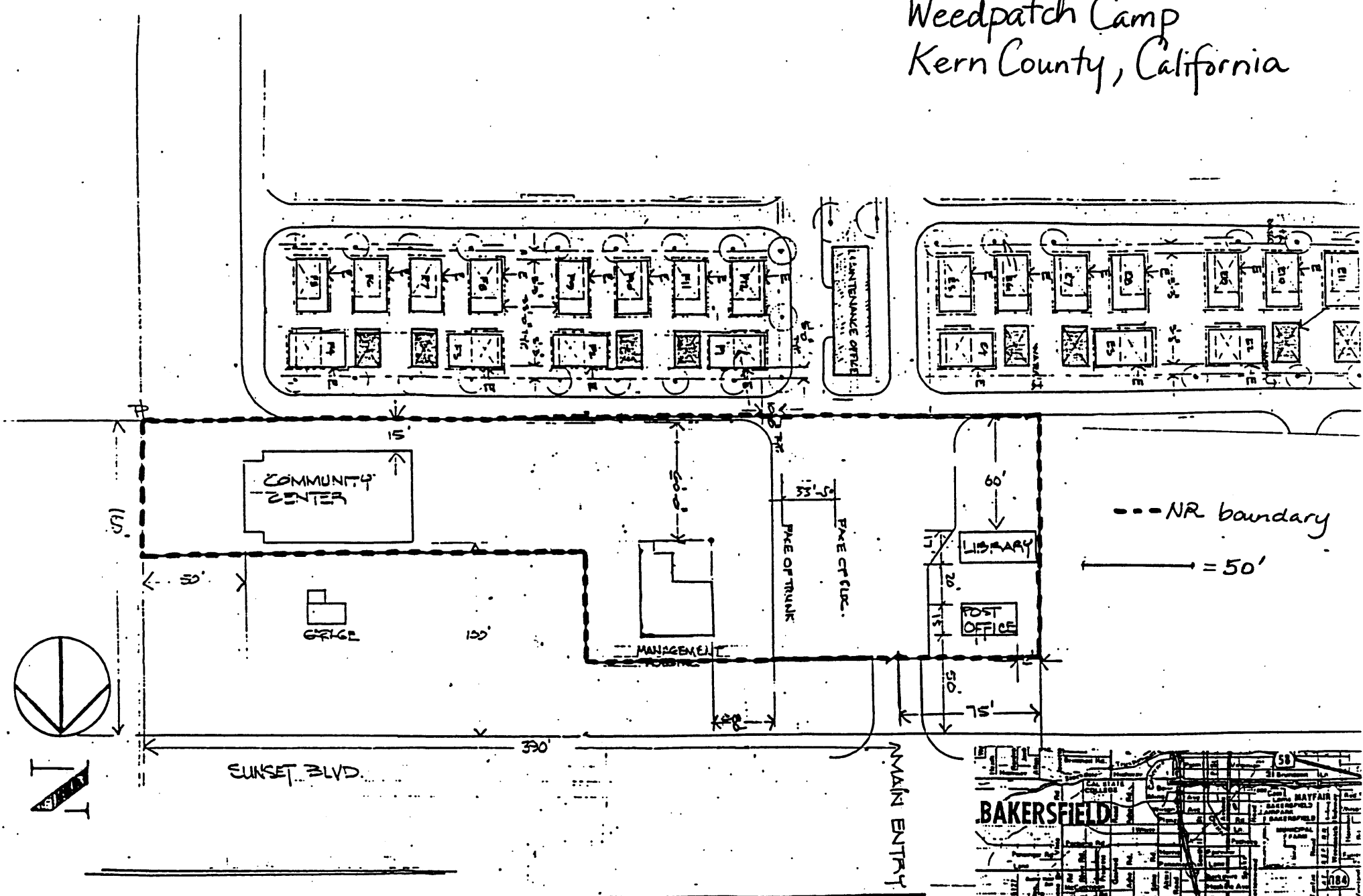
Date of Photographs: September, 1995

Negative Location: Lamont Women's Club
P.O. Box 543
Lamont, CA 93241

Views:

1. Main elevation, community hall
2. East side of community hall
3. Northeast corner of community hall
4. East side of community hall, looking northwest
5. West side of community hall
6. North side of community hall
7. Main elevation, library
8. Entrance, library
9. Rear of library
10. North side of library
11. Main elevation, post office
12. North side of post office
13. Main elevation, post office
14. Rear of post office

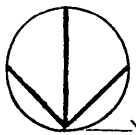
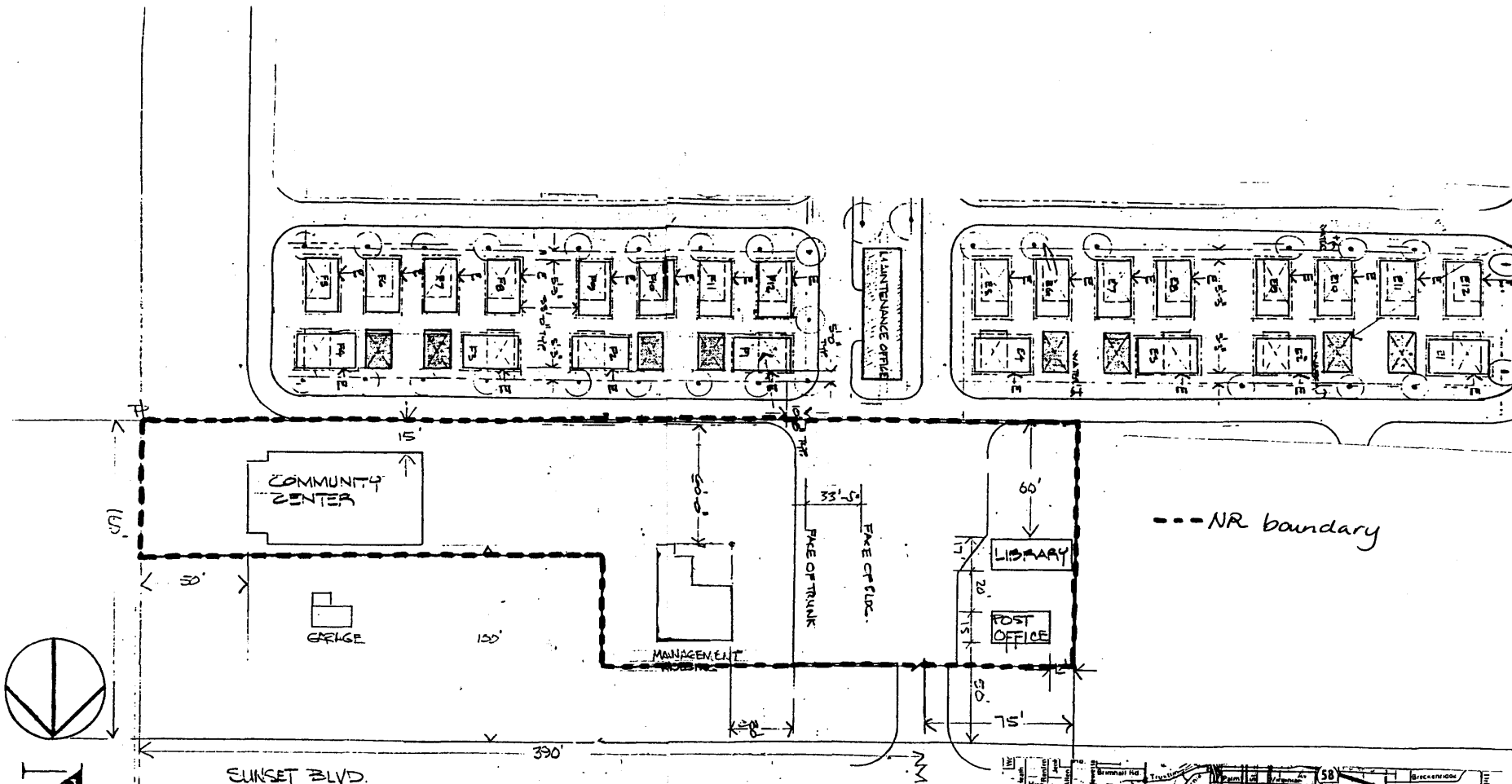
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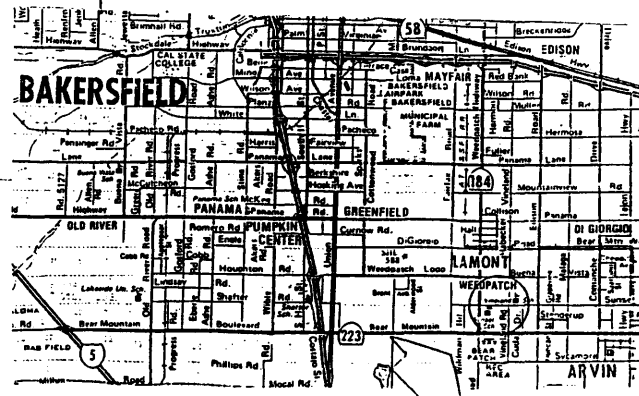
SHEET NO.

SITE PLAN, ARVIN CAMP

KERN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY



SCALE: 1" = 50'-0"



A1

SHEETING

SITE PLAN, ARVIN CAMP

KERN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY