

## SHAPING OF THE VANDENBERG AFB POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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*Volume 6 of the Vandenberg Air Force Base Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) posits that national and international defense policies shaped the historical landscapes with the establishment of Camp Cooke in 1941. Camp Cooke, World War II, and Cold War archaeological sites and ruins were identified as important research topics worthy of future investigation. Since 2005, such investigations have provided insight into the shaping of the Vandenberg landscape.*

Among the sites investigated since the publication of Volume 6 of the ICRPM are the Marshallia Ranch (CA-SBA-3535/H), Lompoc Landing (SBA-223), Honda Section House (SBA-1145/H), Fern Spring Line Camp (SBA-2570/71), a World War II Incinerator (SBA-3550H), and a Korean War maneuver area. Other prominent landscape features also exist, such as the Thor missile launch complex built in 1958 which characterizes mid-twentieth-century development on the base. These sites reflect the evolution of the Vandenberg landscape from Mission times through the modern era.

### MARSHALLIA RANCH

Marshallia Ranch, remnants of which remain on the Vandenberg AFB golf course, reflects the early history of Vandenberg. The first recorded ownership was through a Mexican land grant known as Rancho Jesús María. In 1837, a total of 42,184 acres, nearly one-half of the land on present-day Vandenberg, was granted to Lucas Olivera, his uncle Antonio, and Antonio's son José Antonio. As an ensign in the Mexican militia, José Antonio was entitled to land in Alta California. The three men ran cattle on the rancho, but even with its size, the land did not make them wealthy. Contrary to the romanticized image of the Spanish rancho, the Oliveras' experience is typical of ranchos at the time. Theirs resemble many others where simple homesteads were established and success depended on receiving adequate rain to maintain grazing lands. The drought of the 1860s decimated the cattle herds upon which the economy was based and ruined many of the ranch holders (Fulton et al. 2005).

Lucas Olivera built an adobe in 1837 at the current location of the Visitors' Quarters on Vandenberg AFB. Serving as the rancho headquarters, Lucas resided there until 1853. Antonio and son José Antonio sold their two-third interest in the property to José María Valenzuela, who in turn sold to Lewis T. Burton, an American trapper. After much litigation on his original claim, Burton acquired Lucas' portion of the grant as well and became the sole owner of Rancho Jesús María in 1878. During the period of litigation, the adobe fell into disrepair, and in 1876 it was reported by trapper Paul Schumacher as being dilapidated and deserted. In 1906, portions of the rancho passed into the hands of Edwin Jessop Marshall, who formed the Jesus Maria Rancho Corporation. Marshall was a self-made man who amassed a fortune working for the railroad and oil industry. A passionate rancher, he purchased vast holdings in Mexico and the United States. On his Lompoc property, Marshall constructed several ranch buildings near the Olivera adobe, including a barn, a bunkhouse, and a blacksmith shop. By the 1920s, Marshall expanded his holdings to encompass 52,000 acres, including much of the original rancho. Additions made to the Olivera adobe between 1906 and 1933 included a living room, a kitchen, and bedrooms. These were added haphazardly and constructed of wood frame with shingle roofs. No attempt was made to mimic the Spanish style of the original adobe. Marshall and his wife moved permanently to the rancho in 1933 and again expanded the structure. This time the entire house was covered with stucco, and arched windows and a tile roof were added, giving the home a Spanish eclectic appearance.

Marshall suffered economic reversals during the depression in the 1930s and turned a portion of his holdings into a dude ranch catering to Hollywood celebrities. Bunk houses were built to accommodate



*Figure 1. Vandenberg Air Force Base landscape in 2003.*

paying visitors, and the rancho became known as Marshallia Ranch. Edwin Marshall died in 1937, and his wife left the ranch shortly thereafter. Soon the property was condemned for the establishment of Camp Cooke. The property passed to the Air Force in 1957, and the adobe and surrounding lands, including the dude ranch boarding houses, were retained as Officers' Visiting Quarters, and a golf course was built.

Vandenberg landscape remains much as it did then, with wide-open spaces suitable to grazing and dry farming agriculture (Figure 1). The base complex is isolated, surrounded by vacant land reaching to the coastline. Cultural resources surveys undertaken by Applied EarthWorks (Æ) in the years since the ICRMP was completed have isolated a few outlying structural remnants and archaeological sites representing Camp Cooke, World War II bunkers, and Cold War-era military structures.

Following the rancho period, agriculture became important in the development of the region. Palmer reports in the ICRMP:

With roots in the Mission era, cultivation has been practiced to the present day. Farming sites are typically on marine terraces, along the Santa Ynez River delta, and in the canyons with water sources, such as Santa Lucia and San Antonio creeks. Dairy farming locations are found in hilly terrain [Palmer et al. 2005:3.3]

Agricultural use during the Mission era resulted in the introduction of adobe buildings now in ruins, stone corrals, Spanish tile irrigation systems, windmills, and remnant exotic vegetation such as grapevines and prickly pear cactus rows; these cultural features now dotting the landscape. The Anglo-Mexican agricultural use of the area began in 1845, and agriculturalists left many enduring marks.

Establishment of the Lompoc Temperance Colony in 1874 brought to the study area a wave of Anglo settlers, many of whom were farmers. Development of lands was furthered by the construction of the Lompoc wharf, which was started in 1875. After many false starts due to inclement weather that ravaged the coast line, the landing was completed in 1879. This allowed the shipment of milled lumber, resulting in the construction of wooden structures including feed and dairy barns. Fern Spring Line Camp and De Sabla's Ranch represent such agricultural sites that have been recorded and tested under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

### **FERN SPRING**

Fern Spring was one of several line camps associated with Marshall's Ranch. It was occupied at the turn of the century by cowboys and possibly farmers.

A typical camp would be an assemblage of shacks for people at round up, [to] use overnite [sic] and then continue the round up in the morning. A tenant farmer could have acreage near a camp and this fellow would fix up one of the shacks for a longer stay, perhaps patching up a roof with a flattened tin can [Roberts 1984:II-59-II-60].

A map dating to 1923 depicted Fern Spring camp as a complex of five buildings, two water tanks, a large corral, and a eucalyptus windrow. Æ tested the camp site in 2004, and datable deposits were isolated. Structural remains were found, and artifacts suggest the site was constructed around 1900 and continued in use through 1937. The site was abandoned following Marshall's death and/or destroyed when Camp Cooke was established.

### **LOMPOC LANDING**

Lompoc Landing (SBA-223) is among the sites investigated since 2005 that resulted in changes to the local landscape. Built in 1879, various structures were erected, and the landing immediately became a busy place. Stagecoaches arrived with passengers, and wagons came laden with crops, only to leave stacked with imported goods. Livestock was driven to the site and maintained in corrals and pens until loaded on freighters. Described in December of 1881, "the Wharf Company put up a neat residence for J. W. Rule, the resident manager and his family. A large tank and windmill were also erected. The force employed at the wharf at that time numbered twelve hands" (Mason 1883:298).

Other accounts place the construction of a hotel or lodging house in 1884. Plank walkways leading from the landing to the hotel were added at the same time. In April 1885, a narrow-gauge track was constructed from the wharf to a turnaround near the warehouse. West of the wharf on the bluff was the wharfinger's house.

When testing began in 2003, its success seemed ensured by the discovery of a fire insurance map drawn in 1885. The Dakin Map depicted the location of corrals and stables, hog pens, a large warehouse, and a boarding house complex (Figure 2). Two roadways were visible on a later 1928 aerial photograph, one arriving from the east and culminating at the livery, and the second from the south following the coastline, remnants of which are visible today. Armed with the Dakin map, early aerials, building photographs, and written descriptions of the site, it was anticipated that archaeological excavations would reveal contemporary structural remains and artifact-filled deposits. Even with such documents, it was difficult to isolate the location of structures and to identify their function. Geo-referencing the map was complicated, as the coastline had changed. Test excavations, however, did confirm the presence of a compact historic surface, in situ structural remains, plank walkways, and the presence of in situ artifacts.

After 23 years of service, the landing ceased operation in 1898 when it was partially destroyed by a severe storm. It was never rebuilt, as the arrival of the railroad rendered the landing obsolete. By the late 1800s, the buildings lay abandoned and the site was visited only as a favored swimming spot. Today the property lies vacant.

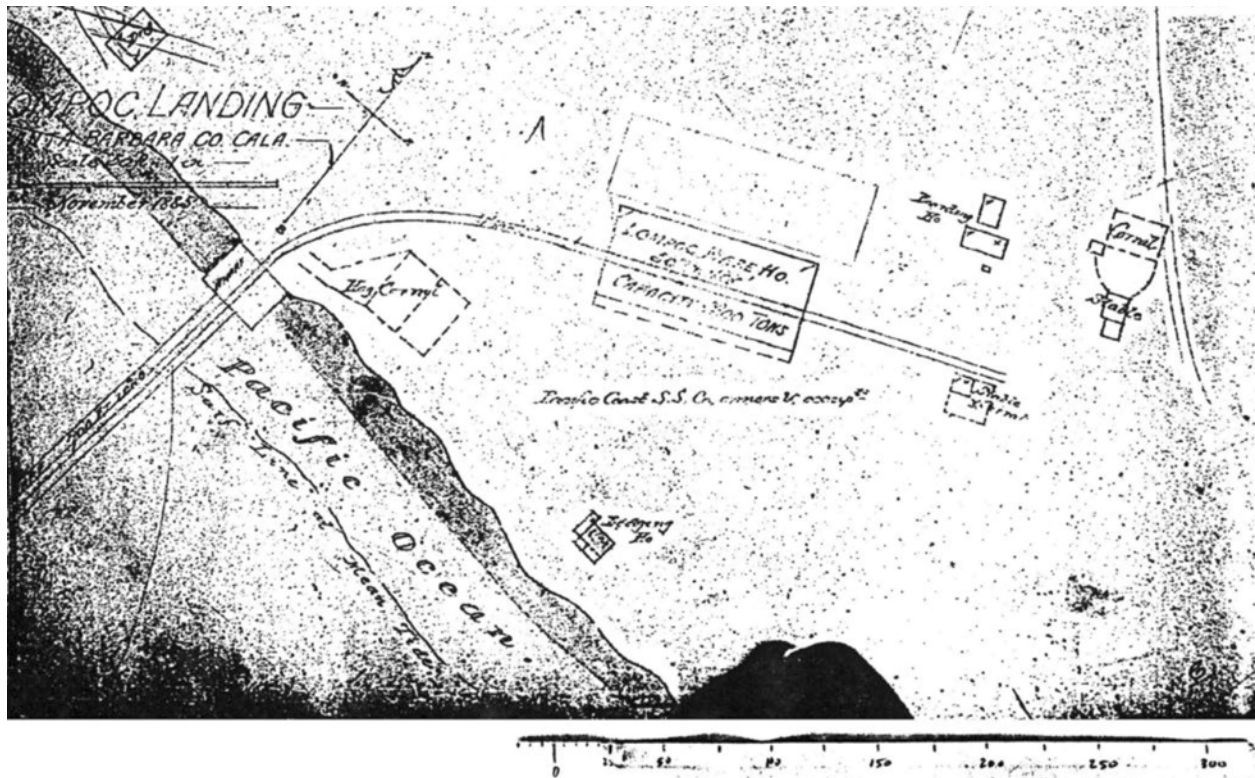


Figure 2. 1885 Dakin fire insurance map of Lompoc Landing in 1885 (on file at Library of the University of California, Berkeley).

### HONDA SECTION HOUSE

Archaeological excavations at the Southern Pacific Honda section house in 2005 quickly revealed the site layout and activity areas of the workers. Situated on North Base, the section house was built between 1898 and 1900. The complex included a foreman's house, bunkhouses, sheds, a privy, and a chicken yard. One bunkhouse was built of railroad ties and another of frame construction, suggesting that additions were made as the need demanded. Lattice work screened the frame bunkhouse from the railroad. The Pacific Ocean was in full view to the west (Figure 3).

Detailed analysis of the artifacts collected revealed much about site occupation. Food refuse, such as eggshell recovered from the Section Foreman's trash, suggested certain commodities were reserved for his consumption. There was sparse accumulation of trash around the foreman's house and behind the tie bunkhouse. Trash was heavily concentrated behind the two frame bunkhouses where an outdoor cook station was located. This area appeared to form a communal cooking area available to all. The occupants of the Honda section house likely spent the majority of their days in close proximity, working the rails and preparing meals, with periods of rest punctuated by collecting and foraging. Shellfish was found in abundance, suggesting some of the occupants were Chinese. Wild game was clearly supplemented with canned goods and other supplies brought down the line. Remoteness combined with the wind-swept coast undoubtedly contributed to a feeling of isolation. While women and children were present, they were not well represented and may not have stayed long. The isolation likely drew occupants together, where each was dependent on the others for food, company, and camaradery. Today the tracks remain active and the terrain is largely vacant, revealing the isolation of the camp (Nettles and Hamilton 2008).

The railroad played an important role in developing agriculture and ranching. It brought in supplies and exported livestock, crops, and other regional products. Many ranches had sidings and cattle loading stations. In addition to the Honda section house, the Sudden Ranch Depot (SBA-2373H) and the



*Figure 3. Honda Section House location along the Southern Pacific Railroad on Vandenberg Air Force Base.*

Narlon railroad siding (SBA-2165H) are located along the tracks that cross Vandenberg AFB. The railroad became a military supply line in the 1940s.

### **CAMP COOKE**

A number of structures/sites have been encountered during survey and testing efforts at Vandenberg that reflect the use of the land for military purposes and date to the expansion of Camp Cooke as Cooke Air Force Base. Palmer (1999) reported the creation of Camp Cooke, which brought training ground, maneuver areas, support buildings, and other structures to the landscape. Dumps were created intentionally for Army use or opportunistically when clearing structures. Observed at some locations are the remnants of these early ranch and agricultural properties, bulldozed to make way for Army improvement grounds. Elements of Lompoc Landing were found bulldozed, as were structures relating to Fern Spring Camp and De Costa's Ranch. Subsequent archaeological survey revealed concrete foundations dating to the Camp Cooke era located primarily on North Base. Bivouac sites are represented, along with the ruins of bayonet training stations. Establishment of Cooke Air Force Base in 1957 brought a new type of facility to the base. Structures from this period are represented by slab-on-grade construction, installation of electrical and communications cables, and establishment of an incinerator/landfill. Two such sites bear mentioning: the World War II incinerator, and a concrete foundation dating to the Korean War.

## **AOC-033 WORLD WAR II INCINERATOR SITE**

The Vandenberg Air Force Base Installation Remediation Program identified the previously recorded archaeological site SBA-3550H as a designated Area of Concern in 2007. The site is depicted on a 1948 Army Corps Basic Information Map as “Incinerator No. 1,” and was thought to have been in operation from the early 1940s to 1953. The incinerator was used to dispose of residential refuse generated by Camp Cooke personnel housed on base. The incineration process resulted in an accumulation of constituents of concern, including lead, dioxin, and TPH (total petroleum hydrocarbons). Because the site was to be remediated, hazardous waste had to be removed, extensive soil excavated, and the surface regraded and revegetated, all of which had the potential to seriously damage any archaeological deposits present (Warren and Hamilton 2007).

The scope of work required the delineation of site boundaries, a determination of the extent of the slag pile, and the identification of other areas requiring documentation to facilitate National Register evaluation. Æ completed fieldwork in April 2007, an effort that isolated four loci where artifacts were identified in higher quantities than on other areas of the site. Loci were pinpointed by the presence of historical material such as slag, glass, ceramics, and unidentifiable metal objects.

Testing demonstrated the main features of the site were the slag piles and the ruins of the concrete incinerator structure. The slag pile continued at least 6 ft. deep and cascaded down the slope into a ravine below. Testing demonstrated the slag contain few diagnostic artifacts and no clearly stratified deposits. Generally, the SBA-3550H deposits were found to lack focus. The processes of incineration precluded data potential; refuse either was brought to the site sorted or was sorted at the site prior to incineration. Solid waste that could not be incinerated was discarded elsewhere. Because the Incinerator No. 1 artifact scatter did not contain datable artifacts and could not be associated with a specific group within the base community, it was found not to be eligible for the National Register. The large poured concrete structure where incineration occurred, however, remains extant today and is a reminder of the changes in the local landscape overtime.

## **KOREAN WAR MANEUVERS**

A part of a cultural resource study for the Military Family Housing Expansion Project undertaken by Æ in 2004 was an examination of Camp Cooke maps. This search revealed that little military activity took place in the Expansion Area during the occupation of Camp Cooke. A 1954 aerial at the Map and Imagery Laboratory did show a trench or mounded area traversed by a dirt road, along with three structures just west of the cantonment area (Figure 4). This area was never illustrated on Camp Cooke maps, so the functions of the structures and mounded area were considered unrelated. Between 1954 and 1958, Camp Cooke was renamed Cooke Air Force Base and, subsequently, Vandenberg Air Force Base. During this period, the cantonment area was expanded to the north. A 1960 aerial at the Map and Imagery Laboratory shows that a large area, in the location of the previously mentioned structures west of the cantonment area, had been cleared of vegetation and graded. One possible structure remained on the southern end of the clearing. As the survey of the area ensued, a prominent concrete foundation was found. It measured 57.8 ft. long and 7.8 ft. wide. During testing of the site’s extent, the brush was cleared and six shovel test pits were excavated within and around the foundation. This effort revealed a low-density debris scatter of modern material, including ferrous metal hardware and plastic. None of these items suggested antiquity. Because the function and age of the foundation could not be determined from the recovered materials, Æ sought other early maps of Vandenberg AFB to determine its function. A 1953 Corps of Engineers map of artillery ranges and training facilities reveals that several places on the base were used for “C-119 Mock-up for Air Movement Training” during the Korean War (Palmer 1999:97). One of these places was in the general vicinity of the concrete foundation. The C-119 is a cargo plane with a bay measuring 50.0 ft. long and 9.2 ft. wide (U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission 2012). These dimensions closely matched to the foundation measurements, when the plane ramp was excluded. Aerial photographs taken at various dates were also examined, including one taken as early as 1938. To more



Role:	Military Transport
Manufacturer:	Fairchild Aircraft
First Flight:	Nov 1947
Introduced:	Dec 1949
No. Built:	1,182
Retired:	1955



Figure 4. C-119 Flying Box Car mock-up for air movement training on Vandenberg Air Force Base.

precisely locate the foundation on the aerial photographs, these images were layered, using recognizable physiographic reference points common to all photographs. This effort revealed that the feature is visible in the 1951 and 1954 aerial photographs. The foundation is flanked by two similar structures that were located approximately 150 ft. to the north and south. Although the foundation cannot be conclusively linked to a C-119 training ground, the feature's unusually long and narrow dimensions match the configuration of the plane's cargo bay. The most likely conclusion seemed that the foundation served as a mock-up for practice loading and unloading of the C-119 cargo planes during the Korean War.

Other prominent landscape features remain on Vandenberg, such as the Thor missile launch complex built in 1958 (Figure 5). The Thor complex was used to launch intermediate range ballistic missiles and later to train Strategic Air Command anti-satellite missile teams. It remains a landscape relic of U.S. military policy during the mid to late twentieth century and is now recognized as a National Historic Site (U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission 2012).

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*Figure 5. Dedication of the Missile Base 1957; Thor Missile launch in 1958; and Space Launch Complex in 1986 (from SPACEFLIGHT / VAFB web site).*