

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: CALIFORNIA
COUNTY: LOS ANGELES
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAY 29 1975

1. NAME

COMMON: LEONIS ADOBE
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 23537 Calabasas Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Calabasas		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 27th	
STATE: California	CODE: 06	COUNTY: Los Angeles	CODE: 037

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

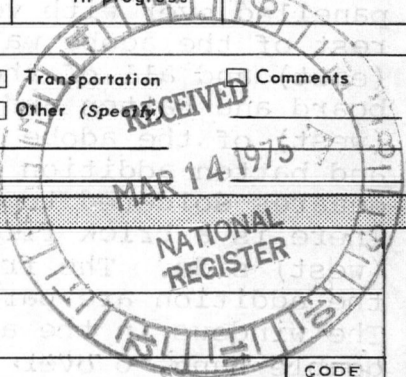
OWNER'S NAME: Leonis Adobe Association			
STREET AND NUMBER: 23537 Calabasas Road			
CITY OR TOWN: Calabasas		STATE: California	CODE: 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: City Hall, Los Angeles			
STREET AND NUMBER: Los Angeles City Hall, Los Angeles			
CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles		STATE: California	CODE: 06

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: HAB (1) Calif. 342; Cultural Heritage Board Monument #1; Native Daughter \$269 (5-2-53)			
DATE OF SURVEY: HAB 1963			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress			
STREET AND NUMBER: 			
CITY OR TOWN: Washington		STATE: District of Columbia	CODE: 11



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

 STATE: California
 COUNTY: Los Angeles

 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY NUMBER
 DATE

MAY 29 1975

also: Nat. Mon. #269, dated 5/2/63

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original adobe was a two story, Monterey style building with porches and balconies on at least three sides. It had a stairway at the rear. The interior of the first floor was divided by a wooden partition into two rooms. The second floor had a center hall with a bedroom on each side. The exterior and interior walls, except for the woodwork, were of adobe brick, plastered with adobe and whitewashed. This building remains virtually intact, although it was added to and somewhat remodeled by Miguel Leonis in the late 1870's. The building was restored to its appearance after Leonis's remodeling; considered its period of "highest and best use".

PRESENT PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present appearance is that of a two-story Monterey style adobe dwelling, as partially remodeled in the late 1870's. It has a pitched shingle roof, porches on both floors on three sides of the house, and a Calabasas fieldstone foundation. The front adobe wall of the first floor has been panelled over with vertical tongue and groove redwood, the rest of the adobe walls are exposed. Half of the right side (east) and all of the rear (north) porches are enclosed with board and batten and divided into several rooms. On the left (west) of the adobe there is no porch, but a one story board and batten addition with a flat roof, originally of tin squares soldered together, now covered with asphalt paper. There is a brick fireplace and a tall chimney on the left (west) side. The front (south) and rear (north) walls of the addition are parapetted, so that the roof is not visible. The windows in the adobe walls and the frame addition are double hung, 6 over 6, with solid wood exterior shutters having cast iron hinges carrying the legend "Pat'd 1843" and apparently imported from the Eastern United States. Two rear windows of the frame addition and all of the windows in the board and batten enclosure of the porches are single 6 light sash sliding sideways and without shutters.

The doors are typical mid-19th century four panelled doors, except that the ground floor front and rear doors to the adobe portion are extra thick, with the interiors being vertical tongue and groove boards. The hardware is mid-19th century cast iron, with porcelain doorknobs.

The house is painted white, with red and blue trim on the doors, windows and shutters, as determined by careful research.

The interior walls of the adobe portion downstairs are panelled with vertical 1X6 tongue and groove redwood boards with a bead detail, covering the original whitewashed adobe walls. There is a 1X6 tongue and groove ceiling and 1X6 tongue and groove plank floor. The 1X6 trim has a bead

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **C. 1844, restored to C. 1879.**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ARCHITECTURE:

The house is a good example of a Monterey style adobe. Subsequent owners modified it almost entirely by additions: oak hardwood over the pine floors, a wing added to the rear, etc. In hardly any way did they disturb the early structure, so that most of the restoration was an uncovering process. As a consequence a very high percentage of the building is original rather than reconstruction.

AGE:

Documents now lost gave the construction dates as 1844-46, while California was still Mexican, and earlier than any remaining building in the San Fernando Valley with the exception of the San Fernando Mission.

HISTORY:

While the origin of the adobe is still obscure, it became in the late 1870's the home of some fascinating people. The wife, Espiritu Chihulla, was an Indian, the daughter of Odon. Odon and his brothers had been in charge of raising cattle for the San Fernando Mission. As a consequence, when the Mission lands were divided they were given a rancho, called El Escorpion. Espiritu was raised at the Mission and later inherited the Rancho, making her reasonably well-to-do. Her husband, Miguel Leonis, was a Basque shepherd who increased her property substantially, remodeled the Adobe in the late 1870's, and died in 1889. His will described her as his "housekeeper" and cut her off with a pittance. Her sixteen year battle for her rights against overwhelming odds is a part of California history deserving of further study. She won the battle in 1905 and died at the Adobe in 1906.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE:

The high percentage of original material in the Adobe makes it more than usually valuable for scholars. Not only is the building largely original, but it has numerous original photographs of the family, several original pieces of furniture,

continued on Form 10-300a

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bell, Major Horace - ON THE OLD WEST COAST, Reminiscences of a Ranger, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1930
 Newmark, Harris - SIXTY YEARS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, Knickerbocker Press, New York, 1926
 Keefer- HISTORY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY, Stillman Printers, Los Angeles, 1934
 THOMPSON AND WEST - HISTORY OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY, Oakland 1880 republished 1960 by Howell-North, Berkeley, P. 105 refers to "McGill Leonis"

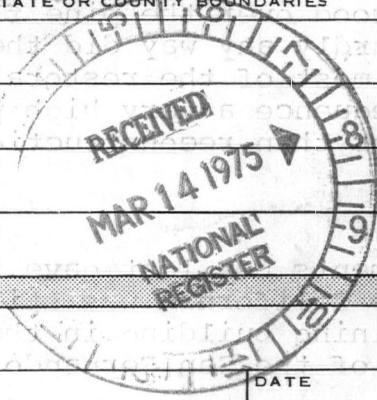
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0	0		34° 09'	118° 38' 22"	
NE	0	0				
SE	0	0				
SW	0	0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One-half acre (1/2)

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Mrs. Ralph Kelly, Mr. Ray Phillips

ORGANIZATION: Leonis Adobe Association DATE: Oct 10, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: 23537 Calabasas Road,

CITY OR TOWN: Calabasas, STATE: California CODE: 06

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: [Signature]
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer
 Date: JAN 2 1975

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/29/75

ATTEST:
[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date: 5.23.75

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 14 1975

DATE ENTERED MAY 29 1975

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

#7 Description, Leonis Adobe continued

detail and the deep reveals around windows and doors are also panelled. The woodwork (except the natural wood floor) is painted cream with a pumpkin yellow trim. The frame addition is of single construction with an open beam ceiling, divided into a dining room and kitchen. The woodwork is painted flat white to resemble the original whitewash. The floor is the original adobe. On the west wall of the dining room is a brick fireplace.

#8 Singificance, Leonis Adobe continued

and is furnished with 1870 and 1880 furniture and Persian carpets. An old barn dates back to 1912. A wealth of early photographs and two early watercolors in the Southwest Museum collection have enabled us accurately to reconstruct such outbuildings as a dovecote, chicken coops, bake oven, grape arbor, well and windmill, and tank house. One of the two privies is original, the other from a ranch nearby.

The barn contains a blacksmith shop and an early threshing machine; other wagons and early agricultural implements are nearby. The dovecote has pigeons, the chicken coops, Black Spanish chickens of a breed brought from Spain by the Franciscan Missionaries. The windmill pumps water, when the wind blows.

So, rather than a single isolated building, as many Adobes are now found, the Leonis Adobe provides a rather complete display of a working ranch of a century ago. For this reason, it is very actively used for field trips by Los Angeles area schools as well as many other types of organizations from Scouts (both boy and girl) to senior citizens and groups of tourists.

The Adobe is on the Historic American Building Survey, has been marked by the Native Daughters of the Golden West, has been designated Historic Cultural Monument Number One by the Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Los Angeles, has received an award from the Conference of California Historical Societies.

Property Leonia Adobe

LOS Angeles

State California

Working Number 3.14.75.408

75000733

TECHNICAL

Photos 4
Maps 2

CONTROL

cm
OK 3.18.75
HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*EVERYTHING
LOOKS KOSHER*

ACCEPT
LEBOVITZ
3-21-75

ARCHEOLOGIST

Accept
M. BARNES
18 MAR 75

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
Cole
4.8.75

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

*Henry D
for Munton*
5.23.75

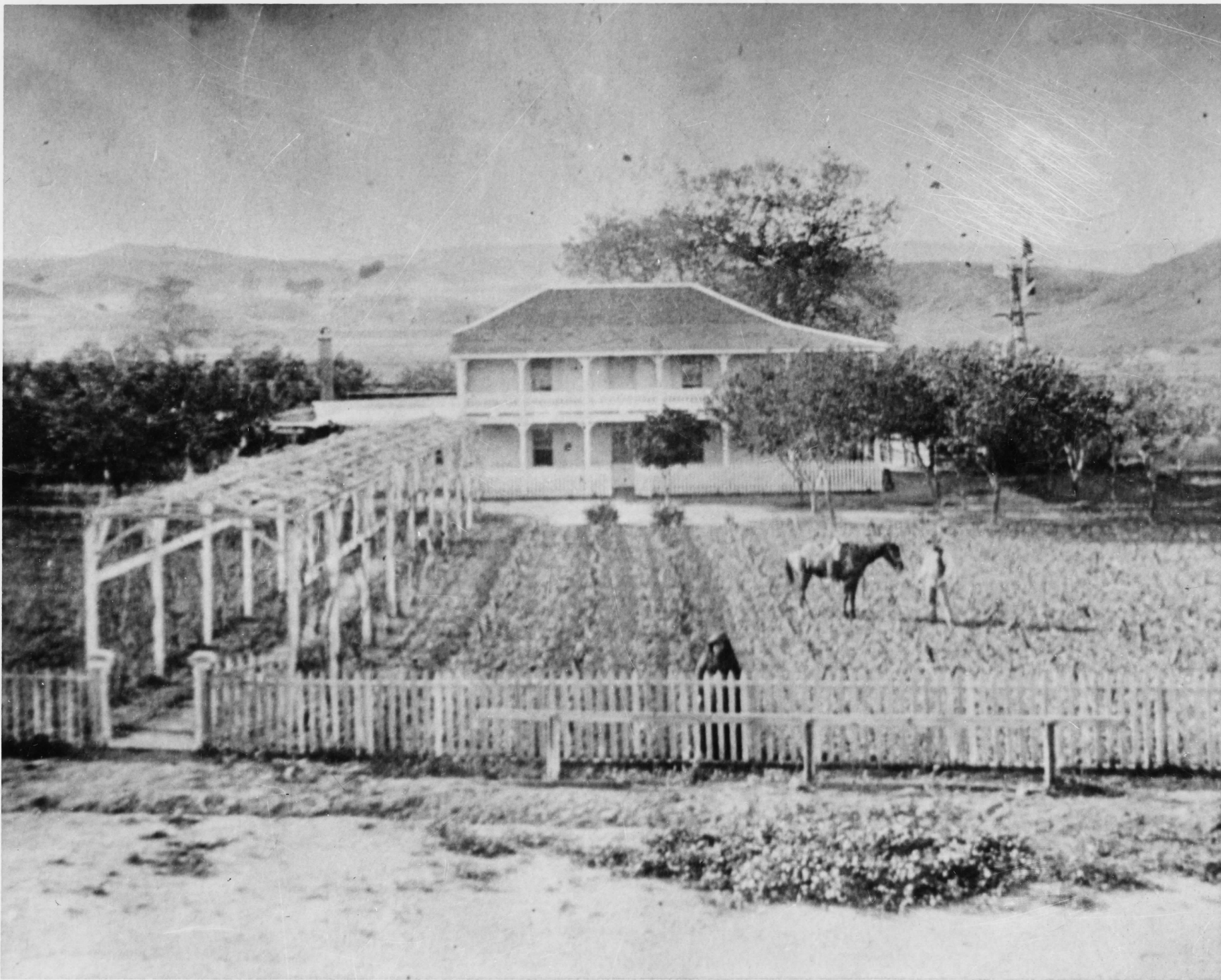
National Register Write-up _____
Federal Register Entry 7-1-75

Send-back _____
Re-submit _____

Entered MAY 29 1975

INT:2106-74

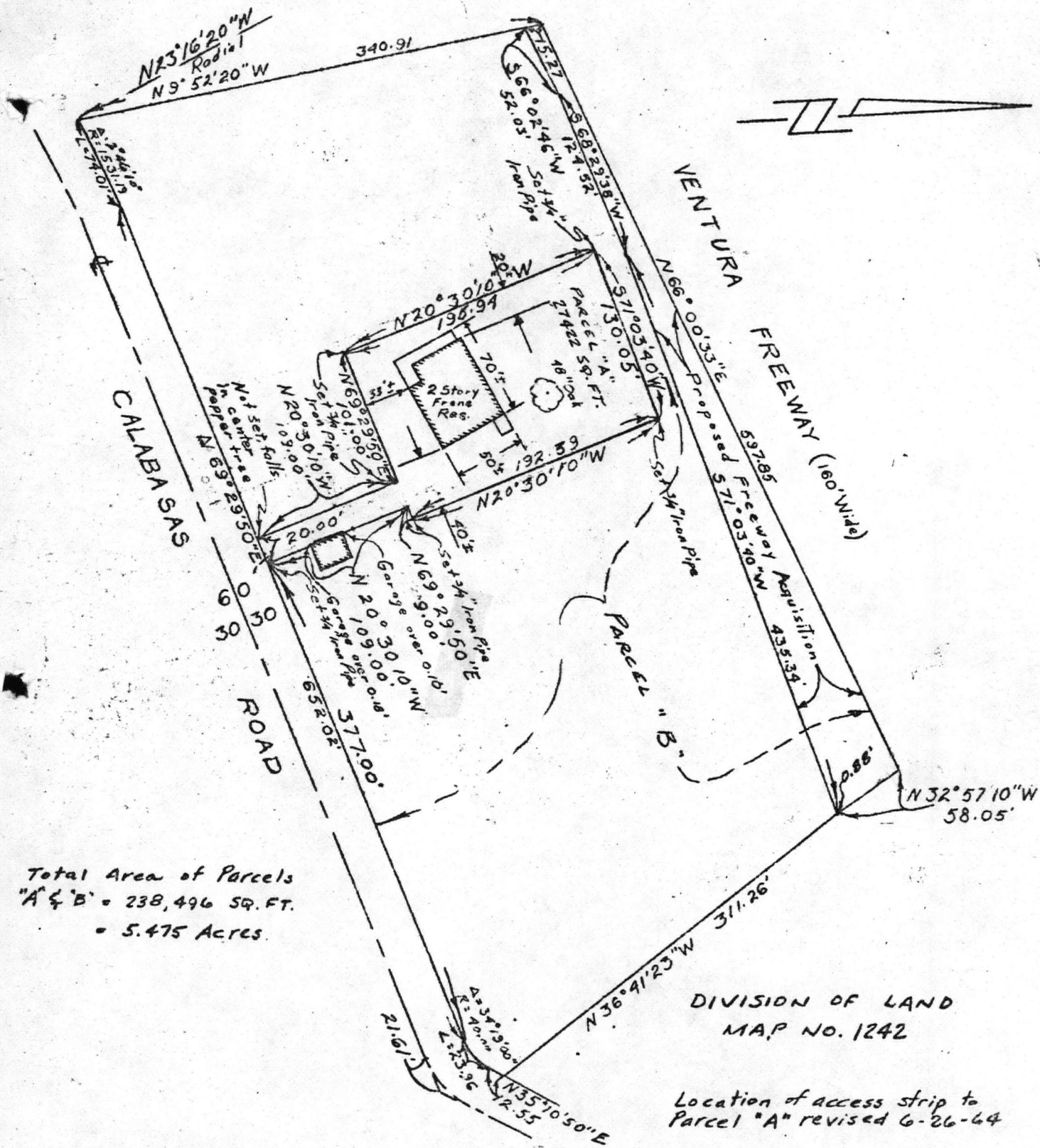




RB-1







Total Area of Parcels
 "A" & "B" = 238,496 SQ. FT.
 = 5.475 ACRES.

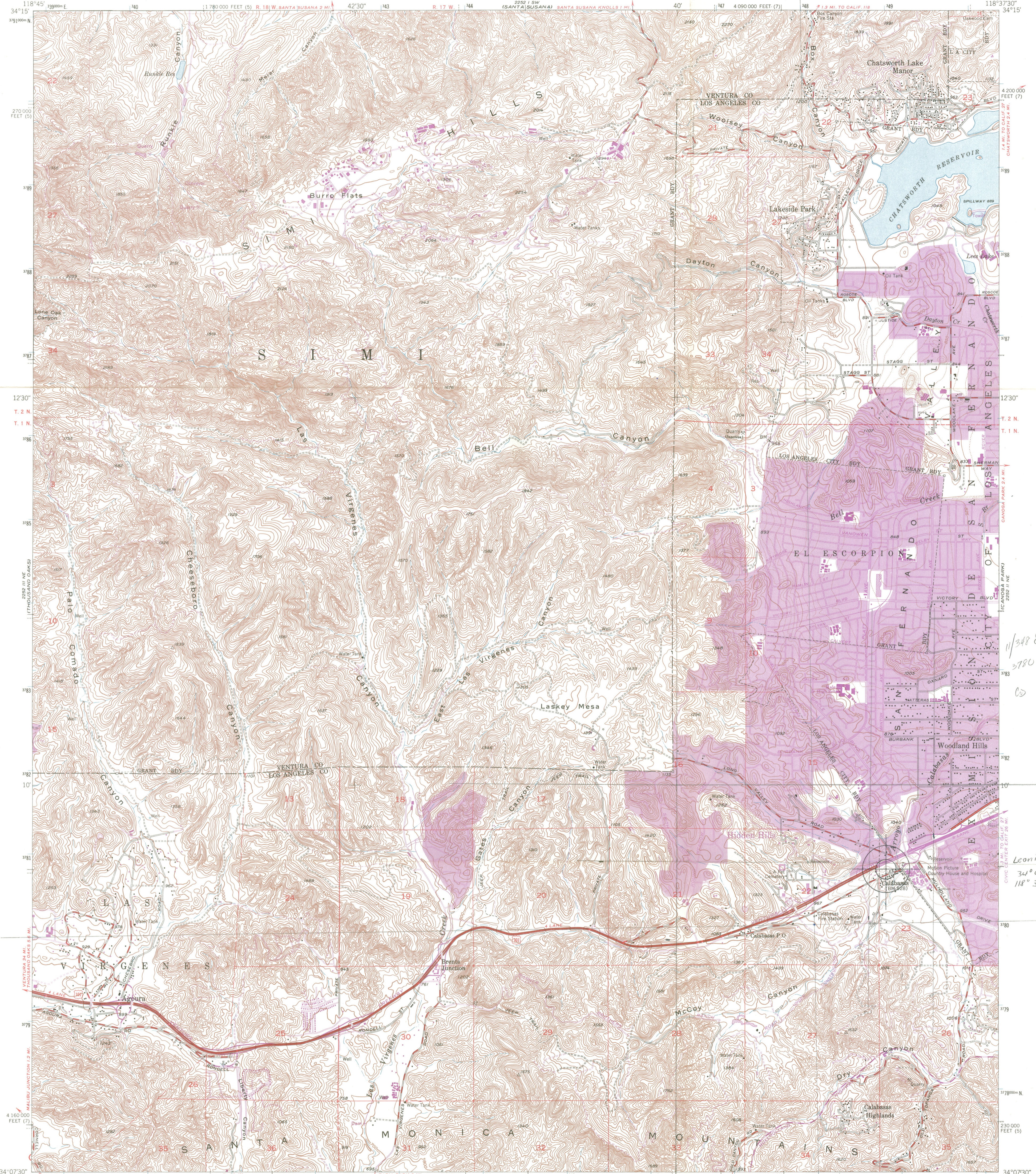
DIVISION OF LAND
 MAP NO. 1242

Location of access strip to
 Parcel "A" revised 6-26-64

Harman Rasnow & Associates
 LAND SURVEYORS
 21318 DUMETZ ROAD
 WOODLAND HILLS, CALIFORNIA
 DIAMOND 8-1084

MAP OF
 PROPOSED LAND DIVISION
 OF A PORTION OF LOTS NO. 1 & 2
 Sec. 23, T1N, R17W
 38M
 IN THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

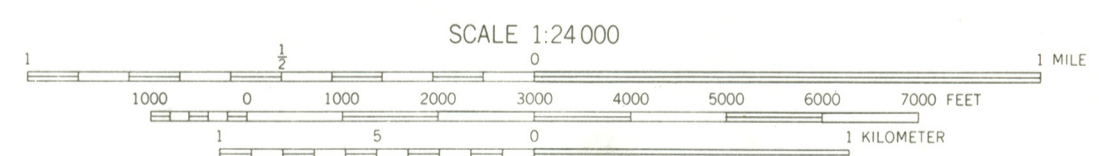
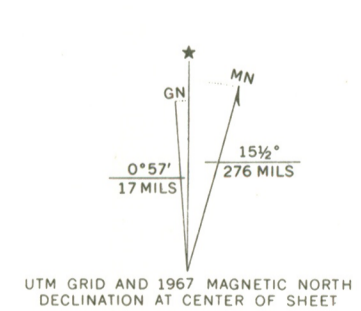
DATE 4-3-64	REVISED 5-25-64 6-26-64	DRAWN BY R.F.M.	CHECKED BY <i>[Signature]</i>	SCALE 1" = 100'	FOR KATHLEEN BEACHY	JOB NO. 4626
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11/348 860
3780 650
CD

Leonis Adabo
34° 09' 27"
118° 38' 22"

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Los Angeles Co.
Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods
Aerial photographs taken 1947. Field check 1952
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on California coordinate system, zones 5 and 7
Dashed land lines indicate approximate locations
Dotted land lines were established by private survey
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 11, shown in blue
Data shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1967. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



CONTOUR INTERVAL 25 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



CALABASAS, CALIF.
NW/4 CALABASAS 15' QUADRANGLE
N3407.5-W11837.5/7.5

1952
PHOTOREVISED 1967
AMS 2252 II NW-SERIES V895

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE CALIFORNIA

Date Entered MAY 29 1975

Name

Leonis Adobe

Location

**Calabasas
Los Angeles County**

Also Notified

**Hon. Alan Cranston
Hon. John V. Tunney
Hon. Alphonso Bell**

Regional Director, Western Region

PR MMott:cm 6/1/75

**State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. William Penn Mott, Jr.
Director, Department of Parks
and Recreation
State Resources Agency
Post Office Box 2390
Sacramento, California 95811**



Photo By LARRY FROST

Valley Landmark: The Leonis Adobe

Standing under the Oaks in quiet Calabasas, a small community "where the old west still lingers," in the southwest corner of the San Fernando Valley, the lovely Leonis Adobe was the stately home of one of the most colorful and legendary figures of early Los Angeles. Built during the last century and recently restored to its original beauty by the Leonis Adobe Association, it is a superb example of gracious living when the San Fernando Valley was ranching country and Los Angeles still a dusty settlement.

Here is living history — an opportunity for you, your children and friends to leave behind for a moment the subdivisions and shopping centers and freeways, and see a remnant of the San Fernando Valley as it once was. Inside this brochure you will find the story of Miguel Leonis — "The King of Calabasas" — who lived in the Adobe with his Indian wife, Espiritu, along with a detailed description of the old Adobe and brief account of how the San Fernando Valley was discovered.

On August 6, 1962, the newly formed Cultural Heritage Board of the Municipal Art Department of the City of Los Angeles officially designated the Leonis Adobe as "Historic Cultural Monument No. 1." Thus the Leonis Adobe became the first of a series of historic and cultural Los Angeles landmarks to be officially recognized by the City of Los Angeles. The American Institute of Architects has also filed with the Library of Congress an official "Historic American Building Survey," Report HABS, Cal. 342, recognizing the Leonis Adobe as a significant historical building and describing its architecture and history in detail. As early as May 2, 1953, a commemorative plaque was placed in front of the house by Topanga Parlor, No. 269, Native Daughters of the Golden West.

On May 21, 1966, the Leonis Adobe was formally opened to the public and an official plaque presented by the Cultural Heritage Board unveiled at ceremonies attended by Los Angeles Mayor Samuel W. Yorty, Los Angeles County Supervisor Warren Dorn, and Los Angeles City Councilman Thomas D. Shephard, and other city and county officials.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
without charge

1:00 to 4:00 P.M. on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays
Also Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day
Group tours at other times may be arranged — Telephone (213) DI 6-3683

See MAP and DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO REACH THE LEONIS ADOBE on back cover.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Less than two hundred years ago, on August 5, 1769, a party of Spanish explorers headed by Don Gaspar de Portola stood where the San Diego Freeway now crosses the top of the Santa Monica Mountains and looked down on "a very spacious and pleasant valley." They were the first white men to see the San Fernando Valley. They were also the first to explore California by land. Although the Spanish had discovered and begun mapping the California-Oregon coast in 1542, it was not until two centuries later when other countries, and particularly Russia, whose fur hunters were already in Alaska, threatened to take possession of the area, that Spain moved to colonize California.

The Portola party, coming up from Mexico, had stopped first at San Diego Bay. There they had joined two other Spanish expeditions that had come from Mexico by different routes, and participated in the construction of the presidio (fortified stockade) and mission that were the beginning of San Diego, the first Spanish settlement in California. Then, heading north, they had located the site where the San Juan Capistrano Mission would be built in 1776. They had come upon a river they named in honor of "Nuestra Senora La Reina de los Angeles" (Our Lady the Queen of Angels) and had camped where the Pueblo de los Angeles was to be established twelve years later, in 1781. They had discovered the La Brea tar pits, and following an Indian trail up a canyon in the mountains that blocked their northward journey — the same route followed today by the San Diego freeway from West Los Angeles to the San Fernando Valley — they had reached the top of the Santa Monica mountains. The valley that spread before them they named "Valle de los Encinos", or "Valley of the Oaks". It was not until after the San Fernando Mission was founded in 1797 that the valley became known as the San Fernando Valley.

Descending into the Valley the Portola party camped beside a spring-fed pond that can still be seen as part of the State Historical Monument at Ventura and Balboa boulevards. They left the Valley through the Santa Susanna pass and continued north to discover San Francisco Bay whose narrow and often fog-bound Golden Gate had gone unnoticed by the galleons sailing past it for more than two centuries! Returning, the Portola expedition entered the Valley by following approximately the route now followed by the Ventura freeway, and passed near or through the site of Calabasas.

CALABASAS "WHERE THE OLD WEST STILL LINGERS"

Calabasas was the site of one of the two hundred or more Indian *rancherias* that once dotted the San Fernando Valley and surrounding hills. It was among the first spots in the Valley to be named by the Spaniards. In 1795, a friar who led a group from the Ventura Mission seeking a location for a mission in the Valley, wrote: "Proceeding on the Camino Real we went to Calabasas to sleep." The *Camino Real* was the "Royal Way", at first a trail, and later the road that linked the Spanish settlements and missions up and down California. In the Valley, it still exists as Ventura Boulevard, and it passes through Calabasas as Calabasas Road, which until the freeway cut it off was part of Ventura Boulevard.

In Spanish, *Calabasas* means "pumpkin", "squash" or "gourd", and as a place name probably meant "place of the wild gourds". The "pumpkin" meaning is reflected

in the quaintly named antique shop "Pumpkin Hollow" located on Calabasas Road just east of the Leonis Adobe.

Across from Pumpkin Hollow is the general store opened in 1908 by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Kramer, who still run it. It is believed to be the last of its kind in the Los Angeles area. In front of the store hangs one of the now rare mission bells that were placed along the Camino Real in 1907 by the Camino Real Association. The Calabasas post office dates back to 1888.

Before the Southern Pacific Railroad connected Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1876, Calabasas was a stop on the stage line to Monterey, which was operated by Flint, Bixby and Butterfield. At that time, and until the turn of the century, Calabasas had a reputation as one of the toughest and wildest spots in California. A dance hall and saloon stood next to where the Kramer store now stands, and across the street stood the Calabasas jail made of heavy timbers spiked together. Alongside the jail grew the famous Calabasas hangman's tree, a Los Angeles landmark until it had to be removed in 1965 to permit one of the 40-foot wide rockets that will propel man to the moon to pass on its way from Port Hueneme to the Rocketdyne rocket testing grounds



MIGUEL LEONIS

in the Santa Susanna mountains. The oak that grows beside the Kramer store was also, according to old-timers who still gather at the store, used for quick frontier justice.

MIGUEL LEONIS "THE KING OF CALABASAS"

Miguel Leonis, as both a legendary and historical figure, was one of the most colorful of the early land settlers and pioneers of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. A giant Basque who stood six-foot-four-inches tall, dauntless, physically powerful, and possessed of a native shrewdness and drive, Leonis for years in the late 1800s controlled and ruled much of the west end of the San Fernando Valley and part of what is now adjoining Ventura county. His home and headquarters was the Leonis Adobe, and he became widely known as "The King of Calabasas."

Leonis was born in 1824 in Cambo in the French Pyrenees, where smuggling across the nearby Spanish border was almost a way of life. Apparently young Leonis took to this local avocation so avidly that before he was twenty or so years old it became advantageous for him to depart for other lands. Probably, too, the lure of

riches and adventure, and of owning your own land and sheep in far off frontier California had reached his ears. Thus, sometime in the mid-1800s he arrived in still youthful Los Angeles.

There is a story that Leonis went to work as a sheepherder in the San Fernando Valley for Joaquin Romero, the son of a Spanish soldier who had been stationed at the San Fernando Mission, but that before long Leonis owned the sheep and Romero was working for him! True, or not, it typifies a man who soon was being referred to as "El Basquo Grande" and who by one means or another, and in spite of the fact that he spoke little Spanish or English, acquired a small empire of land and livestock, until at his death in 1889 his estate was valued at over \$300,000!

One event that furthered the fortunes of Leonis was his marriage to an Indian widow, Espiritu Chujilla. Through this marriage Leonis came into possession of the cattle, sheep and horses, and 1100 acres of land belonging to her family. The land was the El Escorpion rancho and was carved out of the San Fernando Mission lands. Today it is the Platt Ranch subdivision, just north of Calabasas.



ESPIRITU

The Indian Wife of Leonis

Leonis acquired other considerable holdings of land and livestock through various means, and probably often as the result of shrewd trading. But he also was not above claiming land in the public domain — and he guarded his holdings zealously with an armed retinue of Mexicans and Indians. Any would-be settlers on land he owned were quickly discouraged. If not, they were likely to be hauled into Los Angeles to jail and charged with trespassing or stealing. Leonis then made it a point to freely dispense drink and food to the judge, and jury, if there was one, who tried the offenders! The archives of early Los Angeles courts are filled with trials and lawsuits in which Leonis figured — and the litigation over his estate when he died went on for years and still fills an entire file drawer!

At one time a pitched battle between a group of persistent settlers and the armed mercenaries of Leonis raged for weeks through what is now Hidden Hills. Only when the leader of the settlers was finally killed did they disperse, and Leonis was left in possession of the land.

In 1889, Leonis was killed when his wagon overturned in Cahuenga Pass as he was returning to Calabasas following a celebration in Los Angeles after winning one of his lawsuits. Espiritu lived on at the Adobe until she

died in 1906. She is buried at the San Fernando Mission where a monument of unusual distinction marks her grave. Leonis was buried in Cavalry Cemetery in Los Angeles. Miguel and Espiritu had only one child, a daughter, Marcellina, who died at 20 from smallpox. But descendants of John Leonis, a younger brother of Miguel, live in the city of Vernon, which John Leonis founded. Among them, the Leonis Malburgs have been generous contributors to the preservation of the Leonis Adobe.

THE LEONIS ADOBE

The Leonis Adobe was built in stages — and exactly who built the original portion and when it was built is still the subject of research. At first, there appears to have been a simple adobe farm house with white-washed walls, and probably a flat roof. This original portion of the house is believed to date back to 1844, and if this is so it is almost certain that Leonis did not build it. It is much more probable that in the 1850s or 1860s he acquired what was already there. In any event, not later than the 1870s he extensively enlarged and remodelled the house into the gracious Monterey style mansion you see today, and he and Espiritu moved into it and made it their home.

A great deal of research, study and skillful work has gone into faithfully restoring the Leonis Adobe to the way it is believed to have appeared after Leonis completed enlarging and remodelling it.* But there are one or two exceptions. For instance, the present living room was originally two rooms, a parlor and living room, separated by a wall just to the right of the front door. The wall was removed about 1925 and has not been restored in order to provide a large room for group meetings.

Leonis, in enlarging and remodelling the house, sheathed the outside front of the house, and panelled the interior living room walls with wood. He walled-in the rear and northeast side porches, both upstairs and downstairs, to add more rooms. He added the Victorian fretwork balcony along the front of the house, and other enhancing details and features. The bright colors that highlight the house were discovered under many layers of paint, and presumably were the ones that Leonis used. In repainting the house, they were carefully matched.

In the present living room, the family portraits hang on the wall where they used to hang, but the mirror originally hung where the dining room door now is. This door was cut through in the 1920s. Before that, as in many of the old Spanish day houses, one walked along the porch to reach the dining room.

Both the kitchen and dining room are board and batten construction added sometime after the original adobe farmhouse was built. The adobe dirt floors were discovered under modern wood flooring that has been removed. The fireplace in the dining room and stove in the kitchen provided the only heat in the house. The stove, while not original to the house, carries a date of 1875. Most of the kitchen utensils have been loaned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

The stairway to the second floor used to be on the outside of the house before Leonis walled-in the rear porches. Thus, as you go up the stairs, a window in the master bedroom, on your right, opens into what is now a hall. The protruding nails in the upstairs hall rafters were used for hanging grapes to dry them into raisins.

In the 1920s, the then owner of the house built a frame addition along the north (freeway) side, in which two bathrooms were installed. Before, there had been only the traditional outhouse. Because caretakers are living in the house, and meetings will be held in it, one small bedroom has been converted into a bathroom. Old fash-

Continued on back cover

ioned fixtures have been installed, such as the copper-lined, walnut panelled bathtub, which dates from 1880.

The furniture in the master bedroom was very similar to what you see there. There were no closets in any of the bedrooms. Clothes were hung on the walls or packed in drawers or gaily decorated chests.

Outside, at the northwest corner of the house, a large Mexican "beehive oven" with a shed over it for protection from the rain, was used to bake bread and meat. The present oven and shed have been reproduced from descriptions furnished by persons who saw the original ones.

The barn was built in 1912 to replace an early barn and blacksmith shop that stood across Calabasas Road, and that burned. A well, windmill and tank house (that was also used for wine-making) stood at the southeast

Historical landmarks and treasures have disappeared so rapidly beneath the San Fernando Valley's burgeoning growth, that the Leonis Adobe is one of only four of the Valley's early day adobe residences that remain. Visible evidence of the Valley's history and past, of how it was settled and grew, of the founding of one of the world's greatest communities, is now almost totally gone. The Leonis Adobe Association was extremely fortunate in being able to preserve the historic and beautiful Leonis Adobe, not only for people, like yourself, of today, but for future generations. Only through the greatest of efforts and good fortune was the Leonis Adobe saved at the last moment from being bulldozed for a shopping center!

History belongs to everyone, and the Leonis Adobe Association was formed by persons from all over Los Angeles who feel that it is vital that something of the history and growth of a great community like the San Fernando Valley be preserved. If you agree, we hope you will join us in our efforts, and make what contribution you would like to. Much preservation work on the Leonis Adobe remains to be done. Much of its value is in what can be told about it and the history of which it was a center, both through publications and to people visiting it. This costs money. And there is always the cost of maintaining the Adobe and keeping it open for visitors. The non-profit Leonis Adobe Association is supported solely by contributions. All contributions are tax-deductible. Our address is the Leonis Adobe, 23537 Calabasas Road, Calabasas, Los Angeles, California. Telephone DI 6-3683.

WHAT IS AN "ADOBE?"

"Adobe" is the Spanish word for a brick made of mud and dried in the sun, and usually made fairly large in size, such as a foot wide, six or so inches thick, and 12 to 18 or more inches long. Sun-dried mud bricks have been used for construction in various parts of the world since the beginning of civilization, and when the Spanish arrived in the Americas they found the Indians of Mexico and the Southwest using them.

Adobe bricks had a particular advantage for the Spanish and later the American settlers of California and the Southwest, because they can be made literally from the soil on which a building is to be built, provided it is a clay soil with a small amount of sand or loam in it, or one of the latter is added. All that is necessary is to mix the soil with water (which the Indians and settlers did with their feet), pour the mud into wood molds, and dry the bricks in the sun. Straw was also often mixed into the mud to reinforce the dried bricks against breaking.

corner of the house. The well has been located and its decaying redwood lining replaced. A replica of the windmill is being built. The tank house you see was found on an old Van Nuys ranch and the wood tank belonged to the first Calabasas school house.

*Invaluable recollections of how the adobe appeared and of life there and in Calabasas at the turn of the century, after Miguel had died but Espiritu was still living, have been furnished by Mr. and Mrs. Pedro Orsua. Mrs. Orsua was brought to the adobe as a baby girl in 1894 when she was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Juan Menendez (Juan was the son of Espiritu by her first marriage). She remembers Espiritu well and she and Mr. Orsua heard first hand many of the fabulous tales told about Miguel Leonis and early Calabasas.

The Spanish used adobe bricks to build most of their missions and early buildings in California and throughout the Southwest and much of Mexico, and these early adobe brick buildings have come to be referred to as "adobes" — as in the case of the Leonis Adobe.

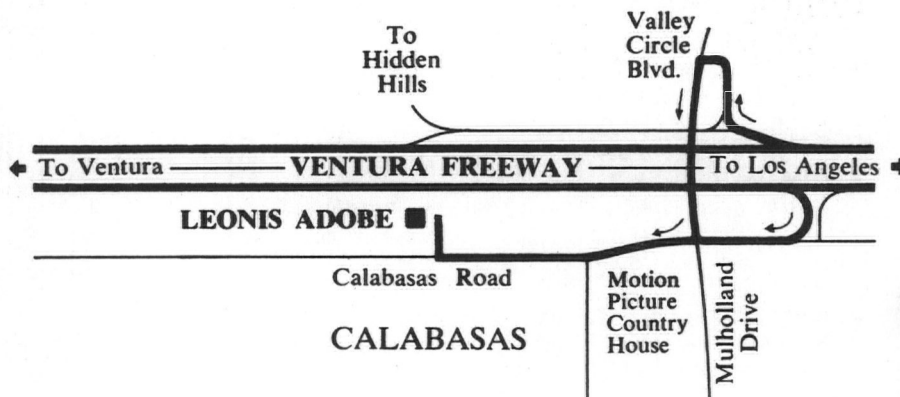
Another principal reason for the use of adobe construction by the Spanish and American settlers was because of the superb insulation they provided against heat and cold.

In the Leonis Adobe, the adobe bricks in the walls have been covered with adobe (mud) plaster, that in turn has been covered by the sheathing and panelling installed by Leonis, and in other places by a regular lime plaster that Leonis or someone added. Thus, in order that some of the adobe bricks in the house may be seen, the plastering has been removed from a section of the adobe wall of the upstairs northeast closed-in porch room (reached through a door at the top of the stairway).

THE LEONIS ADOBE IS EASY TO REACH

COMING FROM LOS ANGELES — SAN FERNANDO VALLEY DIRECTION: Take Ventura Freeway west (outbound) to "MULHOLLAND DRIVE — VALLEY CIRCLE BLVD." turn-off (two miles west of Topanga Canyon and less than 20 minutes from almost any point in the San Fernando Valley). Make *sharp right* as you leave freeway, and *curve left* to VALLEY CIRCLE BLVD. *Left* on Valley Circle Blvd. over bridge across freeway — then immediately *right* on CALABASAS ROAD and into town of CALABASAS.

FROM DIRECTION OF VENTURA: Take Ventura Freeway east (toward Los Angeles) to "MULHOLLAND DRIVE — VALLEY CIRCLE BLVD." turn-off, turn *right* and proceed across Mulholland Drive (STOP sign) straight ahead into town of CALABASAS.



THE COOPERATION OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
IN PRODUCING THIS BROCHURE IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

HRST. PHOTO.

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Leonis Adobe ✓
 ② OTHER NAMES: --
 ③ date of entry: 5-29-75 ✓
 ④ county code: 037

⑤ LOCATION street & number: 23537 Calabasas Road ✓
 city / town: Calabasas ✓
 vicinity of: --
 state: CA ✓
 county: Los Angeles ✓
 ⑥ NPS REGION: Western

⑦ OWNER: PRIVATE STATE MUNICIPAL COUNTY MULTIPLE FEDERAL (agency name)
 ⑧ ADMINISTRATOR: --

⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS: SHABS HAER NHL
 ⑩ FUNDED? YES NO
 ⑪ CONGRESS. DISTRICT: 27th
 ⑫ SOURCE of NOMINATION: STATE FEDERAL

⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES, NAME: -- NO
 ⑭ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES, NAME: -- NO
 ⑮ ACREAGE: .5
 if state who prepared form? Mr. Ralph Kelly
 LOCAL PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

⑯ CONDITION:
 excellent deteriorated altered original site
 good ruins unaltered moved
 fair unexposed reconstructed unknown
 unexcavated excavated
 ⑰ features:
 INTERIOR: SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1 NOT INTACT-0 UNKNOWN-4 NOT APPLICABLE-7
 EXTERIOR: SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2 NOT INTACT-0 UNKNOWN-5 NOT APPLICABLE-8
 ENVIRONS: SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3 NOT INTACT-0 UNKNOWN-6 NOT APPLICABLE-9

⑱ ACCESS: YES - Restricted YES - Unrestricted No Access Unknown
 ⑲ ADAPTIVE USE: YES NO
 ⑳ SAVED? YES NO
 IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? yes no

㉑ AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:
 ARCHEOLOGY - prehistoric-2 COMMERCE-6 ENTERTAINMENT-26 LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15 POLITICS / GOVT.-21 RECREATION-28
 ARCHEOLOGY - historic-1 COMMUNICATIONS-7 EXPLORATION-12 LAW-16 RELIGION-22 SETTLEMENT-29
 AGRICULTURE-3 CONSERVATION-8 HEALTH-27 LITERATURE-17 SCIENCE-23 URBAN PLANNING-31
 ARCHITECTURE-4 ECONOMICS-9 INDUSTRY-13 MILITARY-18 SOCIAL / HUMANITARIAN-24 OTHER (SPECIFY)
 ART-5 EDUCATION-10 INVENTION-14 PHILOSOPHY-20 TRANSPORTATION-25
 ㉒ CLAIMS: explain
 'first'
 'oldest'
 'only'

㉓ functions:
 WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: House
 CURRENTLY: Museum
 ㉔ dates of initial construction: c.1844-46 c.1844--1846 ✓
 major alterations: 1870s-remodeled by Leonis
 historic events: c.1966-restored to 1870s form
 ㉕ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION: Native American (Ca.) Hispanic, French

㉖ architectural style(s): SPANISH COLONIAL
 ㉗ architect: --
 ㉘ master builder: --
 ㉙ engineer: --

㉚ landscape architect / garden designer: --
 ㉛ interior decorator: --
 ㉜ artist: --
 ㉝ artisan: --
 ㉞ builder / contractor: --

㉟ NAMES give role & date
 PERSONAL: Home of prominent San Fernando Valley pioneer, Miguel Leonis, also known as "The King of Calabasas, c.1860s-1889. Espiritu Chihulla Leonis, believed to have inherited the property before her marriage to Leonis, waged and won a 16-yr. battle to retain it after being cut-off from it in her husband's will, died in 1906.
 EVENTS:
 INSTITUTIONAL:

㊱ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP: ADOBE, BOARD AND BATTEN SIDING; 2 STORIES, RECTANGULAR, LOW HIPPED ROOF, INTERIOR CHIMNEY, OFF-CENTER FRONT ENTRANCE, SIMPLE WINDOW AND DOOR ARCHITRAVES, 2-STORY FRONT AND SIDE WRAPAROUND PORCH, UNDER ROOF EXTENSION; ALTERATIONS, 1870s; RESTORED, C.1966. SPANISH COLONIAL.

One of the San Fernando Valley's oldest buildings; home of prominent valley pioneer, Miguel Leonis, whose power and exploits earned him the nickname "The King of Calabasas"; restored as a good example of a working 19th-century CA ranch. Museum