

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE California	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. XVII-b - Commerce and Industry	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 850 Acres
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Pico Canyon, Well No. "CSO" 4 ("Pico" #4)		
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Los Angeles County, 9.6 Mi. north of San Fernando, via U.S. Hwy. 99 & to West of Hwy., or 7 Mi NW of Newhall, via Lyons Ave.		
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Standard Oil Company of California, San Francisco		

7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)
The birth of California's oil industry occurred in Pico Canyon, which in the 70's and early 80's was the principal oil region of California. There the pioneers of the industry received both training and substance, which enabled them to make California the second oil producing state in the nation in the first two decades of the 20th Century.

The successful completion of the Drake Oil Well near Titusville, Pennsylvania, in August, 1859, sent a wave of excitement across the continent and from 1861 to 1867 California experienced the first of its numerous oil booms. Wildcatting was carried out in a dozen widely separated regions of the state. By 1867, when the boom finally collapsed, 75 companies capitalized at about 50 million dollars, had drilled 60 wells in California. At a cost of one million dollars they succeeded in producing some 28,000 barrels of oil worth about \$60,000. When, in 1867, Eastern "coal oil" began selling in San Francisco at less per gallon than the costs of refining and marketing of inferior kerosene made from the California fields, the Pacific Coast oil boom was over.

As a part of this early excitement, Southern Californians turned their attention to the springs and seepages of Pico Canyon. The first claims were filed in January 1865; the San Fernando Petroleum Mining District was formed under the mining laws in June, 1865, and by June 1866 nearly 300 individual claims covering an area, if combined, of more than 7 square miles, had been entered on the books of the San Fernando district. Although some oil exploration was done, this activity was largely of a speculative nature. Up to 1873, Pico Canyon, consisting of a series of steep and rugged canyons cutting into the northern slope of the Santa Susana Mountains, had been bright with promise but of little account otherwise. The major efforts to find and produce oil had been made in Humboldt County of Northern California.

(Continued on next page)

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) Robt. G. Cleland & Osgood Hardy, March of Industry (Los Angeles 1929), 169, 172-178; Frank J. Taylor & Earl M. Welty, Black Bonanza (New York 1950), 38-44, 45-62; James W. Caughey, California (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1957), 418-419; California-A Guide to the Golden State (American Guide Series) (New York 1954), 83, 452; Gerald T. White, Formative Years in the Far West: A History of the Std. Oil Co. of California & Predecessors Through 1919 (New York 1962), 28-58.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)
None

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Orig. Structures	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Oil Field	13. DATE OF VISIT Apr. 19, 1961
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Charles W. Snell	15. TITLE Reg. Chief, Branch Hist. Sites	16. DATE March 12, 1963	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
California	Pico Canyon, Well No. "CSO" 4 ("Pico" #4)

7. Continued:

In 1873 oil promoters of Los Angeles again began to "puff" the merits of the potential oil field at Pico Canyon. As a result, a small refinery was erected at Lyons Station, about a mile and a half southeast of Newhall, in 1873-74. This modest establishment, built at a cost of \$3,000, included a single 15-barrel still with wooden flumes for running the crude oil from storage tanks, and a pipeline to supply water from a nearby spring. It was hoped that oil would be found in sufficient quantities to keep the refinery operating. Drilling began in July 1874 and by early 1875 one well succeeded in producing a little oil, but not enough to keep the refinery in operation.

In early 1875 three migrants from the Pennsylvania oil fields, Denton Cyrus Scott, Robert C. McPherson and John J. Baker, arrived in Los Angeles, decided to lease the shut-down refinery at Lyons Station, and to try their luck in the Pico area. Organizing the Star Oil Works for this purpose, they employed C. A. Mentry, who was also from the Pennsylvania fields, to drill at Pico Springs in July 1875. At the depth of 120 feet Mentry got a production of 10 to 12 barrels a day, which was the best showing yet made by any well in California. By the end of the year he had also completed Pico #2 and #3, shallower wells, both of which yielded some oil.

John A. Scott, a Titusville refiner, was then employed at the Lyons Station Refinery, and in early 1876 he succeeded in turning out better oil than any yet made in California. Encouraged by these beginnings, the partners reorganized their company in June 1876 as the California Star Oil Works Company, with an authorized capital of 1,000,000 dollars; they acquired the Lyons Station refinery, took leases in Pico Canyon, and received an additional financial backing from San Francisco capitalists.

In July 1876 Mentry began drilling Pico #4, using a steam rig, and on September 26, at a depth of 370 feet, it produced a flow of 25 barrels a day.

In the summer of 1876 the Southern Pacific Railroad laid the last of its track between Los Angeles and San Francisco, thereby opening the Pico Region to rail transportation and connecting it with markets.

These signs of progress were sufficient to induce two more oil professionals, the San Francisco veteran oil merchant Frederick B. Taylor and Demetrius G. Scofield, who

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years later became the first president of the Standard Oil Company of California, to enter the company, and the firm thus underwent further enlargement. As more oil was found, it became clear that Lyons Station Refinery, by-passed by the railroad, would be inadequate. In 1877 a new site was selected at Andrew Station (at the edge of Newhall today) on the Southern Pacific Line and a new and larger refinery (now called the "Pioneer Refinery") was constructed during the summer. This improvement was none too soon, for in November, 1877, Mentry deepened Pico #4 to 560 feet, and oil spurted to the top of the 65 foot derrick, and then flowed oil at about 70 barrels daily. This production was the most spectacular yet known in California and revived what had been a collapsing industry. To handle the increased production, the Newhall refinery and Pico field, located 7 miles apart, were connected in 1879 by means of a two-inch cast-iron gravity-feed pipeline, the first to be used in California.

From the Pico oil field in the vicinity of Newhall, oil explorations were extended to the Ventura fields in 1877-78. California oil production rose from 18,000 barrels in 1876 to 41,981 barrels in 1880.

In November 1884, the second future giant of the California oil industry, the Union Oil Company of California, then known as Hardison and Stewart Oil Company, also made its start in Pico Canyon. Here they brought in their first successful well, "Star No. 1," and with funds obtained from this strike, they were able to secure land in Ventura County around Santa Paula, where they brought in a succession of successful wells in 1885, thus launching the firm on a successful career.

Condition of Site

Pico Canyon includes about 850 acres of land on which are located the following historical features:

1. Well No. "CSO" 4 ("Pico" #4). The 1876 discovery well of the Newhall Field. This well still produces about one barrel of oil a day and is marked as California Registered State Historical Landmark No. 516.

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2. The remains of abandoned oil derricks.
3. A two-story frame hotel, erected in 1880 for use of the oil men and now utilized as a residence.
4. A one-story frame school, erected in 1880, for use of the oil men's children.

These features are little altered and are in a good state of preservation. The area is not opened to the general public because of the high danger of fire to the Canyon.