

## Pottery Canyon | Rodriguez Family, RG005.10

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La Jolla Historical Society  
7846 Eads Avenue  
La Jolla, California 92037  
(858) 459-5335  
<https://lajollahistory.org/>  
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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Pottery Canyon | Rodriguez Family, RG005.10

**Dates:** 1930 – Present

**Collection Number:** RG005.10

**Creator/Collector:** La Jolla Historical Society

**Extent:** .5 linear feet

**Repository:** La Jolla Historical Society, La Jolla, California 92037

**Abstract:** The Pottery Canyon | Rodriguez Family Collection is made up of photographs and archival material used for historical research and reference. The Collection contains material dedicated to the history of the Rodriguez Family in Pottery Canyon, the subsequent issues with the land after their departure and the commemoration of the space as a natural park in 2004. Cornelio Rodriguez was a skilled potter who brought his craft from Mexico to La Jolla in the 1930s with his brothers, Abraham and Ubaldo. They established a pottery business off Torrey Pines Road that became known as Pottery Canyon. The Rodriguez family dug clay by hand from the land and used craft skills brought from Mexico. They molded unglazed roof and floor tiles common to the Mission Revival period and baked them in an oil-fired kiln. They fashioned ornamental pots on a potter's wheel and baked them in a now rarely seen wood-burning, up-draught circular kiln. Because of the historical significance of the unique pottery works, the City of San Diego designated Pottery Canyon Park as an historical landmark in 1976. Practicing the craft was a continual struggle for the brothers as land grew in value. When the land was purchased, there was an error in the survey points and the property was sold with the oil-burning kiln without disclosure during the 1950's. From the 1950's through the 1990's, a series of setbacks occurred culminating in the demolition of all but one of the buildings and the wood-burning kiln, despite their historic designation. Ultimately, Pottery Canyon, became a victim of gentrification marking the passing of an historic trade. This material pertains to the history and heritage of La Jolla, California; its people, places and events. A container list is included on the PDF and HTML versions.

**Language of Material:** English

**Access:** The Collection is open for research

**Publication Rights:** The La Jolla Historical Society holds the copyright to any unpublished materials

**Preferred Citation:** Courtesy of the La Jolla Historical Society

**Acquisition Information:** RG005.10

**Biography/Administrative History:** The La Jolla Historical Society inspires and empowers the community to make La Jolla's diverse past a relevant part of contemporary life.

The La Jolla Historical Society's Collections encompass over 80 years of actively collecting archival material, books, maps, scrapbooks, ephemera, fine art, newspapers, street and land use files, business and personal documents and historic and archaeological artifacts. The Society boasts over 20,000 photographs, over 1000 postcards, 400-plus architectural drawings and approximately 200 oral history recordings.

Collecting was initiated by Howard Randolph and volunteers on the historical committee of the Library Association of La Jolla. The Collection began by gathering photographs and documentation in the late 1930s, which later became the nucleus of the La Jolla Historical Society's Collections. The Society was created in 1963.

Through many moves in location the Society continued collecting and expanding. Accumulated Collections took on its current construct in 2010 after the renovation of the La Jolla Historical Society's campus of structures in central La Jolla, which consists of the 1904 Wisteria Cottage and 1940s Balmer Annex used for exhibits and programming, and a 1909 cottage used for business and research offices. The late Ellen Browning Scripps' 1916 automobile garage was also renovated and now houses the Collection in a modern collections storage facility. Materials are housed in archival boxes, sleeves, envelopes and other archival-safe materials and are cared for according to standards and best practices of the museum profession. In 2016, the Society initiated new PastPerfect Museum Software to manage and catalog its Collections and in 2018 started using the Online Archive of California to upload searchable information from its Collections to enable improved public access. The Society will continue these processes and look forward to utilizing new opportunities to collect, preserve and share the history of La Jolla.

**Scope and Content of Collection:** The Pottery Canyon | Rodriguez Family Collection is made up of photographs and archival material used for historical research and reference. The Collection contains material dedicated to the history of the Rodriguez Family in Pottery Canyon, the subsequent issues with the land after their departure and the commemoration of the space as a natural park in 2004. Cornelio Rodriguez was a skilled potter who brought his craft from Mexico to La Jolla in the 1930s with his brothers, Abraham and Ubaldo. They established a pottery business off Torrey Pines Road that became known as Pottery Canyon. The Rodriguez family dug clay by hand from the land and used craft skills brought from Mexico. They molded unglazed roof and floor tiles common to the Mission Revival period and baked them in an oil-fired kiln. They fashioned ornamental pots on a potter's wheel and baked them in a now rarely seen wood-burning, up-draught circular kiln. Because of the historical significance of the unique pottery works, the City of San Diego designated Pottery Canyon Park as an historical landmark in 1976. Practicing the craft was a continual struggle for the brothers as land grew in value. When the land was purchased, there was an error in the survey points and the property was sold with the oil-burning kiln without disclosure during the 1950's. From the 1950's through the 1990's, a series of setbacks occurred culminating in the demolition of all but one of the buildings and the wood-burning kiln, despite their historic designation. Ultimately, Pottery Canyon, became a victim of gentrification marking the passing of an historic trade. This material pertains to the history and heritage of La Jolla, California; its people, places and events. A container list is included on the PDF and HTML versions.

**[Container List Below](#)**

# CONTAINER LIST

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## RG005 – Subject Files (Large) Collection Box 10 – Pottery Canyon

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### Photographs (Misc.)

Photograph (2 copies). Depicts the Rodriguez property covered in debris just off Torrey Pines Rd looking north. "October 31, 1945."

Photograph. Depicts a grove of trees. "1974."

Photograph. Depicts the deteriorating brick kiln on the property.

Photograph. Depicts two old wooden buildings on the property and a woman standing in the foreground. "c.1995."

Photograph. Depicts two people standing at the top of the canyon looking down. "January 15, 1976."

Photograph. Depicts a man shoveling dirt along the side of the canyon. *La Jolla Light*. "February 27, 1975."

Photograph (aerial). Depicts Pottery Canyon and Torrey Pines Church looking northeast. *La Jolla Light*. "c. 1977."

Photograph. Depicts a culvert beside Torrey Pines Rd looking west.

Photograph with caption: "From a point [west] of church and [west] of canyon looking [northeast]. Note trash and debris dump." *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "From west side – looking east toward church. *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "From a point [south] of church, on canyon rim, looking [northerly]. Roof line of YMCA and play equipment visible." *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "From a point [south] of YMCA – at head of Canyon looking [south]." *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "Canyon bottom – behind church. Note erosion beginning." *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "[Westerly] of canyon looking east at trash and debris dumped along [west] rim." *La Jolla Light*. 1973.

Photograph with caption: "Erosion – further down the canyon. This was taken in fall 1972 – erosion is not new." *La Jolla Light*.

Painting (watercolor, 3 copies). Caption: "Artist Georgeanna Lipe caught this view of the home and workshop of Cornelio and his wife, Matiana. This was historically designated in 1976 and unfortunately demolished in the 1990s."

Photograph (2 copies) with caption. Depicts a vast arrangement of pottery for sale. "c. 1930."

Photograph. Depicts a small wooden building and several trucks parked outside.

Photograph with caption: "Tile drying sheds, circa 1930. [...] The

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circular adobe kiln can be seen in the right background, next to the car.”

Photograph. Depicts a large assortment of pottery, notably a triangular stack of small troughs. “*La Jolla Light*, May 31, 1990.”

Photograph with caption: “Pottery Canyon is only modestly developed. This picnic table consists of a metal slab and a log.”

Photograph. Depicts the kiln and the adjacent brick steps.

Photograph. Depicts two large pots up close.

Photograph. Depicts the kiln and the surrounding hillside.

Series of photographs (5). Depict a small home on the property, several decorative pots, and an old truck.

### **Photographs (Rodriguez Family)**

Photograph. Depicts Matiana and Cornelio Rodriguez in front of their Pottery Canyon home. “1978 or 1979.”

Photograph (portrait). Depicts a young Cornelio Rodriguez.

Photograph (2 copies) with caption. Depicts the three Rodriguez brothers (from left to right, Ubaldo, Abraham, and Cornelio) working the pug mill.

Photograph with caption. Depicts the three Rodriguez brothers (from left to right, Ubaldo, Abraham, and Cornelio) standing in front of their pottery shop.

Photograph with caption: “Brothers Cornelio and Abraham Rodriguez at work. A small burro is displayed on work table.”

Photograph with caption: “Cornelio Rodriguez at his pottery wheel, [circa] 1931. This turntable was used in the sanding position to aid in the use of Mexican bisque mold production.”

Photograph. Depicts two men, presumably Rodriguez brothers, forming a large pot on a pottery wheel.

Series of photographs (4). Depict Mary, Frances, and Natalie Rodriguez together on the property. “October 1998.”

Pair of photographs with caption. Depict Cornelio Rodriguez working on pottery in his shop and Matiana Rodriguez digging for clay.

Pair of photographs. Depict Matiana Rodriguez shoveling clay into a wheelbarrow and Cornelio Rodriguez shaping a medium sized pot.

Photograph. Depicts two young women posing with two toddlers in front of a large urn. “c. 1931.”

Photograph (aerial). Depicts early La Jolla, with the houses of Efen Rodriguez and Frank Flores highlighted.

### **Photographs (Collections)**

Envelope. Attributed to the following collection of photographs (Collection # 1). “c. 1980.”

Collection of photographs (18). Collection # 1. Depict Cornelio and

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Matiana Rodriguez, erosion of the canyon, and assorted angles of the property's surroundings. "c. 1980."

Envelope. "Foto Finish." Attributed to the following collection of photographs. Photos taken by Mark Frapwell. "March 1986."

Collection of photographs (27). Depict several buildings, an old truck, and the kiln on the property. "March 1986."

Collection of photographs (26) and included letter. Photocopies of above collection but featuring several unique photos. "March 1986."

Envelope. "Bob Davis Camera." Attributed to the following collection of photographs. Photos taken by Mark Frapwell. October 1999.

Collection of photographs (27). Depict the kiln on the property and assorted angles of the surrounding area. October 1999.

Collection of photo negatives (18). Negatives of above collection. October 1999.

## Newspaper Articles

Newspaper article. "Pottery Canyon – a Spot to Go in Search of Solitude." *Los Angeles Times*, c. 1978."

Newspaper article. "Pottery Canyon demolition a puzzle with many pieces." *La Jolla Village News*. "July 9, 1998."

Newspaper article. "Potter's Ancient Art Turns Sand To Beauty." *La Jolla Light*."

Newspaper article. "Pottery Canyon Park." "April 13, 1978."

Newspaper article. "Ceremony to dedicate Pottery Canyon Park." "November 29, 1973."

Newspaper article. "Rodriguez house wins a reprieve." "November 13, 1975."

Newspaper article. "Pottery Canyon Park OK'd." "November 8, 1973."

Newspaper article. "Canyon fate at stake." "January 29, 1976."

Newspaper article. "Hearing may decide Pottery Canyon fate." "December 4, 1975."

Newspaper article. "Pottery Canyon Park dedicated." "December 6, 1973."

Newspaper article. "A craftsman's art has endured for 56 years in Pottery Canyon." *La Jolla Light*. August 23, 1984.

Newspaper article. "La Jolla Craftsmen: Canyon Clay Yields Pottery." *San Diego Union*. "March 16, 1966."

Newspaper article. "City takes action on Pottery Canyon kiln case." *La Jolla Light*. February 2, 2017.

Newspaper article. "Historic pottery kiln in search of a home." *La Jolla Light*. January 16, 2014.

Newspaper article (original). "Pottery Canyon: A Forgotten La Jolla Story – Historical kiln deteriorates on private property adjacent to park." *La Jolla Light*. July 14, 2016.

Newspaper article (original). "Pottery Canyon: A Forgotten La Jolla

Story Part 2 – how local historically designated buildings were knocked down.” *La Jolla Light*. July 28, 2016.

Newspaper article. “Old School Potter Molded His Life From La Jolla Clay.” *Los Angeles Times*. September 17, 1978.

Newspaper article. “La Jolla’s Pottery Canyon: Pots and park from a hill of clay.” *La Jolla Light*. “July 10, 1980.”

Newspaper article. “City plans lease on pottery works.” “June 24, 1976.”

Newspaper article. “Realtor, potter clash over property rights.” *La Jolla Light*. March 19, 1981.

Newspaper article. “Pottery Canyon, how it grew.” November 29, 1978.

Newspaper article. “Replanting pushed for Pottery Canyon slope.” “February 27, 1975.”

Newspaper article (original and copy). “Pottery Canyon abuses brought to light.” “*La Jolla Light*, February 10, 1977.”

Newspaper article. “Mother Nature needs help in Pottery Canyon.” “*La Jolla Light*.”

Newspaper article (original). “Pottery Canyon kiln to be ‘evaluated.’” *La Jolla Light*. April 13, 2017.

Newspaper article. “Pottery Canyon: La Jolla’s newest park takes a bow Saturday.” “November 29, 1973.”

Newspaper article. “Pottery Canyon Park dedicated.” December 6, 1973.

## Correspondence

Email. From “ljsa.org@gmail.com” to “dschmidt@san.rr.com.” Re: Weighing in on the city’s Pottery Canyon Remediation Plan. June 8, 2014.

Email. From Patrick Ahern to Heath Fox. Re: Identity of the owners of one of the homes on the property. March 07, 2016.

Email. From Carol Olten to Diane Kane. Re: Contacting Peter L. Eidenbach to research the kiln in Pottery Canyon. November 8, 2016.

Letter. From the City of San Diego Park and Recreation to La Jolla Historical Society. Re: The city’s Pottery Canyon remediation plan. August 13, 2014.

CD. “LLCP La Jolla Rodriguez Correspondence.” A collection of letters and telegrams (57 files total) mostly between Thomas Walker (La Luz Clay Products Co.) and Cornelio Rodriguez (La Jolla Canyon Clay Products Co.). 1931 thru 1936.

Letter. From Willis M. Allen to Althea Cochran. Re: Allen expresses willingness to donate a portion of his property on which the Rodriguez kiln is located for historical designation. January 26, 1976.

Letter and attached document (power of attorney). From Matiana, Alice, Natalie, and Frances Rodriguez. Re: Clarifying Frances Rodriguez as the Rodriguez family representative. “September 12, 2002.”

Letter and attached photographs. From La Jolla Historical Society to

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Councilmember Harry Mathis. Re: The demolition of three historically designated buildings on the Rodriguez property without a permit. April 20, 1998.

Letter. From Franklin G. Tabor to Councilmember Harry Mathis. Re: The demolition of three historically designated buildings on the Rodriguez property without a permit. November 18, 1998.

Memo and attached historical designation document. From Neighborhood Code Compliance. Re: The demolition of three historically designated buildings on the Rodriguez property without a permit. July 22, 1998.

Letter. From Councilmember Harry Mathis to La Jolla Historical Society. Re: The demolition of three historically designated buildings on the Rodriguez property without a permit. December 3, 1998.

Letter. From La Jolla Historical Society to City of San Diego Park and Recreation. Re: The city's Pottery Canyon remediation plan. July 31, 2014.

Letter. From La Jolla Historical Society to Mayor Kevin Faulconer. Re: The city's Pottery Canyon remediation plan. June 17, 2014.

Card. From the Rodriguez family to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Christmas greetings card. "December 13, 1999."

Email. From Frances Rodriguez to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: The visitation of officials to inspect the kiln and the site generally. December 22, 2003.

Email. From Frances Rodriguez to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Rodriguez tells the story of the land easement granted to the Allen family. January 13, 2004.

Letter. From the City of San Diego to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: "Contact for Maintenance Issue Dealing with Pottery Canyon Natural Park." January 28, 1999.

Email. From Frances Rodriguez to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Reflections on the commemoration ceremony. January 12, 2004.

Letter. To Joe Ross. Re: Plans for preserving the kiln. March 24, 2003.

## **Commemoration Ceremony**

Series of photographs (7). Depict speakers and attendees to the Pottery Canyon commemoration event. January 10, 2004.

Series of emails (3). Between Frances Rodriguez and Betsy Brennan. Re: Possible volunteer clean-up of Pottery Canyon and bathroom accommodations for the event. January 8 thru 9, 2004.

Email. From Betsy Brennan to La Jolla Historical Society. Re: Parking for event. January 7, 2004.

Email. From Neil Morgan to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Morgan says he is unable to attend and cover the event for the Union-Tribune. January 6, 2004.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Francis T. Haxo and the La Jolla

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Historical Society. Re: Arranging a meeting to plan for event. January 5, 2004.

Pair of emails. Between Frances Rodriguez and Betsy Brennan. Re: Reviewing the invitation before being sent out and parking accommodations. January 7, 2004.

Email. From Frances Rodriguez to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Rodriguez expresses disdain towards the city and the Allen family for their role in shutting down her family's business. December 22, 2003.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Frances Rodriguez. Re: Initial planning of the commemoration ceremony. December 11, 2003.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Frances Rodriguez. Re: Plaque placement and potential protective measures for the kiln. December 10, 2003.

Document (list). "Pottery Canyon Invitations."

Document (list). "Invitation List."

Pair of posters. Invitations to commemoration event. "Please Join Councilmember Scott Peters [...]."

Event program (4 copies). "Welcome to Pottery Canyon Park." January 10, 2004.

Document. "Pottery Canyon Invitations." December 9 and 11, 2003.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Frances Rodriguez. Re: Notifying Rodriguez that the invitations have been sent out. December 19, 2003.

Email. From Frances Rodriguez to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Assorted concerns regarding press coverage, her sister, and the plaque. December 11, 2003.

Email and attached invitation. From Betsy Brennan to La Jolla Historical Society. Re: Dropping off the invitations. December 18, 2003.

Email. From "Gail" to Kip Ives. Re: Planning for the commemoration. November 15, 2003.

Series of emails (3). Between "Gail", Patricia Dahlberg, "Paddi Arthur," and La Jolla Christmas Parade & Holiday Festival. Re: Hiring mariachi for the commemoration event. November 8 and 15, 2003.

Email. From "Gail" to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Contacting Kip Ives. November 15, 2003.

Document. "Memo, Invitation List."

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to several others. Re: Announcing a postponement of the commemoration. November 4, 2003.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Frances Rodriguez. Re: Notifying of the postponement of the commemoration. November 4, 2003.

Email. From La Jolla Historical Society to Christine Rodriguez. Re: Confirming a date for the commemoration. September 24, 2003.

Email with attached menu. From Betsy Brennan to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Purchasing cookies for the commemoration. January 5, 2004.

Event program (mockup). "Program for the Commemoration of The Rodriguez Brothers & La Jolla Canyon Clay Products Co."

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Newspaper article. "Plaque to mark Pottery Canyon: Jan. 10 dedication will honor Rodriguez family of potters." *La Jolla Village News*. January 8, 2004.

## Commemorative Plaque

Collection of memos. Regarding the placement and design of the plaque. From August 8, 2000 to July 26, 2002.

Letter. From La Jolla Historical Society to Councilmember Harry Mathis. Re: Recap of an earlier meeting, including plans for the placement of a commemorative plaque. November 19, 1999.

Letter. From Patricia Dahlberg and Robert Warwick to Sister Mary Rodriguez. Re: Inquiring for input on the placement of a commemorative plaque. July 28, 1999.

Document. "Facsimile Cover Sheet." Re: Quote for the plaque. Includes scale drawings. "October 6, 2003."

Letter. From Frances Rodriguez to La Jolla Historical Society. Re: Approval of the Rodriguez family on the plans for a plaque. August 16, 1999.

Memorandum. From the City of San Diego to Roger Becker. Re: The commissioning of two historical landmark signs, one of which being for Pottery Canyon. February 19, 1976.

Letter. From the City of San Diego Real Estate Assets to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Providing a deadline for the text on the plaque to be given to the city. January 17, 2001.

Printing proof. Includes several annotated snapshots of the proofs. June 6, 2003.

Document. "Request for Reproductions or Application for Permission to Publish." *San Diego Historical Society Research Archives Photograph Collection*. May 25, 2000.

Letter. From La Jolla Historical Society to Ferris Johnson & Perkins Architects Inc. Re: Sending photos and text that are to go on the plaque. July 23, 2000.

Email. From Patricia Dahlberg to Frances Rodriguez. Re: Requesting input on the idea of a commemorative plaque. October 3, 1998.

Collection of documents (15). Comprise several iterations of the text that would go on the commemorative plaque.

Collection of documents. Comprise several design iterations and mockups of the plaque's layout and photographs.

Fax message. From Melesse Traylor to Patricia Dahlberg. Re: Asking for revisions on an included draft for the text to go on the plaque. May 3, 2000.

## Land Use

Assessor's maps (4 copies). Depict the plotted easements on Pottery Canyon land from 1947 to 1985. *San Diego County*.

Assessor's map (2 copies). Depicts the southern end of La Jolla Scenic

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Dr and the southern border of the easement on Pottery Canyon land. *San Diego County*.

Document (Policy of Title Insurance, 2 copies). Title of Pottery Canyon land is granted to Frances Rodriguez. *Guardian Title Co.* September 22, 1999.

Document (Planned Residential Development Permit). Permit granted to Azure Coast Inc. for the development of estates along the east end of Ardath Rd. *City of San Diego*. May 24, 1972.

Document (court ruling). Condemnation of part of the Pottery Canyon land by the City of San Diego. *Superior Court of the State of California*. August 27, 1975.

Document (Right of Way Permit). Cornelio Rodriguez grants right of way to the San Diego Gas & Electric Co. (SDG&E). July 18, 1946.

Document (Property Profile, 2 copies). Profile of Pottery Canyon property and of surrounding area. *Guardian Title Co.* September 21, 1999.

Document (Declaration of Trust). Names Frances Rodriguez as trustee of the Rodriguez Family Trust. *City of San Diego*. June 25, 1985.

Document (Right of Way Permit, 2 copies). Willis and Ruth Allen grant right of way to the San Diego Gas & Electric Co. (SDG&E). July 18, 1946.

Map. "Record of Survey of a Portion of Pueblo Lot No. 1289 [...]" Depicts the Pottery Canyon property. May 27, 1945.

Document (Offer of Dedication). Cornelio and Matiana Rodriguez grant an easement to the City of San Diego for road construction and maintenance. July 13, 1982.

Document (Grant of Easement). Cornelio and Matiana Rodriguez grant a right of way easement to Willis and Ruth Allen. August 2 and October 21, 1982.

Document (Land Development Agreement). Willis Allen proposes the construction of servants quarters and a single-family residence. June 27, 1945.

Document (City Council Resolution). The City of San Diego grants a Right of Entry Permit to Matiana Rodriguez for a portion of Pottery Canyon Park for pottery-making purposes. *City of San Diego*. June 25, 1990.

Document and accompanying letter (Right of Entry Permit). The City of San Diego grants a Right of Entry Permit to Matiana Rodriguez for a portion of Pottery Canyon Park for pottery-making purposes. July 11, 1990.

Memorandum. From the City of San Diego to the Western Area Committee. Re: Proposed corrective action on an uncontrolled fill slope extending from the Torrey Pines Christian Church property into Pottery Canyon. December 23, 1976.

Letter, map, and 4 photographs. From Triano Ciani to the City of San Diego Historical Site Committee. Re: The historical designation of

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Pottery Canyon and the buildings on the land. January 8, 1976.  
Document and attached letter (copy of above). "City of San Diego  
Historical Site Board Register." April 21, 1976.

Document (Tax Assessment). Assessment and appraisal of the Pottery  
Canyon property. September 13, 1999.

Document. Brief profile of the Pottery Canyon property. *Courthouse  
Retrieval System*. 2016.

## Miscellaneous

Large packet (2 copies). "Pottery Canyon Site Archaeological  
Evaluation Project." *Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc.* February 16,  
2011.

Large packet. "The National Historic Landscape of the La Luz Clay  
Products Property, Otero County, New Mexico v. 1.0." Mention of  
Rodriguez family from pgs. 8 thru 10. *Tularosa Basin Historical Society*.  
September 2013.