



Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of October 10, 2022, Item 6a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning

I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant/Property Owner: California Natural Resources Group (CalNRG)
Clif Simonson
1746 F South Victoria Ave., #245
Ventura, CA 93003

II. REQUEST:

A request to designate the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick at a property with a situs address of 3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County) and Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 218-0-011-485 as Ventura County Landmark No. 183 and discuss feasibility of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (Case No. CH22-0025).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 218-0-011-485

The subject property consists of a 40.14-acre parcel in the Agricultural General Plan land use designation and the Agricultural Exclusive Zone (Refer to Exhibit 2). The Tenby Facility occupies approximately 12.22 acres of the subject property and historically consisted of buildings, equipment, and other accessory structures associated with oil and gas extraction and unpermitted former refinery operation activities. The applicant has proposed to retain the derrick and structures (lab, fire station, and control) and the CHB previously approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the remainder of buildings, equipment, and other accessory structures on site at their May 23, 2022 public hearing.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance No. 4604 Section 1366 provides for the designation of Cultural Heritage Sites by the Cultural Heritage Board where the property owner has no objection to a site's designation. The property owner requests designation of the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick at a property with a situs address of 3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County) and Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 218-0-011-485 as Ventura County Landmark No. 183. (Case No. CH22-0025). In addition, the applicant seeks to discuss the feasibility of listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

In December 2020, the previous property owner’s consultant, ASM Affiliates, Inc, completed a Phase I Historic Resources Report (Historic Report) for the subject property; this report was updated in October 2022 (Exhibit 1).¹ The survey of the Tenby Facility included the identification of five permanent buildings remaining on the parcel (control room, maintenance shop, fire station, lab, and shed) in addition to the derrick. Refer to Exhibit 1 for individual photos of on-site structure and components. The permanent buildings are described as follows:

- Control Room. This building contains instrumentation and other devices and is located in the process area near the north end of the site.² It is constructed of concrete block with a simple rectangular plan with a small addition to the south. It is capped by a corrugated steel gable roof with slightly overhanging eaves. All of the fenestration has been boarded over or removed.
- Maintenance Shop (built in the late 1950s). This building has a simple rectangular plan and is capped by a shed roof.³ The building is clad in corrugated steel and has minimal fenestration. The primary (east) façade has a sliding metal door that has been boarded over.
- Fire Station (built in 1983). This building is located immediately north of the Maintenance Shop.⁴ It is a small shed with a flat roof clad in corrugated steel. The solid metal door is the only fenestration and it is located on the east façade.
- Lab building (likely built between 1962 and 1967). This building is located immediately north of the Fire Station and has a simple rectangular plan and a flat roof.⁵ A projecting awning with a thick wood fascia surrounds the building a few feet below the roofline. The primary entrance is located in a projecting enclosed shed roof porch centrally located on the east façade.
- Shed. A small shed with an adjacent steel sheltered area is located in the chemical usage area at the northeast corner of the facility.⁶ The shed has a simple rectangular plan and is capped with a shed roof; it appears to be of steel construction. There is no fenestration except for the door on the north façade which has been removed.
- Derrick (appears to have been built between 1947 and 1962). The derrick is the most prominent feature of the Tenby Facility and frequently appeared in advertisements for the facility.⁷ The derrick covers the well El Rio No. 2 which was first drilled in 1945 and re-drilled in 1952. It is not clear in aerial photos, but it does not appear to be present at the time of the 1947 map but might be

¹ Kung, Laura Taylor, M.A. and Shannon Davis, M.A., RPH, ASM Affiliates, Inc, *Phase I Historic Resources Report for the Edgington Oxnard Refinery, Oxnard, Ventura County, California*, October 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

present in the 1962 map. The steel derrick has a square shape and narrows toward the top. There are two access areas with railings at the mid-point and at the top.

In addition, the Historic Report describes the facility’s 34 tanks ranging across 11 different sizes and types and constructed of varying materials and often at different times.⁸ In addition to the large tanks, there were various smaller tanks, distilling towers, and pipes located throughout the property at the time of survey.⁹ Other notable equipment included a clay brick heater used to heat the product. A freshwater tank and other equipment are located to the east of the east driveway to the facility. The south end of the parcel contained multiple portable units and scrap metal and was not part of the original boundaries of the refinery.

VI. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The property was surveyed in 2014 as part of the Historic Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey for the Eastern Oxnard Plain. It was identified as potentially significant for its association with the “Extractive Industry” historical context theme in Ventura County with a period of significance between 1945 and 1965. The eligibility of the property as a historic resource was not assessed due to the reconnaissance-level nature of the survey.

The history of the Tenby Facility begins with the Chase family, specifically with the “Chase Brothers,” Glywn Sunley and James Warren Chase.¹⁰ Glywn was born in Riverside in 1900 and James in 1903; the Chase Brothers were first raised on their family’s farm in Riverside before the family moved to the San Fernando Valley in 1917 and operated a dairy farm. In 1927, around the same time the brothers were starting their own families, they purchased 320 undeveloped acres along East 5th Street in an unincorporated area of Ventura County, three miles east of Oxnard.¹¹ The brothers followed in their father’s footsteps and started a dairy on a portion of the land near what is now Wolff Road. The dairy quickly became a center of activity in the community, serving as a meeting place for beet sugar farmers and donating milk for children attending Christmas events. The dairy opened a store on the property during the 1950s and continued to operate for several decades.¹²

The Chase Brothers, like many landowners on the Oxnard Plain, would go on to lease portions of their property to oil companies as sources of income.¹³ Oil exploration at the property began in 1935, when the first well was drilled in the area on land leased

⁸ Ibid.
⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid.

by the Vaca Oil Exploration Company. In 1937, the brothers leased 200 acres of their land to the Canadian El Rio Oil Company who successfully broke through the layer and triggered an oil boom in the area. Vaca Oil Exploration soon drilled its well 100 feet east of the El Rio No. 1 well. With multiple producing wells in the area, the Chase Brothers began building the first refinery facilities between 1937 and 1938.¹⁴ The first name for the refinery was Pacific Asphalt Company. By 1949, Ralph Edgington, a lawyer turned oilman, had become part owner of the company. Ralph Edgington was born in Delaware, Ohio, in 1905 and later moved to California to begin his career in law. In 1941, he acquired property in Long Beach which turned out to be an old refinery.¹⁵ He was soon dragged into producing asphalt when World War II began and there were no west coast shippers of asphalt. His company ultimately supplied 78 percent of all asphalt used in the Pacific.¹⁶

In December of 1952, the Oxnard refinery was granted a special use permit from the Ventura County Planning Commission for the drilling of oil and gas. Immediately after the permit was granted, drilling for a new well, El Rio No. 3 was started by the Edgington Refinery of Long Beach and soon after the name of the refinery was changed to Edgington Oxnard Refinery.¹⁷

By 1953, the oldest son of Glywn Chase, Herbert Morley Chase, was general manager of the refinery.¹⁸ Born in 1928, Morley Chase returned to the area following military service in the 1950s and served as plant manager, continuing to work in the industry for the next 60 years. Edgington Oxnard Refinery continued to provide asphalt products to Asia during the 1950s. Due to increased demand, the refinery began to expand during these years. In April 1954 they drilled a new well, Chase No. 2.¹⁹ In 1955, construction began on the largest tank (30,000-barrel) that is still on the site today. A number of incidents and accidents were noted at the facility over the decades it was operational. During the 1960s, the refinery expanded by purchasing other leases and interests. The name Tenby Inc. first appears in 1962; at that time the name represented both Chase Production Company and Edgington Refinery, but it appears Edgington was less involved in operations after this time. The expansion of operations continued into the early 1970s with the purchase of properties and mineral rights in the area.²⁰

The last well was drilled on the property in 1988 at the same time the Edgington Refinery in Long Beach was purchased by another company.²¹ By 1995, the Tenby

¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Ibid.

facility was the last operating refinery in the area (possibly the county).²² The refinery was closed in 2011 and sold; Morley Chase died in 2013. The current property owner acquired the property in 2021.

Evaluation of Significance

The property was evaluated against the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and as a County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Site.²³ Further, the refinery was evaluated under the context themes²⁴ of “Agriculture and Suburbs (1945-1965), subtheme 6E – Extractive Industry” established in the Historic Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey for the Eastern Oxnard Plain.

National Register/State Register

According to the Historic Resources Report prepared for the property, as the site of one of the first wells on the Oxnard Plain and the last existing refinery in the Oxnard area, the property has the potential to be eligible for its association with the oil industry in California as well as expressing the importance of the industry to the development of Ventura County.²⁵ The period of significance for the refinery begins in 1952 with the drilling of El Rio No. 3 which prompted the involvement of Ralph Edgington and the expansion of the property. It ends in 1968, after the partnership with Edgington ended and after which no new tank series were added. During the refinery’s period of significance, Ventura County’s petroleum and associated industries were one of the primary sources of employment in the county.²⁶ Only agriculture was as important to the economic development of Oxnard during this time. By 1995, the facility was the last of its kind in the area. Given its association with the significant role oil played in the local economy, and the rarity of refinery sites, the Tenby Facility appears to meet National Register Criterion A and California Register Criterion 1.²⁷

County of Ventura Landmark

The facility’s status as one of the first oil and gas refineries in the area was found to reflect special elements of the County’s engineering and social history (County

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Historic contexts are those patterns, themes, or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (or significance) within history is made clear. (Office of Cultural Development, State of Louisiana, available at: <https://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/historic-preservation/national-register/historic-contexts/index>)

²⁵ Kung, Laura Taylor, M.A. and Shannon Davis, M.A., RPH, ASM Affiliates, Inc, *Phase I Historic Resources Report for the Edgington Oxnard Refinery, Oxnard, Ventura County, California*, October 2022.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Landmark Criterion 1) as it represents a major economic contribution to the region that is now scarce.²⁸ The oil derrick structure, as a key representation of this history, is closely associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County and Oxnard history under the context theme of “Agriculture and Suburbs (1945-1965), subtheme 6E – Extractive Industry.” The oil derrick structure appears to be eligible as a Ventura County Landmark as it satisfies Criterion 1.²⁹

VII. STAFF CONCLUSIONS:

The evidence provided in the Historic Report (Exhibit 1) supports making the findings under Criterion 1 that the oil derrick structure is eligible for designation as a Ventura County Landmark. In addition, the evidence provided in the Historic Report supports making the additional designation findings in CHO §1367-1 as the site has historic character, value, and interest to the general public, there are no foreseeable costs to the County in designating the subject property as a County Landmark, and the designation shall not infringe upon the rights of the Property Owner as the designation does not change allowable land uses and the Property Owner is the one requesting this designation. Therefore, CHB Staff recommends the CHB approve the request for landmark designation.

VIII. HEARING NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A public notice was sent by U.S. mail to the Property Owner of the subject property not less than fifteen days prior to the date of this hearing (Exhibit 3 – 15-Day Public Hearing Notice). No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

CHB Staff is recommending the CHB take the following actions regarding designation:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division Staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the Property Owner was given a 15-day notice in accordance with CHO §1366-2, that the Property Owner concurs with the designation by the CHB of the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick as Ventura County Landmark No. 183, and placement of said designation in County lists;

²⁸ Ibid
²⁹ Ibid.

3. **FIND** that the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick meets County Landmark Criterion 1 as required by CHO §1367(a), and the additional standards required by CHO §1367-1 based on the substantial evidence in the staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto; and
4. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2022-15 (Exhibit 4) approving the designation of the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick, located at 3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033, as Ventura County Landmark No. 183.

Prepared by:



Dillan Murray, Assistant Planner
Ventura County Planning Division
(805) 654-5042

Reviewed by:



Tricia Maier, Manager
Planning Programs Section
(805) 654-2464

Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Historic Resources Report dated October 2022
- Exhibit 2: Property Owner Letter
- Exhibit 3: 15-Day Public Hearing Notice
- Exhibit 4: CHB Resolution No. 2022-15