



An Employee-Owned Company

October 31, 2019

Mr. Samuel Waisbord, PE
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4740 Ruffner Street
San Diego, CA 92111

Reference: El Camino Real Mission Bell Markers/Guide Posts along the Coastal Rail Trail - Gilman Drive Segment (RECON Number 9476)

Dear Mr. Waisbord:

This letter summarizes the history of the El Camino Real Mission Bells and evaluates their significance. This is in response to the City of San Diego's comment requesting that the Historic Property Survey Report identify the historic El Camino Real Mission Bells and discuss their importance and any project impacts on the bells.

Construction of the El Camino Real

As the nineteenth century came to a close, American industrial expansion generated opportunities for certain economic classes to enjoy a leisure lifestyle. Earlier in the century American presidents declared certain federal lands to be national assets, setting them aside as national reservations (Hot Springs, Arkansas), or national parks (Yellowstone 1872, which was modeled on California's Yosemite State Park). By the last decade of the century, four more national parks had been established (Sequoia, General Grant, and Yosemite in 1890, and Mount Rainier in 1899). Improved access to these lands by way of rail lines, and cross-country tickets, and outfitters supplying pack trains with all necessary supplies meant that these destinations were comfortably approached by the middle and upper classes. Travelers returned with stories of fantastic vistas, and the photographs to illustrate them, filtered through society, creating additional desire by other people to visit. At the same time numerous cities and counties subscribed to illustrative books written by professionals to boost the advantages of their jurisdiction to the outside world. These booster books often described the advantageous assets of the country – the unparalleled richness of the earth, the abundance of available water, the unmatched size and quality of the resulting fruits, vegetables, and animals – as well as exclaiming the virtues of the societal elites who reside and shape the character of the region. Numerous civic societies were also popular at this time. These groups often met to promote business opportunities within the community. It is in this setting, of boosterism, leisure tourism, and economic promotion, that the California Federation of Woman's Clubs and the Native Daughters of the Golden West were situated.

Following the declaration by the Mexican government to secularize the missions in 1833, those properties often began to fall into disrepair. Indeed, some, if not many, were actively deconstructed to be used as materials for other off-site constructions (e.g., portions of the Presidio San Diego de Alcalá for residences in Old Town, or Mission San Luis Rey being used in part to build Rancho Guajome) (National Park Service [NPS] 2019, Hector 1999). After several more decades of neglect following the onset of the American period in California, the missions, and the roads used to access them, were becoming lost to time. The arrival of the automobile, and the need for permanently paved road surfaces, meant that possible alignments of El Camino Real were subject to developmental loss. Sensing this "the notion of preserving El Camino Real was first proposed by Miss Anna Pitcher, Director of the Pasadena Art Exhibition Association, to the Women's Club of Los Angeles in 1892" (California Highways 2019). At the time, the concept of El Camino Real, that is, a road purposely constructed to connect all 21 missions in Alta California, was built more on the nostalgia and

romance of the Spanish and Mexican periods as outlined in the 1884 novel *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson than on an actual, unifying road. In actuality, and due entirely upon necessity of place and time – and particularly weather – the missions, pueblos, and presidios were accessed by a network of trails and tracks that crisscrossed the land as best as could be navigated. But as Kropp (2006) notes “[as] the desire for Spanish afternoons grew, a group of Southern California Anglos hit upon an idea for showcasing the missions' romantic possibilities. [The] local boosters imagined a single road linking the twenty one missions, where travelers might undertake a complete mission tour.”

Unsuccessful in her first proposal, Miss Pitcher tried again in 1902 when she spoke to the California Federation of Woman's Clubs (CFWC), and then to the Native Daughters of the Golden West. Both organizations endorsed the idea, and in 1904 the El Camino Real Association was founded. The first task was to identify the actual, historical route, which often eluded identification due to its shifting nature. (The route eventually came to embrace portions of routes 5, 12, 37, 72, 82, 87, 92, 101, 121, 123, 162, and 185.) Only then could the group mark the historical route, promote tourism, and lobby for government support. Mrs. A. S. C. Forbes (Harrie Rebecca Piper Forbes, nee Smith), of the CFWC, at the suggestion of C. F. Gates, designed the marker that was to symbolize the newly designated route. The bell for the proposed Mission Bell Guidepost was fashioned after those at Los Angeles' Plaza Church, and hung from a pole resembling a shepherd's staff. The original series of bells for the guideposts were designed and forged by Mrs. Forbes.

Mrs. Forbes was one of those people who, by their actions and organizing power, were able to effect changes that they sought. For example, at a Memorial Day celebration in 1900 it occurred to Mrs. Forbes that naval personnel were insufficiently recognized during the event. She campaigned to California schools located along the coast and large river frontages to cast flowers upon the waves and water on the next Memorial Day. By the next year's celebrations, the full Navy had undertaken to do the same. “For fourteen years the present Secretary of the Navy, Hon. Curtis D. Wilber, presided at the naval services where he and Mr. and Mrs. Forbes would arrange to hold this lovely ceremony. Frequently, the Navy Department sent U.S. warships to the Pacific Coast to take part in the services. Now the Naval Memorial is an established ceremony and all vessels of the Navy hold services and cast flowers, especially floral anchors, overboard in memory of their companions and friends” (Naval Historical Center 2019). Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Forbes undertook designing and casting, at her husband's foundry, the bells for the marker used to signify the alignment of the Camino Real as it came to be defined. As seemingly determined and ebullient as Mrs. Forbes appeared to be, the author of an *Evening Star* newspaper article declared that “Forbes is by no means the typical new woman. On the contrary, she is intensely feminine; believes that the home is woman's sphere, never allows out-side matters to interfere with domesticity, and has no interests which her husband does not share” (*Evening Star* 1902).

A total of approximately 158 guideposts were installed along the Camino Real by 1915 (some speculation by the American Automobile Association, however, suggests that some 400 markers were installed) (California Highways 2019). Mrs. Forbes described the original guideposts markers in her touring book *California Missions and Landmarks: El Camino Real*, first published in 1903:

The bells along the highway have two dates and the name El Camino Real cast upon them. The first date, 1769, is the date of the founding of the first mission, and the second, 1906, is the date when the first bell was erected, and therefore marks the time when the reconstruction of the old road began. Each bell weighs over one hundred pounds and is raised eleven feet from the ground, on a substantial standard of iron tubing set in a concrete base. A small brass plate with the donor's name upon it is attached to the standard. There is also a sign which directs the traveler to the missions, where

‘Those bells of the past, whose long-forgotten music still fills the wide expanse,
Tingeing the sober twilight of the Present with color of Romance.’

The first guidepost marker was placed at the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles, also known as the Old Plaza Church (Photograph 1). Additional markers were to be located at each mission, with signage indicating mileage to and from the next mission, with additional bell markers to be placed every mile in between.

The Camino Real Association made no provision for maintenance of the bells, and by 1926 the bells had fallen into disrepair; some were missing and presumed stolen. Between 1926 and 1931, because the bells often served as highway signage, the Automobile Club of Southern California and the California State Automobile Association decided to provide maintenance, and replacement where necessary, of the bells located on state-owned property. By 1949, there were approximately 286 bells along the road (Los Angeles Almanac 2019).

According to John Kolstad, present owner of Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes' original California Bell Company, the bells have been made of cast iron since 1906; they have never been made of brass or aluminum until 2007; though a few bells were made of cement for Caltrans in the 1960s. In 2004 Caltrans installed 557 new production Mission Bell Guidepost Markers from South San Francisco to Los Angeles along El Camino Real and Highway 101. The new production bells are approximately 18 inches by 18 inches, with El Camino Real road markers set at 13 feet 6 inches tall, and freeway markers set at 15 feet 6 inches tall. Additionally, there have been three different staff designs during the past 100 years. The "paper clip" staff was used from 1906 to 1909 (Figure 1 and Photograph 2); the "curved" style staff (Photograph 3) was used from 1909 to the early 1940s; and the "Caltrans" staff (Photograph 4), which was used from 1963 to present (California Bell 2019).

Interpretation of Resource Significance

Based on images shown on Nasland's exhibit (see Figure 1) and corroborated by images available through Google Maps, it appears that the Mission Bell Guideposts located at Gilman Court and Evening Way along Gilman Drive are illustrative of the "Caltrans" staff style. As these appear to date after 1963, and are not part of the original series of Mission Bell Guideposts erected in the early 1900s. At present it is unknown when these particular markers were installed; however, they could be from 1963. As such, because they may be older than 50 years, these posts may be subject to evaluation under criteria set forth under federal and state authority.

The regulatory framework and methods for determining impacts on cultural resources associated with the proposed project include compliance with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as defined in Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines and with City of San Diego Historical Resources Guidelines. These guidelines require the identification of cultural resources that could be affected by the proposed project, the evaluation of the significance of such resources, an assessment of the proposed project impacts on significant resources, and a development of a research design and data recovery program to avoid or address adverse effects to significant resources. Significant resources, also called historical resources, are those cultural resources (whether prehistoric or historic) that have been evaluated and determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and National Register of Historic Places

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the official federal list of cultural resources that have been nominated by state offices for their significance at the local, state, or federal level. Listing in the NRHP provides recognition that a property is historically significant to the nation, the state, or the community. Properties listed (or potentially eligible for listing) in the NRHP must meet certain significance criteria and possess integrity of form, location, or setting. Barring exceptional circumstances, resources generally must be at least 50 years old to be considered for listing in the NRHP.

Criteria for listing in the NRHP are stated in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) (36 CFR 60). A resource may qualify for listing if there is quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and where such resources:

- A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history [36 CFR 60.4].

Eligible properties must meet at least one of the NRHP criteria and exhibit integrity, measured by the degree to which the resource retains its historical properties and conveys its historical character, the degree to which the original historic fabric has been retained, and the reversibility of changes to the property. The fourth criterion is typically reserved for archaeological and paleontological resources. These criteria have largely been incorporated into the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15065.5) as well.

Criteria Considerations

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria if they fall within the following categories:

- (a) A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- (b) A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- (c) A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life.
- (d) A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- (e) A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- (f) A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or

- (g) A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

California Register of Historical Resources

The California Office of Historic Preservation maintains the CRHR. The CRHR is the authoritative guide to the state's significant historic and archaeological resources. The program provides for the identification, evaluation, registration, and protection of California's historical resources. The CRHR encourages public recognition and protection of resources of architectural, historic, archaeological, and cultural significance; identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes; determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding; and affords certain protection to these resources under CEQA.

The CRHR has also established context types to be used when evaluating the eligibility of a property or resource for listing. The four criteria are as follows:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.
4. It has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

Similar to the NRHP, eligibility for the CRHR requires an establishment of physical integrity, including the four criteria previously described. California's list of special considerations is less stringent than the NRHP, providing allowances for relocated buildings, structures, or objects as reduced requirements for physical integrity. CEQA Sections 15064.5 and 21083.2(g) define the criteria for determining the significance of historical resources. The term "historical resources" refers to all prehistoric and historic resources, including archaeological sites, traditional cultural properties, and historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, landscapes, etc. Since resources that are not listed or determined eligible for the state or local registers may still be historically significant, their significance shall be determined if they are affected by a project. The significance of a historical resource under Criterion 4 rests on its ability to address important research questions. Most archaeological sites which qualify for the CRHR do so under Criterion 4 (i.e., research potential).

San Diego Historical Resources Register

The City has developed a set of guidelines that ensure compliance with state and federal regulations for the management of historical resources. These guidelines are stated in the Historical Resources Guidelines. The intent of the City's guidelines is to ensure consistency in the identification, evaluation, preservation/mitigation, and development of the City's historical resources.

The criteria used by the City to determine significance for historical resources reflect a more local perspective of historical, architectural, and cultural importance. For inclusion on the City's Historical Resources Register (HRR), the resource can meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the City's, a community's, or a neighborhood's historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping, or agricultural development.
- b. Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history.

Mr. Samuel Waisbord

Page 6

October 31, 2019

- c. Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or crafts.
- d. Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, engineer, landscape architect, interior designer, artist, or craftsman.
- e. Is listed or has been determined eligible by National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Preservation Office for listing on the State Register of Historic Resources.
- f. Is a finite group of resources related to one another in a clearly distinguishable way or is a geographically definable area or neighborhood containing improvements which have a special character, historical interest, or aesthetic value, or which represent one or more architectural periods or styles in the history and development of the city (City of San Diego 2001).

While El Camino Real is an approximated alignment of an historical route, its original purpose was commemorative in nature, and commercial in application. Additionally, the current "official" alignment has been modified through regulation by the State of California to extend along state-maintained lands. Because the markers along Gilman Drive appear to be of Caltrans' specification, these markers should be considered reproductions, even if they are cast from the same molds designed by Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes. As reproductions, the markers are not eligible for inclusion on either register. These particular markers are not eligible under Criterion A/1/b, as they are not associated with the original series establishing the first signed and designated route in California. These particular markers are not eligible under Criterion B/2/b, as they are not associated with particularly noteworthy people in the history of the state or nation. These particular markers are not eligible under Criterion C/3/c/d, even though they may be considered as having distinctive characteristics that would qualify under the Criterion, they are modern reproductions with fundamental changes from the original design, and do not possess high artistic value, and are not the work of a master craftsman. As reproductions, these markers do not comply with NRHP Criteria Consideration (f), as the consideration would be applicable to the establishment of the route, and the original infrastructure used to denote it. The markers are not eligible under Criterion D/4 as they do not have any additional information they could yield. Finally, under the City's HRR, the markers are not eligible under "a" or "f" as they do not reflect a special element of the City and are not a finite group of resources, considering they are located from San Francisco to San Diego.

RECON recommends that the bell markers be preserved as contractor sidewalk stamps are treated in the City of San Diego as specified in The Whitebook Section 303-5.1.4 (City of San Diego 2018). Like contractor sidewalk stamps, the bell markers should be preserved. The bell markers can be removed and relocated such that they can be seen from the street and as close as practical to their original locations. The current plans are preserving the bell markers in place.

If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at (619) 308-9333 x183 or by e-mail at rshultz@reconenvironmental.com.

Sincerely,



Richard Shultz
Project Archaeologist

RDS:sh

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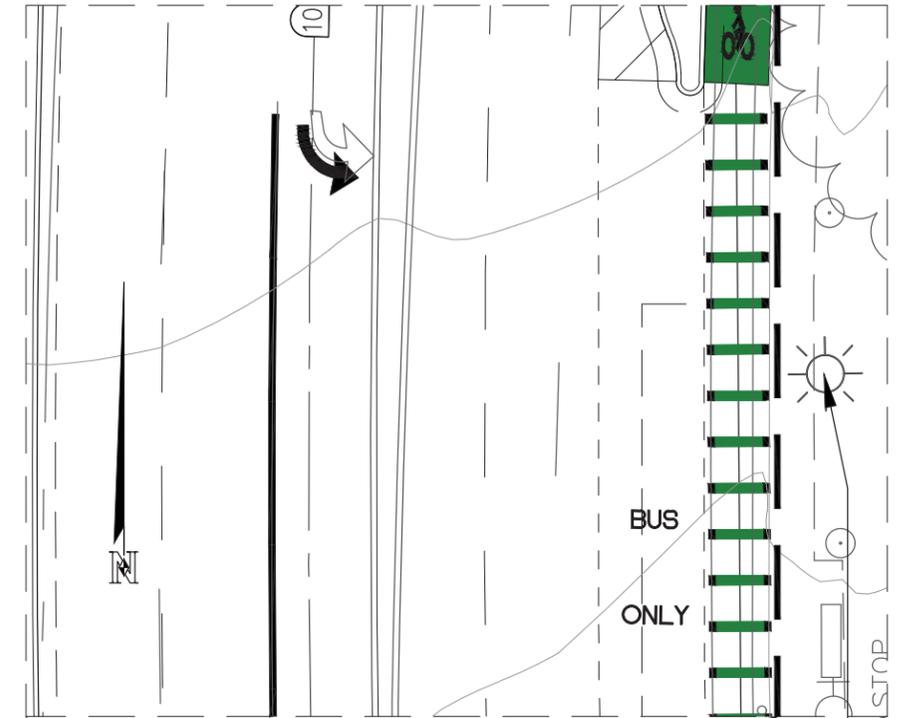
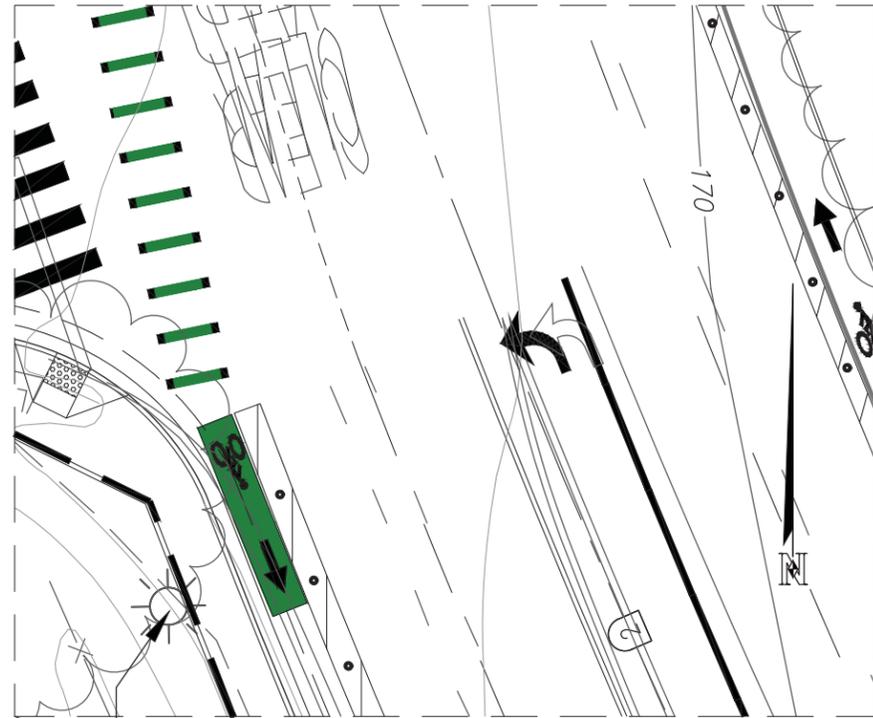
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GILMAN DRIVE AND GILMAN COURT INTERSECTION

NORTH OF GILMAN DRIVE AND EVENING WAY INTERSECTION

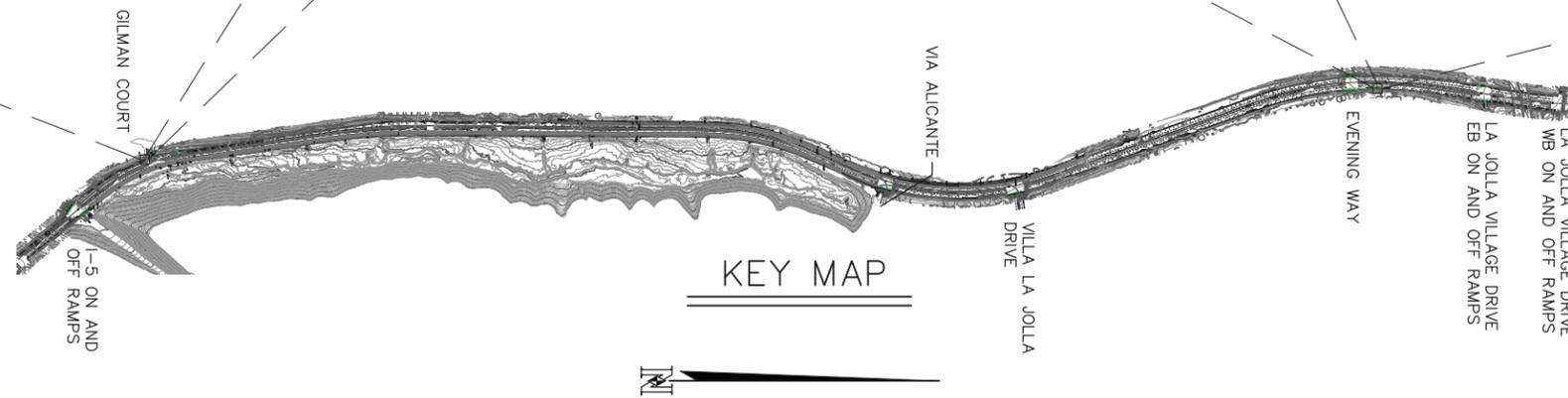
LEGEND

LIMITS OF WORK 



LIMITS OF WORK
EL CAMINO REAL MISSION BELL TO REMAIN AND BE PROTECTED IN PLACE.

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PHOTOGRAPH 1
First Bell Erected on El Camino Real at the
Plaza Church, Los Angeles
SOURCE: Forbes 1915



PHOTOGRAPH 2

“Paper Clip” Style Staff, Circa 1906

SOURCE: https://scvhistory.com/gif/caltrans_elcaminorealbell1906.jpg



PHOTOGRAPH 3

“Curved” Style Staff, Circa 1920

SOURCE: https://www.americanroads.us/autotrails/ElCaminoReal_1920s.jpg



PHOTOGRAPH 4

“Caltrans” Style Staff, Circa 2012

SOURCE: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/image/143405>