

ADDENDUM TO:  
FORTY ACRES, TOMASA ZAPATA MIRELES CO-OP BUILDING  
(Tomas Zapata Gas Station)  
30168 Garces Highway (Northwest Corner of Garces Highway and  
Mettler Avenue)  
Delano  
Kern County  
California

HABS CA-2878-A  
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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

### Addendum to FORTY ACRES, TOMASA ZAPATA MIRELES CO-OP BUILDING

HABS No. CA-2878-A

**Location:** The Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building is located at 30168 Garces Highway, Delano, Kern County, California.

Forty Acres (the property within which the Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building 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 Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building 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.

The Co-op Building was the first building constructed at Forty Acres. The building was designed as an automobile service station. One of several cooperative services managed by the NFWSC, the co-op service station sprang from Cesar Chavez's recognition that collective action encompassed more than just collective bargaining with employers. The Co-op Building and the services it housed reflected the comprehensive vision of self-empowerment that defined the farm worker movement.

The service station cooperative itself pre-dates the development of Forty Acres. Chavez and other movement leaders recognized that gasoline, auto parts, and repairs were necessary yet burdensome expenses for farm workers, especially during a strike. Thus when Chavez and LeRoy Chatfield created the NFWSC, they decided that the first cooperative would revolve around automobiles, selling discounted gasoline but also discounted oil, tires, batteries, and other parts and supplies. A repair shop would provide low-cost repairs as well as job training for farm workers seeking to leave the fields. The NFWSC opened a co-op service station in March 1967, when it began leasing a vacant Texaco gas station near downtown Delano. The acquisition of Forty Acres provided the NFWSC an opportunity to build its own service station.

The Co-op Building's architectural style and method of construction further reflected its close association with farm workers and the farm worker movement. Cesar Chavez and his brother, Richard Chavez, chose mission revival architectural style because they

associated California's Franciscan missions with feelings of stability, peacefulness, and spirituality and because they thought the style would have lasting appeal, especially for Mexican Americans. Richard's efforts to secure discounted building materials and donated labor reflected the resourcefulness of the farm worker movement.

The Co-op Building gained additional historical significance as the site of Cesar Chavez's first public fast on behalf of the farm worker movement. The fast lasted for twenty-five days, from February 19 to March 11, 1968. When Chavez concluded the fast, Senator Robert Kennedy flew to Delano, visited with Chavez at the Co-op Building, and sat by his side during Mass services in Delano's Memorial Park.

The Co-op Building was used as an automobile service station from October 1969 to April 1973. During this time, the building became a symbol of the farm worker movement but also a target. Evidence of gunfire and a bombing are still visible on the building's south and west exterior walls.

**Description:** The Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building was designed and constructed as a rectangular, single story, adobe block building with a gable roof. The building was designed to be used as an automobile service station, thus a large canopy extends from the front of the building, creating a T-form in aerial view and providing coverage for three automobile lanes (and two rows of gasoline pumps, since removed).

The Co-op Building was sited in the southwest quadrant of Forty Acres, with the façade facing south. The building measures 98'-7" wide and 27'-7" deep, with the canopy extending 55'-1" from the front of the building. The building has load-bearing walls on concrete footings. The walls are double-wythe adobe block, reinforced with rebar, laid in courses, and painted white.

The Co-op Building is divided into three sections: an east section with one large room, a smaller central section (subdivided into a customer service area, storage room, and two restrooms), and a west section enclosing a garage with three automobile repair bays. A breezeway running from the front of the building to the rear separates the east section from the central section.

Two doorways on the east wall of the Co-op Building and a third doorway on the east side of the breezeway provide access to the large room in the east section of the building. A doorway on the façade provides access to the customer service area in the central section of the building. A doorway on the west side of the central breezeway provides access to the storage room. Two doorways on the rear wall each provide access to a restroom. Three garage bay openings with retractable metal gates define the west half of the façade.

The façade has three vertical window openings of uniform size. The east wall has one large window opening. The west wall of the central breezeway has one small window opening. The rear wall has six window openings. Many of the windows have been replaced by painted boards, and most of the window openings have been covered with metal security bars. The doorways, garage bay openings, and windows have decorative wood lintels.

The gable roof is supported by a heavy ridge beam and rafters. The canopy extending from the front of the building is supported by four adobe block pillars.

The canopy roof is supported by three heavy beams and rafters. The roof has exposed rafters and shallow eaves and is finished with barrel clay tiles.

The Co-op Building interior has concrete floors. The walls of the larger room in the east section are adobe block, painted white. In this room, the ridge beam and rafters are exposed. The walls of the rooms in the central section appear to be gypsum board, painted white. The walls of the garage in the west section are adobe block.

The Administration Building has been well maintained, and the condition of the fabric is good. Alterations and additions have been minimal. Partition walls originally divided the east section (creating two smaller rooms), but those walls have been removed. Gasoline pumps and underground storage tanks installed in 1969 also have been removed.

History:

For a full discussion of the history of the Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building and Forty Acres as a whole see Overview Historical Context, HABS No. CA-2878.

Construction of the Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building began in August 1967, with James Holland of Bakersfield, California, serving as the architect and Richard Chavez (a farm worker movement leader but a builder by trade) serving as the contractor. The building was completed in January 1968. The delayed dedication of the building took place in September 1969, and the building was named in honor of Tomasa Zapata Mireles, a 24-year-old member of the farm worker movement who died from cancer.

The Co-op Building was the site of Cesar Chavez's first public fast on behalf of the farm worker movement. The fast lasted for twenty-five days, from February 19 to March 11, 1968. During this time, Chavez occupied what became the storage room, receiving visitors, reading, praying, and resting.

The Co-op Building was designed and constructed as an automobile service station, but it was used for storage purposes until summer 1969, when gasoline pumps and underground storage tanks were installed and the area surrounding the building was paved. The service station opened for business in October 1969, and by the end of the year union members were purchasing roughly 16,000 gallons of discounted gasoline per month. The station also sold discounted auto parts and handled minor repairs.

Difficulties securing a steady supply of gasoline (combined with growing operational expenses and declining use on the part of union members) prompted the NFWSC to suspend the operations of the co-op service station in 1973. By the 1980s, the Co-op Building was used primarily as a meeting space, with some space for storage. The gasoline pumps and underground storage tanks were removed during the 1990s.

The NFWSC owned and occupied the Co-op Building continuously from 1968 to 2011. The Cesar Chavez Foundation, which merged with the NFWSC in 2011, has owned and occupied the building since this merger.

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

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Project

Information: The documentation of Forty Acres was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Heritage Documentation Programs (HDP) of the National Park Service, and California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Richard O'Connor, Chief of HDP; and Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief of HABS. Funding was provided the Cultural Resources Directorate of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. and utilized by the university through a cooperative agreement with the Cal Poly Pomona Foundation, Inc., G. Paul Storey, Executive Director, an auxiliary organization of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. The measured drawings were produced by students Sabrina Blackman, Allyson Bradford, Frank Chang, Cynthia Garcia, Chance Jackson, and Leah Schoelles, under the direction of Luis G. Hoyos RA, Professor; Department of Architecture, and Principal Investigator for the Forty Acres project. Robert R. Arzola, HABS Architect of the Washington DC office supervised the project, also providing review and guidance, and assistance in the development of the scope of work in conjunction with Luis G. Hoyos. The written historical reports of Forty Acres were produced by Raymond W. Rast, Ph.D., Department of History, Gonzaga University, under contract for HABS. Supervision of the HABS historical reports was provided by Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken by James W. Rosenthal, working for HABS, in 2012. HABS would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals and organizations for their assistance in the completion of the documentation of Forty Acres: Dennis Dahlin, Landscape Architect, Dahlin and Essex, Inc., Davis California; The Cesar E. Chavez Foundation; Paul Chavez and the Cesar Chavez Family; Delano Field Office, United Farm Workers; and Sheila Geivet, Property Manager of the Agbayani Village; and at California State Polytechnic University, Michael Woo, Dean, College of Environmental Design; and Sarah Lorenzen, RA, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Architecture.