

ADDENDUM TO:
FORTY ACRES, PAULO AGBAYANI RETIREMENT VILLAGE
10701 Mettler Avenue
Delano
Kern County
California

HABS CA-2878-D
HAS CA-2878-D

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: The Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village is located at 10701 Mettler Avenue, Delano, Kern County, California.

Forty Acres (the property within which the Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village sits) is located at latitude: 35.764956, longitude: -119.285283. The coordinate represents the northeast corner of the property. The coordinate was obtained in 2006 and the datum is North American Datum 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: The Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village is one of four buildings at Forty Acres, a property closely associated with the life of Cesar Chavez and the history of the farm worker movement he led from 1962 until his death in 1993. Located on the outskirts of Delano, California, Forty Acres served as the headquarters of the United Farm Workers (UFW) from 1969 to 1972. The property also served as the farm worker movement's flagship "service center," under the auspices of the National Farm Workers Service Center, Inc. (NFWSC), from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Forty Acres was the site of several significant events between 1968 and 1993, and it continues to serve as an important locus of collective memory. Forty Acres was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2008.

Plans for the Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village—the fourth building constructed at Forty Acres—began to take shape in August 1969. As Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz, and other Filipino leaders understood, Filipino men who had arrived in the United States before the 1930s encountered oppressive social conditions, including discriminatory laws that made it difficult for them to start families and save money for retirement. As a result, thousands of Filipino farm workers who stayed in the United States through the 1960s found themselves working past the age of retirement without the financial, familial, or public resources that would have enabled them to leave their jobs in the fields. By the late 1960s, their need for affordable retirement housing had grown acute.

When the NFWSC began to plan for the construction of the Retirement Village, Filipino union members envisioned a building that would provide communal spaces such as a dining room, living room, and recreation room but also comforts unheard of in the labor camps where most Filipino farm workers lived, including indoor bathrooms, private telephones, and central air conditioning. Architect Luis Piña's final plans for the Village called for mission revival architectural style, which Cesar Chavez and his brother, Richard Chavez, had chosen as the guiding architectural style for Forty Acres. A central courtyard designed by landscape architect Dennis Dahlin would enhance the Village's communal atmosphere.

As with the first three buildings constructed at Forty Acres, the method of construction for Agbayani Village reflected its close association with the farm worker movement. The contractor, George Solinas, oversaw a small crew of workers, but they were assisted by hundreds of volunteer carpenters, electricians, plumbers, painters, tile setters, and sheet-metal workers and more than one thousand unskilled volunteers from California and across the United States as well as Canada, England, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Japan. Their work was completed in June 1974, and the Village opened its doors to fifty-eight new residents in February 1975.

Agbayani Village gained additional historical significance as the site of Cesar Chavez's last public fast, a "Fast for Life" that began on July 16, 1988. Chavez fasted for thirty-six days, and he spent the duration of the fast in Room 37 (in the southeast corner of the Village). When Chavez broke the fast on August 21, 1988, friends such as Ethel Kennedy, political leaders such as Jesse Jackson, celebrity supporters such as Martin Sheen, and thousands of union members arrived at Forty Acres for a Mass service and celebration.

Description: The Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village was designed and constructed as a U-shape, single story, residential building complex with a gable roof and informal courtyard.

The Village was sited in the northeast quadrant of Forty Acres, with the façade facing east toward an unpaved parking area and Mettler Avenue. The Village consists of five rectangular buildings and a sixth L-shaped building arranged around an informal courtyard. The buildings are separated by open passageways but united by a continuous roof and a continuous arcade that runs along the courtyard side of the buildings.

The Village measures 262' wide at the base of the U-shape, and each leg of the U-shape (projecting west) measures 182'-6" deep. Each of the five rectangular buildings measure 82' long and 34' deep. The sixth L-shape building forms the north half of the base of the U-shape. The longer ell (running north-south) measures 83'-10" long and 25'-6" deep; the shorter ell (projecting east from the east façade) measures 30' wide and 41'-6" deep. The six buildings comprising the Village are wood-frame structures with adobe block veneer.

The five rectangular buildings house fifty-eight residential units. Four of these buildings have twelve units each. The fifth building has ten units and a staff room, laundry room, janitorial space, and storage space. The sixth L-shape building houses a communal kitchen, dining room, lounge, and hobby room as well as a rental office, a restroom, and storage space.

The five rectangular buildings share similar design features. The buildings house multiple pairs of residential units. Each unit has a doorway opening into an interior double-loaded corridor, one large window, and a doorway to a bathroom shared with another unit (though two units have private bathrooms). Each unit facing the courtyard has a doorway opening into the arcade. The sixth L-shape building has a double doorway on the south wall (the north side of the patio and wide passageway at the center of the base of the U-shape), glass doors, and seven windows facing the arcade and courtyard. A total of thirty-four large windows and

thirty doorways faced the arcade and courtyard. The exterior walls of the U-shaped complex have a total of thirty-eight large windows.

The continuous gable roof is supported by heavy timber beams and exposed rafters and finished with barrel clay tiles. The roofline is continuous along the four buildings that comprise the legs of the U-shape, but the steeper pitch of the roof on the L-shape building formally distinguishes this portion of the complex and announces it as the main entrance. On the courtyard side, the roof extends at a shallower slope to shelter the 8'-deep arcade. The arcade roof is supported by timber beams and posts. The arcade is paved with light brown clay tiles. The passageways between the buildings are paved with the same tile, and the wider passageway at the main entrance also features a large inlaid UFW emblem.

The courtyard is one of the defining features of the Village. Designed and developed by landscape architect Dennis Dahlin, the courtyard originally featured eucalyptus, Chinese pistache, blackwood acacia, carob, and camphor trees. The larger complex site also included fruit trees, recreational garden plots, and pens for gamecocks (north of the complex), a brick barbecue pit (to the northeast), and access to the large grazing pasture (the southeast quadrant of Forty Acres).

The Retirement Village has been well maintained, and the condition of the fabric is good. Alterations and additions have been minimal.

History: For a full discussion of the history of the Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village and Forty Acres as a whole see Overview Historical Context, HABS No. CA-2878.

Construction of the Paulo Agbayani Retirement Village began in April 1973, with Luis Piña of San Jose, California, serving as the architect; Dennis Dahlin of Berkeley, California, serving as the landscape architect; and George Solinas of Santa Cruz, California, serving as the contractor. The Village was completed in June 1974 and dedicated the same month in honor of Paulo Agbayani, a union member who died from a heart attack while on a picket line in 1967. As a press release explained, the union lacked the money to buy Agbayani a head stone in 1967. Seven years later, Agbayani Village would serve as a living memorial.

Agbayani Village was designed, constructed, and used as a residential building for retired Filipino farm workers, including those who had launched the Delano grape strike in September 1965. Most of the fifty-eight residents who moved into the Village in February 1975 were, like Paulo Agbayani, Filipino immigrants. They averaged 68 years in age, and they paid \$100 per month for rent and meals. During the mid-1970s, the Village came to life as a testament to the courage they showed as members of a farm worker movement that predated the union.

By the late 1970s, the NFWSC leadership had begun to wrestle with the challenges of managing Agbayani Village, especially as the number of surviving Filipino farm workers began to decline. By the early 1980s, only seventeen of the Filipino farm workers who launched the Delano grape strike were still alive, and even though the NFWSC worked to attract additional renters, Agbayani Village was only about sixty percent full. At the same time, however, the Village became an important site for educational and commemorative gatherings. As early as 1979, students at UCLA and other colleges and universities had begun to organize visits to Agbayani Village, where they would meet with retired Filipino farm workers, honor their struggles, and learn from their experiences. Such gatherings continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s. The last of the original Filipino farm workers to go on strike in 1965, Fred Abad, died in 1997. The Village continues to provide rental housing for farm workers and other low-income applicants.

Agbayani Village was the site of Cesar Chavez's last public fast, a "Fast for Life" that began on July 16, 1988. Chavez undertook this fast as a form of penance for himself and others who had not done enough to combat the use of pesticides that caused thousands of deaths every year. He fasted for thirty-six days, and he spent the duration of the fast in Room 37 of the Village, where he received visitors, read, prayed, and rested. When Chavez broke his fast on August 21, 1988, family members, friends, political leaders, celebrity supporters, and thousands of union members arrived at Forty Acres for a Mass service and celebration.

The NFWSC owned and managed Agbayani Village continuously from 1968 to 2011. The Cesar Chavez Foundation, which merged with the NFWSC in 2011, has owned and managed the Village since this merger.

Sources: For a full list of sources see Overview Historical Context, HABS No. CA- 2878.

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