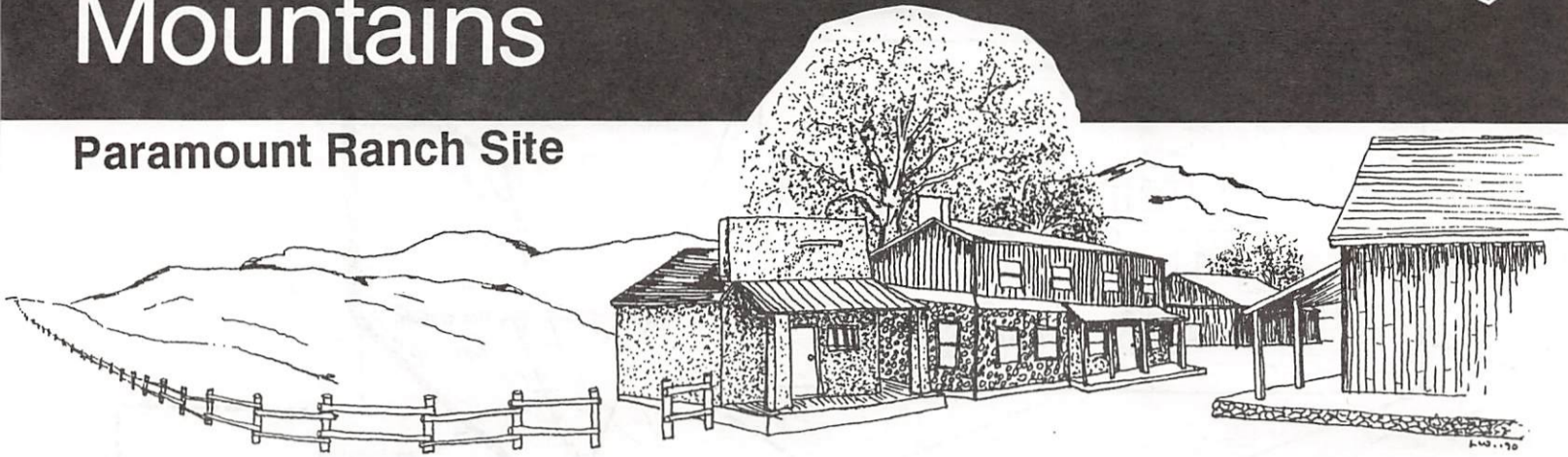


# Santa Monica Mountains

National Recreation Area  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior



## Paramount Ranch Site



### The Studio Years

The year 1927 was important in Hollywood. Studios were learning how to add sound to their films. Paramount Pictures was riding the crest of its successful films, distribution system, and expanding chain of theaters. They moved into a larger studio complex (where they still are), and purchased 2,700 acres of the old Rancho Las Virgenes in the Agoura Hills area.

The site along Medea and Triunfo Creeks included a wide variety of scenic backdrops including rolling grasslands, oak and walnut groves, streams, canyons and even a mountain vaguely resembling the company's logo. Sets

such as colonial Salem village, historic San Francisco, and an old German village were moved to the new ranch.

Near the ranch's southern end was the working core of the ranch. In some ways this resembled a typical ranch with a small ranch house, bunk house, tack room, ranch office, horse barn, and corrals. This self-contained ranch also had its own studio facilities including a wood shop, a water supply, storage sheds for sets and equipment, a construction area, and a commissary that could feed up to 500 people a day.

For twenty years, as Paramount Pictures offered moviegoers two feature films plus selected short subjects each week, the ranch served as a location for

historic or imaginary settings for movies. It was China for "Adventures of Marco Polo," colonial Massachusetts for "Maid of Salem," and Missouri for "Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

The 1940s were a time of great change for the film industry and for Paramount Pictures. After losing a restraint of trade suit, the company was forced to sell off its national chain of movie theaters. Motion picture attendance dropped as Americans were entertained at home by television. With the economic and political changes, the ranch was sold to Eiser Wickholm.

### The Independent Years

Sets were torn down and a few crops planted. The ranch was broken into smaller parcels and sold to different individuals. In 1952 the southeast portion of the ranch was purchased by William Hertz.

The Hertz family took great pleasure in "tinkering" with the 326 acre site. Using imagination, picture books, and the labor of three teenagers, Hertz converted Paramount's metal storage sheds into his version of a western town. The commissary became a dance hall, and the Hertz family played host to a variety of western-style events.

At the same time, westerns had moved from the movie screen to the television screen as a staple of nightly programming. Bill Hertz's western town became the second home of television

westerns like "The Cisco Kid," "Bat Masterson," and "The Plunderers."

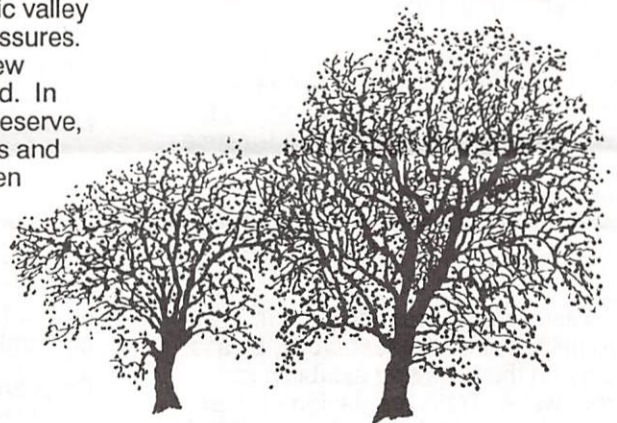
Although the Hertz family sold the ranch to the Paramount Sportsman's Club a few years later, the western town continued to attract filming, primarily for television. In 1980, the ranch was acquired by the National Park Service as part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The Western Town (revitalized in 1984) is one of a few remaining western sets in southern California accessible for use by independent production companies.



### Paramount Ranch Today

The landscape which attracted Paramount Pictures to Agoura Hills, and has been seen on screen by millions of people, is perhaps the most endangered of Paramount Ranch's resources. Oak-studded floodplains have been vital to the lives of grizzly bears, deer, and many smaller animals as well as to the native people of the Santa Monica Mountains. Within this century the native grasses and valley oaks have disappeared due to cattle grazing, farming, and, more recently,

urban development. The majestic valley oaks cannot withstand these pressures. In many areas, the oaks died a few years after development occurred. In an effort to better understand, preserve, and propagate the native grasses and oaks, a restoration zone has been established at Paramount Ranch. As the study progresses year after year, the area within the zone will, hopefully, look more like it did when the Chumash Indians hunted bears and harvested wild chia seeds nearby.



### Site Information

Paramount Ranch is a 436 acre site in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and is administered by the National Park Service. It is located south of Agoura Hills, California and can be reached by taking the Ventura Freeway (101) to Agoura Hills. Exit at

Kanan Road then travel south 0.75 miles. Turn left onto Cornell Road and travel 2.5 miles to the Paramount Ranch entrance on the right.

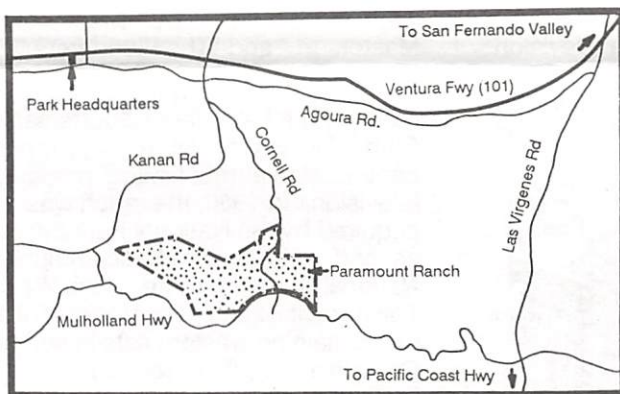
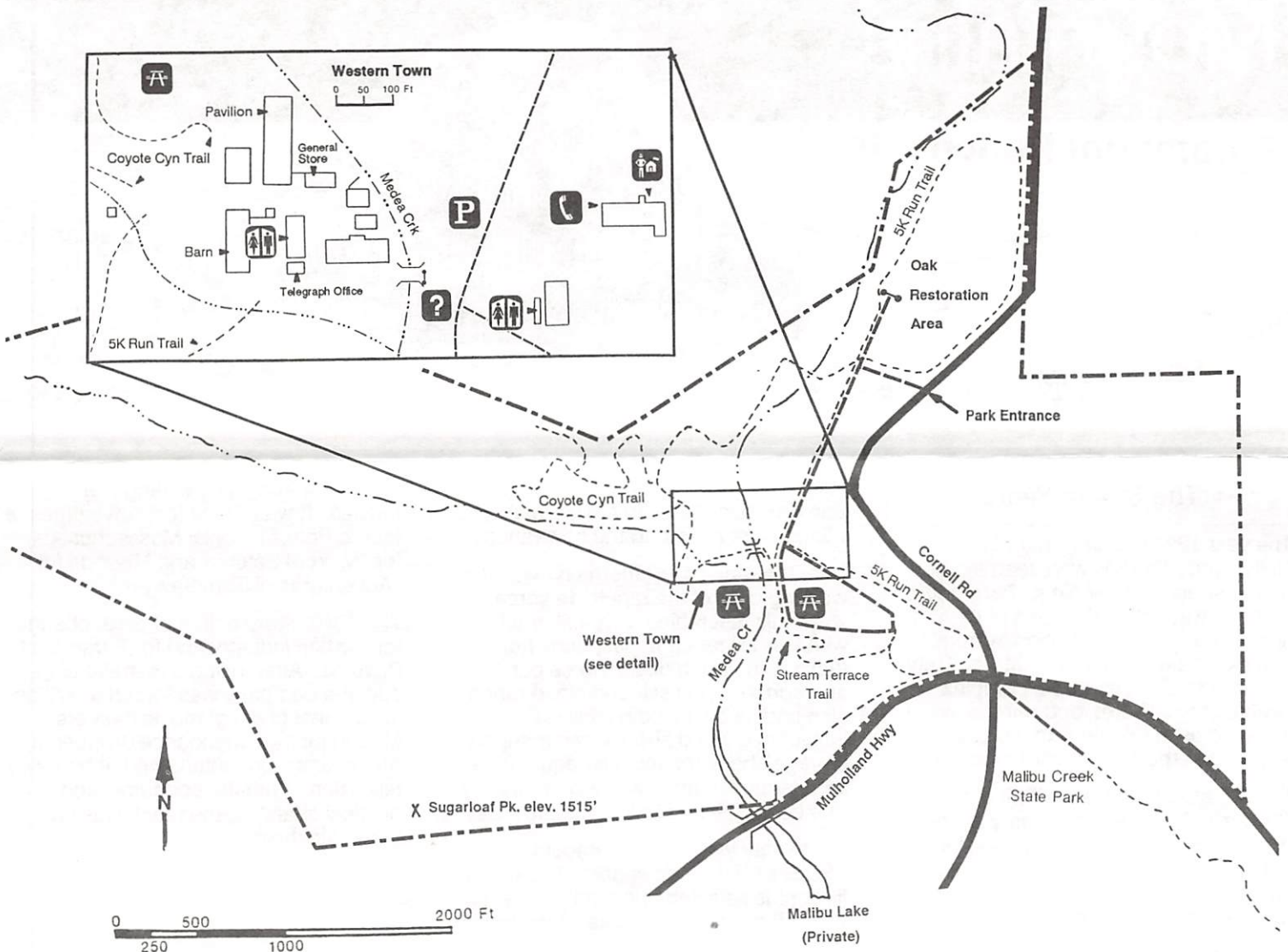
Facilities available include hiking trails, Western Town movie set (open to visitors during filming), picnic areas, water, restrooms, telephone, and

ranger station. The site is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

The headquarters and main visitor center for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area are located at 30401 Agoura Road, Suite 100, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Call (818) 597-9192 for more information.



# PARAMOUNT RANCH



Legend			
	Park Boundary		Ranger Station
	Paved Road		Parking
	Light Duty Road		Restrooms
	Trail		Picnic Area
	Perennial Stream		Public Telephone
	Intermittent Stream		Information Kiosk
	Locked Gate (closed to unauthorized motor vehicles)		Bridge

## Trail Information

### The 5k Run Trail

3.1 miles round trip

This trail is enjoyable for running, walking, bicycling and horseback riding. Starting near the bridge to the Western Town, the Run Trail traverses a variety of ecosystems and offers many views.

### Stream Terrace Trail

1/8 mile round trip

Beginning 500 ft south of the information kiosk this trail (open to hikers only) rises above the Medea Creek riparian ecosystem through oak grasslands to a small knoll overlooking Medea Creek and the Western Town.

### Coyote Canyon Trail

3/4 mile round trip

From the west side of the Western Town the Coyote Canyon Trail (open to hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians) follows a small chaparral covered canyon and climbs a small knoll overlooking the valley. A short spur trail will take you to a picnic spot with a view.

## For Your Safety

To safely enjoy Paramount Ranch and to help protect the resources, please stay on the trails and established roadways. Trails are designated for specific uses including hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding. You must restrict your activities to the appropriate trail.

Remember the Western Town is only a set. Walk carefully on the boardwalks and do not lean or climb on the buildings.

Vehicles are restricted to designated roads and parking areas.

Water is not safe to contact or drink from Medea Creek. Do not drink from any surface waters due to possible contamination.

Dogs are allowed in Paramount Ranch on a leash on designated trails, access roads, and developed areas.

Firearms are prohibited in National Park Service and State Park areas.

Fire is a constant danger. Smoking is not permitted while traveling on trails or during periods of high, very high and extreme fire danger. If you wish to smoke you must stop and stay in one place.

Campfires are prohibited.

Spring and fall are seasons for ticks. Wear light colored clothing and check carefully for these tiny creatures.

Be alert for rattlesnakes and poison oak.

Bicyclists must ride courteously and yield to hikers and horseback riders.

Hikers must yield to horseback riders.

The meadow picnic area is closed to all bicycle and horse traffic.

Wasp and bees are plentiful during the summer months. Please cover foods and sweet beverages while picnicking.

**FOR EMERGENCY:  
Contact a ranger or call 911.**