

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC San Miguel Island Archaeological District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Most westerly of the California Santa Barbara Channel Islands, northern group, 26 miles south of nearest land at Point Conception.

CITY, TOWN

— VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

California

06

Santa Barbara

083

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

— VICINITY OF

STATE

California 94102

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Santa Barbara

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

National Park Service

DATE

1962-63, 1977-78

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Western Archeological Center

CITY, TOWN

Tucson

STATE

Arizona

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The westernmost of the northern California Channel Islands group, San Miguel comprises about 14 square statute miles in area. It is about 26 miles due south from Point Conception, nearest mainland point, and about 3.5 miles west of Santa Rosa, its nearest island neighbor. The surface is largely tableland formed as a wave-cut terrace, which has been subject to ancient and intricate erosion. For the most part, the cliffs rise steeply away from the shores except for sandy beaches at the east and western tips, and where dissecting drainages cut the terraces. The two high points are Green Mountain, (817 feet above sea level) and San Miguel Peak (831 feet). The Harris Point promontory on the north shore shelters Cuyler Harbor, which has historically served as anchorage and landing place. The broad sweep of Simonton Cove is west of this point. The major sea mammal rookery is at the west end from Adams Cove to Point Bennett. Previous natural resource studies have reported the presence of 21 species of birds, and about 175 species of native plants (31 of which are indigenous to the Channel Islands). Native fauna include the Island fox, white-footed mouse, and a local variety of lizard. Shellfish are abundant with both rocky and sandy beach habitats. When first viewed by Europeans, the island was covered with dense growth of brush such as sumac and manzanita, and recent research has located evidence of Ribes sp., Rhus sp., Monterey pine, and Gowen cypress. Evaluation of native plant resources available to prehistoric inhabitants has been obscured by the profound erosional degradation which resulted from stock raising dating to the middle 1800's. It is estimated that as many as 6,000 sheep were grazing in 1862.

The island is swept by winds in a prevailing direction from the northwest; combined with water erosion, the resulting landscape is often denuded of soil, with sand deposits alternating with both modern and Pleistocene dunes. The island is at an interface of both warm and cold water currents which further affects the climate and enhances the range of marine resources. Fresh water is available in the form of both springs and seeps. The island was first observed by Europeans of Cabrillo voyage in 1542 when the voyagers noted the presence of two Indian rancherias. Vizcaino described a village with more than 200 large houses, each containing more than 40 Indians, in 1606. Variouslly called La Posesion (Cabrillo), Isla de Juan Rodriguez (Ferrelo), Isla de Baxos (Vizcaino), San Bernardo (Costanso), and even Santa Rosa (Perez), the name San Miquel was generally adopted on the basis of Vancouver's Admiralty charts after 1792. Both Russians and Americans hunted the sea otter at San Miguel; the Mission San Gabriel sent hunters as early as 1832, Capt. John Bancroft with 25 Aleut hunters exploited these waters in 1838, and private traders such as George Nidever entered into the commerce until the sea otter was almost extinct on the island by 1870.

Sheep were introduced prior to 1850 by Bruce, and grazing was continued under a succession of lessees until 1942. The hunting of seals, sea lions, and sea gull eggs followed the decline of the sea otter. The rookeries at Point Bennett are now protected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Military uses of the island have included bomb practice, gunnery range backdrop, landing strips, and a temporary manned coastal lookout station during World War II.

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The island has been extensively surveyed, resulting in 547 recorded archaeological sites. Of these, 542 are prehistoric, four are historical sites, and one is the first of many geological localities with a potential for recorded man/mammoth associations to be recorded. At least one additional prehistoric site, a cave with midden, is known but has not yet been recorded and mapped. Historical archaeological remains are probably under-represented at this time; and no underwater remains, either historic or prehistoric, have yet been recorded. At this time, the density of aboriginal sites is 14.95 per square km.

Exploration, collection, and excavation began more than a century ago. W. G. W. Harford and William H. Dall, both of the U. S. Coast Survey, collected in the 1870's. Paul Schumacher excavated more than 250 burials from two or three sites for the Smithsonian in 1875. Additional collections were made by de Cessac, Yates, Bowers, Dreyfus, and Doran between 1878 and 1919. The largest undertaking of all was the excavation of Ralph Glidden in 1919 for the Heye Foundation; he unearthed 343 burials from 23 sites, and shipped thousands of artifacts and an unknown number of crania to the Museum of the American Indian. Sanger was a later collector, and cursory surveys were conducted by D. B. Rogers and P. C. Orr. Excavations according to the standards of modern archaeology have been limited to three sites described briefly in the following paragraphs:

4-SMI-1. A 4.6% random sample was investigated by C. Rozaire in 1964. The effort recovered 617 artifacts, and abundant faunal remains from three micro-analysis units (see Rozaire 1978, Walker and others 1978). Based upon shell beads and fishing gear, Rozaire has estimated the occupation to have been primarily during the Early Period (prior to 1170 B. C.) and possibly into the first phases of the Middle Period (prior to 530 B. C.). It was Rozaire's estimation in 1965 that the site was a single-component, long-term occupation with a span of 1500-2000 years, representative of the terminal Middle Horizon.

4 SMI-261. This rockshelter near [REDACTED] was partially excavated by Rozaire in 1967 and 1968. The research yielded a beadmaker's kit, cordage and basketry, and 195 other artifacts, hearth features, the remains of at least 26 individuals, and a wide variety of fauna and mollusca. It is a stratified deposit with considerable time depth. Relative dating based on beads and ornaments suggests an occupation from near the end of the Early to at least the middle of the Middle Period. Dates associated to the bead forms range from 1170 B. C. to A. D. 1630.

4-SMI-525. This is one of the largest of the sand dune sites [REDACTED]. Rozaire placed one unit here in 1967 because the depth of 3.6 meters was the longest profile visible during the surface survey. He recovered 107 artifacts of shell (46), bone (37), and stone (24). Although not encountered in the test unit, human remains are now visible on the surface. Vertical distribution of artifacts and fauna in the single column demonstrate stratification. Relative dating based upon a small bead sample and fishing technology at first

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implied an occupation of about 1,000 years, primarily between A.D. 3 and 700, but a surface collection of 25 beads during the most recent survey (1978) points to a horizontal stratification as well, with a Middle Period component in one area and a distinctly Late Period represented in another. Sea mammal and avian remains suggest that the site was utilized primarily during the spring and summer months.

Although these three tested sites can be relatively dated from artifact types, a series of radiocarbon datings has been obtained by geographer D. L. Johnson (1973) from midden shell samples, and tentative correlations have been established to certain of the recorded archaeological sites (L. J: LaJolla, I: Irvine).

¹⁴ Date (C yr BP)	Lab. No.	Archaeological Site
1750 + 200	LJ-25	SMI-535 or -536 ? [REDACTED]
2120 + 150	LJ-218	SMI-530 ? [REDACTED]
6030 + 150	I-3717	SMI-350 (or SMI-370 ?)
9750 + 150	I-4583	SMI-350 (or SMI-370 ?) [REDACTED]
6450 + 130	I-4587	SMI-388
7580 + 140	I-4852	SMI-443
7940 + 80	UCLA-148B	SMI-438 ?
9360 + 200	UCLA-148A	SMI-438 ? [REDACTED]

Johnson has also received older dates from charcoal or charcoaled flora with less obvious human association. A determination of 16,500 + 350 (Lab. number pending) has been obtained from cypress charcoal in direct association with burned mammoth bone at or near SMI-408, and an age of 17,730 + 300 (I-4586) was returned on a charcoaled stump from the lowermost part of a midden believed to be SMI-395. The newly recorded site SMI-547 is an exposure of charcoaled mammoth bone in situ, in an area of oxidized soil and burned rock, with a possible felsite artifact and the potential for man/mammoth association. There are many other circles of burned earth with and without visible proboscidean remains visible on the caliche flats exposed on the west end of the island, many near the ancient water source at [REDACTED]. These have not been recorded as archaeological sites. At the very least, the suite of dates from midden shell components is evidence of human occupation for a minimum of 7,000 years.

Descriptions of each site are in recent reports by Rozaire (1978) and Greenwood (1978). The greatest density appears to be [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In the sample inspected in 1977-1978, the largest site size seems to be represented among those [REDACTED]. Yet the largest of the cemeteries explored by Heye, where 160 burials were found, [REDACTED] the next largest, yielding 65 burials, is [REDACTED]. Distinctions in artifact forms or distribution, faunal varieties, or chronology cannot yet be made between the various areas of occupation as yet.

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The most frequently encountered site type is a shell midden or cultural deposit with shell and variable proportions of stone tool and animal bone components. Intact primary deposits are still present on the tops of many dune systems, even though there is erosion and loss of site contents down the slopes. Other remains, primarily heavy stone artifacts, are exposed in windblown areas of caliche pavement and bedrock. There are at least three cave sites: SMI-261 at [REDACTED] which contains burials (see Walker 1977), SMI-264 on [REDACTED] which has not been sampled; and a newly discovered cave on [REDACTED] has not been recorded. The size of some of the open sites suggests either large populations or extended use over a long period of time. Some of the larger sites are SMI-161 with 125,000 square meters of visible remains, SMI-472 with 131,150 square meters, and SMI-481 with 252,000 square meters. The depth at SMI-525 has been tested at 3.6 meters. The function of certain of the smaller sites may ultimately be related to the exploitation of a specific natural resource, e.g., stone artifact manufacture, molluscan or plant species not now present, or other specialized function. The highest proportion of sea mammal bone was observed on the sites near the [REDACTED] and it has been suggested that there is a chronological sequence in the exploitation of Haliotis rufescens and H. cracherodii.

From Rozaire's inventory records and the 28% sample of sites inspected in 1977-1978, it is apparent that there is both intra-site and inter-site variability within the cultural resources; different activity areas, for example, are identified by artifact-making detritus, and even based upon evidence visible from the surface, there are instances of differential shell distribution within a single site. Many sites have the appearance of stratification or special function. For example, SMI-504 appears to be specialized in the manufacture of sandstone bowls, while others contain detritus indicative of shell beadmaking. More than 3,000 artifacts have been collected from the surface during the course of Rozaire's survey alone, further illustrating the research potential of the intact sites.

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Additional historic sites are known but not recorded, and there is the potential for others yet to be located. Remains are present of two docks [REDACTED], and a B-24 which crashed during 1942 is present on SMI-459. It is likely that other evidence is present of past Governmental activities. Other resources which may be found include a two-story house said to have been built by Hiram Mills after he bought out Nidever's interest in 1870; the first ranch house, shearing shed, and boathouse built by Capt. Waters on the [REDACTED] in the 1890's and subsequently buried under sand; and any remains which may be left from the enterprises of Bruce, the first known non-Chumash resident, who raised sheep on San Miguel prior to 1850. Other documented activities which may have left archaeological evidence include the hunting of sea otter in the 1830's, rendering of sea lion blubber in the 1870's, presence of the Chinese, and shell-processing by Japanese near [REDACTED]

Underwater Archaeology

There is the potential for both historic and prehistoric remains off the immediate shores. Sunken ships include Capt. Waters' own sloop Liberty which sank in [REDACTED] in 1895, the German liner Anubis which grounded [REDACTED] in 1908, and the schooner Watson D. West and Pacific Mail liner Cuba which sank [REDACTED] in 1923. Maritime disasters along [REDACTED] have long supplied both firewood and building materials, and it is certainly possible that prehistoric navigators also came to grief in the rough waters around San Miguel. Stone vessels have been recovered by divers off both [REDACTED]. At least one of these is a so-called "supervessel" with exterior diameter of 67 cm., and it has been proposed that these may represent a form of ceremonial deposition.

Ethnographic Information

Ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and linguistic research regarding San Miguel is not well advanced, and new data are only beginning to emerge from such sources as the John P. Harrington ethnographic papers. Studies of baptismal records reveal that the majority of San Miguel Islanders came into the Missions around 1814, and that most of them were affiliated to La Purisima Mission near Lompoc, California. From such records, the population in 1812 has been estimated at about 33 individuals. Such studies will yield valuable insights into social organization, the exchange of goods, and relationships between the island and the mainland, and between San Miguel and the neighboring islands. It is suspected that there may have been substantial intermarriage between western Santa Rosa villages and San Miguel, and a wot (chief) of a north Santa Cruz village claimed ties to a lineage on San Miguel. It is predicted that future investigations will demonstrate relationships from each of the islands to specific settlements on the mainland, and that San Miguel will be found most closely related to villages toward the north end of the Channel. The low population during the historic period, and the fact that the location of the named villages of Xaco and Nimoyoyo is still not known, implies that the greatest occupation of the island was during an earlier period.

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Nidever Adobe (4-SMI-546)

Details of the original appearance of the Nidever Adobe are unknown, as no illustrations or narrative descriptions of it are known. Today it consists of ruined adobe walls and timbers which are presumably floor joists, half buried in what were drifting dunes of sand and dirt, now much overgrown. Surviving elements that have been mapped indicate a structure roughly 20 feet square with adobe brick walls roughly 2-feet, 2-inches thick, but it is not known how much of the original structure these remains represent. Beneath the adobe walls at one location is a crude foundation of rough sandstone boulders.

Unfortunately, these remains which would normally possess archaeological research potential if they had pristine integrity, have been seriously damaged by the erosion of a steep-sided wash. Erosion has paralleled nearly the entire length of one wall, probably destroying it and has cut through the entire width of the adobe parallel to another wall, most of which may be destroyed. The wash has not only cut through the structure in two directions horizontally, but has cut vertically through the bottom of the structure and on further down three or four feet in places, leaving the presumed floor joists sticking out into mid-air several feet above the bottom of the wash. This active erosion will progressively move into the center of the adobe, and could go so far as to destroy the surviving remains completely. The fact that the arroyo is cutting vertically as well as horizontally through the adobe indicates the degree of damage it is doing to subsurface archaeological resources.

The adobe was roughly measured by Charles E. Rozaire on August 26, 1973, and his sketch is appended as a site plan; recent examinations indicate significant damage by 1978, including the apparent complete destruction of the fragment of adobe wall at the northwest corner.

It may be presumed that there were historically outbuildings associated with the adobe, but nothing is known of them.

San Miguel Island Ranch House (4-SMI-543)

The Ranch House was described by Capt. William G. Waters in a letter to the 18th Lighthouse District dated June 17, 1911:

"I have built a very comfortable house 16-ft. wide by 120-ft. long, with water and set bowls in all the sleeping rooms, also bathroom and toilet. There are five sleeping rooms, two dining rooms, one of which is for the shearers, a large kitchen, wash room, milk room, and meat room. The main building runs east and west. I also have an "l" running north and south, which is 14-ft. wide and about 90-ft. long. In this building, I have a store room, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, harness room, cow barn and storage room for wagons and tools. I also have a separate house for the chickens and ducks. I have a wool house where I do my shearing, which is 16 x 60 ft., with sheep shed 18 x 90 ft. On the beach I have a warehouse, although not

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not in good condition at the present time, owing to the weight of sand that came upon it . . .

"I have built a nice road from the beach up to the high lands, which is the only place available for a road. I have good well water 16-ft. deep and a windmill with force pump to force the water up to the house 125 ft. on higher land. I have several fields fenced in to be used during shearing time."

According to some sources, Waters' ranch was covered with sand in 1906 and the later ranch house was built by John Russell, yet the above description by Waters is dated 1911, and the length of the main house described by Waters is precisely the length of the house which has been assumed to be later construction by John Russell. This suggests that the house which survived until 1967 was Waters' original house with some subsequent alterations.

According to later descriptions, the house was "V"-shaped with the point headed into the strong west winds which swept San Miguel frequently. One side of the "V" consisted of the 120-ft. house, the other of a high fence. Eventually the open end of the "V" was closed with another fence, and along both fences within the compound were structures such as rabbit hutches and chicken coops. Outside the compound and not far distant were sheds, sheep barns, and wire fences.

On the windward side, the house had double walls with a 6-inch air space between to interdict the powerful winds which would howl through cracks. The original builder reportedly built until he ran out of lumber, using material salvaged from wrecks such as portholes for windows. A wooden revolving door kept the strong winds from sweeping into the house.

Today, nothing is left of the ranch but fences, the 2½-ft. high ruins of a chimney, concrete foundations, two cisterns, remains of another chimney, a rusted bedstead, sinks, pipes, odd pieces of metal, and subsurface archaeological resources. A collapsed windmill and pumphouse lie down an arroyo nearby, their site undercut and all but destroyed by natural erosion. The remains of the Waters Road to the beach suffer from similar erosion. The location of the beach warehouse, now either entirely destroyed or entirely covered by sand dunes, is unknown.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Despite the remoteness of San Miguel Island, its rough surrounding waters, and its inclement weather, the aboriginal site density of 14.95 per square km. may even exceed that for San Clemente. Johnson's radiocarbon dates indicate that San Miguel was occupied at least 7940 years ago, as well as showing the potential for substantially greater age if charcoal and mammoth remains are found in direct association with human cultural remains. Human settlement on San Miguel extends much farther into the past than has been assumed, and occupation was more than merely casual or intermittent. The relative scarcity of named historic Chumash villages here (only two) as compared to those known on Santa Cruz or Santa Rosa may perhaps be a function of age of many sites.

The numerous sites are not redundant simply because of quantity. Even from surface inspection, it is apparent that there is great variability in quantity and variety of faunal or lithic remains. Placement of the sites in regard to topographic or environmental features such as shoreline, sand dunes, drainages, caves, higher elevations in the interior, water sources, pre-contact vegetation zones not now apparent, and other factors implies purposeful settlement pattern or function within the island. Since it is probable that San Miguel had fewer terrestrial subsistence resources, but easier access to the many fish species native to the extensive kelp beds and a unique resource in the sea mammal rookeries, the research potential of the sites is distinctly different, rather than replicative, in contrast to the sites on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa.

Among the specific research problems which can be addressed by reference to the prehistoric archaeological resources are settlement patterns within the island its social and economic relationships to neighboring islands and the mainland coast. Exploitation of natural resources is related to inter-site variability and to the broader patterns of trade and navigation. It is also presumed that changes in technology can be demonstrated through the evolution of fishing methods, implements, and zones exploited. The analysis of stratified deposit samples can yield information not now known about the proportions of the diet obtained through utilization of plant foods, sea mammals, shellfish, and fish, and any changes over the long span of time represented in the cultural inventory. The relationships of relative isolation of the island, any subsistence stress which might have been precipitated by climatic conditions, population pressure, or resource depletion and social organization is another area to be addressed by archaeological inquiry. It is further proposed that shell bead samples from the island sites, connection with radiocarbon dates, may be used to test the various hypotheses and sequences which have been advanced about their validity and accuracy as chronological diagnostics in relative dating methods.

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The value of most archaeological sites is enhanced by the fact that they constitute an unspoiled laboratory for many of the life and earth sciences, as well as anthropology. The remains of fossil birds, molluscs, and mammals are of great interest to appropriate specialists; for example, botanists eager to study the evidence of plants no longer present, marine biologists wish to know more of the past habits, breeding, and distribution of the sea mammals, those engaged in fisheries management or shellfish conservation need to know about past habitats, and geographers have begun studies of land formation and changes which have probably affected human adaptations as well. This evidence is contained within the cultural deposits, and best recovered through the controlled, stratigraphic methodology of archaeological excavation. San Miguel should be considered as one vast interdisciplinary research laboratory.

Although many of the sites have been affected by both natural erosional processes and unscientific collecting, many of them still contain intact primary deposits and scientific integrity and most have never been investigated. The collections which have been removed to the Smithsonian, Peabody, Heye Foundation and other museums and institutions have not been systematically analyzed, and these, too, contain the potential to reveal important information.

The historical sites are significant in the aspects of trade, exploration, and settlement with the potential to yield data about adaptation to this unique and difficult environment. Remains of an 1850 adobe are important to architecture, history, and historical archaeology. Although there are references to stockraising by Bruce prior to this date, no remains of his tenancy are known at this time, and the adobe residence of George Nidever is the oldest structure now visible. Walls and beams of his adobe are intact, and there is the potential, still unknown, for subsurface archaeological resources. Data for comparable studies and interpretation of the subsequent historical period are contained in site SMI-543, the ranch house complex built by John Russell about 1906 and added to over the years, in part with timbers salvaged from wrecked ships such as the J.M. Coleman, Comet, and Watson D. West. These and other shipwrecks themselves constitute a resource for marine historical archaeology. Presumably, the house and outbuildings of Capt. W.G. Waters building during the 1890's may still be found under the sands [REDACTED]. Documentary sources contain little more than the scanty details of leases, and almost nothing about the way of life, patterns of commerce, and special adaptations which would have been required of these residents on a remote and isolated island. In addition to supplying such data, archaeological resources may be able to contribute information about cultural contacts between the Indians and the traders. Indians were employed in hunting seals and sea otters, and as herdsmen even during the tenancy of Herbert Lester, the last resident caretaker.

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For both the historic and prehistoric periods, the research potential of the cultural resources is enhanced by reason of the special island environment, and because of the location of this island as the most westerly in the northern Channel Islands chain. Its particular resources have been valuable enough to attract settlement for at least 7,900 years despite the distance from the mainland, rough seas, and inclement weather. The 547 sites recorded to date contain the potential to illuminate the degree and directions of change by which the successive populations adapted to and exploited this unique environment. They further contain data of significance to other life and earth sciences and thus constitute an interdisciplinary research laboratory of national importance.

Historical Background: George Nidever and the Nidever Adobe

George Nidever was a classic American frontiersman--Indian fighter, explorer, trapper--and finally a sheep owner on San Miguel Island. He came to California in 1833 with a party of other resourceful Mountain Men who made the first east-west crossing of the Sierra Nevada Mountains by white Americans. It has been claimed that he was the most understanding hunter of this whole era, shooting forty-five grizzly bears in California in 1837 alone. In 1833, Nidever followed game down the Tuolumne River, hunted beaver around San Francisco Bay, and then began to hunt for sea otters around the Channel Islands. In 1850, Nidever bought a schooner, then bought out the interest of a man named Bruce, who ran sheep on San Miguel Island. Nidever stocked the island with additional sheep and cattle, and by 1962 had 6,000 sheep, 200 cattle, 100 hogs, and 32 horses. He remained on San Miguel for 17 years.

It is not clear whether it was Bruce or Nidever who built the adobe, but it is clear that Nidever lived in it with his family. He remained a hunter, and one trip to San Nicolas Island found a woman who had lived there along for 17 years. He and a friend brought her to Santa Barbara where she lived in Nidever's home until she died.

George Nidever was an archetype of the wreckless breed of tough Americans who played an important historic role in closing the gap between the commercial American Atlantic Seaboard and the Spanish colonial frontier. They were instrumental in bringing California under the United States flag. Mobile and at home in the wilderness, few remained long in one spot. Thus, the Nidever Adobe is one of the few known semi-permanent residences of one of these men. Its environment captures the feeling of that era, and the ruins of the structure embody native building materials and ideas borrowed from the mainland which was a Spanish, then Mexican colony.

Historical Background: San Miguel Ranch

Captain William G. Waters, the first legal lessess of San Miguel, reportedly started building this ranch house around 1900, and his ranch manager, John Russell, constructed

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most of the building. Robert Brooks was leasee from 1917 to 1948, and with John Russell built the long wall that saved the house from drifting sand. Russell was also the longest occupant of the house, living there nearly thirty years. Brooks hired three ranch managers after Russell left in the late 1920s: Herbert Lester was ranch manager from 1929 to 1942; Ulmar Englund succeeded Lester; and a couple known only as Al and Rosy were the last permanent residents. The Navy Department took over management of the island in 1934, and in 1948 the Navy suddenly cancelled Brooks' lease and gave the couple occupying the ranch, 72-hours notice to vacate prior to using the island as a bombing range. Brooks, the leasee, had to abandon more than 500 sheep and four horses on the island.

The ranch house burned in 1967, according to some sources accidentally touched off by a wayward Naval flare, according to others deliberately burned by the Navy to remove it as an attraction to trespass.

Historical Archeology of San Miguel Island

Since the acquisition of California by the United States in 1848, San Miguel Island has been owned by the Federal Government, but even before 1850, perhaps earlier, the island was occupied by squatters who raised sheep and other stock. Two complexes of ranch structures built by such occupants existed on the Island, the most important historically being the adobe of George Nidever.

These two locally significant sites which have no above-ground structures, fall in the category of exploration and settlement, and possess the potential to yield data especially regarding non-Chumas adaptation to the unique, difficult, and isolated environment afforded by San Miguel Island as the most westerly of the Channel Islands. At both sites there is a potential for subsurface archeological resources. Documentary sources contain scanty details and little about the way of life, patterns of commerce, and special adaptation which would have been required of the residents of these two complexes on a remote and isolated island. Archeological resources at these two historic sites and ruins may further be able to contribute information about cultural contacts between the Indians, and non-Indians since Indians were employed in hunting seals and sea otters, and as herdsmen even during the tenancy of Herbert Lester during the 1930s.

Nidever Adobe (4-SMI-456)

The Nidever Adobe is of local significance as a site associated with the career of one of America's most notable although lesser-known "Mountain Men". As an archeological site, it possesses potential for yielding information important in history and archeology regarding life in this isolated environment and the lifestyle of this important "Mountain Man" once he had settled here. It also has significance as a ruin in the category of exploration and settlement. It is regarded as being of local significance individually, due in part to the extent to which its integrity has been impaired by natural erosion.

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San Miguel Island Ranch House (4-SMI-543)

While Nidever and others had "squatted" on the Island without legal authority, a sequence of 20th Century occupants of a second ranch complex obtained legal leases for their activity. They built a complex of buildings and structures which existed from 1900 until destroyed by fire in 1967, so that the sole remaining aspect of the complex which possesses integrity is whatever historical archeological data potential it may have. The site has the potential to yield data regarding adaptation to this unique and isolated environment and other aspects of history and archeology.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES See continuation sheet

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION



LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Roger E. Kelly, Regional Archeologist; Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian; Dr. Lois Weinman, Contract Historian; and Dr. Roberta S. Greenwood, Principal Investigator

ORGANIZATION National Park Service, Western Regional Office DATE September 15, 1978

STREET & NUMBER 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063 TELEPHONE (415) 556-6893

CITY OR TOWN San Francisco STATE California 94102

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION SEP 5 1979

YES NO NONE

Kramer
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE [Signature]

TITLE Ass't. Dir., Cultural Resources DATE 9/14/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature] DATE _____
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: _____ DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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