

Phase I Historic Resources Report Ojai Music Festival Bowl, Libbey Park Ojai, CA

November 12, 2008

Prepared by:



Prepared for:

City of Ojai
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Executive Summary

This report was prepared for the purpose of assisting the City of Ojai in their compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it relates to historic resources, in connection with the proposed demolition and reconstruction of the Ojai Festival Bowl in Libbey Park. [Figure 1]

This report assesses the historical and architectural significance of potentially significant historic properties in accordance with the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) Criteria for Evaluation, and the City of Ojai criteria. A determination will be made as to whether adverse environmental impacts on historic resources, as defined by CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, may occur as a consequence of the proposed project, and recommend the adoption of mitigation measures, as appropriate.

This report was prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates of Santa Paula, California, Judy Triem, Historian; and Mitch Stone, Preservation Planner, for the City of Ojai, and is based on a field investigation and research conducted in September/November of 2008. The conclusions contained herein represent the professional opinions of San Buenaventura Research Associates, and are based on the factual data available at the time of its preparation, the application of the appropriate local, state and federal regulations, and best professional practices.

Summary of Findings

The property evaluated in this report was found to be eligible for listing on the NRHP and CRHR, and potentially eligible for designation as a City of Ojai Landmark. The property was found to be an historic resource for purposes of CEQA. The proposed project was found to have the potential to adversely impact historic resources.

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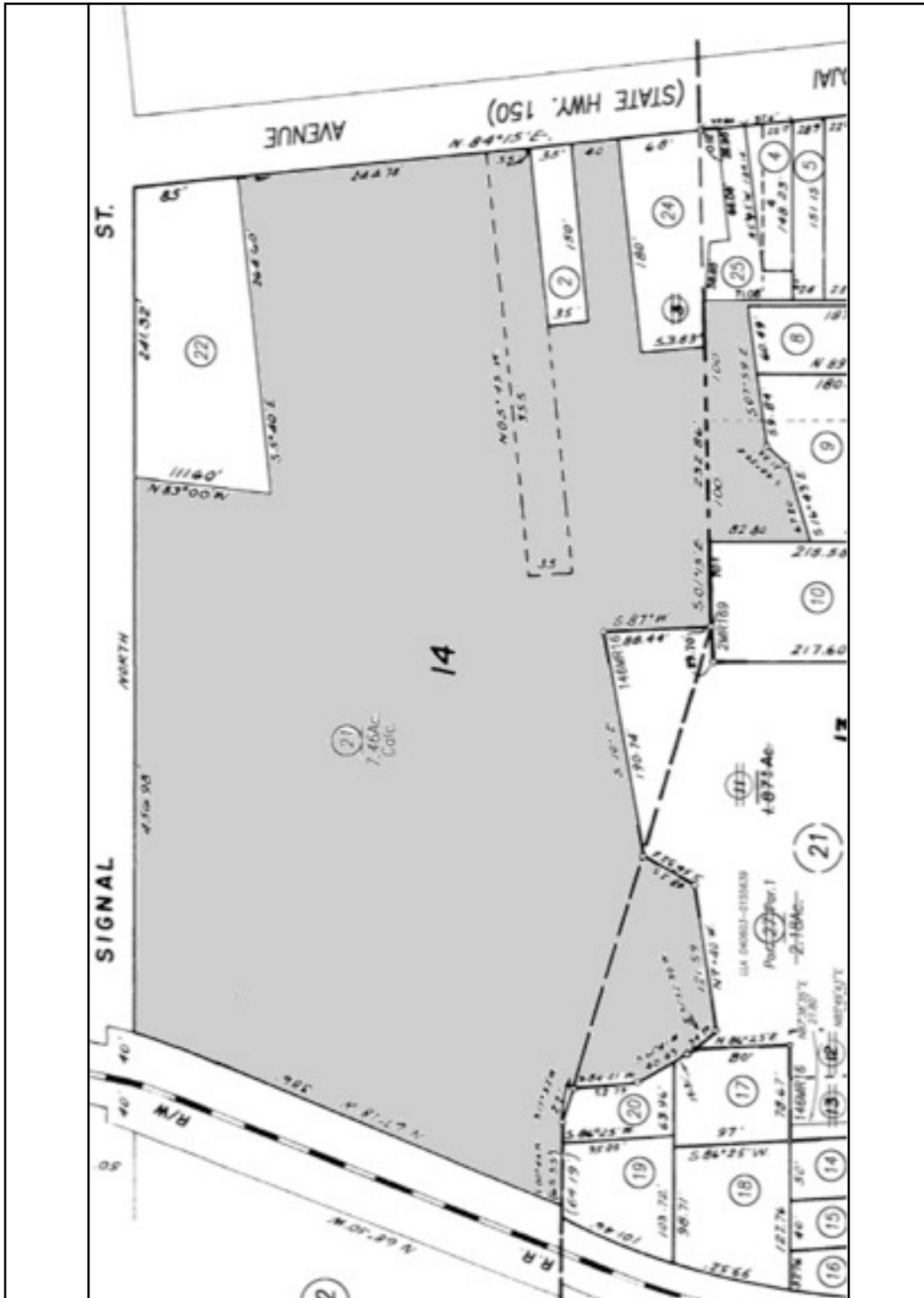


Figure 1. Project Location [Source: Ventura County Assessor, Book 23 Page 10]

1. Administrative Setting

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires evaluation of project impacts on historic resources, including properties “listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources [or] included in a local register of historical resources.” A resource is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources if it meets any of the criteria for listing, which are:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California’s history and cultural heritage;
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (PRC §5024.1(c))

By definition, the California Register of Historical Resources also includes all “properties formally determined eligible for, or listed in, the National Register of Historic Places,” and certain specified State Historical Landmarks. The majority of “formal determinations” of NRHP eligibility occur when properties are evaluated by the State Office of Historic Preservation in connection with federal environmental review procedures (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966). Formal determinations of eligibility also occur when properties are nominated to the NRHP, but are not listed due to a lack of owner consent.

The criteria for determining eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) have been developed by the National Park Service. Eligible properties include districts, sites, buildings and structures,

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

According to the NRHP standards, in order for a property which is found to significant under one or more of the criteria to be considered eligible for listing, the “essential physical features” which define the property’s significance must be present. The standard for determining if a property’s essential physical features exist is known as *integrity*, which is defined as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.” The integrity evaluation is broken down into seven “aspects.”

The seven aspects of integrity are: *Location* (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred); *Design* (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property); *Setting* (the physical environment of a historic property); *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); *Workmanship* (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory); *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).

The relevant aspects of integrity depend upon the NRHP criteria applied to a property. For example, a property nominated under Criterion A (events), would be likely to convey its significance primarily through integrity of

location, setting and association. A property nominated solely under Criterion C (design) would usually rely primarily upon integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The California Register regulations include similar language with regard to integrity, but also state that “it is possible that historical resources may not retain sufficient integrity to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, but they may still be eligible for listing in the California Register.” Further, according to the NRHP guidelines, the integrity of a property must be evaluated at the time the evaluation of eligibility is conducted. Integrity assessments cannot be based on speculation with respect to historic fabric and architectural elements which may exist but are not visible to the evaluator, or on restorations which are theoretically possible but which have not occurred. (CCR §4852 (c))

1. The minimum age criterion for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) is 50 years. Properties less than 50 years old may be eligible for listing on the NRHP if they can be regarded as “exceptional,” as defined by the NRHP procedures, or in terms of the CRHR, “if it can be demonstrated that sufficient time has passed to understand its historical importance” (Chapter 11, Title 14, §4842(d)(2))

Historic resources as defined by CEQA also includes properties listed in “local registers” of historic properties. A “local register of historic resources” is broadly defined in §5020.1 (k) of the Public Resources Code, as “a list of properties officially designated or recognized as historically significant by a local government pursuant to a local ordinance or resolution.” Local registers of historic properties come essentially in two forms: (1) surveys of historic resources conducted by a local agency in accordance with Office of Historic Preservation procedures and standards, adopted by the local agency and maintained as current, and (2) landmarks designated under local ordinances or resolutions. These properties are “presumed to be historically or culturally significant... unless the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.” (PRC §§ 5024.1, 21804.1, 15064.5)

Local Eligibility Criteria

The City of Ojai has established the following criteria for evaluating potential City Landmarks:

Chapter 8, Sec.4-8.07. Criteria for consideration of nomination.

The Historic Preservation Commission shall, upon such investigation as it deems necessary, make a determination as to whether a nominated property, structures, or area meets one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characterization of the community;
- (b) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community;
- (c) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;
- (d) Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community;
- (e) Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant;
- (f) Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative;

- (g) Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
- (h) Its suitability for preservation or restoration. Any structure, property, or area that meets one or more of the above criteria shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration;
- (i) It shall have historic, aesthetic, or special character or interest for the general public and not be limited in interest to a special group or person;
- (j) Its designation shall not require the expenditure by the City of any amount of money not commensurate with the value of the object to be preserved; and
- (k) Its designations shall not infringe upon the rights of a private owner thereof to make any and all reasonable uses thereof which are not in conflict with the purposes of this chapter.

2. Impact Thresholds and Mitigation

According to the Public Resources Code, “a project that may cause a substantial change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment.” The Public Resources Code broadly defines a threshold for determining if the impacts of a project on an historic property will be significant and adverse. By definition, a substantial adverse change means, “demolition, destruction, relocation, or alterations,” such that the significance of an historical resource would be impaired. For purposes of NRHP eligibility, reductions in a property’s integrity (the ability of the property to convey its significance) should be regarded as potentially adverse impacts. (PRC §21084.1, §5020.1(6))

Further, according to the CEQA Guidelines, “an historical resource is materially impaired when a project... [d]emolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources [or] that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.”

The lead agency is responsible for the identification of “potentially feasible measures to mitigate significant adverse changes in the significance of an historical resource.” The specified methodology for determining if impacts are mitigated to less than significant levels are the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* and the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (1995), publications of the National Park Service. (PRC §15064.5(b)(3-4))

3. Historical Setting

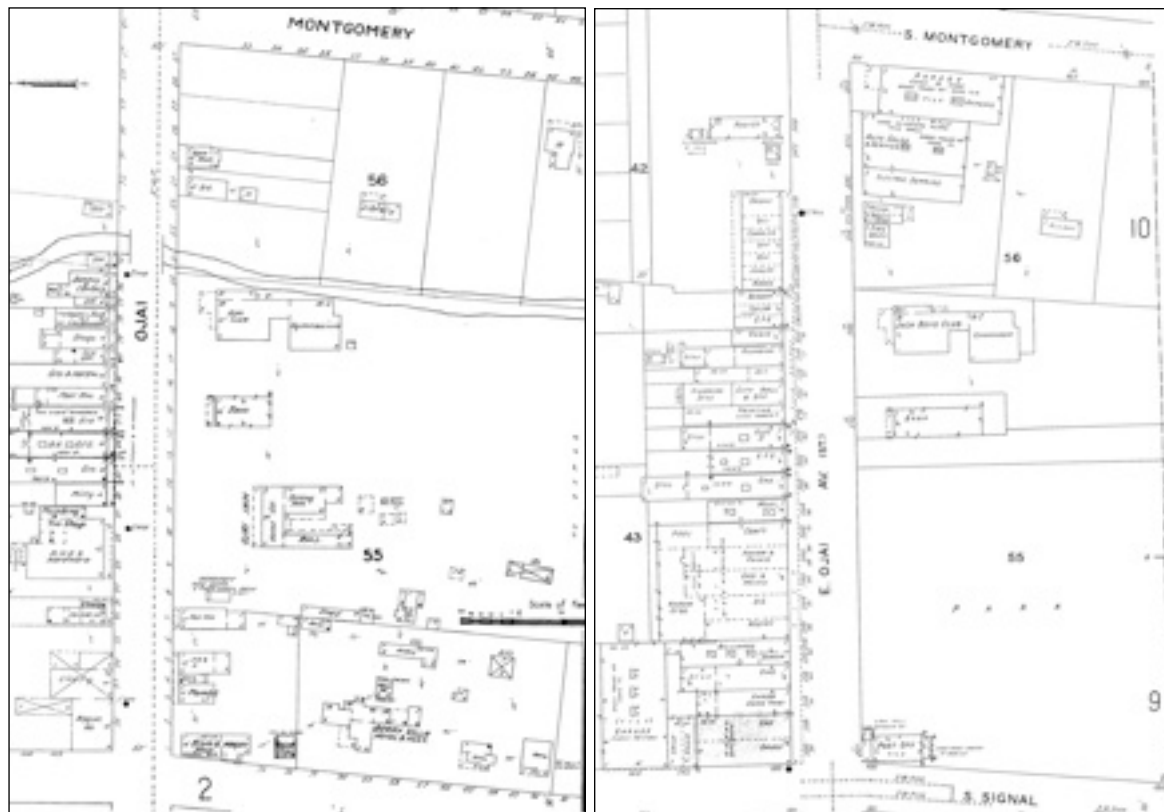
History of Libbey Park

The history of the 7.46 acre Libbey Park parallels the early history of the town’s development. In 1874 the townsite was laid out by Roys Gaylord Surdam, real estate speculator and entrepreneur, who named the town Nordhoff after writer Charles Nordhoff, who had effectively publicized California in his popular 1873 book *California: for Health, Pleasure, and Residence*.

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In 1874 Surdam gave the acreage that would later become Libbey Park to Abram W. Blumberg in exchange for Blumberg's building the first hotel in the townsite. The Nordhoff Hotel was built that year just south of Ojai Avenue. The large two-story hotel, with several additions was considered a "first class resort" in the 1890s. It later became known as the Ojai Valley House, Oakdale Hotel, and finally as the Ojai Inn. The first recreational use of the area that would become Libbey Park took place when the Ojai Athletic Club made their home in the Chrisman residence, east of the Ojai Valley House, in 1894. A baseball diamond was added, followed by dirt tennis courts. (Fry, 1983: 79-81, 250)

In 1900 the Ojai Improvement Company was formed by residents C.W. Bigelow, W.L. Thacher, H.W. Forster, F.W. Hubby, F.F. Spencer, G.W. Mallory, J.J. Burke, A.A. Garland and John Suess, with Forster and Burke as executive officers. The first task of the new company was to purchase the land that was to become the civic park, including the Ojai Inn, which was then leased out. Other leases of the land went to Sherman Thacher, who built the George Thacher Memorial Library and to the Ojai Tennis Club, which built four new courts and a clubhouse. By 1904 the land was partially subdivided, allowing Sherman Thacher to purchase a lot on Ojai Avenue and construct the Jack Boyd Club, also known as Ojai Club. That same year the company donated funds to build the first volunteer fire department building on the west end of the property. The Ojai State Bank was built on the property in 1910. (Bristol, 1946: 85-86)



Sanborn Maps, 1912 (left) and 1929 (right).

This location quickly became the center of town. The first commercial buildings were built on the north side of Ojai Avenue along with a few scattered commercial buildings on the south side. By 1912 the south side of Ojai Avenue between Signal and Montgomery streets was the location of eight commercial businesses, the fire

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department, a clubhouse, and a residence. At the west end of the block where the post office tower is located today was a blacksmith and wagon shop, a plumbing store, barber shop, post office and store building and the Nordhoff fire department building. East of the Ojai Inn was the bank and the Jack Boyd Club. Adjacent to the club was the arroyo followed by a single family residence and a harness shop to the east. South of Ojai Avenue on Signal was the Berry Villa Hotel and restaurant, where the present Post Office and parking lot are now located. (Sanborn Maps, 1912)

Five years later, in 1917, Edward Drummond Libbey, millionaire glass manufacturer from Ohio, purchased the land west of the barranca and east of Signal Street and created the Ojai Civic Park. The land was subdivided leaving the bank and clubhouse on separate parcels. The remaining buildings, including the hotels, post office and commercial buildings were all demolished to create the 7.46 acre Ojai Civic Park. Libbey had hired the architectural firm of Mead and Requa to design a Mission Revival style false front for the north side of Ojai Avenue to connect all the buildings into a unified architectural scheme, and a matching pergola and arches on the south side of Ojai Avenue as the entrance to the park. The 65 foot tall post office tower with its arches at the northwest corner of the park was designed to complement the arcade and donated to the community by Libbey. (Sanborn Map, 1929)

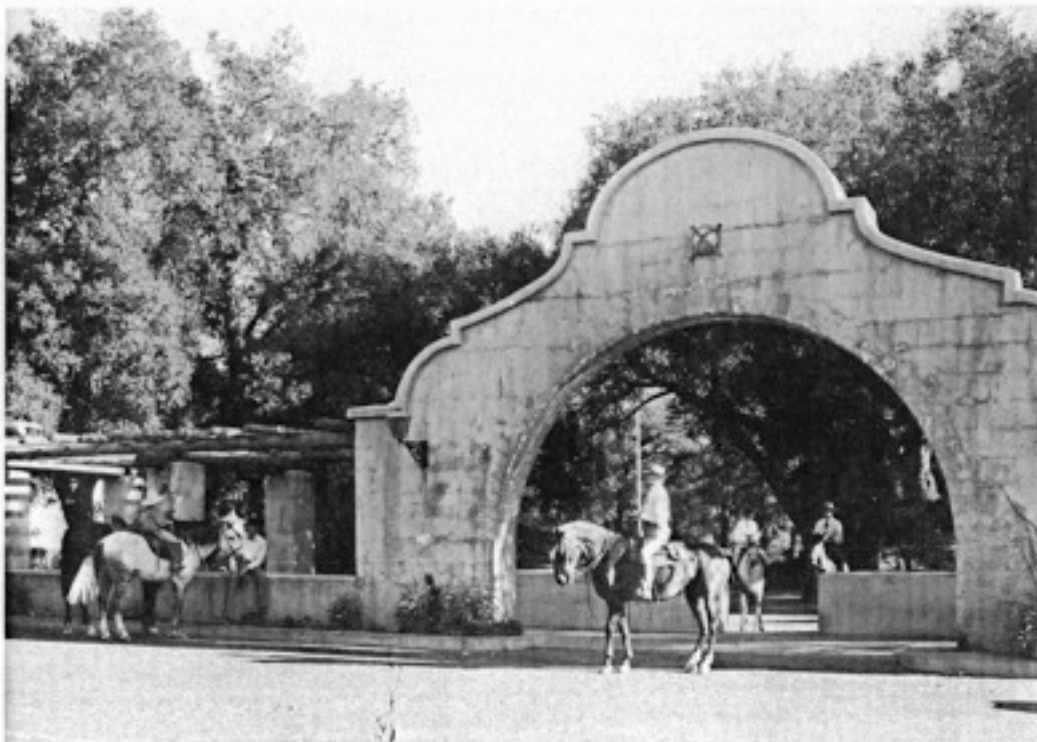


Photo by "Dick" Whittington

Park Entrance, date unknown (Ojai Valley Museum).

The year Libbey established the Civic Park, the Ojai Civic Association (OCA) was formed to manage the park. The trustees were E.D. Libbey, Sherman D. Thacher, Harrison Wilson, H.R. Cole, H.T. Sinclair, J.J. Burke and A.A. Garland. Libbey served as its first president. Local architect Austen Pierpont would also serve for many years as president of the OCA. (Bristol, 1946: 84-85)

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On his death in 1924, Libby willed \$50,000 from his estate to maintain the park, which had been a part of his overall vision for Ojai. The OCA trustees maintained the park until 1971 when it was turned over to the City of Ojai. At that time the Ojai City Council changed the name of Civic Center Park to Libbey Park. The association retained the separate parcel which included the Ojai Post Office and tower. (Bee, 1971: 17)

Over the years, numerous changes have occurred in the park. The first building and structures built were the tennis courts, tennis clubhouse and bleachers. The four tennis courts and bleachers have been maintained and rebuilt numerous times by the Ojai Tennis Club.

These were the only improvements found in the park from its establishment in 1917 until 1954-57, when the stage, seating and bowl shell were constructed for the Ojai Music Festival. The bowl was designed by architect Austen Pierpont and associate Roy C. Wilson. The southwest corner of the park was selected, in part, because it was the location of a dramatic overhanging sycamore tree. The bowl was financed by the Ojai Music Festival which continued to manage and maintain it.

The park entrance from Ojai Avenue has also changed over time. After the pergola and arches were built in 1917 they provided a somewhat formal entrance into the basically rustic park with a canopy of native oaks and sycamores. Except for the tennis courts, the park was used primarily for picnics and occasional special events until the bowl was built during the 1950s. During the 1960s the park fell into disrepair and subjected to extensive vandalism to picnic tables, restrooms and other features. In 1967 and 1968 portions of the pergola were blown up. Eventually, the rest of the pergola, having been declared structurally unsafe by the City, was demolished over much protest by the public. In 1969 the courtyard entry to the park, designed by Austen Pierpont, was paved and benches, walls and planters added. (Bee, 1971: 16-17)

After the City of Ojai acquired the park in 1971, many additional changes occurred. A master plan for the park and adjacent land owned by the city was developed in 1974 by the firm of Royston, Hanamoto Beck & Abey with Thomas D. Church as landscape consultant. The plan included numerous trails and landscape improvements connecting the 7.46 Libbey Park with additional acreage to the south and ten plus acres on South Ventura Street donated to the city by the Smith-Hobson family. The park now contains approximately 28.7 acres including Ojai City Hall and the Senior Center. Eventually a children's playground area was developed close to Ojai Avenue and a restroom added. The plaza area was revamped with a new fountain, and the arches and pergola were rebuilt along the front of the park, restoring the original 1917 scheme



Inside park entrance, 1943 (Ojai Valley Museum).

for Ojai Avenue. A gazebo was also constructed for band concerts. Various local clubs, organizations and businesses have helped fund the park improvements along with the City of Ojai.

History of Ojai Music Festival

The forerunner to the Ojai Music Festival was a series of chamber concerts held in 1926 at the Foothills Hotel, sponsored by Bostonian Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge and Ojai resident Frank Frost. At the time it was held it was considered to be one of the most important musical events on the West Coast, filling 500 seats at every performance.

The 1926 concerts were one-time events, however, and twenty years and a second world war intervened before a music festival returned to Ojai, this time through the vision of John Bauer. A New Yorker who studied architecture at Princeton, Bauer decided to pursue a career as a promoter of theater and music, working with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington D.C., the Metropolitan Opera and managing the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. He and his wife Helen, a former music teacher and writer of music reviews for the *Washington Times*, moved to the Ojai Valley during the 1940s. The couple conceived of a plan to establish a music festival in Ojai. With the couple's wide circle of friends interested in music and the arts, they began planning the first concert and establishing a statewide committee of businessmen to help fund the concerts and enlisting help from numerous volunteers throughout Ojai who opened their homes or guest houses to visiting musicians and gave or helped raise funds for the festival. Bauer became managing director, a position he held until 1954. (James, 1995: 13-16)

The first festival held in 1947 included theater, dance and opera, along with music. Bauer's connections with musicians helped attract the best performers. The proximity of Los Angeles and Hollywood also found not only actors but many wealthy patrons who became involved with the festival by raising funds and attending performances, quickly transforming the festival into a major regional event. In 1949 a Los Angeles Committee of Friends of Ojai group was organized to promote and support the festival with a tea and musical event in the home of Mrs. Edward Bohan. The 1950 Festival was promoted heavily in Pasadena where a number of prominent persons formed the Pasadena Committee of Ojai Festivals "to interest local music lovers in becoming patrons of this country's first international festival of music, theater and dance..." The project was launched with a concert featuring the Hollywood Quartet in the home of Mrs. Joseph F. Rhodes. The first Ojai Festival Benefit Tea was held in November, 1951 at the Ojai Valley Inn and Country Club, sponsored by a number of Ojai residents. (*Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1950; May 5, 1949; October 28, 1951)

The festival was reviewed by many of the prominent newspapers of the day. Longtime music critic of the *Los Angeles Times*, Albert Goldberg followed the festival's growth through his reviews beginning in 1947 and ending in 1965, with his retirement from the newspaper. In one of his first reviews on May 24, 1948, he stated "...when the proposed new mountain-top concert hall and open-air amphitheater are completed, and if the standards are maintained, as we are assured they will be, Ojai stands a good chance of actually becoming that illusory dream, an American Salzburg." In a 1983 interview, Goldberg said that "Bauer created the atmosphere and the name. He wanted Ojai to become the Bayreuth of America." (James, 1995: 20)

In 1954 Lawrence Morton became the first artistic director of the Ojai Festival. As a former musician he had moved from Minnesota to Los Angeles during the 1930s and quickly associated himself with local musicians, becoming a music critic and eventually taking charge of the popular Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles during the 1950s. He served as director from 1954 to 1959 and again from 1967 to 1971, and the single years of 1976 and 1982. Morton continued to bring top musicians and conductors to the festival, combining the

classical tradition with modern and avant garde composers. Morton brought close friend Igor Stravinsky back to the festival in 1955 and 1956. The Russian born Stravinsky, considered to be one of the most influential composers of music in the twentieth century, had first appeared at the 1948 festival in Ojai. In addition, Morton also brought Aaron Copland to conduct the festival in 1957, 1958, and 1976. The French composer Pierre Boulez appeared in 1966 and 1970.

In addition to these conductors, numerous other well-known and highly regarded conductors have performed at the Ojai Music Festival, including Lukas Foss, Robert Craft, John Adams, Michael Tilson Thomas, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Kent Nagano. Many notable artists including composers, soloists and ensembles have appeared at the festival, including baritone Martial Singher, established artist at the Metropolitan Opera, in 1947; soprano Marilyn Horne in 1956, whose major breakthrough came in 1960 when she was invited by Igor Stravinsky to perform at the Vienna Festival; conductor and pianist James Levine in 1968, who made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1971; soprano Dawn Upshaw, sitar player Ravi Shankar; the Julliard String Quartet, the Kronos Quartet, and the Sequoia String Quartet, and a great many others.

The Ojai Festival Orchestra is comprised of top notch musicians from the Southern California area. Over the years other orchestras have performed at the festival, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the New World Symphony, among others. A jazz component was introduced to the Festival in 1961 with performers Andre Previn, the Red Mitchell Trio and Shelly Manne. For the next decade each Sunday morning program was devoted to jazz. From 1981 to 1983 a separate Jazz at Ojai Festival was held in August.

To celebrate the festival's fiftieth anniversary in 1996, the Ojai Music Festival published *Ojai Festivals The Maestro's Challenge: 1947-1996*. Ellen Malino James, one of the principal authors, summarized the festival,

During the first fifty years of the Festivals, the music has ranged from the traditional to the avant garde, and experimentation has flourished. Innovative artists from all over the world have come, bringing their gifts. Here at Ojai, they were allowed the artistic freedom to stretch creative bounds, supported by a friendly, unpretentious yet sophisticated community. Since 1947, each Festival has been challenged to nurture the public's affection for the event while holding fast to the progressive edge of twentieth century music." (James, 1995: 57)

The significance of the Ojai Festival also lies in its ability to draw young new talent who go on to become well known in their field. With many new compositions having premiered at the festival, it has gained a reputation as both an incubator of new ideas and new performers. The festival's many supporters over the years have come not just from the Ojai community, but from all over California, principally Los Angeles. The name Ojai Music Festival has come to be associated with the best in classical as well as modern music, and for its willingness to experiment with new sounds.

History of Libbey Bowl

Initial discussion for building an amphitheater for performances began at least as early as 1947, when the first festival was held in Ojai at Nordhoff High School. John Bauer, the driving force behind the festival and the committee, planned to build a festival playhouse that would house musical, theater and dance events of world-wide caliber. During the second season of the festival, in 1948, a concert hall and open-air amphitheater were advanced with the hope of transforming Ojai into an "American Salzburg." A very conceptual plan was

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designed by the architectural firm of Spalding and Rex of Los Angeles. This plan was never carried out. (*Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1948)

The Ojai Festival continued to be held annually in the Nordhoff Auditorium, and as attendance grew, other venues including the Ventura College auditorium, were added. In 1952 the first concert was held outdoors in Libbey Park, then called Civic Center Park. Two concerts were held in May and June and performed on a temporary wooden platform overhung with a large canvas tarp. The festival was attracted by the possibilities of establishing a permanent location in the park which could accommodate their steadily growing audience, but the park lacked the necessary facilities. This led to the venue which became the Libbey Bowl being built in stages between 1954 and 1957.

The sloping naturally bowl-shaped area at the southwest corner of Civic Center Park was a logical location for the amphitheater. The surrounding native oaks and sycamores added character to the rustic location. Austen Pierpont is believed to have originally conceived of the idea of the bowl in this location. He was serving as a trustee of the Ojai Civic Association at the time and consequently was quite familiar with the park. He apparently had "treasured a spot in Libbey Park, a natural bowl surrounded by trees and dominated by a huge sycamore... that would be an ideal place for presentations of music and drama." (Bee, 1971: 15; Bryan, 1979)

In March of 1954, a controversy arose during the planning for the bowl regarding its funding and use. During this time the Ojai Civic Association trustees initiated meetings with the community including representatives of church, school and local organizations in order to form an association to finance and build a community bowl. Some felt that the City of Ojai should acquire the park and build the bowl so that it would be available for all to use. Apparently others felt that if the bowl remained solely under the supervision of the Civic Center Park trustees, it might not serve the entire community. However, no decision was reached as to the formation of an association at that time, and the Ojai Festivals moved forward with funding to build the amphitheater and encouraged other organizations to help. Ground was broken in April and by May 13, 1954, the bowl was nearly completed with financing from the Festival, and both funds and labor from the community. (*Ojai Valley News*, 3/25/1954; 4/22/1954; 5/13/1954)

The first element of the plan to be constructed was a terraced asphalt seating area to accommodate 750 concertgoers, built in a semi-circle in front of a new wood stage with a concrete floor and canvas backing in May 1954. This first phase of development cost approximately \$1,500. In 1955 permanent seats were built onto the asphalt terrace. That same year the canvas tarp over the stage was destroyed by fire. In 1956 additional benches were added and a new canvas tarp was placed over the stage. This tarp was also destroyed, and in 1957 an acoustically designed wooden shell was built over the existing stage and a storage room completed in time for the May Music Festival. The stage lighting was completed in 1959. For the first time, beginning in the 1960 season, all festival concerts could be held at the bowl. Still, the construction of dressing rooms had to wait until 1980, when the Ojai Rotary Club completed the project. (*Ojai Valley News*, 4/4/1957; 4/18/1957; 5/23/1957)

Apparently the design of the bowl was the subject of lively discussions by the Ojai Festival board. One concept for the bowl's design was drawn by Santa Paula artist Cornelis Botke. The final design was completed by Ojai architect Austen Pierpont and associate architect Roy C. Wilson of Santa Paula. The final design for the bowl came through the architect's committee, which included Pierpont, Wilson, and architect Chalfant Head. The plans included a stage, shell, storage room, dressing rooms and stage lighting.

Funding for the 1957 bowl improvements came from the Ojai Music Festival Committee, which raised money through donations, campaigns by the Women's Committee, the Thrift Shop and Ojai Festival Savings, to pay for the design and construction. Many volunteer hours from community members helped construct the earlier stage structure and the seating area. The final cost of the 1957-58 bowl improvements was approximately \$15,000. In 1958, with the completion of most of the bowl improvements the previous year, a Civic Center Bowl Committee was established to maintain the bowl and to oversee its usage.

In the years after 1958, numerous changes and additions were made to the bowl. The first major addition to the bowl shell structure was undertaken in 1966 when new baffles were installed along the curved rear wall of the stage. Michael Head, local architect and son of Chalfant Head, designed the plywood baffles to improve the bowl's acoustics. At the same time, the front roof of the bowl was extended out from the arch creating what has been referred to as the "eyebrow." Heating coils were also installed in the concrete floor of the stage.

In 1967 the old circa 1900 tennis clubhouse building was removed and new concrete box seating constructed, and additional seating added, increasing the seating capacity by 250. Landscape improvements completed that year included work on the lawn behind the seating area. The lawn area could accommodate as many as 700 additional concert goers, increasing the total seating capacity of the bowl to over 1,500. Chalfant Head Associates designed these improvements.

In addition to music, the Libbey Bowl has been used by the community for school graduations, lectures, and for special recitals and performances sponsored by various clubs and organizations. In recent years, at least fifty events have been held annually at the bowl, involving twenty to thirty nonprofit organizations. In addition to the Music Festival, other annual events include the Mexican Fiesta, Storytelling Festival, and Shakespeare Festival, among many others.

The bowl has acquired several names over the years. When it was first constructed, between 1954 and 1957, it was referred to variously as the Ojai Civic Bowl, the Ojai Festivals Bowl and Ojai Memorial Bowl. In the early 1970s then chairman of the Ojai Festivals Bowl Theodor Lilliefelt wrote a letter to the editor of the Ojai newspaper questioning why the bowl was still commonly referred to as the "Libbey Bowl" when it was the Ojai Festival who constructed it. He argued that it should be called the Ojai Festival Bowl. In 1973 the bowl was officially named the Ojai Festival Bowl, although it is still popularly known today as the Libbey Bowl.

On March 2, 1971, the Ojai Civic Association trustees deeded the Civic Center Park to the City of Ojai. At that time, the City of Ojai changed the name from Civic Center Park to Libbey Park, in honor of Edward D. Libbey who had donated the park to the community.

It was not until 1980 that the Ojai Festival Bowl finally got the much needed addition of performer's dressing rooms and restrooms. The \$36,000 improvement was designed by local architect Michael Head and built by contractor Steve Sutton. Funds were raised by the Ojai Rotary Club as their 75th Anniversary project, with a large contribution coming from the Ojai Valley Service Foundation.

In 1982 strong winds broke off a portion of the large sycamore tree which overhangs the bowl seating. The Ojai Public Works Department secured the fallen limb to the trunk and braced the heavy low branches of the tree. Cables supporting the tree were also strengthened. The sycamore tree was designated a Ventura County Landmark in June 1975. The tree has been determined to be over 200 years old. According to local lore, Chumash Indians bent the sapling tree to mark the beginning of an important trail or camping spot. An arch was

formed when the top of the tree rooted, and this arch is said to have been known to the Chumash as the Peace Tree or Marriage Tree.

It should be noted that this story does not appear in a book *California's Chumash Indians*, although it does discuss other legends. In addition, the California Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) does have the capability to arch and bend dramatically in nature. Its trunk can touch the ground and grow back up again, a characteristic seen in the sycamore tree adjacent to the bowl. (McCall, 1986: 54-62; www.californiagardens.com)

The last major changes to the bowl occurred in 1996 with a seismic retrofitting. The architect for the project was William Howard Wittausch. Improvements included upgrading the arch with beam replacements, sheathing the shell roof with plywood and rebuilding the walls. In 2006 the bowl underwent a major electrical upgrade. In 1995 fifteen new sycamore and oak trees were planted around the bowl to replace those that had died over the years.

Austen Pierpont, Architect

Born in Los Angeles in March of 1891, Austen Pierpont came with his family to Ojai in the fall of that year, where his father Ernest built a house for his family adjacent to the Thacher School. The Pierponts built a hotel and cottages on their 40 acre ranch in order to house visiting Thacher students parents. Austen and his older brother Philip both graduated from Thacher School.

Upon graduation in 1909, Austen Pierpont attended Stanford University where he studied engineering until a severe eye hemorrhage forced a year of rest and changed his intention to obtain a degree in architecture from Cornell University. Instead he studied economics at Stanford as well as managing Ventura's Pierpont Inn, built by his mother in 1910. In 1919 Pierpont attended the New School of Social Research in New York City, followed by a brief career as a researcher on public health issues. A recurrence of his earlier eye problems with a recommendation for outdoor work brought Pierpont and his wife Kitty back to Ojai in 1921.

During the early twenties Pierpont launched his architectural career by designing and building his own English style stone residence adjacent to the Pierpont cottages. He completed numerous residential commissions during the 1920s and 1930s for which he received several awards. During his lengthy career (1921-1967) his notable public buildings include the Ojai Art Center (1934) and the Ojai Festival Bowl in Libbey Park with Roy C. Wilson (1954).

The largest body of Pierpont's work is found on the Thacher School Campus. Beginning in the early 1920s through the 1960s, Pierpont designed the majority of new buildings and additions to older buildings. His most notable Thacher buildings include the Science Laboratory in the Spanish Colonial Revival style (1936), the Middle School Dormitory in the Monterey Revival style (1937), and the Lamb Auditorium in the California Modern style (1959).

Pierpont's buildings during the 1920s and 1930s were designed in the popular Spanish Colonial and Monterey Revival styles of the period. During the postwar years, he adopted the warmer, more accessible form of Modernism which came to be associated with California, and which spawned the California Ranch House. In contrast with the machine aesthetic which characterized the more European-influenced branch of Modernism, the California style employed natural materials and a more casual approach which capitalized on the relationships between indoor and outdoor spaces, and emphasized a building's plan and relationship to the site over the external dress. Characteristics of the style include very low gabled roofs with broad overhanging eaves sup-

ported by exposed beams and rafters. Native stone is used for columns and foundations. His later works utilized concrete block as accents. The result was picturesque compositions especially suited to the rustic Thacher campus.

Pierpont believed his buildings should fit in with the natural environment, to serve a purpose and not necessarily to be monumental or to make a statement of their own. The Libbey Bowl was just such a building. Pierpont wanted to have the bowl blend in with its rustic landscape. He placed it in a location that took advantage of the natural surroundings, including the large mature California Sycamore tree with its unusual shape. Pierpont produced a design for the bowl in association with a contemporary of his, Roy C. Wilson, a well respected Ventura County architect from Santa Paula. In 1952 Austen Pierpont was president of the Ojai Civic Association and had been involved with Libbey Park for a number of years. In 1969 Pierpont designed a new entrance to the park that included a paved courtyard with benches, walls and planters. Austen Pierpont died in 1975 at the age of 83.

Roy C. Wilson, Sr., Architect

Born in 1887 in Fremont, Kansas, Roy Calvin Wilson was the third of five children born to George Washington Wilson and Anna Burlingame. Arriving in California in 1900, the family settled near the Arroyo Seco in the present day Highland Park area. Roy Wilson left school after the seventh grade and took various jobs to supplement the family's income. One of those jobs was a draftsman for local architect, Edwin C. Thorne. Thorne inspired him to learn more about architecture, and he moved to Berkeley to take classes at the university. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake cut his education short, but the rebuilding efforts provided him with practical experience. He was drawn back to Southern California, and in 1911 married Agnes Thorne, the daughter of his mentor.

In 1914 Roy and Agnes Wilson came to Santa Paula for the first time, and were attracted to the natural beauty of "the Oaks" district. At that time, the area had not been developed, and the Wilsons purchased 40 acres of oaks and sycamores adjacent to the Santa Paula Creek from Solomon Obiols. The first few years were spent planting citrus trees, and the couple lived in a small cottage on the ranch. Roy Wilson carried out his desire to become an architect by opening an office in town and began receiving his first commissions in the late teens. He designed some of the first houses in "the Oaks," and by the early 1920s his firm received three major commissions: to design a residence for Limoneira Company President, C. C. Teague; a large dormitory and recreation building for the Limoneira Ranch, and the Limoneira Company Headquarters in town. Roy Wilson's gregarious nature coupled with his strong business sense brought his firm many important commissions throughout his over fifty year career as the first licensed architect in Ventura County. The commissions included a large number of schools and businesses as well as churches and private residences. Wilson had a strong interest in art and promoted this interest by presenting works of art commissioned from local artists and sculptors to several of the schools designed by his firm. Roy Wilson died in Santa Paula in 1974.

4. Potential Historic Resources

The Libbey Bowl, built between 1954 and 1957, is located in the rear southwest corner of the 7.46 acre park. The bowl is comprised of the stage and shell cover with attached wing staging areas, restrooms and dressing rooms. Facing the bowl are wooden seats on an asphalt base arranged in a semi-circle on a sloping site.
[Photo 1]

The raised stage area is constructed of wood and faced with stone across the front (north) elevation. The floor of the wooden stage is scored concrete. The curved or “bowl” shaped shell is located over and behind the stage in order to amplify the sound. It is constructed of wood beams that extend primarily north and south with a single arched large laminated wood beam that extends across just under the edge of the roof and runs from the ground and across the front and back down to the ground where it is anchored. The shell is covered with plywood and composition roofing material. The underside of the shell is covered with medium wood siding. [Photo 2]

At the corners of the front of the stage are large stone columns. Baffles were added to the back of the stage. Double wide sliding track doors are located on either side of the stage. At the back of the stage is a wooden double door. The shell is covered with stucco at the rear and portions of the side. Behind the stage is a wooden deck with a metal railing. [Photos 3-4]

Attached to the east side of the shell and stage is a shed roof wing covered with stucco. The front (north) portion is covered with horizontal wood siding. This may have been an opening at some time and now serves as a storage area. The foundation is concrete block. [Photo 5]

Attached to the west side of the shell and stage is a flat roofed wing covered with stucco siding. A sliding wooden track door is located on the west wall. Attached to this wing is a long rectangular building with a low gable roof and stucco siding. This building was constructed in 1980 to house dressing rooms and restrooms. [Photo 6]

The semi-circular seating area in front of the stage is divided into three sections. The bench seats are on asphalt risers and have wood backs and seats with metal supports. Adjacent to the stone wall is an additional seating area with concrete risers used to hold folding chairs. Behind the seating area is the lawn. Numerous mature oaks and sycamores are located throughout the seating area and the park. The large gnarled sycamore adjacent to the bowl still shades the area. [Photo 7-9]

Designated Historic Properties in the Vicinity

The large sycamore tree adjacent to Libbey Bowl was designated Ventura County Landmark #27 in June 1975. The Post Office tower and Portico, while not on park land, is located in the northwest corner of the park and was designated Ventura County Landmark #26 in June 1975 and Ojai Historic Landmark #6 in September 1993. The Ojai Valley Tennis Tournament and Civic Courts in Libbey Park were designated Ojai Historic Landmark #11 in February 2000. The Ojai Jail, located on a separate city-owned parcel located south of Libbey Park, was designated Ojai Historic Landmark #12 in 2002. Across from Libbey Park is the Ojai Arcade, designated Ojai Historic Landmark #5 in September 1993.

5. Eligibility of Historic Resources

National and California Registers: Significance, Eligibility and Integrity

The Libbey Bowl appears to be eligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR under Criterion A/1 (historical events) because of its association with the Ojai Music Festival, which built the bowl between 1954 and 1957 and has been the location of appearances by world-renowned musicians, performers, and composers for over fifty years. The Ojai Festival has become known throughout the music world for featuring top composers, conductors and musicians, in fulfillment of their mission to “present adventurous music at affordable prices emphasizing both contemporary composers and the discovery or rediscovery of rare or little known works by past

masters.” Many well-known conductors and performers got their start at the Ojai Festival. In addition to the significance of the Ojai Festival within the music world, the festival has also become integral to the community of Ojai and the region, which became deeply involved with the festival through raising funds, hosting events and lectures, and opening their homes to musicians. (James, 1995:6)

Libbey Bowl does not appear to be eligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR under Criterion B/2 for its association with historically significant individuals. While many significant individuals have been associated with the bowl in various ways, their lives have primarily been important for what they have accomplished elsewhere, and not because of their association with the bowl.

The Libbey Bowl appears to be to be eligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR under Criterion C/3 (design) because its association with prominent Ojai architect Austen Pierpont. Pierpont was an important designer in Ojai from the early 1920s through the 1960s. In addition to designing numerous houses in Ojai and elsewhere in Ventura County, he was the primary architect for The Thacher School during that period. Although he was not a notably innovative designer, having worked in the popular styles of the 1920s through the 1940s, during the 1950s and 1960s his designs captured the essence of California Modernism by employing natural materials and a more casual approach which capitalized on the relationships between indoor and outdoor spaces, and emphasized a building’s plan and relationship to the site over the external dress. His treatment of the Libbey Bowl is a prime example of his work in this respect. Roy C. Wilson, prominent Santa Paula architect, was also involved in the project, but according to sources it was Pierpont who “conceived, initiated, planned and built the bowl. Architect Roy Wilson was associated with the project.” (Bee, 1971:15)

Integrity Discussion

The integrity of **location** for this property is intact; the Libbey Bowl is in its original location. The integrity of **design** for the property is substantially intact since the shell of the bowl is essentially the same as when first constructed. One minor alteration is a short extension of the front roof of the shell made in 1966. In 1980 a restroom/dressing room addition was made on the west side. This addition, while non-distinct in design, did not detract from the original shell design. During the 1990s the shell arch was rebuilt with a new beam, the roof received new plywood sheathing, and the sides of the shell were rebuilt. All these repairs reproduced the original design. The seating area has remained virtually unchanged.

The **setting** for the property is substantially intact. The majority of landscape features and the adjacent tennis courts are in their original locations. Some trees have been lost over the years, but new trees have taken their place. The Libbey Bowl has retained its integrity of **materials** and **workmanship** since changes made used the same materials and workmanship. The integrity of **feeling** and **association** are intact since the Libbey Bowl continues to be used by the Ojai Music Festival as well as the community for concerts and events.

On a whole, the Libbey Bowl appears to retain the integrity required for it to be eligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR under criteria A/1 and C/3.

Local Significance and Eligibility

This property appears to be eligible for designation as an Ojai City Landmark under criteria (a), (d), (g) and (h). Under Criterion (a) the Libbey Bowl is significant for the role it played as one of the foremost cultural icons of the community. Its importance is also derived from its association with the Ojai Music Festival, one of the major musical events in California for over fifty years.

Under Criterion (d), the Libbey Bowl is identified as the work of prominent Ojai architect Austen Pierpont whose work influenced the development of the community. Under Criterion (g), the Libbey Bowl is significant for its unique location as part of the rustic park setting and for its singular physical characteristics that make it an established visual feature. Under Criterion (h), the Libbey Bowl has retained its integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship. Under Criterion (i), the property has historic and architectural interest for the general public as outlined in the above report and this property would have interest to the general public.

Conclusion

The property appears to be eligible for listing on the NRHP or CRHR, and for designation as a City Landmark, and therefore should be regarded as an historic resource for the purposes of CEQA.

6. Project Impacts

The proposed project appears to have the potential to adversely impact historic resources.

7. Selected Sources

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Photographs

Historic photographs of Libbey Park entry, located in Ojai Valley Museum Archives.



Photo 1. View looking south to Libbey Bowl and amphitheatre. [8 September 2008]



Photo 2. Close-up view of Libbey Bowl, looking south. [8 September 2008]



Photo 3. Libbey Bowl, on stage. [8 September 2008]



Photo 4. Rear and side view of Libbey Bowl, facing west. [8 September 2008]



Photo 5. View of east wing of Libbey Bowl, facing west. [8 September 2008]



Photo 6. View of west wing and dressing room addition, facing east. [8 September 2008]



Photo 7. View of seating area in front of stage, facing north. [8 September 2008]



Photo 8. View of sycamore tree adjacent to bowl, facing southwest. [8 September 2008]



Photo 9. Overall view of seating area in front of stage, showing lawn and landscaping. [8 September 2008]