OCS Study
MMS 96-0035

# Ventura County: Oil, Fruit, Commune, and Commute

## Final Report

MMS U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Pacific OCS Region

Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region

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# Ventura County: Oil, Fruit, Commune, and Commute

## Final Report

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## DISCLAIMER

This report has been reviewed by the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Department of the Interior and approved for publication. The opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors, and do not necesarily reflect the views of the Minerals Management Service. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use. This report has not been edited for conformity with Minerals Management Service editorial standards.

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BACKGROUND: MMS requested a historic analysis of three California Coastal counties in terms of how their individual "character" evolved over the generations in relation to the oil industry. This report on Ventura County is one of three volumes produced in response; the other two reports consist of one pertaining to Santa Barbara County ("Santa Barbara County: Two Paths") and one pertaining to San Luis Obispo County ("San Luis Obispo County: A Major Switching"). There is also a data base on diskette simultaneously provided which contains a large assemblage of socioeconomic data on each county and its constituent cities. Drafts of scholarly papers are also being provided (see Study Products below).

OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this report are: (1) Explain how the county and its major communities came to have particular economic and cultural configurations making them more or less accepting of oil development, OCS development in particular; (2) Analyze the way different factors (e.g. migration, industrial development, political change) intersected with one another over time; (3) Indicate how these factors differed from one local community to another; (4) Provide a Timeline of important local events, including those involving the oil industry; (5) Display both quantitative and qualitative indicators of the evidence for the conclusions reached (6) Provide a data base on diskette (supplied separately) that contains the data base upon which this analysis was based and which can be used for future EIR/EISs and other analytic exercises.

DESCRIPTION: We used a multi-method strategy. We carried out 70 interviews with local officials, industry personnel, community leaders, and other strategic persons to construct past events and develop leads to appropriate documents and data sets. Census and other data sources were used to describe, over time, changes in population size, educational attainment, economic base and related variables. A variety of data sources was used to chart changes in oil production, oil employment, as well as tax income from the industry. Systematic analysis was undertaken of participation in environmental hearings and the kinds of issues raised by different groups. Systematic investigation was also made of local print media content vis a vis the oil industry at different time points. We also analyzed the nature of local community organizations, developing indicators of their density of development, resource base, and modes of networking. We charted public votes on environmental and oil-related issues. Still other indicators, quantitative and qualitative, were created as a means to understand the types of orientations and resources that had evolved in the county.

The analytic strategy was to contrast parts of the county in terms of how the coming of oil and its variations in form and volume over time intersected with particular types of evolving social and economic conditions in place. In this way we can understand why specific communities responded to oil in the way that they did.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: Ventura County has been, for the most part, supportive of the oil industry both onshore and off. A key explanatory factor is the industry's long history in Ventura County, with first oil prospecting beginning in the 1850s. Most Ventura County residents came to a county already economically and environmentally impacted by oil. In addition, the oil industry was, through the 1950s, the county's single largest taxpayer and a similarly large employer. In the 1960s, new residents migrated into Ventura County as the east county became a suburb of Los Angeles and military employment (including contracting) at county bases flourished. These new residents are less familiar with the history of oil in Ventura County and may

view oil operations as a threat to air quality and their suburban way of life. Although environmentalism is relatively weak in Ventura County, increasing environmental sentiments as well as state and federal regulations (e.g. the Clean Air Act) are moving the county away from its historically accommodating stance toward oil.

STUDY RESULTS: Ventura County has historically been amenable to oil development, although demographic and economic changes in its constituent communities may be shifting attitudes and orientations.

The cities of Ventura, Santa Paula, Fillmore, and -- to a lesser extent -- Oxnard grew up around oil. Oil prospectors were among the first white settlers in these areas, and oil wells already dotted the landscape when larger migrations began following the Civil War. Area ranchers and farmers frequently had oil wells on their property, often in areas too steep for cultivation. Oil thus proved compatible with agriculture, the other major contributor to Ventura County's economy through World War II. Although the city of Ojai became a nationally known tourist destination, even this seemingly incompatible industry easily coexisted with oil as Ojai Valley wells were drilled in canyons, generally out of sight.

World War II brought a military boom economy to Ventura County as naval bases were established at Port Hueneme and Point Mugu. The bases attracted new populations to the area and became even larger employers than the oil industry. As Southern California became a center of military contracting and defense engineering, the high-technology and aerospace firms of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley also attracted thousands of new workers. Some aerospace and technology firms located in eastern Ventura County (in the newer communities of Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley and Camarillo), and thousands of those employed in Los Angeles County settled in the Ventura County suburbs. The communities of the east county have grown such that their populations rival the older settlements of Ventura and the Santa Clara River Valley. These voters in the east can now swing the direction of county-wide votes.

Through the 1980s, Ventura county and community leaders welcomed the prospect of increased drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel, although some local environmentalists pushed for mitigations on proposed projects. The density and resource base of local environmental organizations, as with civic organizations in general, is lower in the city of Ventura and the county overall, compared to neighboring counties to the north. Our studies of civic participation at oil-related hearings indicates only modest levels of local citizen input. Again comapred to the two neighboring counties to the north,

Ventura media have been historically positive toward the oil industry's role in the locality.

Ventura County oil support firms service offshore operations throughout the Channel, and the economic impacts of regional offshore development is recognized by local business and government leaders. Protests in neighboring areas (especially Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties) have slowed the pace of Channel oil development and mediated positive economic impacts for Ventura County. Combined with fluctuations in the world price of oil and declining onshore reserves, the resulting overall slowdown has contributed more to oil's decreasing prominence in Ventura County than any internal local resistance.

STUDY PRODUCT(S): "San Luis Obispo County: A Major Switching"; "Santa Barbara County: Two Paths"; "Ventura County: Oil, Fruit, Commune and Commute"; Freudenburg, William R., James Elliott, Jessica Goldberger, and Steven Martin. 1996. "Attitudes toward Environmental Preservation at the Community Level: A Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches"; Paulsen, Krista, 1996. "Local Response to Offshore Leasing Proposals: How Media Enhance Participation"; Freudenburg, William and Jessica Goldberger, and Michael Spittel, "County-Level Database and Place-Level Database" (Set of three Diskettes).

The purpose of this document is to indicate how the distinctive qualities of Ventura County evolved in relation to the oil industry and explain how the county's settlement pattern and cultural traditions, economy and politics, responded to the coming of petroleum – thus shaping that industry's development within its borders. This means understanding the "character" of this place as it has evolved over time, including distinctions among the towns and cities within it.

We lay out our findings and observations in roughly chronological order. Our observations and conclusions rest on approximately 70 interviews, as well as extensive use of historic archives, government documents, media reports, and previous studies. Whenever feasible, we checked information against more than one source and tried to assemble reliable indicators, including quantitative ones, of trends and patterns we set forth. Each section contains by way of introduction relevant demographic data for the periods under discussion. The report ends with an assessment of the factors influencing Ventura County's relationship to the oil industry, and their implications for the county's future.

* * *

In the last century and a half, what is now Ventura County has been transformed from a largely wild and unsettled section of American frontier to a prosperous and populous Southern California county. This is the story of that transformation told through the development of oil – the industry largely responsible for the county's initial Anglo settlement and eventual industrialization. Oil was, with agriculture, one of Ventura County's first industries, now almost 140 years old; oil production as well as general public support for the industry both onshore and off continue today. Given oil's historic importance in the county, the continuous backing by local government and residents may come as no surprise. However, in nearby Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, where the oil industry has also operated for over 100 years, oil – especially offshore drilling – is met with organized and effective resistance. Citing potential conflicts between offshore drilling and the northern counties' heavily tourist and retirement based economies, as well as local environmental and aesthetic concerns, residents in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties have generated cultural and regulatory climates that inhibit or closely monitor oil operations. In the tri-county area, at least, Ventura County's general acceptance of oil is exceptional.

The oil industry's early presence is, however, only one component of this story. In this report we examine several factors which have shaped the county as a whole as well as making each of the county's communities unique. These factors are *geographical* (e.g. whereas Ventura was, during its early years, isolated from eastern and even northern California markets, today Ventura County finds itself becoming a bedroom community for the ever-expanding Los Angeles metropolis), *economic* (e.g. the oil industry was, for many years, a leading employer and among the largest contributors to Ventura County's tax rolls), *institutional* (e.g. the original pattern of land ownership, through large land grants, resulted in the persistence of

exceptionally large tracts held by single owners through the 1950s), and *political* (e.g. environmental organizing is limited and extremely localized; national environmental policies like the Clean Air Act are responsible for recent moves to curb major polluters). These factors are rooted in the county's history and continue to shape it; they interact with each other and inform local responses to events both inside and outside the county's borders.

As we will show, through the First World War Ventura County struggled to overcome geographical isolation and find markets for its two main exports – agricultural products and oil. Throughout the Spanish and Mexican periods (the mid-1700s through 1848), Santa Barbara was the regional center of commerce; Ventura county was mainly a ranching area, with few settlements and fewer than twenty acres under cultivation (Reith 1963: 85). When American settlers lured west by the discovery of gold in northern California found oil instead, their early attempts at refining and marketing petroleum products were foiled by transportation difficulties. The arrival of the Southern Pacific railroad in 1887 allowed the infant citrus and oil industries to prosper.

Oil was first discovered in the canyons of the Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys in the late 1850s (Fry 1983: 17; Welty and Taylor 1958: 21); with the successful development of the Ventura Avenue oil field following World War I, the adjacent city of Ventura became the county's center for oil production and oil field services. The industry's prominence continued through World War II, when a second economic boom, based on the defense and aerospace industries (including the construction of two major naval bases in Ventura County), brought new wealth and new populations to California. The historical population centers of Ventura County were already growing due to the oil industry, which reached peak production in 1954. As offshore drilling advanced through the 1950s, operations throughout the Santa Barbara Channel utilized Ventura County support industries whose continuing strength cushioned the eventual decline in the county's onshore production. Perhaps the most important development in this era, however, was the construction of U.S. 101 (the main freeway connecting Los Angeles to Ventura County and Santa Barbara) in the early 1960s. It was the 101 freeway that definitively ended Ventura County's isolation; the freeway opened the still agricultural East County to suburban development, separated the city of Ventura from its beach front, and paved over much of the north county coast's beaches.

The Santa Barbara Oil Spill of 1969, a watershed moment in national environmental awareness, is often cited as the impetus for the environmental legislation of the 1970s (including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Air Act). Ventura County's then 100-year old oil industry was now subject to environmentally motivated operating restrictions, and locals were becoming more aware of oil's detrimental impacts. As environmental activism in the county (and in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, to the north) increased through the 1980s, international oil markets collapsed; these two factors together resulted in the closure of inefficient operations and a slowing of new exploration – including

offshore exploration. While new industries, including tourism, manufacturing, and high technology research have come to rival oil and agriculture in the county's economy, oil's influence remains apparent in both the landscape of the county and the memories of its leaders. County elected officials remain generally supportive, but oil operations do meet resistance from regional environmental interests and local regulatory agencies.

The history of Ventura's changing economy is described in further detail below, with an emphasis not only on oil's role in determining early settlement and driving local economies, but on how the various communities of Ventura County came to be the way they are. Basic statistical information on the county's economy and demographics is provided for each era, with a more detailed demographic analysis for each locality included in a final section covering the last 25 years, what we have termed "The Environmental Era."

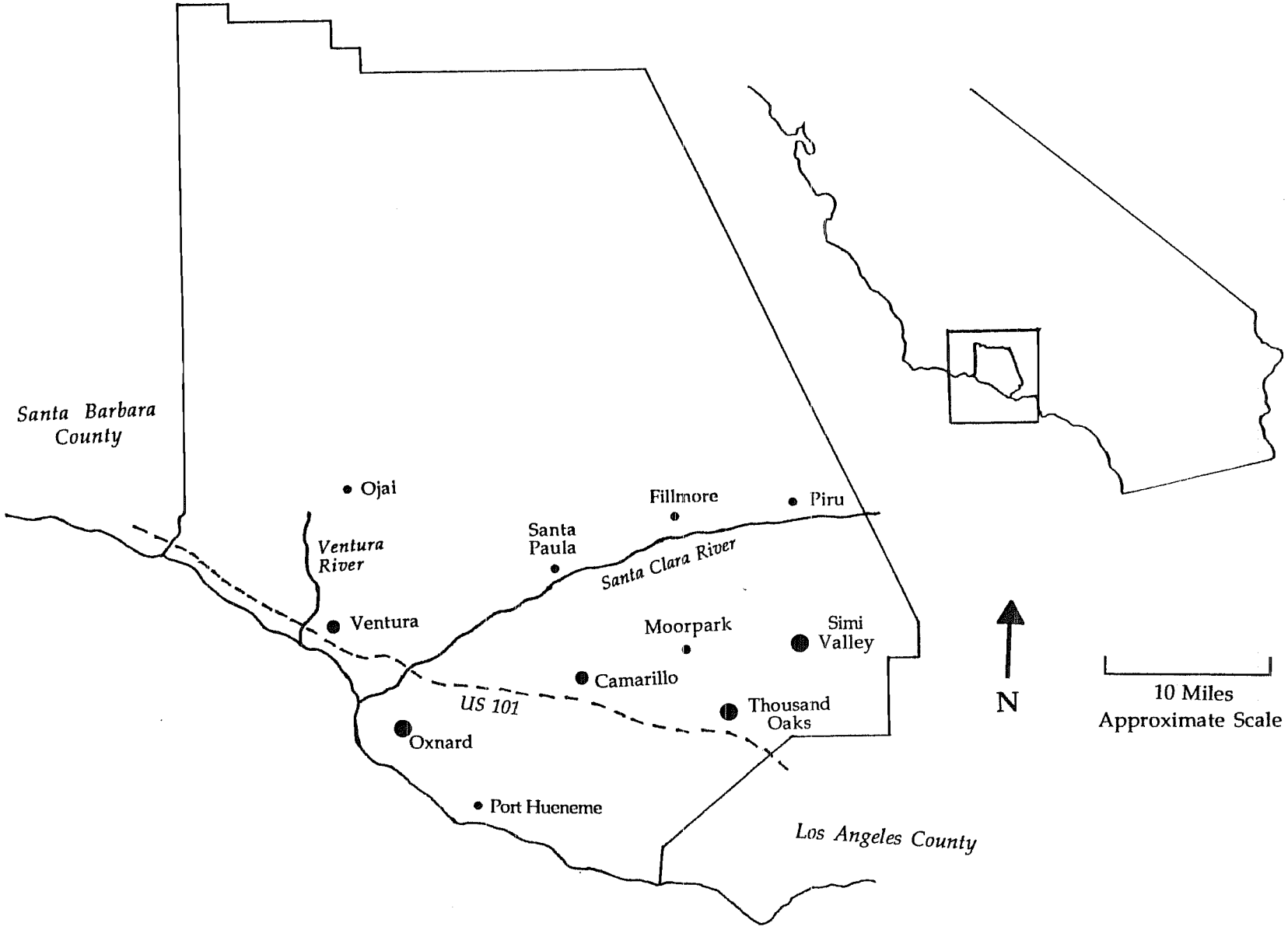
## Geographical Orientation

Ventura County lies between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles Counties to the west and east, respectively, with Kern County to the north (see map). To the south/southwest lies nearly 40 miles of Pacific coast, which varies from wide sand beaches at Ventura and Oxnard to high cliffs with rocky breakwaters at the northern and southern borders of the county. With an area of 1,843 square miles, Ventura is a mid-sized county by California standards (ranking 26th of 58 counties). The northern half of the county consists of steep hills covered with chaparral and scrub pines, and is now included in the Los Padres National Forest (Project Development Company 1992: 4). Many of these back country mountains contain the geological formations necessary to trap oil – including the oil-rich regions of Sulphur Mountain and Ventura Avenue.

Because of this rugged terrain in the north, settlement is concentrated in the southern half of the county where the valleys of the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers, a narrow coastal shelf, and the broad Oxnard plain provided flat, fertile ground for early settlements, including permanent villages established by the Chumash Indians. The Ventura River basin, which forms the Ojai Valley at its northern extreme, runs from north to south through the Santa Ynez Mountains. The Valley's southern end opens into a broad plain now known as the Ventura Avenue area; the Ventura River empties into the Pacific just west of the city of Ventura's historic downtown.

The Santa Clara River is much longer, having its headwaters in Los Angeles County to the east. Flowing between the Santa Susana Mountains on the south and the Santa Ynez range on the north, the Santa Clara River drains an area roughly the size of Delaware (Bottorff 1995: 5). Within Ventura County, the river is fed by two main tributaries , Sespe and Piru creeks. Together these waterways create a narrow valley that runs west/southwest for 35 miles before opening onto the wide Oxnard

# Ventura County Map



Plain. Containing some of the finest agricultural land in the state, the Oxnard Plain was created by the Santa Clara's shifting course. This plain is also the widest area of flat coastal land in Ventura County; for much of the coastline, the coastal shelf is extremely narrow as foothills run right up to the sea. This is the case in the Rincon area of the northern county, and in the Santa Susana foothills at the south.

South of the Santa Clara River Valley, rugged mountains separate the historic settlements of the northern and western county from newer settlements in the east. The Simi and Conejo Valleys make up what is commonly referred to as the "east county," a geographical region proximate to Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. This proximity to Los Angeles's increasing sprawl led to the area's growth as a bedroom community. The Conejo Grade between contemporary Thousand Oaks and the Oxnard Plain thus not only separates the county geographically, it marks a shift in local orientations – either toward Ventura and the coast, or toward Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley.

## I. Before the Americans and Before World War I

**Table 1: County sociodemographic characteristics, 1890-1920**

| | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 10,071 | 14,367 | 18,347 | 28,724 |
| Percent Foreign Born | 18.48 | 17.12 | * | * |
| Percent Nonwhite[1] | 20.21 | 3.77 | 6.62 | 3.37 |
| Percent Male | 58.40 | 56.98 | 57.88 | 52.80 |
| Household Size | 4.61 | 4.10 | 4.30 | 4.12 |

Source: U.S. Census.
* Indicates data not available

Most Anglo settlement took hold in Ventura county between California's statehood in 1850 and the end of World War I; in many cases, the settlers of this early era set the pattern for the various communities' future development. These early settlers were farmers, oil prospectors, and health seekers, and many of the economic endeavors established during these early years have persisted into the present – either through the establishment of physical improvements which would determine future economic paths, or through the attraction of distinct populations whose culture and values would preclude or encourage particular types of development.

[1] In 1890, Mexicans were counted as nonwhite. In 1900-1920, only Blacks, Asians and American Indians were counted as nonwhite.

While detailed statistical information on the occupations of Ventura County residents is not available for this early period, measures of the importance of agriculture in the county are available. For example, the ratio of county residents to the number of farms remained low throughout this era, with 13.8 residents to every farm in 1890 and 18.62 residents to every farm in 1920. This ratio is notably lower than that seen in California as a whole – 22.8 residents per farm in 1890 and 29.1 in 1920 – showing that Ventura county's economy was more dependent on agriculture than the state's. The average farm size in Ventura county during this era dropped from 425 acres in 1890 to 249.4 acres in 1920, probably due to the shift from grazing to more intensive agriculture (especially citrus) following the turn of the century (U.S. Census).

*Early settlement*

The chain of events determining Ventura County's present character began long before the Yankees arrived. The Chumash tribe had inhabited what is now Ventura County for several thousand years before Spanish explorers chronicled their presence. The area's abundant fish, moderate climate, and adequate fresh water supply attracted the Chumash, who established permanent village sites in the area now covered by the city of Ventura. It was because of the Chumash's prosperity in the area that Spanish missionaries chose a site just below the mouth of the Ventura River to establish the Mission San Buenaventura in 1782. The mission proved to be a successful agricultural operation for its first 50 years despite the declining Chumash population; at the time mission lands were privatized in 1833, only 626 Chumash remained – half the number at the mission only 20 years earlier.[2] The Mexican Congress' Secularization Act of 1833 granted large tracts of what had been the mission hinterland to Mexican citizens. Even those lands closest to the mission were privatized, as the dwindling native population (halved again in the decade following secularization) weakened the missionaries' argument that these lands must be maintained in trust for the Chumash. The twenty tracts granted between 1833 and 1846 averaged 25,000 acres;[3] these ranchos remained largely intact when the first Yankee settlers arrived in the mid-nineteenth century (Reith).

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[2] This decline reflects an overall depletion of the Chumash population on the central California coast, mainly due to disease and disruption of traditional ways of life.

[3] Through the 1950s, maps of Ventura County often included the outlines of these ranchos, and oil fields were commonly referred to by the ranchos beneath which they were found. Land grants and contemporary names of locations are as follows: Calleguas (Camarillo), Cañada de San Miguelito (north of Ventura proper), Cañada Largo o Verde (Casitas Springs), El Conejo (Thousand Oaks), El Rincon (Rincon), El Rio de Santa Clara o la Colonia (Oxnard Plain), Ex-Mission San Buenaventura (Ventura and eastward into foothills), Guadalasca (Point Mugu and eastward), Las Posas (Somis), Mission San Buenaventura (36 acres in Ventura proper), Ojai (Ojai Valley), San Francisco (Piru/Camulos), San Miguel (East Ventura/Oxnard), Santa Ana (upper Ventura River to Meiner's Oaks), Santa Clara del Norte (El Rio), Santa Paula y Saticoy (Santa Paula), Sespe (Fillmore, Bardsdale), Simi (Simi Valley), Temescal (north of Piru, mostly Los Angeles County), Tico Lot (20 acres

Mexican ranchers of this period typically raised cattle for hides and tallow.[4] Dependent on favorable climate conditions to maintain feed for their stocks, the ranchers were vulnerable to droughts and floods; if cattle were slaughtered too quickly or died off during poor weather (as was common throughout this era), leather prices at glutted eastern markets plummeted, leaving the ranchers cash poor. The Mexican ranchers' situation was further complicated in 1848, when California became an American territory. United States law required proof of title to establish land ownership, and the sometimes imprecise Mexican descriptions of boundaries and acreage opened their holdings to title disputes; confirming a title required formal legal assistance, which strained the rancheros' finances and often left them in debt to Anglo creditors (Reith 1963: 87; Almaguer 1994). The bias of American land agents toward white settlers further threatened the Mexicans' now tentative hold on their ranchos. Through assertions of ownership or cash exchange, settlers from the eastern U.S. were able to purchase most of contemporary Ventura County in large tracts. The change in land ownership also meant a change in status for Mexicans in Ventura County; whereas the Mexican landholders of the rancho era had been wealthy and self-sufficient, their descendants, without land and wealth, became dependent on Anglo landowners for jobs (usually as ranch or field hands, and later in citrus packing houses) (Menchaca 1995). By the turn of the century, Mexicans (whether born in the county or more recent immigrants) had become the principal source of farm labor in Ventura County (Almaguer 1994: 72).

During this period of Americanization (c. 1850), Ventura County (then actually part of Santa Barbara County[5]) was a sparsely populated region. Settlement centered around the city of Ventura and the mission, site of about "70 or 80 houses" (Reith 1963: 90-91), with a more scattered population living on outlying ranchos. The county's population was mainly Hispanic at this time. Nine "Americans" (Anglos) lived in the city of Ventura in 1858, 21 in 1862 (Reith 1963: 90-91), and early oil prospectors who came to the county soon after Americanization found few white settlers in the existing communities (Hutchinson 1965). Chinese and Japanese immigrants also settled in the region from the 1850s through the early 1900s. Brought to the U.S. by labor contractors to work in mines and on railroads, many of these immigrants had not intended to stay in the area, planning instead to save their earnings and return to Asia. By 1900, however, relatively permanent Japanese and Chinese communities developed in Ventura and Oxnard, with some settlers in the Santa Clara River and Ojai Valleys. Chinese immigrants tended to work as laborers, domestics, launderers, and fishermen or produce farmers, while Japanese worked mainly as farm laborers (Fukuyama 1994; Jennings 1984).

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near Mission San Buenaventura) (Robinson 1979: 20-21, 43-48).

[4] Transportation difficulties made beef a less viable use of cattle. While some cattle were driven to San Francisco following its gold rush boom, hides remained the principal commodity throughout most of the rancho era.

[5] In 1873 the State Assembly voted to split Santa Barbara County in two, creating the boundaries of the current counties (Hutchinson 1965: 211).

The first rush of Anglo settlement occurred in the 1860s, as farmers, speculators and oil seekers emigrated from the east. In many cases, the settlement and economic developments of this early period determined the trajectories the communities have followed through the late twentieth century; the following section details those developments in the coastal communities of Ventura and Oxnard, the Santa Clara River Valley, and the Ojai Valley. While the East County (including the present communities of Moorpark, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks) are discussed in later sections of this document, their role in the county's early history is quite limited. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Simi and Conejo Valleys were used exclusively for cattle and sheep ranching and dry farming (wheat, barley, hay, walnuts and later apricots), extensive enterprises that precluded even the limited degree urban development seen in the west county (Bidwell 1989: 24).[6]

*Ventura*[7] *and the coastal communities*

Although oil brought some of Ventura County's earliest Anglo settlers, the young industry's influence on the *city* of Ventura was minimal through the nineteenth century. While early oil prospectors depended on the city as a port and a center of trade and commerce, oil drilling was generally centered in the back country canyons of the Santa Clara and Ojai Valleys until World War I. These early operations are described below (see *"Oil in the back country: The Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys"*).

Through the mid-1860s, the city of Ventura remained merely a small settlement, as local cattle ranching provided for limited trade and early settlers were dispersed through the Santa Clara and Ojai Valleys. Though lacking a wharf, the city of Ventura already served as a port, and cargoes of eastern manufactured goods were loaded off ships anchored in the bay using smaller boats. This type of trade was limited, however, as the county's meager exports (mainly hides) were collected only over long periods of time (Reith 1963: 88-89).

One factor limiting the development of intensive agriculture in Ventura County (and the city of Ventura's subsequent urbanization) was the persistence of large ranchos – Mexican landowners had been reluctant to subdivide or sell off their properties until forced to do so (see above), when grazing operations ceased to be viable. The development of Ventura as a commercial center would depend upon changes in both the patterns of agricultural production and the politics of Santa

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[6] Maps of Ventura county from the 1870s and 1880s note no settlements between Springville (near present Camarillo) and Calabasas; one Conejo Valley rancher's address was listed as "25 miles east of Hueneme" (Bidwell 1989: 32).

[7] The name Ventura is an abbreviated version of San Buenaventura, the name given to the mission founded there in 1782. "San Buenaventura" was too long to fit on railroad timetables, however, and the name was shortened to "Ventura" with the coming of the Southern Pacific in 1887 (Reith 1963: 113-14).

Barbara County (which, until 1873, included what is now the county of Ventura); these changes took place throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s.

As the Civil War ended in the eastern states, American settlers came west in search of land. The introduction of a population of experienced farmers coincided with the Americanization of Ventura County land ownership; the result was a shift from large ranchos used for grazing cattle or sheep to small (100-200 acre) farms dedicated to more intensive agriculture (including beans, grain, and eventually citrus).[8] Despite the increased agricultural production in its hinterland, however, the city of Ventura remained relatively undeveloped while county tax funds flowed to Santa Barbara. Instead, the town of Hueneme, twelve miles to the south, became the center of regional trade and commerce. The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors had incorporated the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company in 1871 (contemporary Ventura county was still a part of Santa Barbara county), hoping to exploit the natural deep water anchorage. The company then began construction of a pier which, upon its completion later that year, would claim to be the only "true wharf" between Santa Cruz and San Pedro (Hutchinson 1965: 186).

The city of Ventura constructed a wharf at the same time, but lack of a reliable bridge over the Santa Clara River limited Ventura's hinterland to the north bank of the river. Land in the area north of the Santa Clara was thoroughly subdivided, with irrigated farms growing a wide variety of crops; shipments from the port of Ventura thus contained a variety of produce as well as oil from developing Santa Clara River Valley fields (see Photo 1).[9] Agricultural products from the south bank of the Santa Clara, mainly non-irrigated crops such as beans and grain, were shipped through Hueneme. Because of its more intensive agriculture and diverse economy, Ventura boasted a larger population than Hueneme. When the California State legislature divided Santa Barbara County in 1873, creating the present county of Ventura, locals voted the city of Ventura to be the new county seat (Reith 1963: 104).[10]

Like most of Ventura County, the city of Ventura had no access to rail transportation until 1887. Earlier Southern Pacific lines utilized routes through the San Joaquin valley (1867), and Los Angeles became the terminus for Southern Pacific's east/west route through the Mojave (1876). Stage coaches provided access to these rail lines using well-developed roads through the Santa Clara River Valley (Reith 1963: 105-108). While Ventura's modest commercial development before the railroad (flour and saw mills, a local Wells Fargo office, four hotels, a newspaper, furniture and carriage factories and a machine shop), the coming of the Southern

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[8] By 1879, 75,000 acres of Ventura County land was dedicated to crops; 68,000 of these acres were in barley or other grains (Reith 1963: 106).

[9] Hardison and Stewart, founders of what would be the Union Oil Company, moved oil from the Santa Clara River Valley to Ventura via a gravity pipeline, built in 1886 (see below).

[10] Ventura received 238 votes, Saticoy 156 votes, and Hueneme 214 votes (Hutchinson 1965: 211).

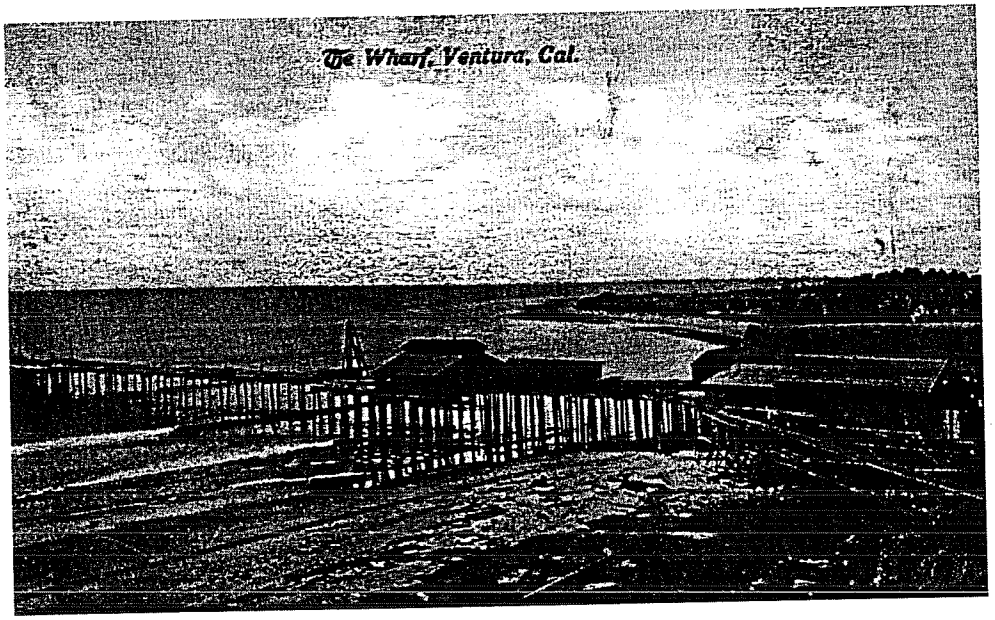


**Photo 1: Ventura wharf circa 1900.** Constructed in the 1870s, Ventura's wharf was used for shipping agricultural goods as well as oil produced in the Santa Clara River Valley and Ventura Avenue fields. Early on the wharf set a precedent for industrial uses of the coast. Reprinted from Murphy (1979).

**Photo 2: Adams Canyon oil field, 1890.** Drilled by Union Oil in 1888, Adams Canyon was the company's first major success and produced 800 to 900 barrels per day. Many of Ventura County's early wells were located in canyons, thus remaining out of sight of many residents and on land not suitable for agriculture. Reprinted from Franks and Lambert (1985).

Pacific's Santa Clara River Valley line, running from Newhall (in northwest Los Angeles County) west to the ocean at Ventura, intensified growth here just as it did in the communities of Santa Paula and Fillmore (see below). A building boom began as new settlers arrived even before the railroad's completion; new streets were platted, and sidewalks and sewers installed. Most commercial development centered around the city's downtown district (east Main and Santa Clara streets, between Chestnut and Figueroa), while homes and small farms dotted the Ventura Avenue section of the lower Ventura River Valley (Reith 1963: 113). It would be another thirty years, however, before oil was discovered on Ventura Avenue (the impetus for Ventura's next major growth spurt).

As the twentieth century approached, sugar beets were becoming a major crop on the coastal plain south of Ventura, across the Santa Clara River (see map). In 1897, following passage of the Dingley Tariff Act (which imposed a tax on imported sugar), a group of area farmers petitioned the Oxnard brothers, recognized as leaders in sugar beet processing, to build a plant in Ventura County. The Oxnard brothers agreed, and initially sought a site in the city of Ventura. An area in east Ventura (near the Santa Clara River and current 126 freeway) was amenable to both city officials and the Oxnard brothers, but no land in this area was for sale (Reith 1963: 120).

Instead, the sugar beet refinery was built for two million dollars on the empty site of a town that would later bear the Oxnard brothers' name. Completed in 1899, the project initiated rapid urban development in what had been a largely agricultural area; buildings were quickly moved in from nearby settlements at El Rio and Hueneme. To meet the new labor demand approximately 1,000 Japanese workers were housed in tent cities near the beet fields (Fukuyama 1994: 3-4). Immediately following the plant's construction, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed a spur line to Oxnard. The new town would soon eclipse Hueneme as Ventura County's agricultural transportation hub and as the center of commerce south of the Santa Clara River. By 1902, Henry T. Oxnard claimed that "The sugar beet investment in Southern California amounts to upwards of $6,000,000, and we pay for labor, beets, lime rock and freight, all of which dispenses in this part of the state about $4,000,000 annually" (quoted in Almaguer 1994: 98). The city of Oxnard was incorporated the following year, with a population of 2,200; jobs provided by the sugar beet refinery ranged from 50 in the off season to 700 at harvest (Triem 1985: 98-100). Farmers were able to rotate sugar beets with lima beans and barley, the area's former agricultural staples. The practice of growing several crops a year would make the Oxnard plain an especially productive agricultural region throughout the twentieth century.

The city of Ventura remained an agricultural and business center through the First World War. In 1903 Ventura's City Beautiful league formed, undertaking projects including street paving and tree planting (Triem 1985: 105). Local philanthropist E. P. Foster donated an oceanside parcel of land to be used as the County fairgrounds, and the site was landscaped to resemble San Francisco's Golden

Gate park, with palms and sculptured sandstone. Olives, grapes, walnuts, and especially lemons flourished on the hillsides. As the need for cooperative marketing and innovative packing techniques became more apparent (produce was eventually shipped east via refrigerated freight cars), Ventura became one of many lemon packing and processing centers throughout the county (Reith 1963: 119). However, the Santa Clara line providing Ventura's main rail access also limited the city's potential as an agricultural packing center. Citrus groves dotted the length of the rail line, and packing of Santa Clara River Valley produce at Santa Paula or Fillmore was more economical as all crops eventually moved east to the main line at Newhall.

Through World War I, Ventura's oil and gas production industry remained negligible. In 1903, a local utility company drilled nine wells in the Ventura River bed, which produced gas for domestic use in Ventura and Santa Paula. Although the project yielded 10,000 to 15,000 cubic feet of gas per day, the endeavor was short-lived due to water intrusion in the wells (Reith 1963: 132; Beaton 1957: 108, footnote). Oil transport, however, was proving to be a lucrative endeavor. The port at Ventura was nearest to the Santa Clara River Valley oil fields (and later the Ventura Avenue oil fields), making it a practical loading point for the increasing amounts of crude oil produced in the region. Ships easily loaded oil via pipelines, but the lack of protection at the pier, and debris deposited by winter storms, made docking difficult and hampered the shipment of solid cargo. Due to something of a "catch 22," the city of Ventura had difficulty securing funding to improve the facility. In 1915 the Army Corps of Engineers recommended building a jetty to protect the harbor from sand deposited by the Ventura River, as the Ventura port was preferable to Hueneme for "shipping oil by gravity pipeline" from the fields to tankers. The recommendation was rejected, however, due to what was then a low level of port traffic (Reith 1963: 124-25).

To the north of Ventura, the Rincon Coast settlements of Mussel Shoals, Seacliff and La Conchita took root in the 1890s. In the late 1890s, Southern Pacific railroad workers established a camp north of Ventura near present day La Conchita. When the railroad was completed in 1907, oil workers replaced the railroad men, but the town remained little more than a labor camp, with accompanying saloons and brothels. The area's temperamental geology became apparent as soon as the railroad was completed; mud slides killed between four and six men in 1907 (a foreshadowing of the slides which destroyed several homes at La Conchita in 1995) (*Santa Barbara News-Press* , March 19, 1995). Nevertheless, permanent settlements would take hold in this area during the 1920s oil boom.

*Oil in the back country: The Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys*

California oil development began near the current Los Angeles-Ventura County line in 1855, when General Andreas Pico began distilling oil found at seeps near Newhall in Los Angeles County. Ventura County was also home to early oil development; some prior to the first Pennsylvania wells of 1859. One of the county's first commercial developments of petroleum resources ended in 1861, when George Shoobridge Gilbert's Ojai Valley refinery burned. An explosion following rebuilding drove Gilbert to Ventura, where he became a merchant (Fry 1983: 17). Three years later, in 1864, Captain James H. White (of E. Conway and Company) gained title to 78,000 acres of Rancho Ex-Mission and surrounding land, including Sulphur Mountain.[11] White reportedly refined oil found in the area to yield 38 percent illuminating oil and 48 percent lubricating oil (Franks and Lambert 1985: 5). While this should secure his place as one of Ventura County's true oil pioneers, he is for some reason excluded from most histories of the region. Leland and Josiah Stanford (of railroad, mining and University fame) are regularly acknowledged, however, as initial developers of Sulphur Mountain. As early as 1866 they tunneled into the mountain at an angle which would allow the oil to flow out using only gravity. Forty-five tunnels produced up to sixty barrels each per day, most used for lubricating oils (Franks and Lambert 1985: 40).

Exploration of the Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys exploded in 1864 when Yale professor Benjamin Silliman wrote to his Pennsylvania associate T. A. Scott that seeps in Rancho Ojai likely meant a "river of oil" lay beneath the surface. In their history of the Union Oil Company (founded in Ventura County some 20 years after this initial communication), Welty and Taylor (1958) credit this letter with starting a major rush for land and oil in Ventura County. Scott was a railroad executive who, like many of Ventura County's original oil prospectors, had taken part in the original Titusville, Pennsylvania oil boom. Unlike most, however, Scott had profited from the boom through both oil and railroad interests. He responded to Silliman's claim by organizing a syndicate of investors who purchased 277,000 acres of California land (including eight Ventura County ranchos, as well as property in Los Angeles and Humboldt counties).[12] Scott sent his nephew, Thomas R. Bard, and Titusville veteran J. A. Beardsley to Ventura to seek the reported river of oil. Arriving in 1865, Bard began exploration of the Ojai Valley – an endeavor that would prove relatively fruitless as costs of exploration far outweighed the value of the few meagerly producing wells (Welty and Taylor 1958: 22-24). Even Bard's most successful well, Ojai No. 6 in the upper Ojai Valley, produced only 15 to 20 barrels per day – not enough to secure Scott's interest in the endeavor. Scott ordered

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[11] Sulphur Mountain is directly south of Ojai.

[12] Scott's purchase played an important role in shifting Ventura County land from Mexican to Yankee ownership. One historian argues that Scott and his agents often coerced Mexican Rancheros into selling their property and often paid less than fair prices. Following this purchase Mexicans quickly lost their affluence and their political influence in the county. By 1868, only six of the 48 owners of Ventura County tracts larger than 500 acres had Spanish surnames (Almaguer 1994: 82-86).

drilling halted in 1867, and Bard remained on as a land broker, possibly his most influential role in shaping the county's history (Fry 1983: 20).

By this time, oil prospectors were no longer the only Yankees in the area. While the Pennsylvanians drilled in Rancho Ojai, horticulturist George G. Briggs purchased Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy (near present day Santa Paula) in the interest of establishing a fruit orchard and temperance colony. Although the Santa Clara River Valley typically has an ideal climate for fruit and nut trees, the drought of 1863-64 stunted Briggs' young trees and he subdivided the property in 1867 (Triem 1985: 70). Later endeavors in citrus farming would prove highly successful in the Santa Clara River Valley, as did oil exploration. By 1868, school districts were established in both the Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys (in the towns of Ojai, then called "Nordhoff," and Santa Paula, respectively); these were the first districts in the county outside Ventura proper (Hutchinson 1965: 150). In 1873, Nathan Blanchard and Elisha Bradley purchased what would be the town site for Santa Paula (2,700 acres). By 1879, Santa Paula was the second largest town in Ventura County with a population of 250 (Triem 1985: 70-72).

Wildcatting continued in the Ventura county region despite early disappointments. Around 1876, Pennsylvanian D. C. Scofield struck a rich find at Pico Canyon, near Newhall (in the Santa Clara River Valley, just across the Los Angeles County line), which re-invigorated exploration in nearby Ventura County. Scofield built the first pipeline on the Pacific coast in 1879, from his Pico Canyon find to a refinery at Newhall five miles away (Welty and Taylor 1958: 26-7). Encouraged by these successes, another Pennsylvanian, I. E. Blake, offered long-time Titusville operator Lyman Stewart all the land he could drill on Blake's leases, which stretched from Newhall to Santa Barbara. Stewart accepted this offer and arrived in Newhall with partner Wallace L. Hardison. The pair (with the assistance of Thomas R. Bard, by then "the richest man in Ventura County") would eventually incorporate their operation as the Union Oil Company (known as Unocal after 1985) (Welty and Taylor 1958: 17-18, 41).

Hardison and Stewart had mixed results with wells drilled in Pico, Adams, and Tapo Canyons[13] in their first years of operation. Although many of these early wells were successful producers, Stewart's insistence on acquiring more and more land kept the company in lean financial straits, even as production soared from 2,661 barrels in 1884 to 87,785 barrels in 1887 (Welty and Taylor 1958: 235). This lack of operating capital led to inventiveness, however. Frustrated with rail rates that made shipment to the lucrative San Francisco market unprofitable, Hardison and Stewart constructed a four inch pipeline from Newhall to Ventura in 1886 and shipped their oil north by steamer. This ship, the *Wallace L. Hardison*, was the first oil tanker built on the Pacific Coast (Welty and Taylor 1958: 2, 38). The tanker burned in 1889 at the Ventura Pier after a crewman attempted to check the oil level

[13] Adams Canyon is in the Santa Clara River Valley, approximately three miles west of Santa Paula; Tapo Canyon is in the hills just north of present-day Simi Valley.

in the hold using a lantern (Franks and Lambert: 28). To avoid using costly coal to fire steam drilling rigs, Stewart had his mechanics design the first ever nozzle and burner unit that could burn oil instead of kerosene – a development that changed the drilling industry and "doubled the potential market for California petroleum" (Welty and Taylor 1958: 37-38).

When Hardison and Stewart moved their operation from Newhall to Santa Paula in 1886, they found a typical oil boom town. Santa Paula at this time boasted one saloon for every seven families, a fact that devout Presbyterian Lyman Stewart abhorred and sought to change. As they began to profit from their oil operations, Hardison and Stewart regularly donated money for town improvements as well as traveling musicians, speakers and other cultural events. The two also engaged in a friendly rivalry over who could donate more to their respective church for amenities such as stained glass windows (Welty and Taylor 1958: 40-43).

Through much of this era, Ventura County was cut off from the new Southern Pacific Railroad line which joined Los Angeles and San Francisco via the San Joaquin Valley (Hutchinson 1965: 202); however, the 1887 completion of a new Southern Pacific line through the valley to Ventura, would permanently alter the region's economy. For instance, early Santa Clara River Valley settlers had experimented with citrus farming during the early 1880s, but the inaccessibility of rail transportation led them to rely on less perishable crops (specifically wool, honey, and grains). Rail transportation made citrus farming economically viable, and both oranges and lemons flourished in the valley's near perfect climate.[14] Lima beans, walnuts, and apricots also became more viable with the introduction of rail transport.

In addition, the railroad shaped the pattern of Valley settlement by determining which towns would develop as centers of agricultural packing. Fillmore, located midway between Santa Paula and Piru, originated as a rail stop and later became a packing and transport center. Rather than establishing a central Santa Clara rail stop in the existing communities of Bardsdale, Sespe or Cienega,[15] the Southern Pacific instead purchased land between the three from the Sespe Land and Water Company, naming the stop and the new town Fillmore after a Southern Pacific executive.

The city of Santa Paula also flourished with the coming of the railroad, as it was now connected to both Los Angeles and San Francisco. This proved a boon for Santa Paula's Hardison and Stewart Oil Company, which built its first refinery in Santa Paula in 1887. The refinery transformed 14,000 barrels a day of crude oil into

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[14] Oranges became a major crop in the Ojai Valley as well, where they were commercially produced as early as 1880. In 1911 Ojai boasted production of enough oranges to feed every man, woman and child in the U.S. (Fry 1983: 211). How many oranges this meant per capita is left to the imagination.

[15] While Bardsdale still exists as a suburb of Fillmore, Cienega and Sespe are no longer on the map.

grease, asphalt, lubricants and illuminating oil before it closed in 1895.[16] The following year Hardison and Stewart brought in California's most successful well to date, Adams Canyon Number One, which produced 800 to 900 barrels a day near Santa Paula (see Photo 2) (Welty and Taylor 1958: 235). By the close of 1888, Hardison and Stewart's holdings included "90 miles of pipeline connecting the various oil tanks of the county" plus 60 miles of telephone wires, 52 oil tank cars, and a steam ship with capacity of 6,500 barrels that loaded its cargo at Hueneme (Welty and Taylor 1958: 46). On October 17, 1890, the Sespe, Torrey Canyon, and Hardison and Stewart oil companies incorporated as the Union Oil Company of California, with Thomas Bard as president. The company built its headquarters in Santa Paula, and the original brick office on Main Street today serves as the Santa Paula Union Oil Museum. The company continued to grow through the 1890s, and by 1892, vice president Lyman Stewart was acquiring so much land that Union hired an assistant for the county recorder to keep complete account of the transactions (Welty and Taylor 1958: 60).[17]

Santa Paula's population tripled in the 1880s, its growth fueled by oil and citrus production (Union Oil Museum, Santa Paula). Although much of the city's downtown is currently in relative disrepair, the elaborate Victorian architecture of downtown homes and businesses remains as a reminder of the city's past wealth. At the turn of the century, agriculture and oil vied for status as the city's largest industry. Agriculture gained some prominence in the early 1900s as overproduction from fields in the city of Los Angeles caused several Ventura County wells to be shut down, and Los Angeles became the new center of Pacific Coast oil production. The status of agriculture and oil would be inverted again in 1916, however, when significant strikes at South Mountain initiated a ten year boom (Triem 1985: 109).

In 1900, the Union Oil Company moved its headquarters from Santa Paula to Los Angeles. The Union Tool Company, a local subsidiary developed to provide oil field tools to Union at wholesale (as well as designing tools for situations specific to Union's operations), followed the corporate office south in 1901 (Welty and Taylor 1958: 89). Nevertheless, several similarly sized but shorter lived companies remained. Santa Paula nearly doubled its population between 1900 and 1910 (from 1,324 to 2,216), as oil exploration and production by Union and other companies continued after Union's corporate departure, and as the young citrus industry continued to grow.

The community of Fillmore had its first major oil boom in 1911, when the Montebello Oil Company made a major find four miles south of town. Oil changed the face of this tiny agricultural town, as several citrus orchards were subdivided to provide housing for oil field workers, and Central Avenue's wooden storefronts

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[16] The plant burned in 1896, after which time owner Union oil relied on its refinery at Oleum (Northeast San Francisco Bay) to pick up the slack. Another small refinery would be built at Santa Paula in 1912.

[17] Union was also rapidly acquiring land in Kern and Santa Barbara counties.

were replaced with the unique sandstone and brick buildings that stand there today.[18] A 1911 promotional edition of the *Fillmore Herald* claimed that Fillmore was "in the center of the Ventura County oil industry"; forty-seven rigs were said to be producing the lightest oil in the state (*Fillmore Herald* 1911). Fillmore's Ventura Refinery opened five years later, employing 150 persons. One of the largest industrial developments in Ventura County at the time, the refinery operated twenty-four hours a day (Buckler 1982: 7). The town boasted hotels, banks, and an opera house and claimed to have the "largest lemon orchards in the world" (*Fillmore Herald* 1911). In a case of "cross-valley rivalry," the *Santa Paula Chronicle* claimed only two years later that Santa Paula had the "largest" acreage in lemons (Triem 1985: 109).

In this early era, oil and citrus easily coexisted in the Santa Clara River Valley (as they do today), and their development occasionally benefited the same parties: citrus farmers received royalties from wells drilled on their land[19] (often in areas too steep to farm), and oil developers occasionally took up citrus farming – sometimes with great success. In 1891, Union Oil vice president Wallace Hardison entered into a partnership with agriculturist Nathan Blanchard, purchasing 413 acres to be planted in citrus. The pair incorporated their operation as the Limoneira Company, parent company of what was to become the nation's great citrus marketing giant, Sunkist.

Blanchard and Hardison made several contributions to the Santa Clara River Valley's industrial infrastructure. In 1891, they organized the Santa Paula Water Works to serve the town; two years later they organized the Thermal Belt Water Company to serve the Limoneira Ranch. Their first Thermal Belt pipeline was laid in 1893, the same year 18,644 lemon trees were planted on Limoneira property. When Hardison's nephew Charles Teague became director in 1899, the company had over 50,000 trees. By 1911, Limoneira was large enough to warrant a Southern Pacific rail spur, and in 1917 the company built the first private insectary in California, used to grow beneficial insects (Triem 1991: 2-3). The political power of the citrus growers, including members of the Teague and Hardison families, reached beyond their ranches. Through the Thermal Belt Company and related water endeavors (including the Santa Paula Water Works), citrus farmers controlled local utilities, and sat on the boards of Valley banks (Almaguer 1994: 96). In addition, from the 1870s to 1964 citrus growers (and not leaders of the less locally-grounded oil industry) also dominated the Santa Paula city council (Menchaca 1995: 109).

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[18] Although the facades of several Central Avenue buildings were severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the city had already approved a redevelopment plan that would assure any improvements were in keeping with the town's existing visual character.

[19] Much of a citrus farmer's investment is in labor i.e., the maintenance of trees. These are high costs which remain constant regardless of yield. This increases the risk of citrus production as low yields per acre (caused by small fruit) carry the same costs as high yields, without returning the investment. Because marginal production is unprofitable, the citrus industry has a high failure rate (Teague: 68). Oil royalties cushion investments in this risky endeavor.

Teague and the Limoneira Company pioneered the California Fruit Growers Exchange, the first such exchange to provide farmers an alternative to marketing through commodity speculators. The Exchange pooled citrus fruits from growers throughout the Santa Clara River Valley region (and eventually the state), graded and packed the fruit, then marketed it collectively under its "Sunkist" brand. Initiated in 1907, "Sunkist" was the first name brand to be nationally advertised by a fruit exchange; Sunkist's orange juice advertising campaign of 1916 dramatically increased the national market for oranges (Teague 1944: 86-87). The resulting increase in both production and consumption made Ventura county's growing citrus industry all the more lucrative. The Limoneira story also illustrates how one industry might attract the "human capital" that in turn benefits others. In this case, oil attracted Hardison, the Pennsylvanian, who brought not only his understanding of business and marketing, but his family. Hardison and nephew Teague in turn applied their knowledge to the infant citrus industry.

It is important to note here that while both agriculture and oil contributed great wealth to the communities of the Santa Clara River Valley, this wealth was not equally shared throughout the population. The Mexican population of the Valley, whether descended from the original Mexican settlers or born in Mexico[20] were subjected to political disenfranchisement, social segregation, and labor discrimination throughout this era (and indeed into the 1960s and 1970s). Mexican and Anglo residents in Santa Paula lived in segregated neighborhoods, attended segregated churches, and their children attended segregated schools habitually short on space and resources. Mexicans, who had at one time owned the Valley in its entirety, were largely prohibited from owning property during this era, and a substantial Mexican middle class did not develop until after World War II. Mexicans were excluded from lucrative oil industry jobs and instead worked on area citrus ranches, often living in company housing. This high degree of forced dependence on the citrus industry, combined with a lack of support by national labor organizations, left area Mexicans without the resources to successfully change their economic or political status (Menchaca 1995: Chapters 1-4).[21]

The intensive agricultural development seen in the Santa Clara River Valley was hampered in the East County (the Simi and Conejo Valleys) by limited water supplies. Santa Clara River Valley oil exploration did extend into this region, however, stretching south over the mountains and into Simi Valley. Locals referred to one canyon north of Santa Susana (at the eastern edge of Simi Valley) as Oil Canyon, because of its numerous oil seeps. Development around these seeps began in 1900, when the Simi Oil Company's discovery well yielded little oil but encouraged development in the area. Nearby Tapo Canyon, on Simi Valley's

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[20] The Valley received a major influx of Mexican immigrants from 1910-1924, largely those fleeing unrest caused by the Mexican Revolution (Menchaca 1995).

[21] Japanese immigrants also settled in the Santa Clara River Valley, including several hundred working at the Limoneira Ranch. Like all Japanese in Ventura County, these workers were interned during World War II, and none returned to the Limoneira Company (Yamamoto 1994: 45).

northern rim, did contain significant oil deposits which were developed as early as 1912. Development continued into the 1920s, when fifty wells had been drilled in Tapo Canyon (Franks and Lambert 1985: 43). Speculators gambled that oil development would lure new settlers, just as it had in the Santa Clara River Valley. Advertisements for plots in Simi Valley's Patterson Ranch bragged of "oil wells within a few rods of subdivided tracts" (Cameron 1963: 68). Simi Valley, however, never became the oil town that Santa Paula or even Fillmore was; one reason might be its proximity to these existing oil centers. The mountains between the Simi and Santa Clara River Valleys are accessible from either valley, and oil operations remained based in Fillmore and Santa Paula. Large-scale settlement of the east county would occur only much later – as a result of Los Angeles' increasing suburban development.

*Ojai: A place for the spirit-minded*

Through the first decades of the twentieth century, Santa Paula and Fillmore remained industrial and commercial centers, but unlike many southern California communities, they were relatively unaffected by an early tourism boom. These were working-class "company towns," with a great deal of ranch- or company-owned worker housing. While Santa Paula boasted the Sulphur Mountain Springs resort (developed in Santa Paula Canyon around 1890), and had its own resort quality hotel in 1911, this is probably more a reflection of the city's flourishing economy than its status as a resort destination. Santa Paula's Glen Tavern Inn, built in 1911, boasted hot and cold running water in every room and was considered quite luxurious for the time; it has been preserved close to its original condition (Santa Paula Oil Museum; Glen Tavern Inn brochure). Santa Paula, however, never received the acclaim as a resort destination conferred on its neighbor to the north, Ojai. Despite its smaller size, Ojai by this same time had at least four resorts near town, plus Wheeler and Matilija hot springs resorts in outlying canyons; many of these resorts had been in service since the 1880s (Fry 1983).[22] One reason for Ojai's success in the resort industry might be its failure with oil; without land dedicated to oil processing facilities and without the economic benefits of oil production, the Ojai Valley was willing and able to trade on its looks.

The Ojai Valley is similar to the Santa Clara River Valley in its climate and scenery, but its development took a decidedly different turn. The oil production and large-scale agriculture found in the Santa Clara River Valley never materialized in Ojai. Instead, the valley became known as a resort and attracted both tourists and wealthy part-time residents fleeing eastern winters. Like Santa Barbara to the north, Ojai was sold to easterners through advertisements and magazine articles as a

[22] While Santa Paula's first telephone connected Union Oil Vice President Wallace Hardison's home and the Adams Canyon oil fields, Ojai's first phone was installed in 1892 to connect the Gally Cottages, a resort, with the town livery stable (Santa Paula Union Oil Museum; Fry 1983).

health resort. This promotion began as early as 1872, when Lorenzo Dow Roberts found in the bucolic Ojai Valley an ideal climate for curing his chronic bronchitis; upon his return to health, Roberts promoted Ojai to fellow easterners and subdivided a section of his 50-acre farm with the intent of giving away every second lot (Fry 1983: 24-25). The following year, the *Ventura Signal* ran several articles in praise of Ojai, claiming that due to its climate, abundance of timber, and proximity to sea ports, Ojai "would make an excellent sanitorium" (quoted in Fry 1983: 25). The *Los Angeles Times* spoke of Ojai in less pragmatic terms, claiming in 1878 that the valley is "the magnetic center of the earth," where "spirit-minded people come to reach the God centers in themselves" (quoted in Fry 1983: 243). The first large-scale subdivision of land in all of Ventura county was initiated as Ventura businessman Royes Gaylord Surdham mailed brochures to eastern doctors, encouraging them to send their incurable patients to Ojai. Surdham also offered land to anyone willing to build a hotel on the site, and Abram Blumberg took him up on this offer: Ojai's first hotel opened on April 11, 1874 (Fry 1983: 25). The same year William S. McKee built the Oak Glen Cottages, later called McKee's Health Resort. Like many of Ojai's founding settlers, McKee was seriously ill when he settled in the area and used tales of his own recovery experience to promote his business (Fry 1983: 81-82).

Ojai's slow steady land sales of the 1870s mushroomed in the 1880s. Following Pennsylvania oil man T. A. Scott's death in 1881, Thomas Bard was forced to sell most of Scott's holdings (originally acquired for their oil potential), which included a large part of Rancho Ojai. Bard advertised lots in the *Ventura Signal* at one to twenty dollars per acre (Fry 1983: 21); speculation soon led to a land boom, and by 1887, land values had increased six-fold. A new cohort of settlers arrived who could afford to buy at these inflated prices, and elaborate Victorian houses began to mix with the existing adobes and frame houses. Ojai historian Patricia Fry claims that before 1887, the influence of wealthy settlers and developers was balanced by a population of working class farmers (who publicly decried the effects of the boom). After this time, she claims, the "new ideas" of wealthier settlers, including greater cultural sophistication and exclusionary social practices, were unavoidable (Fry 1983: 106).

Following this land boom, Ojai continued to attract both the wealthy and the sickly. In 1889, Sherman Day Thacher, with brothers Edward and George, emigrated to Ojai, hoping that the climate would restore George's failing health. George died soon after their arrival, but Edward became a successful citrus farmer and Sherman used his Yale degree to gain work as a tutor. By 1891, Sherman Thacher was advertising his services as a teacher and accepted 11 students; that year the young Thacher School conducted its classes in a set of shacks. Following a fire in 1895, Thacher rebuilt the school in a more permanent setting, constructing a predecessor to the current elite preparatory school. Thacher was the first such school in a community that would later become known for its concentration of both prestigious and progressive private schools, and is included on William Domhoff's short list of "ruling class" preparatory academies in *Who Rules America?* (1967).

Throughout these early years, Thacher took an active role in community organizing and development: in 1891 he led a drive to secure private funding for a spur line of the Southern Pacific to Ojai (collecting $3,250, one sixth of the amount needed, but enough to begin construction),[23] and in 1893 he donated the majority of funds necessary to build a public library. Thacher was also a main initiator of the Ojai Club, the first governing body of the as yet unincorporated town, still under the jurisdiction of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. The Ojai Club was envisioned by Thacher as an "improvement club," which would raise money for sidewalks and a town hall by organizing lectures and entertainment events (Fry 1983: 127). The Ojai Club also provides an early example of the town's interest in self-determination, especially in the interest of community development and preservation.

Edward Drummond Libbey (of Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass fame) first visited the Ojai Valley in 1908. Libbey originally lodged at the exclusive Foothills Hotel, a resort that required guests to provide references and turned away those not up to snuff (Fry 1983: 84-85). Libbey was soon dividing his time almost equally between Toledo, Ohio, and a winter home in Ojai, taking an active role in fostering the town's scenic potential. Although Ojai already boasted buildings by nationally known architects (including Julia Morgan, architect of Hearst Castle and other major structures), the Ojai Avenue business district lacked any unity of design. At a 1914 town meeting, Libbey proposed refurbishing Ojai Avenue with a Spanish-style arcade, and the plan was greeted enthusiastically by local merchants who agreed to pay $10 per frontage foot for the project, with Libbey making up the remainder. Libbey commissioned San Diego architect Richard Requa to design the structure which still stands as the town's landmark. Construction commenced in 1916, and although several buildings were eventually demolished to make way for the structure, oak trees were carefully left undamaged (Fry 1983: 169-170).[24]

Although Libbey's benefaction was outstanding, he is by no means the only "outsider" to take such an interest in the town. In 1902, the parents of a Thacher student donated a clubhouse to the town following their son's death from rheumatic fever. The family originally intended to make a donation to the school, but Sherman Thacher refused, claiming "our boys have too much already." In 1917, winter visitor Charles Pratt donated $16,000 for a manual training and domestic sciences building to annex Ojai's Nordhoff High School. The same year the Ojai Civic Organization was founded for the sole purpose of accepting gifts to the town of land or funds for improvements (Fry 1983: 136, 64, 71). The result of these efforts is a town whose physical plant, most notably its architecture, belies its small size and provincial location. The effect of this culturally rich hardware has been two-fold.

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[23] The railroad connecting Ojai and Ventura was completed in 1898. The initial depot provided only a ticketing window and passenger waiting area, however. As an afterthought, a freight warehouse was added in 1899; passengers were clearly intended to be the primary cargo (Fry 1983: 124).

[24] This desire to preserve trees persists even today. Mayor Joe DeVito commented in 1994 that "Ojai is really concerned about trees."

Tourists and residents attracted to Ojai are those who appreciate physical beauty and an aesthetic that appeals to connoisseurs of art and architecture who are, for the most part, well-educated. Secondly, residents and local businesses are motivated to preserve this feature that attracts visitors, and which indeed may have attracted them as well. The result is a town very conscious of its physical appearance, that has, historically, gone to great lengths to preserve existing structures as well as carefully controlling new construction.

## II. Between the Wars (1914-1945)

**Table 2: County socioeconomic characteristics, 1910-1940**

| | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 18,347 | 28,724 | 54,976 | 69,685 |
| Percent Foreign Born | * | * | 8.0 | 12.77 |
| Percent Nonwhite[25] | 6.62 | 3.37 | 27.12 | 1.87 |
| Percent Male | 57.88 | 52.80 | 52.62 | 51.59 |
| Household Size | 4.30 | 4.12 | * | 3.35 |
| Median School Years, Adult Males 25+ | * | * | * | 8.6 |
| Median School Years, Adult Females 25+ | * | * | * | 9.5 |
| Percent Unemployed | * | * | * | 6.5 |

Source: U.S. Census.
* Indicates data not available

The period between World Wars I and II was one of unprecedented growth in Ventura County, largely due to increasing oil development. The ratio of county residents to the number of farms reflects this diversification of county industries: in 1920, Ventura County had 18.62 residents for every county farm; by 1940, this figure had grown to 34.83. This rise also reflects the increasing importance of *intensive* agriculture – citrus, and later, row crops – requiring more labor than grazing operations or the farming of beans and grain. On the Oxnard Plain, and in the Santa Clara River Valley, much of the additional labor required by these crops was provided by immigrants, both Japanese and Mexican. While Japanese laborers had lived in the Oxnard area since the turn of the century, the era between the wars was a period of increasing stabilization for these immigrants as they started businesses and raised families. U.S. law denied first-generation Japanese immigrants citizenship, and thus prevented them from owning land[26] (their children would be

[25] In 1910, 1920 and 1940, *only* Blacks, Asians and American Indians counted as "nonwhite." In 1930, Mexicans were also included in the "nonwhite" category.

[26] The California Legislature passed alien land laws in 1913 and 1920 that restricted Japanese

granted dual citizenship); nevertheless, many Japanese immigrants leased land, or purchased it with the aid of friends or relatives, and made significant contributions to Oxnard's growing agricultural industry. The Japanese population of Ventura county would fall by almost half following World War II (from 672 in 1940 to 362 in 1950, according to the U.S. Census), as many of the families interned in wartime "Relocation Camps" elected not to return to the area. In many cases, these families had little incentive to return – their property was often stolen, their land sold off, and their homes burned (Fukuyama 1994; Yamamoto 1986).

As Table 3 shows, the populations of Santa Paula and Fillmore nearly doubled between 1920 and 1930, due largely to the booming citrus industry, and development of the South Mountain and Montebello oil fields (Triem 1985: 121). The population of Ventura grew even more rapidly following development of the Ventura Avenue oil field. This was the great period for the city of Ventura's emergence as the center of the county's petroleum industry.

**Table 3: Growth in the communities – 1920-1930**

| | 1920 Population | 1930 Population | % Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fillmore | 1,597 | 2,893 | 81% |
| Santa Paula | 3,967 | 7,452 | 88% |
| Ventura | 4,342 | 11,603 | 167% |

Source: U.S. Census

*Ventura and the Ventura Avenue oil field*

Gas seeps in the Ventura Avenue area had been noticed by locals since the 1890s, but the only commercial development prior to World War I was the ill-fated natural gas project of 1903 (see above). Development of oil in this field began in 1915, by Avenue native Ralph Lloyd. Lloyd, who grew up on a ranch in the area, noted the strength of the gas seeps as a boy when he saw one ignited by a lightning storm. He later studied geology at the University of California, Berkeley, and returned to Ventura Avenue to map the seeps and lease (with partner John Dabney) all the surrounding land he regarded as potentially oil-rich. Operating as State Consolidated Oil Company, Lloyd and Dabney brought in their first well, Lloyd Number One, in May of 1916. Although the pair struck oil, high pressure natural gas and salt water caused tremendous technical difficulties that limited the commercial viability of the first wells drilled in the area (Franks and Lambert 1985).

The Avenue field was developed by a handful of primary operators: Shell Oil claimed 45 percent of production, and Tidewater Associated Oil Company 40 percent

immigrants from owning land or leasing for a period over three years. In 1924, the US Congress halted all further Japanese immigration with the Alien Exclusion Act. These restrictions were repealed only in the 1950s (Fukuyama 1994: 21).

(Tidewater Associated was later bought by Getty Oil, and Getty was eventually purchased by Texaco, whose Avenue interests were purchased by Shell's CalResources group in 1996). Because the land was mainly agricultural and had not been subdivided into small parcels or town lots, a few operators were able to control development and prevent a scramble for leases (Beaton 1957: 190). Shell Oil acquired 13,000 acres of land along the Avenue in 1916 and began drilling their first well on the Taylor ranch the same year (Triem 1985: 119). After having spent two and a half million dollars on more and less successful experimental techniques, in 1922 Shell brought in Gosnell Number Three, credited as the field's "discovery well," as it was the first well to produce in potentially commercial quantities (Beaton 1957: 111, 189). Production was slow, however, until the advent of technology capable of drilling in high-pressure gas fields. In the mid-1920s, the increased use of rotary drilling rigs and the development of heavier drilling muds made Avenue drilling more feasible (Beaton 1957: 112). While these technologies were not developed for the Ventura Avenue field, their specific applications were designed for this field. Use of new the technologies to tame high pressure fields became something of an export industry, as Ventura Avenue operators used these methods to tap fields with similarly high gas pressure elsewhere.[27]

By the mid-1920s, Shell and Associated were producing more oil with deeper wells – Lloyd Number 9A yielded 4,870 barrels a day at 5,150 feet (Reith 1963: 136-37). Production reached approximately 21,000 barrels a day by 1926, with Shell and Tidewater Associated responsible for three-fourths of the total (See Photo 3) (Triem 1985: 119). Production from the Ventura Avenue field dominated the already oil-rich county, rivaling that of fields in Kern County, south Los Angeles, and Texas/Oklahoma. By 1950, the Avenue field ranked twelfth nationally in total production, with a cumulative output of 376,787,000 barrels to date (Franks and Lambert 1985: 45). The field also proved exceptionally durable; through secondary recovery and ever-deeper drilling, the field maintained an output of over five million barrels annually from 1930 to 1993 (California Division of Oil and Gas). Chart 1 shows the Avenue Field's production, compared to that of other Ventura County fields, from 1920-1970.

[27] Ventura Avenue was, however, the site of one of the first fully electric drilling rigs in California. Mountainous terrain made construction of a road to one Shell lease prohibitively expensive, so an aerial tram was used to transport drilling equipment to the drill site. Because the tram would not support the boilers commonly used to power drilling rigs, electricity was used instead (Rintoul 1976: 142-143)

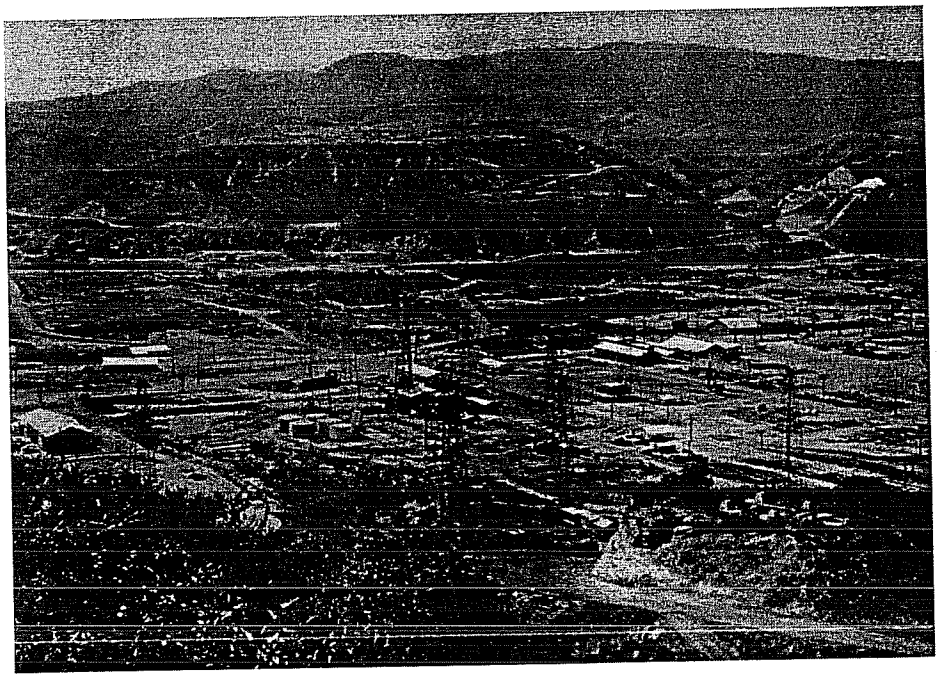


**Photo 3: Ventura Avenue oil field, 1940s.** Ventura Avenue would prove to be one of the largest and most durable oil fields in the country. Shell (whose operations are shown here) developed approximately half the field. Reprinted from Franks and Lambert (1985).

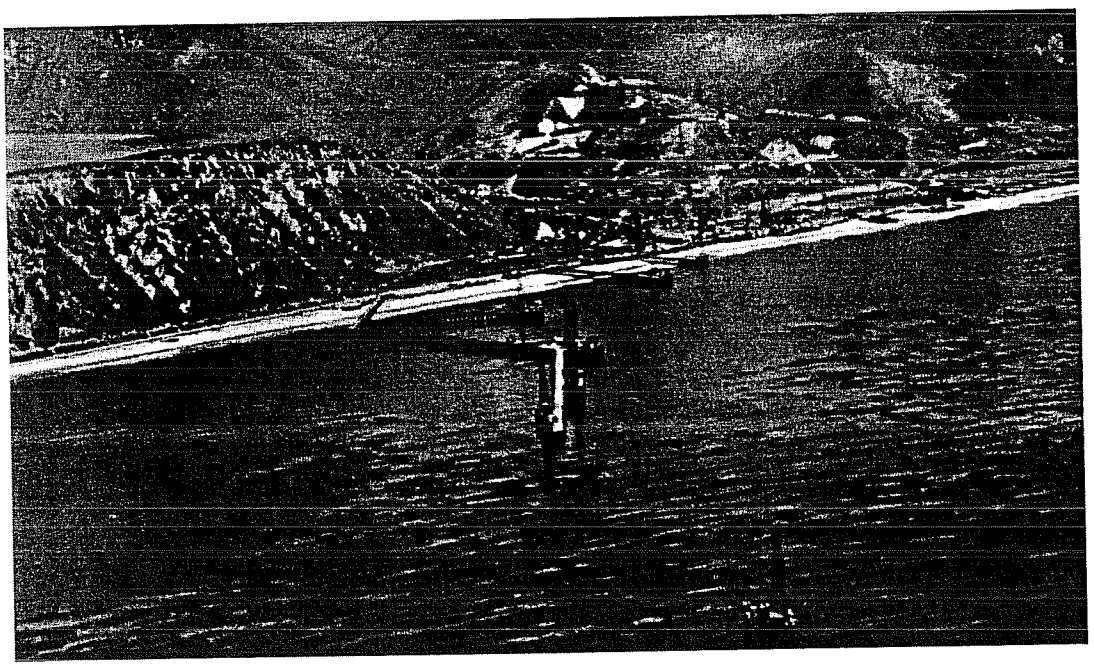
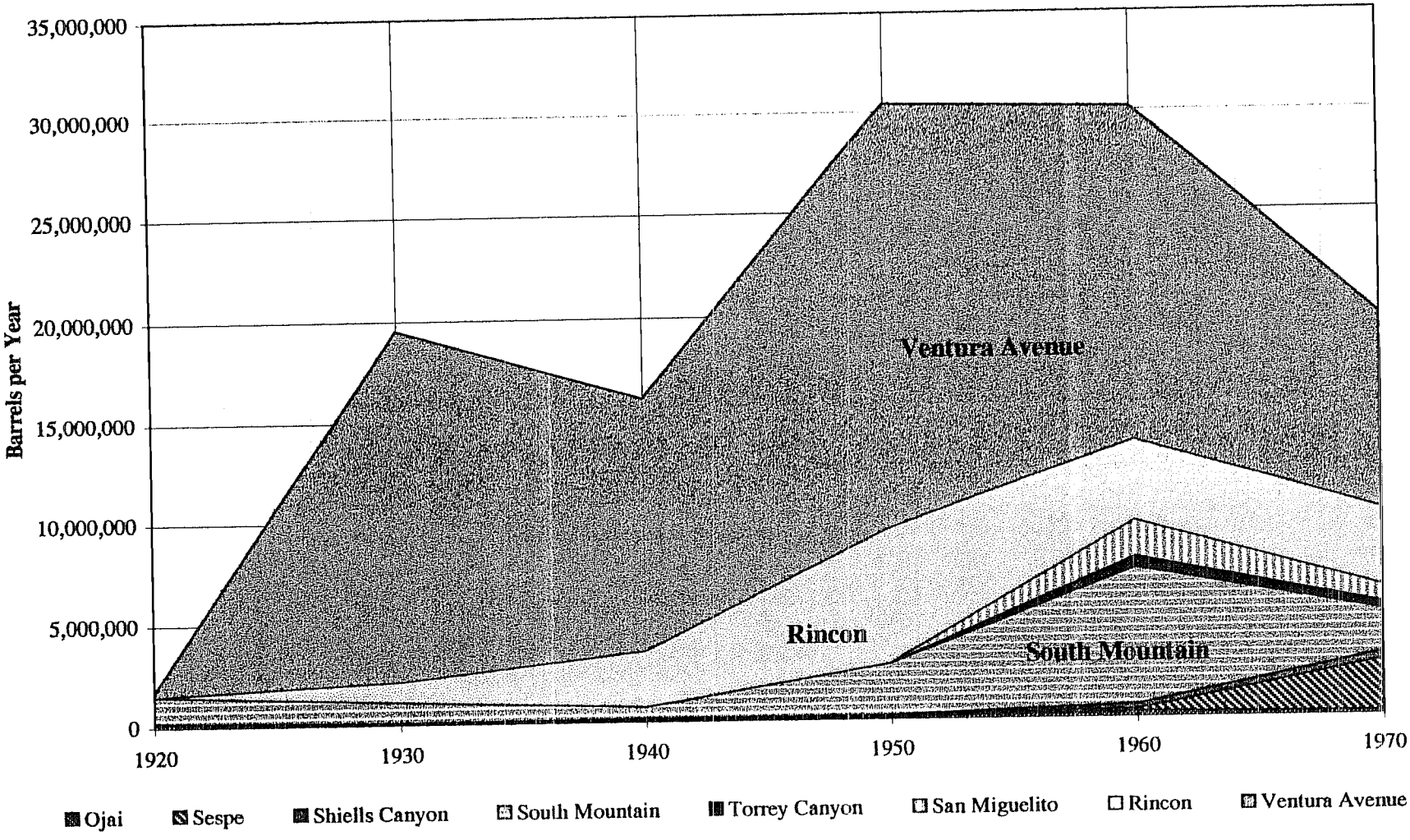


**Photo 4: Early offshore development at the Rincon.** Through the 1950s, drilling from piers was the most common means of extracting offshore oil. General Petroleum used these piers in their Rincon operations in the 1930s; Richfield would later build an artificial island to tap nearby reserves. Reprinted from Franks and Lambert (1985).

## Chart 1: Ventura County Oil Production, 1920-1970
## (Selected Fields)




Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil and Gas.
Annual Reports of State Oil and Gas Supervisor

While the development of the Avenue field boosted the city of Ventura's population and economy, the oil patch also brought boom town problems to a city whose industrial base until this time consisted mainly of agriculture and trade. The city was now faced with an unprecedented industrial development – one that was necessarily linked to a particular piece of land. Although Ventura Avenue was just north of downtown, the oil patch was an unincorporated area and the city could neither collect taxes nor control the direction of its development. Inexpensive homes, machine shops, and poker rooms dotted the city's western edge, and "rough" oil industry occupants kept "better" developments from moving in. Avenue landowners had no incentive to allow annexation, as basic services were already provided by either private utilities or the oil companies themselves. This blight to the west, combined with the geographical constraints of mountains and sea, would contribute to Ventura's eventual growth toward the east in the 1940s (Reith 1963).

A second mixed blessing was the use of Ventura's harbor for exporting oil. Oil from the Avenue, which runs perpendicular to the ocean, as well as oil from the Santa Clara River Valley fields, was loaded onto tankers at Ventura using the first ever submerged pipeline. This practice became so common that when the wharf there was damaged by a storm in 1926, it was already obsolete for this purpose (Reith 1963: 125).[28] The same tankers polluted the harbor, however, as they emptied oily ballast water into the ocean. Oil eventually became so common on Ventura beaches that cleanup efforts following the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill reportedly left the beach cleaner than before the accident soiled these shores. While this may be an exaggerated claim, the possibility of beach pollution seems more than likely given the proximity of the tanker loading stations to local beaches.

Development of the Avenue field brought more than industrialization to Ventura. The *Ventura County Star*, the leading paper in most Ventura County communities even today, was founded by editor Roy Pinkerton who gambled on the economic potential of the Avenue field. In 1925 Pinkerton, an editor with Scripps-McRae newspapers, visited Ventura with the intent of buying the *Ventura Post*, then the dominant local paper. After a deal to buy the *Post* fell through, Pinkerton, captivated by the growth potential he saw in the Avenue oil fields, found himself nevertheless interested in the Ventura market. He consulted with petroleum geologists (not bankers or advertisers, as was usual for someone attempting to found a newspaper) in an effort to understand the field's reserves and the financial implications for the city. Encouraged by these meetings, and by discussions with *Santa Barbara Morning Press* publishers Charles and Thomas Storke, Pinkerton founded an independent newspaper in the community he claims to have fallen "in love" with during this visit (Pinkerton 1962: 5-7). The *Star* introduced several modern innovations to news reporting in Ventura County: the new paper was the first in

[28] Ventura's wharf remained in industrial use through the 1930s, when agricultural shipping began to rely mainly on trucks and railroads. Following World War II, tourists and locals used the pier for fishing and recreation.

the city to publish UPI dispatches (beginning in 1925) – it was even the first to print national or international news. The upstart *Star* proved so successful that Pinkerton and his partners were able to buy out the *Post* by August, 1926 (Pinkerton 1962: 12-20).

The Ventura oil boom of the 1920s was not confined to Ventura Avenue alone; geologists looked to the Rincon area, located near the Santa Barbara-Ventura County line, as an extension of the increasingly productive field. The Rincon field, north and west of Ventura Avenue, was initially explored in 1923, when Associated Oil company drilled to 5,215 feet – stopping only 500 feet short of productive oil sands. Four years later, the Pan American Petroleum Company drilled the first successful well in the area. Other operators in the area included General Petroleum, Italo-American, Wilshire Oil Company, and Petroleum Exploration Company (owned by Edward Doheny) (*Ventura Free Press*, June 7, 1928). By June of 1928, the 17 wells of the Rincon field were producing 4,000 barrels per day (*Ventura Free Press*, June 28, 1928). In 1931, the world's deepest well to date, Chanslor-Canfield Midway Oil's (CCMO, later Santa Fe Energy Company) Hobson Number A-2 was completed at the Rincon at 9,702 feet, producing 270,000 barrels in its first ten years at a slightly shallower depth (Franks and Lambert 1985: 48). The CCMO operation eventually employed 200 men and boasted 102 wells on its Rincon lease (McHenry 1950).

Offshore drilling at Rincon began long before the offshore boom of the early 1950s. While wells abutting the coast had been drilled by 1928, drilling from piers and "steel islands" – the predecessors to modern platforms – began around 1930 (see Photo 4) (Kallman 1984: 37). Standard Oil was drilling from piers at Rincon by 1938, as well as from freestanding platforms (Franks and Lambert 1985: 65). General Petroleum was a major offshore operator in these early years, and their oil installations were not always welcomed by Rincon residents. Attempting to cross a local ranch with their oil pipeline, General Petroleum employees found themselves faced with armed cowboys demanding an agreement to provide right of way compensation to the Hobson family, owners of the pipeline route. The Hobsons won out, and received royalties for several decades (Kallman 1984: 36-38).

The Rincon area was first subdivided into leased home sites in 1917. Most residents were Santa Paulans seeking summer cottages, and the area was occasionally referred to as "Little Santa Paula." In the 1920s, Chanslor-Western Oil Company moved existing structures from its oil properties at Mussel Shoals to lots south of current La Conchita, where the company rented houses to employees for five dollars a month. South of the Rincon proper, the community of La Conchita del Mar was originally subdivided in 1923, by former Ventura County Surveyor Milton Ramelli. Ramelli sold lots for $200-$495, which included the property's mineral rights, in the hopes that oil finds at nearby Seacliff might lure investors. Oil was never found in La Conchita, and the lots were developed mainly as summer cottages.[29] More permanent settlements were prevented by the lack of utilities in

[29] A General Petroleum well was drilled three-eighths mile from La Conchita, which boosted property values in the area somewhat (*Ventura Free Press*, June 28, 1928).

the area; drinking water was unavailable to homes until the Casitas Dam was completed in 1954. Transportation was another stumbling block: the Southern Pacific passed through without stopping, and what is now a four-lane freeway was merely a wooden causeway along the beach (*Ventura Star-Free Press,* December 14, 1983: Vista Magazine Section; *Ventura Star-Free Press Profile '79 Magazine*; *Santa Barbara News-Press,* March 19, 1995). While oil speculation along the Rincon did increase property values in the La Conchita area during the 1920s, once the lack of oil on town lots became an established fact, lot prices fell to as low as fifteen dollars (*Ventura Star-Free Press,* December 14, 1983: Vista Magazine Section).

During these early years, as oil companies built worker housing and developers bragged of home sites complete with mineral rights, the Rincon area became established as a place where oil and beach-side living easily coexisted. The following 1927 ad for lots in seaside La Conchita makes this abundantly clear:

> La Conchita Units: Each unit consists of a full acre. $1,000 per unit. One half of oil rights. La Conchita units are held under community oil lease for $10,000 cash bonus and a one-sixth royalty. The community lease provides that if oil is discovered on any of the 38 units that the owner of each unit receives 1/38 of one half of all the oil! The means that oil does not have to be found on the acre-unit you own in order for you to participate in possible oil earnings. BUY AT ONCE! (*Ventura Free Press,* December 13, 1927)

The advertisement goes on to note that adjacent property is currently under lease to Shell Oil, then a major Ventura Avenue developer. Ads in other papers of the era invited diners and dancers to enjoy the beach-side inn featuring a glass-enclosed ballroom over the water and boasting guests including current Hollywood film stars.

While the regional economic growth associated with the Avenue find is clear, accounts vary as to how the effects of the 1929 depression may have limited the field's development. *Ventura County Star* editor Roy Pinkerton claims that oil activity persisted through 1929, and the effects of the depression were first felt in 1930 (Pinkerton 1962: 35). This buffering of the depression's effect may be due to Shell Oil, one of two major Ventura Avenue operators; the company entered the depression strong and carried on business as usual through 1929 and into 1930. The following two years, however, brought unprecedented belt-tightening to its California operation, and the troublesome Ventura Avenue field might have been cut back early on (Beaton 1957: 364-365). To the contrary, geographer Gertrude Reith claims that most exploratory drilling was halted in 1929 due to the depression, and that the slowdown in development reduced property values by up to 60 percent in the city of Ventura (Reith 1963: 144). County assessors' figures seem to support Pinkerton's claim; assessed valuations of Ventura County oil fields declined slowly in the first years of the depression, taking a steeper fall in the later years:

**Table 4: Assessed value of oil Properties before World War II (in dollars)**

| Year Ending: | Countywide Assessed Valuation: |
|---|---|
| 1930 | $30,611,910 |
| 1931 | 27,367,370 |
| 1932 | 26,056,097 |
| 1933 | 17,191,549 |
| 1934 | 13,744,924 |
| 1935 | 15,563,256 |
| 1936 | 14,527,945 |
| 1937 | 16,795,940 |
| 1938 | 19,125,210 |

Source: *Ventura Star-Free Press*, "Oil Progress Week" Special Section, October 14, 1953

Assessed values increased every year following 1938, by one to two million dollars per year, until a larger jump at the onset of World War II. Still, economic activity clearly did not cease altogether during the depression; one noteworthy example is Ventura Tool Company (later VETCO), one of Ventura's largest oil field support companies, founded by Fritz Huntsinger in 1930 (Triem 1985: 119). Exploration of areas surrounding the Ventura Avenue field also proceeded throughout the 1930s.

Growth in the Oxnard/Port Hueneme area presaged what would come to be, with oil and agriculture, a major node in the Ventura County economy. Infrastructural changes that attracted the military to the county during World War II actually began ten years prior with efforts to create an improved deep water harbor at Hueneme in the late 1930s. The site for the new harbor was donated by Richard Bard, son of early oil prospector and land agent Thomas Bard (see above). Although port developers originally applied for federal Public Works Administration funds, these funds did not materialize and a port district was created to raise the necessary capital through bonds. The original harbor district, including Oxnard, the Conejo Valley, Camarillo, the City of Port Hueneme, and the Ventura County coastline, was organized to include the broadest possible tax base; an ensuing bond measure raised $1,750,000. Contractors immediately began dredging four million cubic yards of dirt from the central basin and hauling rock from Catalina Island for the 1,600- and 900-foot jetties. Other improvements included a fish cannery and kelp processing site. The port was completed in July 1940, just two years after the project began. In another two years, however, the port would be surrendered to the U.S. Navy through the end of World War II for use as the U.S. Naval Construction Battalion Center. Hueneme was the busiest port in the U.S. during the war, shipping out twenty million tons of supplies from 1942 through 1945 (Ventura County Historical Society 1972: 47; Triem 1985).

The Port Hueneme military installation was one of two infrastructural developments that literally paved the way for Ventura County development following World War II. The second improvement consisted of new highway linkages with Los Angeles: the coast route (Highway 1), from Malibu to Oxnard, was

completed in 1922, and the Camarillo Grade (on Highway 101), linking Camarillo and the Conejo Valley (see map), was completed in 1937 (Triem 1985: 122). The new highways created the physical linkages with Los Angeles necessary for the rapid suburbanization of the 1950s, and World War II era military installations on the south county coast would bring more new residents to the area than even the Ventura Avenue oil boom.

The discovery of oil on Ventura Avenue and the adjacent coastal oil field radically changed the city and county of Ventura – both physically and economically. By comparison, the Santa Clara River Valley communities of Santa Paula and Fillmore continued on the trajectory they had taken before the war: oil and citrus persisted in their dominance of the local economy, and population growth, while still strong between 1920 and 1930, leveled off somewhat in the following years (Santa Paula grew by 21 percent between 1930 and 1940, Fillmore by 19 percent). Oil fields originally drilled by Hardison and Stewart in the late 1880s continued to produce through the 1930s, and the Santa Paula field supported 100 wells by 1939 (with a cumulative production of 1.2 million barrels). To the east, the Colima Oil Company continued exploring the Sespe field, and their second well produced 500 barrels a day. By 1940, the field supported 17 flowing wells, and cumulative production exceeded 3 million barrels of heavy crude (Franks and Lambert 1985: 41). The Sespe and South Mountain fields, located in the hills above Santa Paula and Fillmore had some of the highest yields in the county during the early part of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, as Chart 1 shows, these fields were dwarfed by the production on Ventura Avenue.

The most important event in the Santa Clara River Valley during this era – a tragic one – was not related to oil, but to water. The Saint Francis Dam (constructed by the city of Los Angeles for water storage and hydroelectric power) on San Francisquito Creek, a minor tributary of the upper Santa Clara River, collapsed on March 12, 1928, killing over four hundred people in the Santa Clara River Valley. The flood released by the dam collapse washed through Fillmore and Santa Paula along its 65 mile journey to the ocean (Teague 1944: 185; Hey 1984). Several homes in the lower portion of Santa Paula were lost, and scores of workmen camped in the lower part of the valley were killed. Most damage from the flood occurred along the Los Angeles-Ventura County line, however, as the communities of Fillmore, Bardsdale, and Piru were at elevations above the water level (Triem 1985: 127-8). *Ventura County Star* editor Roy Pinkerton recalled that coverage of the disaster was "a live serial" for two years after the event, and the biggest single story of his nearly 40 year tenure (Pinkerton 1962: 33). Altogether, 1,240 homes were lost and 7,900 acres of land flooded (Teague 1944: 185).[30] Damage to the land varied from debris

[30] A survey of damage to Santa Clara River Valley crops gives a picture of both the agricultural use of the valley and the enormity of the disaster. Acreage flooded is as follows: "1,554 acres citrus, 367 acres walnuts, 287 acres apricots, 1,287 acres beets, bean and hay land, 675 acres alfalfa, 505 acres vegetables, 2,915 acres pasture land, 17 acres grapes, and 293 acres vacant land could be used for vegetables" (Teague 1944: 189).

deposited in orchards, "in some cases ten to fifteen feet high," to "land being completely washed away," to heavy deposits of sand and silt (Teague 1944: 191).

Like the Santa Clara River Valley, the Ojai valley continued on a trajectory set about in the early twentieth century. The trajectory itself, however, was radically different from that of the Santa Clara as throughout the 1920s, the Ojai Valley intensified the incorporation of aesthetics into its economy. The Ojai Garden Club, founded in 1926, claimed, "Ojai is beautiful and we are going to work to make it still more beautiful," a claim echoed by town elites. In 1923 Edward Libbey purchased 360 acres of oaks rather than see them cut down; the same year, the Ojai Valley Inn and Country Club was completed, commissioned by Libbey as a gift to the community (architect Wallace Neff of Pasadena received a certificate of honor from the California Architectural Board for its design). The Country Club served elite families of the area through the early years of the depression, but was closed in 1932 and utilized by the military in the early 1940s. The Ojai Valley Inn reopened as a resort in 1947 and continues in this use today (Fry 1983).

In 1924, theosophist Albert P. Warrington moved his Krotona spiritual center from Hollywood (where he felt crowded by the growing motion picture industry) to Ojai, a place he thought was "impregnated with occult and psychic influences" (quoted in Fry 1983: 245). The theosophical Order of the Star of the East followed Warrington in 1928, and the Order's spiritual leader, Jiddu Krishnamurti, purchased 220 acres adjoining Krotona. Although Krishnamurti disbanded the Order in 1929, he and many followers stayed on in the Ojai Valley. Annie Besant, a former president of the World Theosophical Society, began teaching lessons in private homes in 1927 and founded the current Happy Valley School in 1946 (Fry 1983: 66). Happy Valley joined the Thacher School and Villanova Preparatory Academy (founded by Augustinian fathers in 1924) as one of the Valley's growing number of elite private schools (Fry 1983: 66).

The creative arts also gained a stronghold in Ojai during this era. Ojala, a religious artists' colony, was founded by Rick and Eugenia Everett in 1929. Seven years later, Dr. Charles Butler solicited donations for an art center which could house local music and dance talent. Ground was broken in 1939 after eastern part-time residents pledged $6,000, and locals pledged an equal amount. A conflict over use of the new center arose the following year as professionally trained actors attempted to use the Ojai Community Art Center for their regular performances. The conflict was resolved as the professional actors moved to an old school house in the Upper Ojai Valley, later called the High Valley Theater, leaving the Community Art Center as a resource for local talent (Fry 1983).

While the east county (Moorpark, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks) remained largely agricultural through the Second World War, small precursors to the subdivisions that would come to dominate the area began developing in the 1920s and 1930s. The community of Thousand Oaks, today connected to the expanding Los Angeles metropolis, was founded in 1922 as the Newbury ranch was subdivided

and sold in three parcels. Dr. Homer Hansen purchased one of these parcels and divided the land further into town lots selling for as little as ten dollars. A Conejo Valley schoolboy won the contest Hansen sponsored to name the new town with his entry "Thousand Oaks" (Bidwell 1989: 37). The building ordinances that still distinguish the Conejo Valley also began during this era. The first such regulations were developed at the Mattheissen Lake tracts in 1925 (the lake was created by a dam in 1905; it was later renamed Lake Sherwood). Developer F. W. Mattheissen required that builders submit plans to an "art jury" to

> insure the conservation of natural beauty and to so direct both building and planting that the entire project may harmonize, and to discourage the construction of discordant or incongruous units. These wise provisions are for the purpose of preserving the witchery and charm of the most beautiful spot in Southern California (quoted in Bidwell 1989: 39).

It was the area's persistent wild character, however, that attracted Louis Goebel, formerly a zoo keeper at Universal Studios. Goebel started his "Lion Farm" in the Conejo valley following Universal's closure of their in-house zoo in 1922. The Lion Farm, later known as Jungle Land, provided animals to Hollywood studios; in a few years it became a tourist attraction in its own right and attracted additional commercial development in the Thousand Oaks area. The first phone installed in the Conejo Valley was at the Lion Farm, in 1926 (Bidwell 1989).

The only oil activity recorded in the Conejo Valley was newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst's 1925 purchase of 30,000 acres near Westlake, following on the strength of recent Ventura Avenue finds. Exploration proved disappointing, however, and Hearst sold the property at a loss in 1943, just before the Conejo Valley land boom of the 1950s (Bidwell 1989: 38-42).

**Table 5: County sociodemographic characteristics, 1940-1970**

| | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 69,685 | 114,647 | 199,138 | 376,430 |
| Percent Foreign Born | 12.77 | * | 8.24 | 7.2 |
| Percent Nonwhite[31] | 1.87 | 2.57 | 3.3 | 4.0 |
| Percent Male | 51.59 | 51.08 | 51.56 | 49.67 |
| Household Size | 3.35 | 3.24 | 3.33 | 3.43 |
| Median School Years, Adult Males 25+ | 8.6 | 10.1 | 11.2 | 12.5 |
| Median School Years, Adult Females 25+ | 9.5 | 11.3 | 11.9 | 12.4 |
| Percent Unemployed | 6.5 | 7.2 | 4.9 | 5.7 |

Source: U.S. Census.
* Indicates data not available

**Table 6: County employment by occupation, 1940-1970**

| | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional, Technical | 1,723 | 3,739 | 9,410 | 24,813 |
| Proprietors, Managers, Officials | 1,916 | 3,499 | 5,286 | 12,321 |
| Clerical and Sales | 2,556 | 6,570 | 12,497 | 30,812 |
| Craftsmen and Foremen | 2,232 | 5,852 | 9,496 | 18,178 |
| Service | 2,414 | 4,465 | 6,625 | 15,767 |
| Farm Managers, Laborers, Foremen | 6,690 | 7,252 | 8,781 | 6,756 |
| Laborers (except farm), Operatives | 5,623 | 9,117 | 12,507 | 23,254 |
| Occupation Not Reported | 267 | 564 | 3,249 | 0 |
| TOTAL EMPLOYED | 23,421 | 41,058 | 67,851 | 131,901 |

Source: U.S. Census

The period following World War II was a time of unprecedented growth in California, and Ventura County proved no exception to this trend (see Table 5). Growth in the county outpaced the rate of growth seen in the state as a whole: while California's population increased by 188 percent from 1940 to 1970, Ventura County's population increased by 440 percent during this same period. The economy also shifted radically, with growth particularly strong in professional and

[31] Includes blacks, Asians, and Native Americans.

clerical positions. Jobs in the professions (e.g. medical, legal, engineering) grew even faster in Ventura County than they did in the state as a whole. In 1970, 18.8 percent of Ventura County's labor force was employed in the professions, versus only 17.4 percent for the state; Ventura County had lagged behind the state in professional employment only 30 years earlier (7.4 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively). The relative importance of agriculture in the county declined radically during this era: farm employment, as a percentage of total employment, fell from 28.6 percent in 1940 to 12.9 percent in 1960, and only 5.1 percent in 1970; Ventura County had 34.83 residents per county farm in 1940 (compared to 44.5 statewide), but by 1970 this figure had exploded to 224.2 residents for every county farm. In short, while Ventura County entered this era heavily dependent on agriculture, by 1970 the county had gained a high proportion of residents who were less dependent on this industry.

Ventura County's large Latino population was also able to participate in this shift away from agricultural employment. Mexican-American soldiers returning from World War II were eligible for college scholarships and small business loans under the G. I. Bill of Rights, and many throughout Ventura County took advantage of this opportunity. In Santa Paula, where Latinos had worked almost exclusively in citrus and other agriculture, Mexican-Americans used this opportunity to open cafes, boarding houses, grocery stores and repair shops. An increasing Mexican market in the area, largely due to the importation of farm laborers from Mexico, supported Mexican-Americans' move into the service sector. The bracero program (Agricultural Labor Law No. 45, enacted in 1942), a response to labor unrest in California (Mexican farm workers attempted to strike in 1917, 1937, and 1941, each time unsuccessfully) and wartime labor shortages, allowed Mexican nationals to work in the U.S. on six month contracts. These contracts could then be extended, pending satisfactory work evaluations. By its termination in 1964, the bracero program had brought thousands of Mexican nationals into Ventura County (Menchaca 1994: Chapters 4 and 5). Thus while Latinos born in the U.S. moved away from farm labor following World War II, their labor was replaced by a new population once again vulnerable to exploitation in the County's citrus orchards and vegetable fields.

Ventura County's economic shift away from agriculture was accompanied by a shift in patterns of settlement. The cities of Ventura and Oxnard dominated the county through the 1950s, bolstered by the still-productive Ventura Avenue oil field and increased employment at military installations on the county's southern coast (over 30,000 military and civilian employees worked at the bases – see below). Military employees soon spilled over into the rapidly growing Camarillo area. Following completion of new freeways to the San Fernando Valley, settlements in the L.A.-proximate east county flourished in the 1960s. Largely dependent on the aerospace and defense industries of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, the communities of Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks became major residential cities during this era.

World War II brought an unprecedented increase in the value of Ventura County's terrestrial oil industry; production on Ventura Avenue continued to increase through 1954, after which time it entered a slow decline. Development of the San Miguelito and Rincon-Padre fields northwest of Ventura also skyrocketed during this era, and operators began planning for the expansion of offshore operations. The move offshore necessitated new drilling technologies and new regulatory apparatuses for managing oil operations in the tidelands and outer continental shelf. The following sections chronicle the move offshore as experienced by Ventura county oil operators, and describe the transformation of county communities during this era of rapid growth and change.

**Table 7: Assessed value of oil properties, World War II through 1953 (in dollars)**

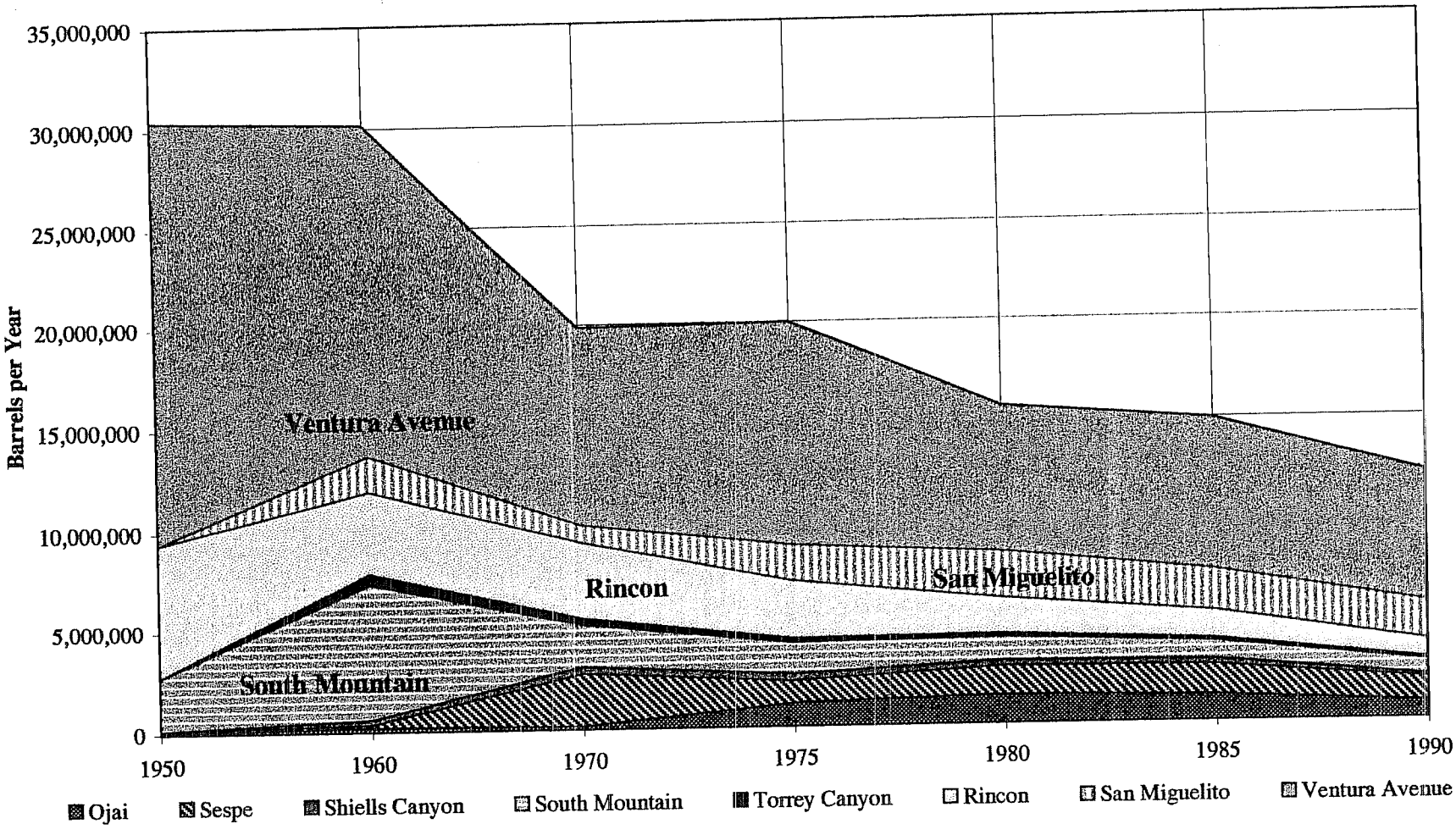
| Year Ending: | Countywide Assessed Valuation: |
|---|---|
| 1941 | $23,496,421 |
| 1942 | 24,423,823 |
| 1943 | 35,358,980 |
| 1944 | 43,625,490 |
| 1945 | 49,597,580 |
| 1946 | 54,915,610 |
| 1947 | 64,905,340 |
| 1948 | 88,500,070 |
| 1949 | 121,404,850 |
| 1950 | 131,510,280 |
| 1951 | 138,529,930 |
| 1952 | 155,200,060 |
| 1953 | 164,509,700 |

Source: *Ventura Star-Free Press*, "Oil Progress Week" Special Section, October 14, 1953

*The oil patch as permanent fixture*

The geological formations of the Ventura Avenue area, unlike many fields, provided a durable source of petroleum. New techniques continually made deeper discoveries possible, and the relative permanence of production on the Avenue and in neighboring fields had pronounced effects on the city of Ventura. Through revamped exploration efforts and secondary recovery, Avenue oil production increased throughout the mid-1950s (Reith 1963). In 1955, responding to the previous year's decline in Avenue production, Shell Oil began experimenting with water flooding (injecting water into oil wells to raise the level of remaining oil) as a means of recovering more oil. A pilot program began testing in 1956, and a larger scale installation was in place by 1963; consequently, production began to increase by 1966, reaching 10,000 barrels per day in 1968 and 16,000 barrels per day in 1971 (Paul 1971: B1). Chart 2 depicts Avenue production from 1950 to 1990, relative to other Ventura County oil fields.

## Chart 2: Ventura County Oil Production, 1950-1990
## (Selected Fields)




Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil and Gas.
Annual Reports of State Oil and Gas Supervisor

The Avenue, like many Ventura County fields, contained several layers of oil producing strata which became accessible as drilling technology improved. Just as the high gas pressure encountered in the field's initial exploration necessitated customized applications of new technology, conditions in the Avenue field continued to demand technological innovations: the electric collapsible rig was developed on the Avenue in 1947, and soundproof rigs, although not developed specifically for the Avenue, were installed in 1954 (*Ventura Star-Free Press,* December 30, 1947: 2 and July 8, 1954: 1). In 1952, tons of earth were moved to protect Avenue pipelines and well casings from impending landslides; holes dug around casings to protect the pipes from lateral earth movement curtailed production on 57 rigs (*Ventura Star-Free Press* , March 19, 1952: 1). Technical innovations in the field added to the Avenue area's fate as an industrial zone as firms established an array of machine shops, supply centers, and other enterprises to facilitate Avenue oil production (as well as oil and gas extraction elsewhere in the county – and the world).

The Avenue field's durability came to be recognized as unique by oil workers of this era. In 1950, General Petroleum superintendent Alex McLean noted that the field's longevity made it more attractive to his employees because they felt confident settling in the area. Assured that the field would produce for "not just decades, but generations to come," about 75 percent of General's employees bought homes in the area, and "almost all [were] active in one or two community groups." McLean also noted that part of the area's attraction was its receptiveness to the oil industry: "Lots of towns don't understand oil men and oil operations. Ventura folks like us and, I believe, appreciate us" (*Ventura Star-Free Press,* Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 18, 1950). The apparent permanence of the oil industry in Ventura may have contributed to residents' positive vision of the oil industry and its employees, just as this same feature contributed to oil employees' enthusiasm about the town.

During this era, Ventura became something of a company town, or, more accurately, a single-industry town. While agriculture remained an important facet of the local economy – walnut orchards and bean fields ringed the city throughout this era – the oil industry's economic influence was pervasive. One resident from this time, whose father worked in the oil industry, recalled that,

> In grammar School and high school, all my friends, their fathers worked for an oil company or a service company, or if they were in business they depended on the oil business or the oil families for their livelihood.

The oil industry also made economic contributions outside of its payroll. Taxes assessed on oil company property and facilities meant high quality schools and recreation facilities, and Shell Oil sponsored local concerts by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Together these factors – high tax and payroll figures, plus philanthropic contributions – gave the oil industry a high profile in what was still a relatively small community (1950 population 16,534). Oil dollars generated not only economic ripples, but created, in effect, what we term a "social multiplier,"

analogous to an economic multiplier in the sense that the impacts of an industry radiate out from those who work in it toward a wider circle of those with less direct interests. This social multiplier is always at work as a potential force that creates an interest in maintaining a particular economic function. Some people may make no money themselves from a given sector but have sympathy for it because of their relations with people who do. While clearly not "everyone" worked in the oil industry, community members apparently sensed that all boats would rise or fall on this tide (this became all too apparent when a 1948 industry-wide strike in Ventura crippled local oil operations as well as the local economy).

Avenue oil industry operations were not limited to oil drilling and oil well support industries. Both Shell and Tidewater Associated (also known as Associated) had natural gas processing plants on the Avenue, and these expanded as energy demand increased in the 1940s and 1950s. The Associated plant was acquired from Standard Oil in 1941. Under Standard's ownership, the plant produced fifty million cubic feet per day of natural gas from the Avenue field; by 1952 production had increased to 75 million cubic feet per day, plus gasoline, propane, butane and iso-butane. The gas plant employed 75 people, about 12 percent of Associated's 660 person Ventura County work force; total Associated payroll for 1952 was estimated at three million dollars (*Ventura Star-Free Press*,Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 17, 1952). Shell Oil's operations also underwent upgrades around this time: a natural gas absorption plant, founded on Ventura Avenue in 1926, was upgraded in 1949 (the plant separated "wet" and "dry" gasses from Ventura Avenue's gas-rich field, producing both "dry" natural gas, supplied to local utility companies, and propane – the demand for which increased sharply following World War II) (*Ventura Star-Free Press*,Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 19, 1949). Shell's Ventura Avenue anhydrous ammonia plant was constructed in 1953, immediately becoming Ventura County's largest industrial plant. The facility transformed hydrogen from the field's natural gas into a synthetic ammonia used in fertilizers (*Ventura Star-Free Press*,Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 13, 1954).[32]

By the mid-1950s, the city of Ventura had been permanently impacted by the oil industry economically, socially, and geographically. In the 1940s, oil development on Ventura Avenue precluded a northward expansion of the downtown commercial area, resulting in the city's "move" east. The shoddy housing, machine shops and staging areas that dotted the Avenue in the 1920s proliferated in the 1940s, and the central business district found itself "hemmed in by blight on the west, hills on the north [and] the sea on the south" (Reith 1963: 148). A new Sears store at the Santa Paula highway (state highway 126) in East Ventura became the catalyst for retail development outside the traditional city center, effectively splitting Ventura' s shopping district into two discrete units and shifting commercial and residential development away from the beach.[33] The subsequent

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[32] The Shell ammonia plant would later be sold to U.S.A. Petroleum, Inc. See "Petrochem – A case of environmentalism and market dynamics," below.

[33] Because of this move east and the resulting annexation and development of farms and orchards, the

lack of investment in the city's historic downtown and beach district then resulted in low property values and a diminished emphasis on the city's coastal resources. These became important factors when, in the early 1950s, the city of Ventura (like other communities in the county) began negotiations over the location and placement of a new wider 101 freeway.

The old 101 route led directly through downtown Ventura, causing congestion so severe that a three mile drive took up to 45 minutes. As upland areas of the narrow coastal plain were already built up, and a route to the north would mean building over steep hills, "after many hearings a route was selected that would disturb the city as little as possible," a route midway between downtown and the beach. This route disturbed commerce little as the main shopping area in Ventura has already moved east, and land south of downtown was either vacant or contained deteriorating housing and low-rent commercial structures (Reith 1963: 185). The latter area was generally occupied by low-income and Hispanic residents, a pattern encouraged by the adjacent industrial land uses related to oil development. As the city was also engaged in the construction of low income housing at this time, replacing substandard units with new housing, units displaced by the freeway facilitated what one housing official referred to as "slum clearance" (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, January 16, 1958: B1). A 1957 *Ventura Star-Free Press* editorial congratulated the city for negotiating a depressed freeway route preserving views of the ocean from the county courthouse (now Ventura's city hall) above downtown (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, August 20, 1957). Nevertheless, the new deisgn obscured views of the city from the freeway, and what might have been valuable coastal property was covered in concrete, leaving pedestrian or auto access to the beach limited to a few awkwardly configured over- and under-passes.

Haphazard development and a lack of any coherent zoning persisted in North Ventura and the Ventura Avenue area through the 1960s. Seeking to remedy this situation, in 1967 the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and the City of Ventura embarked on a joint assessment of the Ventura Avenue Area, creating a General Plan for this area that is part city, part county. One physical condition planners found contributing to the Avenue's disagreeable environment was the "intermingling of what are, inherently, incompatible land uses," such as residential units adjacent to industrial plants or staging areas. The study found that while the oil industry installations were still the dominant land use, oil employed only seven percent of Avenue residents.[34] This confirms the recollections of one Ventura resident during this era, who recalled that most oil field workers lived in East Ventura, not on the Avenue, from the 1940s onward. The scarcity of oil industry employment was one reason cited for the area's relative poverty (21.7 percent of families had incomes under $3,500 at the time of the study) and

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City of Ventura doubled its geographical area between 1947 and 1962 (Reith 1963: 150).

[34] The study noted that while the employment effects on Avenue residents of current offshore exploration could not be foretold, "some persons unemployed because of a layoff could obtain employment" in offshore operations (*Ventura Avenue Area General Plan*: 2).

substandard housing (an exterior study of the area found twenty percent of housing units to be substandard based on the Uniform Housing Code) (Ventura County and City of Ventura: 4-8).

The problems outlined in the Ventura Avenue Area General Plan can be seen as resulting from the area's initial oil-dependent development. The land use patterns of the 1920s boom – inexpensive housing commingled with industrial development – were still in place in the 1960s, while oil was in something of a decline. The heavy manufacturing plants that accompanied the oil industry invited similarly land-extensive commercial or industrial development, including storage yards and auto wrecking facilities. The low residential land values in the area invited more of the same; specifically, a number of trailer home parks built on the Ventura River's flood plain. The result was a land use policy that satisfied neither residents nor planners, requiring a joint effort and expenditure by the city and county of Ventura to right the situation. The emphasis of the General Plan was to provide some coherence to land use in the area, including consolidating shopping, residential, and industrial areas. The Planners argued that "Not one of the uses, operating in proper locations and with adequate development standards, would cause deleterious effects on adjoining uses," thus avoiding placing blame on the oil industry for a negative impact on the Avenue as a residential area. The oil industry had not, however, allowed incorporation of their land into the city, nor imposed their own restrictions on its development, either of which might have ameliorated this situation.

*Offshore oil takes root*

The oil industry in Ventura County increased its emphasis on offshore exploration and production throughout the early 1950s. The *Ventura Star-Free Press'* annual "Oil Progress Week" edition on October 12, 1955 heralded the beginning of the offshore era with the headline: "Strange Armada May One Day Invade Waters off Ventura County Shores in Search of Deep Oil." This indeed proved correct as increased exploration, new drilling techniques, and a settlement to the long-standing debate over who owned submerged lands and their minerals materialized during this era.

Seismic exploration along the Ventura County coast became common in the late 1940s as offshore technology developed. Seeking still further reaches of the geological formation that created the Ventura Avenue field, oil companies explored waters off the Rincon area. In 1949, one blast illegally discharged near the water's surface killed an estimated 50,000 fish, resulting in a protest by Santa Barbara and Ventura County fishermen to state Fish and Game commissioners. Oxnard Commissioner Edwin L. Carty took their protests to Governor Earl Warren, noting that the practice killed "too many fish" and that areas under investigation were already sufficiently mapped (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, July 9, 1949: 1). Newspaper treatments of this type of conflict had varying emphases in the Santa Barbara

Channel region. Protests against seismic exploration and other offshore drilling issues were common in Santa Barbara and Montecito during this era and received thorough and supportive coverage in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*. In contrast, the protests by these fishermen were covered almost incidentally by the *Star-Free Press*; the emphasis of news stories around this issue was the status of the permits, not the organization of anti-oil opposition.

In 1954, California law still required that tidelands drilling be conducted from bases constructed of "natural materials" or piers,[35] a condition that prohibited use of the steel "Texas Tower" platforms then becoming common in the Gulf of Mexico. Richfield Oil purchased a 1,175 acre tract off the Ventura County coast that year and in February 1957 began construction of its Rincon Drilling Island. The island was designed to provide a one acre sand and dirt work area, surrounded by a concrete breakwater that brought the total surface area to three acres (400,000 tons of rock and dirt used in the island's base came from a quarry five miles inland, in Rincon Canyon). Richfield spudded its first well in September 1958, using a collapsible rig that could be removed upon the well's completion to reduce the area's industrial appearance. Similarly, palm trees were planted on the island's perimeter, to disguise its purpose. Production from the island's wells eventually reached 2,000 barrels a day (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, February 13, 1965).

The technological innovations that allowed for increased offshore operations were accompanied by new state and federal legislation to designate ownership of submerged lands. The federal Submerged Lands Act of 1953 gave states the right to tidelands within three miles of shore, with the federal government to control leasing and development beyond that point. California's Shell-Cunningham Tidelands Act, passed in 1955, declared state tidelands from San Luis Obispo County south to Orange County's Newport Beach open for offshore oil leasing. One exception was the area directly offshore from the city of Santa Barbara, where an oil-free sanctuary was designated from the University of California, Santa Barbara's Goleta campus east to Summerland Bay. Santa Barbara residents actively lobbied for their offshore sanctuary during negotiations over the act (with the support of the local newspaper); residents of Ventura County, as well as county and city governments, were generally absent from these deliberations. One exception to Ventura county's silence was the city of Oxnard. City representatives attended the hearings, and City Attorney Joseph Goss asked the committee to "take into consideration the opinions of other communities along the coast [besides Santa Barbara], including adequate protection for the new, smaller communities who have not yet had time to develop their beach front" (Sosna 1954: A1-A2).[36] It is clear from this statement that even during the continuing oil boom of the 1950s, Oxnard

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[35] Offshore drilling to this point had been confined to piers, utilized at the Rincon field since the 1930s (Kallman 1984: 37).

[36] The City of Santa Barbara claimed its seven million dollar investment in beach front development would be at risk if offshore drilling occurred within the city limits. While Oxnard could not cite the same figures, its saw its position as similar (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, August 27, 1954).

was turning some attention toward tourism and recognized offshore development as a possible threat.[37]

The development of offshore reserves coincided with the decline of the Ventura County terrestrial oil industry,[38] buffering the local economy against either a boom or recession. Chart 3 depicts cumulative production figures for Ventura County's onshore production and Santa Barbara Channel offshore production. Santa Barbara's state tidelands production figures are included here because Ventura County provided personnel and services to offshore operations throughout the region; the economic impact of offshore oil was not limited to the county whose shore it abutted.[39] Beginning in 1957, the first year for which offshore production statistics are available, tidelands oil only slightly buffered the decline in Ventura County's onshore industry. It was not until the 1970s that Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) development in federal waters returned regional oil production to levels above those seen in Ventura County during the mid-1950s.

Although the City of Oxnard expressed hesitation regarding offshore drilling, the Oxnard plain saw its share of terrestrial oil development during this period. In 1947 Standard Oil made a major find on a section of the plain owned by the McGrath family, but the initial rig was destroyed by fire. A second rig was then blown out by high pressure mud, and Standard stationed guards around the operation's perimeter, fearing encroachment on what might be a major find. The city of Ventura even considered leasing its money-losing municipal golf course, in the Oxnard area (on land adjoining the Standard operation), for oil development (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, April 16, 1947: 2). A second blowout occurred seven years later, as Standard's MacInnes Number Two blew in the middle of the night, spewing approximately 2,500 barrels a day into the surrounding bean fields. Although the well reportedly released "millions of cubic feet of natural gas," this well did not catch fire. Coverage of the event in the *Ventura Star-Free Press* focused on the unfortunate loss of natural gas pressure due to the blowout, not on the despoliation of either crops or the natural environment. Oil beat reporter Joe Paul Jr. noted that "oil men were sickened by the heavy loss of oil and the bleeding off of the vital gas pressure" (Paul 1954a; 1954b).

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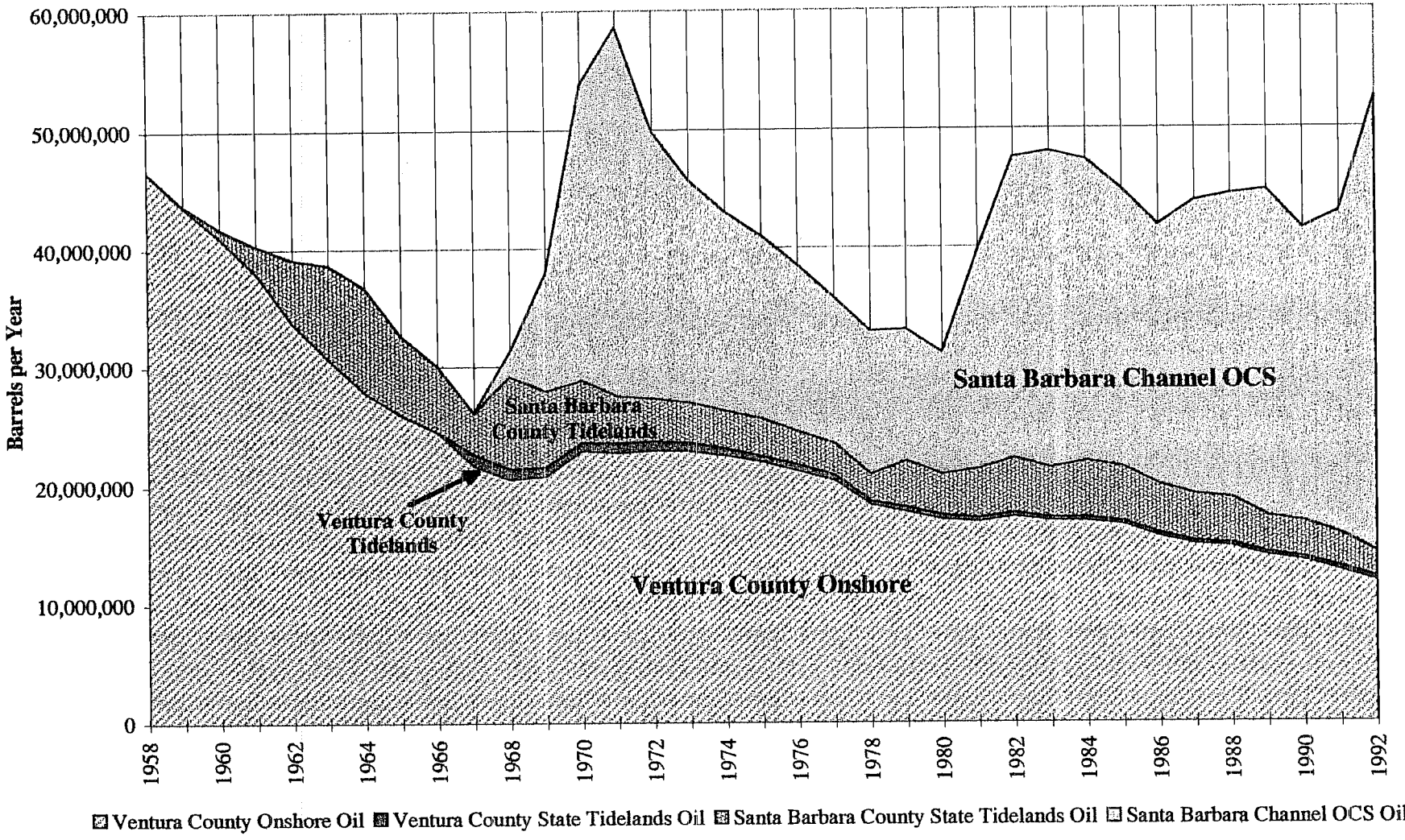
[37] Just as it had during the conflict over seismic exploration in 1949, the *Ventura Star-Free Press* relied on oil industry sources in covering these negotiations, quite in contrast to the Santa Barbara paper's reliance on local officials for commentary. Media's reliance on business and government spokespersons is not unusual (see Sigal 1986), in contrast, Santa Barbara's daily newspaper utilized several citizen groups as sources in its coverage of these hearings.

[38] Two major Ventura County drilling firms folded in 1964: Rocky Mountain Drilling, and Drilling and Exploration Company, which continued to conduct business in the Middle East (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, September 14, 1964).

[39] For example, even though most platforms in this initial boom were off Santa Barbara County's coastline, Port Hueneme functioned as the primary staging area and transport point for offshore crews and equipment. One source at the Port estimated that at its height, the offshore oil industry accounted for almost all of the Port Hueneme's business.

## Chart 3: The Offshore Era
## Ventura County Onshore and Regional Offshore Production




Sources: California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil and Gas; Annual Reports of the Oil and Gas Supervisor.
Minerals Managment Service, Estimated Oil And Gas Reserves, Pacific OCS (MMS 94-0008)

Oil was only one economic boon to the Oxnard Plain. The establishment of military installations at Port Hueneme (1942) and Point Mugu (1946), as well as the Oxnard Air Force Base (1952), brought unprecedented growth to the area. Port Hueneme and the surrounding land were appropriated by the U.S. Navy in 1942 for development of the Naval Advanced Base Depot, later known as the Construction Battalion Center. The base served as a staging area for construction materials and as a training center for Navy Seabees. Approximately 10,000 civilians and 21,000 military personnel were employed at the base, and new housing tracts were built in Oxnard and Hueneme to accommodate the influx of personnel (Triem 1985: 134-36). The U.S. Navy acquired Point Mugu in 1946 for its Naval Air Missile Test Center, now the Pacific Missile Test Center. The acquisition was not without opposition, however, as local ranchers expressed concerns about safety and possible threats to nearby communities. Nevertheless, the first missile was launched in 1947 (Triem 1985: 136).

The military boom of the 1950s spilled east from Oxnard to nearby Camarillo. While it continued to be a farming community (and continues to be even now, albeit to a lesser extent), Camarillo experienced the same trend toward industrialization and intensified residential development seen in the coastal communities.

**Table 8: Growth in the communities – Camarillo**

| | 1960 Population[40] | 1970 Population | % Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 2,359 | 19,219 | 715% |

Source: U.S. Census

Prior to 1960, agriculture (including warehouses, packing houses, and food processing plants) dominated the local economy. Camarillo was home to the Ventura County Walnut Growers' Association warehouse, a citrus processing plant, and the California Confection Company. In 1963, 3M (Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing) opened its plant in Camarillo, the first national manufacturing firm to locate in the area. Playtex and Clairol have since followed, and current industrial production includes fiberboard cartons, business forms, precision machinery, aerospace metals, chemicals, agricultural equipment, and power supplies (White 1979: 77). The Oxnard area military bases were another vital facet of Camarillo's economy; in 1960, 29.47 percent of the Camarillo labor force was employed by government, and 21.62 percent in 1970 (these figures include local government employment as well, but the military employment clearly contributes to this high figure) (U.S. Census).

[40] 1950 population data was not available, as Camarillo's population was under 1,000 at this time.

During the 1950s, the Camarillo Chamber of Commerce (the local governing body prior to incorporation in 1964) had encouraged the California Department of Highways to shift the 101 freeway from its proposed course, south of the city, to the present Conejo grade route directly through Camarillo. Convinced that a position on the freeway would attract new residents, the Chamber of Commerce considered the Highway Department's agreement to the new route a major victory. In the 1970s, however, city leaders became dissatisfied with the bifurcation of Camarillo by the 101 and asked the department of transportation to move the freeway south, to the original route proposed twenty years earlier. The Department of Highways declined (Triem 1985: 137-138).

*Back country oil: The valleys go their own ways*

Petroleum development was an important part of both the Santa Clara River and Ojai Valley landscapes and economies throughout this era, albeit in distinctive ways. The Ojai valley, known mainly for its scenic beauty and numerous resorts, has a complicated relationship with the oil industry. The rugged Upper Valley[41] was the site of some of Ventura County's earliest oil exploration; the Lion Mountain field, two miles south of Ojai, was initially developed in the 1860s and successfully drilled again by Humble, as well as independent operators, beginning in 1948. Generally obscured from view from the Ojai area of resort fame, these Upper Valley wells quietly produced through the 1950s, and exploration continued as drilling techniques improved.[42] Even a blowout at the independent W. R. Oil Company's Bailey Number Four on October 24 1956, spouting one million cubic feet of gas mixed with oil, water, and drilling mud, was regarded as good news – and front-page news – at least in Ventura (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, October 24, 1956: A1).

Oil drilling in the lower valley however, has been met with local resistance. One Ojai historian claims that in the early 1950s, an exploratory rig (Carty Number One, located near the Maricopa highway at Route 33, in the lower Ojai Valley) angered several residents who objected to the noise and unsightliness. The well produced only salt water, however, thus ending the conflict (Fry 1983: 204). During this same era, an Ojai resident complained to *Star-Free Press* editor Roy Pinkerton about despoliation of his view, claiming that Pinkerton and the *Star-Free Press'* support of the oil industry were directly to blame for a "badly scarred mountain," created by hillside drilling. A second theme in this letter is the Ventura County Planning Department's insensitivity to residents of Ojai and their wishes; the author accused the Planning Commission of "pass[ing] their will upon us" unjustly, as "nine out of ten people in Ojai are not in commercial business here and do not

[41] The designations "upper" and "lower" are commonly used to denote the east and west ends of the valley, respectively.

[42] Production from the Ojai Valley, 1953: Weldon Canyon (east of Oak View), 112 barrels per day; Ojai Group, 699 barrels per day.

want it here near their homes" (Snyder 1951). This comment stands in sharp contrast to the attitudes of Ventura County developers who, in the course of selling tracts at La Conchita and Simi Valley, bragged about the proximity of oil operations to home sites. While this contrast could be seen as marking the passing of an era when residences and industry easily mixed, we see this as another reflection of Ojai's interest in aesthetic preservation. Today even proactive Ojai environmentalists acknowledge that oil operations kept out of sight are easily kept out of locals' minds; it could easily be the case that the two instances described above violated this essential consideration, thus bringing about public scrutiny.

In the Santa Clara River Valley, existing wells continued to produce oil through the 1940s and 1950s,[43] but processing facilities began to leave the area. While the valley had been home to some of the earliest commercial refineries, these were relatively primitive and isolated. By comparison, the Ventura Avenue area was proximate to marine terminals and an abundance of flat land where processing and service facilities were constructed, and boomed at a time when technology was advancing rapidly. Oil could be profitably refined near Avenue drill sites or tankered to Los Angeles, which had by this time become a center of oil refining. The Texaco refinery at Fillmore (originally called the Ventura Refining Company) processed Santa Clara River Valley crude from 1915, to 1950. Oil once processed locally would now be piped to facilities at Torrance, and Texaco offered the plant's thirty or so employees jobs in the Los Angeles basin (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, March 10, 1950: 1). The plant itself has been removed, and the site is undergoing soil remediation, water treatment, and well monitoring following its classification as a Superfund site. This sometimes alarming designation seems of relatively little interest to area residents; while the city's mayor expressed some concern that Texaco should not "make [its] profit on us and go away and leave us with the problem," she recalled little public outcry or organization around the issue. A Pacific Coast Pipeline pumping station (transporting oil from Ventura to Newhall) now occupies the area.

The tendency of oil companies to consolidate refining facilities is also demonstrated by Union Oil's development of the ridge between the Santa Clara and Simi valleys; new discoveries in this area meant new pipelines, not new refineries. The years 1952 and 1953 brought increased exploration of the Tapo Canyon, Oakridge, and Torrey Canyon[44] fields, on the Simi Valley side of Big Mountain. By

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[43] The South Mountain field near Fillmore continued to produce through the 1940s and into the 1950s as a Texaco operation (Franks and Lambert 1985: 71). Between 1952 and 1953, average daily production increased from 7,613 barrels to 12,342 (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, October 14, 1953). Because of the area's steep terrain, Texaco and other companies (including Shell and Fairfield) utilized drilling "islands," level slabs of concrete notched into steep hillsides from which several wells could be directionally drilled. In 1949 Texaco had six islands in the South Mountain field, each with three to five wells – accounting for about a fourth of the company's 140 wells in the area (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, October 19, 1949).

[44] The Union Oil company commonly named its tankers after productive fields, including the Torrey Canyon field. The tanker *Torrey Canyon* ran aground in the spring of 1967, spilling 30,000,000 gallons of

1953 these fields were producing sufficiently for Union Oil to build a five million dollar, sixty-five mile pipeline to Los Angeles refineries, capable of transporting 50,000 barrels a day (Welty and Taylor 1958: 1958: 245). The Torrey Canyon and Oakridge fields are located on Union's extensive fee property in the area – land on which the oil company has purchased the mineral rights in perpetuity, and does not pay a royalty based on production. Additional land was and still is owned by Union outright, making Union one of the largest landholders in the Simi Valley area. It is the role of landholder that Union (known as Unocal after 1985) is best known for today in Simi Valley; perhaps because oil was, from the outset, piped south for refining, and Simi Valley never became a center of oil processing.

*Conejo and Simi Valleys: The suburban era*

The biggest changes in eastern Ventura County during this post-World War II era were not the result of changes in oil or agriculture but of the great Southern California population boom fueled by aerospace and defense contracting. Like the rest of Southern California, Ventura County experienced tremendous population growth during the 1950s and 1960s. New freeways meant that travel between Los Angeles and the Central Coast became quick and easy enough to make areas of Ventura County viable bedroom communities for the aerospace industries of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. New roads, the importation of Los Angeles metropolitan water, and the subdivision of previously rural areas drastically changed the population distribution and infrastructure of Ventura County.

**Table 9: Growth in the communities – the east county**

| | 1950 Population | 1970 Population | % Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Moorpark | 1,146 | 3,380 | 195% |
| Thousand Oaks | 1,243 | 36,334 | 2,823% |
| Simi Valley | 2,107 | 56,464 | 2,579% |

Source: U.S. Census

The Conejo Valley's connection to Los Angeles precedes even Louis Goebel's decision to move his Lion Farm there from the Universal Studio lot in 1926; Los Angeles developers Edwin and Harold Janss (whose developments included Yorba Linda and the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles) had purchased 10,000 acres of the Conejo Valley in 1893. The brothers focused their development efforts on Los Angeles for over sixty years, while the Conejo property remained a working farm. Following the 1955 completion of the Conejo segment of the 101 freeway, the

crude oil and polluting beaches in England and France. Ironically, this spill provided many lessons for the Santa Barbara spill at Union's Platform A two years later, especially regarding the hazards of using chemical dispersants (Easton 1972: 40).

Janss brothers began the subdivision and development of land near Thousand Oaks, then a town of just over 1,200 people (Bidwell 1989: 34-42; 1950 census). The developers attracted a number of corporate employers to their land, including Northrop, Packard Bell, Westinghouse and the North American Aviation Science Center (Triem 1985: 139). The first subdivisions, selling in 1956, were marketed exclusively to aerospace and electronics professionals. A Janss brochure describes one development as "a super community. . . for the superior new worker of the age of electronics." A company press agent explained, "Its concept is slightly snobbish: deliberately planned to appeal to highly trained, highly selective, highly paid people" (quoted in Bidwell 1989: 42).

As housing construction increased, water shortages became chronic; groundwater was overdrafted and water rationing followed the intermittent loss of water to several homes in 1959. A ballot measure proposing that Thousand Oaks join the Los Angeles Municipal Water District passed overwhelmingly (93 percent) in 1960, and Colorado River water arrived three years later (Bidwell 1989: 48).[45] Despite this new water source, however, a dam on Sespe Creek was proposed in the early 1960s. As the dam proposal included creation of a road through the Sespe Condor Refuge (located north of Fillmore, in the Los Padres National Forest), the plan was vehemently opposed by conservationists, including activists from the Audubon Society. Information gathered by San Luis Obispo county environmentalist Ian McMillan (see San Luis Obispo County Report) helped to counter dam supporters' criticisms of the sanctuary (specifically, that it was ineffective for condor conservation, and that captivity offered the birds better chances of survival). The environmentalists won out over claims by a coalition of construction, recreation and real estate interests that had supported the dam project, and the $100,000,000 bond issue necessary for the project was defeated (McMillan 1968: 158-161). McMillan also credits the Sespe Creek controversy with increasing public awareness about the endangered raptors:

> One of the main effects of our arguments was a surprising increase in popular ecological understanding. . . an unforeseen swell of public opinion appeared in support of our position on how and why the condor should be protected (McMillan 1968: 161).

Thousand Oaks incorporated in 1964, later annexing the communities of Newbury Park and the Ventura County portion of Westlake Village (Project Development Company 1992: 7). Three years after incorporation, "more then half the houses under construction in Ventura County were being built in the Conejo Valley" (Bidwell 1989: 57).

[45] In 1968, Camarillo's Calleguas Municipal Water District also began receiving Colorado and Feather River water through the Los Angeles Municipal Water District, to supplement existing local ground water supplies (White 1979: 78-79).

Simi Valley saw a similar boom in housing construction slightly later, during the 1960s (see Table 9: Growth in the communities – the east county). Compared to Thousand Oaks, development was less coherently planned and lacked an explicit emphasis on attracting aerospace and electronics engineers. Instead, the city provided inexpensive tract homes[46] to workers from the San Fernando Valley and Ventura County, sometimes at the expense of other services. When the city of Simi Valley incorporated in 1969, few retail or commercial services were available, and most residents still shopped in nearby Moorpark. Moorpark had been the area's commercial center prior to the suburban boom; the city's own residential explosion would not occur until the 1980s.

The rapid suburbanization of the east county area signals the emerging integration of the county's overall economy into the Los Angeles metropolis. This growth was to overwhelm any previous phase of development, and would indeed come to challenge the county's identity as a region independent of the ever-expanding L.A. metropolis.

## IV. The Environmental Era (1969-Present)

We now turn to the last phase of Ventura County's history, with our attention increasingly on the modern developments that have given the county its current social and economic configuration. We first describe the demographic and infrastructural features of the constituent towns and cities. We focus as well on local media and inventory the local civic organizational structures, particularly the non-profit "voluntary organizations." Finally, we chronicle developments in oil, both onshore and offshore, including reactions to the 1969 Santa Barbara Channel oil spill – frequently viewed as the beginning of the contemporary environmental era.

### *Part A: Demographic Changes and Community Differentiation*

Since 1970, Ventura county has experienced growth unprecedented since World War II brought a military boom economy to the coastal communities of Ventura, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme. While all Ventura County communities saw their populations increase following 1970, growth has been especially intense in the east county communities of Moorpark, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks. Oxnard and Camarillo saw similar growth spurts, although not as dramatic, while the Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys remained comparatively stable. Below, Table 10

[46] Since 1970 (the earliest year for which Simi Valley figures are available), housing prices in Simi Valley have been 20 percent lower than those of Thousand Oaks.

shows the changing demographic make-up of Ventura County as a whole, and Chart 4 depicts population growth in the major cities of Ventura County.

**Table 10: County sociodemographic characteristics, 1960-1990**

| | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 199,138 | 376,430 | 529,174 | 669,016 |
| Percent Foreign Born | 8.24 | 7.2 | 12.67 | 17.04 |
| Percent Nonwhite[47] | 3.3 | 4.0 | 19.56 | 20.1 |
| Percent Male | 51.56 | 49.67 | 49.77 | 50.45 |
| Household Size | 3.33 | 3.43 | 3.0 | 3.02 |
| Median School Years, Adult Males 25+ | 11.2 | 12.5 | 12.8 | * |
| Median School Years, Adult Females 25+ | 11.9 | 12.4 | 12.8 | * |
| Percent Unemployed | 4.9 | 5.7 | 5.3 | 4.7 |

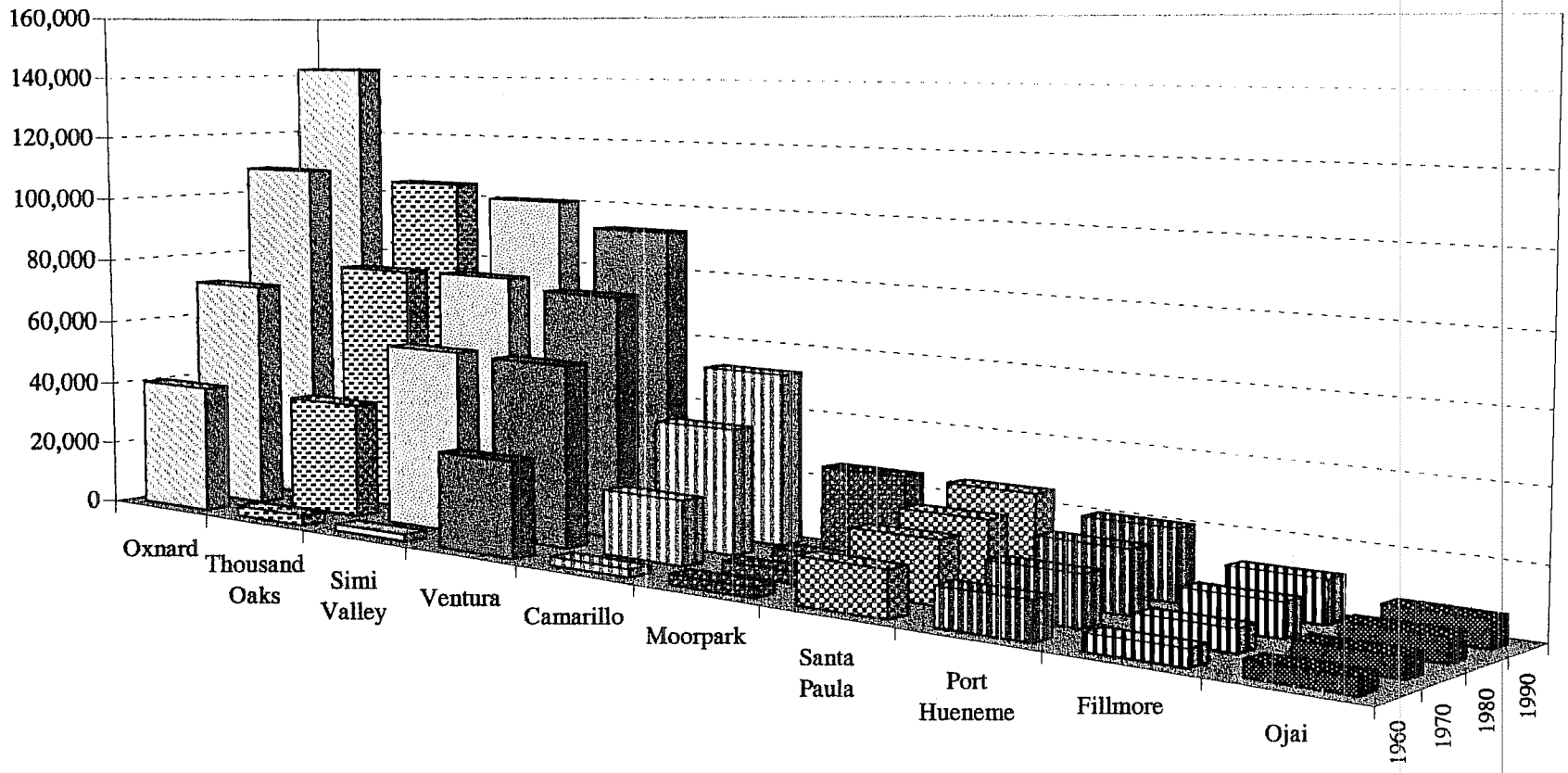
Source: U.S. Census
* Indicates data not available

Since its initial non-native settlement, Ventura county has provided an example of racial stratification in that minority-dominated occupations have been generally low-wage occupations, and towns with more ethnic diversity are typically less affluent. Many people of color have achieved economic and social success in the county – e.g. in Oxnard, Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans have held the mayor's office for decades (Fukuyama 1994: 29), and in Camarillo, the Camarillo family maintained their ranch well into the twentieth century and actively participated in development of the current city (White 1979). Still, most Hispanics (the largest minority group in the county) live in working class towns, and many hold jobs in what remain low-wage industries. In cities highly dependent on agriculture (including food processing and packing) and manufacturing we find a high Hispanic populations. Hispanics make up at least half of the populations of Oxnard, El Rio, Fillmore, Piru, and Santa Paula. In the east county and the city of Ventura, economically dominated by middle-class professionals (often commuters), we find a more ethnically homogeneous population, typically 70 to 80 percent "Non-Hispanic Whites."[48]

[47] Including Blacks, Asians, and American Indians.

[48] Asians, the second largest minority group in the county, make up 6.8 and 8.6 percent of the populations of Port Hueneme and Oxnard, respectively. In Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks, Asians make up 5.5 and 4.8 percent of the population. These four communities represent the highest concentrations of Asians in the county, and their economic differences make it difficult to draw conclusions about the economic status of this group.

## Chart 4: Ventura County Community Populations, 1960-1990




Source: U. S. Census

**Table 11: County employment by occupation, 1960-1990**

| | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional, Technical | 9410 | 24,813 | 38,668 | 62,334 |
| Proprietors, Managers, Officials | 5,286 | 12,321 | 28,517 | 49,202 |
| Clerical and Sales | 12,497 | 30,812 | 62,821 | 94,278 |
| Craftsmen and Foremen | 9,496 | 18,178 | 31,239 | 39,379 |
| Service | 6,625 | 15,767 | 29,025 | 37,637 |
| Farm Managers, Laborers, Foremen | 8,781 | 6,756 | 14,257 | 15,908 |
| Laborers (except farm), Operatives | 12,507 | 23,254 | 30,954 | 38,034 |
| Occupation Not Reported | 3,249 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL EMPLOYED | 67,851 | 131,901 | 235,481 | 336,772 |

Source: U.S. Census

Table 11 shows the changing economy of Ventura County during this era. The employment picture that emerges here is an increase in middle-class occupations (the professions, proprietors, mangers and officials, clerical and sales), accompanied by a decrease in the relative number of non-agricultural laborers. This pattern closely matched that seen in the state of California as a whole, where white-collar occupations also increased in their relative importance. One important difference between Ventura County and the state, however, is the relative importance of agriculturally-based occupations (including managers and foremen, as well as laborers). Although the percentage of Ventura County residents employed in agriculture fell by over half from 1960 to 1970 (remaining relatively stable at around 5 percent through the 1970s, '80s and '90s), agriculture nevertheless played a greater role in Ventura County's employment mix than it did statewide (4.7 percent in Ventura County versus 2.7 percent in California for 1990).

On the following page, Table 12 provides a second view of Ventura County employment and the relative importance of each industrial sector. While the above U.S. Census data show what occupations are held by Ventura County residents, Table 12 uses data collected by the Regional Economic Information Service to show the jobs actually located in Ventura County. Comparing this information provides a picture of just what kinds of jobs are located in Ventura County versus what kinds of jobs are available only by commuting (usually to Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley). Note the relative importance of service and retail employment by 1990; these figures suggest that while many Ventura County residents work in the professions, many of these jobs lie outside the county's borders. Jobs created inside the county appear to be in those sectors that support the expanding bedroom communities of the East County.

## Table 12: Ventura County Employment by Industry, 1970-1990

| Year | Total Employment Full-time and Part-time | Farm Employment | Ag. Services, Forestry, Fishing and Other Employment | Mining Employment | Construction Employment | Manufacturing Employment | Transportation and Public Utilities Employment | Wholesale Trade Employment | Retail Trade Employment | Finance, Insurance and Real Estate Employment | Services Employment | Gov. Federal and Civilian Employment | Gov. Military Employment | State/Local Gov. Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1970 | 134,567 | 11,268 | 3,175 | 1,938 | 5,684 | 14,065 | 4,516 | 4,299 | 21,873 | 9,223 | 21,792 | 10,482 | 9,379 | 16,873 |
| | | 8% | 2% | 1% | 4% | 10% | 3% | 3% | 16% | 7% | 16% | 8% | 7% | 13% |
| 1975 | 170,741 | 14,897 | 6,358 | 2,126 | 5,751 | 17,479 | 4,933 | 6,422 | 25,610 | 12,605 | 30,888 | 10,996 | 8,735 | 23,941 |
| | | 9% | 4% | 1% | 3% | 10% | 3% | 4% | 15% | 7% | 18% | 6% | 5% | 14% |
| 1980 | 219,778 | 11,907 | 7,414 | 3,007 | 10,955 | 24,932 | 7,392 | 8,035 | 35,297 | 18,682 | 46,462 | 10,338 | 8,386 | 26,971 |
| | | 5% | 3% | 1% | 5% | 11% | 3% | 4% | 16% | 9% | 21% | 5% | 4% | 12% |
| 1985 | 261,866 | 8,716 | 8,125 | 4,118 | 13,988 | 29,735 | 9,209 | 9,195 | 47,169 | 20,288 | 64,797 | 11,054 | 8,912 | 26,560 |
| | | 3% | 3% | 2% | 5% | 11% | 4% | 4% | 18% | 8% | 25% | 4% | 3% | 10% |
| 1990 | 331,203 | 10,597 | 9,897 | 3,011 | 23,020 | 35,568 | 13,392 | 13,313 | 54,832 | 24,947 | 91,662 | 12,568 | 8,110 | 30,286 |
| | | 3% | 3% | 1% | 7% | 11% | 4% | 4% | 17% | 8% | 28% | 4% | 2% | 9% |

Source: Regional Economic Information Service

Also of note here is the consistent role of government employment. Although federal military and civilian jobs make up a smaller and smaller percentage of total county employment (15 percent of total employment in 1970 versus 6 percent of total employment in 1990), as we will describe in more detail below, the military also makes a significant contribution to the county's economy through contracting and expenditures. State and local government employment grew in the actual number of positions, but its relative importance in the economy diminished (13 percent of county employment in 1970 versus 9 percent in 1990).

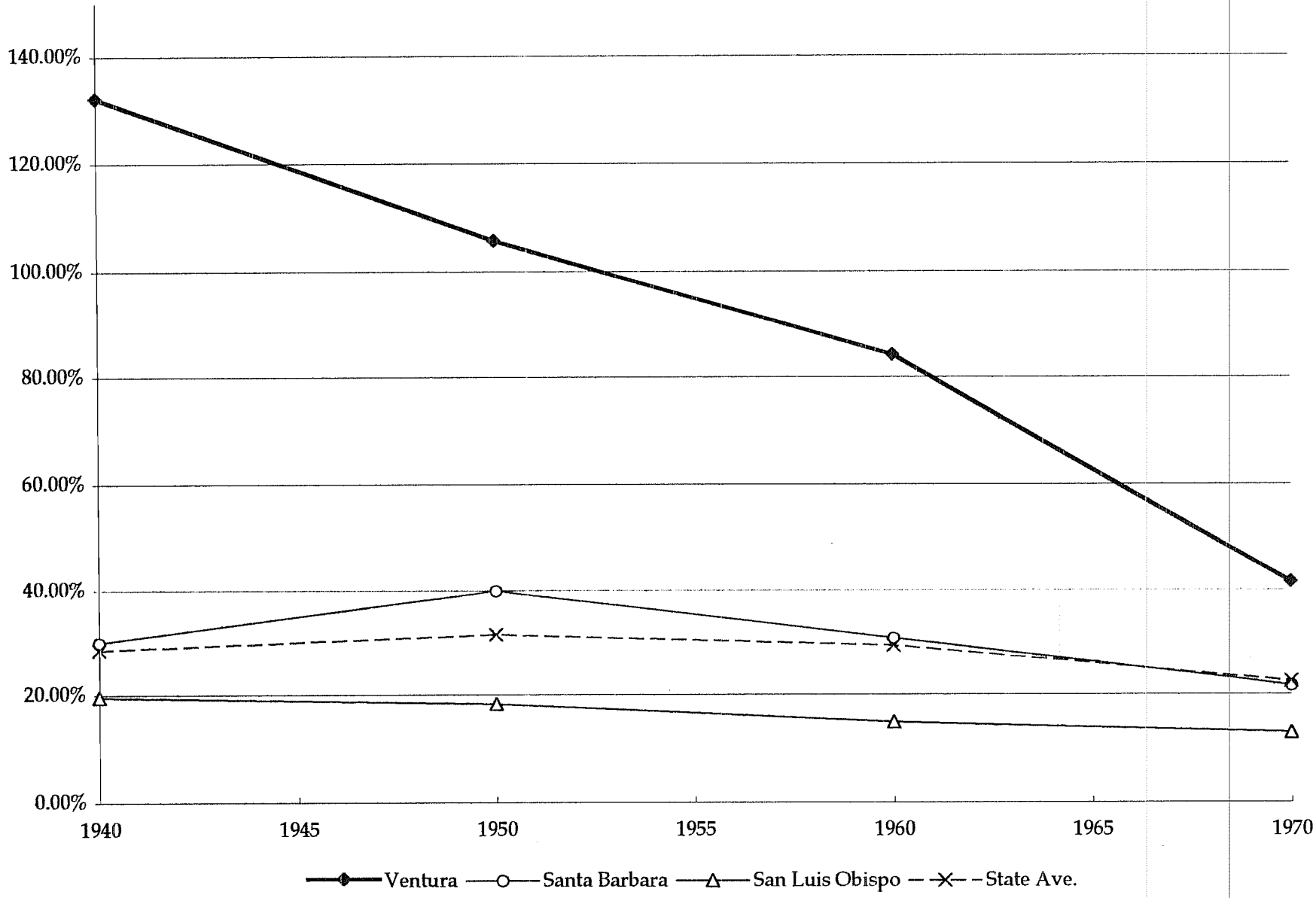
Our data provide several indicators of oil's declining impact on Ventura County employment as well as county tax revenues. Chart 5 shows the "Extract/Intact Ratio," or the relative importance of mining, chemical and allied, and petroleum jobs to the number of jobs generated in the tourism industry. Here it is apparent that by 1970, tourism had become more important to Ventura County than the extractive industries – an inversion of their status in 1940. While the actual numbers of mining jobs (the category includes petroleum extraction, plus other extractive enterprises including sand and gravel) rose from 1,938 in 1970 to 4,118 in 1985 and settled at 3,011 in 1990, even at its peak this category accounted for only 2 percent of total employment. Chart 6 (Ventura County Oil Industry Payroll) and Table 13 (Property taxes on developed oil and gas mineral rights) show that the economic impact of the oil industry, in both countywide payroll and contributions to county property tax rolls, followed a similar curve (peaking in 1985) and generally diminished thereafter (below we will describe in more detail the role of world oil prices in setting this pattern).

**Table 13: Property taxes on developed oil and gas mineral rights**

| Year | Tax Contribution |
|---|---|
| 1977 | $7,598,785 |
| 1980 | $8,330,769 |
| 1985 | $13,384,953 |
| 1990 | $10,725,033 |
| 1995 | $4,307,660 |

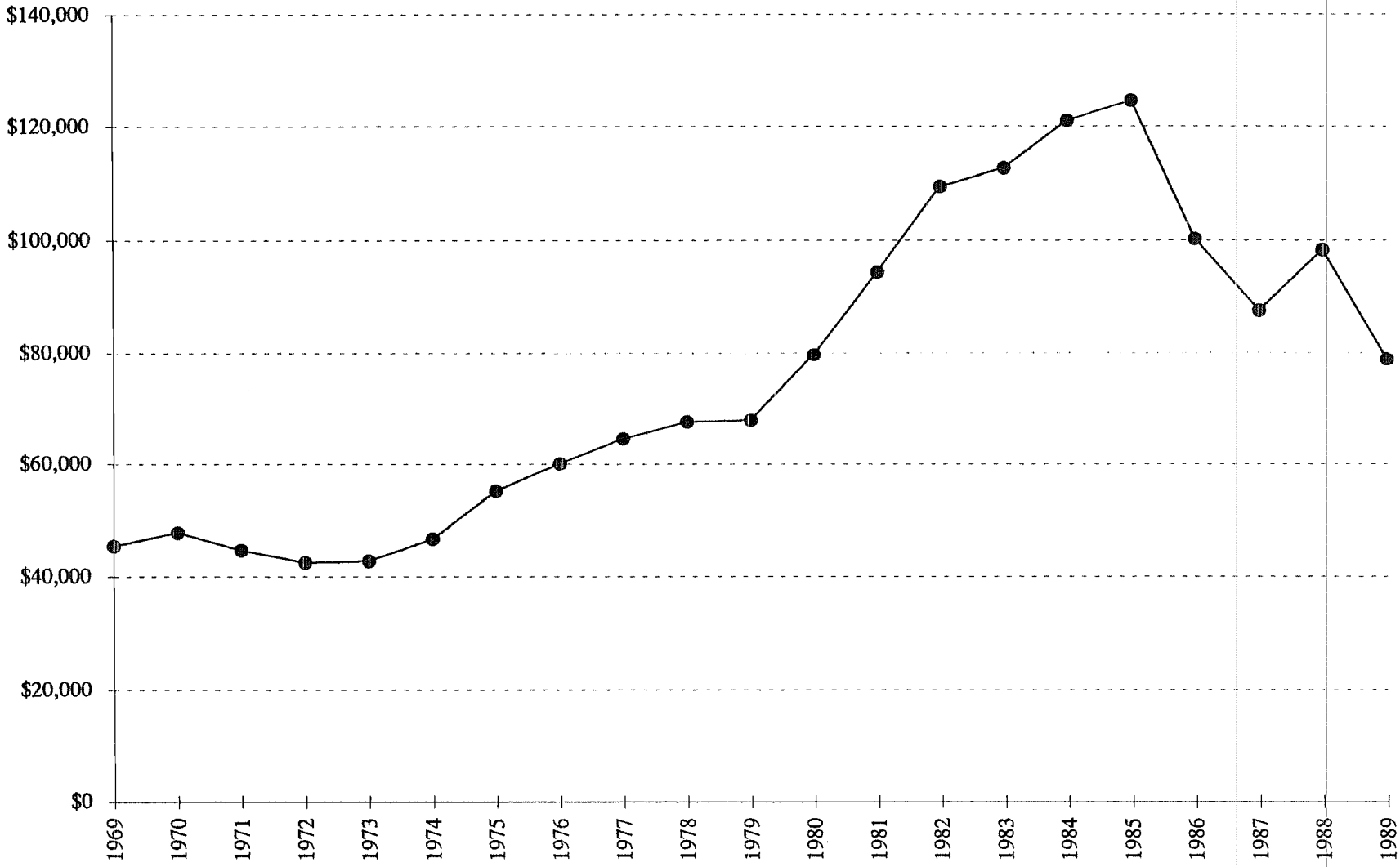
Source: California Board of Equalization

## Chart 5: The Extract/Intact Ratio
## Ventura County Compared to State and Region




The Extract/Intact Ratio compares the numbers of jobs in mining, chemical/allied, and petroleum to jobs generated by eating, drinking and lodging establishments -- a proxy for the tourism industry.
Source: U.S. Census

## Chart 6: Ventura County Oil and Gas Payroll, 1969-1989
## (In Thousands of Dollars)




Earnings are shown in constant (1982) dollars.
Source: Regional Economic Information Service

By 1995, oil and gas properties held by major oil companies[49] in Ventura County were assessed at $379 million, compared to total property assessment countywide. These oil and gas properties accounted for 0.86 percent of the county's $43 billion worth – a steep decline from earlier times, when oil accounted for up to 55 percent of the county's property assessments (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 17, 1952).

While oil, agriculture, and the military appear to be diminishing as the county's leading industries, this conclusion neglects certain related elements of each sector which have actually grown. For instance, the sector of "agricultural services" has steadily grown in absolute numbers of jobs, while farm work tends to fluctuate. Similarly, while military employment currently makes up only 2 percent of total county employment, military installations also employ significant numbers of contract employees whose connection to the military is obscured by their actual employers' non-military (and non-government) status. For instance, Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center retains 3,100 contract employees who are technically employed at companies such as Grumman and Delco. Table 14 contains employment and expenditure data for Ventura County's two largest military installations:

**Table 14: : Military employment and expenditures**

| | Port Hueneme Naval Construction Battalion Center | Point Mugu Naval Air Warfare Center |
|---|---|---|
| Military Employees | 4,067 | 4,992 (combined military and civilian) |
| Civilian Employees | 4,562 | |
| Contract Employees | 684 | 3,100 |
| Local Purchases | $63,077,000 | $7,601,740 |
| Local Contracts over 25K | $102,634,000 | $150,470,565 |

Source: U.S. Navy

To gain a better understanding of how these economic and demographic factors have helped to shape each of the cities of Ventura County, we have divided the county communities into three categories with somewhat common profiles and histories. We will first discuss the Coastal communities of Ventura, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme, which have in common not only their geographic proximity but their dependence on agricultural and military employment. Second, we focus on the historical valley settlements of Ojai, Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru, and finally

[49] "Major" oil companies include Arco, Chevron, Conoco, Exxon, Fortune, Mobil, Oryx, Santa Fe Energy, Seneca, Shell, Signal Hill (PP), Texaco, Union, and Vintage Petroleum.

the newer suburban cities of Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, and Moorpark. These categories are meant to suggest the similarities between certain communities and simplify an analysis of their socioeconomic character – they are not meant to represent hard and fast divisions within the county. It is instead our hope that by showing the kinds of people living in each type of community, and the social and economic concerns of those people, we might anticipate how each type of place would respond to offshore oil development.

*The Coastal Communities*

Ventura, Oxnard, and Port Hueneme share a common location on the coastal plain, their history of long-term industrial development (in both oil and agricultural processing) and, more recently, their proximity to active military bases.[50] Local, state, and federal government employment provides a steady, non-cyclical source of income. The Ventura County Government Center (located in the newer, eastern area of the city of Ventura) provides local jobs in county administration, and the Naval Construction Battalion Center at Port Hueneme and the Naval Air Warfare Center at Point Mugu together employ nearly 20,000 military, civilian, and contract personnel. The multiplier effect from base personnel expenditures is well-understood by locals, who have become especially sensitive to the current trend of military downsizing and base closures. While the Point Mugu and Port Hueneme military operations appear protected at this time, locals closely monitor the situation and any change in the bases' status is front page news.

[50] While located inland, in the Las Posas Valley (between Oxnard and Thousand Oaks), Camarillo shares with the coastal communities its dependence on the military economy of Point Mugu and Port Hueneme, as well as a historic dependence on agriculture. Camarillo also shares many characteristics with the suburban cities of the east county – including its rapid growth during the 1960s (see Table 8), its affluence (see Table 20), and its attractiveness to Los Angeles refugees. For this reason, Camarillo is included in the section on "New Suburban Cities."

The community of Oak View shares a common economic and demographic profile with these coastal cities. Located at the southern end of the Ojai Valley, Oak View is only a 10 minute drive from the city of Ventura and is even closer to the Ventura Avenue oil operations. For these reasons it might be appropriate to include it with the coastal communities, as its economy seems more parallel to Ventura and Oxnard than to Ojai proper.

**Table 15: Percentage of labor force employed by government**
(Coastal Communities shown in italics)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 29.60 | 21.64 | 16.49 |
| El Rio | 21.33 | 17.50 | 12.07 |
| Fillmore | 13.92 | 15.67 | 14.73 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | 17.61 | 17.02 | 13.38 |
| Moorpark | 12.5 | 10.54 | 9.36 |
| Oak View | 21.1 | 20.02 | 19.01 |
| Ojai | 20.41 | 16.44 | 14.67 |
| *Oxnard* | *24.99* | *18.5* | *17.05* |
| *Port Hueneme* | *19.98* | *17.41* | *17.72* |
| Santa Paula | 15.55 | 14.0 | 11.52 |
| Simi Valley | 14.02 | 12.83 | 10.4 |
| Thousand Oaks | 13.49 | 10.86 | 9.55 |
| *Ventura* | *24.42* | *21.23* | *18.03* |

Source: U.S. Census

The construction of military bases meant rapid development and unprecedented economic growth, the pace of which declined after World War II – both Oxnard and Port Hueneme had unemployment rates over 10 percent in 1950. While Ventura was protected from this post-war bust by its still thriving petroleum industry, oil production eventually declined to the point that only significant new finds would be able to prevent layoffs and downsizing . The oil shocks of the early 1970s meant increases in world oil prices and increased production and revenues in Ventura, as the high-sulfur crude became more lucrative. Exploration was stepped up, and existing wells became more valuable. Note in Table 16 (Number Residents employed in Petroleum and Mining) how almost every community reporting figures for 1970 showed an increase between 1970 and 1980 – a time of increasing oil prices. Employment between 1980 and 1990 fell off again in most communities following the oil glut and subsequent price collapse of the mid-1980s (a trend also reflected in countywide payroll figures – see Chart 6).

**Table 16: Number of residents employed in petroleum and mining**

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 10 | 111 | 130 |
| El Rio | * | 14 | 38 |
| Fillmore | * | 134 | 61 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | * | 118 | 112 |
| Moorpark | * | 17 | 24 |
| Oak View | * | 141 | 68 |
| Ojai | * | 103 | 41 |
| Oxnard | 114 | 406 | 332 |
| Piru | * | * | * |
| Port Hueneme | 33 | 27 | 62 |
| Santa Paula | 179 | 196 | 217 |
| Simi Valley | 26 | 63 | 83 |
| Thousand Oaks[51] | 53 | 160 | 179 |
| Ventura | 899 | 1312 | 965 |

Source: U.S. Census.
* Indicates data not available

The prominence of agriculture in the Ventura County economy means that for many workers, employment is cyclical within the year, as well as varying from year to year, depending on crop yields and market conditions. While agricultural workers may not necessarily consider themselves "unemployed" between work seasons, the amount of wages generated through agriculture impacts other local businesses, and may alter perceptions of local economic health. Agricultural employment in the county typically peaks in April. In April 1990 agriculture provided 22,500 jobs countywide; during the same year's lull, however, agricultural employment dropped to 12,000 (Project Development Co.: 22).

Strawberries, the second most profitable crop in the county (behind citrus), are grown almost exclusively on the Oxnard Plain. The city of Oxnard celebrates this crop with an annual strawberry festival drawing 70,000 to 80,000 people from around California and the U.S. Nevertheless, land on the Oxnard Plain once yielding up to three crops a year is increasingly being developed for residential and commercial use. Oxnard now appears something like a checkerboard, with housing tracts, commercial outlets, and manufacturing plants mixed with farmland – some of which is used as a buffer between industrial and residential areas (see Photo 5). The disappearance of farmland is not confined to Oxnard, however. During the 1980s, Ventura County lost 800 to 1,000 acres of agricultural land each year to residential

[51] Much of the oil employment in Thousand Oaks might be attributable to the Exxon Corporate headquarters located there from 1981 to 1993.

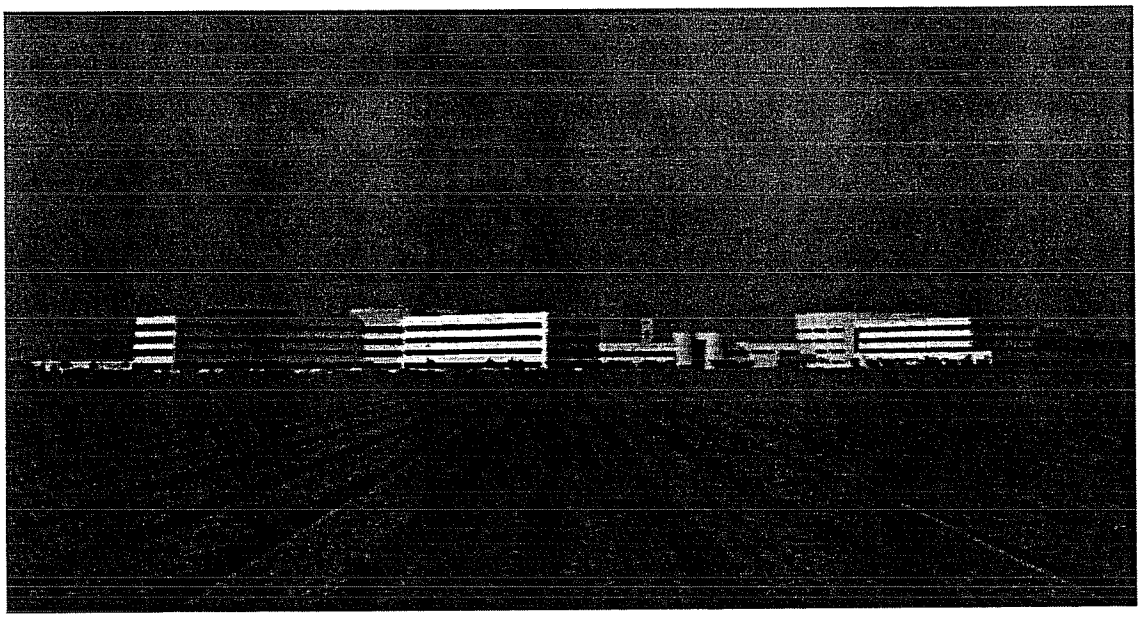


**Photo 5: Oxnard's rapid growth.** Oxnard is among the fastest growing communities in Ventura County, and agricultural land is increasingly used for new residential, commercial and industrial development. Photo provided by Oxnard Chamber of Commerce.

**Photo 6: The city of Ventura today.** This view from City Hall clearly shows Ventura's proximity to the ocean. Note how the freeway (center, at right) splits the city center from the beach, hindering pedestrian access. Photo by Leonard Nevarez.

and commercial development.[52] While some of this acreage was replaced by increasing agricultural use of hillside land, the county is quickly "running out of hillsides" (Fujii and Whitmore 1989: D1, D3).

*Coastal tourism*

These communities have always had the Pacific Coast available as both an industrial and a recreational resource. While the Port of Hueneme has loaded cargo for nearly a hundred years, and the loading of oil from submerged pipelines at Ventura has taken place for almost as long, large-scale recreational development of coastal resources has taken place only more recently. In some cases, the possibility of coastal recreation is now nearly impossible, as freeways, military installations, and an industrial infrastructure dominate much of the Ventura County shore. Thus despite this potential recreational resource, tourism employment in the Coastal Communities (measured in this study by employment in eating and drinking establishments, recreation, and entertainment) lags behind both the historical tourist destination of Ojai and the bedroom communities of the east county (see Table 17, Percentage of Labor Force Employed in Tourism).[53]

[52] As of 1990, 27.4 percent of Ventura County land was used for agriculture (2,120 farms), and nearly one third of this land was under irrigation (Project Development Co.: 22).

[53] While the east county is not a tourist destination per se, both Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks show a larger percentage of residents employed in tourism than Ventura. One explanation for this might be the relatively high numbers of eating and drinking establishments (a key element of our tourism measure) in these affluent bedroom communities. What is measured here as "tourism" might also be thought of as service sector employment.

**Table 17: Percentage of labor force employed in tourism**

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 3.87 | 5.23 | 5.51 |
| El Rio | * | * | 3.22 |
| Fillmore | * | * | 5.05 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | * | 7.34 | 7.29 |
| Moorpark | * | 3.44 | 5.40 |
| Oak View | * | 4.67 | 2.95 |
| Ojai | * | 7.71 | 9.74 |
| Oxnard | 3.84 | 4.27 | 5.27 |
| Port Hueneme | 3.61 | 4.88 | 4.81 |
| Santa Paula | 3.79 | 4.65 | 3.54 |
| Simi Valley | 4.00 | 5.62 | 5.80 |
| Thousand Oaks | 4.66 | 6.3 | 6.35 |
| Ventura | 5.74 | 6.0 | 5.76 |

Source: U.S. Census.
* Indicates data not available

The Rincon area of the Ventura County coast, roughly between the city of Ventura and the Santa Barbara County line, is an extremely narrow coastal shelf dominated by the 101 freeway. Much of the beach along this area was filled for construction of this freeway and its predecessor, Highway 1 (the old coast road, running parallel to 101 for several miles in this area), leaving little room for recreational development. In La Conchita, the northernmost beach settlement in Ventura County, the beach is only accessible via a high-risk dash across the four lane freeway or a crawl through a four foot storm drain. Three county and state parks (Faria, Hobson, and Emma Wood), located between La Conchita and Ventura, provide overnight camping and day use facilities, but, as is also the case to the north, the beach has largely been filled over leaving a very narrow strip of sand and a rocky breakwater. At high tide, swimming, or even walking on much of the beach is risky, if not impossible. Recreational expansion is encumbered by not only the high amount of land dedicated to highways and the Southern Pacific Railroad but oil installations upland of the highway (the San Miguelito and Rincon fields – see history, above). In some cases, oil and the highway may have worked together to fill over the beach. According to Ventura County environmentalists, a popular surf point on the Rincon was filled over as the freeway bypassed an onshore processing facility (Patagonia, Inc. 1993: 7).

Beach areas in the city of Ventura have also been given over to extensive uses outside of outdoor recreation. These include residences and industrial developments (including Texaco's oil storage facilities), as well as recreational facilities that according to some fail to maximize the waterfront's potential. At the

Ventura County Fairgrounds, what once was a vast seaside park was gradually paved over to increase space for parking and permanent structures. Much of this area is unused outside of the week of the fair. A multiple-use harbor, built near the mouth of the Santa Clara River, is susceptible to damage from floods, and its entrance is considered unsafe in stormy conditions (Price 1990). This mixed use of coastal property is, to some extent, a problem for Ventura's tourist economy. According to the city's Director of Tourism,

> What people tend to do is they see ocean front property devoted to oil tanks, or, in some cases, people see the ocean front – part of the ocean front property – devoted to a fairgrounds. And they think, "Wouldn't that make a great visitor serving location." . . [A] few people have said wouldn't it be nice, for example, to move the fairgrounds to the country and then do something with the fairgrounds property. Or I would imagine it would be the same thing if people actually had an option to do something different with the land that's devoted to oil tanks.

At this time, Texaco's oil storage tanks at the former marine transit site have been dismantled and removed. Water storage tanks remain, and the property is for sale.

Ventura's government is currently trying to draw residents and tourists alike to its beach and to re-incorporate the beach and pier to Ventura's recently re-developed downtown area. Some amenities along the waterfront, including the promenade, were paid for by the oil companies themselves. While San Buenaventura State Beach (the city's sandy portion of beach south of the Ventura Pier) is so crowded on summer weekends that some users are turned away from public parking lots, tourism during the school season, when families with children are less likely to travel, remains sparse.

Twenty percent of Ventura's $1.8 million in hotel bed taxes are channeled into visitor services and recruitment, including a Visitor Information Center and marketing to independent and group tourists. The city is thought by tourism officials to lack a clearly defined image, however, compounded by both infrastructural difficulties and competition with the historic tourist destination of Santa Barbara thirty miles northwest. The 1950s choice of a sunken freeway design for U.S. 101, which would allow ocean views from city hall and Main Street, is now seen as emphasizing views of the city's industrial areas, an obstacle to attracting tourists. While many infrastructural features have become "invisible" to residents, they remain visible, and potentially repulsive, to tourists (see Photo 6). Ironically, those things which have become *more* visible to residents through city outreach – the redevelopment of Main Street with decorative paving stones and flags, Ventura Harbor with its restaurants, shops, and Channel Islands National Park Visitor Center (dedicated in 1980) – are largely invisible to those passing through on U.S. 101. One tourism official complained that Ventura "doesn't show well from the freeway." The perceived importance of a growing tourist economy makes Ventura leaders eager to avoid any future use of coastal land for non-tourist purposes.

The city of Oxnard shares a similar predicament of heavily mixed industrial and recreational uses at the oceanfront. The Channel Islands Harbor, constructed in the 1960s, is located just south of Ventura's multiple use harbor and provides moorage for fishing as well as pleasure vessels. The harbor has become a center for Oxnard's growing tourist industry and is now surrounded by shops, restaurants and hotels that play on nautical themes. While the harbor and adjacent Harbor Boulevard abut a white sand beach, access to the beach is hampered by tightly packed beach-front homes and condominiums on one end, and heavy industrial installations (including Southern California Edison's Mandalay Beach Power Plant and Unocal's Mandalay Beach oil processing facility) on the other. Naval installations at Point Mugu occupy the beach south of the city.

Even those areas of beach left relatively undeveloped were inaccessible to the public through the 1970s. A state beach provided camping and picnicking facilities several miles north of the harbor, but many populated areas were without a nearby public beach. Residents attracted by the harbor area's coastal amenities (including reasonably priced homes with private boat slips on harbor canals) were frustrated by the limited beach access. Efforts to secure a state purchase of open coastal areas were hampered by conflict with real estate developers. For example, one local resident's petition to add a 114-acre parcel of the undeveloped Mandalay Beach area to the State Park system conflicted with a hotel developer's concurrent and competing bid on the same parcel.[54] The private Mandalay Beach Colony and Resort now shares the parcel with Oxnard State Beach, administered by the City of Oxnard.

This fight for the beach park had an unintended consequence, however, as formerly non-political Oxnard locals forged alliances with state lawmakers and regional environmental experts. One local activist called on the nearby resources of a University of California, Santa Barbara, oceanographer who then investigated local rates of beach erosion. These alliances have outlasted this specific struggle and contributed to a budding environmental network on the south county coast.

*The Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys*

Growth in the historical settlements of Fillmore, Santa Paula, Piru[55] and the Ojai Valley[56] has been more limited than that seen in other parts of the county (including Oxnard, Thousand Oaks, and Simi Valley). One explanation is the Valleys' geographical containment; the Santa Clara River and Ojai Valleys are

[54] This parcel was held by the McGrath family, one of Oxnard's original large-scale farming families. At one point the McGraths owned 5,000 acres of farmland on the Oxnard plain, including four miles of beach front (Bodle 1979: 138).

[55] Because of Piru's small population (1,157 in 1990) much of the data available for other cities (e.g. types of employment, commute times) are not available from the U. S. Census.

[56] Including Ojai, Oak View, and Meiner's Oaks-Mira Monte.

relatively narrow river bottoms surrounded by steep hills, unlike the much broader Simi and Conejo Valleys. An equally likely factor, however, is isolation – Highways 33 and 126 remain two-lane roads with stop lights through much of these areas, although this may soon end in the Santa Clara River Valley. In the Ojai valley, citizens and civic leaders have actively opposed development, including the development of area highways.

Ojai's heritage attracts both businesses and residents who value, and invest in, the town's natural and architectural beauty (see Photo 7). One leading business here is tourism: as Table 15 shows (see previous section, *The Coastal Communities*) Ojai leads the county in the relative importance of tourism employment, and the city currently receives $800,000, or 13 percent of its six million dollar annual budget, through a bed tax.

Preserving Ojai's "small town feel" is a priority for city government as well as local activists. In a 1994 city-sponsored attitude survey, Ojai residents ranked this as a high priority. Tourism itself is seen as a threat to this goal by some locals, but others welcome tourism as a relatively clean and stable economic base. For example, the Ojai Valley Inn is one of the city's largest employers, second only to the public school district. Ambivalence toward the tourist economy means that while public funds are "creatively" generated to protect tourist attractions,[57] care is taken to prevent tourism from overwhelming the city's economy and infrastructure (including parking, local parks, etc.).

As Table 18 shows, education is another major employment source in Ojai. With its beauty and milieu, the Valley has attracted several private schools.

[57] In the late 1980s a report suggesting the Ojai Arcade was seismically unsafe was aggressively responded to. Approximately $1 million was spent on improvements – $600,000 from business owners, the remainder from bonds. One informant saw this as evidence of Ojai's difference from other tourist communities, such as Santa Cruz, where business resisted investment and in the end was destroyed by a natural disaster.

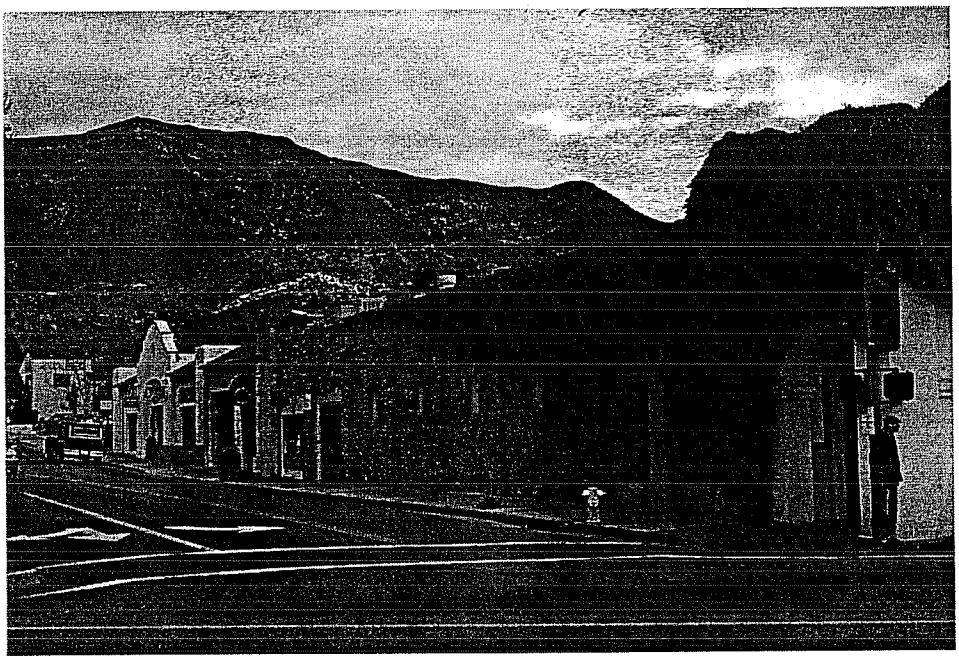


**Photo 7: Ojai's historic downtown.** Thousands of visitors are attracted to Ojai each year by its natural and architectural beauty. While surrounding mountains were home to some of Ventura County's first oil exploration, oil wells are generally invisible from the town of Ojai. Photo by Krista Paulsen.

**Photo 8: Residential development in Thousand Oaks.** The communities of Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s. Many residents in these communities work in Los Angeles or the San Fernando Valley and came to the area seeking affordable housing, cleaner air, and lower crime rates. Reprinted from Bidwell (1989).

**Table 18: Percentage of labor force employed in education**
(Ojai Valley towns are in Italics)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 8.48 | 7.52 | 6.66 |
| El Rio | 4.88 | 4.86 | 5.02 |
| Fillmore | 8.28 | 9.30 | 6.42 |
| *Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte* | *10.74* | *6.01* | *7.77* |
| Moorpark | 7.50 | 4.89 | 4.34 |
| *Oak View* | *6.26* | *7.88* | *7.5* |
| *Ojai* | *11.49* | *9.47* | *12.88* |
| Oxnard | 5.94 | 3.39 | 4.63 |
| Port Hueneme | 3.26 | 4.48 | 4.06 |
| Santa Paula | 5.68 | 4.49 | 5.52 |
| Simi Valley | 7.61 | 4.75 | 5.75 |
| Thousand Oaks | 10.44 | 5.15 | 7.31 |
| Ventura | 8.32 | 8.49 | 7.22 |

Source: U.S. Census

Ojai's adults also have a high level of educational attainment, with 26.7 percent of those over age 25 holding four-year degrees (see Table 21, in the following section). This may be due in part to the presence of so many teachers in a small town. While large in number, the schools do not appear to play a significant role in civic or political life, at least according to several of our informants who thought faculty "keep to themselves." Ojai's distinctive environmentalism and spirituality exists independent of the prep school presence.

With a traditionally solvent city budget (a $1.6 million surplus in 1994), Ojai is insulated from developers' claims that their projects are needed to fund city services; unlike communities in the east county, the city of Ojai does not actively recruit new businesses. Instead new businesses are more passively "welcomed," and the city has allowed development of one business/industrial park. Many residents work outside the city or in aesthetically dependent businesses such as tourism or the arts and are not interested in attracting economic growth. While Ojai is often referred to by residents as a "bedroom community," it is not a daily commuter community, like the east county cities (Ojai is 90 minutes from Los Angeles by car). Occupations noted among those who commute to Los Angeles include airline pilots as well as film stars and producers – professions where work is commonly several days or weeks "on" with a substantial block of time off. Some specialized oil industry employees who travel internationally also make their homes in Ojai. The presence of such high-income "commuters" provides an incentive – and a resource -- for preserving Ojai's small town character, as these residents have chosen the area deliberately as an alternative to Los Angeles and often join movements opposing local environmental threats.

Because much of the Ojai Valley is unincorporated, the city of Ojai and its slow-growth establishment are unable to control development in the neighboring communities of Meiner's Oaks, Mira Monte, and Oak View, which have indeed grown more rapidly (see Chart 7: Population of Ojai Valley). Businesses that are prohibited in Ojai proper can set up shop nearby. Recent examples include fast food restaurants with drive-through windows (which Ojai prohibits) now lining Highway 33, and a Payless drug store opened outside of town to bypass Ojai's inhospitability. According to one informant:

> They had 150 people that came out to a public meeting and said, "We don't want a Payless there." They've even formed an organization called Citizens Against Chain Stores. . . So what Payless did, they went into the Mira Monte area, they got a market to move out, and they're going to take it over. Well, all of a sudden, we're losing some sales tax. It's going into the unincorporated area. We're going to have the effects of that air quality because of the traffic going in and out of there, and we feel like we should have something to say about what goes into the valley.

To solve the problem, some Ojai leaders have proposed a "valley-wide city" but have met opposition from other communities fearing Ojai's regulations.

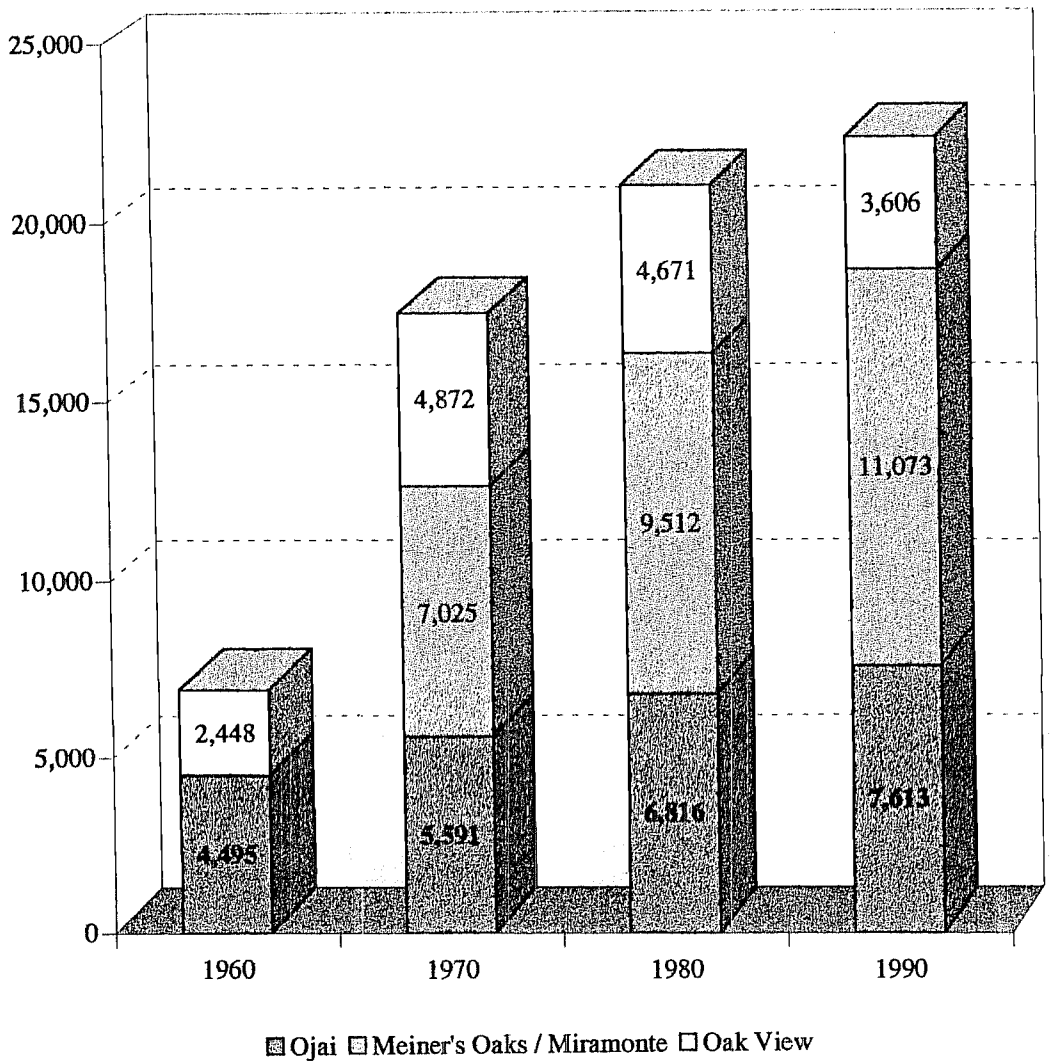
While the Santa Clara River[58] and Ojai Valleys are geographically similar, their distinct economies – tourism in Ojai, oil and agriculture in the Santa Clara – have led to different populations and infrastructures. The distinctions are familiar to residents and civic leaders. Ojai Mayor Joe De Vito noted Santa Paula's desire for intensive retail development, while Fillmore Mayor Linda Brewster noted economic, demographic, and cultural differences between Ojai and her own town:

> I think that people that live in Ojai are more into the arts. . . It's an older generation. You don't think of it as young families. Here we're families, we're people in agriculture, where you don't think of Ojai as that. You think of [Ojai] more as a tourist place. Somebody that has money lives up there. A lot of actors and actresses. . . A lot of people that have environmental issues, that are vocal, are all up there. We just have down-to-earth, everyday working people that live here.

Demographic data bear out Brewster's observations. Seventy-eight percent of Ojai residents live in families, compared to 86 to 88 percent of Fillmore/Santa Paula residents. The median age of Ojai residents is at least nine years older than Santa Clara River Valley residents, and 1990 median house values in Fillmore and Santa Paula were 78.5-84.2 percent of the median value of Ojai homes. Ojai also has two to three times the proportion of college graduates per capita and nearly twice as much

[58] The Santa Clara River Valley includes the communities of (from east to west) Piru, Fillmore, and Santa Paula. Older settlements in the valley have been largely subsumed by the dominant cities: Saticoy is now essentially a section of eastern Ventura, while Bardsdale is adjacent to contemporary Fillmore.

## Chart 7: Populations of the Ojai Valley Communities, 1960-1990




Source: U.S. Census

tourism employment. While Ojai residents are not wealthier than Fillmore residents in terms of *household* incomes, their *per capita* incomes are much higher, due to smaller household sizes in Ojai ($17,478 for Ojai, compared to Fillmore's $10,674). Ojai also has a higher percentage of retirees, whose incomes may be low but whose accumulated wealth gives them a different class status. Long-term commuters in the two areas also differ; commuters in Ojai may have Hollywood-related jobs, while those in Fillmore work as Los Angeles police officers or firefighters, or on offshore oil rigs. Unemployment rates in the Santa Clara River Valley are currently among the highest in Ventura County (see Table 19).

**Table 19: Unemployment rates**
(Santa Clara River Valley Towns are in Italics)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 4.6 | 3.4 | 3.8 |
| El Rio | 7.8 | 6.9 | 9.3 |
| *Fillmore* | *5.0* | *3.9* | *6.6* |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | 6.7 | 7.1 | 3.1 |
| Moorpark | 7.6 | 7.7 | 3.6 |
| Oak View | 6.3 | 6.0 | 5.8 |
| Ojai | 5.9 | 6.0 | 2.5 |
| Oxnard | 6.2 | 8.0 | 6.8 |
| *Piru* | * | * | *5.3* |
| Port Hueneme | 5.5 | 8.8 | 6.0 |
| *Santa Paula* | *7.2* | *5.7* | *7.7* |
| Simi Valley | 6.8 | 4.7 | 4.1 |
| Thousand Oaks | 5.3 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Ventura | 4.6 | 4.8 | 3.7 |

Source: U.S. Census

Tourism is one area where Fillmore and Santa Paula are attempting to expand. The Santa Clara River Valley is regularly used as a movie set – Santa Paula's airport (known for its large collection of antique and unusual planes), the brownstones of Fillmore's Central Avenue, and the orchards between provide rural and small-town settings for Los Angeles studios. The historic downtown cores of both communities remain largely intact and are celebrated through walking tours or weekend tourist train excursions.[59] But just as Ventura struggles in the shadow of

[59] Fillmore's Central Avenue, the main commercial street, was severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Several months before the quake, however, the city had approved "downtown specific guidelines," with the aim of preserving the town's unique character. Rather than fast-tracking repairs or rebuilding, the City of Fillmore housed merchants in temporary shelters in the town square, and the pre-quake guidelines remain in effect.

Santa Barbara's historic tourist appeal, the Santa Clara River Valley is overshadowed by nearby Ojai; the communities of Fillmore and Santa Paula lack a clear image to draw tourists.

*The New Suburban Cities*

The 1970s saw a substantial population increase in the east county, as the Los Angeles sprawl moved north toward the relatively new cities of Camarillo, Simi Valley, Moorpark and Thousand Oaks. With the exception of Camarillo, these cities share a location east of the Conejo Grade, a geographical feature that separates the east county from the historical settlements of the Pacific Coast and Santa Clara River and Ojai Valleys not only geographically but also in the public imagination. With rapid population growth in the 1960s and 1970s, a high percentage of residents living in families, and relative affluence, the east county has challenged county officials to expand and relocate some services (including courts) to serve its growing population (see Photo 8).

The east county is, by design, the most affluent area of Ventura County (see *"The First Subdivisions,"* above). Planned in the 1950s and 1960s as bedroom communities for the growing aerospace industry of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, their residents are indeed among the most well-paid and well-educated in Ventura County (see Tables 20 and 21, below). These cities continue their role as bedroom communities (a 1989 Spectra Inc. study of growth in Ventura county estimated that approximately 70 percent of Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Moorpark workers commuted to Los Angeles County, as did 40 percent of Camarillo workers) but have attracted some companies to the area. Like the companies that provided jobs for the east county's original residents, these largely high-tech companies (including manufacturing and research firms in communications, micro-processors, biotechnology and aerospace) play a major role in Ventura County's shift from extractive to "cleaner" industries. High-tech companies tend to to "leapfrog" away from the high land and labor costs of Los Angeles, resulting in a high concentration of high tech firms in Ventura county since the 1980s (mainly clustered along the 101 and 118 freeway corridors). As Ventura county high-tech firms are generally smaller and more flexible than their Los Angeles counterparts, and less dependent on defense contracting, they should remain an important element of the County's economy and continue to attract a highly paid and highly educated workforce (Scott forthcoming).[60]

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In the first six months of 1996, the cities of Santa Paula and Fillmore have worked toward developing the "Heritage Trail" plan, featuring rides on the vintage railroad cars through the orchards and communities. This plan also includes provisions for improvements to local depots and adjacent areas.

[60] Importantly, not all high-technology jobs are professional positions; these companies often maintain two-tiered workforces, with many lower-paying manufacturing jobs held by Latinos and other

**Table 20: Median income per household**
(East County Communities are in Italics)

| | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|
| *Camarillo* | *$25,915* | *$48,219* |
| El Rio | 20,365 | 35,991 |
| Fillmore | 16,590 | 33,482 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | 16,976 | 34,610 |
| *Moorpark* | *18,119* | *60,368* |
| Oak View | 19,912 | 45,234 |
| Ojai | 17,727 | 33,247 |
| Oxnard | 17,633 | 37,174 |
| Piru | * | 27,000 |
| Port Hueneme | 18,678 | 33,554 |
| Santa Paula | 18,561 | 31,605 |
| *Simi Valley* | *26,554* | *53,967* |
| *Thousand Oaks* | *29,835* | *56,856* |
| Ventura | 18,791 | 40,307 |

Source: U.S. Census

**Table 21: Percentage of adults 25+ with four-year degree**
(East County Communities are in Italics)

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Camarillo* | *17.4* | *37.2* | *27.2* |
| El Rio | 2.9 | 6.5 | 8.2 |
| Fillmore | 10 | 8 | 8.6 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | 9.6 | 16.0 | 21.4 |
| *Moorpark* | *7.9* | *5* | *28.4* |
| Oak View | 6.1 | 7.4 | 15.6 |
| Ojai | 19.7 | 22 | 26.7 |
| Oxnard | 9.1 | 10.8 | 13 |
| Port Hueneme | 7.9 | 12.3 | 15.9 |
| Santa Paula | 8.6 | 8.6 | 9.9 |
| *Simi Valley* | *8.9* | *14.1* | *21.1* |
| *Thousand Oaks* | *21.2* | *29.6* | *35* |
| Ventura | 15.1 | 20.5 | 24.6 |

Source: U.S. Census

immigrants (Scott, forthcoming).

The commute connection to L.A. is clear. Although the 1994 Conejo Valley[61] Attitude Survey, sponsored by the city of Thousand Oaks, reported that while half of all residents were "very satisfied" or "generally satisfied" with Conejo Valley as a place to work, an additional 45 percent of residents did not work in the area (including retirees) (City of Thousand Oaks: 1). Like nearby Moorpark and Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks has one of the highest median one-way commute times in Ventura County (see Table 22 for commute data).

**Table 22: Median one-way commute times**
(East County Communities are in Italics)

| | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|
| *Camarillo* | *23.8* | *20.8* |
| El Rio | 19 | 21.2 |
| Fillmore | 21.1 | 25 |
| Meiner's Oaks/Mira Monte | 24.4 | 24.4 |
| *Moorpark* | *22.1* | *28.3* |
| Oak View | 27.3 | 25.3 |
| Ojai | 22.3 | 22.2 |
| Oxnard | 19.7 | 21.2 |
| Piru | * | |
| Port Hueneme | 16.5 | 20.4 |
| Santa Paula | 21.5 | 22.9 |
| *Simi Valley* | *31.6* | *32.2* |
| *Thousand Oaks* | *27* | *26.9* |
| Ventura | 18 | 20.4 |

Source: U.S. Census

Nevertheless, comparisons to Los Angeles are a source of local ambivalence. According to a Thousand Oaks city council member:

> The biggest curse you can utter in Thousand Oaks, at least to most people, is to say, "It's becoming another San Fernando Valley." If there is anything this city does not want to do or be, it's the San Fernando Valley. It is truly a curse. We really do feel ourselves very strongly in line with the rest of Ventura County and with Santa Barbara County. . . Sure, we're not the same as Santa Barbara; we're not the same as San Luis Obispo. We're not, but we would rather be more that way and would like to preserve that kind of image and

[61] The Conejo Valley is the larger geographical space around Thousand Oaks. The two terms are often used interchangeably, and the "Conejo Valley Attitude Survey" is an instrument designed by the City of Thousand Oaks to gauge community needs and priorities.

those kinds of standards and concerns rather than the very commercialized Valley.

To protect itself from "becoming like L.A.," the city of Thousand Oaks has imposed growth controls, open space requirements, restrictions on hillside construction, and signage and height ordinances for commercial development.

Despite these environmental controls, the city of Thousand Oaks does actively recruit business, especially high technology and biotechnology industries. These businesses appeal to the city's desire to promote land intensive "clean industry" and attract highly educated, high-salaried employees like those already living in the area. Amgen, a local biotech corporation, is exemplary of the type of business Thousand Oaks wants to attract and retain. Founded in the city in 1981, this Fortune 500 company has grown large enough to dominate one local industrial park, and recently required a new headquarters (Amgen Inc. employed 2,885 in 1996, making it the largest Thousand Oaks employer). Negotiation over this construction project illustrates the city's concern with both land use controls and maintaining a high-tech industrial base. Mayor Judy Lazar said of the new Amgen campus:

> That required us again to look at our planning standards, and so we made some changes to them for certain industrial areas. Where they are not visible from the major roadways, where there were sufficient setbacks, we are now allowing additional heights within those areas. Amgen came through with some very innovative policy possibilities for planning their parking, encouraging walking, virtually banning use of cars on their campus, so their employees come in, they park generally in a parking structure, and all of the buildings are close enough together so they can walk to all of these buildings, or they bike. It's kind of like what you see up in the Silicon Valley area, some really different types of planning.

The changes Lazar speaks of include variances to the city's 35-foot building height limit, a concession also made to Exxon to accommodate a regional corporate office in the 1980s (see below).

The effort to be different than L.A., yet the close dependence upon it, is revealed by the Simi Valley mayor's strategy for attracting new industries, in his term, "out" from L.A., just as many residents speak of moving "out" of the same area. Recent corporate recruits include Countrywide Mortgage, Whittaker Electronics, Farmers Insurance, and Bugle Boy apparel. Nevertheless, approximately 60 percent of Simi Valley residents still work in the San Fernando Valley, and look to the L. A. area for cues about their economic future, rather than looking north, say, to Ventura's economic health. One informant even suspected that, "There's a lot of people [in Simi Valley] who probably don't know they're in Ventura County.".

Most residents in these young communities have no memory of the oil development in the surrounding hills that predated the residential booms of the

1960s. Although Unocal continues to operate wells in Tapo and Torrey Canyons, directly north of Simi Valley, the company is best known in the area through its land management subsidiary, Moreland Development. Unocal is a major landholder in Simi Valley due to acquisitions made in search of oil; today Moreland Development is selling these properties or developing them to suit local demand. The city's relationship with Moreland seems genial.

One minor frustration with the oil industry occurred in the 1990s, when a pipeline was proposed through the region. Potentially impacted by one of the alternative routes proposed, the city the city of Simi Valley voiced preference for the developers' original route to avoid local impacts. Concerns about the project centered mostly on logistical issues of disruption, not on any principle of opposition to oil or environmental concern:

> We believed, frankly, that bringing a major pipeline through a large population center was not a very good idea, even just from the standpoint of the difficulty in locating it and getting it through town. . . Where are you going to put it, how are you going to bring it through, how many streets are you going to have to dig up to put it in – those were all major problems. In addition to the fact that there's not a lot of risk, but there's still some risk obviously to having a major pipeline.

Because Simi Valley was not the preferred alternative for the pipeline route, the city never had to seriously face its construction.

One circumstance under which oil would probably be opposed is if it were thought to threaten air quality standards. Ventura County is a non-attainment area per EPA standards (Ventura County Air Pollution Control District: 1), although its air quality is seen as superior to that further south. Many east county residents fled the pollution of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, and as a consequence these residents have a stake in protecting the environment that attracted them. According to the 1994 Conejo Valley Attitude Survey, 92.5 percent of Thousand Oaks residents said preserving clean air was "very important," 6.6 percent said this was "somewhat important." In previous surveys, between 96.1 percent and 97.5 percent of residents stated that this was "very important," making clean air consistently the highest priority among Conejo Valley amenities deserving preservation (City of Thousand Oaks: 16).[62]

Simi Valley has similar concerns about air quality, demonstrated by their opposition to a proposed Southern California Edison-San Diego Gas and Electric merger. The merger, which would shift power generation from San Diego to existing Oxnard facilities, was seen as contributing to east county air pollution:

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[62] Other local amenities consistently ranked as "very important" to preserve include natural hills, mountains and ridge lines, public open space, and a "semi-rural feeling" (City of Thousand Oaks: 16).

> . . . they said they had spare capacity there and they could just generate all this much more electricity [at Oxnard]. We said well that's very nice, but you're not going to increase the level of smog, in fact you're going to continue to decrease it. . . along with a lot of other cities, I think we took a very strong, aggressive stance against that merger.

While Simi Valley Mayor Greg Stratton claimed that offshore oil drilling is not perceived by his community as the threat to air quality that the Oxnard generating plants are, new offshore proposals might nevertheless come under scrutiny (aided, no doubt, by countywide agencies charged with maintaining air quality standards).

*Ventura County Media*

Ventura County residents get their news about local affairs, including development and environmental issues, from a changing array of media. The county has become a highly competitive newspaper market. The *Los Angeles Times* introduced a Ventura County edition in 1990 that ceased publication in 1995. During the interim, the added competition was enough to put several of the county's older dailies out of business (between 1993 and 1995, the *Oxnard Press-Courier*, *Camarillo Daily News* and the *Santa Paula Chronicle* all closed). Although the *Ventura County Star* (formerly the *Star-Free Press*) has attempted to cover news from these communities, many smaller towns are left without a local daily. The *Los Angeles Times* retains significant coverage of the Ventura County market, however, and continues to publish a weekly supplement targeted to this region.

The *Ventura County Star* (a Scripps-Howard paper) currently circulates five editions, tailored to the towns of Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura. The *Star* is the dominant paper in the West County communities; "we own this market," says one editor. The paper's priorities are local government, education, and some community events. A big story can challenge the paper's scarce resources, as when, for example, Point Mugu was included on the federal government's list of possible base closures. Half the staff was pulled from their regular beats to cover the story. Coverage of the smaller communities (Fillmore, Ojai, Piru and Santa Paula) is one of the first things to go when resources are stretched; one reporter is assigned to cover all these communities and must also fill in on other beats when shortages are caused by vacations or breaking news.

Issues cited by *Ventura County Star* reporters as important to cover included funding of police and fire departments, economic development, and to some degree the environment. While oil was vigorously covered by the *Star-Free Press* through the 1950s and 1960s,[63] coverage of oil has fallen off more recently, as has other

[63] The *Ventura Star-Free Press* printed an annual "Oil Progress Week" edition in the 1950s, which provided a clearinghouse of information on the local industry as well as international trends. Oil Progress Week was a national industry recognition event, observed in the second or third week of

business coverage. As it is, negative stories about oil make the news; local spills, and the contentious issue of tankering oil through the Santa Barbara Channel, are covered regularly, but the periodic updates on the industry's exploration and production progress that were common in the 1950s and 1960s are no more.

Ventura County also supports several smaller papers, especially in the Santa Clara and Ojai Valleys, where the *Star's* coverage is not as thorough. These include the *Ojai Valley News*, the *Fillmore Herald*, and the *Santa Paula Times*, most of which publish only one or two days each week. These papers generally cover city issues, as well as the local consequences of county-wide decisions or events; they also provide the only forum for local sports and cultural events.

One paper that actively watches oil and environmental issues is the *Ojai Voice*, a bi-weekly alternative newspaper produced in Oak View. Because the *Voice* is largely reader-produced (the paper employs no journalists – one full-time staff person handles most of the advertising, editorial and graphics work), it often serves as a platform for local activist groups. The *Voice* was especially forceful in opposing a 1989 landfill proposal (described below); the paper devoted several covers to the issue and included "coupons" for readers to cut out and send to County Supervisors to show their opposition – about 1,200 are said to have done so. Defining its circulation area as the "Ventura River Bio-Region," the *Voice* also addresses controversies outside the Ojai Valley. Issues reported on by readers include malathion spraying in other parts of the county, and statewide ballot initiatives, as well as arts and entertainment events.

*Voluntary Organizations*

One distinguishing factor among communities is the number of non-profit or "voluntary" organizations they support. While the emphases of these organizations vary widely – from arts and cultural organizations to health and human services to environmental concerns – their social functions are similar. These groups reflect and reinforce the social and organizational networks that supplant official agencies and business groups both as a part of local governance and in responding to potential community impacts – including oil developments. In the case of environmental organizations this is relatively explicit; other organizations may not be geared specifically toward environmental threats, but nevertheless familiarize locals with organizational or activist tactics and may provide institutional links to government agencies. Non-profit organizations also tend to be linked to one another through the people they share on their boards and the programs they co-sponsor.

To better understand the relative importance of voluntary organizations in Ventura County and its communities, and to understand how this county compares

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October.

to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, we determined the number and wealth of non-profits on a per capita basis using published human resource directories for each of the tri-counties.[64] This gives us the *organizational densities* for private non-profit and voluntary organizations. We calculated the number of voluntary organizations, as reported in countywide directories, as well as the revenues and assets of these organizations (a measure of their "wealth").[65] These figures were then divided by the county or community's population, thus providing a measure of organizational "density."

The tri-counties were shown not only to vary greatly in the number and relative wealth of their private voluntary organizations, but communities within the three counties showed wide variation as well. When compared to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, Ventura County's private voluntary organizations are fewer in number (per capita), have fewer assets, and take in less revenue.

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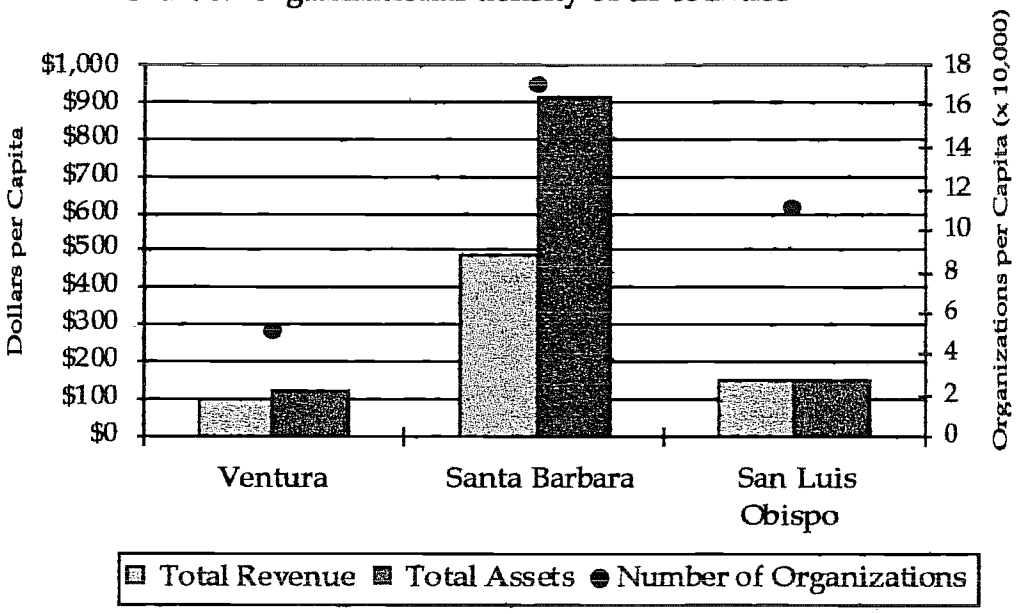
[64] The actual directories used are: in Ventura, *Blue Book: The 1995 Directory of Health and Human Services throughout Ventura County*, published by Helpline, a non-profit organization under the umbrella of Interface Children, Family Services; in Santa Barbara, *The Community Resources Information Services (CRIS) Directory* for 1995, published by the Family Service Agency of Santa Barbara; and in San Luis Obispo, the 1994-95 *Human Services and Support Groups Directory*, published by Hotline.

[65] Private voluntary or non-profit organizations include branches of national organizations (i.e. American Lung Association) as well as local organizations (i.e. local, private health outreach organizations.) Revenues and assets are for private, non-profit organizations with assets over $25,000 are listed in the Yearbook of California Charitable Organizations – the primary source for the financial information analyzed in this report. Revenue refers to the "total of all contributions (support), program service revenues (subscription fees, counseling fees, etc.) and other revenue (interest, rents, gain or loss on sales, etc.) received by the organization;" assets refer to the "dollar value of an organization's assets including cash, accounts receivable, savings, loans due, inventories, investments, land, buildings, and equipment."

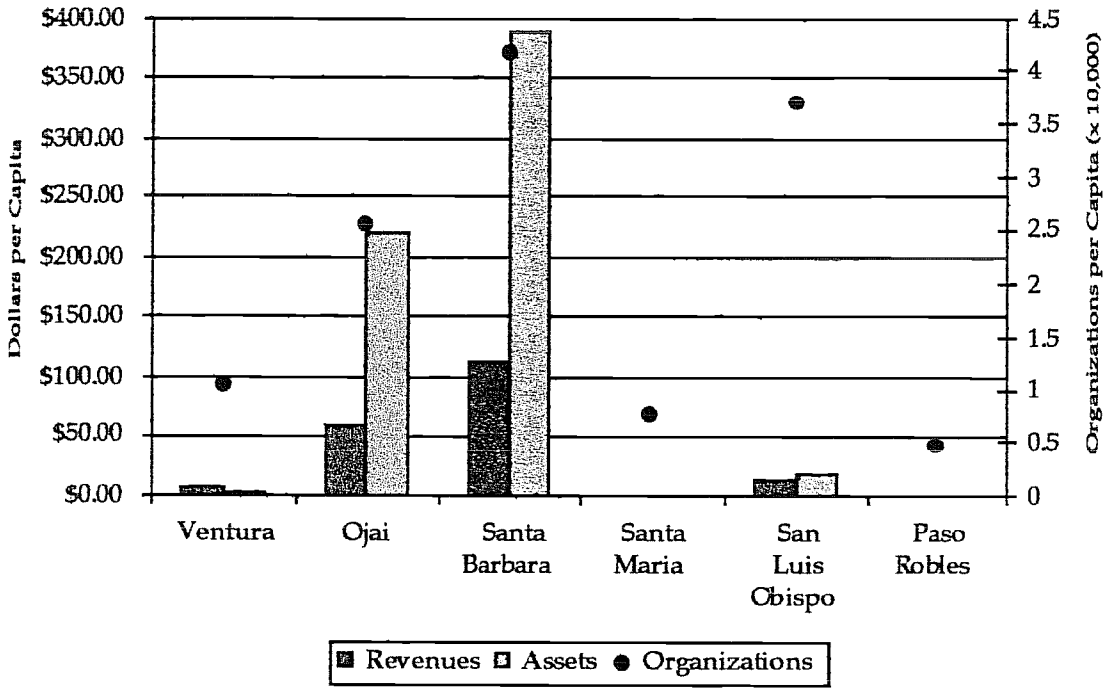
**Chart 8: Organizational density of tri-counties**




Source: Data collected by authors, see footnote 64

We singled out Ventura and Ojai for closer investigation, looking not only at organizations generally, but at the types of organizations found in each community; specifically, arts and cultural organizations versus health and human services organizations. This level of specificity seeks to answer claims that communities rich in one type of organization will be poor in others, e.g. that a community rich in arts organizations would neglect human service organizations (see Wolpert 1988). We found that in the communities of the tri-counties, this is not the case; communities with a high density of voluntary organizations in one sector are dense across the board.

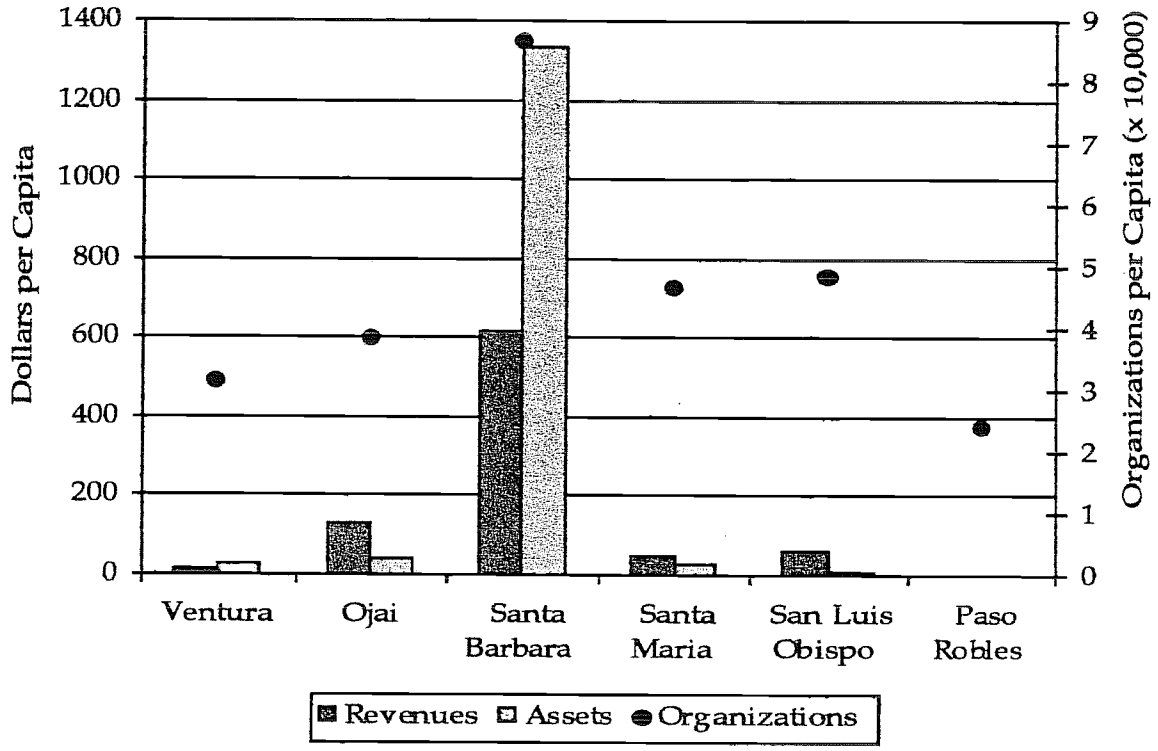
**Chart 9: Arts and cultural organizations in tri-county communities**




Source: Data collected by authors, see footnote 64

This comparison revealed that true to its history as a cultural center, Ojai has a high density of artistic and cultural organizations that are relatively wealthy (Ojai is second only to the city of Santa Barbara in this regard). Ventura, however, has relatively few arts or cultural organizations (one organization per 10,000 persons), and the wealth of these organizations is far below that of Ojai's. It should be noted here, however, that while Ventura's cultural organizations pale in comparison to Ojai's, the city of Ventura may not be far from a national average in this regard. The cities of Santa Maria and Paso Robles were also examined in connection with work reported elsewhere, and their densities were both lower than Ventura's. The town of Ojai does not fare less well than other areas in health and human services organizations, it actually fares somewhat better: Ojai has four organizations per 10,000 persons versus three per 10,000 in the city of Ventura. Again, Ojai's organizations lead in both assets and revenues.

**Chart 10: Health and human services organizations in tri-county communities**




Source: Data collected by authors, see footnote 64

One partial explanation for these disparities might lie in Ojai's small size (1990 population: 7,613). The presence of one or two well-endowed organizations could easily increase the overall appearance of organizational wealth, and the use of 10,000 person increments to compare the numbers of organizations may appear to inflate the real number of organizations in this tiny town. Nevertheless, the impact of organizational density – increased citizen response and activism – is evident in Ojai. As noted above, citizens rapidly responded to the perceived threat of a chain store in their community, as well as the fear of seismic instability in their historic downtown shopping district. Citizen groups also readily coalesce around environmental threats, including the proposed dump at Weldon Canyon and the expansion of a Ventura Avenue refinery (described below).

*Offshore oil: Environmental and economic impacts in Ventura and Oxnard*

The majority of offshore development in the Santa Barbara Channel occurs from the Ventura-Santa Barbara County line west toward Point Conception. While platforms in federal waters are not legally inside any particular county, 15 of 19 federal platforms lie closer to Santa Barbara County than Ventura County. Only four federal platforms sit in waters off Ventura County's coast, and only two of these are serviced by Ventura County processing plants. Platform Gina is approximately nine miles due west of Oxnard, and Platform Gilda is approximately four miles west of Port Hueneme; oil from these platforms is processed at Unocal's Mandaly Beach facility in Oxnard. While platforms Grace and Gail are in the same area, oil from these platforms is piped north to Carpinteria for processing. Conversely, several platforms off Santa Barbara County pipe their oil into Rincon facilities for processing: Unocal's platforms Henry, Hillhouse, A, B, and C lie due south of Summerland and pipe their oil to processing facilities at the Rincon.

The proximity of "Santa Barbara" platforms to Ventura County generates multiple economic impacts. Perhaps the most straightforward contribution is the property tax returned to Ventura county by its onshore processing facilities – estimated at $82,684 in 1996. In addition, some of the most sophisticated oil support industries in the Channel region developed along Ventura Avenue, thanks to Ventura's long history of oil development (including early tidelands development). These businesses serve the offshore industry throughout the Channel. The Port of Hueneme has also been a primary service port for drilling and supply vessels since the offshore boom began in the 1960s. Drilling in state waters (from, for example, the artificial island at the Rincon) also generates some income for the County as operations adjacent to parklands contribute a 1 percent royalty for park maintenance; this contribution has varied recently, falling from $10,581 in 1991-92 to $3,942 in 1994-95.

Offshore drilling also creates environmental impacts in Ventura County. As we will describe below, oil from offshore spills such as the one in 1969 tend to flow southward and may contaminate Ventura County beaches. Emissions from offshore platforms create a second impact: county air quality officials, as well as environmental activists, have documented the contribution of offshore emissions to local pollution levels and have in some cases successfully acted to reduce these omissions.

The 1969 Santa Barbara Channel oil spill is widely regarded as having started the modern environmental movement and certainly raised awareness about the hazards of offshore drilling. The January 28, 1969, blowout at oil Union's Platform A, just north of the Santa Barbara County line, spilled twenty-one thousand gallons a day of crude oil from a fissure beneath the sea for ten days before being brought

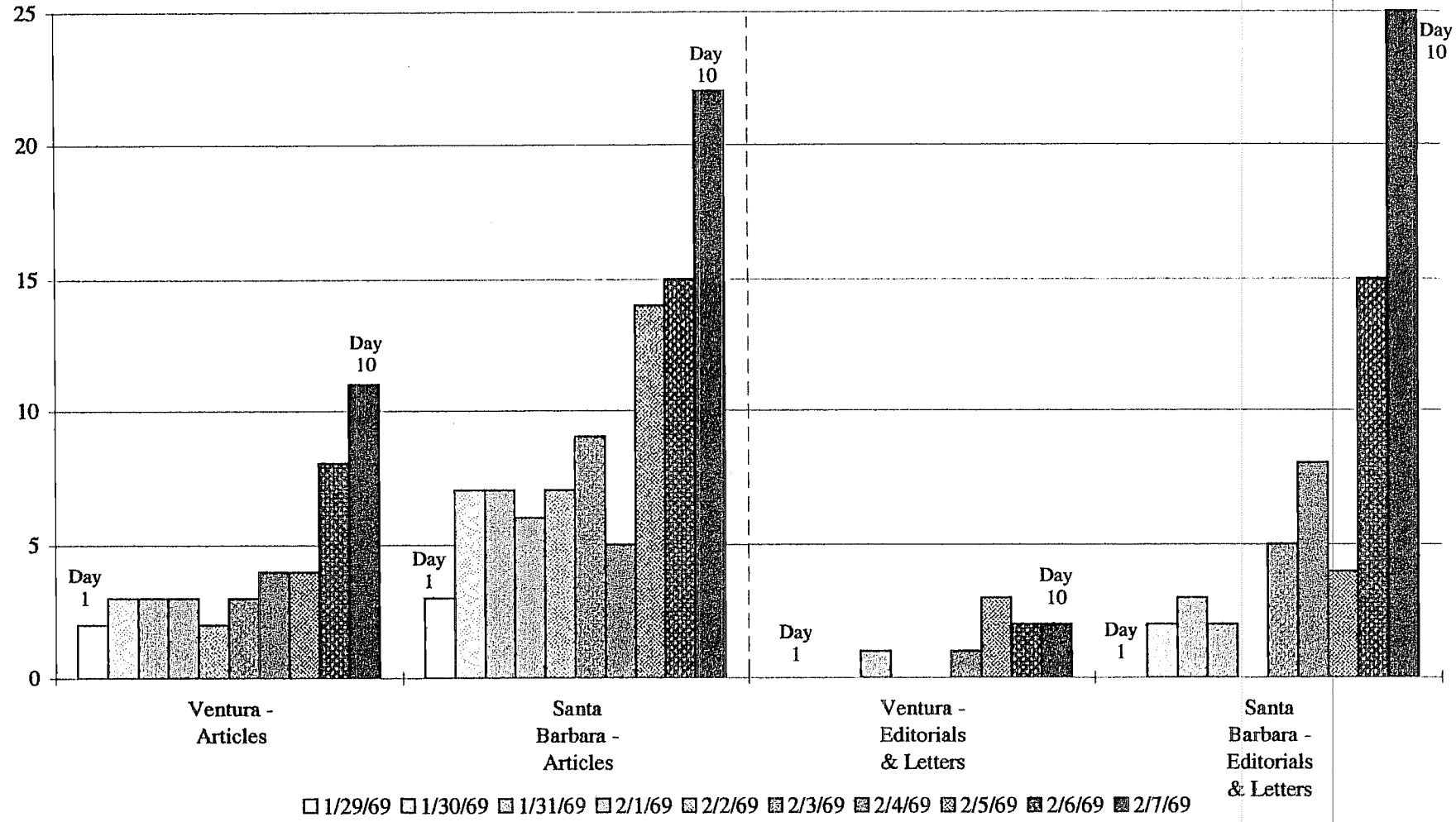
under control. While efforts to plug the leak with cement succeeded in halting the bulk of the flow, approximately 5 to 10 barrels per day continued seeping out of the well for the remainder of the year and some time thereafter. Before the oil came ashore in Santa Barbara, the first beaches to be coated were those along the Rincon in the northwestern part of Ventura County. On February 5th and 6th, some oil broke through precautionary log booms installed at Ventura Harbor (the Ventura Keys, a separate marina, then built a $7,000 earth dam in response to the threat). Local boat owners suffered losses as oil clogged marine engines and damaged hulls, and oil was found on beaches as far south as the Ventura-Los Angeles county line. The beaches of Santa Barbara's South Coast were also, and famously, covered with oil. But compared to Santa Barbara, Ventura County's newspaper coverage of the event and local (city and county) governmental response was restrained. The event was treated as an unfortunate accident but not a reason for strong disciplinary action, either against the industry or against the federal government. Again, the contrast with Santa Barbara was strong; there the spill was called a result of government insensitivity and industry greed. It marked the beginning of an increased local environmental consciousness reflected in grass-roots action as well as future planning decisions.

While the *Ventura Star-Free Press* did dispatch a reporter to cover the spill first hand (the *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune* relied on wire coverage of this relatively proximate event), its news coverage of the spill was restrained compared to the effort seen in neighboring Santa Barbara. We counted the number of news stories, editorials, and letters to the editor in the *Ventura Star-Free Press* and compared them with the numbers in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* – Chart 11 shows our results.[66] Even when the slick equally threatened beaches in both counties, the *Santa Barbara News-Press* provided over twice as much coverage of the spill compared to the *Ventura Star-Free Press*. When the Ventura paper did provide more than one article on the spill, the additional coverage was usually gleaned from the wire services, often bearing a Santa Barbara dateline.

The *Star-Free Press* emphasized both Union's efforts to right the situation and the technical (rather than political) causes of the accident. A comparison of the headlines used by The *Star-Free Press* and *News-Press* reveals that while the *News-Press* named Union Oil only as a news source, the *Star-Free Press* made Union both the subject and object at the center of the repair operation with phrases like "Union Company Seeks to Stem Leak in Sea," "Union plans do or die attempt to stop oil," and "Battle to Halt Oil Flow Ends; Union Abandons Well Site" (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, January 30, 1969: A1; February 6, 1969: A1; February 8, 1969: A1). Headlines in Santa Barbara framed the oil slick itself as the primary actor, and emphasized political or regulatory responses: "Oil Mess Reaches Carpinteria Shore," "Voluntary Oil Drilling Halt Will Be Requested – Hickel," "Leak Still Flowing – Channel Oil

[66] News scores were tabulated as follows: Front page lead story = 3 points; front page of local or main section = 2 points; other stories = 1 point. Editorial = 2 points; letters to the editor, syndicated commentary, and editorial cartoons = 1 point.

## Chart 11: The First 10 Days of the Oil Spill, News Coverage in Ventura and Santa Barbara




Source: Data collected by authors from *Santa Barbara News-Press* and *Ventura Star-Free Press*

Operations Are Ordered Shut Down" (*Santa Barbara News-Press*, January 31, 1969: A1; February 4, 1969: A1; February 7, 1969: A1). Similarly, the content of the *Ventura Star-Free Press*' news articles emphasized the efforts of both Union and local harbormasters to halt the flow of oil and to minimize damage to Ventura County boats and coastal resources.

> An editorial in response to the spill identified its damage as twofold:
>
> The first damage is that which has been done to physical properties, to the wildlife and to the ecological balance in the area and the recreational facilities of the shoreline, not to mention the injury to the community's sense of esthetics. . . Considerable damage has also been done to the image of the oil industry and to the belief that oil can be extracted from beneath the ocean without accidents and pollution. Within the industry, Union Oil likely is regarded as the goose which cracked the golden egg (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, February 5, 1969: E10).

The author goes on to shift the bulk of the blame for the accident from Union, characterized as acting within the law, to the state of offshore regulation generally. Thus the paper implicitly exonerates Ventura County native Union Oil while calling for increased regulation of OCS operations. This is the only editorial printed by the *Star-Free Press* regarding the spill during the first eleven days of coverage.[67] Only four letters to the editor were printed, compared to 54 letters printed in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* during the same period.

The county's second largest paper at this time, the *Oxnard Press-Courier*, took a stronger stance against the oil industry in its editorials and reflected in its coverage concerns with the harbors and beaches seen even then as vital to Oxnard's economy. The Channel Islands harbormaster was one of the most extensively quoted sources regarding the status of the slick, and almost every article on the spill includes a report on the harbor.

Like the *Ventura Star-Free Press*, the *Press-Courier* emphasized local preparedness and clean-up efforts in its coverage. A serious change in tone occurred, however, after oil invaded the Santa Barbara Harbor on February 5th, damaging hundreds of boats and creating a severe fire hazard. Coverage of the slick from this point on takes a more acrimonious and alarmist tone; one Oxnard journalist reported the slick was "two-thirds the size of Rhode Island," and "boiling into the sea unchecked" (*Oxnard Press-Courier*, February 5, 1969: 1). The following day's coverage included a plea by the Oxnard Harbor District president that citizens join him in sending telegrams to President Nixon asking the federal government to "stop the oil and clean up the oil coated beaches," citing danger to Oxnard's sport fishing industry

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[67] The editors did acknowledge the spill again, on February 8, 1969, in the weekly "Pa Ventura" comment column. This column consists of comments in brief, addressed to various political figures and segments of the community, and has a generally humorous or ironic tone (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, February 8, 1969: B-10).

as well as small craft and deep harbor operations (*Oxnard Press-Courier*, February 6, 1969: 1). Whether this change in tone resulted from an increased awareness of the slick's destructive potential or merely reflected the perspective of a different reporter (the initial articles carried reporter Rick Nielsen's byline; later articles carried no byline at all) is difficult to say.

Nevertheless, this change in the tone of the coverage parallels a shift in the Oxnard paper's editorial position. An early editorial ("Side Benefit of Oil Slick," *Oxnard Press-Courier*, January 31, 1969: 4), while referring to the slick as a "mess," uses the accident to argue for citizen support of Representative Charles Teague's (R-Ojai) Ocean Pollution Bill. The spill is seen as serendipitous in that it would bring the issue of water pollution to the top of new Interior Secretary Walter Hickel's agenda. Following the slick's invasion of the Santa Barbara harbor, however, the *Press-Courier*'s editorial writers can find no silver lining, calling for a complete ban on offshore operations pending reassessment of both OCS regulations and oil industry technology. The editors once again encourage swift implementation of the Teague bill, claiming that without a "secure guarantee against a repetition of the pollution and destruction of wildlife and property along our coastline, then a permanent halt to all offshore oil activity in this area cannot be ruled out" (*Oxnard Press-Courier*, February 7, 1969: 4).

Congressman Charles M. Teague Jr. (R-Ojai) of the Limoneira citrus (Sunkist) family represented Ventura County and the South Coast section of Santa Barbara County at the time of the spill.[68] He actively lobbied for a moratorium on Channel drilling in the wake of the spill; the urgent demands of his Santa Barbara county constituents evidently outweighing the official pro-oil position taken by the government of Ventura County at this time (which did not join Santa Barbara officials in requesting a moratorium on new drilling). On February 4, Teague asked Secretary of Interior Walter Hickel for a permanent ban on all Channel oil drilling, arguing that revenues from offshore leases could not offset the risks to "one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world" (quoted in Thomas 1969: A1). Although neither the county nor the city of Ventura showed any official support for the proposed moratorium (unlike the city and county of Santa Barbara), an informal poll conducted by the *Star-Free Press* claimed that persons polled in downtown Ventura generally supported the ban (seven for it, three against, and one undecided), many of them citing among their reasons a trust in Charles Teague. Those opposed to the ban all cited economic reasons and noted the accidental nature of the spill (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, February 8, 1969: A3).

A first test of county policy following the spill came, in 1969, with Sun Oil's effort to construct a processing and storage facility at La Conchita, north of the city of Ventura. This facility would have processed oil from a proposed offshore platform

[68] In 1990, congressional redistricting divided Ventura and Santa Barbara counties for the most part, although parts of Carpinteria (in southeastern Santa Barbara County) remain in District 23 – Teague's former District.

on lease tract 401. While the facility would have added approximately $41,000 a year (1969 dollars) to Ventura County's tax rolls over a twenty year period, residents of seaside La Conchita protested the addition of still another oil project in their small settlement (two years earlier, Phillips Petroleum had installed a processing facility nearby). La Conchita residents challenged the rezoning request, even though many area residents worked in the oil industry. County supervisors turned Sun Oil down, three to two, claiming that both Sun Oil and earlier installations by Phillips and Mobil violated a prior policy agreed upon by county officials and industry governing land use in the area (Smith 1969; *Santa Barbara News-Press*, June 25, 1969: A4). It is clear that besides Ojai, the coastal areas have reservations about the oil industry.

A second indication of sentiment in Ventura County after the oil spill was the 1972 public vote on the establishment of the Coastal Commission. The statewide referendum, in addition to increasing regulation of coastal development, asked voters to recognize the coastal zone as a "delicately balanced ecosystem." Support for the initiative indicates environmental awareness and a willingness to increase state and local regulatory power to preserve coastal resources. Ventura County voted in favor of the Coastal Act by the barest majority (a more solid state win made it law). Santa Barbara County voters supported it by a 62 percent majority. As Table 23 shows, however, support for the initiative varied in the Ventura County communities, failing to gain a majority in most. Only Ojai, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks favored the measure, and the city of Ventura was almost evenly split, just four votes short.

**Table 23: Votes on the 1972 Coastal Zone Conservation Act**

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Camarillo | 47.82% | 52.18% |
| Fillmore | 43.14% | 56.86% |
| Ojai | 54.07% | 45.93% |
| Oxnard | 45.30% | 54.70% |
| Port Hueneme | 43.14% | 56.86% |
| Santa Paula | 40.04% | 59.96% |
| Simi Valley | 51.58% | 48.42% |
| Thousand Oaks | 59.67% | 40.33% |
| Ventura | 49.99% | 50.01% |
| Total, unincorporated areas | 50.39% | 49.61% |
| **Total, County** | **50.47%** | **49.53%** |

Source: Ventura County Elections Division

This pattern supports our other evidence on public orientations toward oil and the environment among these communities. In Ojai, where locals have prized aesthetic resources and controlled growth for nearly 100 years, support for the act was relatively high at over 54 percent. Support was highest in Thousand Oaks, a

suburban tract city but one which has imposed strict growth controls and other environmental measures. Somewhat more surprisingly, the suburban tract town of Simi Valley, a city more lax in its approach to development, also supported the Coastal Conservation Act – implying that the "new" Ventura county of Los Angeles escapees in the eastern towns has a more strongly environmentalist tilt on ocean issues than most of the "old" Ventura. Support was lowest in the oil-oriented Santa Clara River Valley, as well as in coastal communities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme. Resistance to the act in these communities may reflect a fear of increased regulation along the Oxnard Plain (agricultural areas contiguous with the coast were to be included in the Coastal Zone, thus limiting development), as well as concerns that coastal regulation would curtail development of offshore reserves.

Another indication of public attitudes toward oil development can be gleaned from reactions at hearings held for public input regarding proposed offshore oil projects. In 1981, the Department of Interior proposed Lease Sale 68 on California's central coast as part of its area-wide leasing program. The sale included tracts off the Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles County coasts, ranging from Long Beach north through the Santa Maria Basin. Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) were prepared for the lease sale, and public hearings were held regarding the draft versions of these statements, per the National Environmental Policy Act. As one element of our larger study, we examined comments made to the Bureau of Land Management (the agency overseeing the lease sales) in the context of these hearings and the local media coverage of these hearings. We coded every line of comment as to its topical content (e.g. references to air quality, endangered species, critiques of the hearing/EIS process itself) and characterized participants vis a vis their support for or opposition to the proposed lease sale (for a more thorough description of methods, see Appendix 2).

Despite the inclusion of tracts off the Ventura County Coast and the economic link between non-local platforms and Ventura county support industries, few Ventura residents participated in the hearing process. The location of the hearing was Santa Barbara, which may have discouraged some Ventura County residents from attending,[69] but letters to the Bureau of Land Management were also considered in the EIS process, a fact publicized by local papers (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, July 31, 1981: A8). The following table shows the levels of participation of Ventura County locals versus those from Santa Barbara County, including in-person testimony and letters:

[69] Santa Barbara is 27 miles north of the city of Ventura, approximately a 30 minute drive on U.S. 101.

Table 24: Participants in Lease Sale 68 Draft EIS hearing

| Type of Participant | Ventura County | Santa Barbara County |
|---|---|---|
| Government Agencies | 2 | 8 |
| Local Oil Industry Representatives | 4 | 7 |
| Representatives of Other Organizations[70] | 3 | 21 |
| Members of the General Public | 4 | 15 |
| Total | 13 | 51 |

Source: Bureau of Land Management 1981

Of the four letters received from Ventura county entities regarding the lease sale, two were from local governments, one was from a technical consulting agency, and only one was from a private citizen (Bureau of Land Management 1981).

The majority of Ventura County locals who participated in the hearings (in person or by letter) were in favor of the project. Among the pro-OCS participants, many represented either oil companies or oil support firms – including VETCO Offshore, with three representatives present, and the Union of Operating Engineers. Most cited the safety of contemporary drilling technologies, the need for national energy independence, as well as possible positive impacts to Ventura County's economy. The two anti-OCS participants represented themselves – one a "housewife in Ventura," the second a man from Mussel Shoals (a small community on the Rincon).

Interestingly, no government officials from Ventura county testified in person. When a comparable hearing was held in San Luis Obispo the previous year, both San Luis Obispo county officials and representatives of coastal cities testified en masse, expressing their concerns about potential detrimental impacts to local tourist economies, increasing burdens on infrastructure, and the deterioration of air quality (Bureau of Land Management 1980). In the Lease Sale 68 hearings, however, the two government entities that did respond – the County of Ventura and the City of Oxnard – did so via letter.

Concerns expressed by the City of Oxnard were two-fold: first, the city cited sections of the EIS that estimated impacts on local infrastructure, and asked what funds would mitigate these impacts; second, the city cited the Draft EIS's acknowledgment of potential spills and resulting hazards to "water-oriented recreation." This second concern motivated the city's request that the lease sale be

[70] Non-industry organizations represented were Ventura County Economic Development Association, Ventura County Taxpayers Association, and the Greater Ventura Chamber of Commerce. The Santa Barbara organizations present were mainly environmental groups.

modified, to "reduce potential conflicts with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary" (City of Oxnard, in Bureau of Land Management 1981).

The County of Ventura largely echoed Oxnard's concerns about local infrastructure and the Channel Islands Sanctuary, adding to this questions from the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District regarding the

> adequacy of the cumulative impact analysis, adequacy of the reactive pollutant modeling, lack of a cumulative emission inventory for sources in the Santa Barbara Channel and differences between the Lease Sale 48 FEIS and the subject DEIS in terms of resource estimates (County of Ventura, in Bureau of Land Management 1981).[71]

These statements were made in the form of letters and did not receive the type of media coverage granted to statements made during the hearings themselves. The absence of local officials at the hearing may have reduced the newsworthiness of the hearing in these communities and therefore reduced the amount of information available to locals regarding offshore leasing generally. Other communities (those in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties) provided much more thorough coverage of the hearings as local lawmakers' participation attracted significant media attention.

Nevertheless, news coverage amplified anti-oil sentiments; while the anti-oil views expressed at the hearing were in the minority, they accounted for a majority of media coverage. Participants at the Lease Sale 68 hearing were, by our measures, split in their orientations toward the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the prospect of offshore drilling more generally. Of 74 (total) speakers at the Santa Barbara hearing, we coded 65 percent as supporting oil; we coded 34 percent as opposed, with one speaker (approximately 1 percent) coded as neutral. But in their coverage, both the *Ventura Star-Free Press* and the *Oxnard Press-Courier* emphasized the arguments made against the Draft EIS and/or OCS development, albeit to different degrees (see Table 25).

**Table 25: Pro- and anti- OCS comments represented in coverage of Lease Sale 68**

| | Pro-Oil | Anti-Oil | Neutral | Lines Coded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ventura Star-Free Press* | 38% | 43% | 19% | 225 |
| *Oxnard Press-Courier* | 19% | 81% | 0% | 72 |

Source: Data collected by authors from *Ventura Star-Free Press* and *Oxnard Press-Courier*, July 21, 1981 through August 5, 1981.

[71] Air quality issues are a major point of contention when oil projects are proposed onshore or off, even in largely pro-oil Ventura County. The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District would later prove to be a major player in the permitting of Platforms Gail, Gina, and Gilda.

One explanation for the amplification of the anti-OCS arguments is the credibility and legitimacy of their sources; elected officials representing generally anti-oil Santa Barbara, as well as portions of Ventura County, denounced the lease sale. Prior studies (see Sigal 1986) confirm that elected officials are used as sources and receive coverage much more than any other group, a pattern apparent in this case. Speaking specifically on behalf of the "citizens of Santa Barbara," State Assemblyman Gary Hart vehemently criticized the Department of Interior, accusing the agency of only a perfunctory consideration of public concerns, despite the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act to include public input in decision making processes:

> [Citizens] have read voluminous environmental documents, made specific comments, have attempted in an intelligent and objective manner to respond to the call for public participation. Yet their comments have characteristically received scant attention in Interior's final decisions. Somewhere between public input and federal output the public participation process has become a sham (in Bureau of Land Management 1981: Santa Barbara Public Hearing Transcript, p. 23-24).

This "sham" remark was strongly featured in headlines.

State Senator Robert Lagomarsino (R-Ojai) also commented on the tracts' proximity to Channel Islands National Park, asking that tracts within the drilling sanctuary be eliminated.[72] Because Hart and Lagomarsino both represented Santa Barbara, where offshore oil development has, historically, been one issue that crosses traditional liberal-conservative political boundaries and makes or breaks political careers, these representatives saw not only the importance of participating in the hearing but of showing their opposition to the proposal. The "habitual" newsworthiness of elected officials (Molotch and Lester 1974) ensured that these views made the news, despite the actual pro-oil balance in the hearing and in the context of a county supportive of the oil industry.

While the city of Ventura did not express explicit support for offshore drilling during the Lease Sale 68 process, the city did make such an effort two years later, in 1983, when then-Senator Pete Wilson proposed a ten year moratorium on OCS leasing (Senate Bill 1103). The cities of Fillmore, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme and Ventura (as well as the Ventura Chamber of Commerce, the Ventura Economic Development Council, and the Constituency for Public Awareness, headquartered in Camarillo) made formal declarations of their opposition to Senate Bill 1103 by adopting resolutions against offshore drilling moratoria *in general.*[73] Themes echoed

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[72] The Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary is a three mile wide zone surrounding the Islands, where oil drilling had been prohibited. The Sanctuary, established in 1980, begins at the limit of state-controlled waters (three miles offshore from the islands) and continues for an additional three miles. Thus through state and federal measures, a zone six-miles wide had been established to protect the islands (including Channel Islands National Park) from proximate oil development.

[73] Ventura city councilman James Monahan received thanks for his opposition to the offshore

in these nearly identical resolutions included Ventura County's status as the state's fourth largest oil producer, the reliance of locals on jobs either in the oil industry or oil support services, and the existence of sufficient federal regulations to "preserve and enhance the environmental quality of the Outer Continental Shelf" (City of Santa Paula: 1).

The city of Ventura continued its support for offshore development during negotiations over Chevron's proposed Platform Gail, in 1986. One of the few OCS platforms off the Ventura County shoreline, Gail was wholeheartedly supported by the City of Ventura despite the then-Lieutenant Governor's urgings that local governments support a drilling moratorium in the interest of increasing California's bargaining power with the Department of Interior (McCarthy 1986). In the city's view, however, the Chevron project provided sufficient measures "to mitigate the effects of the Platform – particularly with regards to the Channel Islands National Park" (Monahan, 1986). The City of Ventura found Chevron's air quality mitigations sufficient and noted in a letter of support for the project the potential employment opportunities available to Ventura County residents during the project's 32-year life (Monahan, 1986).

In both of these examples, the city of Ventura and a number of others in the county supported offshore drilling even as the state of California was working to slow down the pace of OCS exploration and development. This degree of local government support is evidenced nowhere else on the Tri-county coast. Unlike the coastal communities of San Luis Obispo County, whose residents voted against the onshore processing facilities that necessarily accompany OCS development, or the city of Santa Barbara which regularly expresses its opposition to offshore drilling, the cities of Port Hueneme and Ventura are remarkable for being the only coastal cities in the Tri-counties (or indeed anywhere north of L.A.) to endorse OCS development.

Despite this widespread support, however, local regulatory agencies and environmental activists have secured mitigations on proximate OCS projects. Platforms Gina and Gilda were the first platforms to be located not only off the coast of Ventura County but to process their oil in the county as well. These platforms were also the first two platforms proposed by Union Oil (by then Unocal) following the 1969 oil spill – a coincidence that according to one informant may have increased Unocal's willingness to satisfy local regulators. Company officials responded to the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) and pressure from environmentalists, including the Oxnard League of Women Voters, by agreeing to substitute electric power for diesel on the platforms to reduce

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moratorium not only from oil companies and oil support services in Ventura, Fillmore and Santa Paula but from one oil support company as far away as Houston, Texas (Kott 1983).

emissions.[74] Union complied, and these first ever fully electrified platforms in the Channel generate almost no emissions at the site.

In addition to supporting the electrification of the platforms, the League of Women Voters expressed concerns for both the safety and the aesthetics of the onshore facility to be built at Mandalay Beach, asking that it be set back behind existing sand dunes to reduce possible damage by a storm surge or tsunami. Consolidation of pipelines coming in to the processing facility was successfully urged. Finally, the platform operators donated funds for a hostel and small museum at a park near the separation facility.

The Ventura County APCD was less successful in negotiations with Chevron over Platform Gail, in 1986. Although the platform was considered to be in Santa Barbara County's jurisdiction (if any county's jurisdiction – the platform sits in federal waters),[75] the Ventura County APCD took an active role because its emissions impact the coastal communities as well as the Ojai Valley. Chevron claimed that as it was built, the platform could not accommodate either the electric power or the low-emission turbines recommended by the APCD. The parties finally compromised on a moderately low-emission turbine, and Chevron allows regular inspections by Ventura APCD officials despite Ventura's lack of jurisdictional power. Ventura air quality officials (who are, according to one official, even more savvy than Santa Barbara's) have learned not that emissions do not respect jurisdictional boundaries, but that potential pollution sources must be identified early in the project's design process.

*Ventura County in the world oil market*

The 1970s and 1980s not only saw oil move offshore, the era was marked by an unprecedented increase in the volatility of world oil markets. The OPEC embargo of the 1970s drove oil prices to previously unseen heights, and the price of oil remained relatively high into the early 1980s – making the relatively expensive prospect of offshore drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel appear promising. Environmental Impact Reports for Channel drilling projects anticipated tens of thousands of new employees (and their families), most employed during the labor-intensive construction phase; with Port Hueneme acting as the main service center for offshore support vessels, Ventura County anticipated a major boom.

As local governments have no jurisdiction over drilling projects in federal waters, local officials faced the question of how to secure mitigations that would

[74] On most platforms, including those off the Santa Barbara Coast, energy for drilling and other operations is generated by turbines on the platform itself. It is this generation which makes the platforms point-sources for air pollution.

[75] Platform Gail is about 14 miles south of Carpinteria and ten miles west of Oxnard.

offset the impact of this new population. The SocioEconomic Monitoring Program (SEMP), a condition of Chevron's Point Arguello project permit with Santa Barbara County, provided a means to monitor the population impacts of new offshore developments. The strategy behind SEMP was twofold: first, by monitoring the actual number of new employees entering a locale (e.g. a school district, fire district, or municipality), the oil companies could avoid paying mitigations based on possibly inaccurate projected impacts; second, by tracking the employees' residences, mitigation payments could be distributed to the home communities, regardless of where the employee worked (often some distance away). This second facet of SEMP is especially important in Ventura County, where offshore employees often reside even though their work may be based in Santa Barbara County. For example, in 1986, SEMP's first year, Chevron/Texaco's Point Arguello project, All American Pipeline, Gaviota Marine Terminal, and Exxon's Santa Ynez Unit/Las Flores Canyon Processing Facility – all located in Santa Barbara County – brought 1,300 new residents to Ventura County. By 1990, the same projects had brought a total of 4,425 new residents to the county (Molotch and Woolley 1994: 102). Table 26 details the Ventura County payrolls of projects participating in SEMP monitoring. Most of these employees worked in oil or gas plant construction and operation, platform operations, or permitting.

**Table 26: Ventura County payroll from northern Santa Barbara Channel OCS platforms and onshore support projects**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1986 | $3,191,162 |
| 1987 | $5,370,725 |
| 1988 | $6,688,845 |
| 1989 | $7,138,857 |
| 1990 | $4,801,907 |

Source: Molotch and Woolley 1994, Table 4; data prepared by Molotch and Woolley using SEMP monitoring reports and SEMP mitigation payment spreadsheets.

These population impacts are significant and resulted in $1.2 million in company mitigation payments to Ventura County service providers (including the city and county of Ventura, the city of Oxnard, Oxnard Union High School, and the Oxnard Elementary School District – see Molotch and Woolley 1994 for a detailed account of mitigation payments).[76] Still, even the total *actual* tri-county population impact from the Chevron/Texaco and Exxon projects – 11,099 – does not begin to approach the over 40,000 new migrants predicted during the offshore projects' planning stages (Molotch and Woolley 1994: 3). This discrepancy reflects the

[76] These mitigation payments are the main compensation Ventura County service providers receive for impacts generated by the Santa Ynez Unit and Point Arguello Projects, as, unlike Santa Barbara County, Ventura County collects limited property tax revenues for the onshore components of these installations (e.g. from pipelines, and from local service companies). SEMP accounts for the possibility of claims for generic impacts on public services in its Ventura County component (VCSEMP) (see Molotch and Woolley 1994: 30).

difficulties of estimating population impacts as well as changes in the economic prospects of offshore drilling generally. Low oil prices, the poor quality of Santa Barbara Channel crude, and the opposition to offshore development expressed by residents in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties all slowed the pace of Channel drilling. These largely non-local factors in turn curtailed offshore drilling's economic and growth impacts in Ventura County.

In anticipation of a lucrative offshore oil industry, several major oil companies undertook corporate expansions or relocations in Ventura County in the early 1980s. Exxon was the first to undertake a major building project in 1981, with its new western regional headquarters in Thousand Oaks. The city planning commission voted four to one to waive the city's 35-foot height limitation to allow the five-story, 70-foot structure which would bring approximately 150 employees to the area (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, October 29, 1981). Chevron followed two years later, proposing to move its Southern California production headquarters to Ventura from Orange County. The new facility would relocate 50 employees in the Ventura area. One incentive for Chevron's move was its expenditure of between $600,000 and $700,000 per day on drilling vessels based in Port Hueneme (Bates 1983). Local support industries enjoyed the boom as well; VETCO Offshore, originally Ventura Tool Company, reached its zenith in 1982, employing 1,300 and building a new Ventura Avenue facility (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 18, 1986).[77]

Within two years of this building boom, the price of oil started to fall and by 1986 plummeted to a record post-embargo low; by spring of that year, the price of some grades of crude fell from $30 a barrel to $13. The *Ventura Star-Free Press* covered the price drop as a major threat to the County's economy, as indeed it proved to be. Ventura Avenue businesses – from oil support firms to donut shops and pharmacies – saw sales fall off ten to 15 percent or more. The number of oil drilling rigs operating in the county was halved; Mobil Oil alone closed 83 onshore wells in the Rincon Field. By fall of 1986, one of Ventura's most successful oil support businesses, Vetco-Gray, Inc. (originally Ventura Tool Company, then VETCO Offshore) was shut down by new parent company Hughes Tool. By this time only 360 employees remained, and only 35 would stay on to sell and service remaining oil field equipment as Ventura Tool Company (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 18, 1986; June 19, 1987; Fujii and Whitmore, 1989: D1, D3).[78]

Oil prices rebounded somewhat towards the close of the decade. At the onset of the Gulf War, world oil prices leapt from $21.50 a barrel to nearly $33.00, and

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[77] Yet even as Chevron and others profited from increased offshore production, the decline in terrestrial reserves motivated Shell Oil, whose local holdings were concentrated in the Ventura Avenue area, to consolidate its California operations in Bakersfield. The 1982 closure of Shell's Ventura office would move 120 workers out of the area in the next one and one half years (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, April 2, 1982).

[78] From World War II through the 1960s, VETCO manufactured aerospace tools for both the cold war and the Apollo space program.

some operators resumed production on wells shut-in in the 1980s. Nevertheless, major oil operators began abandoning their Ventura headquarters as fast as they had built them. Texaco was the fist to pull out, in 1990, despite having built one new office in 1989 and renovating another. The company elected to consolidate its production division in Denver, transferring 145 positions out of Ventura County. Another 170 would remain, however, some in a new Ventura field office under construction at the time of the reorganization. Coverage of the layoffs emphasized Texaco's difficulties completing their share of the Point Arguello offshore project due to a dispute with Santa Barbara County over tankering of oil produced offshore (Platform Harvest was already constructed by this time, but the tankering dispute had prevented any drilling). A company spokeswoman denied that this was a major factor, however (Moraga 1990: A1-A6). At the same time, Chevron was scaling back operations and decided not to occupy a new Oxnard office building. Chevron consolidated in Bakersfield in 1993, leaving a half-built office building in Ventura and laying off or transferring 200 employees (Simon 1993: B1-B5).

Exxon also reduced its Ventura County work force in the early 1990s, from a 1980s peak of 400 employees to 150 by 1993. This reorganization eventually led the company to close its new Thousand Oaks headquarters, built just twelve years earlier. Some employees transferred to Santa Barbara production facilities, and a few support staff remained in the Thousand Oaks area. Exxon's departure came at an especially bad time for the Conejo Valley: Northrup had already abandoned its Newbury Park facility, where city lobbying efforts to lure new tenants were unsuccessful as of 1993, and the former city hall had been seeking a new tenant for five years. Office vacancy rates in Ventura County as a whole were at 20 percent, and 37 percent of those vacant offices were in Thousand Oaks (Simon 1993: B1).

In order to survive the instabilities of the offshore drilling industry, some Ventura County oil support firms, like similar firms in Santa Barbara County, either diversified or branched their operations to include non-Channel activities. One firm that branched its operations was Port Hueneme Marine Supply Company, which originally supplied and serviced offshore oil vessels. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the company was conducting oil spill simulation exercises to determine what equipment might be needed in future emergencies. In 1989, they supplied oil spill clean-up equipment for the Exxon Valdez and Huntington Beach (1990) oil spills. Several other Ventura county companies have strategically diversified their operations, often entering the areas of environmental monitoring, waste recycling and remediation, and technological consulting. One such firm is Measurement and Control Engineering, Inc. This company's expansion into emission testing and sales or rental of monitoring equipment came from a conscious effort to avoid the cyclical nature of the oil industry. While not all firms have chosen this means of surviving the volatile industry conditions created by both world oil prices and environmentalist opposition to Channel development, many firms have grown and increased in value using this strategy (Molotch, Freudenburg, and Jori forthcoming). While it is difficult to predict how these firms' decreasing dependence on local oil extraction might effect local sentiments regarding Channel

oil development, these firms are part of an important trend toward cleaner, high technology industries that is changing the make-up of Ventura County's economy.

*Back country oil revisited*

While canyons surrounding the Ojai and Santa Clara River Valleys were home to Ventura County's first oil operations, new neighbors and new attitudes toward the environment have changed the way oil operates, even in this relatively sparsely populated section of the county. Conflicts over road use, wildlife habitats, and the visual appearance of oil installations reached unprecedented levels in the 1980s as government agencies, activist groups, and private citizens sought to control an industry whose access to much of this land predated even very basic land use regulations.

Throughout the late 1970s, the county of Ventura struggled for authority over oil drilling in Los Padres National Forest, which covers about one half of Ventura County (as well as parts of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties). Because this land is included in the national forest, much of Ventura County's back country falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior, leaving the county no power to control how these operations proceed. The county sought to change this in 1974, when the Interior Department leased 120 acres within the national forest for exploratory oil drilling. This lease allowed Gulf Oil to drill just inside the forest boundary. Ventura County filed suit to stop the drilling on the grounds that Gulf had not obtained a special use permit from the county. The case ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1980, with the court backing Gulf. This decision effectively opened half of Ventura County to oil drilling at the federal government's discretion, also setting precedent a for control of federal land elsewhere in the country (Bates 1980: A1).

In areas where the county did have jurisdiction, citizen groups pressured the county throughout the 1980s to increase regulation on the oil industry which, in many cases, meant updating antiquated permits that allowed oil companies unmitigated use of both privately held land and public roads. As early as 1980, Argo Petroleum met resistance from Ojai Valley residents who charged, at a day-long hearing, that truck traffic to and from the Argo drill site would threaten the only access to their homes, that oil drilling should be subject to the same controls as other land development, and that the project's environmental impact statement was inadequate. The Ventura County Planning Commission approved Argo's permit, however, with only a commissioner from Ojai dissenting (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, March 21 1980: D1). In a second Ojai incident, an independent operator found after drilling a well above the Ojai Valley that although in compliance with the site's 1949 permit, his actions were out of compliance with current regulations. Ojai Valley residents objected to his leveling a drilling pad by bulldozing earth over the side of the mountain and building a rig that "could be seen from all over Ojai." Responding to citizen complaints, Ventura County supervisors "modernized" the

permit, requiring the developer to landscape the scarred hillside and keep any future drilling operations in compliance with current regulations (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, December 14, 1984).

Wildlife activists provided a second element of oil opposition during this era, when oil developers requested permission to drill in the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Unlike the neighboring Sespe Condor Sanctuary (located in the mountains north of Fillmore), the Hopper Mountain Refuge is available for oil drilling and contains known hydrocarbon reserves. In 1981, a Santa Barbara oil developer was granted permission to drill twenty-six wells in the refuge, raising concerns of adverse effects to the nearby condor sanctuary. In the end, protests from the National Audubon Society, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Fish and Game resulted in new conditions attached to the permit to protect the condors (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, June 12, 1981: A11).[79]

New uses of privately held back country land provided a third source of conflict. Saint Thomas Aquinas College, a small Catholic college founded in the early 1980s north of Santa Paula, contested oil drilling on nearby lands in March 1985. The college sought assistance from Santa Barbara's Environmental Defense Center, a non-profit environmental law firm, to contest an Argo petroleum drilling operation that they feared would increase traffic, contaminate groundwater, and damage Santa Paula Creek (*Santa Paula Chronicle*, March 8, 1985). The county of Ventura responded by imposing several restrictions on Argo's permit, including prohibiting use of the road bordering the college except in emergencies, as well as requiring that Argo landscape the drill site and construct a hiking trail through Santa Paula Canyon (*Ojai Valley News*, March 31, 1985).

While none of these protests prevented oil development in Ventura County's back country, most complainants were successful in securing mitigations. These cases also illustrate that by the mid-1980s, citizen protest against oil development was a regular occurrence in Ventura County with diverse origins. In the 1800s, back country residents had come to this area to be near the oil industry; in this century, however, residents appear to come *despite* the oil industry (or, in some cases, without knowledge of oil's legacy in the region). While compromises are still reached which allow the industry to operate, oil is no longer allowed to dominate the landscape and infrastructure in the way it once did.

*Petrochem U.S.A.: A case of environmentalism and market dynamics*

The rise in environmental consciousness seen in the 1980s coincided with the decline in oil prices, making it sometimes hard to attribute local outcomes to one cause or another. At the same time that Ventura County groups were increasing

[79] Conditions included cessation of drilling activities from April through November (the condor mating season), as well as restrictions on human access to the area and on drilling practices.

their awareness of oil, the declining oil prices of the 1980s made Ventura County's heavy, sulfur-rich crude less and less profitable to refine and market. While some operations opted to modernize their facilities (some built almost 50 years prior), others downsized their operations or folded completely. Several major oil companies sold off their depreciating Ventura County properties.

One story that illustrates this confluence of factors is that of Petrochem U.S.A., a Ventura Avenue refinery originally built in the 1950s by Shell Oil as a fertilizer plant. Petrochem, owned by U.S.A. Petroleum Corporation of Santa Monica, was set to embark on a 100 million dollar modernization program in the early 1980s. The refinery had been converting Ventura Avenue oil into fuel oil for ships, a relatively unprofitable product. The plant remained in operation largely through federal government subsidies to small refineries (estimated by one source at several thousand dollars per day). When these subsidies were scheduled to end in the late 1970s, company officials aimed to expand their production of gasoline and diesel oil. This proposal required a new cracking plant – which necessitated the plant expansion.

Even before this proposed expansion, the Petrochem refinery was regarded by many residents of both the Ventura Avenue area and the Ojai Valley as a public nuisance. Avenue residents feared explosions and gas leaks, and the latter were not uncommon at the plant. A nearby school kept buckets of damp rags available on the playground for children to cover their noses and mouths with in the event of a gas release. The problems created for Ojai Valley residents stemmed largely from everyday emissions; nitrous oxides, reactive organic compounds, sulfur dioxide, and particulates were regularly released from the plant and easily followed the prevailing winds north into the Ojai Valley (the Ojai Valley naturally collects pollutants, and ranks among the poorest in the county in air quality). Petrochem was one of Ventura County's largest polluters, permitted to emit 129 tons of hydrocarbon pollutants and 122 tons of other pollutants. Some Ojai residents complained of daily asthma attacks, and a number were hospitalized for respiratory problems. In addition, the plant's rusted appearance did little to inspire community confidence in its safety (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 19, 1984).

Citizens to Preserve the Ojai (CPO), a grassroots environmental group dedicated to issues seen as threats to the Ojai Valley, filed suit against Petrochem based on the EIS submitted for the proposed plant expansion. While the plant was already recognized as a nuisance prior to any expansion, the intent of the suit was not to close the plant but, in the words of CPO chair Stan Greene, "to prevent their expansion and the creation of additional pollution." Toward this end CPO enlisted legal help from Santa Barbara's Environmental Defense Center (EDC), a non-profit environmental law firm familiar with both the oil industry and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The suit aimed to appeal the Ventura County Board of Supervisors' approval of the planned expansion by contesting the EIS. Greene recalled that several

attorneys in both Ventura and Santa Barbara were pessimistic about this prospect. One EDC lawyer volunteered, however, bringing with him the knowledge gained through Santa Barbara's long history of oil-related conflicts. The suit rested on the contention that the EIS neglected to provide a cumulative air quality assessment, one that would take into account emissions from *offshore drilling*. The EDC was successful, and in 1984 an appellate judge ordered that Petrochem revise the EIS to include these figures and re-apply for a permit.

The legal fight had lasted approximately three years, during which time Petrochem had delayed borrowing the funds needed to begin its expansion (estimated at $100,000,000). At the same time, the price of oil was falling from its highs of the 1970s. The combination of market factors, environmentalist opposition, and the imminent end of federal subsidies led parent company U.S.A. Petroleum Corporation to close the Ventura Avenue facility permanently in November, 1984. The plant closure meant layoffs for eighty workers (Petrochem reported an annual payroll of $2.5 million) and loss of the operation's $350,000 contribution to county tax rolls (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 17 and 21, 1984).

*Environmental targets in Ventura County*

Ventura County is home to what some of our informants have characterized as "targeted environmentalism"; that is, environmental response tends to be centered around specific issues or threats, utilizing ad-hoc organizing as well as established environmental organizations (e.g. Citizens to Preserve the Ojai, the Ventura County Environmental Coalition, and Santa Barbara's Environmental Defense Center). While these targets often include oil installations like those described above, the targets are just as often (perhaps even more often) not oil-related. While the examples detailed below do not provide an exhaustive account of environmentalist response in Ventura County, we hope they will provide some illustration of how Ventura County's environmental activists respond to perceived threats, and how these responses reflect locals' concerns about the county's environment.

Growth and urban development are issues of great concern to residents of Ventura County. This concern has many manifestations, ranging from architectural and open space regulations in Ojai and Thousand Oaks to environmentalist responses to specific projects. Here we will briefly describe three such responses – a proposed California State University Campus in Ventura, a proposal to develop wetlands south of Oxnard, and a landfill slated for development in an Ojai Valley canyon.

In 1986, governor George Deukmejian budgeted $19 million dollars for the purchase of two new California State University Campus sites – one in San Diego

County, the other in Ventura County.[80] While the Ventura effort originally centered on a site near Ventura Harbor, failed negotiations there sent the search committee looking for another site – this time at Taylor Ranch, a largely undeveloped parcel just across the Ventura River from the city of Ventura. Then home to 300 cattle and 400 oil wells (7,500 acres of the ranch were leased to Shell and Conoco as of 1987), Taylor Ranch could provide the undeveloped acreage necessary for a college campus (Saillant 1990a; Katz 1987). Site negotiations did not go smoothly: in 1988, owner Cynthia Wood reneged on an original agreement to sell 550 acres of the ranch, citing among other reasons possible conflicts with Shell Oil's operations (Reem 1988), initiating a move by state officials to condemn the property (Katz 1988).

Perhaps more important for the site's final fate was local environmentalists' opposition to the proposed campus, a sentiment that emerged as negotiations dragged on. Whereas many communities welcome colleges and universities for their potential to encourage "clean development" (Santa Barbara's University of California campus was supported by local boosters for just this reason), environmentalists including the Ventura County Environmental Coalition, Friends of the Ventura River, and the Patagonia corporation (an environmentally-conscious outdoor clothing manufacturer headquartered in Ventura) opposed the university because of the relatively pristine quality of the Taylor Ranch site. Patagonia's reasons for entering the fight are summarized in a company brochure on its environmentalist mission:

> Our property lies a stone's throw from the river that puts a stop to L.A.; beyond the [Ventura] river rugged, mustard-colored hills meet the sea along a stretch of coast called the Rincon. This twelve-mile strip of land has beach houses, a freeway, railroad tracks, oil and strawberry fields, but no shopping malls, tract homes, or auto dealerships (Patagonia, Inc. 1993).

Company leaders, as well as local environmentalists and housing advocates, feared that a university on this site would open up the west bank of the Ventura River to development, as well as driving up housing prices in the Ventura Avenue area (one of the few affordably priced areas in Ventura's increasingly expensive housing market). Patagonia donated funds, office space, phones, and employee time to the fight and supported a lawsuit by Santa Barbara's Environmental Defense Center that challenged the site's initial Environmental Impact Statement and slowed the siting process (Patagonia Inc. 1993; Saillant 1990b).

The company's role in this controversy became controversial in itself; supporters of the Taylor Ranch site complained that Patagonia's contributions

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[80] At this time Ventura County was without a four-year public college, as it continues to be today. Currently the only four-year facility in the county is California Lutheran University, a private college founded in 1961 in Thousand Oaks. Community colleges are located in Moorpark, Oxnard, and Ventura. The university center in Ventura also offers extension classes through California State University, Northridge and the University of California, Santa Barbara.

unfairly influenced the debate (Saillant 1990b). Whether or not the company's influence was "fair," they certainly aided opposition to the university site. Community resistance however, eventually cooled state officials' enthusiasm for the Taylor Ranch proposal. Citing a divided community and city council, fears of a lengthy court battle, and the expense of obtaining freeway access, the California State University trustees officially retreated from the Taylor Ranch proposal in 1990 (Miller 1990; *Los Angeles Times* 1990).

Our second growth-related example concerns the development of coastal wetlands south of Oxnard. While the city of Oxnard has generally embraced development (Oxnard has some of the tallest buildings in Ventura county – the only buildings approaching "skyscrapers" in the area – and big box stores dot the 101 freeway on what was once prime agricultural land), area residents concerned about development in a biologically rich coastal area formed the Ormond Beach Observers in 1987, to literally "observe" a coastal wetland in South Oxnard.[81] The impetus for their observation was an Orange County developer's proposal to build residential housing in a contested wetland area, historically used as a buffer around existing light industrial operations. While the development company spent considerable time and money lobbying area residents about the potential positive economic impacts of the housing development, the Ormond Beach Observers sought to "watchdog" the development process and document the condition of the existing habitat (including gathering evidence for the area's legal status as wetland). The Observers also gathered opponents of the proposed land uses together to testify at relevant hearings and educated locals about possible alternatives to increased residential development.

A key impact of the Ormond Beach Observers has been their role in representing the local environmental community to the Ormond Beach Task Force, an 80-member group of area stakeholders, including the U. S. Navy, the Port of Hueneme, Southern California Edison (operator of a power plant near the site), the City of Oxnard, state and federal wildlife agencies, the Coastal Conservancy, the developer, and others. Rather than oppose development outright, the strategy of Ormond Beach Observers representative Jean Harris has been to encourage intensive commercial development along Hueneme Road, specifically the establishment of businesses associated with the Port. This strategy is two-fold: first, it addresses the concern for economic revitalization in South Oxnard, a local concern the residential developer has played upon; second, dense commercial development will leave more of this sensitive area in its natural, or near natural, state. While the 33-acre parcel currently under deliberation is zoned residential in the city's general plan, the County Economic Development Association (V.C.E.D.A.) has encouraged finding a purchaser of the land who would bring in additional jobs and business to the area. As Harris has "a background in compromise," this accord

[81] The group represents individuals as well as organizations (including the Sierra Club, Ventura County Environmental Coalition, the Oxnard League of Women Voters, Oxnard Beautiful, and the Surfrider Foundation).

between economic and environmental voices is seen as a major accomplishment. Whether all of the environmental organizations represented by the Ormond Beach Observers will agree remains to be seen.

Our third example concerns two issues of growing local as well as national salience – solid waste disposal and air quality. During this same era, the mid-1980s, the existing landfills in western Ventura County were rapidly reaching capacity, necessitating a new solid waste facility. Thirty potential sites were evaluated, but Weldon Canyon – just off the lower Ojai valley and accessible only via highway 33 – became the county's preferred site. As siting deliberations took place, however, a private solid waste firm obtained a lease option for the location in Weldon Canyon, thus eliminating the possibility of a publicly managed waste facility. The dump proposed by this company would have to be large enough to be commercially profitable, which would mean importing trash along a highway in the "breathing tube" of the Ojai Valley airshed. By one estimate, the dump would attract 600 trucks a day, approximating the air quality impact of 10,000 new homes.

Environmental groups including Citizens to Preserve the Ojai (CPO) formed a broad coalition to fight the Weldon Canyon dump. The *Ojai Voice* (the local alternative paper) dedicated several cover stories to the issue, and local celebrity resident Larry Hagman (*Dallas'* J. R. Ewing) hosted a $500 a plate dinner to finance the cause. Activists worked with local theatrical talent to organize a rally attended by 3,000 people (about 13 percent of the Ojai Valley's population). CPO activist Stan Greene went so far as to run for County supervisor, "not because I thought I would win, but because I wanted to get a platform to talk about the garbage dump." The combined effect of these strategies was successful; Ojai's Supervisor Maggie Erickson, the swing vote in determining the dump's approval, eventually voted it down. The fight is not over, however, as Solid Waste Management continues to push local ballot measures that might circumvent the Board of Supervisors and approve a dump at Weldon Canyon.

Although these three cases of environmental organizing are only a sample of environmentalist activity in Ventura County, they provide insight into the ways in which environmentalists organize. Each of these groups tends to act locally: Patagonia opposed development "a stone's throw" away, the Ormond Beach Observers are generally residents of the Ormond Beach or greater Oxnard areas, and Citizens to Preserve the Ojai focus their energies on perceived threats to their home, the Ojai Valley. Nevertheless, in each of the three cases, coalition building between local, regional (especially Santa Barbara), and national environmental groups and regulatory bodies have increased the potential efficacy of even the most locally-oriented activists.

Several informants from Ventura County's environmental organizations agreed that increasing national awareness of the environment has influenced Ventura County locals. These same informants noted that the increasing suburbanization of the east county may increase environmentalist sympathies, as

suburban residents strive to protect the quality of life that attracted them. While environmentalism in Ventura County lacks the institutionalized status seen in Santa Barbara or San Luis Obispo Counties (see corresponding reports), perceived environmental threats are addressed by both organized and ad hoc groups who, in various ways, have influenced what are often characterized as pro-development local governments.

*Remediation and Abandonment*

In the environmental era, oil operators – responding to public sentiments and their own self-consciousness about the appearance of their installations – attempted to lessen the visual impact of refineries and storage facilities. As early as 1971, Ventura Avenue oil companies began efforts at beautifying their operations; Shell planted 800 trees between highway 33 (the road from Ventura to Ojai) and its processing plant. New field equipment installed as part of this landscaping and modernization effort was painted "autumn gold and cypress green"; abandoned wells were sealed off according to the State Division of Oil and Gas standards, and sumps were scraped, re-filled, and planted (Paul 1971: B1). This was something of a new attitude. A 1953 "Oil Progress Week" edition of the *Ventura Star-Free Press* had characterized abandoned oil field equipment as "landmarks of the pioneering days which launched the county's major industry" (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, Oil Progress Week Special Section, October 14 1953).

But oil seeping from abandoned wells caused major environmental hazards in the 1970s and 1980s. Above Fillmore, oil from an abandoned MRG Oil Company well began spilling into Sespe Creek in the 1970s. Located on rugged Forest Service land (the parcel was purchased by the Audubon Society and donated to the Forest Service in an effort to eliminate privately held lands within the Condor Sanctuary), clean-up efforts were hampered by the lack of road access to the area. The seep was eventually repaired when bulldozing equipment, cement, and work crews were airlifted to the site through a joint effort by the Forest Service and the California Division of Forestry in October 1985 (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, April 7 1985; December 7 1985).

Abandonment is still a major concern for Ventura County planners. According to one planner, the following is a typical (albeit pessimistic) abandonment scenario: A major operator (e.g. Shell, Texaco) sells its wells to smaller operators as production decreases. These smaller operations hold the wells until production falls below their own lower standards, eventually selling them to an individual or a limited partnership. This last operator will hold the well until the operation goes bankrupt, thus ducking financial responsibility for proper abandonment. The cost of returning the well site to its natural state then falls to county taxpayers. While abandonment is not currently a major problem (most existing wells are still producing, albeit at marginal levels), one planner noted a statewide "push" is on for omnibus legislation to establish who pays this final cost.

The early 1990s saw several new spills in Ventura County – mainly due to pipeline failures. In January 1993, 370,000 gallons of condensate or liquefied petroleum spilled from a pipeline near the Ventura River (Ventura Avenue). Although the condensate contained two known carcinogens – benzene and toluene -- authorities found no evidence of damage to wildlife or contamination of the city's water supply. In March 1994, 28 California Department of Fish and Game officials searched Texaco's Ventura Avenue office looking for evidence that would link Texaco to the spill. The spill itself angered local residents, who were also put off by state officials' unwillingness to disclose the spill when initially discovered in 1993; a second source of resentment was Texaco's unwillingness to claim responsibility for the spill despite what was regarded as strong evidence of culpability. The 1994 Fish and Game raid of Texaco's offices yielded company records hoping to implicate Texaco and recover some of the estimated multi-million dollar clean-up costs (Saillant and Fields 1994; Kelly and Hadly 1994).

A second spill occurred Christmas morning, 1993, as 84,000 gallons of crude leaked from a Bush Petroleum pipeline, fouling McGrath Lake and McGrath State Beach, north of Oxnard. Close to 200 clean-up workers, including state Fish and Game employees, clean-up professionals hired by the pipeline operator, and volunteers worked to save birds and other wildlife in what is considered an environmentally sensitive area. Clean-up workers eventually recovered 133 dead birds from the lake and eight miles of soiled coastline (*Santa Barbara News-Press*, January 1, 1994). Bush employees had no means of recognizing a sudden loss of pipeline pressure – one reason the spill took almost three hours to trace after it was first spotted by Minerals Management Service officials. This fact, along with the company's unwillingness to provide an accurate estimate of the pipe's condition or the amount of oil lost in the spill, raised public alarm about not only this spill but the state of similar pipelines and officials' ability to respond.

Oil pipeline management provides a major challenge to Ventura County planners, as the status and even the location of many pipelines remains somewhat mysterious. The California Pipeline Safety Act, legislation introduced by State Assemblyman Jack O'Connell following the McGrath spill, was to be one means of compiling this information. The legislation called for an inventory of pipelines located outside specific oil leases; pipelines within leases are exempt from this inventory. This inventory was intended to examine pipeline pressure, temperature, condition and ownership, as well as regular maintenance received and maintenance required. According to one Ventura County planner, the survey has been "surprisingly disappointing" in generating data regarding pipeline location and the relative risks of various types of pipelines, as the sample size was not adequate to accurately estimate what risks are associated with each type of pipeline.

*Oil's current impact and influence*

Petroleum remains the among largest property tax revenue sources for Ventura County, annually vying with agriculture for top honors (oil's tax contribution to the county was approximately $4,722,406 in 1995-96, with agriculture close behind at $4,455,058). The industry still has strong influence, especially in regard to regulation of Ventura County's numerous and in some cases deteriorating pipelines. A proposal from the Office of Oil Enforcement (part of the Ventura County Planning Department) to investigate the spills of the early 1990s and seek possible preventative measures was declined by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in 1995. One informant characterized the board's rationale as, "Oil and gas have been very, very good to us."

Nevertheless, oil is part of an increasingly diverse county economy. Fifteen years ago, offshore oil support vessels made up almost all of the Port of Hueneme's business; in the past decade offshore support has declined to about 10 percent of the Port's income. As offshore development began to decline, the Port made a deliberate effort to diversify, including expansion of international trade. The City of Port Hueneme, which is independent from the port itself, is currently experiencing an influx of retirees and others in search of inexpensive beach-side living. This new population is more involved in environmental concerns, pushing the city to preserve the ocean views through the use of wide setbacks with beach development.

Along Ventura Avenue, new businesses are replacing the oil support industries that once dotted the area; these include the corporate headquarters for Kinko's Copies (employing 315), and Lost Arrow Corporation/Patagonia Inc. (employing 300). These companies not only replace oil industry employment with non-extractive jobs; they may, as is the case with Patagonia, contribute to local environmental causes (see above).

And while county government appears to still honor oil, some regulatory questions are now out of local governments' hands. Air quality, for instance, must meet federal standards to prevent penalties to the county-wide district. Ventura County's status as a non-attainment area motivates reduction in emissions from all point-source polluters, including the oil industry. Thus despite the county's relative leniency toward oil, local regulatory agencies have an incentive to see that oil works in environmentally sensitive ways.

# Conclusion: Factors Influencing Ventura County Development

*Oil as First Mover*

Oil was one of Ventura County's first industries and played a strong role in shaping the county's infrastructure, sociodemographics, and political climate. Oil's pedigree has lent it legitimacy through its contributions for public works and its status, for many years, as the area's top industrial employer. The persistence of oil workers in the community confers a type of informal familiarity and respect. The town elders are, in many cases, oil folk.

Because oil prospectors were among the original Yankee settlers, those who came after found a landscape already dotted with oil wells and criss-crossed by pipelines. Early towns serviced the nearby oil patches of the Santa Clara River Valley, and oil companies built much of the county's original infrastructure. The land was never "virgin" to most people's eyes, as oil drilling regions were well demarcated before current residents arrived, and oil companies owned vast acreage in mineral rights beneath many landowners' properties. Some new property owners, unaware of oil's legacy in the Ventura County back country, are surprised (sometimes unpleasantly) to find oil companies have the right to drill under their property.

Other types of land uses have had to accommodate to oil's presence rather than the other way around. Oil fields attracted not only supply companies and refineries, but inexpensive housing and taverns. These land uses persisted even as the oil declined, leaving economically depressed and poorly planned areas in need of city or county attention. In the city of Ventura, degradation at Ventura Avenue led new retail businesses to leapfrog into East Ventura; investments in a new retail area induced disinvestment in the existing downtown.

Similarly, because the oil industry's interest in the ocean front was as a utility port, the uses nearby were not amenable for tourism. When a site was needed for the 101 freeway through town, the beach-front land suggested itself – for one reason because it was flat, but for another because its uses made it relatively cheap to acquire and its residents (many low-income Mexican Americans) were less able to resist than those living in more affluent parts of town. In this way, the freeway and related beach-area infrastructure inhibits tourism and other beach-oriented development.

A final effect of oil having come first, or at least early, is the continuing exemption of old physical plant and machinery from contemporary environmental standards. This gives "old oil" an enduring impact on the area, including the creation of some resentment toward the industry among those who came later.

*Compatible Industries: Agriculture and oil work together*

The only other early industry of significance in the county was agriculture. With the exception of the Ventura Avenue field, oil in Ventura county has been found mainly in canyons and hillsides; land where farming would be unfeasible. The families who owned farms displaced by development of the Avenue oil field still receive royalties; some descendants have become quite wealthy. Although some tensions have developed between citrus farmers and oil operators, for the most part these conflicts have been resolved through changes in the oil industry's operations and/or financial compensation for damage. Unlike much environmental litigation, these cases do not generate the ideological heat seen in places like Santa Barbara.

*Land Ownership: Persistence of large holdings*

Even though most of the Mexican landholders lost their ranchos soon after Americanization, many of these tracts were sold in their entirety – in some cases even growing larger over time. Arrangements with very few parties were thus necessary to gain access for unfettered oil exploration; this was the case on Ventura Avenue, where large holdings prevented the scramble seen in other oil regions for "town lot" sized leases. The largest single parcel of Ventura County land was actually owned by an oil prospecting firm. While subdivided over the years, parcels remained big, as much as several thousand acres through the mid-twentieth century.[82] These large holdings would become the basis of suburban tract communities during the coming boom – homogenous suburban cities lacking downtowns or a sense of tradition or cohesiveness.

*Geography: Far and near*

Ventura County's history has been a struggle for linkages with the rest of the world; even as oil came in, limited access to markets inhibited other development from following. The struggle for a reliable coastal route took the form of a wooden causeway, followed by a two-lane highway and finally the current four-lane freeway along the land that is sometimes a very narrow shelf between steep hills and the ocean. The beaches of northwest Ventura County were largely filled over to provide stable roadbeds, and tourists are now forced to wait for low tides to see what remains of a once sandy beach. The 101 freeway through Ventura proper had a similar effect, but here it was the beach-side neighborhood rather than the beach itself that was paved over. Anxious to alleviate the traffic congestion caused by the original

[82] Examples include the McGrath holdings on the Oxnard plain (5,000 acres) (Bodle 1979: 138), the Janss ranch in the Conejo Valley (10,000 acres) (Bidwell 1989: 35) and Rancho Camarillo (10,000 acres) (White 1979: 64).

highway route through downtown, planners agreed to a new freeway route which created a canyon between the historic downtown business district and the beach. As a result, the city of Ventura is easy to drive through, and many tourists do just that.

The same freeway construction spree that left northwest Ventura County without easy beach access brought the formerly isolated eastern section of the county closer to Los Angeles. The result was the suburban tract-home boom of the 1950s-1970s that gives almost half the county an identity of a Los Angeles suburb, rather than a central California county. New citizens bring to their new county a zeal for good air and low crime (the reason they "escaped" from L.A.) but do not step into a very well-developed structure of civic organizations.

*The Political Climate: Weak environmentalism*

Compared to the two counties to the North, Ventura County fosters a low level of environmental activism, in part due to traditional dependence on oil, in part due to conditions that have not created – with the exception of small Ojai – a very strong basis for robust challenges to industry. But this too may be changing as suburbanites protect their good life and as the oil industry keeps decreasing as a proportion of local employment and as a civic presence in other realms.

*Prospects for the Future*

Oil is no longer the industrial giant that it once was in Ventura County. While a rise in oil prices could provide the incentive needed to drill new wells or invest in secondary recovery operations at older ones, even a rejuvenated oil industry could not dominate the county the way oil once did. Several factors underlie this assumption: the continuing diversification of Ventura County's economy, a shift in Ventura county's population as natives are replaced by more and more "urban refugees" from nearby Los Angeles, and the emergence of an environmental consciousness among county residents.

As discussed above, Ventura County's economy has greatly diversified since oil's reign in the 1940s and 1950s. High technology firms are a leader in this change, as research and development as well as manufacturing firms "leapfrog" into Ventura County from Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. While some of these firms depend on defense or aerospace contracting (often working in tandem with the Naval bases at Point Mugu and Port Hueneme), many operate independently of military contracting and are therefore relatively stable. Civic leaders throughout the county, and especially in the eastern communities of Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks, expressed a desire to attract such industries, as well as corporate headquarters. As these corporations and their employees continue to emigrate from Los Angeles County, their relative significance in Ventura County's

economy will increase as oil's decreases. We expect that the development of coastal tourism will have a similar effect, although this industry's weight in Ventura County will not likely approach that seen in Santa Barbara, or even San Luis Obispo County.

Importantly, many relocating firms are attracted to Ventura County by those amenities seen as lacking in Los Angeles – most notably clean air, open space, and low crime rates. Even in those areas less successful in attracting new businesses (e.g. Fillmore, Santa Paula), increasing suburban development means that those residents who remember oil's contribution to Ventura County are gradually being replaced by those seeking an alternative to Los Angeles. While these new residents may not appear environmentalist by the standards of San Luis Obispo or Santa Barbara Counties, civic leaders in these suburban areas indicated to us the importance of maintaining these amenities that have attracted many residents over the past 30 years (recall that Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley both supported the 1972 Coastal Act, as well as ballot measures for open space and parklands).

Some residents and some area firms have expressed a willingness to take activist positions against county development, including oil. County government has proven responsive to citizen complaints (recall the permit modifications required of back country oil operators) and has shown a willingness to comply with state and federal environmental regulations. However, neither Ventura County residents nor county level government have sought proactive measures to increase regulation of the oil industry such as those seen further north. The regulations implemented in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties have not only slowed the pace of Channel drilling (thus stifling potential economic gains by those Ventura County support companies still dependent on offshore development), the organizations behind these measures have influenced Ventura County activists. These activists might call on Santa Barbara's environmentalist network if new drilling projects were proposed off Ventura County's shore.

Rather than being a county that oil could depend upon, Ventura County has been gaining a mix of uses and orientations more typical of coastal areas in the state as a whole. While not headed to be a bastion of new age environmentalism, it will likely become "normalized" by California coastal standards. Faced with the prospect of additional offshore development, we would expect Ventura's voters to act like the state's other coastal regions.

# Appendix A:

## Ventura County Timeline

(Digits following year indicate month of event.)

- 1782.03: Mission San Buenaventura founded (Reith 1963: 12).
- *1848: Mexican American War ends, California becomes US territory. Simultaneous discovery of gold in Northern California stimulates westward migration (Reith 1963: 83-4).*
- 1856: San Buenaventura described by visitor Henry Miller as "quite a village of 70 or 80 houses." Anglo population of town is 9 in 1858, 21 in 1862 (Reith 1963: 90-1).
    - 1861: George Shoobridge Gilbert builds first petroleum refinery in California at east boundary of Rancho Santa Ana (land leased fro Juan Camarillo) to manufacture lubricating oil and kerosene. Refinery is destroyed by fire May 2, 1861. A second explosion later drives Gilbert out of petroleum business; he becomes a merchant in Ventura (Fry 1983: 17).
- 1862: Rancho Santa Paula Y Saticoy purchased by horticulturist George G. Briggs to found fruit orchard and temperance colony. Subdivided in 1867 after fruit trees are stunted by 1863-64 drought; tracts average 150 acres (Triem 1985: 70).
- 1866: City of San Buenaventura is incorporated (Reith 1963: 92).
    - 1867: Thomas Bard's well number 6 in upper Ojai Valley yields 15 to 20 barrels per day of good quality oil, but financial strain on company leads T. A. Scott to order drilling halt (Fry 1983: 20).
- 1871: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors incorporates Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company, begins construction of a pier at Hueneme. Upon completion later that year, Hueneme is first "true wharf" on California Coast between Santa Cruz and San Pedro (Hutchinson 1965: 186).
- 1872: Nathan W. Blanchard and Elisha L. Bradley purchase 2,700 acres of Rancho Santa Paula Y Saticoy; pair plans town of Santa Paula in 1873 and formally record plot in 1875 (Triem 1985: 70).

- 1873.01: State Assembly bill divides Santa Barbara County, making the southern half what is now Ventura County. Nominations for County seat include Ventura (238 votes), Saticoy (156 votes) and Hueneme (214 votes); major rift was developing between communities north and south of the Santa Clara River (Hutchinson 1965: 211, 225).
- 1874: First large scale subdivision and promotion effort in Ventura County is Royes Gaylord Surdham's promotion of Ojai. Surdham mails brochures to Eastern doctors encouraging them to send incurable patients to Ojai, advertises that he will donate land to someone willing to build a hotel. Abram Blumberg opens hotel on donated site April 11, 1874 (Fry 1983: 25).
- 1874: Newbury Park is settled, named for early settler John Newbury (originally of Santa Barbara) who made his home there until great drought of 1879-77 forced family into bankruptcy. Post office attached to Newbury Park name is moved around the Conejo Valley until 1908 when it finds permanent site in contemporary Newbury Park (Triem 1985: 114).
- 1875.11: First edition of *Ventura Free Press* (Hutchinson 1965: 181).
- 1876: Juan Camarillo purchases 10,000 acre Rancho Calleguas, eventually establishes successful vegetable, citrus and walnut production (Project Development Co.: 5).
- 1881: T. A. Scott's death means that agent Thomas Bard must subdivide and sell Scott's land holdings, including Rancho Ojai; lots are advertised in *Ventura Signal* at $1-20 per acre (Fry 1983: 21).
    - 1883: Wallace Hardison and Lymon Stewart (founders of Union Oil Company) drill first well in Pico Canyon, east Ventura County. Well is abandoned when drilling tools are lost (Triem 1985: 214).
    - 1886: Union Oil constructs four inch oil pipeline from Newhall to Ventura, where product is shipped to San Francisco (Reith 1963: 131).
- 1887: First land boom in Ojai Valley marks transition between a time of resident farmers and a new era of wealthy investors and speculators who bring "new ideas" to the area (Fry 1983: 106).
- 1887: Southern Pacific Railroad arrives at San Buenaventura via Newhall and Santa Clara River valley, including Santa Paula and Fillmore. The name San Buenaventura is too long to fit on railroad timetables and is shortened to Ventura, which is the common name (although not the legal name) of the present city (Reith 1963: 113-4).

- 1887: Thomas Bard brings in Los Angeles investors to form Simi Land and Water Company; hotel is built on knoll at East end of Simi Valley to attract potential buyers. Two to three dozen settlers are attracted to area (farming mainly barley), but few stay (Triem 1985: 90-91).
    - 1887: Union Oil refinery opens in Santa Paula with 14,000 barrel per day capacity; products include asphalt, grease, lubricants and illuminating oils (Triem 1985: 214).
    - 1888: Hardison and Stewart drill California's "first big producer," Adams Canyon Number 16 (near Santa Paula) (Triem 1985: 214).
- 1889: Sherman Day Thatcher moves to Ojai Valley with brothers Edward and George, in hopes that the climate will cure George's ill health. Sherman, a Yale graduate, earns money tutoring local boys (Fry 1983: 67-68).
    - 1890.10: Union Oil incorporates; Hardison, Stewart and Bard are officers. Bard retires in 1900 after election to US Senate (Triem 1985: 215).
- 1890: Santa Paula population triples; oil and citrus are main industries (the Limoneira Company is the main citrus grower and processor) (Union Oil Museum, Santa Paula).
- 1891: Sherman Thatcher leads drive to secure private funding for a spur line of the railroad to Ojai. Thirteen men pledge a total of $3,250, one sixth of the necessary funds (Fry 1983: 124).
- 1892: First telephone in Ojai connects livery stable and Gally Cottages (Fry 1983: 146).
    - 1892: Ojai Asphalt Company exports twenty tons of paving material. Its mine was later closed due to financial difficulties (Fry 1983: 205).
    - 1892: First recorded oil spill occurs when Union Oil's Adams field sends 1,500 barrels per day into Ventura County's Santa Clara River and the ocean (Johnson and Nye 1979: 191).
- 1893: Sherman Day Thatcher provides majority of funding for first Ojai public library, with condition that the library be named for his deceased brother, George. Additional funding provided by members of the Congregational Church, as well as in-kind donations (Fry 1983: 120).
- 1893: Students at Thatcher invite all comers to first Ojai Tennis tournament, held at Thatcher School. Contest is later formalized in 1899 when multiple divisions are organized (Fry 1983: 249-251).

- 1895: Fire destroys shacks that comprised Thatcher School; Thatcher decides to build more permanent structures (Fry 1983: 68).
    - 1895: Forty-seven producing wells in Ventura County (Reith 1963: 131-2).
    - 1895 (c.): First telephone installed in Santa Paula connects Union Oil founder William Hardison's home to the Adams Canyon oil fields (Union Oil Museum, Santa Paula).
- 1898: Oxnard brothers build sugar refinery at Oxnard following success of local sugar beet production. Southern Pacific Railroad arrives in Oxnard that year, making Oxnard, not Hueneme, the center of agricultural transportation in Ventura County (Triem 1985: 94, 101).
    - 1900: Citrus eclipses oil as main industry in Santa Paula until big strike at South Mountain in 1916 initiates a new 10 year boom (Triem 1985: 109).
- 1900: Moorpark (named for the Moorpark apricot) is platted on subdivided ranch belonging to Simi Land and Water Company chief Robert Poindexter; Southern Pacific Milling Company, grain warehouses, and beet dumps are established by 1904, newspaper by 1910 (Triem 1985: 112).
    - 1900: Union Oil moves headquarters to Los Angeles (Union Oil Museum, Santa Paula).
- 1903: City of Oxnard is incorporated; population is 2,200. Jobs at the sugar refinery vary from 50 in off season to 700 at peak (Triem 1985: 98-100).
- 1903: Coalition of Mexican and Japanese farm laborers strike on Oxnard Plain, demanding higher wages. This unique multi-ethnic alliance won increased control over agricultural labor contracting (Almaguer 1994: Chapter 7).
- 1903: Founding of Ojai Citizens League and their vigilance group, the Committee of 15 – charged with law enforcement and promotion of good citizenship. In 1904 the committee organize the planting of pepper trees along Ojai Avenue, most of which still stand (Fry 1983: 128-9).
- 1903: Ventura's City Beautiful League is formed. Projects include tree planting and street paving (Triem 1985: 105).
    - 1903: Nine wells drilled in Ventura River bed to supply Ventura and Santa Paula with natural gas for domestic use. Project yields 10,000-15,000 cubic feet per day but is short-lived (Reith 1963: 132).
- 1903: Over 100 railroad cars leave Ojai filled with oranges; over 500 cars full by 1950 (Fry 1983: 211-212).

- 1903-9: Two hundred producing wells in Ventura County; total production of 30,000 barrels per day (Reith 1963: 132).

- 1904: Coast Railroad established through Simi Valley (Triem 1985: 90).
- 1910: Camarillo (originally Pleasant Valley) is platted with Southern Pacific depot at its center, as well as walnut and bean warehouses (Triem 1985: 113).
- 1910: Gaston Melies locates Star Film Stock Company in Santa Paula; most famous film made in 3-year endeavor is "The Ghost of Sulphur Mountain" (Triem 1985: 109).
- 1911: Patterson Ranch is subdivided in Simi Valley (five to 15 acre parcels). Well water allowed for citrus and walnut orchards; two more subdivisions soon follow (in 1918 and 1920). Simi Valley citizens travel to Moorpark or Oxnard, however for banking and shopping (Triem 1985: 111).

    - 1911: Montebello Oil Company's find south of Santa Clara river marks beginning of boom which changes face of Fillmore; many citrus orchards are subdivided to make home lots for oil industry workers. Central Avenue's wooden buildings are replaced with stone and brick buildings, including homes of Fillmore State Bank in 1906 and a Masonic Temple in 1919 (Triem 1985: 110).

- 1914.04: Glass magnate and part-time Ojai resident Edward Libbey announces improvement plans at town meeting of 87 men. Ideas are enthusiastically received, and Libbey hires San Diego architect Richard S. Requa, who designs Spanish-style arcade to re-vamp Ojai's downtown shopping district. Merchants pledge $10 per frontage foot to project, and Libbey assumes any additional financial responsibility. Construction project requires removal of several buildings, but oak trees are carefully left intact (Fry 1983: 169-170).
- 1914: Electricity from San Fernando Valley supplies Simi Valley and Moorpark (Triem 1985: 141).
- 1914: Fillmore is incorporated (named for Southern Pacific executive J. P. Fillmore) (Triem 1985: 81).
- 1915: Army Corps of Engineers recommends building a jetty to protect the Ventura harbor from sand deposited by the Ventura River. The report cites the advantages of the Ventura port (over Hueneme) for "shipping oil by gravity pipeline" from the Santa Clara River Valley fields to tankers. The recommendation is rejected due to what was then a low level of port traffic (Reith 1963: 124-5).

    - 1916: Shell Oil Co. acquires 13,000 acres of Lloyd lease and drills first well on Taylor Ranch (Triem 1985: 119).

- 1917.03: Ojai's name is officially changed to "Ojai" from Nordhoff (after Charles Nordhoff, whose writings about the beauty of Southern California enticed early settlers) (Fry 1983: 176).
- 1918: *Santa Paula Daily Chronicle* claims Santa Paula to have largest acreage in lemons; major lemon groves from 170-868 acres are enormous compared to average California farm size of 15 acres (Triem 1985: 109).
    - 1919.01: Ventura Refinery Company operating at full capacity in Fillmore (Triem 1985: 110).
    - 1919: Shell's Gosnell Number 1 comes in at 1200 barrels per day – first big Avenue producer (Triem 1985: 119).
    - 1920s: Oil is loaded to tankers at Ventura by submerged pipeline. This practice was so common that when the wharf was destroyed by a storm in 1926, it was already obsolete (Reith 1963: 125).
- 1920s: Rapid development of tract homes in western part of Ventura, near Avenue. Machine shops and other support facilities begin to replace Avenue farms and packing houses. The Avenue area is not incorporated, and city of Ventura has no ability to tax oil field or to control ensuing development. As gambling is permitted in unincorporated areas, poker rooms are common; low income groups come to dominate West Ventura as better homes and developments are kept away by "rough" oil industry occupants (Reith 1963: 139-40).
- 1920s: Subdivision of old Newbury Ranch into Greenwich Village and Thousand Oaks (name is suggested by a local schoolboy in a contest sponsored by Los Angeles Developers). Greenwich Village name eventually dropped. Development is slowed by depression, as well as unstable water supply (Triem 1985: 115).
- 1923: Ojai Valley Inn and Country Club, commissioned by Edward Libbey as a "gift" to the community, is completed. Architect Wallace Neff of Pasadena receives a certificate of honor from the California Architectural Board for his design. The club served wealthy families of the area through the depression, but was closed in 1932 and utilized by the military in 1942, reopening in 1947 to become a resort (Fry 1983: 90-91).
- 1924: Theosophist Albert P. Warrington moves his Krotona center from Hollywood (where the burgeoning motion picture industry was crowding him) to Ojai, a place he felt was "impregnated with occult and psychic influences" (quoted in Fry 1983: 245).

- 1925: Lloyd Number 9A, drilled to 5,150 feet, yields 4,870 barrels per day, the first big Avenue find. Most Avenue development at this time is by Shell Oil (45%) and Tidewater Associated (40%); a small number of developers means fairly orderly exploration and development (Reith 1963: 136-7).
- 1926: Associated Oil and Shell Oil each produce 15,000 barrels per day at Avenue sites; General Petroleum produces 6,000 barrels per day (Triem 1985: 119).
- 1929: Depression slows exploratory drilling; Ventura area property values fall as much as 60% compared to earlier boom days (Reith 1963: 144).

- 1929: Opening of Pacific Coast Highway provides coastal access between Oxnard and Los Angeles (Triem 1985: 122).
  - 1930: Fritz Huntsinger founds Ventura Tool Company (later VETCO) (Triem 1985: 119).
- 1937: Ojai is used as Shangri-La in Ronald Coleman's *LostHorizon* (Fry 1983: 249).
- 1940.06: Deep water port at Hueneme is completed; project is undertaken with private funds on land donated by Thomas Bard. A fish cannery and kelp processing plant also occupy the site (Triem 1985: 134).
- 1942: Port Hueneme and surrounding land are appropriated by US Navy for development of Naval Advanced Base Depot (later known as the Construction Battalion Center). Base was staging area for construction materials and training center for Seabees. 10,000 civilians and 21,000 military personnel were employed, and new subdivisions developed in Oxnard and Hueneme to accommodate influx (Triem 1985: 134-36).
- 1946: US Navy acquires Point Mugu for Naval Air Missile Test Center (now Pacific Missile Test Center) despite resistance from local ranchers who feared effects on their land and expressed concern about safety of nearby communities. First missile launched in 1947 (Triem 1985: 136).
  - 1947: First electric collapsible rig is developed on Ventura Avenue. New rig can be picked up and moved to a new location, reducing the cost of exploration (Paul 1947).
- 1947: Sears store at Highway 126 in Ventura is catalyst for development of new shopping district in East Ventura; city area nearly doubles between 1947 and 1962 (Reith 1963: 150).

- 1947: Standard oil makes major find on Oxnard Plain, but fire destroys rig. Rebuilt derrick is blown out by high pressure mud, and Standard stations guards around perimeter of operation fearing encroachment on what may be a major find. City of Ventura considers leasing its money-losing municipal golf course to Standard, as the land abuts the new find (*Ventura Free-Press*, April 7, 1947: 3 and April 16, 1947: 2).

- 1948: Matilija Dam is completed, designed to supply Ojai Valley. Dam is found unsafe in 1965 and notched to reduce capacity (Triem 1985: 140).

- 1949: Automobile traffic replaces most use of Ventura River and Ojai Valley Railroad; train remains in service only during orange harvest (last trip in 1955). 1969 flood necessitates removal of remaining tracks (Fry 1983: 126).

  - 1949: Seismic exploration off Ventura County coast is curbed due to negative impact on fishing (*Ventura Free-Press*, July 9, 1949: 1).

- 1950: Population of Conejo Valley at 3,000; 1970 population is 35,000; Simi Valley at 5,000 in 1950 and 59,832 in 1970 (Triem 1985: 139).

  - 1950s: Exploratory rig on Maricopa highway angers lower Ojai Valley residents, who object to noise and unsightliness. Well produced only salt water (Fry 1983: 204).

- 1950s: City of Camarillo advocates the building of new 101 freeway through downtown, hoping to attract new residents to the community; although CalTrans advocated building highway to the South, Conejo Grade route is chosen after a push by victory for the Camarillo Chamber of Commerce. Dissatisfied with the bifurcation of their city, Camarillo residents attempted (unsuccessfully) in the 1970s to have the freeway relocated to the South (Triem 1985: 137-38).

  - 1951: Texaco refinery at Fillmore closes after 36 years of operation; production is transferred to Torrance where Ventura County oil is already shipped by pipeline. Most of the thirty employees accept Texaco's offer of jobs in Los Angeles area refineries (*Ventura Free-Press*, March 10, 1951).

- 1952: Oxnard Air Force Base is established at Camarillo (Triem 1985: 136).

- 1954: Casitas Dam is built as joint project of Bureau of Reclamation and Ventura River Municipal Water District (Triem 1985: 140).

  - 1954: First sound-proof derrick installed in Ventura County (*Ventura Free-Press*, July 8, 1954: 1).

- 1954.03: McInnes well Number 2 on Oxnard plain blows out in middle of the night, spewing uncontrollably – approximately 2,500 barrels a day. Well is brought under control the following day (*Ventura Free-Press*, June 30-July 1, 1954: 1).
- 1954: Production from Avenue wells peaks, declining each following year (Reith 1963).
- *1955: State legislature passes the Shell-Cunningham Tidelands Act, which clarifies state tidelands development and leasing by (1) granting tidelands authority to State Lands Commission, (2) creating the development-free Santa Barbara Oil Sanctuary (adjacent to the Santa Barbara urban/suburban area, extending from Coal Oil Point to Summerland Bay), and (3) authorizing development elsewhere on the Channel with one new requirement: a 200-day waiting period between application for drilling rights and granting of rights (Lima 1994; Johnson and Nye 1979: 194).*

- 1955: After development of 101 freeway, Conejo Valley landholder Janss Valley Corporation begins master plan for community of Thousand Oaks. Janss lures Northrop, Packard Bell, Westinghouse, and the North American Aviation Science Center to the Conejo Valley/Thousand Oaks (Triem 1985: 115, 139).
- 1956: Ojai Architectural Board of Review is established; of five members, one must be a trained architect, and one must be a licensed contractor. Charges include reviewing size, style and color of new construction in accordance with city's "unique character" (Fry 1983: 236-7).
    - 1958: Landslide on Ventura Avenue causes upwards of $1 million in damage (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, April 7, 1958).
    - 1957: *Amendments to Shell-Cunningham Tidelands Act create sliding royalties scale which is decried as exorbitant by many oil industry firms. State tidelands leasing is suspended for one year until amendments are approved (Welty and Taylor, 229; Lima 1994).*
- 1959: Southern California Edison completes Mandalay Steam plant at Oxnard (Triem 1985: 141).
- 1960s: Los Angeles Metropolitan Water District agrees to provide water to Simi, Conejo and Las Posas Valleys (Triem 1985: 139).
- 1964: City of Camarillo incorporates (Project Development Co.: 5).
- 1964: City of Thousand Oaks incorporates, later annexing Newbury Park and the Ventura County portion of Westlake Village (Project Development Co.: 7).

- 1964: Rocky Mountain Drilling and Drilling and Exploration fold; both are major Ventura County employers. Drilling and Exploration to continue operation in the Middle East (*Ventura Free-Press*, September 14, 1964).

- 1966: Completion of Simi Valley-San Fernando Freeway over Santa Susana Pass; Highway 118 (Los Angeles to Simi) would not be completed until the 1980s (Triem 1985: 139).

    - 1966.12: Federal leasing in Channel begins with the sale to Phillips Petroleum of Drainage Tract OCS P-0166 in the Carpinteria Field. Phillips' Platform Hogan, the first offshore platform in federal OCS waters in the Santa Barbara Channel, is installed the next year, piping its oil to La Conchita for processing (Lima 1994: 244; Johnson and Nye 1979: 197).

    - 1968.08: Army Corps of Engineers approves Unocal permit to construct Platform A over Santa Barbara protests concerning the lack of a public hearing. The platform is installed later that year, along with Platforms B and Houchin. Although located near Summerland, Platforms A and B pipe their oil to Unocal's Rincon facility, in Ventura County, for processing (Johnson and Nye 1979: 198; Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix B).

    - 1969: Ventura county beaches are covered with oil after Union blowout in Santa Barbara Channel; Ventura County Environmental Coalition is founded in 1970 in response (Triem 1985: 141).

    - 1969.06: In a 3-2 vote, Ventura County supervisors reject a proposed Sun Oil processing facility at La Conchita. The facility would have been the third in a small section of northern Ventura County coast (*Santa Barbara News-Press*, June 25, 1969: A4).

    - 1970: *A wave of environmental legislation is enacted in the wake of the Santa Barbara Channel oil spill. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and (by November) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) become law, requiring Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Impact Reports, respectively, prior to approval of development projects. In July, President Nixon establishes the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Federal Water Quality Act and Clean Air Act are also enacted in the same year (Johnson and Nye 1979: 219; Easton 1972: 236).*

- 1971: Ventura Avenue oil companies begin efforts at beautifying their operations; Shell plants 800 trees between highway 33 (the road from Ventura to Ojai) and its processing plant. Field equipment is painted "autumn gold and cypress green"; abandoned wells are sealed off, and sumps are scraped, re-filled, and planted. (Paul 1971).
- 1971.01: California's State Lands Commission lifts ban on new development in state tidelands (Johnson and Nye 1979: 216).

- 1972: Southern California Edison completes Ormond Beach plant between Point Mugu and Oxnard (Triem 1985: 141).
- 1972: Ventura County voters narrowly approve California Coastal Act, creating the California Coastal Commission. Support is strongest in Ojai and the newer suburbs, including Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley (Ventura County Elections Division). The California Coastal Commission now enters the state tidelands offshore development issue and ends State lands Commission-oil industry domination. The Federal Coastal Zone Management Act and Clean Water Act are also enacted in the same year (Johnson and Nye 1979: 217-18).
  - 1973: *First Energy Crisis begins. Oil shortage due to OPEC embargo leads to a drive for greater American energy self-reliance and independence through new energy sources and conservation (Lima 1994).*
  - 1977.12.21: Chevron applies for permit to build subsea pipelines from proposed Platform Grace (in federal waters, 12 miles west of Oxnard) to operating Platform Hope (in state waters) and expand its Carpinteria operations (Graves and Simon 1980: 319).
- 1978: Ventura County Government Center is dedicated in East Ventura (Triem 1985: 140).
  - 1978.08: *Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act amendments are passed by US Congress, requiring OCS developers to meet county air emission standards (Graves and Simon 1980: 72).*
  - 1979: Federal Lease Sale 48 offers 148 OCS tracts from Point Conception to Mexico border. Results in 9 active leases covering 23,040 acres and two offshore platforms (Harvest and Hermosa) erected in the next 6 years (Sollen, forthcoming, Appendix B).

- 1979.03: At Chevron Santa Clara Unit hearing, Chumash and Candeleria Indian representatives express concerns about Carpinteria-to-Rincon pipeline's impacts on 4 archaeological sites. Chevron agrees to restore sites after excavation (Graves and Simon 1980: 330).
- 1979.07: Get Oil Out! (GOO) lawsuit to prohibit construction of Platform Grace, which had threatened Chevron's Santa Clara Unit plans, is defeated in federal court (Graves and Simon 1980: 333).
- 1979.09: Santa Barbara County Planning Commission approves Chevron's expanded Santa Clara Unit project, due west of Oxnard, bringing 2 year EIR/permitting process to end (Graves and Simon 1980: 334).
- 1979: Platforms Grace (Chevron) and Henry (Sun Oil) are installed in Santa Clara Unit and Carpinteria Field, respectively, of the Santa Barbara Channel (Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix B).
- 1980: Unocal's Platforms Gilda and Gina are installed off Ventura County in the Hueneme and Santa Clara fields, respectively. These are the first ever fully electrified platforms installed in the Channel, a change requested by the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix B).
- 1980.03: US Supreme Court decision allows Gulf Oil to drill in Los Padres National Forest without securing permits through Ventura County; decision sets precedent for drilling in national forests throughout the country (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, March 31, 1980).
- 1981: Federal Lease Sale 68 offers 140 OCS tracts from Point Conception to the Mexico border. Results in 4 active leases covering 15,860 acres (oil companies bid $117.9 million for 35 OCS lease tracts). Public hearings held in Santa Barbara attract few Ventura County participants; most of those in attendance represent oil or oil support companies (Bureau of Land Management; Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix A).
- 1983: Cities of Santa Paula, Fillmore, Port Hueneme and Ventura formally oppose Senator Pete Wilson's proposed moratorium on OCS leasing off California's coast (S. 1103), and OCS moratoria *in general*. Resolutions stress the importance of oil industry employment in the local economy, and adequacy of existing environmental regulations (Monahan; City of Santa Paula).

- 1984: Federal Lease Sale 80 offers 657 OCS tracts from Point Conception to the Mexico border. Results in 1 active lease covering 456 acres (Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix A).
- 1984: USA Petroleum Corporation (Petrochem) permanently closes its Ventura Avenue refinery following an environmentalist lawsuit challenging the plant's proposed expansion. The plant closure means layoffs for eighty workers (Petrochem reported and annual payroll of $2.5 million) and loss of the operation's $350,000 annual contribution to county tax rolls (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 17, 1984).
- 1986: California Coastal Commission denies Chevron's proposed Platform Gail in September but finally approves the project in December. Against the urgings of Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy, the city of Ventura supports the project, anticipating employment opportunities for locals (Monahan 1986).
- 1986: Falling world oil prices mean downsizing or closure of Ventura County support companies, including VETCO, who laid off 325 employees (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, November 18, 1986).
- 1987: Chevron's Platform Gail is installed in the Sockeye field off Ventura County (Sollen, forthcoming: Appendix A).
- 1987: Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties sue California Coastal Commission over approval of Platform Julius off northern Santa Barbara County. Counties charge that Coastal Commission met without public knowledge, negating due process provisions (Dalton 1987). Suit does little to slow permitting process, but platform is never installed.
- 1990: Texaco closes Ventura production office, consolidating operations in Denver; 145 employees transfer, 170 remain in local field office (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, August 17, 1990).
- 1992.05: *Department of Interior announces that Channel OCS Lease Sales are to be shelved for 5 years (Parker 1992).*
- 1992.07: Chevron pleads guilty to having dumped oil and other toxic materials near Platform Grace, off the Ventura County coast, from 1982 through 1987. The $6.5 million paid by Chevron in criminal penalties make this the third largest fine to date for federal environmental violations (Soble 1992: B1, B6).

- 1993: Chevron consolidates operations in Bakersfield, laying off or transferring 200 Ventura employees; Exxon closes its Thousand Oaks corporate headquarters the same year (Simon 1993: B1, B5).
- 1993: Mobil announces its plans to abandon oil piers near the Santa Barbara-Ventura County line.
- 1993.04: An estimated 420 to 840 gallons of oil leak from Conoco transfer lines into the sea near Solimar, a beach colony in northern Ventura County (Meyers 1993: B1, B5).
- 1993.12: 84,000 gallons of crude leaks from a Bush Petroleum pipeline, fouling McGrath Lake and McGrath State Beach, north of Oxnard – an environmentally sensitive area. Close to 200 clean-up workers, including state Fish and Game employees, clean-up professionals hired by the pipeline operator, and volunteers work to save birds and other wildlife. (Mosk 1993).
- 1993.01: 370,000 gallons of condensate or liquefied petroleum spill from a Texaco pipeline in School Canyon, near the Ventura River (Ventura Avenue) (Johnson 1994).
- 1994.03: Twenty-eight California Department of Fish and Game officials search Texaco's Ventura Avenue office looking for evidence that would link Texaco to the January, 1993 spill (Saillant and Fields 1994).
- 1996.03: Texaco announces sale of its oil and gas Ventura Avenue properties to CalResources, Inc.

# Appendix B:

## Federal OCS Lease Sales 53 and 68 hearings -- a case study

This section describes our in-depth case study of two federal OCS lease sale hearings – for Lease Sale 53 (in San Luis Obispo on June 27, 1980) and Lease Sale 68 (in Santa Barbara on July 28-29, 1981) – including the public comments received there and newspaper coverage, to measure the content and pervasiveness of attitudes in the county concerning offshore drilling and the oil industry. Quantitative and content analyses of the draft EISs, the hearing transcripts, and additional written statements concerning the draft EISs and lease sales in general provide a useful way to measure and compare the sentiments of various groups in the county, at one point in time, towards offshore oil drilling (Gundry and Heberlein 1984). Additionally, this case study examines newspaper coverage of the hearing to indicate how the printed media depicts and influences the county's sentiments. The case study looks at: the draft EIS documents, who commented in the county (e.g. government units, spokespersons from environmentalist groups, oil industry organizations, or other associations, the general public), whether their statements were generally supportive or opposed/critical of the draft EIS and the proposed lease sale (and the home community of each type of commentor), which themes or substantive concerns they addressed, and how two county newspapers covered the hearings and the lease sale in general. The findings reported here are culled from our larger comparative case study of equivalent "local" OCS Lease Sale hearings in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties; where relevant, comparisons will be made to those two counties. [83]

We looked for and coded six categories or themes in this case study – environment, air quality, way of life, national energy needs, physical infrastructure, and economic base[84] – as they were addressed in hearing transcripts and written

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[83] San Luis Obispo's equivalent "local" hearing was the 1980 draft EIS hearing for federal OCS Lease Sale 53, held in San Luis Obispo on June 27, 1980. Santa Barbara County's equivalent "local" hearing was the same 1981 draft EIS hearings for federal OCS Lease Sale 68 discussed in this Appendix; this hearing, located in Santa Barbara, provided the closest forum for Ventura County residents and officials to comment on offshore leasing. The Lease Sale 53 and 68 hearings were chosen for comparative analysis because of their similar stage in the administrative process (public review of first draft EIS for the initial federal proposal of OCS tract leasing) and their roughly concurrent time period (1980-81, which was the first federal offering of new OCS tracts since the 1969 Santa Barbara Channel spill). For a more detailed discussion on the hearings, public comments, and media coverage of the lease sales in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, see our respective reports on those counties.

[84] *Environment* includes almost every concern for offshore oil drilling's impact on the physical environment: endangered species, other plant and animal species, water quality, and sensitive environments. Statements predicting probabilities of impact upon the environment (e.g. oil spill models, drilling cut analyses) were coded under this category, as were statements about indirect environmental threats (e.g. seismic fault mapping, concerns for the use of oil tankers, fear that oil

statements (quantitatively measured as lines of text). Freudenburg and Gramling (1994) used these categories in a comparable quantitative study of public responses to offshore oil drilling. A seventh category, *Legitimacy/procedure*, represents this case study's addition to this line of research. Critical comments on the inadequacy and undemocratic nature of the environmental impact analysis process and what opponents perceived as the larger intentions of the Bureau of Land Managment (BLM), the oil industry, the Department of Interior, and even the U.S. government emerged as a robust theme in our tri-counties research. This theme's significance here suggested that such claims should not be subsumed into the more concrete categories, as they had in prior research.

*The Lease Sale draft EIS*: In addition to providing scientific estimates of potential impacts on the local environment, air quality, economic base, infrastructure, and way of life, the draft EIS serves another important yet less visible function. Specifically, it lays the ground for future comment by various groups (government units, the oil industry, environmental organizations, the public, etc.) not only through the scientific evidence it presents but in what it neglects or fails to say. In the latter regard, two themes are largely absent from both lease sale draft EISs; we discuss them here to frame our subsequent analysis of the hearing, comments, and newspaper coverage. First, national energy needs, as a brief section at the beginning of the document indicates, provided the rationale for the entire lease sale. While this theme's treatment in the draft EISs was so terse that it literally approached zero percent of both documents, national energy needs proved to be an immensely provocative subject for both supporters and opponents of the lease sales, many of whom devote a significant proportion of their comments to this very issue. Second, a substantive discussion of legitimacy/procedural themes is absent in both draft EISs. This is perhaps predictable; as a technical document, the draft EISs tended to either reduce this theme to strictly technical issues or refer the commentor to its lengthy citations of laws and provisions which address the responsibilities of the

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might contaminate the cooling systems of the Diablo Canyon nuclear reactor). Finally, sentiments considered "biocentric" or generally environmentalist were coded under this category. *Air quality* includes statements concerning air quality, its measurement, and the impact offshore oil drilling could have upon air quality. *Way of life* includes concerns for offshore oil drilling's impact upon social and sentimental facets of the "quality of life" in the affected communities: the "character" of a community, aesthetics (i.e. visual impairment of the coastline by offshore platforms), recreational uses of the coast and other impacted areas, residents' health and well-being, etc. The unity of categories that are typically implied when people state "I moved here to breathe clean air..." or "the beauty of this region is appreciated by both tourists and local residents..." – that is, when people recognize the connectedness of specific concerns for impacts upon their residence and measure them in personal terms – is coded here as way of life. *National energy needs* includes statements about the political and policy-oriented goals for offshore oil development which presumably are the reasons the Lease Sales are being proposed: to reduce the need for imported oil, to protect national security, to fuel the growth of the national economy, etc. *Infrastructure* includes statements about impacts upon public services and facilities as provided by local governments, housing, schools, land use, planning, ports, highways, and local roads. *Economic base* includes concerns about local economies, employment, and revenues resulting from offshore oil drilling. Comments about the potential impacts and benefits of drilling upon commercial fishing and tourism, two major industries for much of the tri-county area, are coded here.

BLM and the rights of the public in the EIS process. However, as witnessed in the subsequent comments and newspaper coverage, legitimacy/procedural questions proved to be a very salient theme which framed not only public response to the draft EISs and the lease sales but, increasingly, public attitudes towards the oil industry and offshore oil drilling in general.

*Who commented*: In letters and oral statements, 2 Ventura County parties used the Lease Sale 53 draft EIS comment period, and 13 Ventura County parties used the Lease Sale 68 draft EIS comment period, as an occasion to express their sentiments on the document, the lease sales, and the general prospect of offshore oil drilling in the county, for a total of 15 county commentors. Of these 15 Ventura County participants, six represented local oil interests, three represented other organizations,[85] two represented local government entities, three spoke or wrote on their own behalf as unaffiliated county residents (i.e. the public), and one made a factual correction to the draft EIS document as a representative of his consulting firm. Here it should be noted that, among the equivalent "local" lease sale hearings in the tri-counties, Ventura County brought forth the *fewest* commentors of any county in the comparative tri-county case study.[86]

*Supportive/opposed*: Of these 15 commentors, 10 (or 66 percent) expressed support of the lease sale and/or criticisms of the draft EIS, two (or 14 percent) expressed opposition to the lease sale and/or the draft EIS, and three (or 20 percent) gave a "neutral" statement. Ventura County commentors were the most supportive of the offshore leasing proposal and its draft EIS. Among equivalent lease sale hearings the tri-counties, Santa Barbara County was the most evenly split in its attitudes toward the lease sale: of 57 Santa Barbara commentors, 29 (or 51 percent) expressed opposition to the lease sale and/or criticisms of the draft EIS, 28 (or 49 percent) expressed support of the lease sale and/or the draft EIS, and no one gave a "neutral" statement. By comparison, of 128 commentors in San Luis Obispo County, 92 percent were opposed/critical, six percent were supportive, and two percent were neutral.

*Themes of comments*: Our analysis here focuses most prominently on the Lease Sale 68 hearing, where the volume of Ventura County comments was greatest. Both of the Ventura County speakers opposing the sale represented themselves, and claimed no organizational affiliation. These members of the public emphasized legitimacy/procedural concerns (38 percent), the environment (39 percent) and perceived threats to their way of life (22 percent). No other Ventura

[85] The Ventura County organizations represented were: Ventura County Economic Development Association, Ventura County Taxpayers Association, and Ventura County Chamber of Commerce.

[86] In equivalent hearings, San Luis Obispo County was represented by 128 commentors, in which 15 represented local or county government agencies, 1 represented an oil industry organization, 11 represented other organizations, and 101 represented themselves (i.e. the public). Santa Barbara County was represented by 57 commentors, in which 11 represented local or county government agencies, seven represented oil industry organizations, 24 represented other organizations, and 15 represented themselves (i.e. the public).

County commentors touched legitimacy/procedural themes, as these themes were used most often to contest the validity or necessity of the sale. Speakers in favor of the sale used other themes to explain its validity and necessity, especially national energy needs.[87] One unaffiliated citizen wrote a letter in support of the sale, using oil's environmental benevolence relative to nuclear power to argue for increased offshore development.

Only two commentors from Ventura County represented government entities: the City of Oxnard and the County of Ventura. These government entities emphasized air quality concerns (55 percent), as well as impacts on the local infrastructure (36 percent) and the economy (six percent). The County of Ventura acknowledged the importance of offshore drilling to the local economy, but asked for the deletion of tracts in the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary and questioned the air quality models used in the draft EIS. The city of Oxnard expressed concerns about the effects of offshore drilling on its tourism industry, but couched these comments in what we coded as neutral language.

Organized groups commenting on the lease sale unanimously supported the proposal/draft EIS. Unlike Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, where organizations represented a range of interests – from industry associations to "good government" groups (e.g. the League of Women Voters) to groups solely dedicated to environmental concerns (e.g. local chapters of the Sierra Club) – Ventura County organizations tended to represent the oil industry (including representatives of individual firms), as well as economic development interests (e.g. the Ventura County Economic Development Association, the Ventura Chamber of Commerce, and the Ventura County Taxpayers' Association). Still, petroleum industry groups emphasized the environment more than any other type of commentor (65 percent). The thrust of these "environmental" comments was the lack of risk posed to the environment by offshore drilling, including statements on how drilling technologies had improved since the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill. These speakers also emphasized the importance of offshore reserves for bolstering domestic energy supplies (national energy needs comments ranked second, at 30 percent). Not surprisingly, the economic development groups emphasized positive effects for the local economy (65 percent), using national energy needs to argue for the sale's necessity (23 percent).

*Newspaper coverage*: The case study looked at the amount and content of coverage by the *Ventura Star-Free Press* and the *Oxnard Press-Courier* as as it appeared in news articles, editorials, and letters to the editor published in a ten day period around the hearings (from two days before to seven days after). An important note: while many papers covered both hearings, much of our descriptions of newspaper behavior is based upon the hearing closest to the newspaper's home, where

[87] Unaffiliated citizens from other counties, most notably San Luis Obispo, used the national energy needs theme to argue against offshore leasing by claiming that research into renewable sources would prove a wiser energy strategy.

coverage is likely to be heaviest (i.e. Lease Sale 68 for the *Star-Free-Press* and *Press-Courier*). Our first finding was that the depth of coverage provided by the *Star-Free Press* and *Press-Courier* varied greatly. The *Star-Free Press* (Ventura County's major daily newspaper) devoted 423 column lines of coverage to Lease Sale 68, while the *Oxnard Press-Courier* (also a daily paper) provided only 139. By comparison, the *Santa Barbara News-Press* devoted 334 column lines to the Lease Sale 68 hearings, and the Santa Maria Times failed to cover the hearing at all. In 1980, the *Five Cities Times-Press-Recorder* devoted 546 column lines of text, and the *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune* devoted 443 column lines to "their" lease sale hearing.

In regards to the content of coverage (in news articles as well as editorials and letters), the *Ventura Star-Free Press* devoted approximately 43 percent of its Lease Sale 68 coverage to the comments of offshore drilling opponents, 38 percent to supportive comments, and about 19 percent to neutral remarks. Compared with the fact that 65 percent of the Lease Sale 68 speakers (including oil industry and other non-county speakers) spoke in *support* of the lease sale, the *Ventura Star Free-Press* came the closest of any tri-county paper to representing the actual balance of the hearing. In contrast, only 19 percent of the *Oxnard Press-Courier*'s coverage reflected pro-oil views, with 81 percent of coverage reflecting anti-oil comments. Both papers amplified the importance of legitimacy/procedure concerns, dedicating 42 percent (Oxnard) and 40 percent (Ventura) of their coverage to comments on this theme. This phenomenon, also seen in other tri-county papers' coverage of the Lease Sale 68 hearing, is largely explained by the prominence given to comments by State Assemblyman Gary Hart. Hart claimed that the BLM had neglected citizen comments in the draft EIS, and that the public participation element of the leasing process had become a "sham." The attention given to Hart's comments reflects not only the vehemence of his remarks, but conforms to a documented pattern of news reporting, the "habitual access" of government representatives and other privileged newsmakers to newspapers.

*Conclusion*: Table 27 shows the proportions of comments devoted to environment (Env), air quality (AQ), way of life (WOL), legitimacy/procedure (L/P), national energy needs (NEN), infrastructure (Inf), and economic base (EcB) themes in the Lease Sales 53 and 68 draft EISs; the oral statements of all speakers at the "local" draft EIS hearings in Santa Barbara; the oral and written statements of all Ventura County commentors about the lease sales and their respective draft EISs; and the coverage of the *Ventura Star-Free Press* and *Oxnard Press-Courier* regarding both hearings.

**Table 27: Proportions of comments and themes regarding Lease Sales 53 and 68 in Ventura County (lines of text from documents and transcripts)**

| | Env | AQ | WOL | L/P | NEN | Inf | EcB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lease Sale 68 and Lease Sale 53 draft EISs | 60% [13110] | 5% [1157] | 9% [1997] | 0% [0] | 0% [31] | 9% [1874] | 17% [3614] |
| Lease Sale 68 hearing | 55% [2576] | 3% [120] | 4% [205] | 11% [494] | 16% [766] | 3% [135] | 8% [381] |
| County commentors | 39% [382] | 15% [147] | 5% [53] | 8% [85] | 15% [153] | 9% [95] | 9% [93] |
| *Ventura Star-Free Press* | 34% [76] | 0% [1] | 0% [0] | 40% [91] | 16% [36] | 0% [0] | 10% [22] |
| *Oxnard Press-Courier* | 23% [22] | 7% [7] | 15% [14] | 31% [30] | 0% [0] | 7% [7] | 17% [16] |

Source: BLM, Final EIS,[88] *Proposed 1981 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Lease Sale, Offshore Central and Northern California: OCS Sale No. 53*; BLM, Final EIS, *Proposed 1982 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Lease Sale, Offshore Central and Northern California: OCS Sale No. 68*; BLM, *Public Hearing on Draft Environmental Statement for Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Lease Sale No. 53, Central and Northern California: San Luis Obispo, California, June 27, 1980*; BLM, *Public Hearing on Draft Environmental Statement for Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Lease Sale No. 68: Santa Barbara, California, July 28-29, 1981*; letters from Santa Barbara County regarding Lease Sale 68, held at M.M.S. library, Camarillo, California; *Ventura Star-Free Press*, 6/25-7/5/80 and 7/26-8/4/81; *Oxnard Press-Courier*, 6/25-7/5/80 and 7/26-8/4/81.

Ventura County concerns emphasized the environment, air quality, and national energy needs. While the salience of environmental concerns for Ventura County commentors did not closely reflect the amount of attention this theme received in the draft EIS documents, this figure approximates the importance of environment to commentors in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties (35 and 45 percent, respectively). A key difference in Ventura County, however, is the ends to which environmental themes were argued: here scientific data about the effects of offshore drilling on the natural environment were used to argue *for* oil development, not against it. In the other two counties, comments coded as

[88] A methodological qualification: Strictly speaking, the final EIS for Lease Sale 68 was the product of public responses to two previous versions of the EIS, and so the documents coded in this case study were published at the *end* of the EIS/public comments/media coverage sequence investigated in the comparative tri-county study. While there is room for some speculation that the final EIS might have produced fewer questions of legitimacy and procedure from the public than its draft versions in fact produced, there are two reasons why we feel coding the final EISs was justified. First, we did not code the public comments sections of the final versions, and so what remained was structurally the same document as the draft versions. Second, the final versions of the Lease Sales 68 reached the same conclusions of negligible environmental impact and showed the same naiveté about the social impact of the EIS process itself which resulted in the public outcry in the first place. That is, despite their modifications in substance, the final EIS was essentially the same document used to reach the same conclusions as the draft EIS was.

environmentally related were raised by oil opponents almost twice as often as they were raised by oil supporters. One explanation for this is the higher degree of environmental sophistication in both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. Activists in these counties – especially Santa Barbara – have developed a facility with the language of environmental review that allows them to critique claims made in the lease sale draft EIS documents. In Ventura County, anti-oil commentors relied on relatively unsophisticated claims about oil's environmental impacts (unlike project supporters, who spoke of pollutants in terms of "parts per million"), as well as noting perceived threats to their way of life and questioning the legitimacy of the leasing process.[89]

In addition to showing the uses made of environmental discourses in Ventura, this case study shed some light on the pattern of organizing in this traditionally pro-oil county. While Santa Barbara has its share of oil industry associations and oil support firms, the presence of such organizations is countered by a sophisticated network of environmental activists, and a well-informed and environmentally sympathetic citizenry. This is clearly not the case in Ventura County, as oil support firms, professional organizations, and pro-oil economic development groups dominated the county's presence at the "local" Lease Sale 68 draft EIS hearing. This was the case despite a plea by *Ventura Star-Free Press* editors that citizens attend the hearing regardless of their orientation on the oil leasing issue (*Ventura Star-Free Press*, July 26, 1981: B14). While the one-sided organizational turnout at the hearing may simply reflect Ventura County's lack of organizational density (see "Voluntary Organizations," above), the lack of participation by the general public may reflect not only general support for the oil industry, but the county's limited experience with environmental activism in general (at least in the early 1980s).

[89] County air quality professionals – who did make sophisticated comments on the draft EIS – tended to do so in value-neutral technical terms.

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## List of those consulted or interviewed
(Partial list)

Persons are listed according to the county with which they are most knowlegable (usually the county where they live or work). Many informants, however, provided useful information on other communities or counties with which they were familiar.

**Ventura County:**
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Robert Klausner, businessman, civic volunteer.
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Stephan B. Logan, Building Contractor, Board of Directors, South Coast Congregate Care.
Sheila Lodge, Former Mayor, Santa Barbara
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Brenda Hearing, Carnegie Foundation Library (Columbia University)
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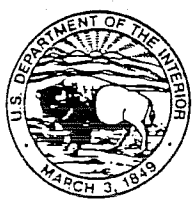


## The Department of the Interior Mission

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.


## The Minerals Management Service Mission

As a bureau of the Department of the Interior, the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) primary responsibilities are to manage the mineral resources located on the Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), collect revenue from the Federal OCS and onshore Federal and Indian lands, and distribute those revenues.

Moreover, in working to meet its responsibilities, the **Offshore Minerals Management Program** administers the OCS competitive leasing program and oversees the safe and environmentally sound exploration and production of our Nation's offshore natural gas, oil and other mineral resources. The MMS **Royalty Management Program** meets its responsibilities by ensuring the efficient, timely and accurate collection and disbursement of revenue from mineral leasing and production due to Indian tribes and allottees, States and the U.S. Treasury.

The MMS strives to fulfill its responsibilities through the general guiding principles of: (1) being responsive to the public's concerns and interests by maintaining a dialogue with all potentially affected parties and (2) carrying out its programs with an emphasis on working to enhance the quality of life for all Americans by lending MMS assistance and expertise to economic development and environmental protection.