Indigenous History in Ventura County

Prior to European settlers arriving in the area that would eventually become Ventura County, the Ventureño Chumash people had been stewarding the land for over 13,000 years. The Chumash people comprised a large and diverse population living in settlements ranging from coasts and islands to the interior and mountain areas between Malibu and San Luis Obispo. Their large coastal villages engaged in long-distance trade with villages on the Channel Islands.

Before their way of life was disrupted by Spanish settlers, the Chumash exhibited high levels of craftsmanship, including basketry, elaborate rock painting, and the construction of sturdy plank canoes that enabled travel to the Channel Islands. In addition, as part of their stewardship, the Chumash people burned large areas of grassland in order to increase yields of seeds and other foods, an important practice that was later outlawed by the Spanish (County of Ventura Historic Preservation Plan). Generations of Chumash descendants continue to help steward these lands to this day.

To learn more about indigenous history in Ventura County, please visit vclandmarks.org.

The Cultural Heritage Board works to preserve and protect public and private historic, cultural, and natural resources. The CHB is composed of seven members, one member representing each of the five Supervisorial Districts and two at-large members.

For more information, please visit our website vclandmarks.org or contact the program planner, Dillan Murray, at 805.654.5042 or Dillan.Murray@ventura.org
Finding Hidden Gems

Have you ever wondered about the history of your property or one in your community? Each historic property, no matter how significant, has a story to tell. A little hard work and research can help you unearth a hidden gem. We have a few tips on where to begin.

The Building

The building itself is a great place to start. Examine it carefully, both inside and out. Take precise notes on its current appearance: the building materials, style, and shape, as well as the number and style of windows and chimneys and the appearance and material of the roof. All of these elements can point to the date of construction. Below are a few examples of common roof types.

- Gable
- Hip
- Offset Gable
- Translated Hip
- A-Frame
- Pyramidal
- Flat
- Gambrel

Documents with historical information about a building can be found in many places.

- Historical Property Contracts (Mills Act Contracts)
- State and Federal Tax Incentives
- Zoning Code Deviations
- Building Code Alternatives (State Historic Building Code)
- Conservation Subdivisions

Benefits of Designation

There are many benefits to having your property designated as a Ventura County landmark, including eligibility for the following:
- Historical Property Contracts (Mills Act Contracts)
- State and Federal Tax Incentives
- Zoning Code Deviations
- Building Code Alternatives (State Historic Building Code)
- Conservation Subdivisions

Mills Act Contracts

Mills Act historical property tax contracts benefit property owners of eligible landmarks and district contributors. Under the Mills Act, in return for investment into a property, property taxes may be reduced by 30 percent (commercial) to 60 percent (residential) depending upon the circumstances of the historic landmark and the date of purchase.