

October 15, 2004

Ventura Parks and Recreation Commission
501 Poli St.
Ventura, CA 93001
Ken Magdaleno, Chair
Sharon Troll
Suz Montgomery-Hart
Bill Varela
Ed Wehan
Jim White
Judy Devine, Community Service
Mike Montoya, Parks Manager

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Susana Callender Arce and I reside in Ojai. I am assistant principal of Nordhoff High School and a past commissioner of the Ojai Cultural Heritage Board.

I am a 7th generation Ventura/Santa Barbara resident, my earliest ancestor having come from Mexico to Santa Barbara as a soldier in 1781. I am a descendant of Fernando Tico, the grantee of Rancho Ojai and Jose Ramon Rodriguez, the grantee of Rancho San Miguelito.

I am interested in the preservation and recognition of the park which was known as St. Mary's Cemetery. There should be some indication of the park's origins on the site and acknowledgment of the fact that over 2500 people are buried there. Many of those people were members of my family - the Ticos, Elwells, Rodriguezes - and others were family friends. The fact that the headstones have been abandoned and/or destroyed is unacceptable. There should be immediate attempts to locate and secure these headstones in order to restore this important historical landmark.

I have confidence that wisdom will prevail in this matter and that our rich heritage will be preserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susana Arce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susana" and the last name "Arce" clearly distinguishable.

Susana C. Arce

Cc: Ventura City Council