

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Bancroft Ranch House

AND/OR COMMON Bancroft Ranch House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
9050 Memory Lane

CITY, TOWN  
Spring Valley

STATE  
California

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF  
CODE  
06

\_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
41st  
COUNTY CODE  
San Diego 073

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Spring Valley Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER  
P. O. Box 142

CITY, TOWN  
Spring Valley

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. San Diego County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
San Diego

STATE  
California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bancroft Ranch House is a one-story adobe structure with a gable roof which overhangs on the entrance side to form a small veranda. The house was built by A. S. Ensworth in 1856. Incorporated into the structure are curved oak timbers from the coaling hull of the Clarissa Andrews, former three-decker trans-Atlantic packet of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. After Ensworth's death, Captain Rufus K. Porter purchased the adobe house and land and moved his family to it from San Pedro in 1865. The Porters added a kitchen and dining room to the west end of the adobe and two bedrooms to the east end.

Hubert Howe Bancroft bought the ranch in 1885. Here he continued to write volumes of his histories and experimented with many types of plants and crops until his death in 1918. In 1940 a frame addition was added to the rear or north of the house doubling its size. In 1962 the deteriorating condition of the building required a major overhaul. The cellar was filled in and a concrete floor laid in addition to steel bracing of the walls. It is now opened as a museum and storehouse for artifacts and relics of Spring Valley.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1856, 1885

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hubert Howe Bancroft compiled the monumental histories of the western half of the North American continent. Working over a thirty-year period in the last half of the nineteenth century, he described the history of civilization that was then rapidly disappearing. His 39 fact-packed volumes, published in San Francisco between 1882 and 1890, still maintain their preeminence as the basic authority on the history of Alaska, and the western portions of Canada, Central America, Mexico, and the United States. Built in 1856 by A. S. Ensworth, this one-story adobe house was acquired by Bancroft in 1885, and occupied by him until his death in 1918.

## HISTORY

Born in Ohio in 1832, Bancroft came to California in 1852 and tried his hand briefly at mining. In 1855 he opened a book and stationery store in San Francisco, later becoming also a book publisher. He conducted his business affairs with such skill that by the end of the Civil War he had become one of the most successful merchants in the West and a very wealthy man. In connection with his business, Bancroft had begun collecting books on California. This hobby evolved eventually into a systematic worldwide search and purchase of every book and pamphlet relating to not only California but the entire Pacific slope of North America. By 1868 he had assembled 10,000 titles. It was at this point that he decided there was still time enough in life to accomplish something more lasting and more important than selling and publishing books. He himself would write, while his agents continued adding volumes to his collection. This collection, when finally completed (and now lodged in the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley), contained more than 60,000 books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts, as well as the record of interviews with many early pioneers of the Pacific Coast.

In 1869 Bancroft began work on the gargantuan task he had set for himself--that of sifting, correlating, and evaluating all of the material he had collected and of writing from it a complete history of the Pacific slope. Bancroft realized that no one human being could do this in a single lifetime, and he made no pretense of doing so. He employed 20 assistants some of whom, such as Henry Oak, Thomas Savage, and Francis Fuller Victor, were historians in their own right, to work steadily on this project until it was completed in 1890.

Bancroft's method, as described by his biographer, James W. Caughey in California, pages 437-38, was as follows:

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	3	6	2	1	8	7	0
ZONE			EASTING					NORTHING						

B 

ZONE			EASTING					NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Bancroft Ranch House has been drawn to include the house and is coterminous with its lot as shown on Tax Assessors Map Book 500, page 20 for Spring Valley, included as Sketch Map A outlined in red. The other areas of the original property have been built up and no longer retain historical integrity. The 1940 frame addition does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

by Charles Snell, 1961; updated by Cecil McKithan, 1978.

Boundary determined by Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

July 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Boundary Certified

*Henry F. ...*  
DATE July 14, 1978

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2/21/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

"By trial and error a technique developed. At first Bancroft set men to work making literal extracts from the sources. These proving too cumbersome and less satisfactory than the originals in their context, he turned to an elaborate index, which likewise proved too complex. The next resort was a simple subject index on three by five slips, which were organized on a topical basis and then subdivided locationally and chronologically. This master index to his library was years in the making and cost an estimated \$35,000, yet Bancroft considered that a bargain price for a key that would unlock the knowledge stored up in his vast collection...

With aid of the index, then, Bancroft and his staff went through the subject matter of the Pacific slope history item by item, viewing the evidence, weighing it, comparing and interpreting. The facts as they saw them were written up in the text proper, while divergent or variant testimony fell into the footnotes in company with verbatim quotations from many supporting witnesses. Thus the work proceeded, with the mark of the index in evidence in such matters as the general organization, in which chronological arrangement was made subordinate to the geographical divisions. The end result was 39 fat volumes, uneven in quality, but cyclopedic in detail and crammed with citations of every conceivable authority. Well-digested history it doubtless is not, but a more comprehensive compilation of sources would be difficult to imagine."

Bancroft himself actually wrote far less than half and probably not much more than one-tenth of the text of his 39 volumes, but having conceived of the project, furnished the tools, provided the raw materials, and paid his assistants, he felt no qualms in assuring the world that he was the sole author of Bancroft Works; in his autobiography, Literary Industries, Vol. 39 of the History, however, Bancroft did acknowledge the important clerical and scholarly assistance rendered by his co-workers.

In October 1885, Hubert H. Bancroft, in search of a place to retire, bought Porter's property. In addition, he purchased the land of several neighbors bringing the total acreage to 515 acres which he called "Helix Farms."

Part of Bancroft's famous history series was written at Helix Farms. Experimental farming was carried on with the introduction of subtropical trees, palms, olives and citrus fruits. After Bancroft's death in 1918, the land was sold by heirs and divided.

(Continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Three-and-a-half acres of this land including the old adobe were purchased by the Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce in 1940. The deteriorating condition of the building required a major overhaul in 1962. On March 24, 1963, the old adobe was opened as a museum and storehouse for artifacts and relics of Spring Valley and named the Bancroft Ranch House Museum.

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Caughey, James W., California, New Jersey, 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_, Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of the West, Berkeley, 1946.

Mills, James, compiler, Historical Landmarks of San Diego County, San Diego,  
1949.

Walker, Franklin, San Francisco's Literary Frontier, New York, 1939.