

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property



historic name Rhoades Ranch

other names/site number Phegley Home Ranch/Strawberry Institute of California

## 2. Location

street & number 2290-A Cochrane Road

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

city or town Morgan Hill

state California code CA county Santa Clara code 085 zip code 95037

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	2	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
6	2	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwellings/secondary  
structures

AGRICULTURE: agricultural field/outbuildings/  
horticultural facility

EDUCATION: research facility

COMMERCE: business

DOMESTIC: multiple dwellings/secondary  
structures

AGRICULTURE: agricultural field/outbuildings

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: Other(National)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: Minimal Traditional

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: WOOD: Shingle, STUCCO

roof: CLAY TILE/COMPOSITION/WOOD SHINGLE/  
BRICK

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Located near the base of the Leroy Anderson Dam and Reservoir in southern Santa Clara County, this 12-acre site is nestled in the northeast corner of what was once a larger 160-acre ranch that was established in the 1860s when the Mexican era *Rancho Laguna Seca* was first subdivided. Most of the early ranch area is now known as Borello Farms, a 123-acre active ranch on an adjacent property to the south and west. The subject site is on a rise adjacent Coyote Creek, and overlooks the orchards of Borello Farms. This overlook is the original ranch headquarters site, and was also the site of the Strawberry Institute of California, which was developed subsequent to the property split. The larger setting remains agricultural, although the historic landscape was modified with the construction of Anderson Dam in 1949-1950. The Santa Clara Valley Water District now owns undeveloped properties to the north and east of the subject site. The property today represents a continuum of significant and supporting design elements from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries including much of its natural setting. Although the surrounding associated agricultural lands has been and will continue to be subject to urban development, the site preserves the feelings and associations of the headquarters of an early Northern California ranch, is the site of a 1920 Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival residence that represents the work of master local architects, and was the headquarters of the Strawberry Institute, an institution important in the agricultural history of California.

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### Narrative Description

The main owner-occupied house (known as the Rhoades House), completed in 1920, shares the site with four other houses that today function as rentals. Other buildings and structures exist on the site, including an early barn, an agricultural equipment building, remnants of a water tank, and other minor ancillary structures related to the residences. The site also contains mature landscaping associated with various eras of site occupation, as well as some native vegetation near the riparian corridor of Coyote Creek that is located along the northern boundary of the site. The site has one small adjacent parcel under separate ownership that fronts on Coyote Road and is partially embedded into the site. That adjacent site is not a part of this nomination. Coyote Road runs along the east boundary of the site at the base of the foothills, and extends from Cochrane Road to East Main Avenue about a mile to the southeast.

The entry to the subject site is from Cochrane Road at the northwest corner of the property. A nearby adjacent driveway (to the west) provides access to the perimeter road of Borello Farms. This drive leads to a complex of agricultural buildings to the south of and not a part of the subject property.

#### Contributing building/structures:

##### (1) *Phegley House (ca. 1863)*

This two-story National folk house represents the earliest known occupation of the site. It is a two-story single-wall (board wall) house constructed in the early 1860s during the early American settlement period of Santa Clara County. Single-wall houses are one of the earliest American-era building types in California, when the availability of large redwood lumber planks allowed for quick assembly of buildings. The construction technology was popular from the mid-1850s to the late-1860s during the pre-railroad era in California.

National folk houses are common across the nation, particularly in the South and the Midwest, and were a result at mid-nineteenth century of the availability (via the emerging railroads) of manufactured lumber in newly developing areas that were a distance from water transport. The Phegley House is a sub-type of National folk houses known as I-house, a type characterized by two-story buildings two-rooms wide and one deep, often with rear additions. With roots in British folk housing, I-houses were popular due to the larger sizes possible at moderate cost. Although the railroad did not connect rural areas in California until the late 1860s and later, settlers in California were aware of the technology from the Midwest and South, and were able to obtain redwood lumber harvested from the large forested Coastal Range.

Facing west towards the entry to the site from Cochrane Road, the house sits above the creek and road where the foothills begin their rise near the mouth of Coyote Canyon. This site is a natural early habitation location. Early boundary descriptions referenced the large Sycamore trees that framed the creek. Large Eucalyptus trees provide a focal point and

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identify this house site from the valley below. Eucalyptus trees were first planted in California from seeds brought from Australia during the Gold Rush, and were propagated and marketed extensively beginning in the mid-1850s. The mature Eucalyptus trees near this building were likely planted during the nineteenth century.

The building is T-shaped with a two-story cross-gabled front volume and a rear one-and-one-half story offset wing. A one-story hipped shed is nested along the rear wing on the south side. The steeply pitched roof is characteristic of folk housing of the early 1860s in California, with a cross-gabled front volume set higher than the rear-gabled wing. Other character-defining features include the enclosed soffits, wide fascia trim, and lap siding. A chimney rises through the peak of the roof of the rear wing.

A large wooden porch and covered deck wraps the west and north side of the building. It is covered with a low-slope hipped roof with false-bead ceiling boards, framed with large square wood columns, and enclosed with a solid balustrade of v-groove siding, the porch was likely added to the building in the second decade of the twentieth century when the ranch was acquired by the Rhoades family, and was renovated again after 1945. The porch deck on the north side of the building faces the riparian corridor of Coyote Creek. The porch/deck is accessed from steps centered at the front façade, leading to a front door that is centered in the front façade and framed by recessed wood panels.

Fenestration appears to have been replaced at the time of the porch addition in the 1920s, and is mostly wood-sash double-hung windows with dog-ears. Replacement doors and other improvements were probably made at that time, and other foundation work and improvements were done later, which have all reduced the integrity of the original building.

*(1a) Phegley House garage (pre-1920)*

South of the Phegley House is a small one-story garage. It is a simple front and rear gabled volume with a front garage door and side windows. Although clad with channel-rustic siding (typical of nineteenth century construction), it may have been built after the Rhoades acquired the property in 1911, but prior to when they constructed their large house.

*(2) Horse Barn (ca. 1860s)*

This moderate-sized timber-framed horse barn located uphill from the houses near Coyote Road was likely constructed during the same decade as the Phegley House. Rectangular in size and one-and-one-half stories in height, it is front and rear gabled, with an upstairs hay storage area loaded from both front and rear hay-doors above the sliding doors at both ends. The floor is made of wood and has three interior horse stalls located in the right rear corner. The siding is a wide-board v-groove profile that is not usually found in Santa Clara County, but may be associated with a transition period in the mid-1860s before channel-rustic siding became the norm throughout Northern California. The tall 6/6 double hung windows are also characteristic of the mid-1860s with their thin mullions. Most of the glazing is missing. The roof has been covered with galvanized corrugated metal panels that cover what may be original shingles.

*(3) Water tower remnant structure (pre-1920)*

Located southwest of the barn is the remaining structure of what was once a large watertower. This structure appears on an early 1920s photo of the site (see **Additional Documentation: Historic Photos**), and was likely constructed during the nineteenth century. The original siding and tank are now gone.

*(4) Rhoades House and garage (1917-1920)*

Designed by the architectural firm of Higbie and Hill, with construction beginning in 1917 but completion not occurring until after World War I, this Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style house with detached garage is sited within a grove of large Oak trees at the rise above the orchards of Borello Farms to the west and south. At the time of construction, the property included the Borello Farms acreage. The Rhoades House is an excellent example of a work by local master architects.

The Rhoades House has a large, mostly square footprint (one narrow wing extends the front façade northward). At the rear, buttresses frame a shallow bump-out and an interior court. Mostly one-story in height, a two-story L-shaped section rises at the southwest corner of the building and extends northward across the front of the square footprint, but stops short of the one-story wing. The two-story section partially wraps the interior courtyard. The massing of the house is a maze of undulating forms, creating the illusion of a house larger than its already large size. The one-story sections have flat tops and parapets faced with a row of decorative Spanish roof tiles about a foot down from the coping. This decorative mansard sits above flared stucco cornices. The tile decorative feature wraps the building except for the intrusion of some large buttresses on the south and east facades that frame the canopy roof (south façade) with a jog in the building line (rear façade).

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The second story is covered by a moderately sloped Spanish tile covered roof that extends down to large sweeping eaves. These eaves contain scroll-cut rafter tails with notched-in gutters. The scroll-cut boards are found again in the cantilevered canopy outriggers over the rear door and side windows. Both the canopies and the second-story roofs are framed and cornered by large scroll-cut braces.

On the front façade a partially cantilevered wing protrudes from the building shape, but is contained in the composition by the line of the decorative tile. The parapet encloses a balcony that overlooks the entry. The horizontal line of the coping is drawn into the stucco of the two-story section, providing a base to the window sills. The horizontality is further emphasized by a stucco watertable at the base of the walls. The watertable line originates on the north façade of the wing where it abuts a small buttress, continues into the caps of two large bollards at the front entry, and then terminates after wrapping the rear corner of the building against a large buttress mid-façade. Above the watertable is a false base of stepped-out stucco, further emphasizing the horizontality, and monumentalizing the wall profile.

The prominent arched entryway alcove with its key at the apex and trimmed with decorative archivolt is nested into a solid stucco-covered L-shaped railing of monumental proportions. The steps drop to the side along the wall into a narrow entry patio framed by large square bollards. The thick railing is embellished with flares in its vertical plane, and a quarter bottom-curve provides a counterpoint to the curves of the arch nearby. The front entry arch covers a deep recess into which the custom arched door and its frame provides a grand entry into the house.

The fenestration is a mix of casement, top-hinged, and fixed multi-light windows. Most of the windows have multi-light fixed transoms. The front projected wing contains a six-part window with a semi-arch, and centered in the second story of the front façade is a recessed tri-partite window unit framed with four slender twisted columns. The center section is solid and contains an ornately trimmed cast panel.

Additional character-defining features include second-story planter boxes with doubled corbels, two stucco chimneys with solid gabled caps, ornamental carriage-style exterior wall lamps, integrated foundation/planters, and rectangular stucco insets.

The related detached garage is similar in character to the house. It is wrapped with a Spanish tile mansard and contains matching multi-light windows. The garage door is a replacement. A rock retaining wall follows the driveway along the south side of the house. Foundations remain of a garden room that no longer exists.

*(5) Equipment building (ca. 1945+)*

This long structure was built to house farm equipment, and has four sliding doors facing a driveway circulation area near the large older barn and a house to the southwest. The building is simple in shape, with end gables, and board and batten siding. The concrete base and interior framing indicate mid-century construction.

*(6) Office/Board-and-batten house and garage (ca. 1945+)*

Located at the northeast corner of the site, this house was originally built as an office. It is a long narrow structure with step-backed gables and a mix of siding types. The building was expanded over time, and was later converted to residential use.

**Non-contributing buildings/structures:**

*(7) Stucco house (ca. late 1940s)*

Located in the center of the site between the Rhoades House and the equipment building, this one-story stucco-clad Minimal Traditional-styled house is L-shaped and has an attached two-car garage. Some vernacular houses, particularly in the 1930s and early 1940s as the Modern Movement progressed, were built very simply in what is referred to as "Minimal Traditional style." One of the most ubiquitous architectural styles and commonly overlooked as a non-style, it quickly evolved from the simplified "modern" interpretation of the many revival styles prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s. The style is recognized as one-story, unadorned, stucco houses with gabled roofs, shallow eaves and simplified porch designs. Minimal Traditional buildings are a transition between the revival styles of the 1920s and 1930s into the post-war Ranch-style houses.

The building has a raised floor and a long concrete entry porch covered with an attached roof with slender 4x4 columns. The end gables have vertically installed dog-eared planks, and the windows are framed with false shutters. The garage may have been added, as were some aluminum sash windows during the 1960s or 1970s.

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*(8) Board-and-batten house and shed (date unknown, post-1945)*

The one-story house located east of the Phegley house above Cochrane Road is a contemporary house, with board and batten siding, and a detached garage.

**Conclusion**

The property maintains much of its historic integrity as per the National Register's seven aspects of integrity. The historic houses, barn, office, and equipment building, maintain their original location on the ranch, in the historic headquarters area of the larger 160-acre ranch created in the 1860s, and the site of the Strawberry Institute of California of the mid-twentieth century. The property today is located in a rural environment as it has been since established in the 1860s, although Anderson Dam, built in 1949-1950 is clearly visible to the northeast. The subject property retains its late-nineteenth century and early-to-mid twentieth century rural ranch scale and feeling, and continues to represent rural patterns of development

Other houses and structures on the site contribute to the late-nineteenth century and early-to-mid twentieth century rural ranch setting. The Phegley House was renovated during the early-twentieth century, but retains its distinctive early 1860s character and composition that is expressed through its preserved materials, workmanship, and early California redwood construction techniques. The alterations, such as the porch and windows, have reduced the integrity of the original 1860s building, but were done during the period of significance of the larger site. The horse barn has changed little since its early construction, and little changes have occurred to the equipment building and other older structures on the site.

Some buildings have been lost, such as what is believed to have been a large propagation shed to the rear of the Rhoades House that was built in the late-1940s, and demolished in 2003. Other smaller sheds that have been identified in historic photos are no longer extant. The office building of the Strawberry Institute of California and two secondary houses on the property were built after World War II. The office building has been expanded and converted to residential use, but still retains its' ca. 1945 character. The two houses, although associated with the period of ownership when Harold Thomas headed the Strawberry Institute of California at the site, are not distinctive modern-era buildings and are not known to be identified directly with the historically important use of the site during the mid-twentieth century. These two residential buildings do not directly contribute to the historic significance of the property, although reflect the continued evolution of the site into the recent past.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

CRITERION A: AGRICULTURE, EXPLORATION/  
SETTLEMENT

CRITERION B: AGRICULTURE

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1863-1966

**Significant Dates**

1945-1966 (association with Strawberry Institute)

ca. 1860s (first period of construction)

1920 (Rhoades House completed)

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Thomas, Harold E.

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Higbie, Howard Wetmore (architect)

Hill, Andrew P. Jr. (architect)

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Rhoades Ranch period of significance begins ca. 1863 and ends in 1966.

The period of significance spans an over-100 year period beginning from the ranch's initial development during California's Early American Period as a 248-acre portion of the rancho *La Laguna Seca*, and represents today, to some degree, agricultural development patterns in the South Santa Clara County area with some buildings spanning 150 years of occupation and agricultural use. In particular, the architecturally significant Rhoades Ranch house, occupied by the Rhoades and Thomas families was initially built between 1917 and 1920, well within the period of significance for the subject property. The association of this site however, with Dr. Thomas and the Strawberry Institute and related organizations from 1945 to 1966, is of particular historic significance within California and the United States, due to the contributions that Dr. Thomas and the Institute's work had to the development to the commercial strawberry industry during the post-War era, and relates specifically to Thomas' directorship of the Strawberry Institute on the property until 1966. In 1966, Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc. assumed ownership of the Strawberry Institute, which continued to operate on the property for another decade. The period of significance ends in 1966 due to the change in ownership at this time. Driscoll's association with the site, while important, is not of primary significance as Dr. Thomas' association and leadership of the Strawberry Institute between 1945 and 1966.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The Rhoades Ranch property meets the requirements of National Register Criteria Consideration G (properties that have achieved significance in the last 50 years) because of its exceptional significance as a continuously developing agricultural property between the 1860s and 1966. Rhoades Ranch was the site of the Strawberry Institute of California, and under the direction of Harold Thomas, the varieties of strawberries developed on the property have become important in the Strawberry industry of the United States, with over half of the national strawberry production being done in California, with the Shasta and Lassen as chief varieties by the late 1950s. Originally setup in 1945, Harold Thomas continued to run the Strawberry Institute until the end of the period of significance in 1966, at which point it merged with the Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc., which Thomas continued to lead on the property until 1976.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The 12.27-acre site known as Rhoades Ranch located on Cochrane Road is locally significant under National Register Criteria A, B and C in the areas of Agriculture, Exploration/Settlement and Architecture. It is significant at the state level under Criteria A and B for its association with the Strawberry Institute of California and Harold E. Thomas, its head, who is a person important to California's agricultural development. It is the historic headquarters of what was once a larger ranch in South Santa Clara County (located to the east of Morgan Hill). Today it represents one of the last remaining agricultural settings able to convey the broad patterns of late nineteenth and early twentieth century agricultural development in the now mostly urbanized floor of Santa Clara Valley. This northern California agricultural property contains resources illustrating the early American-era agriculture period, the early twentieth-century development of the property during years of regional horticultural development, and is directly associated with California's pioneering strawberry industry (the largest in the United States). The property is eligible under Criterion C due to the presence of the Rhoades House, a distinguished example of an architect-designed Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival residence designed by Howard Higbie and Andrew Hill Jr. The period of significance begins in 1863 and ends in 1966, the period from initial settlement of the property until the sale of the property to Driscoll Strawberry Associates in 1966. The property meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G due to the exceptional significance of Harold E. Thomas and the role of the Rhoades Ranch in California's strawberry industry.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion A: Patterns and Events**

The property represents today agricultural development patterns in the South Santa Clara County area, with buildings spanning 150 years of occupation and agricultural use. The association of this site with Dr. Harold E. Thomas and the Strawberry Institute and related organizations from 1945 to 1966, is of historic significance within California, due to the contributions that Dr. Thomas and the Institute's work had to the development of California's strawberry industry



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Strawberry breeding in California has reflected a working public/private partnership since the early twentieth century. Intensive breeding work, along with related investigations, is conducted at the California Experiment Stations; more breeding work has occurred at the private grower-supported coops such as the Strawberry Institute of California, and both have been closely allied to the strawberry industry of California which in some places produces the heaviest yields per acre in the world. There existed an almost symbiotic relationship of industry to experimental work in the earlier decades of the industry.

When Thomas acquired the subject property in 1945, he embarked upon a research program that rose to prominence in applied research and development of strawberry cultivars unrivaled in beauty and quality anywhere else in the world. The Strawberry Institute sought to solve disease, insect, variety, and other problems in strawberry production, and also furnished disease-free stock to the grower members. The Institute, located on the property and organized by E. F. Driscoll, was the brain child of a far-sighted strawberry grower who began cooperating with the University of California Berkeley beginning in 1930. It was designed to conduct breeding and provide scientific assistance to the growers.

Strawberry breeding first began at the University of California's Davis Station in 1925-1926. William T. Howes and A. G. Plakidas initiated the first work. Some selections were made of their crosses in 1927 and W. T. Horne made further crosses that year. He was succeeded by Dr. Harold Thomas. The first Thomas-Goldsmith seedlings were fruited in 1930 at the San Jose Station near Santa Clara. The first crosses, made in 1929 by Goldsmith were actually unauthorized, but were the result of his curiosity when he was foreman of the Deciduous Fruit Field Station of the University of California in San Jose. These were followed by systematically building up the desirable characters toward an ideal type. In 1934, there were between 3,000 and 4,000 acres of strawberries in California. Just before World War II the strawberry acreage in California was about 5,000, most of which was the variety Marshall (Banner) in central California and Klondike in southern California. By the end of the war the acreage had been decreased down to 900 acres due to the economic climate and marketability of strawberries during wartime. In 1945, the University introduced five varieties of strawberries resulting from Thomas' and Goldsmith's work -- the Shasta, Lassen, Tahoe, Donner, and Sierra. Of these, Shasta and Lassen became important in the United States. The five new varieties were relatively virus-free and were far more vigorous and productive than the Marshall variety.

Post-World War II, acreage increased steadily until there were 22,500 acres of strawberries planted in California in 1956, composing 55 percent of the national production, with Shasta and Lassen as the chief varieties. Of these, Lassen (originated in 1936) proved to be best in southern California because of its low chilling requirement, relatively high tolerance to salinity, wide adaptation under a variety of planting systems and high productive capacity. The fruit is mediocre to poor in quality, soft, ships poorly, tends to roughness and is unsatisfactory for freezing. Shasta, originated in 1935, proved to be best in coastal central California because of continuous production under the prevailing conditions, where fruit is harvested from the same plants from April through November. The fruit is good in quality, ships well, and is passable for freezing. The Sierra, Tahoe, and Donner varieties ultimately failed as varieties in California but Donner is a leading variety in Japan.

With the passing of years, Shasta and Lassen also became infected with virus and a virus-free nursery program was put into effect. Some Donner and Tahoe were grown in the early 1950's and Donner has now become important in Japan. The Goldsmith (Z5A) was patented and introduced by the Strawberry Institute commercially in 1958 as Z5A and named in 1963. Solana, named in 1957 by the University of California, was selected in 1937 by Thomas and Goldsmith. Solana is established as the dominant variety in the Oxnard district of Ventura County and around Fresno, replacing Lassen in both areas, and is grown to a limited extent in other areas including the central coast near Watsonville.

In 1959, a for-profit corporation (Strawberry Institute Nursery) founded by Thomas, was established to separate the plant propagating work from the strictly service work of the Institute. Patented varieties originated by the Institute were propagated for members of the Institute only. At its peak, about twenty million plants were propagated annually by the Institute. In 1962, Institute members had about 1,600 acres in production. In 1966, the Strawberry Institute merged with Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc., which Thomas continued to direct for another ten years, outside of the period of significance.

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### Criterion B: Personages

Harold E. Thomas is a recognized twentieth century figure in California, considered to be the "Father of the California Strawberry Industry," and was eulogized by the University of California Academic Senate in 1987 as such, following his death.

Harold E. Thomas was born in Watsonville, California on March 25, 1900, where he grew up on a small farm about six miles outside the city. After high school he spent a year on the ranch and then went to the University of California in 1920, obtaining his M.S. in 1924 and his Ph.D. in 1928 in Plant Pathology after studying *Armillaria mellea*, a root destroying fungus primarily found in deciduous orchard crops of California. The study of deciduous orchard tree root diseases as well as strawberry diseases was his area of responsibility while a member of the U.C. faculty. He then became a Professor in the Department of Plant Pathology in 1928, and continued working on strawberry diseases that threatened the California industry. Thomas is renowned for his pioneering research on the strawberry, often called the "Father of the California Strawberry Industry." During his tenure at the University, Thomas enlarged strawberry breeding programs to include wild strawberries to create disease-resistant varieties, working with the University of California Deciduous Fruit Field Station in Santa Clara. He resigned from the University of California to become Director and Pathologist of the non-profit Strawberry Institute of California in 1945, located on the subject property.

In 1934, Thomas had married Helene Diepen, who worked at the Field Station, and the following year another Field Station employee, Earl V. Goldsmith (1892-1954) became his research assistant. In 1939 he published *University of California Agriculture Extension Circular 113* "Production of Strawberries in California," and in 1945 "The Shasta, Sierra, Lassen, Tahoe, and Donner Strawberries" was published as *Bulletin 690* in conjunction with Goldsmith. These two publications changed the character and scope of strawberry production in California and opened the potential of strawberries as a fresh market fruit. In 1945 he bought the upper portions of the larger Rhoades Ranch, including the subject property and established at this location The Strawberry Institute of California, and became its Director. Thomas was aided in this endeavor by E. F. Driscoll, and the research done by the non-profit was used to assist the growers belonging to Driscoll Strawberry Associates. Harold Thomas died in Morgan Hill in 1986 at the age of 86.

### Criterion C: Architecture

The Rhoades House is the work of the local firm of Higbie and Hill, a partnership of two local master architects during the late teens and early 1920s. The Rhoades house is a distinctive example of Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival architecture for the period, under construction in 1917 and completed in 1920. It was an innovative design by Howard Higbie and Andrew P. Hill, Jr. The Rhoades House has changed little since its construction, and continues (through its massing and detailing) to illustrate its associations with a significant architect-designed work, and is recognized as such by government agencies.

Prior to World War I, most designs of Spanish influences in California were variations of the Mission Revival style that had its roots in the late nineteenth century. The Mission Revival style bears almost no direct connection to the Mission architecture of Old California for which the name is derived, but it is rather a conglomeration of late Arts and Crafts "simplicity" (honest use of materials), tile roofs, stucco walls and pseudo-Mexican Colonial design elements. The focus of the style on Mexican-California changed with the Panama-California Exposition held in San Diego in 1915. The Exposition represented a much more precise and elaborate representation of Spanish Colonial architecture and received wide attention. Architects, inspired by what they had seen at the expo, began to look directly to Spain and its colonies for inspiration, and finding a rich history to pull from, the style evolved into what many refer to as Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival. Detailing included Spanish or Mission tile roofs, raised and inset plaster ornament, arched porches and arched picture windows, shaped buttresses, and often carved timbers and rafters. This style reached its climax in the 1920s and 1930s and then passed rapidly from favor by the 1940s.

The Rhoades House is individually significant, and has changed little since its construction, and continues (through its massing and detailing) to represent the creative work in the Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival style of local master architects, Howard Higbie and Andrew P. Hill, Jr. This house is a unique representation of the Mission-influenced Spanish Colonial style found in the American Southwest. While it showcases many character-defining features like the prominent arched entryway and the massing, it does so in an uncommon way not found outside of the work of Hill and Higbie, as evidenced by the addition of a larger-than-normal entryway, scroll-cut rafter tails and braces along the second story roof

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and the prominent watertable line along the base of the outside walls. The mannerist design of the Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial forms are mixed with Craftsman details manifest to embody a distinguished design of the early twentieth century. Minor changes to the building and the surrounding property landscape have not affected the integrity of the property, having been done in a thoughtful manner that remains consistent with the period of significance.

Andrew Hill, Jr. was the son of Andrew P. Hill, the renowned photographer and California landscape painter. Andrew P. Hill Jr. (1886-1973) was an architect with a short, but defining career in California prior to becoming a State architect. He was trained in industrial arts education at San Jose State College and in architecture at Stanford University. After teaching full time at San Jose State College from 1910 to 1917, he continued to teach part-time while establishing an architectural practice. During this time he was commissioned to do a small number of residential projects that are now considered distinguished local works in the post-World War I period. During a portion of this period Hill partnered on projects with architect Howard Higbie.

Howard Wetmore Higbie (1879-1958) was born in New York and was educated at Columbia University. Higbie practiced as an architect in New York before moving to San Jose with his wife Jane in 1912. Jane was a prominent Interior Designer/Decorator, and is known to have participated in the designing and outfitting the interiors of buildings designed by her husband Howard. Howard Higbie was the architect for a number of houses and apartment buildings in the 1920s and 1930s throughout Santa Clara County, and often designed in the Spanish-Eclectic and Mediterranean Revival styles. His design work portfolio included public buildings as well as residences.

Works of Higbie and Hill have been recognized collectively and individually throughout the San Francisco Bay area for their architectural significance. In San Jose, their 1923 Pomeroy House and 1924 Lynnwood Apartments are designated City Landmark Structures. In Saratoga, their 1924 design for the family of Joan Fontaine is historically significant. In Campbell, the 1923 Campbell Women's Club is listed as one of the City's significant historic structures. During the brief years that the firm existed in the early twentieth century, their residential designs ranged from South San Francisco to Morgan Hill.

The other buildings identified as contributors to the Rhoades Ranch are associated with the property's use as a ranch, rather than specific architectural distinction as the work of a master architect. The Rhoades Ranch contributing properties do represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

## Conclusion

During 100 years of agricultural production, this site evolved from a cattle ranch to a horticultural farm where prunes, apricots, and other horticultural products were grown. By the mid-twentieth century, the site, reduced to its present size, became the headquarters of an experimental strawberry facility that included propagation work on the site as well as other off-site farms that created many disease-resistant varieties now grown throughout the world. Prominent people have been involved in this ranch prior to establishment of the Strawberry Institute of California, including early owner James F. Phegley, a South County rancher who served on Santa Clara County's Board of Supervisors, and Ira Osborne Rhoades, a railroad purchasing agent who retired to the ranch and became involved in a leadership role in the statewide California Prune and Apricot Growers Association. The property is significant however, due to the association of Dr. Harold E. Thomas, a plant pathologist who helped found, and was Director of, the non-profit Strawberry Institute of California. The Rhoades Ranch is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A, B, and C at the state level of significance.

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## Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

### Rancho La Laguna Seca

The four leagues of the rancho *La Laguna Seca* translate to about 20,000 acres, and the subject property is located near the southeast corner of that Mexican-era land grant. This ranch was developed in the 1860s during Santa Clara County's Early American Period as a 248-acre portion of the rancho *La Laguna Seca*. *La Laguna Seca* was established in 1834 when Mexican Governor José Figueroa granted four leagues of land in Coyote Valley to Juan Alvires. *La Laguna Seca* was purchased by Capt. William Fisher in 1845. A year later, Fisher returned to California from Mexico with his wife Liberata Cesena and then died in 1850 soon after moving to the ranch. Liberata and her children continued to own the rancho into the 1860s, following her marriage to Dr. George H. Bull, and then later Caesar Piatti in 1858.

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The rancho did not receive its patent from the United States Land Commission until November 24, 1865 (Land Claim: #PLC 196, Land Case #211), when the title was cleared to L. Bull et.al. (the heirs of William Fisher). Liberata had applied for that patent in the 1850s, and had the property first surveyed at that time (the notes to this 1850s field survey were lost in the 1906 Earthquake). The rancho extended northward from the subject site and included most of Coyote Valley of South Santa Clara County. At its southeastern corner is the entry to what was once known as Coyote Canyon.

In the 1840s and early 1850s, the ranch lands in South Santa Clara County were vast and sparsely settled. By the time she was granted the patent in 1865, Liberata had already subdivided and distributed much of the rancho. In 1861, Cesar Piatti conveyed a 635-acre parcel at the south end of the rancho to José Jesus Bernal. A year and a half later, Bernal and his wife Susana Gulanc de Bernal surveyed and sold a smaller portion of 300 acres of this larger parcel (containing the subject property) to Alvora Cottle, who likely built the house that is now known as the Phegley House.

Cottle was a lawyer and native of Missouri, and appears to have briefly settled in Santa Clara County in the 1850s during the period of patent litigation over California land titles. He later moved his family to Southern California where he was a farmer. A number of other Cottle family members had also arrived in Santa Clara County during the 1850s and 1860s. It is likely that Alvora Cottle built the extant two-story house, known later as the old Phegley House, and the horse barn, during the mid-1860s (most likely ca. 1863) shortly after he purchased the property from the Bernals in November of 1862. Cottle further subdivided his 300 acre property during the late 1860s, selling a portion in 1867, and another parcel (containing the subject property) to Peter and Frances Quivey around 1867 or 1868. Peter Quivey was an early California pioneer who died in 1869, and his wife retained ownership of the property after his death. The property was then sold on May 24, 1871 by Santa Clara County Sheriff Harris when Frances Quivey defaulted on the mortgage and the property was acquired shortly thereafter by Daniel Phegley, the father of James Phegley.

Daniel and Nancy Phegley, and their son James and his wife Mary, settled in Santa Clara County in 1870, and acquired the subject property near Madrone in what was then called the Burnett Township by August 1870. Originating from Missouri, James and Mary Phegley brought three children with them to California.

James Phegley remained on the subject property with his family for about seven years, and then moved to Gilroy where he operated a grocery store and expanded his cattle ranch holdings, while leaving his parents on the subject ranch. He had been educated at the Arcadia Academy in Iron County Missouri. While living in Gilroy, he served as Constable, and in 1886 was elected Supervisor of the First District of Santa Clara County. The Madrone ranch continued to be owned by the Phegley family until the 1890s, and is referenced in later official records as the Phegley Home Ranch, despite James and Mary's move to Gilroy. By the late 1890s, Phegley had sold the property. Short-term owners were connected with the property until 1911 when I. O. Rhoades bought the ranch, then about 160 acres. The Phegleys had retired to Pacific Grove by 1910, and James Phegley died in 1915.

Ira Osborne Rhoades (who went by the name IO Rhoades) was a railroad purchasing agent for Southern Pacific in San Francisco when he bought the ranch near what had then become Morgan Hill. Rhoades had previously been a purchasing agent for the Union Pacific and then the Oregon Short Line. He was hired by Southern Pacific in 1905 and worked in San Francisco until he retired in 1917. That year he began construction on the large Spanish Eclectic house at his Cochrane Road ranch. The ranch was converted to horticultural use during the teens by I. O. Rhoades and his son William. Although ownership of the property was transferred to his son William in 1920, by that year Ira was involved with the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association (now known as Sunsweet Growers, Inc.). Sunsweet began as a cooperative of fruit farmers in 1917, whose primary purpose was to act as a marketing agent for the crops of its members. The fruits were sold under the brand name "Sunsweet". This innovative venture allowed the participants to reach a larger consumer market with less work from the individual farmer. Rhoades was a participant in this new cooperative from the beginning, and the fruits grown on the Rhoades Ranch property were available for public consumption in this way.

Rhoades was elected to the state-wide Board of Directors in 1922 of the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association, and for a time he functioned as both President and interim manager. Ira and his wife Katherine remained part-time residents of San Francisco in the 1920s, and later moved to Southern California.

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William Rhoades, son of Ira Rhoades, had co-owned and managed the ranch since its purchase in 1911, and planted 125 acres in orchards by 1922. William had been born in Nebraska, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. He joined his parents in San Francisco in 1909, and moved to the ranch during the teens. Serving in World War I after attending Officer's Training School at the Presidio at San Francisco, he returned to the Morgan Hill ranch after the war.

On March 10, 1945, ten years after William died in 1935, William's widow Katherine Garnett Rhoades sold 14.31 acres (the subject property) to Harold E. Thomas. The larger 145-acre portion was sold to Sebastian and Luigia Borello that same year, which today is known as Borello Farms. The 14.31 portion is what generally remain today as the subject property, with only a one-acre portion along Coyote Road partitioned and sold in 1965, and another one-acre piece along the north property line that was sold to the Santa Clara Valley Water District in 1983.

### **Sunsweet Growers, Inc.**

What began as the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association in 1917, 61 years after the French prune was introduced to California by pioneer nurseryman Louis Pellier, underwent continuous growth as it expanded to meet consumer demands for dried prunes and other fruits during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The primary function of the cooperative was to serve as a marketing agent for the crops of its members – sold under the brand name "Sunsweet" - to consumers at better prices than were offered by individual growers. When IO Rhodes became involved with the cooperative after it was formed in 1917 first as a grower (utilizing the lands of his Morgan Hill ranch, including the subject property), and then in 1923 as President of the Association, he was deeply invested in the dried fruit industry in California. Thus both Rhoades and the subject property are closely tied to the development of the dried fruit industry in California.

Today, Sunsweet Growers, Inc. processes and markets the dried fruit production of more than 300 grower-members with orchard holdings primarily in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. After nearly nine decades, Sunsweet boasts an enviable 85 percent market share in American households, placing it in the very top rank of long-standing successful American products, and operates the world's largest dried fruit plant. Sunsweet Growers Inc. is the world's largest handler of dried tree fruits including cranberries, apricots and prunes and as the grower-owned marketing cooperative representing more than one-third of the prune market worldwide, and Sunsweet currently processes more than 50,000 tons of prunes a year.

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## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

### **Primary Records**

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Deeds and Official Records.  
Recorded Maps.

R. L. Polk & Co. *Santa Clara County Directories*, 1870-1960.

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### **Published and Secondary Sources**

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University of California Academic Senate. "In Memoriam: Harold E. Thomas, Plant Pathology: Berkeley." Berkeley: University of California, 1987.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 12.27 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 10S 621568mE 413875mN 3 \_\_\_\_\_

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Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the proposed site includes all of Santa Clara County Assessor's Tax Parcel 728-34-010, addressed as 2290-A Cochrane Road, Morgan Hill, California, 95037. For a visual image of these boundaries please see the accompanying map entitled "Assessor's Parcel Map for APN 728-34-010", located in **Section: Additional Documentation**. The northern boundary of the site is comprised by the Coyote Creek and Cochrane Road, which runs east-west. The eastern boundary is located along Coyote Road, which runs north-south along the subject property. The western and southern boundaries of the site are comprised by the perimeter road of the adjacent 123-acre Borello Farms.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The proposed boundary includes all of the extant resources historically associated with Rhoades Ranch (including the main house, four additional residences, outbuildings and agricultural structures) as well as the natural and landscape features that were a part of The Strawberry Institute. The parcels of the original larger ranch have been excluded in the current boundary because they have been developed separately since the property split in 1945. The boundary represents the historical boundaries of the property purchased by Harold Thomas.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Franklin Maggi/Architectural Historian and Sarah Winder/Historian  
organization Archives & Architecture, LLC date July 24, 2012  
street & number PO Box 1332 telephone (408) 297-2684  
city or town San Jose state CA zip code 95109  
e-mail franklin.maggi@archistory.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.  
**Assessor's Parcel Map**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)  
**Map Key/Photograph Log**  
**Photographs**  
**Historic Photographs**

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

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Name of Property: Rhoades Ranch

City or Vicinity: Morgan Hill

County: Santa Clara

State: California

Photographer: Franklin Maggi, Archives & Architecture, LLC

Date Photographed: September, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: See **Additional Documentation Page 3: Map Key/Photograph Log**

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**Property Owner:**

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

---

name Joe and Sheila Giancola  
street & number 2290-A Cochrane Road telephone (408) 779-1230  
city or town Morgan Hill state CA zip code 95037

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Additional Documentation (page 1)  
Location Map

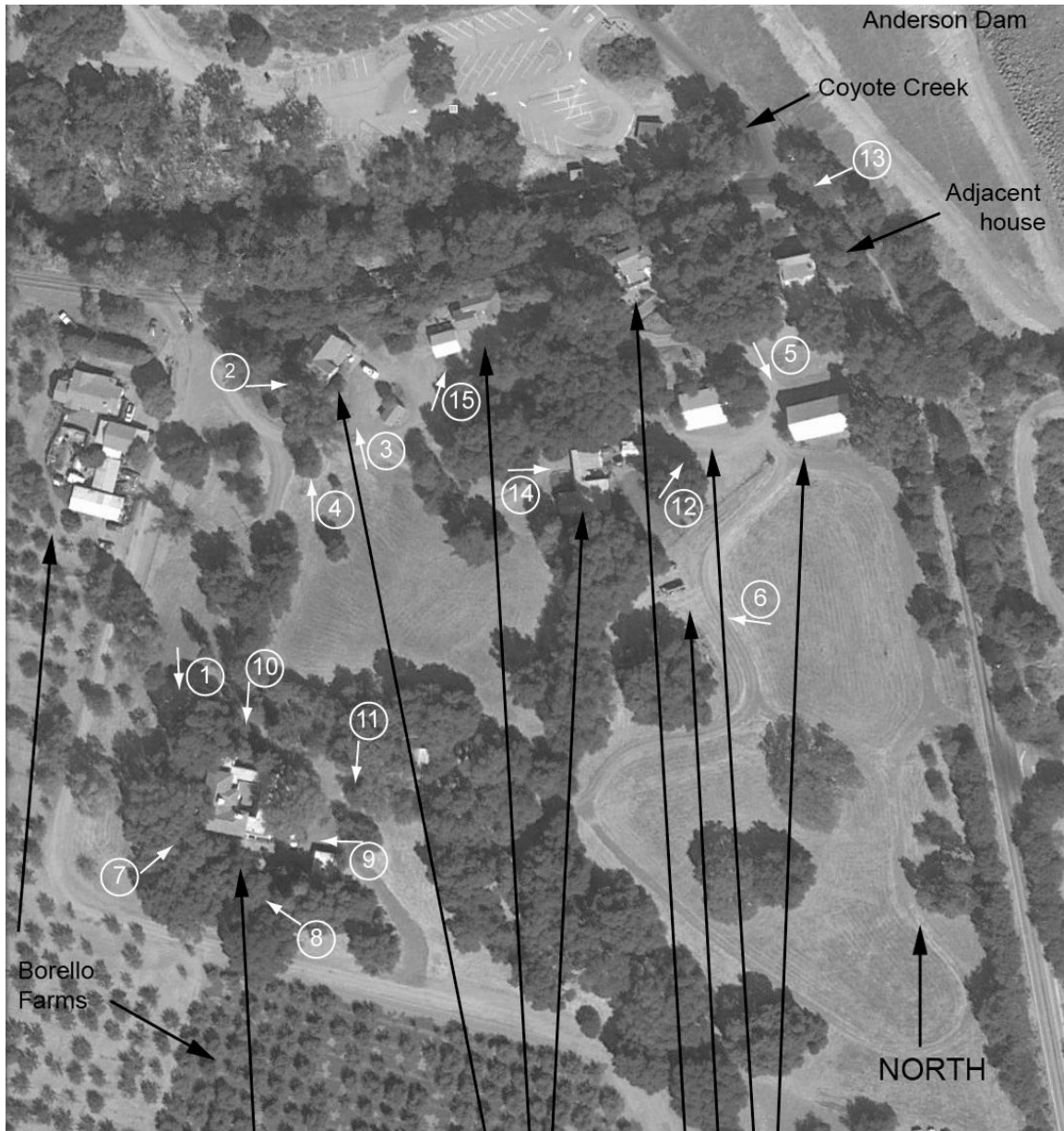


USGS Morgan Hill, 1955 (photorevised 1980).





**Additional Documentation (page 3)**  
**Map Key/Photograph Log**



- 4- Rhoades House
- 1 - Phegley House
- 8 - B&B House
- 7 - Stucco House
- 2 - Horse Barn
- 5 - Equipment Barn
- 3-Watertower
- 6 - Office

**Additional Documentation (page 4)**  
**Photograph Log**

Name of Property	Rhoades Ranch
City or Vicinity	Morgan Hill
County	Santa Clara County
State	CA
Name of Photographer	Franklin Maggi
Date of Photographs	September 2010
Location of Original Digital Files	533 N. 10th St., San Jose, CA 95012
Number of Photographs	15

Photo #1 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_Rhoades Ranch\_0001)  
Rhoades House

Photo #2 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0002)  
Phegley House

Photo #3 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0003)  
Phegley House

Photo #4 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0004)  
Phegley House shed

Photo #5 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0005)  
Horse Barn

Photo #6 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0006)  
Water Tower

Photo #7 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0007)  
Rhoades House entry

Photo #8 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0008)  
Rhoades House south elevation

Photo #9 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0009)  
Rhoades House east elevation/entry

Photo #10 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0010)  
Rhoades House north elevation

Photo #11 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0011)  
Rhoades House garage

Photo #12 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0012)  
Equipment Barn

Photo #13 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0013)  
Office

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**Additional Documentation (page 5)**  
**Photograph Log**

Photo #14 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0014)  
Stucco House

Photo #15 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_0015)  
Board & Batten House

**Additional Documentation (page 6)**  
**Historic Photos**

Name of Property	Rhoades Ranch
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State	CA
Number of Figures	3

Photo #1 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_Rhoades Ranch\_Additional Documentation\_001)  
Historic view of barn, ca. 1920s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

Photo #2 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_Additional Documentation\_002)  
Historic site overview from foothills to the east, ca. 1920s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

Photo #3 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_ Rhoades Ranch \_Additional Documentation\_003)  
Helene and Harold Thomas at the subject property, ca. 1970s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Section number AD Page 2

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Rhoades Ranch  
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National Park Service

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National Park Service**

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Rhoades Ranch  
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Rhoades Ranch  
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Rhoades Ranch  
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



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Rhoades Ranch  
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National Park Service

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Photo 15 of 15

**Additional Documentation (page 6)**  
**Historic Photos**

Name of Property	Rhoades Ranch
City or Vicinity	Morgan Hill
County	Santa Clara County
State	CA
Number of Figures	3

Photo #1 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_Rhoades Ranch\_Additional Documentation\_001)  
Historic view of barn, ca. 1920s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

Photo #2 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_Rhoades Ranch\_Additional Documentation\_002)  
Historic site overview from foothills to the east, ca. 1920s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

Photo #3 (CA\_Santa Clara County\_Rhoades Ranch\_Additional Documentation\_003)  
Helene and Harold Thomas at the subject property, ca. 1970s. Thomas Family Private Collection.

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Rhoades Ranch  
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Historic Photo 2 of 3



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\_\_\_\_\_  
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