

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 Rubel Castle Historic District
 other names/site number Rubelia, Rubel Pharms

2. Location

street & number 844 North Live Oak Avenue not for publication
 city or town Glendora vicinity
 state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 91741

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
11		buildings
	1	sites
3	3	structures
	1	objects
14	5	Total

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/Single dwelling
AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Field
AGRICULTURE/Processing
AGRICULTURE/Storage
AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Outbuilding
AGRICULTURE/Irrigation Facility

DOMESTIC/Village Site
RECREATION & CULTURE/Work of Art

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Folk Art Environment

foundation: Concrete
 walls: Stream Rocks; Concrete; Recycled Bottles; Wood; Corrugated Metal Siding
 roof: Wood; Corrugated Metal; Composition Shingles; Clay Tile
 other: Recycled Objects; Found Objects

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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 in a single-family residential neighborhood in Glendora, California, approximately 20 miles east of Los Angeles, the Rubel Castle Historic District is a 1.7-acre folk art environment consisting of a walled, 22,000-square-foot Castle Complex and adjacent, adaptively reused citrus buildings. Referred to as Rubel Castle, Rubelia, and Rubel Pharms, the property is named after its designer and builder, Michael Clarke Rubel (1940-2007). Through the early 1950s, this land and wide swaths of the surrounding acreage throughout northern Glendora consisted primarily of citrus groves. By the mid-1960s, northern Glendora had changed dramatically, with the decline of the citrus industry and rapid increase in residential settlement. After Rubel acquired the property in 1959, he began living in the buildings of the former citrus ranch in the early 1960s and, with the help of a wide network of friends, associates, townspeople, and "Pharm Hands," began collecting materials and constructing the castle. Construction on the property unfolded over two and a half decades, from the mid-1960s to 1986.

Best characterized as a self-contained village, the Rubel Castle Historic District occupies a portion of the former grounds of the Albourne Ranch Company, a citrus farm that operated on the site until 1949. The Rubel Castle Historic District includes two adjacent areas: the property's eastern portion contains the remnants of the citrus farm; the western portion contains the Castle itself and other related buildings and structures. Contributors on the eastern portion of the property include a Citrus Packing House, Residence, Tool Shed, Lemon House, and Box Factory, all dating from 1936 to 1943. Contributors on the western portion include the Castle Complex, which is a combination of stone masonry and wood buildings and structures that incorporate recycled objects, architectural follies, and a wide variety of other artifacts. The Castle Complex includes a series of two- to four-story buildings and six towers, four of which are square in shape and embedded in the castle's curving walls. Within the Castle Complex are the Clock Tower, Stair Tower, Round House, and Bottle House. All of the castle walls and towers are lined with battlements. Contributing ancillary buildings and structures are the Rock Shed, Rock Barn, Wood Rental, and Rock Garage. Non-contributing ancillary structures, and objects on the site are the Corral, Santa Fe Rail Lines Caboose, Water Tower, Windmill, and Cemetery. Overall, there are 14 contributing buildings and structures, and four non-contributing structures and objects, and one non-contributing site (the cemetery).

The property remains largely intact and continues to convey both the history of the local citrus industry, and Michael Rubel's vision for a medieval-style castle that is monumental in scale and constructed out of recycled materials. Overall, the Rubel Castle Historic District retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, association, setting, and feeling.

Narrative Description

Overview

Throughout his life, Michael Rubel had an interest in building forts and castles. Rubel's childhood forts often climbed multiple stories and had numerous rooms, and, with the family's home located near Glendora's municipal dump, also incorporated numerous found objects. The grounds of Albourne Ranch had also been a favorite place to play for Rubel when he was a child. When the Bourne family subdivided and sold most of the former citrus ranch, they donated a 2.5-acre parcel, which included the reservoir and citrus ranch buildings, to Glendora's Episcopal Church, with the understanding that Rubel would be given the option to purchase the property when he turned 20 years of age. Rubel ultimately acquired the property when he was 19, and it served as his residence for most of his life.

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When Rubel began building his ultimate Castle, superimposed on an existing circular concrete reservoir, one of his first projects was to bore a car-sized passageway through the walls below grade. This project began in 1965. In 1968, once the passage was complete, Rubel began to work on the Bottle House, followed by the Portcullis. In the early 1970s, construction generally focused on the southern portion of the Castle walls and buildings, which climbed to three stories by the mid-1970s. In addition to serving as a ready-made, reinforced concrete form, the circular reservoir provided the organizing scheme for the Castle's layout, with towers and buildings added to the basic form with varying massing and configurations. At the ground story, the buildings of the Castle face onto a courtyard and walkway that circles the central complex.

Dominating the center of the grounds is a round, two-story Machine Shop with two cupolas. The reservoir's reinforced concrete walls, which are one and one-half feet thick, remain largely intact, with two openings cut through to provide entry to the Castle. The main, southern entry has a broad Portcullis, or medieval-style gate, made of a latticed grille with wood timbers fastened to beams. A second passageway on the southeast links the Castle Complex with the original living quarters, workshops, dining, and public areas housed in the former citrus buildings. While the castle has no specific architectural style, the use of stream rocks and boulders from the San Gabriel Mountains, used as structure, veneer, and hardscaping throughout the grounds, gives Rubel Castle the distinct look and feel of a picturesque medieval village. This atmosphere is enhanced through the incorporation of battlements in the Castle walls and buildings, and the organic quality of the irregular stone masonry and detailing.

Given the ad hoc development of Rubel Castle and the absence of any construction documents or building permits, available sources offer contradictory information with respect to dates of construction for the Castle's many component buildings and structures. The dates provided in this nomination are drawn from historic photographs, archival aerial photographs, and information provided in the sources listed in the bibliography. The locations of the buildings, structures, and features described below are indicated in the Site Plan included in Attachment 1, page AD-1.

Contributing Buildings: Castle Complex

1. Castle Walls, Buildings, Towers, and Entry Portcullis

The Castle was built on a 124-foot diameter irrigation reservoir that was completed in 1910. When Castle construction began in the 1960s, the reservoir provided a ready-made concrete foundation. This base and the 12-foot walls established the organizing form for the complex. Capped with battlements, the Castle walls are built primarily from stream rocks and slabs of recycled granite set in cement mortar. With the original reservoir walls serving as a base, the Castle walls, buildings, and towers were constructed over time, to form a continuous, self-contained townscape. In some places, the original reservoir walls are visible. Embedded in the mortar of the Castle walls are many recycled and found objects and curios, such as bottles, household items, and appliances, as well as portions of bicycles and motorcycles. The ground story of the Castle's interior has an area of 22,000 square feet.

The Castle was constructed between approximately 1965 and 1986. By 1972, the Castle walls were approximately three stories tall around the periphery. The walls consist of irregular courses of boulder-sized stream rocks, with slabs of granite reinforcing portions of the base. The rocks and granite are set in cement, with steel reinforcing bars and other materials serving as supports (these materials include steel piping, railroad tracks, bed springs, large steel cable, and telephone poles). The Castle walls have a number of openings with handmade and recycled casement windows as well as large iron grilles.

There are four square towers and a series of two- to four-story buildings along the Castle walls. Tiled shed roofs serve as hyphens for the towers. The square towers are lined with crenels and rise as high as four and a half stories. The four square towers consist of: the East (or Pigeon) Tower, which is over four-stories

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high and once housed a flock of pigeons on the upper story; today the East Tower contains a rental unit; the stepped Fire Tower (on the south side), which contains a water tank and pressurizing pump, and provides access to an ample terrace overlooking the grounds and surrounding neighborhood; the West (or Bee) Tower on the west side, which once housed a working bee hive; and on the north side, a three-story tower, with a roof terrace, abutting the Clock Tower.

The towers have a variety of window materials and configurations, including recycled, wood-frame, double-hung sashes and casements, with wood lintels. A balcony extending across the Fire Tower has massive timber posts, supporting a shed roof, and a railing made from a variety of recycled materials, including wood grilles and wagon wheels. The second-story residences, workshops, and rooms are reached by a series of external staircases. The staircases generally consist of irregularly sized and shaped slabs of recycled granite with steel-pipe railings. There are decorative ironworks made at the Castle's blacksmith shop and recycled objects embedded in the mortar of the castle's stream-rock walls.

Progressing around the Castle, the ground stories have open, recessed garages, storage areas, and workshops. The courtyard and walkway around the Castle are faced with symmetrically arranged brick pavers accented by decorative glazed ceramic tile. Just east of the Clock Tower, an iron gate, made by the castle blacksmith, marks the walkway leading from the Clock Tower to the "Troll's House," a ground-story rental property, and the "King's Quarters," Rubel's second- and third-story apartment residence.

The Castle Complex is reached from a main entry tunnel located on the south side of the Castle. The entry has a Portcullis, or medieval-style gate, made of massive wood timbers, arranged vertically and bound with wrought-iron hardware. Stepped, square towers made of stream rocks flank the Portcullis. The gate, which is operated electronically, opens outward. The tunnel is lined with retaining walls finished by multicolored glass bottles set in cement and a wood-plank ceiling with wood rafter supports. A second, smaller passageway on the southeast links the castle grounds with the complex's original living quarters, workshops, dining, and public areas, which are housed in the Citrus Packing House (Tin Palace) and Lemon House (Pharm Kitchen). The Portcullis and its flanking stream-rock walls were constructed in circa 1970. A massive, handmade wood gate made of recycled materials leads from the tunnel into the Castle's main courtyard.

While no specific architectural style was used for the castle, the use of hundreds of thousands of tons of alluvial rocks and boulders from the San Gabriel Mountains, transported over the years by Rubel and his wide network of Pharm Hands, unifies the castle aesthetically.

2. Clock Tower

Two cylindrical towers topped with battlements occupy the courtyard along the Castle's northern section. The tallest tower, which rises 74 feet, is the Clock Tower. The basic structure of the Clock Tower consists of 10,000-gallon water tanks, stacked vertically, bolted together, and welded. The tanks are clad in stream-rock and granite set in cement. The side of the Clock Tower abuts the adjacent Castle structure. The water tanks were previously used to irrigate the citrus groves. By 1985, the tanks had been hoisted into place and the stream-rock exterior walls had been constructed. In 1986, the 1890 Seth Thomas hand-wound clock was installed in the Clock Tower. Wound each day by a caretaker, the clock continues to mark each hour and half hour, in a chime that has become anticipated throughout northern Glendora.

3. Stair Tower (Bell Tower)

The Stair Tower (or Bell Tower) contains a spiral staircase leading up to an open walkway that connects to the castle's north terrace. Climbing three and one-half stories, the Stair Tower is constructed of stream-rock and reinforced granite walls. An arched opening at the top of the tower contains one of the clock bells that came with the Seth Thomas clock.

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4. Round House (Machine Shop)

The centerpiece of the Castle Complex is the Round House, or Machine Shop, which was constructed in approximately 1972. Circular in plan, the Round House is a two-story, timber-framed building. With an irregular design composition, the Round House presents a different appearance from all angles. The walls have irregular courses of granite and boulder-sized alluvial rocks set in cement. Embedded in the walls are various recycled bottles, curios, and other found objects. A series of large iron grilles and gates are placed irregularly along the ground story, providing light and access to the interior.

The roof consists of radial wood joists supporting a grid of wood-plank sheathing covered in plywood. Rising from the roof are two cupolas, one centered and a smaller one off-center. The larger cupola has clerestory windows, which provide light to a second-story loft. The treatment of eaves varies, with wide, open eaves on the southwestern side extending to shelter the one-story Bottle House, and shallower, open eaves ringing the circumference of the building. The irregular design composition extends to fenestration, which includes a variety of homemade and recycled fixed and casement windows, in wood and metal, with an irregular placement. Windows and doors have lintels made of timber and slabs of granite. The plan of the interior is open, with the shop occupying the first story and a loft area and work spaces on the second story. On the south side, near the entry tunnel, a second-story balcony and walkway connect the loft of the Round House with the castle buildings. A similar walkway connects the Round House with the Clock Tower on the northern portion of the building.

The massive structural timbers used in the Round House were salvaged from a demolished railroad bridge when the Feather River project was in progress. The iron doors came from Glendora's 1920s-era jail as it was being demolished. Much of the equipment in the Round House – including lathes, milling machines, and other machinery – was donated by Lorne Ward, a family friend of Rubel who also donated the funds for Rubel to purchase the 1890 Seth Thomas hand-wound clock.

5. Bottle House

Constructed in 1968, the Bottle House was the first building constructed in the reservoir. Wishing to add a residence/get-away apart from the family's main residence in the former Citrus Packing House, Rubel built the one-story dwelling out of multicolored bottles set in cement. Rectangular in plan, the Bottle House measures approximately eight by ten feet and has a front-gabled roof, sheathed in corrugated metal. The Bottle House is entered via a door on the north façade. Broken concrete pieces serve as corner stones. The Bottle House is sheltered beneath the open eaves of the Round House. The transparent, multicolored bottles allow light in to illuminate the interior, which consists of a single room with a small wood-burning stove and sitting area, and an elevated loft area reached by a ladder.

Contributing Buildings: Former Citrus Ranch

6. Citrus Packing House (Tin Palace)

Located east of the Castle, the Citrus Packing House (or Tin Palace as it is known at Rubel Farms) was originally constructed in 1938. Utilitarian in design, the building served as the packing house and cold storage area for Albourne Ranch. The interior walls still display original posters providing instructions for boxing fruit. Measuring 36 by 108 feet, the wood-frame building is one story in height, with exterior walls sheathed in corrugated metal siding. The building is capped with a wood-truss roof clad in corrugated metal panels. Fenestration consists primarily of wood-framed, multi-light, double-hung windows, in a variety of configurations.

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The Citrus Packing House is linked to the Castle grounds via a tunnel through the reservoir walls, lined with multicolored bottles set in cement. After Rubel acquired the property in 1959, the Citrus Packing House was converted into a residence, with cold storage rooms along the west elevation reused as bedrooms, and large dining, living, and public rooms extending through the open, rectangular space of the building. Original wood-plank floors and wall panels made of quarter-inch plywood remain throughout the interior. Along the west side of the building, bedrooms are accessed via the Packing House's original wood refrigerator doors.

In 1939, the building was extended on the south and north sides, and a partial basement was added beneath the building's southern portion. In 1940, a small office was added in the northern portion; originally used by Michael Rubel as a kitchen, this was subsequently removed after being damaged in a flood in 1969. In 1943, when the adjacent Lemon House was constructed, a platform and covered walkway was added along the southern side of the building, connecting it with the Lemon House.

Today, the Citrus Packing House functions as a repository for Rubel's vast collection of memorabilia and artifacts, as a guest house, and as a gathering space for public events.

7. Residence (Tree House), Carport, and Shop

Utilitarian in design, this two-story wood-frame building was constructed in 1936 as a residence for ranch personnel (it is currently used as a rental property). Rectangular in plan, the building consists of an enclosed garage on the ground story and residence on the second story of the south elevation. The ground-story garage has sliding doors. A full-length balcony, with a shed roof and wood railing, spans the second-story facade. The balcony is supported by a recycled telephone pole used as a beam, and post supports clad in irregular courses of stream rocks, set in cement. There is a low-pitched, side-gable roof with clay tiles. Fenestration consists of metal- and wood-framed windows in a variety of configurations. Exterior wall materials include cement plaster and corrugated metal siding. Extending north is a one-story shed and shop, consisting of a wood post-and-beam structure and wood truss roof sheathed in corrugated metal.

8. Tool Shed

Originally part of the Albourne Ranch, this utilitarian, one-story structure was built in 1937 as a shop for the citrus farm. Measuring 14 by 24 feet, the structure has a wood frame and wood-beam roof, with corrugated metal siding on exterior walls and doors. The building now serves as a tool storage area.

9. Lemon House (Pharm Kitchen)

This two-story, wood-frame building was constructed in 1943 by the Albourne Ranch Company as a Lemon Packing House and cold storage area. After Rubel acquired the property, this building became the "Pharm" Kitchen and gathering place (a function it continues to serve). Measuring 28 by 44 feet, the building consists of an enclosed cold storage area on the ground story and the kitchen and dining room on the second story. A full-length open balcony, fronted by an iron-pipe railing, extends across the second story. The building has a low-pitched, front-gabled roof. Exterior wall materials include panels of ribbed metal siding. Fenestration consists of single-panel, wood- and metal-framed windows and doors, in a variety of configurations and sizes. When the Lemon House was constructed, a platform and walkway with a shed roof were added to connect this building with the Citrus Packing House.

10. Box Factory and Tool Shed

This vernacular, multi-purpose building was constructed in phases from 1940 to 1941 as a box-making factory, residence, and tool shed for the Albourne Ranch Company. The Box Factory consists of a

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rectangular, two-story wood-framed building with corrugated metal exterior walls and a concrete foundation. Storage areas and covered garages occupy the ground story, and a residence, now a rental property, occupies the second story. There is a low-pitched, side-gabled roof with exposed rafters and corrugated metal sheathing. Exterior walls display corrugated metal. A small balcony with a shed roof, wood post supports, and a simple wood railing, mark the center of the facade. Fenestration includes wood-framed windows in a variety of sizes and configurations. A one-story Tool Shed with a shed roof is located at the southern portion of the building.

Contributing Ancillary Buildings and Structures

11. Rock Shed (Bennett's Bunker)

Located near the Live Oak Avenue entrance to the Rubel Castle Historic District, the Rock Shed (also known as Bennett's Bunker) is just outside the Castle walls. The one-room structure is rectangular in plan and capped with a side-gabled roof sheathed in clay tiles. The roof gables and rafters bear on a massive wood log and beams. The building displays load-bearing stream-rock walls set in cement, with timber lintels over a handmade wood door made of recycled materials. A series of small, rectangular window openings are framed by flat, asymmetrical chunks of granite. The granite slabs throughout Rubel Castle and in the faux cemetery are a combination of cast-off pieces donated by a local tombstone maker, and custom markers memorializing family members and Pharm Hands. Construction of the Rock Shed was led by long-time Pharm Hand Ed Bennett, who built the shed in 1981.

12. Rock Barn (Billing's Barn)

The Rock Barn is a two-story building just south of the Live Oak Avenue entrance to the historic district. The building is rectangular in plan and capped with a front-gable roof sheathed in clay tiles. Three purlins, made from recycled telephone poles, mark the gable apex and sides. The eaves are open, revealing the structure of wood planks and recycled wood rafters beneath. On the south side, the roof eaves extend to enclose a storage area. Handmade, double wood doors provide access on the ground story. There are wood casement windows with wood frames on the second story. Exterior walls are structural stream-rock in irregular courses, set in cement. This building was constructed in approximately 1975 by long-time Pharm Hand Curt Billings to house the resident horses.

13. Wood Rental (Chip House)

This one-story, wood-frame residence is clad in wood siding and capped with a side-gable roof. The exterior of the building is only partially visible due to its proximity to the Castle walls. Although the original date of construction is unknown, the house appears on a 1953 aerial photograph. Alterations to the building include the addition of a kitchen and bathroom. A patio was added that spans the façade and consists of telephone poles used as post supports and a timber beam.

14. Rock Garage (Engine Room)

Located in the northeastern portion of the property, the Rock Garage (also known as the Engine Room) is a one-story structure just east of the Citrus Packing House. The building is rectangular in plan and capped with a front-gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal. Recycled wood doors, with wood frames and lintel, provide access to the ground story. The gable apex is pierced with a round opening filled with a recycled wagon wheel, which provides ventilation to the interior. Exterior walls consist of structural stream-rock in irregular courses, set in cement. The structure houses an operational, single-cylinder, natural-gas-powered engine recycled from a nearby citrus farm which Michael Rubel used to power a bird bath.

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Non-Contributing Ancillary Landscape Features

The grounds of Rubel Castle include mature trees and landscaping, as well as numerous recycled artifacts and architectural follies. These include the Corral (#15), just south of the castle's main entrance; a 1940's Santa Fe Rail Lines caboos (#16), which was converted by Rubel into a guest house; a Water Tower (#17), which was recycled from a defunct citrus ranch; and an operational Windmill (#18), which was disassembled and transported from Lompoc to Glendora by Rubel with the help of many Pharm Hands. The grounds also include a faux cemetery (#19), which makes use of the donated tombstones.

Integrity

The Rubel Castle Historic District retains all seven aspects of integrity, and continues to convey its early history as a citrus ranch, as well as the folk art environment created by Michael Rubel:

Location: All contributors remain in their original locations.

Design and Setting: The contributing buildings within the Castle grounds retain their original design and setting. After Rubel acquired the 1930's and 1940's citrus-era properties, they were gradually adapted for re-use and became the first residence, gathering spaces, and workshops for the folk art environment of Rubel Castle. The citrus-era properties retain their integrity of design and setting.

Workmanship and Materials: There have been few alterations since Rubel Castle was completed in 1986. The significant character-defining features and materials of contributing buildings and structures remain intact, and Rubel Castle retains its integrity of workmanship and materials.

Feeling: Rubel Castle retains the significant physical features that contribute to the original feeling as a monumental folk art environment and village.

Association: Rubel Castle continues to convey its original association. It still functions as a "working castle," with live/work quarters for artists and other residents, workshops, and public events and tours.

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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.)

- Agriculture
- Art
- Architecture
-
-
-

Period of Significance

1910 – 1949; 1959 - 1986

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rubel, Michael Clarke

Period of Significance (justification)

There are two periods of significance, reflecting the two distinct periods of development for the property. 1910-1949 reflects the property's association with Glendora's citrus industry; 1910 is the date of construction for the concrete irrigation reservoir on the property, and 1949 is when the citrus ranch ceased operations. 1959-1986 reflects the property's association with Michael Rubel; 1959 is the date of Rubel's acquisition of the property, and 1986 is the completion date of the Clock Tower, which was the last addition to Rubel Castle.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Although it was completed fewer than 50 years ago, Rubel Castle meets Criterion Consideration G as a rare, monumental example of a folk art environment that has achieved national acclaim and exceptional local significance as one of Glendora's best known and most visited landmarks. There is precedence in California for designating sites associated with folk art that are less than fifty years old, and because these sites are often fragile or on underutilized properties, they are becoming increasingly threatened.

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

The Rubel Castle Historic District is significant under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the local citrus industry, which played a crucial role in the development of the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Packing House and other citrus-related buildings remaining on the property are rare, remnant examples of citrus facilities that once dominated the landscape in this area. The period of significance under Criterion A is 1910-1949, representing the construction of the irrigation reservoir on the property, through the closure of the property as a working citrus ranch.

The Rubel Castle Historic District is significant under Criterion C at the local level of significance as a unique, rare, and exceptional example of a folk art environment.¹ Typically these environments reflect the "idiosyncratic visions of singular creators working with obsessive consistency over a period of years, during which time intuition replaces blueprints or formal planning toward the rebuilding process."² The architect, builder, engineer, and resident of the castle, Michael Clarke Rubel, had no formal training in architecture, construction, or art, and no formal designs for the castle. Although Rubel held a job as a school bus driver, his primary occupation throughout his life was constructing the castle, which also served as his residence until a few years prior to his death in 2007. The result is a monumental folk art environment created by thousands of tons of alluvial boulders from nearby washes of the San Gabriel Mountains, and thousands of recycled and found objects. The Castle's recycled objects include everything from small, everyday household items to industrial-scale objects and remnants of the early agricultural and industrial development of the San Gabriel Valley. The Castle possesses high artistic value and embodies the distinctive characteristics of handcrafted stone masonry, as seen in its central walls, buildings, and towers. The period of significance under Criterion C is 1959, when Michael Rubel acquired the property, through 1986, when the construction of the last component of the Castle was complete.

Although it was completed fewer than 50 years ago, the Rubel Castle Historic District meets Criterion Consideration G for exceptional importance. It is a rare, monumental example of a folk art environment that has been celebrated nationally since the 1970s. It is one of Glendora's most important and visited landmarks. As Michael Rubel began work on the Castle, it quickly became a community project, in which Rubel's network of friends and associates, as well as Glendoran residents, contributed materials, equipment, labor, or leads on available objects and materials. The Rubel Castle Historic District reflects the characteristics identified for significant folk art environments in the 1978 Thematic Nomination for Twentieth-Century Folk Art Environments in California.³

¹ There are three previous nominations for folk art environments that have been particularly helpful in the preparation of this nomination. Arguments established in these earlier documents establish precedent and significance thresholds useful for creating context for the Rubel Castle Historic District: Robert Selway, Albert Hurtado, and Emily Hart, "Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments in California," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Nomination, 1978. "Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments," California Register of Historical Resources, 1981. Daniel Paul, "Grandma Prisbey's Bottle Village," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1996.

² Daniel Paul, "Grandma Prisbey's Bottle Village," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1996, Section 8, Page 1.

³ Selway, "Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments in California," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Nomination, 1978. This nomination laid the groundwork for recognizing works of folk art as historical resources, and since that time several folk art sites in California have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The majority of these sites were designated prior to reaching the 50-year threshold.

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

Criterion A

The remnant citrus properties on the site of the Rubel Castle Historic District are rare extant resources from this important period in Glendora's history. The landscape and built environment reflecting California's historic citrus industry is rapidly vanishing, and remnant resources that continue to tell the story of the industry's significant role in the history and development of California are increasingly rare.

The striking conversion from large-scale ranching and wheat farming to small-scale intensive farming in California from the 1870s to World War I represented one of the most rapid transformations in American history. In 1873, two Bahia trees alive with Washington Navels grew outside Riverside. By the end of the 1880s, more than one million Bahia trees dotted the Southern California landscape, producing about 2,000 carloads of navel oranges in 1886 alone.⁴ In addition to the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, other rail lines such as the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe helped end California's seclusion from the rest of the nation and provided rate competition with Southern Pacific that reduced transportation and shipping costs. As a result, by 1899 California held a monopoly on orange production with about 5.9 million boxes of oranges out of the 6.2 million produced nationwide.⁵ Although the California citrus industry extended from San Diego to Santa Barbara, there were several concentrated areas responsible for the most production. One of the primary "citrus belts" was located in the foothill areas from Pasadena to San Bernardino, including Monrovia, Azusa, Glendora, Covina, Pomona, Upland, and Ontario.⁶

In the early 1900s, an effort to promote citrus ranching in the state brought hundreds of would-be citrus barons to California for the "second Gold Rush." The lush groves of oranges, lemons, and grapefruit gave California another legacy - its lingering image as the Golden State - the land of sunshine and opportunity. Early local pioneer Joseph Swift Phillips, who would found the nearby city of Covina, sold land to buyers who specifically wanted to come to California to work in the citrus industry, and arranged for local nurserymen to tend citrus groves for absentee owners. Gradually, other local crops were replaced with citrus groves. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the vast groves of orange and lemon trees began to establish Glendora as a center of the Southern California citrus industry. In 1896, Glendora built its first packing house.

The local citrus industry continued to grow in the early twentieth century. From 1909 to 1913, Glendora sent a monthly supply of oranges and lemons on the Santa Fe Railroad to the White House for President Taft. In the 1920s, the Glendora Citrus Association and the Glendora Heights Orange and Lemon Growers joined forces to create the Glendora Fruit Exchange. In 1923, the Glendora Fruit Exchange constructed a new packinghouse that was "the largest fruit packinghouse in the world with equipment and facilities good for a pack each season of 1,500 to 2,000 carloads of 400 packed boxes each."⁷ During this period, other local growers began to establish independent packing associations, and several new packing houses were constructed in Glendora in the early 1920s. Glendora's citrus industry continued to thrive through the 1940s.

⁴ Richard B. Rice, William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *The Elusive Eden: A New History of California*, third edition (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002), 332-33. As quoted in: Paul Jason Prescott Sandul, *Harvesting Suburbs: Recalling the Suburban Side of California's Agricultural Colonization* (Dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Public History, California State University, Sacramento and University of California, Santa Barbara, 2009), 78-79.

⁵ Paul W. Rhode, "Learning, Capital Accumulation, and the Transformation of California Agriculture," *The Journal of Economic History*, Volume 55, Issue 4, December 1995, 773-800. As quoted in: Sandul, *Harvesting Suburbs: Recalling the Suburban Side of California's Agricultural Colonization*, 78-79.

⁶ Cary McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1973), 206.

⁷ *Glendora Gleaner*, as quoted in Barbara Ann Hall, *Covina Valley Citrus Industry* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 75.

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The Rubel Castle Historic District is located in the heart of Glendora's former citrus groves, and was part of a citrus ranch that was operated by various owners from the early twentieth century until 1949. Irrigation pipes were first laid across the property in 1887 by Glendora founding father George D. Whitcomb, and in 1910 the concrete reservoir was constructed for the irrigation of the area citrus groves.

In 1905, William B. Glidden purchased property in Glendora, a portion of which would become the Rubel Castle Historic District. Glidden came to Los Angeles from New York in 1887 seeking a healthier climate.⁸ Glidden became a land developer in downtown Los Angeles, responsible for the early development of property around Temple, Main, and Seventh Streets. Glidden purchased a 40-acre citrus property in Glendora where he built the "Glidden Villa."⁹ He became active in the area's civic and agricultural development, and played a key role in the establishment of public utilities. Glidden was elected the first president of the Glendora Irrigating Company, and served as director of the Glendora Heights Orange and Lemon Association.

Glidden sold the property to Arthur K. Bourne in 1926. Arthur K. Bourne was the son of the president of the Singer Corporation. When Bourne purchased the property, it consisted of the orange and lemon groves, main house, and reservoir. In addition to the Glidden citrus ranch, Bourne purchased a significant amount of property in the area, and by 1930 he held over 140 acres.¹⁰ In 1932, Bourne commissioned renowned architect Wallace Neff to design his family home, which became known as the Singer Mansion. Bourne expanded the citrus facilities in the 1930s, constructing shop spaces, packing houses, a box factory (for the assembly of packing crates), and provisions for servicing the farm vehicles. By 1940, Bourne had created a largely self-sufficient citrus farm which had the ability for growing, packing, and shipping. Sometime after 1943, Bourne named the citrus ranch "Albourne" for his wife, Alberta A. Bourne.

Southern California's citrus industry declined rapidly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, due to two primary factors: the population growth in Southern California after World War II, which made land and water more valuable and brought the development of large housing tracts; and a mysterious virus that swept through the area's citrus groves, killing vast numbers of trees in a short amount of time. Some growers lost up to 50 percent of their groves to the disease and were facing up to four years before new trees would mature and begin producing. With the rising prices and development pressures of the period, many growers decided to sell their land to developers instead of starting over. Albourne suffered the same fate, and in 1949, the Albourne Ranch ceased operations. In 1954, Bourne and his family relocated to Lake Tahoe.

In 1957, Bourne started subdividing and selling portions of his property. The 27 acres north of Palm Avenue and the 1.8 acres in the southeast corner of the property did not initially sell. Bourne offered to sell these parcels, which included the reservoir, to the city for parkland, but the city declined to purchase the property. Michael Rubel, who grew up in Glendora, had long admired the property, and in 1959 convinced Bourne to sell him a 2.5-acre parcel that included the reservoir. Rubel couldn't afford to buy the property outright, so Bourne donated the land to the Grace Episcopal Church, where Rubel's father had been the minister and his mother was still an active member, with the understanding the Rubel would then purchase the property from the church.

The citrus-related buildings in the Rubel Castle Historic District are significant, and increasingly rare, physical reminders of Glendora's past. The original citrus ranches that dominated the landscape

⁸ "Death Ends Eventful Life of Pioneer Businessman," *Glendora Gleaner*, April 24, 1924.

⁹ Glidden Villa was later demolished.

¹⁰ Burnside Citrus Map, 1930.

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through the mid-twentieth century have been largely replaced with post-World War II tract housing. The resources in the historic district related to the Albourne Citrus Ranch (including the packing house, box factory, and other utilitarian buildings) continue to convey the property's early history. These resources are located in the eastern portion of the historic district, and still read as an intact collection of citrus-related buildings.

Criterion C

The Rubel Castle Historic District is eligible under Criterion C as a rare and excellent example of a folk art environment. Both the citrus-related buildings and the later structures constructed as part of Michael Rubel's vision contribute to the significance of the historic district. The original citrus-related buildings were incorporated into the daily life of the Rubel family, and were adaptively re-used as part of the family home and Castle Complex. The property, and in particular the Packing House, was a community gathering place, and the site of numerous parties and fundraisers.

The Rubel Castle Historic District embodies the characteristics and creative spirit outlined in the 1978 Thematic Nomination for Twentieth-Century Folk Art Environments in California. Folk art environments have particular significance in California, which "like the emergence of Roadside Vernacular architecture in the 1920s and the Googie style coffee shops of the 1950s and 1960s...reflects California's reputation as a place for eclecticism, diversity, alternative creativity and the free spirit."¹¹ In spite of their importance to the history of California, relatively few folk art environments have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Folk art environments are characterized as "significant creations by individualistic spirits," with "expression unbounded by conventionality."¹² They typically evolve over a long period time behind a singular artistic vision, display monumental proportions, and incorporate the natural landscape and discarded materials. The monumental scale of Rubel Castle is remarkable, especially considering that no professional contractors or engineers were involved, and almost all of the building materials were recycled, donated, found, or created on site at one of the Castle's many workshops. Folk art environments are often described as all-encompassing fantasy worlds. This is certainly true at Rubel Castle, where visitors find themselves surrounded on every side by Michael's vision.

Michael Rubel was born in Glendora in 1940. The Rubel family had relocated to Southern California from New York in 1936. Rubel's father, Henry Scott Rubel, was a successful comedy writer and musician for stage, radio, and motion picture productions before becoming an Episcopal Minister. He was under contract to Paramount pictures, and also served as rector of Glendora's Grace Episcopal Church until his death in 1946. Rubel's mother, Dorothy Deuel, had been a chorus girl in New York, dancing for a time with the Greenwich Village Follies. Following his father's death, one of Rubel's surrogate father-figures was a Glendoran named Odo Stade. Stade had traveled extensively, spoke seventeen languages, and worked for a time as a United States emissary in Mexico. He authored the book *Viva Villa* about the life of Pancho Villa, from which the movie was made. Following Stade's lead, Rubel left school at age 17 and traveled the world for three years.

In 1959, Rubel returned from his travels and arranged to buy a portion of the former Albourne Citrus Ranch at a bargain price. In the early 1960s, Rubel's mother moved to the property with Michael. The Packing House (which became known as the Tin Palace) was adaptively re-used as their primary residence, with the original coolers being converted to bedrooms. Dorothy liked to throw extravagant parties, whose guests included an array of local residents, Hollywood entertainers,¹³ and politicians,

¹¹ Paul, "Grandma Prisbey's Bottle Village," Section 8, Page 1.

¹² "Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments in California," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Nomination, 1978, 2.

¹³ Sally Rand, Bob Hope, Jack Benny, and Alfred Hitchcock all attended Dorothy Rubel's parties.

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including Dwight D. Eisenhower. These parties were the impetus behind the creation of Rubel's Castle, as Michael constructed the Bottle House largely to escape all of the commotion. The construction of the Bottle House sparked the 25-year project that would become Rubel Castle.

Although Rubel had no formal training, he came up with his own method of construction, acting as structural engineer, builder, and designer for the Castle. In terms of engineering, this meant relying on his intuition and input from the Pharm Hands to see the structural possibilities of the recycled commercial and industrial cast-offs they had collected. Recycled railroad tracks, scrap steel, box springs, and telephone poles became the structural basis and reinforcements for castle walls and buildings. In order to secure the Castle against the inevitable earthquake, Rubel took the advice of a Pharm Hand who was studying engineering and established a system of footings. In order to create the footings, Rubel had to bore through the six-inch concrete of the reservoir floor and dig ditches ranging from three to 12 feet deep. Although Rubel managed to borrow a compressor and jackhammer for cutting through the reservoir floor, the footing ditches were dug by hand by Rubel and his Pharm Hands over a seven-year period. This intuitive, ad hoc construction process was something Rubel shared with other artists who created significant folk art environments, as described in the 1978 Thematic Nomination:

The design of the environmentalists was the result of a highly intuitive process of creation. The folk artists followed no particular plan or set of rules and had only their vision and creative impulse to guide them. Still, they worked with great care.¹⁴

In spite of the absence of any plans, the ad hoc construction process, and the wide variety of recycled materials that went into the Castle, its design is unified by the San Gabriel Mountain stream rocks that Rubel crafted into load-bearing masonry walls, veneer, and hardscaping throughout the Castle and grounds. This handcrafted stone masonry lends the Castle an overall aesthetic unity and atmosphere of a medieval village. This is enhanced by the incorporation throughout the grounds of other found objects, such as an elevated water tower and windmill, located outside the Castle walls on the property's eastern portion. Although these objects were moved and recycled in a different context, they contribute to an overall atmosphere of a picturesque village that developed over time. In evaluating folk art environments for the National Register, these characteristics – high-quality craftsmanship and a unified, distinctive design – were also highlighted in the 1978 Thematic Nomination:

Development of a particular technique throughout forms the basis of the design quality of the works. All possess their own fundamental order, which is evident in a unity of design, technique, and theme. This unity contributes to their strength as folk art statements.¹⁵

Many folk artists work with little to no funding for their projects, and the media used are frequently found and discarded objects which have no correlation to art, per se. It is this circumstance that is responsible for much of the acclaim given these individuals:

(1) there is a bold task involved in seeing creative potential in a hubcap or headlight as opposed to paint and pastels, and (2) the folk art environmentalist meets this task, physically manifest in their massive creations, in which "junk" is transformed and redefined into something more.¹⁶

¹⁴ Selway, "Twentieth Century Folk Art Environments in California," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Nomination, Addendum, September 1979, 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., Section 7, page 1.

¹⁶ Paul, "Grandma Prisbey's Bottle Village," Section 8, Page 1.

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In the case of Rubel Castle, the magnitude of the task – building a three- to four-story castle out of found objects, stream-rocks, and mortar, with limited financial resources or equipment – seemed to further motivate and inspire Michael Rubel.

Michael Rubel was a beloved character in the city, and his Castle quickly became a community project. Although an eccentric and nonconformist, Rubel was by no means a loner – he clearly had remarkable charm and people skills, which he used to inspire his many friends to help him design, build, furnish, and populate his compound. Michael's enthusiasm seemed to "infect everyone," and a large group of friends and volunteers helped Rubel accomplish his dream of building a castle.¹⁷ He became known throughout the San Gabriel Valley for his willingness to take any object or material, regardless of its value, and find it a home at the Castle. A wide network of friends, who became known as "Pharm Hands," assisted him in all aspects of the castle's construction, from digging footings, gathering and transporting stream rocks, to providing labor to construct the castle's many components. The Pharm Hands also alerted Rubel to the availability of discarded materials in the community:

Word soon got out and whenever anyone heard of any materials available, Michael and his friends were off with the old truck to save them from the scrap pile or the dump. People dropped off bottles, bed springs, scrap metal, anything they didn't want, and the Pharm became home for them. When one of the castle builders, John McHann, was concerned that they needed materials but didn't have any money, he was told by Rubel, "Don't worry...if we need something, it will be here... Whatever I needed somebody always came by with one. If I needed telephone poles or a forklift or railroad ties, they would always show up."¹⁸

Rubel delighted in the challenge of "liberating" and transporting to the castle such items as 10,000-gallon water tanks, railroad tracks, telephone poles, and, on one occasion, an operational windmill, which was transported to the Castle from Lompoc. Such finds allowed the scale of the Castle to match Rubel's dreams. For example, the broad interior span of the Round House was made possible by the massive timbers acquired from the construction site of a decommissioned bridge overpass. The 74-foot-high Clock Tower and neighboring Stair Tower are built of remnants from Glendora's citrus industry. As the region's orchards gave way to widespread residential construction in the post-World War II period, many abandoned water tanks and industrial materials became building blocks for Rubel's castle. The incorporation of these found objects also imbues the Castle with a sense of humor and whimsy.

As an assemblage of the relics and artifacts of Glendora's early agricultural and industrial eras, Rubel Castle relied upon the recycling and innovative use of both natural and cultural materials, which is an important unifying characteristic in the work of folk artists throughout California. Rubel Castle incorporates many items salvaged from local buildings that were slated for demolition. These include the iron doors that were rescued from the 1920s-era Glendora Jail that was demolished in the 1960s. In this way, Rubel Castle is a time capsule of Glendora and the San Gabriel Valley history: from the early agricultural era, the gradual decline of the citrus industry, and the increase in residential settlement in the mid-twentieth century. When his financial resources were severely limited, Rubel was also resourceful and dogged in his determination to find the materials he needed. As he began building the Bottle House, for example, Rubel would travel to a cement plant in a nearby town, where, shovel in hand, he gathered the remnants of cement that had spilled onto the ground from a conveyor. Later in the process, a close family friend offered to donate cement to Rubel.

¹⁷ David C. Traversi, *One Man's Dream: The Spirit of Rubel Castle* (Petaluma, CA: David C. Traversi, 2002), 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

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In addition to the found and salvaged materials, Rubel Castle is adorned with a variety of handcrafts created in its own workshops. The property included a machine shop, accommodations for making stained glass, and a blacksmith area. In order to make Rubel Castle a "living-working castle," artists in residence were (and still are) encouraged to pursue their crafts. The machine shop included potter's wheels for throwing clay and looms for producing textiles. Kilns are located on the western edge of the property. There is print-making equipment on the property that was used by the artists-in-residence, as well as for teaching classes to the local community. In the complex's West Tower (known as the Bee Tower), hives of bees were maintained and the honey was processed on site and sold.

Michael Rubel and his Castle started to receive national attention in the 1970s. Following an extensive profile on Rubel and the castle in the *Los Angeles Times*, journalist Harry Reasoner featured Rubel Castle in late 1974 in a program entitled "Castles in the World." In the segment, Reasoner juxtaposed three castles: two traditional European castles, and Rubel Castle in the United States. Opening the 15-minute segment devoted to Rubel, Reasoner thus introduced his subject:

I'd like you to meet one of most eccentric human beings I have met among California people. His name is Michael Rubel. He's 34 years old, and he lives in an old packing house...in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. My story is not about the packing house, which Rubel has filled with hundreds of antiques. My story is about the huge stone castle that Rubel is building in a reservoir next to the packinghouse. I cannot adequately describe Rubel's property; the castle is being built of stone and concrete. But Rubel is also using bottles and chairs and bed springs and scrap metal to reinforce the walls of the castle.¹⁹

This national coverage brought more attention than Rubel wanted. When Barbara Walters paid him a visit six months after Reasoner's program, Rubel turned her away when she announced that she wanted to do a program on his "commune." A *Washington Post* writer had more success in 1975, when he interviewed Rubel for an article in August. In 1988, after the Castle was finished, *New Yorker* writer and author John McPhee included Rubel Castle, and a brief interview with Rubel, in an article and subsequent book, *The Control of Nature*. In 1990, Rubel agreed to appear on Huell Howser's program, which included an extended tour of the Castle grounds and interview with Rubel. By this time, Rubel Castle had also become part of the pantheon of the "zany" buildings of Los Angeles.

As construction of Rubel Castle was nearing completion, Glendora's monthly magazine published a special issue on Rubel Castle, the first of two such special issues devoted to Rubel, his family and history in Glendora, and details on Rubel Castle. Attempting to describe Rubel, the author of one of the articles explained:

Keep in mind that Michael C. Rubel is a homespun philosopher, a bachelor, a genius, a loveable nut and a very funny man who loves life, people and hard work, and who values good health. He loves to quote his grandfather who said, 'don't bore people with the truth.'²⁰

Glendoran native Ed Bennett became a Pharm Hand when he was ten years old and continued helping Michael until the Castle was completed. Bennett said that Rubel's story "reminds us all that we are only limited by our imagination." Rubel and his castle became so important to the community because, as Bennett said, Rubel "inspired so many young people to dare to try the impossible."²¹

¹⁹ Harry Reasoner, "Castles in the World," Transcript, October 13, 1974. As quoted in: Dwayne Hunn, *Every Town Needs a Castle: Especially When Built of Recycled Junk and Spunk* (Xlibris Self-publishing, 2010).

²⁰ "A Boy's Dream, A Man's Reality," *The Glendoran*, Vol. II, No. 1, January/February 1984, 20.

²¹ Richard Macy, "Birth of a Castle," *The Glendoran*, July/August 1999, 39.

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Michael Rubel lived at Rubel Castle until a few years prior to his death, when it became too much for him to maintain. At that time, he and his wife, Kaia, moved to a smaller house in the neighborhood. He died in Glendora in 2007. In 2005, Rubel had arranged for the Rubel Castle property to be donated to the Glendora Historical Society, which still owns and operates the property today. It is home to numerous tenants who maintain the physical and spiritual aspects of the place, and the property is open for public tours and other events.

Conclusion

The Rubel Castle Historic District is an exceptional and rare resource. The property is a physical reminder of the citrus industry, which played a significant role in the development of the area in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Much of this history has been erased by later development, and intact buildings from this era are increasingly rare. With the purchase of the property by Michael Rubel in 1959, the property became a laboratory for his creative spirit. The Rubel Castle Historic District represents a monumental folk art environment, created by Michael and his "Pharm Hands" over several decades. Although the final segment of the Castle was completed in 1986, the Rubel Castle Historic District meets Criterion Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years. It is exceptionally important within the context of folk art environments in California, and meets the criteria identified in the 1978 Thematic Nomination for California Folk Art Environments.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The land that would become Glendora was once part of the Mexican land grant Rancho San Jose. In 1837, Rancho San Jose was granted to Ricardo Vejar and Ygnacio Palomares by Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado. In 1840, Rancho San Jose was expanded, and the northwest portion granted to Ygnacio Palomares' brother-in-law, Luis Arenas. Arenas' 4,430-acre property included the future city of Glendora. In 1844, Englishman Henry Dalton purchased five ranchos in the area, including Arenas' property. In 1848, California came under the control of the United States, and the 1851 Land Act provided for a group of commissioners to review all Spanish and Mexican land grants to determine which were legally binding. The burden was on the landowner to provide proof of ownership. As a result, Dalton lost the claim to most of his property. In 1862 the U.S. government passed the Homestead Act, and in 1868, the area that would become Glendora was opened for homesteading.

Late-nineteenth century settlers were primarily farmers who discovered that the area's rich soil would produce abundant crops. In 1874, John Bender and William Bryant Cullen, childhood friends who moved to Southern California from Memphis, Tennessee, became some of the first permanent settlers on land that would later become Glendora. Bender acquired 160 acres north of Foothill Boulevard, between Grand and Pennsylvania Avenues. Cullen acquired the land between Wabash and Live Oak Avenues, and Sierra Madre and Bennett Avenues. Bender and Cullen cleared the land and planted wheat, flax, barley, castor beans, grapevines, vegetables, and fruit trees. As other settlers continued to arrive through the 1870s, this area flourished as an agricultural center. Later settlers often had less farming experience, but continued the agricultural tradition that was begun by their predecessors.

Glendora's founding father was George D. Whitcomb (1834-1914), a wealthy Chicago manufacturer who came to Southern California for health reasons. In 1885, Whitcomb purchased 200-acres for \$40 per acre, on land that would become the heart of the city of Glendora. Whitcomb established the community of Glendora on April 1, 1887. The name Glendora is a combination of his wife's name, Leadora, and the location of his home in a "glen" of the San Gabriel Mountains. Crucial to success of early Glendora was Whitcomb's ability to convince the Santa Fe Railroad to shift its proposed route between Pasadena and San Bernardino so that it ran closer to his land. This was largely accomplished

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through Whitcomb's personal connections to William Barstow Strong, president of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, and Charles W. Smith, the general manager.²² The new route ran to the north of the route as originally proposed, which had the added benefits of more stable ground, a more reliable water source, and established communities in Glendora and Azusa that had already been platted.²³ Glendora prospered during this period, with the Santa Fe Railroad providing the means to send export their agricultural products. Glendora was officially incorporated as a city in November, 1911.

The property that would become Rubel Castle has ties to some of Glendora's most influential early history. Following the loss of Dalton's claim to the land, it was acquired by James C. West. From 1887 to approximately 1905, the property was under the ownership of Dr. John Needham and Charles E. Needham. Prior to the establishment of the city of Glendora, the property was described as 40 acres in Section 29, Township One North, Range Nine West SBM; once the city was established it became known as the Needham Subdivision.

²² Ryan Lee Price, *Stories of Old Glendora* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 122.

²³ *Ibid.*, 122

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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: Glendora Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.7 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	_____	_____	_____	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

Resurvey of Needhams sub lot at northwest corner of Lot 1, Tract number 23007, on north line of SD Lot and east prolongation thereof.

The Rubel Castle Historic District is located on an approximately square-shaped parcel on the southeast corner of Palm Street and Live Oak Avenue in the city of Glendora, California.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the property purchased by Michael Rubel in 1959.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debi Howell-Ardila and Christine Lazzaretto

organization Historic Resources Group, LLC date November 5, 2012

street & number 12 South Fair Oaks Avenue telephone 626-793-2400

city or town Pasadena state CA zip code 91105

e-mail debi@historicla.com or Christine@historicla.com

Rubel Castle Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Attachments (Additional Documentation Sheets)

- Attachment 1: Sketch Map
- Attachment 2: Parcel Map
- Attachment 3: Historic Photographs
- Attachment 4: Sketch Map with Photo Key
- Attachment 5: Photo Log

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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.

Type and Number of Photographs: 45 archival 5x7" color photographic prints

Name of Property: Rubel Castle Historic District

City or Vicinity: Glendora

County: Los Angeles

State: California

Photographer: Peyton Hall

Date Photographed: August 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number: See Sketch Map with Photo Key (Attachment 4, page AD-11) and Photo Log (Attachment 5, page AD-12)

Property Owner:

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

name Glendora Historical Society

street & number P.O. Box 532, Glendora Avenue

telephone (626) 963-0419

city or town Glendora

state CA

zip code 91740

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.

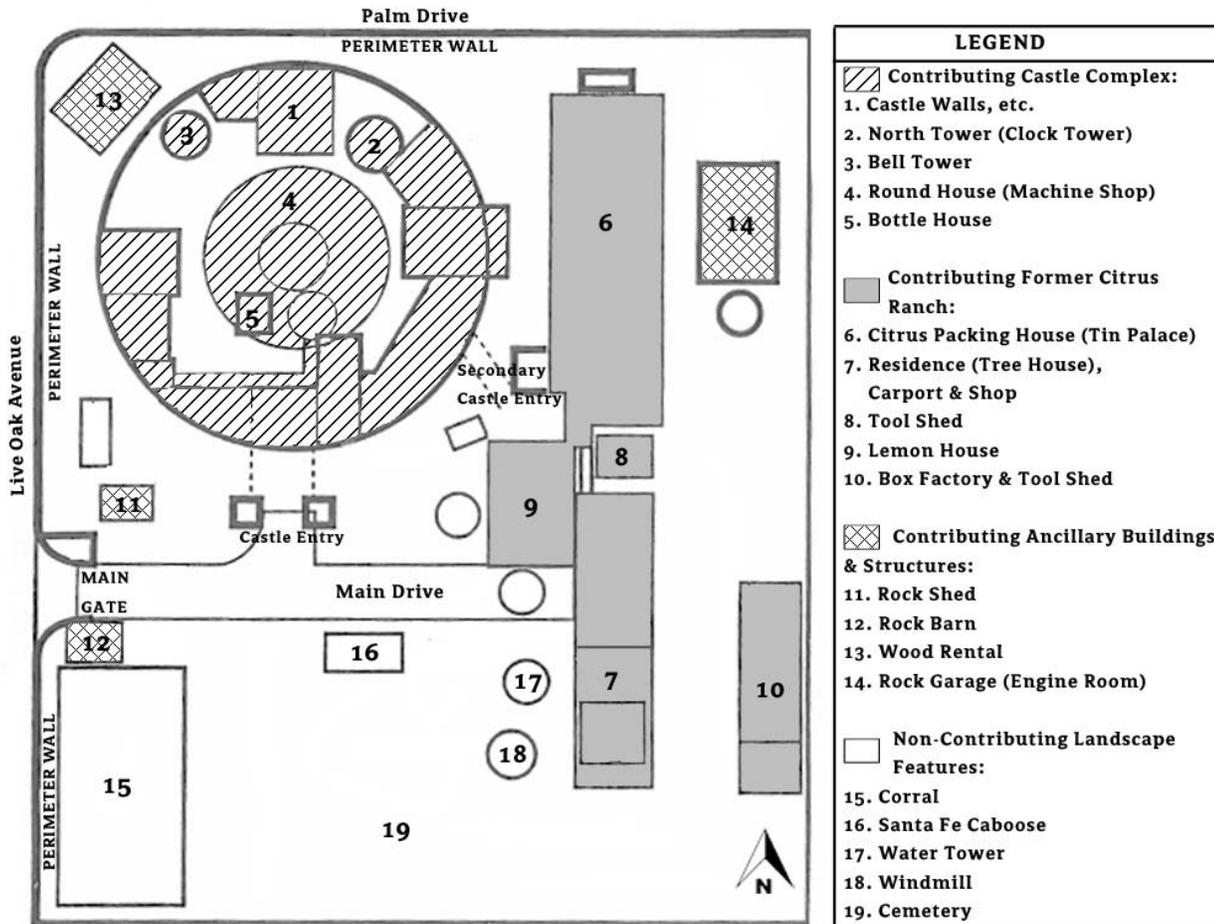
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Rubel Castle Historic District
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 1

Attachment 1: Sketch Map



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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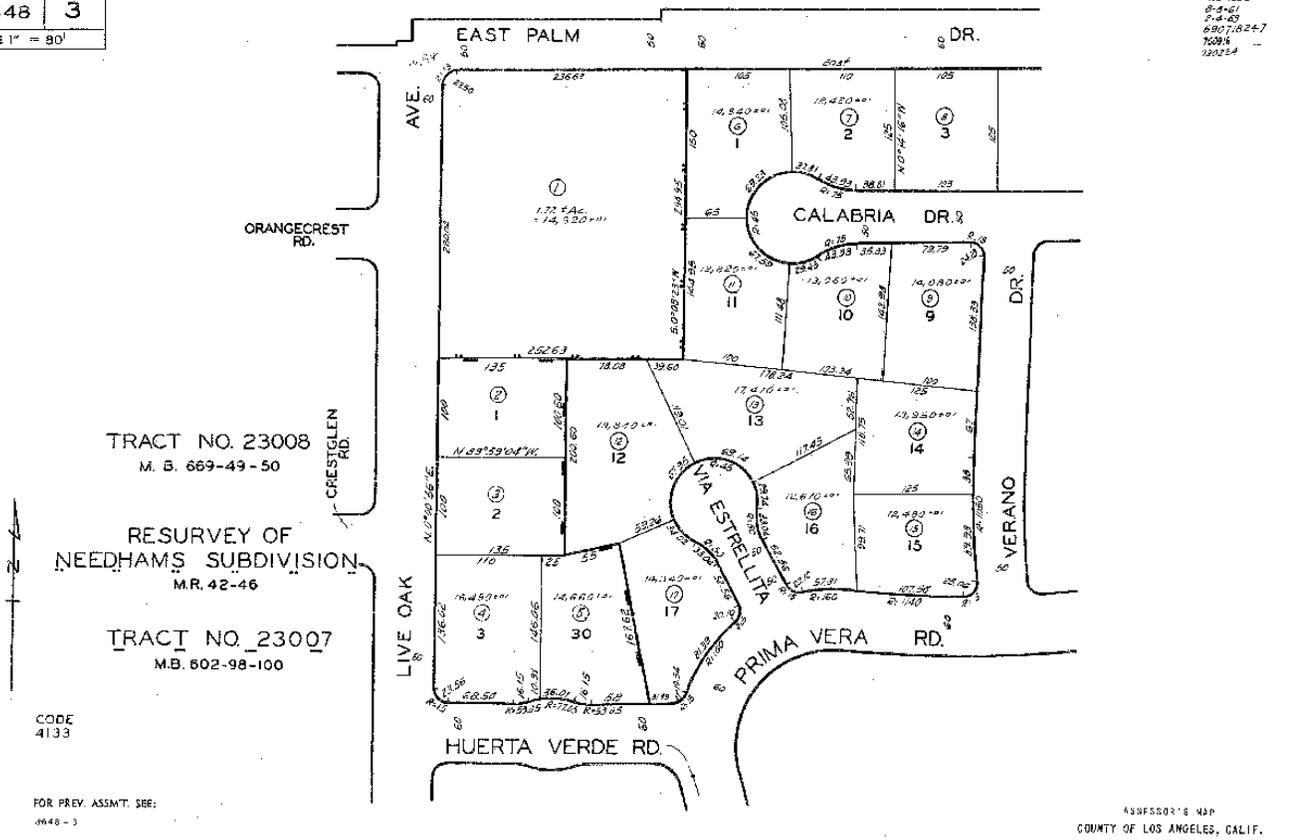
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 2

Attachment 2: Parcel Map

8648 | 3
SCALE 1" = 80'

REVISION
8-2-61
2-4-63
6-27-62+7
7-29-66
7-22-64



CODE
4133

FOR PREV. ASSMT. SEE:
9648 - 3

ASSESSOR'S MAP
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Rubel Castle Historic District

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Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



View of Glendora citrus groves, 1931. Source: Los Angeles Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section number AD Page 4

Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Dorothy Rubel and Sally Rand at the Tin Palace, 1964. Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

United States Department of the Interior
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Section number AD Page 5

Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Construction of automobile entrance through reservoir, 1965. Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Construction of portcullis, 1970. Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

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Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Michael Rubel at the cement mixer; first towers under construction, 1970.
Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

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Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Bottle House in foreground; Chip House under construction in background, 1970. Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Michael Rubel and some "Pharm Hands," 1972. Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section number AD Page 10

Attachment 3: Historic Photographs



Castle walls under construction, 1975. Source: Source: Scott Rubel, Rubel Castle History Project.

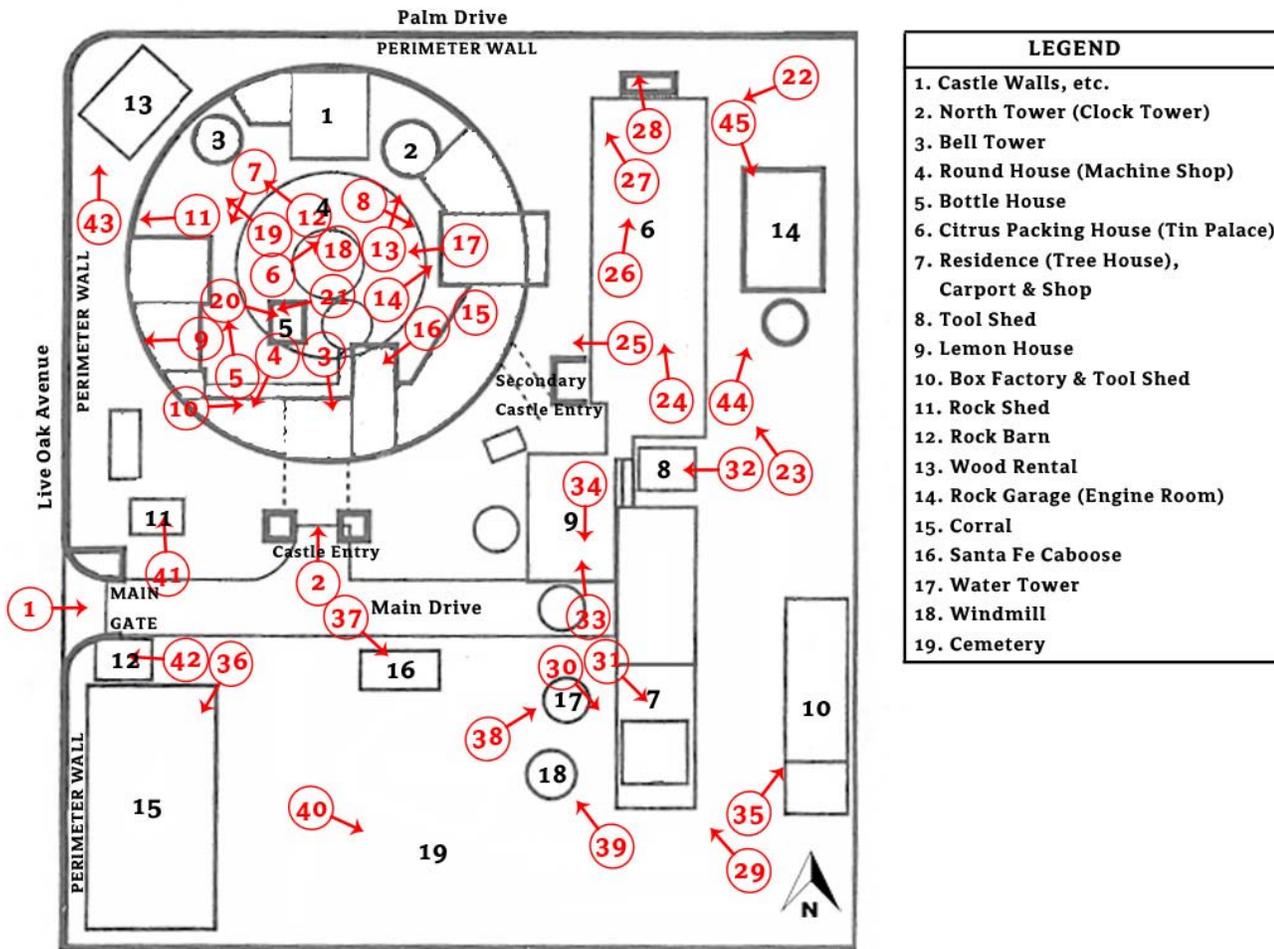
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Attachment 4: Sketch Map with Photo Key



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National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number AD Page 12

Attachment 5: Photo Log

PHOTO #	DESCRIPTION/VIEW
001	Main Entry Gate. Looking east from Live Oak Avenue.
002	Castle Complex: Portcullis. Looking north.
003	Castle Complex. Looking south.
004	Castle Complex. Looking southwest.
005	Castle Complex. Looking north.
006	Castle Complex. Looking northeast.
007	Castle Complex. Looking southwest.
008	Castle Complex. Looking southeast.
009	Castle Complex: King's Quarters and Stairway Detail. Looking west.
010	Castle Complex: Interior detail. Looking east.
011	Castle Complex: detail of the garage. Looking west.
012	Castle Complex: Stair Tower (Bell Tower). Looking northwest.
013	Castle Complex: Clock Tower. Looking northeast.
014	Castle Complex. Looking northeast.
015	Castle Complex: Interior detail.
016	Castle Complex: detail of stairway. Looking southwest.
017	Castle Complex: Round House (Machine Shop). Looking west.
018	Castle Complex, Interior detail of Round House roof structure.
019	Castle Complex: Interior detail of Round House structure. Looking northwest.
020	Castle Complex: Bottle House. Looking east.
021	Castle Complex: Bottle House detail. Looking west.
022	Citrus Packing House (Tin Palace). Looking southwest.
023	Citrus Packing House. Looking northwest.
024	Citrus Packing House. Interior. Looking north.
025	Citrus Packing House. Interior door detail. Looking west.
026	Citrus Packing House. Interior detail.
027	Citrus Packing House. Interior detail. Looking northwest.
028	Citrus Packing House, Interior detail. Looking northwest.
029	Residence (Tree House), Carport, and Shop. Looking northwest.
030	Residence (Tree House), Carport, and Shop. Looking southeast.
031	Residence (Tree House), Carport, and Shop. Looking southeast.
032	Tool Shed. Looking west.
033	Lemon House (Pharm Kitchen). Looking north.
034	Lemon House (Pharm Kitchen). Interior. Looking south.

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National Park Service

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PHOTO #	DESCRIPTION/VIEW
035	Box Factory and Tool Shed. Looking northeast.
036	Corral. Looking southwest.
037	Sante Fe Caboose. Looking southeast.
038	Water Tower. Looking northeast.
039	Windmill. Looking northwest.
040	Cemetery. Looking southeast.
041	Rock Shed (Bennett's Bunker). Looking north.
042	Rock Barn (Billing's Barn). Looking west.
043	Wood Rental (Chip House). Looking north.
044	Rock Garage (Engine Room). Looking northeast.
045	Rock Garage (Engine Room). Looking south.