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INTRODUCTION

The following report is submitted by W.H. Bonner Associates at the request of Christopher A. Joseph & Associates to perform a cultural resources records check and survey of the proposed Canyon Hills Subdivision located in the Verdugo Hills of the City and County of Los Angeles, California (Figure 1). Specific development plans are pending.

The assessment is in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act as Amended, and Executive Order 11593 requirements.

LOCATION AND SETTING

NATURAL SETTING

The Canyon Hills Subdivision Project is located in unsectioned parcels of the San Rafael and Tujunga land grants, as well as portions of sections 23 and 24 T2N., R14W., and sections 19 and 30, T2N., R13W., as depicted on the Burbank 1966 (rev. 1972) and Sunland 1966 (rev. 1972) U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute quadrangles. The terrain is generally mountainous, with the La Tuna Canyon drainage

delineating the southern boundary of the project. It is largely wooded with oak trees and undeveloped. Elevations range from approximately 1000 feet in the drainage to over 1900 feet along the central ridge which trends generally east to west (Figure 2). The project area is bisected by Interstate 210 (Foothill Freeway).

CULTURAL SETTING

According to Wallace (1955) four main horizons exist in the southern California prehistoric cultural chronology:

Early Man Horizon

Spanning the period from the end of the Pleistocene to approximately 6,000 B.C., archaeological assemblages attributed to this horizon are characterized by large projectile points and scrapers. The limited data available suggests that prehistoric populations focused on hunting and gathering, moving about the region in small nomadic groups.

Milling Stone Horizon

Characterized by the appearance of handstones and millingstones, this horizon tentatively dates to between 6,000 B.C. and 1,000 B.C. Assemblages in the early

Figure 1. General Location of Canyon Hills Subdivision.

Figure 2. Location of Canyon Hills Subdivision Burbank and Sunland 1966 (rev. 1972) USGS 7.5 minute quadrangles. Scale 1:24,000.

Milling Stone period reflect an emphasis on plant foods and foraging subsistence systems. For inland locales, it has been assumed exploitation of grass seeds formed a primary subsistence activity. Artifact assemblages include choppers, and scraper planes, but generally lack projectile points. The appearance of large projectile points in the latter portion of the Milling Stone Horizon suggests a more diverse economy. The distribution of Millingstone sites reflects the theory that aboriginal groups may have followed a modified central based wandering settlement pattern. In this semi-sedentary pattern, a base camp would have been occupied for a portion of the year, but a small population group seasonally occupied subsidiary camps in order to exploit resources not generally available near the base camp. Sedentism apparently increased in areas possessing an abundance of resources which were available for longer periods of time. More arid inland regions would have provided a seasonally and areally dispersed resource base, restricting sedentary occupation.

Intermediate Horizon

Dated to between 1,000 B.C. and A.D. 750, the Intermediate Horizon represents a transitional period. Little is known about the people of this period, especially those of inland southern California. Sites assemblages retain many attributes of the Milling Stone Horizon. Additionally, Intermediate Horizon sites contain large stemmed or notched projectile points and portable mortar and pestles. The mortars and pestles suggest that the aboriginal populations may have harvested, processed, and consumed acorns. Neither the settlement-subsistence system or the cultural evolution of this period is well understood due to a general lack of data. It has been proposed that sedentism increased with the exploitation of storable food resources (acorns); the duration and intensity of occupation of base camps increased, especially toward the latter part of this horizon.

Late Prehistoric Horizon

Extending from A.D. 750 to Spanish contact in A.D. 1769, the Late Prehistoric Horizon reflects an increased sophistication and diversity in technology. This is characterized by the presence of small projectile points which imply the use of the bow and arrow. In addition, assemblages include steatite bowls, asphaltum, grave goods, and elaborate shell ornaments. Use of bedrock milling stations was widespread during this horizon. Increased hunting efficiency and widespread exploitation of acorns provided reliable and storable food resources. These innovations apparently promoted greater sedentism.

Ethnohistory

At the time of European contact in 1769, the San Fernando Valley, including the Verdugo Hills area, was occupied by the Fernandeano, so called by the Spanish for those Native Americans living near Mission San Fernando Rey de España. The Fernandeano are considered a subgroup of the Gabrielino who occupied the Los Angeles Basin, including much of Los Angeles and Orange counties. According to Bean and Smith (1978:538) the Gabrielino are one of the least known groups of California native inhabitants. In addition to much of the Los Angeles Basin, they occupied the offshore islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, and San Clemente. Gabrielino populations are difficult to reconstruct. However, it is estimated that any one time as many as 50 to 100 villages were simultaneously occupied. Like the prehistoric culture before them, the Gabrielino were a hunter/gather group who lived in small sedentary or semi-sedentary groups of 50 to 100 persons, termed rancherías. These rancherías were occupied by at least

some of the people all of the time. Location of the encampment was determined by water availability. Within each village houses were circular in form, and constructed of sticks covered with thatch or mats. Each village had a sweat lodge as well as a sacred enclosure (Bean and Smith 1978).

Their subsistence relied heavily on plant foods, but supplemented this with a variety of meat, especially from marine resources. Food procurement consisted of hunting and fishing carried out by men and gathering of plant foods and shellfish by women. Hunting technology included use of bow and arrow for deer and smaller game, throwing sticks, snares, traps, and slings. Fishing was conducted with use of shell fish hooks, bone harpoons, and nets. Seeds were gathered with beaters and baskets. Food resources were stored in baskets, then processed with manos and metates, and mortars and pestles. Plants and meats were cooked in baskets coated with asphaltum, in stone pots, on steatite frying pans, and by roasting in earthen ovens (Bean and Smith 1978).

Historic Period

In 1850, when California joined the Union as its thirty-first state, the Canyon Hills property was part of two ranchos (Tujunga and San Rafael) and an undeeded strip of land that lay between the two ranchos (Figure 3).

According to one account, the first intrusion of Europeans into this portion of the San Fernando Valley occurred in 1776 when the Garces expedition passed through what today is Foothill Boulevard (Robinson 1938:np). San Fernando mission was not established until 1797 (Johnson 1964:261).

Between these two events, Jos, Maria Verdugo was granted some 36,000 acres of land in 1784 which he named La Zanja (later San Rafael). Verdugo did not actually live on the land until 1797 when he retired from the military. He was joined by his family, his brother, and a friend Antonio Rosa. Cattle raising was the major endeavor on the rancho.

Although the southern and eastern boundaries of the land grant were well established, the western and northern borders were not specific. As a result, disputes arose with

Figure 3. Spanish Land Grants of the Northeastern San Fernando Valley. the administrators at Mission San Fernando over grazing rights. In 1817, an inquiry was held which established the north and west boundaries of Rancho San Rafael.

Jos, Verdugo died in 1831, leaving the rancho to two of his children (Julio and Catalina). In 1850, following the American take over of California, the two siblings filed a petition with the new government. The Board of Land Commissioners confirmed title in 1855. However, it was not until 1882, after the land had been resurveyed, that a patent was issued for Rancho San Rafael. In the meantime, however, Julio Verdugo had gone into debt. In 1861 the rancho had been divided between the two siblings with Catalina receiving ownership to the northern, more mountainous portion. Eight years later, when Julio's debts became uncontrollable, the rancho lands were sold at auction to Alfred B. Chapman. Catalina Verdugo died in 1871, Her brother died five years later. Over the ensuing years, the former rancho lands were subdivided again and again (Robinson 1939).

Rancho Tujunga was considerably smaller than San Rafael. It consisted of less than 7,000 acres. The parcel had formerly been part of the Mission San Fernando claim. After secularization of the mission system in 1834 by the Mexican government, individuals were granted portions of the former mission lands. In 1840, Governor Alvarado granted the Tujunga lands to Pedro and Francisco Lopez. The grant amounted to some 6,680 acres. In 1860, the rancho was sold to D. W. Alexander, Francis Mellus, and Augustin Olvera (Robinson 1939:225). Patent on this parcel was confirmed in 1874. At that time David Alexander and Alexander Bell were named the legal owners (Shumay 1988:37). Like Rancho San Rafael, Rancho Tujunga was used almost exclusively for cattle raising.

The community of Sunland was established sometime before 1902; Tujunga after 1902 (USGS Santa Monica Sheet 1902). In 1926, the community of Sunland, then encompassing some 3,848 acres and Tuna Canyon, amounting to 4,910 acres were annexed by the city of Los Angeles (Spalding 1930:448). These communities remained primarily residential in nature, with no large commercial enterprises to stimulate rapid growth. As such, growth was slower than for other parts of Los Angeles.

INVESTIGATIVE METHODS

A cultural resources records check was conducted at the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) prior to on-site monitoring. The records check is required to determine what cultural resources might be recorded on or within a one-half mile radius of the project location. It also reveals if any previous archaeological assessments have been performed on or within a one-half mile radius of the project site. The records check involves a review of archaeological resources maps, historic topographic maps, and historic register lists. Geologic maps of the area also are examined.

Upon completion of the map review and records check, an on-site walk over was carried out. This was necessary to determine the current status of previously recorded cultural resources and to document any prehistoric or historic sites or features which have not been previously recorded. The field inspection was performed by Wayne H. Bonner, M. A., RPA certified archaeologist and Diane F. Bonner, M.S. geologist. Mr. Bonner fulfills the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for a field archaeologist.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

RECORDS CHECK

Archaeological Resources

The records check indicates no prehistoric archaeological resources have been recorded on or within a one-half mile radius of the property. Two previous investigations assessed portions of the property (Bouscaen 1984 and UCLA 1965). Five additional field assessments were conducted in adjoining parcels (Armstrong 1979; Anonymous 1990; Singer and Atwood 1990; Padon 1986; Weil 1986). None of these assessments recorded any cultural resources.

Historic Properties

Historic registers including the National Register of Historic Places (2001), the California State Historic Resources Inventory (2001), the California Points of Historical Interest (2001), and the California Historical Landmarks (1996) do not list any historic properties on or within a one-half mile radius of the parcel.

Historic Maps

A review of historic maps indicates that the parcel had been part of two Hispanic land grants (San Rafael and Tujunga). A strip of land between the ranchos was never granted during the late eighteenth or first half of the nineteenth centuries (Figure 3).

A century ago, the entire Canyon Hills Subdivision parcel remained undeveloped. An unpaved road entered La Tuna Canyon from the west, but extended only to the present debris basin. One structure is shown south of the east end of the road, off the Canyon Hills Subdivision property. To the north, the community of Sunland had been established with some roads leading south into the Verdugo Hills, but not onto the subject property (Figure 4).

Some forty years later, La Tuna Canyon Road had been extended further east with more structures appearing on both sides of the road. The power transmission line in use today had been constructed. The communities of Sunland and Tujunga had grown, but no roads or structures are shown on the subject parcel other than the transmission line (Figure 5).

In 1957, La Tuna Canyon Road appears to be paved up to Sadali Drive where "St. Elizabeth's Retreat" is plotted. The road extends eastward beyond this point, but appears to be unpaved (Thomas Brothers 1957:10-11). No other development is indicated.

Interstate 210 (Foothill Freeway) was constructed in the late 1960's. At this time La Tunas Canyon Road most likely was extended eastward to connect with Honolulu Avenue.

ORAL INFORMATION

According to an unnamed account, prehistoric remains have been found on the Canyon Hills property in the past. No documents confirming this information have been located. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) does not have any information to substantiate this claim.

ON-SITE WALK OVER

Because of the lack of a previous survey over the entire 600 acres of the property, it became prudent to conduct a walk over survey of the proposed parcel in order to determine if any cultural resources would be impacted during the construction phase.

At the request of Christopher Joseph & Associates, a pedestrian survey of the proposed subdivision was performed on July 24-25, 2001. Only those portions of the parcel with a slope of fifteen degrees or less scheduled to be examined. The survey was performed by two field persons walking parallel tracts approximately ten meters (30 feet) apart over all accessible portions of the property.

Access to much of the property was limited due to private roads, lack of access from the freeway, and overall ruggedness of the parcel. More than two thirds of the 600 acres is located on slopes greater than 15 degrees where it is unlikely that archaeological remains would exist in these locations. A total of less than fifty acres was accessible (Figure 6). No cultural remains, either prehistoric or historic, were noted in those portions of the property where access was possible. In general, the parcel may be considered undeveloped.

Figure 4. Canyon Hills Area in 1902. Santa Monica (1902) 15 minute USGS sheet.
Scale 1:24,000 enlarged from original 1:62,500.

Figure 5. Canyon Hills Area in 1939/1942. LA Crescenta (1939) and Sunland (1942) 6 minute USGS quadrangle maps.

ASSESSMENT

- 1) Improvements to the Canyon Hills Subdivision parcel will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of any recorded historical resource as defined in SS 15064.5 of CEQA.
- 2) Improvements to the Canyon Hills Subdivision parcel will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of any known archaeological resource pursuant to SS 15064.5 of CEQA.
- 3) Improvements to the Canyon Hills Subdivision parcel will not disturb previously recorded human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The negative results of the records check and on-site survey preclude additional archaeological investigation prior to the beginning of construction. However, these recommendations should be reevaluated when final development plans have been confirmed.

It is the recommended that

- 1) If buried cultural materials are exposed during construction, work must be halted in the immediate vicinity of the find until a qualified archaeologist can assess the significance (CEQA Section 15064.5-f and PRC Section 21082).
- 2) If the finds are termed significant, the archaeologist and a Native American Monitor should be permitted to remove the items in a professional manner for further laboratory evaluation (CEQA Section 15064.5-f and PRC Section 21082).
- 3) If human remains are unearthed during construction, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition (CEQA Section 15064.5-e). If the remains are determined to be those of a Native

American, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) in Sacramento must be contacted before the remains are removed.

Wayne H. Bonner, M.A.,
RPA Certified Archaeologist

Figure 6. Portions of Canyon Hills Area that have been surveyed.
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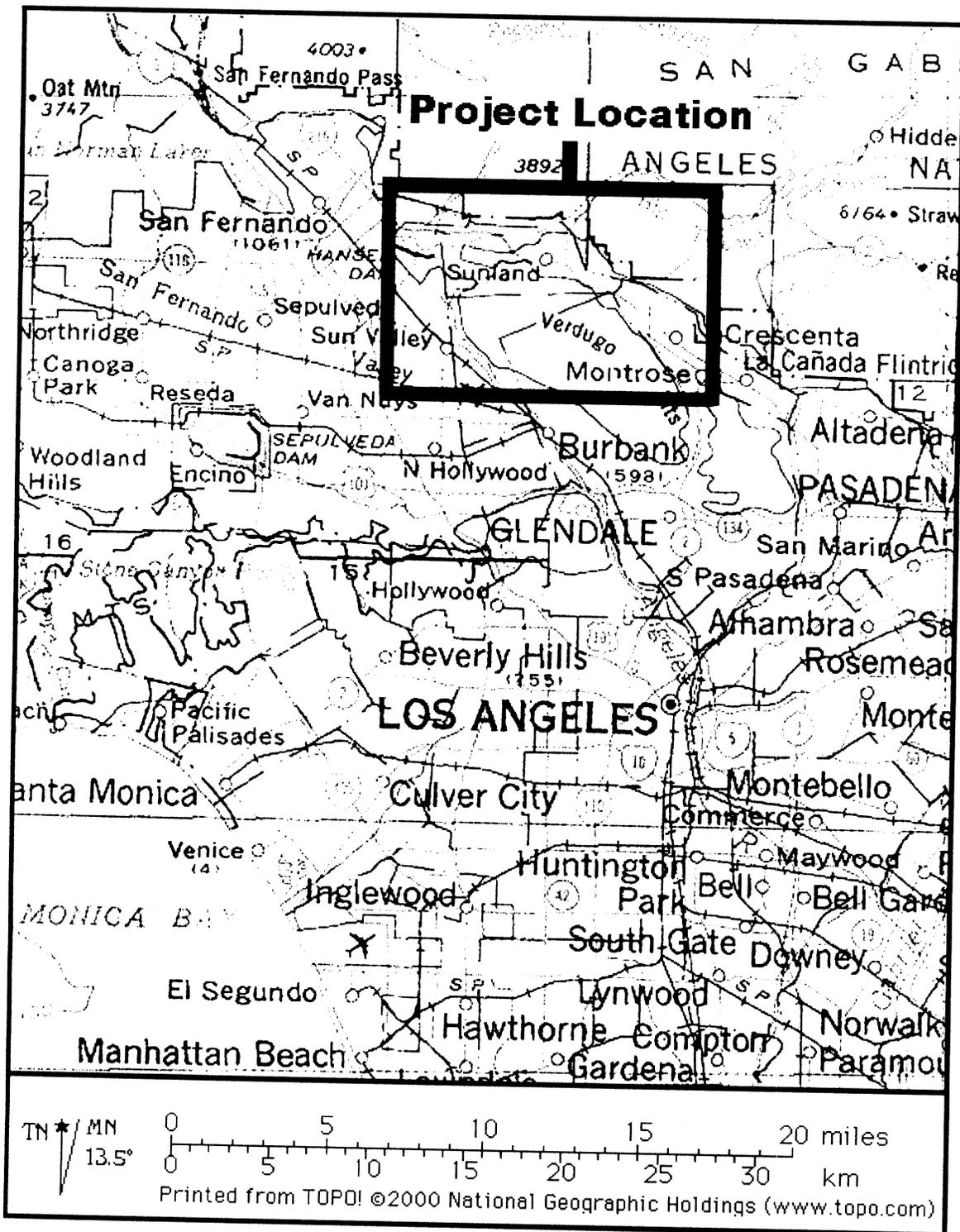


Figure 1. General Location of the Canyon Hills Project.

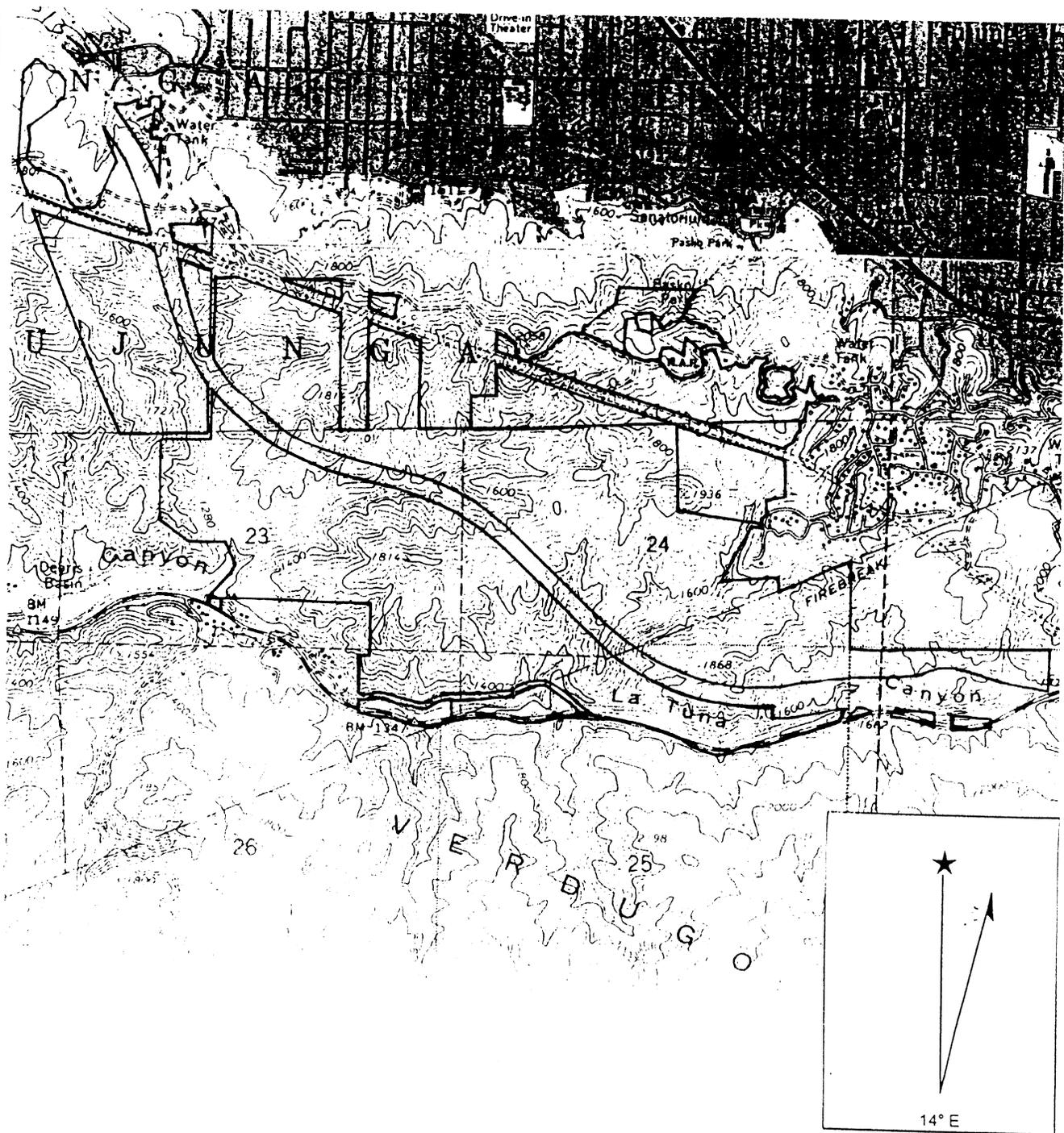


Figure 2. Plan Map of the Canyon Hills Project Site and Environs. Burbank and Sunland 1966 (rev. 1972) USGS 7.5 minute quadrangles. Scale 1:24,000.

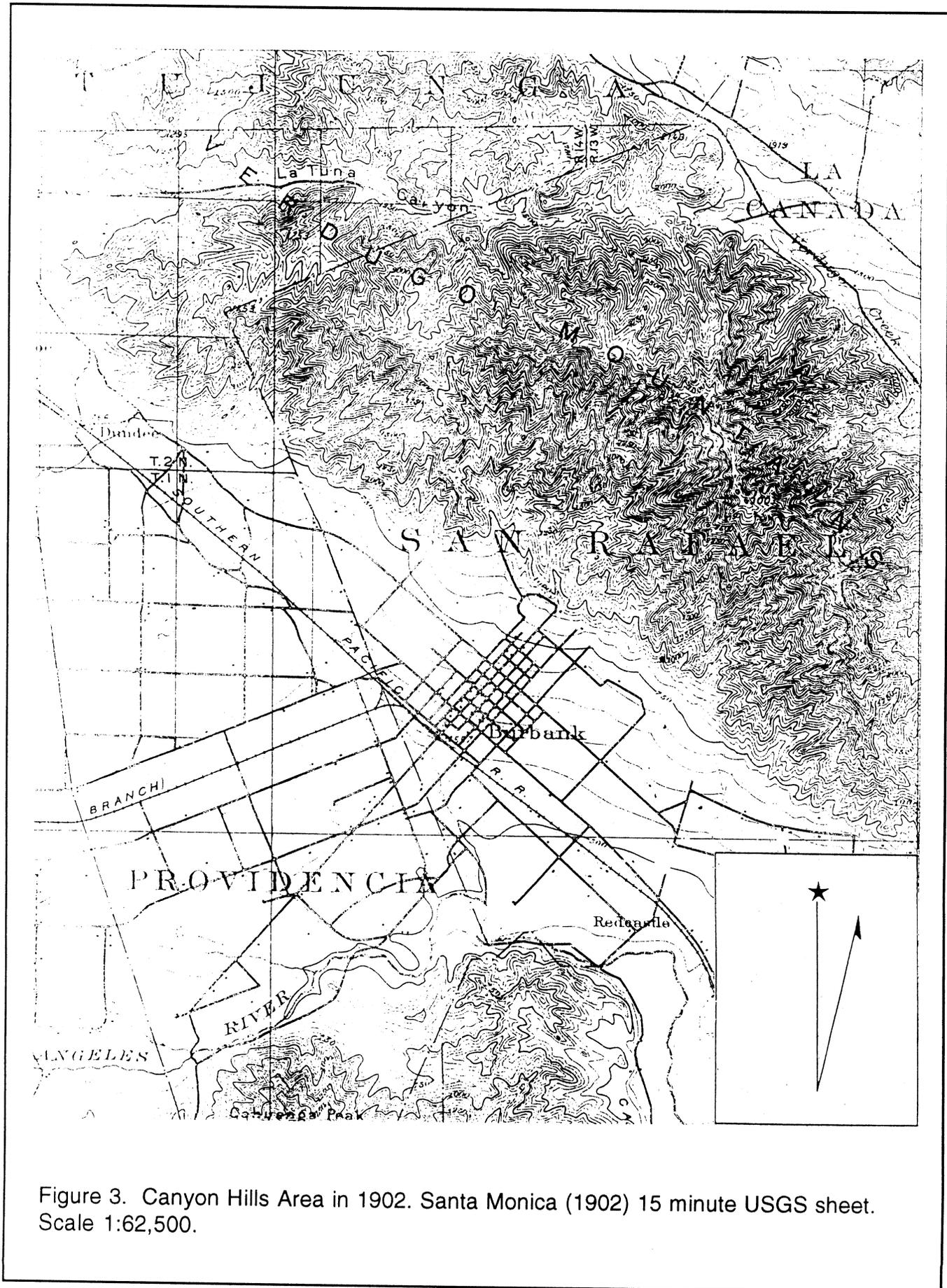


Figure 3. Canyon Hills Area in 1902. Santa Monica (1902) 15 minute USGS sheet. Scale 1:62,500.

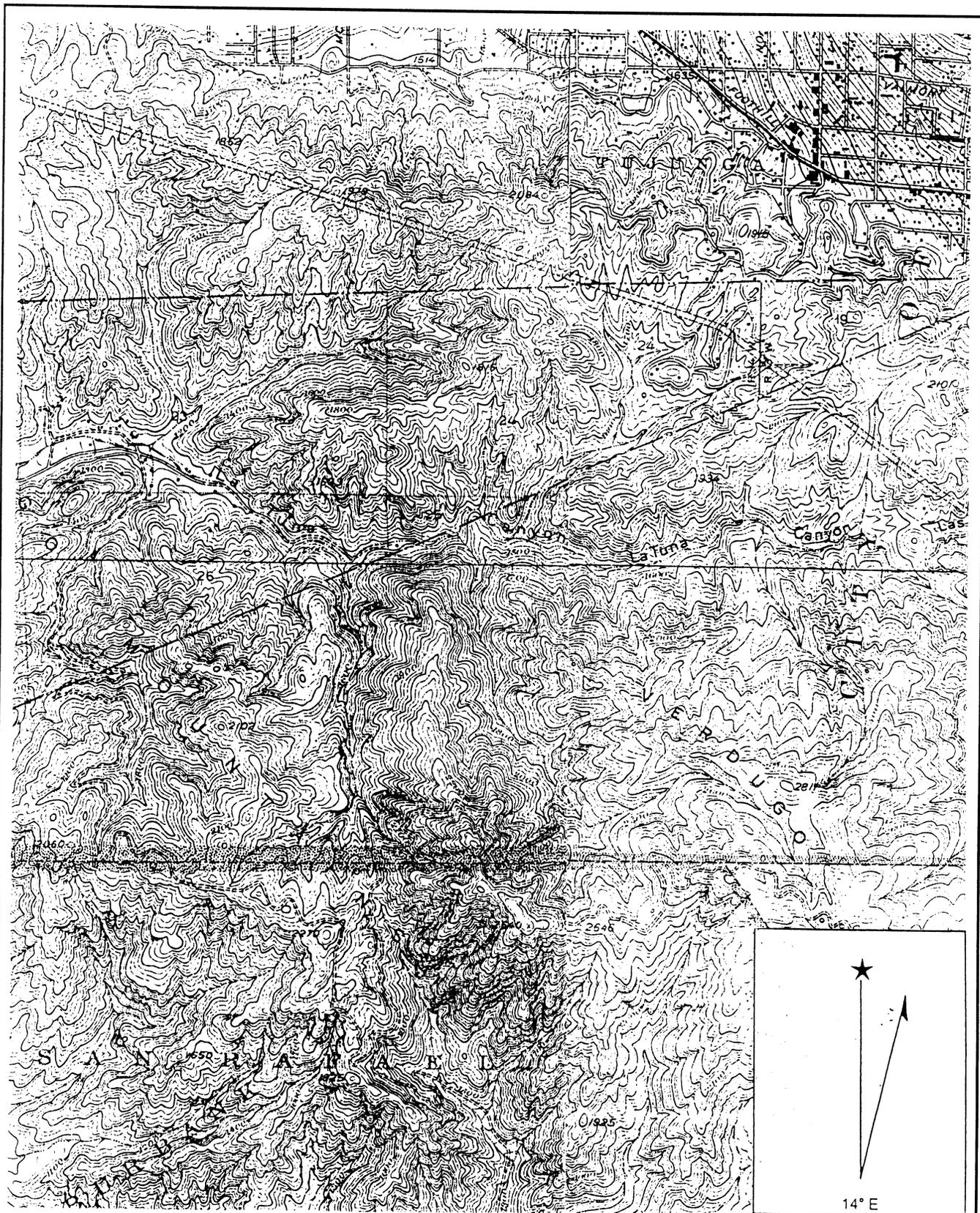


Figure 4. Canyon Hills Area in 1939/1942. LA Crescenta (1939) and Sunland (1942) 6 minute USGS quadrangle maps. Scale 1:24,000.