

ADDENDUM TO:
FORTY ACRES, ROY REUTHER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Roy Reuther Memorial Union Hall)
(Roy Reuther Hall)
30168 Garces Highway (Northwest Corner of Garces Highway and
Mettler Avenue)
Delano
Kern County
California

HABS CA-2878-B
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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, ROY REUTHER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

HABS No. CA-2878-B

Location: The Roy Reuther Administration Building is located at 30168 Garces Highway, Delano, Kern County, California.

Forty Acres (the property within which the Roy Reuther Administration 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 Roy Reuther Administration 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.

Plans for the Roy Reuther Administration Building—the second building constructed at Forty Acres—took shape in April 1968. By that point, the success of the United Farm Worker Organizing Committee's grape boycott and the completion of Cesar Chavez's first public fast had generated new levels of support and strength. The union was growing, and the services provided by the NFWSC were expanding. The large, steel-frame building would provide a centralized administrative space as well as space for services and meetings.

The building's method of construction reflected its close association with the farm worker movement. Richard Chavez served as the contractor, and he actively sought discounted or donated building materials. His small crew of workers also sought and received assistance from scores of skilled volunteers from building trade unions, including cement finishers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, painters, and tile setters. Such assistance helped farm workers build solidarity with other members of the broader labor movement.

The Administration Building was completed in September 1969. It was named in honor of Roy Reuther, the brother of United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther. Upon completion, the building became significant as a symbol of the enduring presence of the farm worker movement.

The Administration Building gained additional historical significance as the place where union leaders and Delano growers met in July 1970 to sign their first contracts, bringing the five-year grape strike to an end. Hundreds of farm workers filled the large meeting room where the contracts were signed, while thousands more celebrated outside.

Throughout the early 1970s, the Administration Building was alive with the activity of the UFW hiring hall, membership office, boycott office, negotiations team, accounting office, legal office, and leadership as well as the NFWSC's credit union, social services center, medical plan, and leadership. The building grew somewhat quieter after the UFW transferred its administrative offices from Forty Acres to Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz in January 1972, but the building has continued to house a variety of functions and gatherings, and it remains significant as a locus of collective memory.

Description: The Roy Reuther Administration Building was designed and constructed as a rectangular, spacious, single story building with a slightly pitched gable roof. Although the building lacked a guiding architectural style, it was embellished with several mission revival features.

The Administration Building was sited near the western perimeter of Forty Acres, with the façade facing east toward a large parking lot. The building measures 121' wide and 71'-4" deep. Five industrial steel frames with concrete footings provide structural support, and shallow steel beams spanning the width of the building provide support for the roof. The exterior walls are wood framed and covered with stucco. The east façade and south wall also have five courses of adobe block veneer.

The east façade of the Administration Building has one doorway located near the center of the building. This is the main entrance, and it is sheltered by a modest portico finished with barrel clay tiles. The north wall has two doorways, each of which are sheltered by simple porticos. The rear (west) wall has three doorways. The south wall has two doorways. One of these doorways, near the center of the wall, is a double doorway providing access to the building's largest meeting room.

The east façade of the Administration Building has fourteen windows, twelve of which are uniformly sized and horizontally aligned. The other two windows, which flank the portico and main entrance, are slightly wider and lower than the rest. The north wall has five windows, all of which are uniformly sized and horizontally aligned. The rear (west) wall has nineteen windows, twelve of which are horizontally aligned along the upper half of the wall near the south end of the building. The south wall has ten windows, nine of which are horizontally aligned with the twelve windows high on the rear wall. All of the building's forty-eight windows have been painted white.

The Administration Building has a slightly-pitched gable roof with minimal eaves, metal gutters, and four downspouts. The roofing material is corrugated metal.

The original floor plan divided the Administration Building into three usage areas: offices, services and utilities area, and multipurpose space. An L-shape, double-loaded corridor office zone ran along the east and north sides of the building. The main entrance to the building and a small day-lit lobby interrupted the run of offices along the east side of the building and provided access to the other areas. A small central area located at the crux of the ell extended the full depth of the building and served primarily as the service core of the building, which included a kitchen, restrooms, utility area, and storage area. The largest space in the building was a large multipurpose room that encompassed the southwest portion of the building. This room served as a large meeting room, a waiting room for the hiring hall, and a space for social events.

The Administration Building has concrete floors finished with linoleum tile. Each office in the building had a distinct tile pattern, creating a visual impression of the office sizes and locations even after the partition walls were removed. The building originally had dropped ceilings, but most of these have been removed. The exposed steel frames and beams have been painted white, matching the interior walls. Four large air conditioning units are installed on the roof of the Administration Building. Removal of the dropped ceilings left the duct system exposed, and numerous ceiling fans have been installed.

The Administration Building has been well maintained, and the condition of the fabric is good. Partition walls and dropped ceilings in the north one-third and south one-third of the building have been removed, and all of the windows have been painted. Other alterations and additions to the building have been minimal.

History:

For a full discussion of the history of the Roy Reuther Administration Building and Forty Acres as a whole see Overview Historical Context, HABS No. CA-2878.

Construction of the Roy Reuther Administration Building began in May 1968, with Richard Chavez (a farm worker movement leader but a builder by trade) serving as the architect and contractor. The building was completed in September 1969. The building was dedicated the same month and named in honor of Roy Reuther, the brother of United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther and a strong labor leader in his own right. Both men were staunch supporters of the farm worker movement.

Reuther Hall (as the building came to be known) was designed, constructed, and used as a multipurpose administration building. Soon after completion, the building came alive with the activity of the UFW hiring hall, membership office, boycott office, negotiations team, accounting office, legal office, and leadership as well as the NFWSC's credit union, social services center, medical plan, and leadership. Cesar Chavez's office was located in the northeast corner of the building. The offices of Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla, Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz, and other movement leaders were located nearby.

On July 29, 1970, twenty-eight Delano grape growers, UFW leaders, and thousands of union members gathered in Reuther Hall to sign contracts and celebrate the end of the union's five-year grape strike.

In 1971, Chavez decided to transfer the administrative offices of the UFW and the NFWSC from Forty Acres to Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz, a newly-acquired property in the foothills of the Tehachapi Mountains, thirty miles east of Bakersfield, California. When the transfer was completed in 1972, Forty Acres became a UFW field office with a smaller staff and budget. Reuther Hall grew somewhat quieter, but the remaining NFWSC staff continued to assist farm workers and their family members in a wide variety of ways—helping them respond to problems they faced beyond the fields, helping them navigate government bureaucracies and understand government procedures, even helping them secure access to resources that the services center could not provide.

During the 1980s, Reuther Hall (and the rest of Forty Acres) became a popular site not only for union rallies but also community barbecues and family gatherings to celebrate first communions, quinceñeras, weddings, and other events. The removal of partition walls and dropped ceilings reflected and facilitated these changes in the building's primary function.

The NFWSC owned and occupied Reuther Hall 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.