



Memorandum

Date 10 December 2021

Project Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve
Portola Valley, California

To Alex Casbara, Planner III
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District)
330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, CA 94022

From Ruchira Nageswaran

Topic Historical Consultations - Olive Groves and Hawthorn Trees; Secondary
Ancillary Structures

Via Email

Purpose of this Memorandum

In 2021, the District began a multi-year project to explore the feasibility of introducing ecologically sensitive public access to the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve (Hawthorns Area) in the Town of Portola Valley, California. The purpose of this Memorandum is to evaluate the current condition of the olive groves, hawthorn trees, and secondary ancillary structures on the property to inform the District's planning process regarding future public access. Specifically, this Memorandum addresses the following:

- Delineate boundaries for portions of the olive grove considered to be historic;
- Identify treatment options for subsequent generations of fugitive/volunteer olive trees;
- Identify and locate the hawthorns shrubs/trees that contribute to the property's historic significance;
- Assess the conditions of ancillary structures to determine if they retain integrity to contribute to the historic district.

Refer to the attached site plan and aerials for the layout of the site and structures; historical areas of olive groves and hawthorn trees; and other trees along the original driveway.

Historical Status

The *Hawthorns Structures Conditions Assessment – Historic Resource Study* compiled by Knapp Architects in December 2013 found that the approximately 79-acre Hawthorns Area appears eligible to the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district under Criterion A (broad patterns of history) at the local level. The property was developed by the Allen family from 1886 and was bought by the Woods family in 1912 and retained until District acquisition in 2011. The property is significant as a “gentleman’s farm” as part of the early development of the Peninsula in the late 19th and early 20th century. Its period of significance runs from its

original development by the Allen family in 1886 to 1953, when the property was subdivided by Frances Newhall Woods with a portion given to Fred Woods to construct a residence in the early 1950s, which was a mixture of both Ranch and Monterey Revival styles, different from those of the Historic Complex.

The property consists of two sectors which are divided by a north-south ridgeline: the Los Trancos Road Precinct with the historic complex of buildings on the east side of the ridge, and the Alpine Road Precinct with the later 1950s residence on the west side of the ridge.

Olive Groves

The Los Trancos Road Precinct contains an extensive olive grove between the property's northern and southern boundaries on the eastern side of the ridgeline. The internal road that runs over the ridge between the Historic Complex and the original Historic Entrance Driveway from Alpine Road divides the Los Trancos Road Precinct olive grove into two sections; the section north of the road is smaller and covers approximately three-quarters of an acre; the section south of the road covers approximately eight and a half acres. The trees are planted in rows spaced about 20 feet apart.

According to a December 25, 1886 San Mateo County Times-Gazette article cited in the 2013 HRS, up to 1000 olive trees may have been planted. The 2013 HRS notes this matches a rough count of trees on a 1953 aerial viewed in Google Earth within the Los Trancos Road Precinct olive grove. As noted in the 2013 HRS and in their current state, these olive trees have not been pruned or tended for many years with sucker branches growing from the base of the trees, moss on trunks and limbs, and the encroachment of trees and brush within the edges of the grove (2013 HRS, p. 63-64).

The Alpine Road Precinct contains a smaller olive grove in the southwestern corner of the property that was planted at an early date. This grove is visible in a 1943 aerial photograph referenced in the 2013 HRS. The olive trees were planted in rows spaced about 20 feet apart within an area of approximately two and a half acres but the grove has not been maintained. As indicated in the 2013 HRS, the area is overgrown with oaks and brush to the extent that the rows of olive trees are no longer apparent within the expanse of wooded area along the western edge of the property (2013 HRS, p. 71).

The olive grove within the Los Trancos Road Precinct retains integrity as a character-defining feature of the historic district with distinct rows visible despite the trees being overgrown. The condition and integrity of the olive grove at the southwest corner of the property in the Alpine Road Precinct has deteriorated so that it no longer contributes to the significance of the property and is no longer a character-defining feature (2013 HRS, p. 75-76).

Management Considerations

In order to manage the olive groves, the removal of fugitive and volunteer trees within and outside the Los Trancos Road Precinct and the Alpine Road Precinct groves would be acceptable. For general management and to minimize fire risk, the following is recommended for mature olive trees within each of the groves.

Removal of mature olive trees may occur at the eastern grove (Los Trancos Precinct) retaining an outline of original trees composed of multiple rows (three trees in depth) to maintain the historical appearance of the grove on both sides of the internal road and along the western edge of the Historic Complex. Beyond the visual continuity of retained rows, the trees to the interior of the grove could be removed or thinned as they become less visible from the road and the Historic Complex.

Since the southwestern grove (Alpine Road Precinct) no longer retains integrity and does not contribute to the significance of the property, the removal of mature olive trees would be acceptable within this grove.

District staff noted that, even with pruning, the existing groves would be difficult to return to a productive orchard. However, if a partner were found to manage an orchard at either the Los Trancos Road Precinct or Alpine Road Precinct groves, new trees could be planted within the footprint of the old groves.

Hawthorn Trees and Shrubs

The Hawthorns property was named for the small ornamental tree, of the *Crataegus* genus, that Judge Allen planted along Alpine Road and at the original entry at the Historic Entrance Driveway soon after he acquired the property. The planting, originally maintained as a tall, pruned hedge (about 12-15' high), was known to have pink and white blossoms in the springtime. The hedge was removed when Alpine Road was widened in 1952 (2013 HRS, p. 71). Google Earth historical aerials shows the dark line of the hedge along Alpine Road in 1948, which disappears in the 1953 aerial.

While the full hedge along Alpine Road is no longer extant, there are individual examples of hawthorns that have naturalized or self-seeded along Alpine Road at the southwestern edge of the property; and scattered in the adjacent field and along the Historic Complex Driveway. Since the original hedge is no longer extant, the fugitive and volunteer hawthorns plants would not contribute to the historical significance. As such, the hawthorns trees may be managed by the District as needed, including removal, without impacting the property's historic significance.

Historic Entrance Driveway Trees

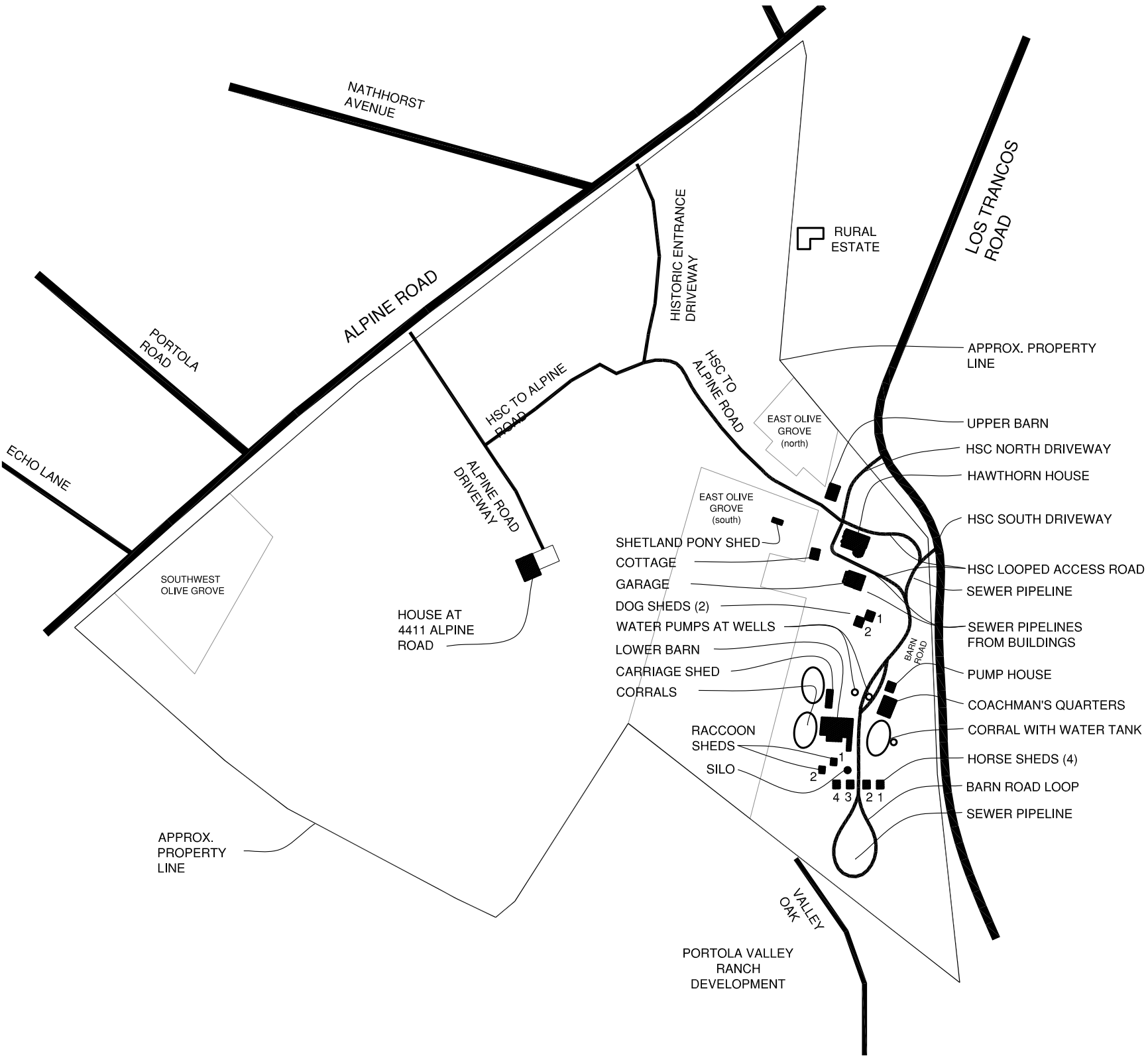
Google Earth historical aerials from 1948 and 1953 show trees planted evenly along each side of the Historic Entrance Driveway from Alpine Road to the ridgeline. The 2013 HRS noted the roadbed is no longer extant and formalized vegetation along its edges are not readily apparent (2013 HRS, p. 76). The thickening of trees is evidenced on the 1991 and 2020 aerials. With heavy vegetation, it was not possible to walk within the driveway during the site visit on 10/15/2021. District staff noted that the driveway's location was likely the natural drainage for the surrounding hills and may have experienced sustained flooding or erosion. Over time, with lack of management, the driveway became a wooded area. At Alpine Road, where brush has been cleared, the gate at the original entry is flanked by oak trees. In addition, one row of oak trees extends from Alpine Road to the now overgrown area that was the driveway. This pattern of oak trees may continue into the wooded area but is no longer readily discernible.

In terms of management, it is recommended to retain any aligned oak trees that recall the original driveway route and contribute to the overall historical character of the property.



Trees at Historic Entrance Driveway – Above, the view looking northwest at the original entry at the gate flanked by oak trees and line of trees extending along one side (left). Below, the view looking southeast from the original entry with a line of trees to the right along one side extending to the woods where the driveway existed.

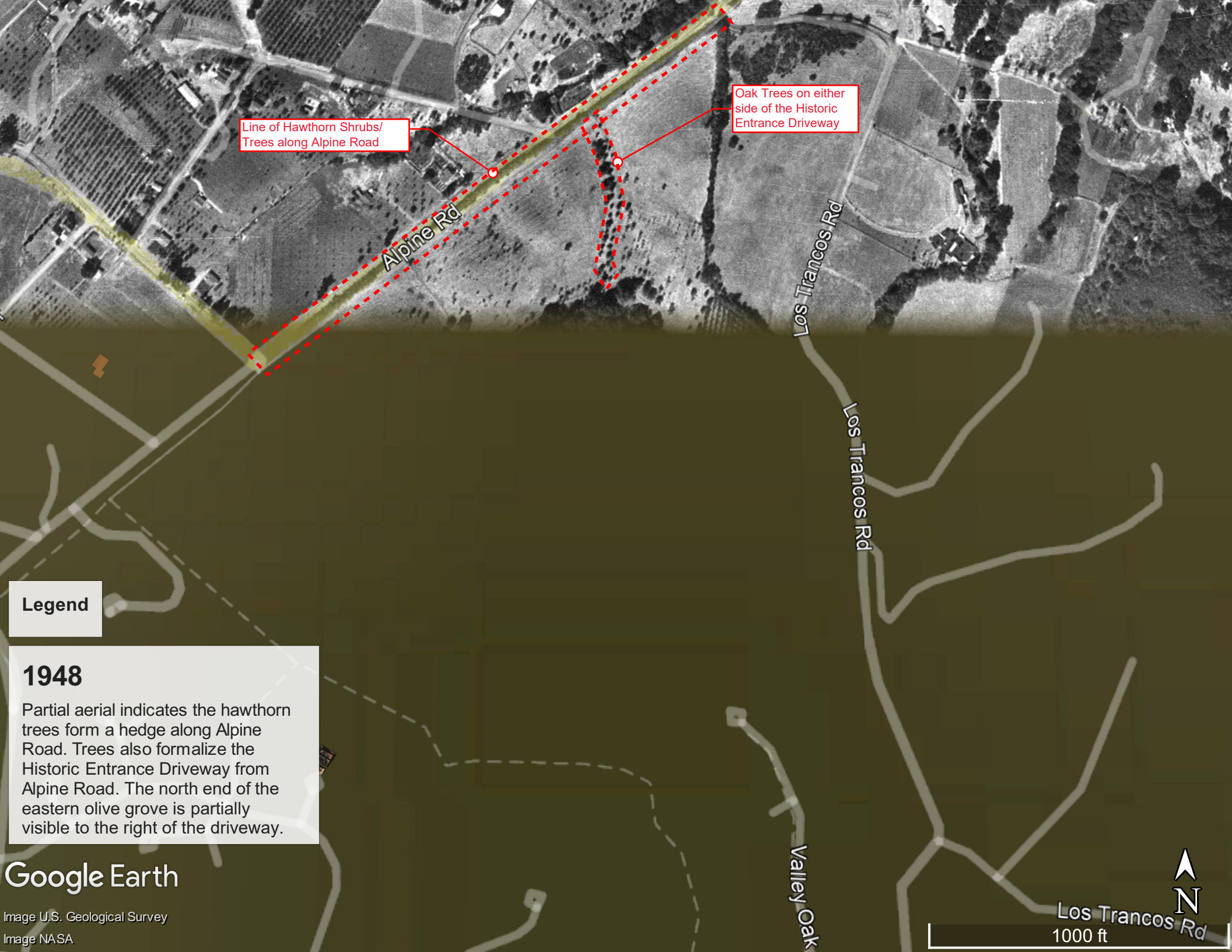




HISTORIC STRUCTURE
COMPLEX (HSC) AT 800 LOS
TRANCOS ROAD INCLUDES:
HAWTHORN HOUSE, COTTAGE,
GARAGE, LOWER BARN



This site diagram is for reference only and does
not represent the accurate configuration of site
features and boundaries.



Line of Hawthorn Shrubs/
Trees along Alpine Road

Oak Trees on either
side of the Historic
Entrance Driveway

Alpine Rd

Los Trancos Rd

Los Trancos Rd

Valley Oak

Los Trancos Rd
1000 ft

Legend

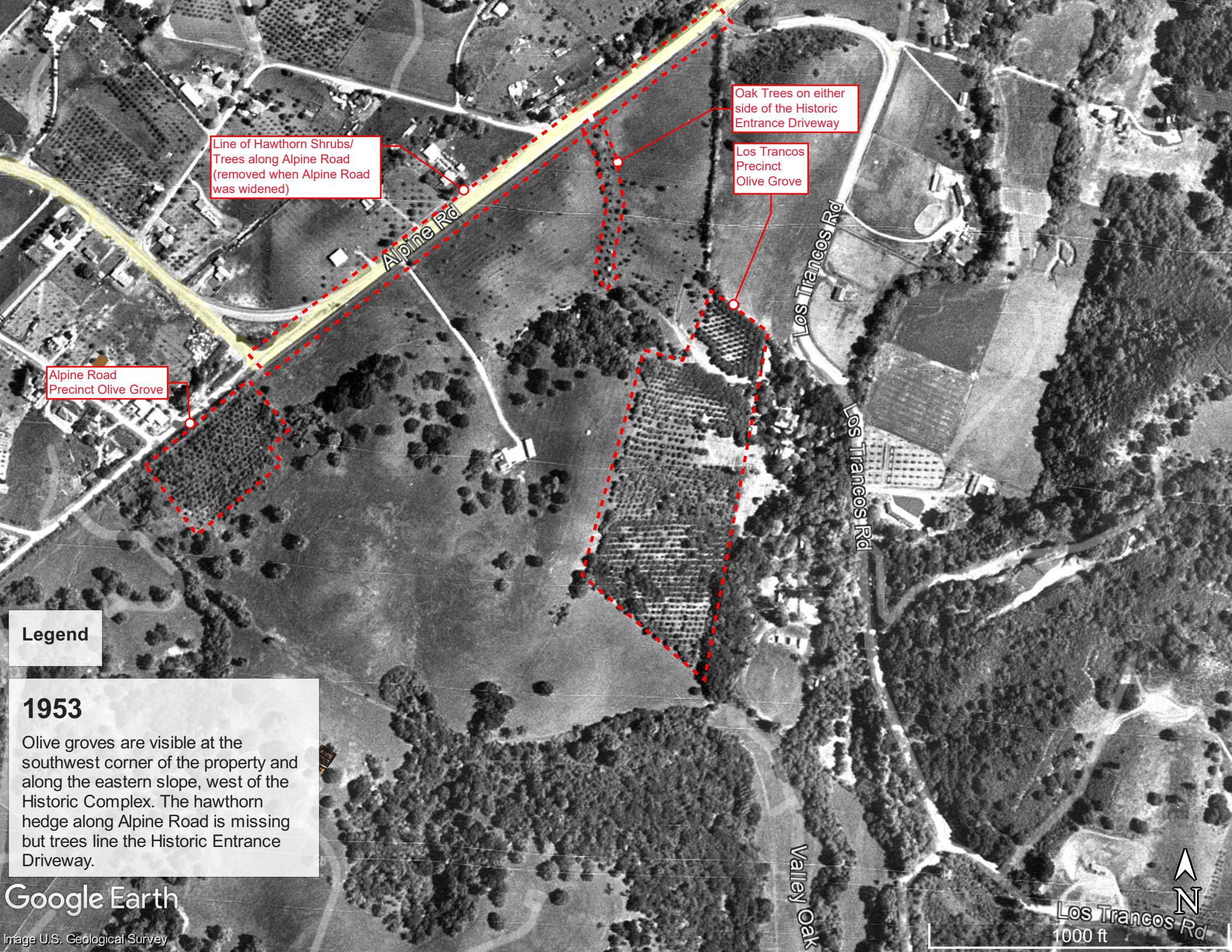
1948

Partial aerial indicates the hawthorn trees form a hedge along Alpine Road. Trees also formalize the Historic Entrance Driveway from Alpine Road. The north end of the eastern olive grove is partially visible to the right of the driveway.

Google Earth

Image U.S. Geological Survey
Image NASA





Line of Hawthorn Shrubs/
Trees along Alpine Road
(removed when Alpine Road
was widened)

Alpine Road
Precinct Olive Grove

Oak Trees on either
side of the Historic
Entrance Driveway

Los Trancos
Precinct
Olive Grove

Alpine Rd

Los Trancos Rd

Los Trancos Rd

Valley Oak

Legend

1953

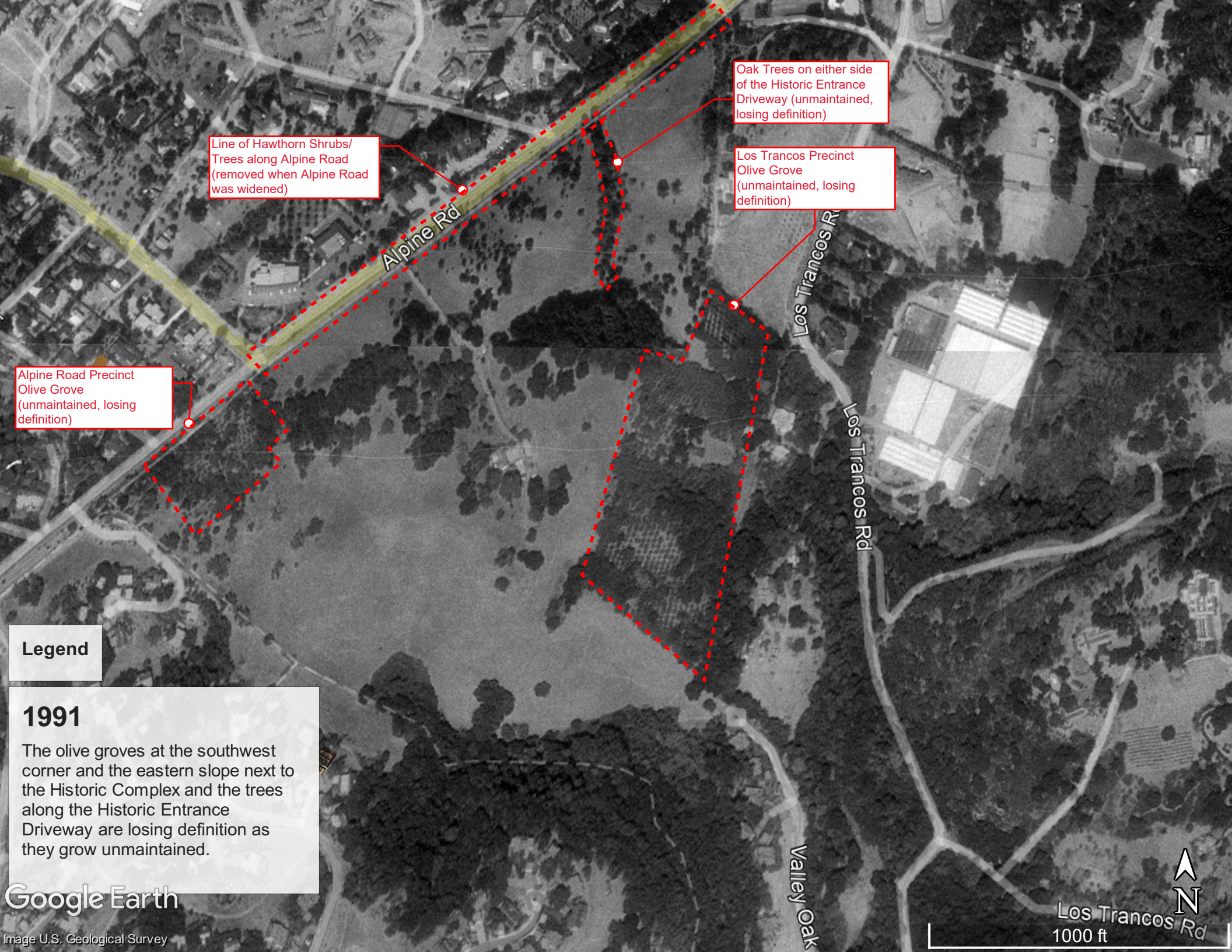
Olive groves are visible at the southwest corner of the property and along the eastern slope, west of the Historic Complex. The hawthorn hedge along Alpine Road is missing but trees line the Historic Entrance Driveway.

Google Earth

Image U.S. Geological Survey



Los Trancos Rd
1000 ft



Line of Hawthorn Shrubs/
Trees along Alpine Road
(removed when Alpine Road
was widened)

Oak Trees on either side
of the Historic Entrance
Driveway (unmaintained,
losing definition)

Los Trancos Precinct
Olive Grove
(unmaintained, losing
definition)

Alpine Road Precinct
Olive Grove
(unmaintained, losing
definition)

Legend

1991

The olive groves at the southwest corner and the eastern slope next to the Historic Complex and the trees along the Historic Entrance Driveway are losing definition as they grow unmaintained.



Line of Hawthorn Shrubs/
Trees along Alpine Road
(removed when Alpine Road
was widened)

Oak Trees on either side of
the Historic Entrance
Driveway (unmaintained,
overgrown)

Los Trancos Precinct
Olive Grove
(unmaintained, overgrown,
losing definition)

Alpine Road Precinct
Olive Grove
(unmaintained, overgrown,
definition lost)

Legend

2021

The olive groves at the southwest corner and the eastern slope next to the Historic Complex have matured unmaintained. Similarly, the trees along the Historic Entrance Driveway are overgrown although they still define the original route.

Ancillary Structures

The primary structures of the Hawthorns Historic District are the Hawthorn House, Garage, Lower Barn, and Cottage. The secondary structures are the Upper Barn, Shetland Shed, Dog Sheds, Carriage Shed, Pump House, Coachman's Quarters, Raccoon Sheds, Horse Sheds, and Silo. The construction dates and specific histories of the outbuildings are undocumented. The following pages summarize the outbuilding description, location, overall architectural condition, and include a statement of individual integrity based on level of intactness and condition.

Condition

The ancillary buildings are in various states of disrepair from dilapidated finishes to total collapse. Since the site has been vacant for many years, architectural conditions ratings assume a base level of deterioration due to their long abandoned state not comparable to ratings for buildings in active use. Base level deterioration includes the poor condition of roofing materials, loose and peeling paint exposed wood exhibiting dry rot, loose and dilapidated siding, and poor drainage at the base of the building due to overgrowth and poor grading. Physical conditions ratings are described in general as follows:

- Excellent – Intact without deterioration
 - Good – Intact with minor repairable deterioration
 - Fair – Deteriorated with portions that require replacement
 - Poor – Severely deteriorated or missing requiring replacement and reconstruction
- Structural assessment of the outbuildings has not been performed but would be necessary to understand the stability of the intact ancillary buildings for safety and reuse.

Integrity

When a property is significant under criteria of the California Register, the property's integrity is assessed to verify that it retains the physical characteristics which convey its historic significance. The seven aspects of integrity include location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The National Register Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" provides guidance on integrity for historic districts:

"For a district to retain integrity as a whole, the majority of the components that make up the district's historic character must possess integrity even if they are individually undistinguished. In addition, the relationships among the district's components must be substantially unchanged since the period of significance." (p. 46)

The 2013 HRS notes the following in regard to the outbuildings:

"There are a number of other ancillary outbuildings on the site that are both difficult to date and to understand how they were used historically. These components of the site should be considered contributing, but of secondary importance to the historic district." (p. 107)

"While the Hawthorns property has been changed and been altered over time, and while some of the contributing resources are in poor condition, overall the historic district retains a great deal of integrity and a strong sense of time and place. It conveys its significance as

a representative example of a “gentleman’s farm” or estate property as developed in the late 19th and early 20th century. While many of the outbuildings on the site are in poor condition, some even in serious state of decay, they may provide additional information about the development and use of the property.” (p. 108)

The Hawthorns Historic District is significant under Criterion A (broad patterns of history) at the local level as a “gentleman’s farm” developed from 1886 to 1953. Of the various ancillary buildings, the Upper Barn, Raccoon Sheds, Silo, and Horse Sheds, range in condition from good to poor, but are essentially intact and retain integrity. The Shetland Sheds, Dog Sheds, Carriage Shed, Pump House, and Coachman’s Quarters are in poor condition and collapsed. In their current state, the remaining portions are a scattered array of construction materials with no sense of their original architectural configuration or use. As such, these particular ancillary buildings no longer retain integrity to contribute to the property’s historic significance.

Even if these secondary structures with no remaining integrity were removed, the Historic District would retain the seven aspects of integrity to maintain character to convey its significance through the primary structures, augmented by the remaining secondary contributing structures. If these secondary structures are removed, their location should be documented on a map; their physical footprint outlined at the site; and a sign added at the site with available information, if any, (such as historical information and photographs of their state before collapse) to facilitate historical interpretation as elements of the overall property.

Upper Barn	
Description	Rectangular plan with inset porch, stalls and shed; corrugated steel roof; vertical board & batten wall & door finish; hopper shutters at window openings; horizontal board siding at stalls; wood frame on grade (roof 1x6 sheathing on 2x4 purlins, 4x4 posts); dirt floors
Location	North end of the site on HSC North Driveway in close proximity to Hawthorn House; east of north end of olive grove; visible from Historic Complex
Condition	Intact; Fair condition
Integrity	Retains integrity



<i>Shetland Shed</i>	Appears to be shade device and may relate to Upper Barn with stalls
Description	Rectangular plan, open on three sides; corrugated steel roof; rear south wall with vertical board & batten finish; wood frame on grade (roof 4x4s sistered to 2x4s, 1x4 posts, 2x6 wall); dirt floors
Location	West of the Cottage; visible on drive from HSC to Alpine Road in between north and south olive groves across from Upper Barn
Condition	Collapsed; Poor condition
Integrity	Does not retain integrity



<i>Dog Sheds (2)</i>	Appears to be shelter enclosure
Description	Rectangular plan; corrugated steel roof; Shed 1 - 1x6 horizontal board finish; wood frame on grade (roof 4x4, 1x8 skip sheathing, 4x6 posts, 2x6 wall); dirt floors; Shed 2 – 1x6 vertical board finish; wood frame on grade (roof 2x4, 8x8 posts); dirt floors
Location	Southeast of Garage; somewhat visible within field west of Barn Road
Condition	Collapsed; Poor condition
Integrity	Does not retain integrity



<i>Carriage Shed</i>	Appears to have an open shelter at the south and enclosed space at north with stalls
Description	Rectangular plan; corrugated steel roof; 1x12 vertical board finish; vertical board doors with strap hinges; wood frame on grade (roof 1x6 skip sheathing on 2x6 rafters, 1x4 posts & sills); 1x12 floors
Location	North of the Lower Barn; visible from Barn Road
Condition	Collapsed substantially at the north; Poor condition
Integrity	Does not retain integrity



<i>Pump House</i>	Adjacent to creek with a concrete pad at the interior
Description	Rectangular plan; corrugated steel roof; 1x12 vertical board finish; vertical board doors with strap hinges; wood frame on grade (roof 1x6 skip sheathing on 2x6 rafters, 1x4 posts & sills); 1x12 floors
Location	East side of Barn Road, north of Coachman's Quarters, across from Lower Barn along sloping bank of north-south creek to the east
Condition	Collapsed; Poor condition
Integrity	Does not retain integrity



<i>Coachman's Quarters</i>	Appears to have small living quarters at the north end, central covered space, and grooming/tack room structure at the south
Description	Rectangular plan; corrugated steel roof; board & batten wall finish; wood frame on grade (roof exposed, 6x6 posts & 2x6 wall); wood tongue-and-groove
Location	East side of Barn Road, south of the Pump House, across from Lower Barn along sloping bank of north-south creek to the east
Condition	Collapsed substantially; Poor condition
Integrity	Does not retain integrity



<i>Raccoon Sheds (2)</i>	Appears to be shelter enclosure
Description	Rectangular plan; corrugated steel roof; Shed 1 – board & batten short wall finish and horizontal boards long side; wood frame on grade (roof 1x8 skip sheathing, 4x4 posts, 2x4 plates); dirt floors; Shed 2 – board & batten south wall finish; wood frame on grade (roof 1x4 skip sheathing on 2x4 rafters, 4x4 posts); dirt floors
Location	South of the Lower Barn; visible within field west of Barn Road
Condition	Intact; Fair to poor condition
Integrity	Retain integrity



<i>Horse Sheds (4)</i>	Appears to be a series of shelters north of a large field and loop road
Description	Square plan, open three sides; corrugated steel roof; horizontal board siding at inside face of rear wall framing; wood framing (roof 2x4 rafters, 4x6 posts); rough concrete floors; central wooden trough
Location	Two sheds flank the end of Barn Road where it loops within a field south of the Lower Barn and Coachman's Quarters
Condition	Shed 1 & 2 Intact, Fair condition, 3 & 4 Partially collapsed, Poor condition
Integrity	Retains integrity



Silo	Storage cylindrical about 30 feet high and 15 feet in diameter,
Description	Circular in plan, clad in vertical concrete panels with metal rods wrapped horizontally at intervals along the height; ladder enclosed by a cylindrical metal attachment on the exterior; roof is sheet metal with a conical raised cap for ventilation
Location	East of the Raccoon Sheds
Condition	Intact; Good to fair condition
Integrity	Retains integrity

