

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

RANCHO CAMULOS

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Rancho Camulos

Other Name/Site Number: Camulos Ranch, Del Valle Ranch, Camulos

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 5164 East Telegraph Road

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Piru

Vicinity: N/A

State: California County: Ventura Code: 111

Zip Code: 93040

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: X

Public-State: X

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s):

District: X

Site:

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

4

3

7

Noncontributing

9 buildings

sites

structures

objects

9 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 19

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Agriculture	Sub: agriculture outbuilding	
	Domestic		single dwelling
	Transportation		rail-related

Current:	Agriculture	Sub: agricultural outbuilding	
	Domestic		single dwelling
	Transportation		rail-related



7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Spanish Colonial
 Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival
 Bungalow/Craftsman

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Stone, concrete
Walls:	adobe, wood, brick, stucco
Roof:	asphalt, tile, shingle
Other:	wood, metal

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Rancho Camulos is nestled near the eastern boundary of Ventura County in the Santa Clara River Valley, directly east of Piru and 47 miles northwest of Los Angeles. The 1,800 acre citrus ranch is bounded by low hills on the north, Piru Creek to the west, the Santa Clara River and the Oak Ridge Mountains to the south and the Newhall Ranch on the east. The ranch headquarters complex is located south of State Highway 126, bisecting the ranch from east to west. The former Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way runs roughly parallel and to the north of the highway.

The ranch headquarters on the south side of Highway 126 is composed of eleven buildings: the Ygnacio del Valle Adobe, Nachito del Valle Adobe, barn, bunkhouse, winery, chapel, schoolhouse, gas station, shed and two garages. Directly across from the ranch, north of Highway 126 and the railroad right-of-way are two railroad-related residences and three farm labor cottages. Located to the northeast of these buildings, outside of the boundaries of this nomination, is the Del Valle family cemetery.

The **Ygnacio del Valle Adobe** (contributing) was built in several phases, beginning in 1853 and reaching essentially its present plan by 1880. The first four rooms, built circa 1853, form the southeastern portion of the u-shaped adobe. These original rooms formed an elongated rectangle, with porches, termed *corredores* in Spanish, extending along the northern and southern elevations supported by chamfered wood posts typical of Greek Revival architecture. The medium pitch gabled roof was wood shingled. Four doors open onto the *corredor*. The doors are lighted in the upper portion and paneled below in an X pattern. Two stone buttresses form a solitary window on the south elevation. A door opens onto a small wooden balcony on the second story at the east end of the south wing. A brick chimney punctuates the roofline about mid-span.

Between 1861 and 1862, an addition created three rooms adjacent and west of the original four rooms. A wine cellar beneath this portion of the adobe is accessed through double wood raked cellar doors below the porch. Steps lead up to the elevated porch, presently enclosed with screens. The roof of this section of the adobe is hipped. Wood sash windows feature six over six lights typical of the classically influenced architecture of the era. At the same time, a freestanding kitchen building was constructed at the northeastern corner of what was to become the patio, or *placita*, area.

During the 1870s (an exact date has not been established), a west wing was added perpendicular to the 1853 and attached 1861-2 portions of the building. A screened in *corredor* runs along the western elevation of this section of the adobe creating an l-shaped plan. Square capped wood posts support the *corredor* roof and the floors are concrete. Six four paneled wood doors located along the *corredor* lead into the bedrooms and living areas of the wing. The windows are six over six lighted, some with vertical wood bars and shutters. The final alterations to the plan of the adobe were made at some time between 1895 and 1923. A hip-roofed extension to the north end of the west wing was constructed of stone and covered with plaster to read like adobe as was a bath/dressing room added at the southwest corner of the building. A wooden breezeway was constructed to connect the northeastern end of the adobe to the kitchen, completing the U-shaped plan.

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The Ygnacio del Valle Adobe evolved and expanded considerably over a roughly fifty-year span, but essentially represents the overall plan and appearance it attained by 1880. The most intrusive alterations are the addition of large picture windows on the west side of the west wing, and on the north side of the south wing made after 1954. The original kitchen in the north wing was remodeled into a garage and living quarters between 1925 and 1934.

The one and one-half story brick **Del Valle Winery** (contributing) was built in 1867. The gabled roof is wood shingled. The rectangular building has two large openings at the north and south ends with relieving arches above and paired recessed paneled wooden double doors. The double doors at the southern down slope end of the building are accessed by a stone masonry ramp. The high foundation stem walls and buttresses are constructed of river cobbles and lime masonry as well. Wood sash windows are symmetrically placed below the roofline on all four sides and additional single wood doors access the interior on the east and west sides. A board and batten shed roofed structure used for farm equipment was added to the west side of the building at an unknown date, almost certainly prior to 1920.

Wines were probably aged in casks in the cool wine cellar beneath the adobe, judging from the federal licenses posted therein. Camulos was known for its fine brandies and wines primarily between the 1870s and 1890s. When grapes were no longer grown for commercial purposes, the building was converted to use as storage. In later years, August Rubel converted the second floor of the winery to a museum housing del Valle family artifacts.

The **Roman Catholic Chapel** (contributing) was also constructed circa 1867. The wooden chapel measures fourteen feet wide by twenty feet in length, with a thirty-foot long narrow porch extending off the eastern end of the building. The porch forms an "open chapel" when the large double entrance doors are opened, enabling a larger congregation to participate in the sacrament of mass. The building is elevated upon wood and brick piers and is currently stuccoed. The unusual gabled porch roof features a barrel vaulted wood ceiling. The gable end is wood shingled and contains a small white wooden cross. The arch below features inverted fleur-de-lis gingerbread repeated by a single pendant motif at the apex of the gable. Three concrete steps lead up to the wooden porch partially enclosed by wooden latticework sides. The wood sash window on the north contains a decorative stained glass window in the upper half and a six lighted lower sash. Decorative wrought iron shutter dogs hold back louvered wood blinds.

Directly adjacent to the northwest of the chapel is the **Bell Structure** (contributing). Three bells hung from a wooden freestanding frame have been features of Camulos since at least the 1870s, possibly earlier. The largest of the three bells was cast by Russians in Kodiak, Alaska, and was used to call worshipers to morning prayers or mass in the chapel. A second smaller bell was also cast in Kodiak, Alaska in 1796. This bell originally hung at the San Fernando Mission and may have been removed to Camulos by Antonio del Valle when he was administrator of the mission. A third, smaller bell was removed by a Del Valle daughter and taken to her private chapel.

The **Fountain** (contributing) with basin east of the chapel and centered on the south wing of the adobe is a circular brick feature about three feet in height constructed circa 1853. It was originally lime plastered, but much of the rendering has exfoliated exposing the low-fired

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ladrillo, or bricks. In the center a tapered brick stem supports two, flat plaster and fired clay bowls above the main basin. Photographs indicate that the central element is not the original, which was wrought iron with two shallow basins above. The precise date of the fountain is unknown, but it is depicted in plan upon a signed drawing dated 1853 in the del Valle family papers. The Rubel family replaced the central element circa 1934.

The **barn** (non contributing) located in the work area of the ranch headquarters near the State Highway, measures 54 by 64 feet. It is rectangular in plan with a high gable roof and knee brackets under the eaves. A gabled vent protrudes from the ridgeline. All of the barn openings are cut out of the board and batten siding and swing outward on hinges. Large double doors centered under the front gable end are highlighted with diagonal stick ornamentation. The barn has a concrete floor. The date of the barn is unknown, but the modest Craftsman style detailing, (brackets, rafters and trim) suggests a circa 1910 date. Crop planting records indicate that the 1909 to 1916 period is when the largest number of walnuts, apricots and orange trees were planted. These dates might coincide with the construction of the barn, gas and oil house and bunkhouse. A shed roofed addition of concrete blocks and board and batten was made to the south side circa 1950. A long rectangular four-car garage is located adjacent to the main entrance. It measures 20 by 74 feet and is covered with board and batten siding with corrugated metal at the rear and on the roof.

The **gas and oil house** (non contributing) was probably built about the same time as the barn, circa 1910. It has similar Craftsman-style detailing. The tiny nine by ten foot rectangular plan building has a low front gabled roof with a raised gabled monitor vent along the ridgeline. Exposed beams and rafters are revealed beneath the eaves. Wood casement windows are present in threes or singly with plain wood moldings. The building is sheathed with board and batten siding and rests upon a concrete slab foundation. South of the gas and oil house is a rectangular board and batten **shed** with a corrugated metal roof. It is open on the east side and was built circa 1910 as well.

The **bunkhouse** (non contributing), built circa 1916, is a long rectangular building with a low-pitched gable roof with exposed rafters and knee brackets under the broad overhanging eaves. The recessed front porch at the southeast corner has been enclosed with screens. The Craftsman style bungalow is shingled all over and rests upon a concrete slab foundation. Windows are double hung as well as casement with wood moldings. A detached pergola extending along the north side of the bunkhouse is covered with mature wisteria vines. The former workers' dining room at the eastern end has been removed.

The **Nachito del Valle Adobe** (non contributing) is located near the main road (Highway 126). It was built circa 1920 and more recently served as the ranch manager's house and office. Built around a central courtyard, this Spanish Colonial Revival style residence's northeastern wing features a recessed arched entry. The raised parapet of the flat roof is tiled. A second entrance, in the middle of the façade, is recessed and has a tiled roof with wooden beam and columns. The wood plank front door features a small decorative window with a wood grill. The double hung and casement windows are wood framed and recessed. They are arranged in bays of threes and fours with stucco pilasters between each window. The house is constructed of adobe clad with stucco and rests on a concrete slab foundation. Internal walls are wood

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frame covered with lath and plaster. East of the house is a small one car stuccoed wood frame garage with a flat roof.

The **schoolhouse** (non contributing) was built circa 1930 by August Rubel to serve the family's five young children and those of the bookkeeper. It was designed to blend in with the early adobe buildings with a long rectangular plan, low pitched hipped roof, plastered surface, and long open *corredor* supported by square posts along the south and east sides. Windows are six over six wood sash like those of the Ygnacio del Valle Adobe with wood moldings. The front door is constructed of wood planks with decorative wrought iron hardware.

In addition to the buildings and objects, a large number of mature trees and extensive gardens contribute to the historic character of the property. These landscape features help divide the working portion of the ranch from the residential sections. Surrounding the Ygnacio del Valle Adobe, schoolhouse, chapel and fountain, are well-manicured lawns, concrete and brick paths, flower gardens and dozens of mature ornamental trees. At the southern end of the formal lawn is the family orchard where dozens of varieties of fruit trees are grown. Additional features include a playground south of the schoolhouse, an aviary and remnants of a once long grape arbor, a small swimming pool and fishpond, and a barbecue area with brick oven. Compacted earth, mature California Pepper trees and a Cork Oak tree characterize the working area of the ranch headquarters north of the del Valle adobe. At the entrance to the ranch is a row of Eucalyptus trees, a long arbor with mature wisteria vines and a stone historical marker bearing a bronze plaque denoting the State Landmark status of Rancho Camulos.

Of special interest is the California black walnut tree, "El Rey Nogal," the only survivor of four "Black Eagle" seedlings planted by Juventino del Valle circa 1870. The tree has been noted by Maunsell Van Rensselaer in *Trees of Santa Barbara* as the "Camulos Black Walnut," perhaps the largest California Black Walnut (*Juglans Hindsii*) in the Santa Barbara/Ventura County region. When it was measured for this book in 1940, its circumference was eighteen feet, and with a branch spread of 129 feet. Today, the tree's trunk measures approximately twenty-five feet in circumference.

On the north side of the highway, a dirt road leads across the **railroad right-of-way** (contributing) to five houses paralleling the location of the former Southern Pacific Railroad bed. To the east of the road and north of the railroad right-of-way is a wood frame railroad section house, built circa 1887 by the Southern Pacific Railway. A small depot or platform was also located nearby, but has been removed. East of the section house is a duplex, used as a bunkhouse for railroad workers built circa 1887. West of the road lie three farm labor houses built by the del Valle family circa 1916.

The **Southern Pacific Railroad Section House** (contributing), built in 1887, is one and one-half stories in height with a medium pitched asymmetrical gabled roofline producing a saltbox-house effect. The porch is recessed under the corner of the house and supported by a capped square column. Eaves are boxed. A corbelled brick chimney punctuates the roofline. The wood frame double hung windows have multiple panes and wood moldings. The house is sheathed with wide horizontal tongue and grooved siding and rests upon a wood mudsill foundation. A metal water tank surmounts a **water tower** located to the east of the house was recently demolished because of earthquake related damage.

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The duplex **bunkhouse** (non contributing) is rectangular in plan with a medium side-facing gabled roof. It was built ca. 1916. The roof extends over the porch and is supported by wood posts. The broad eaves are open with supporting brackets on the sides. The house is covered with board and batten siding and rests upon a concrete perimeter foundation. Two front entrances are symmetrically arranged and flanked by double hung wood frame windows on each side.

Three **farm workers' bungalows** (non contributing), built ca. 1916, share similar characteristics. They are primarily rectangular in plan with medium to low gabled roofs, exposed rafters under the open eaves, medium clapboard siding, double-hung wood frame windows with wood moldings and concrete perimeter foundations.

Integrity

The integrity of location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred) for Rancho Camulos is intact; all of the remaining buildings are on their original sites. The integrity of design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property) for the site as a whole is almost entirely intact. No new buildings have been constructed since 1930, when the school house was erected. A minor addition to the barn is the only recognizable change to the plan of the ranch complex occurring outside of the period of significance (1853-1941), and this change generally continues the design of the earlier building, to which it is attached. Several buildings from the historic period have been demolished, including the railroad depot, a blacksmith shop, post office and a number of barns. The depot was located adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad near the section house. The blacksmith shop was located to the north of the barn within the ranch complex. The post office was located to the east of the ranch complex on the south side of the State Highway. A grouping of barns and sheds originally located adjacent to the railroad right-of-way and to the west of the section house have also been removed. Despite these changes, the site's plan and the spatial relationships between the buildings remains apparent.

Although the Ygnacio del Valle Adobe was expanded considerably over a fifty year period, the last major addition occurred within the period of significance (1884-1941). After 1954, the adobe had a large multi-paned steel mullioned window added on the west side of the wing. The interior of the kitchen in the southeast corner was also remodeled in the 1950s. Minor changes, such as the removal of louvered shutters, have occurred at various times. Despite these minor changes, the overall ability of the adobe to visually convey its sense of historic time and place remains excellent.

The integrity of the setting (the physical environment) for the property is almost completely intact. Aspects of the retained setting are the relationships between the extant buildings and structures, the natural environment (mountains, Santa Clara River) and agricultural landscape.

Post-war urban development trends have almost entirely eradicated the evidence of this landscape of citrus cultivation throughout most of the Southern California region, with the conspicuous exception of the Santa Clara Valley. The setting for Rancho Camulos is particularly notable, in and of itself, as a rare survivor of a virtually intact citrus landscape in Southern California. Some reduction of setting has resulted in the urbanizing fringe of Piru,

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Fillmore and Santa Paula, but this urban growth has largely remained contiguous with these historic urban areas. The widening of State Highway 126 is also responsible for some minor loss of the historic setting.

To the extent that the original buildings remain, their integrity of materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property) and workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory) are intact. However, it should be noted that the Ygnacio del Valle Adobe, in particular, exhibits some evidence of ongoing repair and maintenance. These introductions of new materials were caused by the fragile nature of adobe construction material and the need for constant upkeep.

The integrity of feeling (a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time) and association (the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property) remains particularly strong, for this property. The del Valle Adobe, the winery, chapel, gardens and other buildings related to the historic agricultural use of the property are especially evocative of the historic time and place. This feeling of historic place is enhanced considerably by the continuity of use of the property as an active citrus operation and the retention of the rural setting of the Santa Clara Valley.

A January 1994 earthquake resulted in both structural and cosmetic damage to several buildings at Rancho Camulos, including the del Valle Adobe, the winery and the water tower. The Ygnacio del Valle Adobe experienced the total failure of two adobe walls on the southern elevation and the partial failure of a number of other walls. Brick chimneys toppled to tile ground, and both exterior and interior plaster cracked throughout the building. A considerable volume of brick fell from the northern and southern gable ends of the winery building. This damage has been repaired, with federal financial assistance, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and under the guidance of the California State Historic Preservation Office.

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A list of NHL and NRHP contributing properties follows:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>
1	Ygnacio del Valle Adobe	1853	NHL
2	winery	1867	NHL
3	chapel	1867	NHL
4	bells	1870	NHL
5	fountain	1867	NHL
6	Southern Pacific Railroad Section House	1887	NHL
7.	Southern Pacific Railroad Right-of-Way.	1887	NHL

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>
Non contributing Resources			
1	barn	1910	NRHP
2	gas & oil house	1910	NRHP
3	bunkhouse	1916	NRHP
4	Nachito del Valle Adobe	1920	NRHP
5	schoolhouse	1930	NRHP
6	farmworker bungalow	1916	NRHP
7	farmworker bungalow	1916	NRHP
8	farmworker bungalow	1916	NRHP
9	bunkhouse	1916	NRHP

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>
Lost Resource			
1	water tower	1887	N/A

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme [1987]: XIX. Literature
B. Fiction
1. Novel

NHL Theme [1994]: Expressing Cultural Values
Literature

Areas of Significance: Social history (Ramona)

Period(s) of Significance: 1884-1941

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.Summary

Rancho Camulos is eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark under Criterion 1. No other extant site is more strongly associated with Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* and the resource possesses exceptional value in interpreting the fictional "Home of Ramona." The publication of *Ramona* in 1884, together with the arrival of the Southern Pacific railroad at Camulos in 1887, propelled the rancho into a nationwide notoriety that proved key to the romanticizing of the mission and rancho era of California history. As the setting for *Ramona*, Rancho Camulos, is vital to the creation of this mythology.

Chronological History

The present 1,800 acre Camulos Ranch, established by Ygnacio del Valle in 1853, was carved out of the 48,612 acre Rancho San Francisco, granted in 1839 to Ygnacio's father Antonio del Valle, majordomo and administrator of Mission San Fernando. Camulos was located at the western boundary of the rancho and was originally a Tataviam Indian village known as *Kamulus*. The San Fernando Mission used the area as early as 1804 for raising small animals and crops grown by the Indians, who numbered 416 when visited by Inspector General of the Missions, William Petty Hartnell, in 1839.

Antonio del Valle and his family lived at the eastern edge of the ranch near Castaic in the former San Fernando Mission granary adobe building. After Antonio's death in 1841, the land was divided among his wife and seven children. Ygnacio received the western portion of the ranch known as Camulos and built a corral and stocked it with cattle in 1842, the same year he married Maria de los Angeles in Santa Barbara. Maria died in childbirth in 1847, and Ygnacio married Ysabel Varela in 1852. The following year he had a house built at Camulos.

The four room (thirty by eighty foot) adobe was at first occupied by Ygnacio's majordomo (foreman). Ygnacio and his new wife lived in Los Angeles in an adobe on the Plaza as he continued to work in his new position as Los Angeles County Recorder. In 1852 he was elected a member of the Los Angeles City Council and the California Assembly. Ygnacio resigned from the council in 1857 in order to devote his time to the development of Camulos. The adobe was expanded that year with the addition of three rooms within the attic. Orange tree seedlings, the first to be planted on a large scale in Ventura County, were obtained from the nursery of William Wolfskill in Los Angeles.

Between 1853 and 1861, five children were born to the del Valles. By 1861, after the birth of their fifth child Josefa, the family moved permanently to Camulos. In 1861-62, three new rooms and a basement were added to the original adobe. Many of the *Kamulus* Indians continued to live and work at the ranch and helped make the adobe blocks and assist in the construction. Some of these Indians are buried in the family cemetery. Between 1862 and 1870, seven more children were born at Camulos, for a total of twelve del Valle children. Only half of the children lived to adulthood. During the 1870s, the west wing was extended to the north.

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The drought of the 1860s took its toll on del Valle cattle and crops, forcing the sale of the Rancho San Francisco in 1865 to Thomas Bard, agent for capitalist Thomas Scott. Bard purchased 42,216 acres of the Rancho San Francisco from the del Valle heirs and split off the 1,500 acre Rancho Camulos selling it back to Ygnacio del Valle. In 1868 the acreage was reduced to 1,340 acres and then to 1,290 acres when Ygnacio gave his first born son Juventino fifty acres. Juventino had assumed many of the ranch management duties from Ygnacio in the 1870s.

By the time Ygnacio's death in 1880, the ranch had grown from a few hundred head of-cattle in the 1840s to a thriving, virtually self-contained ranch of approximately 1,290 acres of citrus, vineyards, almonds, grain, and vegetables supporting close to 200 residents. In addition to the del Valles, large numbers of Mexicans and Indians, were employed on the ranch. The single four room adobe built in 1853, grew into a twenty room adobe surrounded by numerous other buildings--a brick winery, chapel, barn and worker's housing. The isolation of the Santa Clara Valley was broken with the arrival of the stagecoach in 1874 and the railroad in 1887.

In 1886 Ulpiano, the seventh child born to Ygnacio and Ysabel, became ranch manager and introduced horse raising to the ranch. By 1900, mules replaced the horses and Ulpiano began to introduce new crops. Camulos wines and brandies became well known throughout Southern California. After Ygnacio's death in 1880, Ysabel del Valle remained as head of the ranch until her failing health made her move to Los Angeles in 1900 to live with her daughter.

In 1908 the ranch was incorporated as the del Valle Company by Ulpiano and his remaining brothers and sisters for the purpose of raising of crops and livestock, acquiring water rights, and developing oil resources. Eventually, friction within the family and the death of several family members forced the sale of the ranch in 1924 to the August Rubel Family. At the time of the sale, writer Charles Lummis, a close family friend of the del Valles, appealed to the State of California to purchase Camulos as a historic park. Lummis had long been an active preservationist, and is credited, along with the Landmarks Club which he founded, as contributing substantially to preserving the missions. His magazine *Out West*, more than any other publication, promoted the heritage of Southern California. When the sale to the Rubels was inevitable, Lummis wrote:

It has been forty years since I first visited Camulos. Since that time, it has been like my own home, and its people like my own. The old folks were like parents to me. The romance, the traditions, the customs of Camulos are all familiar and all dear to me--not merely because they are Camulos but because that was the Last Stand of the patriarchal life of Spanish California, which has been so beautiful to the world for more than a century.¹

The Los Angeles Times echoed Lummis' sentiment when they wrote:

¹ Smith, Wallace E., *This Land was Ours: the Del Valles & Camulos*. Ventura:Ventura County Historical Society, 1977, pg. 242.

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An era in the history of California closed yesterday. The Del Valles of Camulos bade farewell to the homestead where they have lived in successive generations since Antonio del Valle. It was the passing of the old regime. They are said to be the last of the old Spanish families who held in unbroken succession to the ancestral acres.²

The August Rubel Family moved to Camulos in 1925, having purchased the ranch the previous year. August Rubel, a native of Zurich, Switzerland, came to Ventura County in 1922, after graduating from Harvard at the age of twenty-three. He and his wife Mary Colgate McIsaac first lived in Aliso Canyon near Santa Paula, having established the Billiwhack Dairy there in 1924. The Rubels raised five children at Camulos Ranch. August Rubel served in the American Field Service in France between 1917 and 1919. He returned to this service during World War II, and was killed in Tunisia in 1943 when an ambulance he was driving hit a German mine. Mrs. Rubel married Edwin Burger in 1946, who continued to live and manage the ranch after Mrs. Rubel's death in 1968.

Significance of the del Valle Family

Three generations of del Valles served their country through either military service or in responsible governmental positions under the Mexican government and the new government of California. Their lives were closely associated with the most prominent and Influential citizens of Mexico and California during the tumultuous years of California's entrance into the United States and its rise from a rural state to one of power and influence.

Antonio del Valle, a native of Compostela, Mexico, played a prominent role in both the Spanish and Mexican colonization of California. He arrived in California in 1819 as a lieutenant in the San Blas Infantry, responsible for delivering forty men to the presidio of San Francisco. New troops were called to reinforce the garrisons that had been attacked the previous year by the privateer Bouchard. The Company moved to Monterey and del Valle became commander in 1822. In 1814 he was placed in charge of secularizing the San Fernando Mission and served as majordomo until 1837. In recognition of his years of military service, he received the 48,612 acre Rancho San Francisco grant in 1839.

Ygnacio del Valle, son of Antonio, began his military service in 1825 as a cadet at the Santa Barbara Presidio. Following his training, he accompanied Comandante General Don Jose Echeandia to San Diego and served as staff adjutant and harbormaster in San Diego until 1832. By 1832 he had attained the rank of second lieutenant and was put in charge of the San Gabriel Mission. The following year he joined the Monterey presidial company and under Governor Figueroa was put in charge of the secularization of the Santa Cruz and San Francisco missions. As a trusted officer, del Valle was charged with the military command at Monterey during Figueroa's absence. He left the military in 1839. As reward for his services to the government, he was granted Rancho Tejon in 1843.

Continuing in public service, Ygnacio del Valle accepted numerous positions of importance in both the Mexican and American governments. During the 1840s he served as a member and

² Los Angeles Times. August 11, 1924.

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secretary of the junta (council), and treasurer of civil government under Governor Pio Pico. In 1850 he was elected alcalde (mayor) of Los Angeles and recorder of Los Angeles County. Finally, in 1852, he was elected to the California legislature. His residence, located on the Plaza (square) in Los Angeles was the center for political meetings. Harris Newmark writes in his book *Sixty Years in Southern California*,

Among the distinguished citizens of Los Angeles whose residences added to the social prestige of the neighborhood was Don Ygnacio del Valle. Until 1861, he resided on the east side of the square, receiving there his intimate friends as well as those who wished to pay him their respects when he was Alcalde, Councilman and member of the State Legislature. In 1861, del Valle moved to his ranch, Camulos.³

Ygnacio's son Reginaldo was born in the family home on the Plaza in 1854, the second child born to Ygnacio and Ysabel Varela after their marriage in 1852. Perhaps it was his father's influence and the numerous political meetings held at the house that led Reginaldo into public life. By 1873, he graduated with honors from the Santa Clara College in San Jose and by 1877 he was admitted to the bar and elected to the Assembly in 1880. In 1882, at the age of 28, he was the youngest member ever elected as president pro tempore of the State Senate.

Although he lost the 1884 congressional campaign, he continued to work for the Democratic Party as a delegate to numerous state conventions and as elector in almost all presidential elections. Following his campaigning for Grover Cleveland in 1893, he was offered ministries to Chile and Japan. He declined the offers hoping to receive the ministry to Mexico, which never materialized.

In addition to Democratic politics, Reginaldo del Valle had a great interest in California history and promoted it through preservation efforts due in large part to the influence of his close friend, Charles Lummis. Together with Lummis, Reginaldo was a founding member of the Landmarks Club of Southern California, formed in 1887 to advocate for the restoration of the missions. He was one of the forty founding members of the Southern California Historical Society and spearheaded the committee to restore the San Fernando Mission and to mark the El Camino Real with bells. He was also a strong promoter of John Steven McGroarty's *Mission Play*. His daughter Lucretia del Valle Grady performed the role of Ysabel Yorba in the *Mission Play*.

In 1913 Reinaldo was appointed by Woodrow Wilson as his personal representative to Mexico, and in 1914 was appointed president of the Los Angeles Public Service Board, later known as the Water and Power Board, and was a close friend of William Mulholland.

³ Newmark, Harris, *Sixty Years in Southern California: 1853-1913*. New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1926, pg. 98.

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Ramona and the Cult of Southern California Romanticism

Although Rancho Camulos became well known among Californians for the accomplishments of three generations of del Valles in both the political and agricultural history of the state, it is best recognized at the national level as the "Home of Ramona." When Helen Hunt Jackson published her best-selling novel *Ramona* in 1884, it was her intention to supply the general reader with an appreciation of the California Indian's plight as illustrated by the trials and tribulations of the fictional Indian girl, Ramona. Disappointed that *A Century of Dishonor*, her earlier book reciting the past injustices of the Indians, received so little notice, she wrote *Ramona* hoping to elicit popular support for the Indians, much as her acquaintance Harriet Beecher Stowe had done with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The setting and characters in Jackson's book *Ramona* are apparently composites drawn from places Jackson visited and people she met in her travels throughout Southern California during the early 1880s. Various portions of the novel were drawn from her visits to California Indian reservations, missions and ranchos. It appears likely that Jackson chose Camulos as the setting for a portion of her novel upon the advice of her close friends, Antonio and Mariana Coronel. In the opinion of the Coronels, Camulos was one of the few remaining ranches still reflecting its colonial origins. Antonio Coronel assisted Jackson in the preparation of an itinerary of ranches and missions.⁴ Jackson heeded their advice, briefly visiting Camulos on of January 23, 1882.⁵ In her novel published two years later, Ramona's fictional home on the "Moreno Ranch" was located "midway in the valley [between lands] to the east and west, which had once belonged to the Missions of San Fernando and San Bonaventura [sic]." This geographical location, and the description of the setting recounted in the novel accurately matched Camulos:

The house was of adobe, low, with a wide veranda on the three sides of the inner court and a still broader one across the entire front, which looked to the south....The two westernmost rooms had been added on, and made four steps higher than the others...Between the veranda and the river meadows, out on which it looked, all was garden, orange grove and almond orchard"⁶

Additional features of Camulos accurately referenced in Jackson's novel were all unmistakably part of the ranch setting, the wooden cross on the hill, the chapel, the bells and the fountain and courtyard. Among the earliest articles recognizing Camulos as the setting for the fictitious Moreno Ranch was a San Francisco Chronicle article by Edwards Roberts, published after his visit to Camulos on April 27, 1886, just prior to the completion of the railroad line through the Santa Clara Valley.

Jackson's novel was serialized in the *Christian Union* and quickly became a best seller. and eventually an American classic, with over 135 printings, three motion pictures, and a pageant

⁴ Banning, Evelyn I., *Helen Hunt Jackson*. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1973, pg. 105-166.

⁵ Smith, *This Land Was Ours*, pg. 180.

⁶ Jackson, Helen Maria Hunt, *Ramona: A Story*. Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1912:16-17.

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performed annually since 1923. Railroad promoters, writers and photographers all became drawn into the burgeoning Ramona craze, publishing hundreds of articles in books, magazines and newspapers touting the Ramona connection.

The book was ultimately to have an entirely unanticipated, but profound cultural effect. Its publication in 1884 and remarkable popularity almost perfectly coincided with the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in Ventura County in 1887. The romantic story of Spanish California coupled with the vivid descriptions of the setting brought literally thousands of curiosity seekers to view the "Home of Ramona" on the "Moreno Ranch," happily overlooking its fictitious origins.

Ramona became so phenomenally popular that schools, streets and even towns were named in honor of the novel's fictional heroine. With the huge influx of tourists and homeseekers flooding into California during the 1880s and 1890s on the newly established railroads, many communities claimed Ramona for their own in order to profit from the vast tourism bandwagon. Writers such as George Wharton James and others visited Rancho Guajome and the Estudillo house in San Diego to photograph and research the conflicting claims for the setting of the novel, a controversy made possible by the death of Helen Hunt Jackson in 1885. James, in his 1909 book *Through Ramona's County*, expressed the opinion that Camulos was still the "avowed and accepted home of the heroine." According to James, Camulos had changed little from the time of Edwards Roberts' first article in 1886. In 1888, Charles Lummis, a close friend of the del Valle family since his arrival in California four years earlier, published a promotional booklet filled with photographs he had taken at the ranch, proclaiming Camulos as the home of Ramona.

The immense popularity of the novel and the commercially lucrative derivatives it generated spawned an abundance of Ramona-related claims. As Carey McWilliams describes in his popular history *Southern California Country*.

Picture postcards, by the tens of thousands were published showing "the schools attended by Ramona," "the origin of Ramona," "the place where Ramona was married," and various shots of the "Ramona County." Since the local chambers of commerce could not, or would not, agree upon the locale of the novel--one school of thought insisted that the Camulos rancho was the scene of the more poignant passages, while still another school insisted that the Hacienda Guajome was the authentic locale--it was not long before the scenic postcards depicting the Ramona Country had come to embrace all of Southern California.⁷

Camulos was widely photographed and painted by many of the professional photographers and artists of the day. C.C. Pierce, a well known Los Angeles photographer, developed a portfolio of Camulos photographs in 1887 in conjunction with writer George Wharton James. Pasadena photographer Adam Clark Vroman illustrated Camulos in the Little, Brown and Company's 1912 edition of *Ramona*. Famed artists Henry Chapman Ford and Alexander Hamier painted Camulos. Well-known eastern illustrator Henry Sandham, who accompanied Jackson on her

⁷ McWilliam, Carey, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*. New York: Duel, Sloan, & Pearce, 1946, pg. 73.

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tour of the missions and Indian reservations, made many sketches and paintings of Camulos which illustrated his edition of *Ramona* in 1900 published by Little, Brown, and Company.

In 1887 Ventura photographer John Calvin Breasted photographed Camulos, recreating scenes from *Ramona* which eventually were published in the San Francisco Chronicle. Del Valle family members and friends posed for these scenes and others that depicted the romance between Alessandro and Ramona. Occasionally the family complained about the excursion trains that stopped at the ranch and the avalanche of tourists that descended upon the ranch demanding to see Ramona, and invading the orchards and house. Reginaldo del Valle even considered at one time building a hotel to accommodate tourists, when he thought his mother's gracious hospitality was becoming a burden in her later years and the cost of accommodating so many guests was getting out of hand. The del Valle family also capitalized on *Ramona* by establishing the Home of Ramona Brand trademark for their oranges.

Camulos continued to receive tourists at the ranch even after the Southern Pacific Railroad relocated its main line to the south through the Santa Susanna Pass in 1903. Two daily trains continued to make trips down the Santa Clara Valley in the 1920s until passenger service was discontinued in the 1940s. Throughout this period, Camulos continued as a scheduled stop.

D.W. Griffith's silent motion-picture version of *Ramona*, starring Mary Pickford, was filmed at Camulos and Piru during a two-day shoot on April 1 and 2, 1910. At the time this one-reeler was made, it was billed as the Biograph Company's "most elaborate and artistic movie yet filmed." The chapel, the adobe and patio and the nearby mountains were all used as backdrops.

An article in *Sunset Magazine* for December 1925 indicated that Camulos was still welcoming visitors. By this time the Rubel family owned the property. August Rubel eventually established a small museum in the winery for the del Valle ranch artifacts. Occasional visitors, whom the Rubels referred to as "Ramona-seekers," visited the ranch and small school groups from Piru arrived on occasional field trips. Nevertheless, the Rubel Family let it be known that the ranch was private and did not encourage visitors.

By the time of American involvement in World War II, the anti-American sentiments expressed in *Ramona* combined with its dated sentimentalism ended its popularity with readers. Also a factor was the wartime attraction of newcomers to California motivated by jobs, not picturesque scenery. Thus, the popularity of *Ramona* died.

Care McWilliams characterized Helen Hunt Jackson and her influence on Southern California:

"H.H.," as she was known to every resident of Southern California, was almost solely responsible for the evocation of its Mission Past, and it was she who catapulted the lowly Digger Indian of Southern California into the empyrean....She had originally been sent to Southern California by *Century Magazine* to write some stories about the Missions....In Southern California she became...enamored of the Missions, then in a state of general disrepair and neglect....In the sunny, delicious, winterless, California air, these crumbling ruins, with their walled gardens and broken bells,...exerted a potent romantic influence on Mrs. Jackson's nature. Out of these brief visits to Southern

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California came *Ramona*, the first novel written about the region, which became one of the most widely read American novels of the time. It was this novel which firmly established the Mission legend in Southern California.⁸

The *Ramona* myth played a central role in fashioning a regional identity for Southern California at a time when the West was trying to establish an historical and cultural legitimacy separate but comparable with the East. Colonial history and architecture received a tremendous boost in the public consciousness during and after the United States Centennial of 1876, and for a time, the Southwestern United States freely borrowed the colonial architectural imagery of the East Coast.

As early as the 1870s, however, artists and photographers began to recognize and document the romantic ruins of the California missions. By the 1880s, the colonial architecture of the Southwest had been introduced into the national imagination, first sparking a local preservation movement directed towards the restoration of the mission churches, and later a revival of the mission architectural style itself. Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* served to integrate the imagery of a physical place, as captured by artists and photographers, and a people into a cohesive, if highly romanticized, whole. This rediscovery of California's picturesque colonial history coincided with the railroad-inspired boom of 1886-87, providing convenient promotional fodder for real estate developers, railroad companies, and regional boosters. The remarkable effectiveness of this campaign is evidenced by the mass migration of tourists and land buyers into Southern California during this era.

As one of the most widely recognized settings for Jackson's novel, Rancho Camulos became not only a tourist Mecca in and of itself, but also emblematic of California's colonial past in both reality and in fiction. It is a tribute to the power and influence of Jackson's novel that her popular fiction achieved a capacity to fire the collective imagination of the American public to an extent that the more prosaic reality of colonial California might never have equaled. It was in large part this brand of fictionalization and romantic invention that induced Americans to move in vast numbers from east to west, with expectations of discovering the fabled land of *Ramona*.

Significance Based on the *Ramona* Myth Theme

Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* sold more copies than perhaps any other book of its time. It was republished in dozens of editions, and several films were made of the novel. A play based on Jackson's tale continues to run to this day. Its impact on the culture and history of Southern California has been phenomenal and can be recognized as one of the principal defining events in the state's history.

Forms of commercial promotion, many of which were considered innovative at the time, coincided with the great Southern California land rush of the late 1880s. When the flood of immigrants to the region abruptly subsided, and a deep recession set in during the early 1890s, *Ramona* mythology fed directly into efforts of regional boosters to counteract the economic doldrums.

⁸ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, pg. 72-73.

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One of the most important and influential boosters of this era was Harrison Gray Otis, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*. As founder of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Otis and the other powerful board members tirelessly promoted Southern California, particularly targeting Midwesterners, and often enlisting Ramona mythology in the effort. The *Times* ran numerous Ramona stories, featuring the locations and characters from the novel. One story appeared in the January 13, 1887 issue of the *Times* under the headline "Camulos: The Real Home of Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona."⁹

Only a very limited number of properties are closely associated with the Ramona phenomenon. These are the places that Jackson visited in preparation for writing the novel, the places she clearly used in fragments for the setting of the story, the places that the contemporary public perceived as being Ramona-associated, and those they consequently sought out in large numbers, transforming sleepy backwaters into major tourist destinations. Only three properties in the nation potentially meet all of these criteria: Rancho Guajome, the Estudillo House, and Rancho Camulos.

Rancho Guajome's own claim as the "Home of Ramona" was established in 1894, when an article entitled, "Rancho Guajome: the Real Home of Ramona," appeared in the November issue of *Rural Californian*. The unnamed author of this article declared that "now that there is no doubt as to the true place, tens of thousands of tourists will throng there yearly to visit the scenes that so inspired Helen Hunt Jackson." DeLyser comments, "while the statement that tourists would come by the 'tens of thousands' was surely an exaggeration, like Camulos, Rancho Guajome became a destination for Ramona-seekers."¹⁰

Although Camulos had been granted a "head start" on Guajome, both of these sites ultimately came to fully embody the romantic, though largely invented, image of Southern California's colonial past then being impressed into the consciousness of the nation. The Estudillo adobe is distinct from these two, in that it appears to have become the most fully realized as a tourist attraction, particularly after 1910 when it was redesigned and utilized solely for this purpose. In time, other Ramona inspired or associated landmarks emerged as well, although they were clearly of secondary importance, were not visited by Jackson, or derived from settings described in the novel.

Both the Estudillo House and Rancho Guajome have been listed as National Historic Landmarks, but not necessarily for connections to the Ramona myth. Of Camulos, DeLyser says:

Camulos, more than any other place, had come to symbolize Ramona in the minds of the public. While few now make the pilgrimage on account of the novel, during the period of the myth's greatest popularity (from the late 1880s to the early 1950s) Camulos was the Home of Ramona, and as such, it was the key landmark for Ramona-seekers. In 1893, Olive Percival compiled a booklet

⁹ DeLyser, Dydia Y., *Ramona Memories: Construction the Landscape of Southern California through a Fictional Text*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Syracuse University Department of Geography, 1996, pg. 68-70.

¹⁰ DeLyser, *Ramona Memories*, pg. 104.

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which she titled *The Home of Ramona*. In later years she described her work as a--souvenir booklet made by me (young pilgrim not vet 25). In It can be found a photograph of Camulos, quotes from the novel written in Percival's hand and pressed flowers and plants, presumably obtained from the grounds of the Rancho.¹¹

Rancho Camulos had symbolic meaning to the public. Created in fiction, the Home of Ramona was reflected back in popular culture pursuits, such as the sending of postcards, the purchase of photographs, the compilation of souvenir albums, the customizing of one's personal edition of the novel, or the ever-popular pilgrimage to those hallowed halls. Rancho Camulos became the Home of Ramona.¹²

Rancho Camulos is one of only three properties in the nation to become widely recognized for its association with Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel, *Ramona*, having not only played a role in inspiring the writing of this highly influential book, but also by becoming an important tourist attraction on that account. Rancho Camulos can therefore be regarded as a key player in the invention and broadcasting of the romanticized image of California that was to become ingrained in the national consciousness for several generations.

¹¹ Oliver Percival papers. UCLA Department of Special Collections.

¹² DeLyser, *Ramona Memories*, pg. 95.

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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: # CA/38
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository): Huntington Library

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 40

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	337560	3808610
2	11	337810	3808560
3	11	337700	3807970
4	11	337460	3807940

Verbal Boundary Description:

Rancho Camulos is located on both the north and south sides of Highway 126, approximately three miles east of Piru. The legal description of the recently created 40 acre parcel is as follows:

Commencing at a 1 ½" iron pipe shown as set on the westerly line of said Rancho San Francisco on the map filed in the office of said County Recorder in Book 4, Page 52 of the Record of Surveys; thence, North 15°06'37" West 1710.19 feet to a 1 ½" iron pipe shown as set on the westerly line of said Rancho San Francisco on said map; thence, North 15°06'37" West 1401.17 feet to a 4" iron pipe shown as Corner No. "SF 13" on said map and on the map recorded in Book 124, Page 55 of Miscellaneous Records in the office of the said County Recorder; thence, South 80°53'17" East 10,100.57 feet to the True Point of Beginning; thence,

1st South 79°19'40" east 852.00 feet; thence,
 2nd South 10°40'20" West 1938.65 feet; thence,
 3rd North 89°48'16" West 465.22 feet; thence,
 4th South 74°40'44" West 438.93 feet; thence,
 5th North 10°40'20" east 2215.61 feet to the True Point of Beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property is a 40-acre parcel out of the total 1,800 acres of the ranch holdings that encompasses all of the historic buildings of the ranch itself and a portion of the historic setting. This setting includes citrus orchards, windrows, railroad right-of-way, and Santa Clara River bottom.

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