

December 10, 2024

**REVISED**

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**OWEN BROWN GRAVESITE LANDMARK DESIGNATION  
PROJECT NO. PRJ2022-002656-(5)  
CASE NO. RPPL2022008240  
(FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)**

**SUBJECT**

The recommended actions are to find the Owen Brown Gravesite Landmark Designation is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and to designate the Owen Brown Gravesite, located at the northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004 and in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County of Los Angeles (County) Landmark.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD,**

1. Find that the project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA for the reasons stated in this Board Letter and in the record;
2. ~~Indicate its intent to designate the subject property as a County Landmark, as recommended by the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission; and~~ Adopt a resolution to designate the Owen Brown Gravesite as a County Landmark as recommended by the County Historical Landmarks and Records Commission.
3. ~~Instruct County Counsel to prepare the necessary final documents to designate the subject property as a County Landmark for the Board's consideration.~~

## **PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The purpose of this action is to designate the subject property as a County Landmark, thereby preserving the County's distinctive history.

The subject property is associated with the life of a person who is significant in the history of the nation, state, and community of Altadena. Specifically, the property is the site of the grave of celebrated abolitionist, Owen Brown who participated in a raid in 1859 on an armory in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to initiate a slave revolt. After escaping capture, he homesteaded near the gravesite where his body was interred in 1889.

## **Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

This action supports the County's Strategic Plan North Star 2 (Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities). Designating Landmarks and Historic Districts preserves the unincorporated community's cultural heritage, thereby fostering community vibrancy.

## **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

There is no fiscal impact for this project.

## **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Historical Landmarks and Records Commission Recommendation**

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.B, at a duly noticed public hearing held on April 12, 2024, the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission (Landmarks Commission) unanimously adopted a resolution to recommend that the Board of Supervisors find that the designation of the subject property as a County Landmark is categorically exempt from the provisions of the CEQA and adopt a resolution designating the subject property as a County Landmark. The Landmark's Commission's resolution is attached.

### **Board Public Hearing Requirement**

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090, a public hearing before the Board is required because consent to the designation was not obtained from the property owner.

### **Board Consideration**

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.C, following the filing by the Landmarks Commission of an adopted resolution, the Board is also required to adopt a resolution approving the landmark designation, in whole or in part and with or without modifications; or disapproving

the landmark designation and deny the nomination application if the Board determines that the criteria applicable to the designation have not been met.

### **Designation Effective Date**

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.D, a landmark designation shall be effective as of the date a resolution approving the designation is adopted by the Board.

### **Procedures Upon Approval**

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.E, upon the effective date of a landmark designation, the Landmarks Commission shall promptly enter the property into the County Register as a County Landmark and shall specify the effective date of the landmark designation.

Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.F, the Director of the Department of Regional Planning shall cause a document titled "Notice of Landmark Designation" to be promptly recorded with the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk upon the effective date of a landmark designation.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

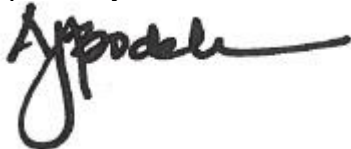
Pursuant to Section 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation—Class 31) of CEQA, a historic landmark designation is categorically exempt from the provisions of the CEQA because the designation will preserve a historical resource in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (1995).

### **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The proposed action will not impact current County services or projects.

For additional information regarding this item, please contact Dean Edwards at [dedwards@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:dedwards@planning.lacounty.gov).

Respectfully submitted,



AMY J. BODEK, AICP  
Director of Regional Planning

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

December 10, 2024

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Attachments:

1. ~~Draft~~ Board Resolution
2. HLRC Resolution

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Historical Landmarks and Records Commission

S\_12\_10\_2024\_AP\_BL\_OWEN\_BROWN\_GRAVESITE\_LANDMARK\_DESIGNATION

**RESOLUTION  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OWEN BROWN GRAVESITE LANDMARK DESIGNATION  
PROJECT NO. PRJ2022-002656-(5)  
CASE NO. RPPL2022008240**

**WHEREAS**, on December 10, 2024, the Los Angeles County ("County") Board of Supervisors ("Board") found the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31) and designate the Owen Brown Gravesite, located near the northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004 in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County Landmark pursuant to Section 22.124 of the County Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board finds:

1. On February 27, 2024, the Board of Supervisors nominated the subject property to be designated as a Los Angeles County landmark.
2. The gravesite is located at the northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004, in the unincorporated community of Altadena, in the Fifth Supervisorial District and in the Angeles National Forest.
3. The subject property is approximately 5.58 acres in size and located on a hilltop in the San Gabriel Mountain foothills. The gravesite is accessible by a footpath that begins at the terminus of El Prieto Road. The gravesite is marked by a rustic commemorative stone, and by additional stones placed to mark the presumed outline of the interred body. Two interpretive panels, three benches, and a directional sign are located on the site.
4. The boundaries of the proposed landmark follow the boundaries of APN 5863-003-004.
5. In 1859, Owen Brown participated in a raid, led by his abolitionist father, John Brown, on an armory in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to initiate a slave revolt. Owen Brown's father, John Brown, was executed after being tried in December of 1859, but Owen Brown escaped capture. In approximately 1884, Owen Brown relocated to Pasadena, California where his sister lived. Soon after, he began homesteading with his brother in the foothills of Altadena. They were visited at their homestead by admirers of Owen Brown's abolitionist work. In 1889, Owen Brown died. His funeral service at the Tabernacle in Pasadena was attended by approximately 2,000 mourners, notably Caucasian and African American. In 1898, a commemorative stone, replacing the original wood marker, was placed

on his gravesite by his friend Horatio Nelson Rust. The commemoration ceremony was attended by prominent community leaders. By 1907, a ring of stones was added indicating the presumed placement of the body. From Owen Brown's death to 1942, the gravesite was a place of pilgrimage by admirers of his abolitionist work. In 1948, police investigated reports of desecration of the gravesite. In 1972, the United States Forest Service restored the vandalized stone. In 2002, the disappearance of the stone led to its retrieval and storage. In 2021, the stone was restored to its original location and configuration on the basis of historic photos. In 2023, the interpretative panels and benches were installed, and the existing directional sign was updated.

6. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.A, the property is eligible for designation because the following criteria have been met. The landmark is:
  - a. 50 years of age or older. Owen Brown was interred at the site in 1889, 135 years ago; and
  - b. Associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation, state, and of the community in which it is located. Specifically, it marks the gravesite and commemorates the life of celebrated abolitionist Owen Brown.
7. Historic integrity is commonly defined as the ability of a site to convey its historical significance and is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The setting has retained its integrity as the upper foothills are relatively undeveloped, the site remains undeveloped, and the gravestone has been restored to its original location and configuration. The additions of the interpretive signs and the benches do not detract from this integrity, and they enhance the feeling of association since they inform visitors of the historic importance of the site.
8. The National Park Service defines period of significance as "the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred" associated with the historic site. Although Owen Brown lived in the immediate vicinity of the subject property, no evidence directly associating him with the subject property before his internment was discovered. Therefore, the period of significance of the subject property is 1889, when Owen Brown was interred, to 1907, when the original ring of stones was placed around the gravesite.
9. Pursuant to County Code Section to 22.14.080 – H, character-defining features are the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the historic character of an historic

resource that must be retained to preserve that character. The character-defining features of the subject property are attached.

10. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.A, the County noticed the record owner of the nomination. The owner did not certify in writing that they consent to the landmark designation and therefore a public hearing is required before the Board of Supervisors.
11. On July 26, 2024, CAI Holdings, LLC sold the subject property to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC). Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.270, the SMMC and the owner of record, CAI Holdings LLC were noticed of this public hearing.
12. On July 26, 2024, Historical Landmarks and Records Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Board find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act and designate the subject property as a County Landmark.
13. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.140, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required to authorize certain work on the landmark.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DOES HEREBY RESOLVE, DETERMINE AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:**

1. Find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31);
2. The property located at northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004 and in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County Landmark is hereby designated as a Los Angeles County Historic Landmark;
3. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.14.080, character-defining features are defined as “the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the historic character of a historic resource that must be retained to preserve that character.” The property’s character-defining features are attached; and
4. Pursuant to County Code section 22.124.190.A, the effective date of this designation is December 10, 2024 and the decision of the Board is final.

EDWARD YEN  
Executive Officer-Clerk of the Board of  
Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles

By: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
DAWYN HARRISON  
County Counsel

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas R. Parker, Senior Deputy County Counsel

Attachment: Character-defining Features



**CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES  
OWEN BROWN GRAVESITE LANDMARK  
PROJECT NO. PRJ2022-002656-(5)  
CASE NO. RPPL2022008240**

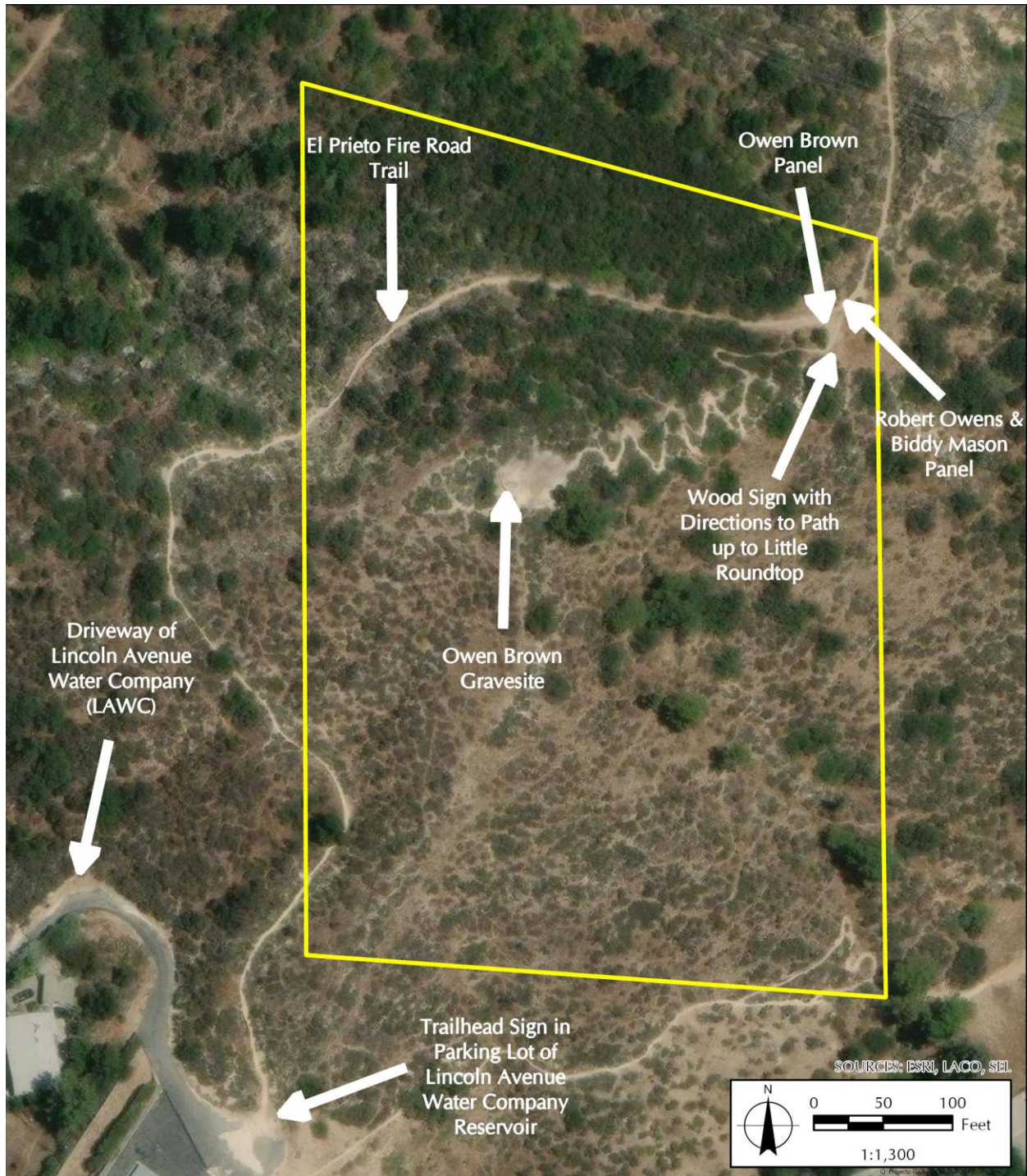
The Owen Brown Gravesite landmark's character-defining features are:

1. The rustic, partially-dressed commemorative stone;
2. The adjoining ring of smaller stones, demarcating the presumed location of the body beneath;



Owen Brown Gravesite with commemorative stone and stone ring (facing west)

3. The hill on which the commemorative stone is located;
4. The lack of development of the subject property, except for the pedestrian pathways and interpretive features.
5. The native Southern California chaparral vegetation.
6. The dirt pedestrian access path located between the wood panel sign with directions to the gravesite.



Orthographic map of the subject property depicting the hill, gravesite and access path



**RESOLUTION**  
**HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND RECORDS COMMISSION**  
**OWEN BROWN GRAVESITE LANDMARK DESIGNATION**  
**PROJECT NO. PRJ2022-002656-(5)**  
**CASE NO. RPPL2022008240**

**WHEREAS**, on July 26, 2024, the Los Angeles County ("County") Historical Landmarks and Records Commission ("Landmarks Commission"), considered a recommendation that the Board of Supervisors find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31) and designate the Owen Brown Gravesite, located at the northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004 and in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County Landmark pursuant to Section 22.124 of the County Code; and

**WHEREAS**, the Landmarks Commission finds:

1. On February 27, 2024, the Board of Supervisors nominated the subject property to be designated as a Los Angeles County landmark.
2. The gravesite is located at the northern terminus of El Prieto Road, on APN 5863-003-004, in the unincorporated community of Altadena, in the Fifth Supervisorial District and in the Angeles National Forest.
3. The subject property is approximately 5.58 acres in size and located on a hilltop. The gravesite is accessible by a footpath that begins near the terminus of El Prieto Road. The gravesite is marked by a rustic commemorative stone, and by additional stones placed to mark the presumed outline of the interred body. Two interpretive panels, three benches, and a directional sign are located on the site.
4. The boundaries of the proposed landmark follow the boundaries of APN 5863-003-004.
5. In 1859, Owen Brown participated in a raid, led by his abolitionist father, John Brown, on an armory in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to initiate a slave revolt. Owen Brown's father, John Brown, was executed after being tried in December of 1859, but Owen Brown escaped capture. In approximately 1884, Owen Brown relocated to Pasadena, California where his sister lived. Soon after, he began homesteading with his brother in the foothills of Altadena. They were visited at their homestead by admirers of Owen Brown's abolitionist work. In 1889, Owen Brown died. His funeral service at the Tabernacle in Pasadena was attended by approximately 2,000 mourners, notably Caucasian and African Americans. In 1898, a commemorative stone, replacing the original wood marker, was placed on his gravesite by his friend Horatio Nelson Rust. The commemoration ceremony

was attended by prominent community leaders. By 1907, a ring of stones was added indicating the presumed placement of the body. From Owen Brown's death to 1942, the gravesite was a place of pilgrimage by admirers of his abolitionist work. In 1948, police investigated reports of desecration of the gravesite. In 1972, the United States Forest Service restored the vandalized stone. In 2002, the stone's disappearance led to its retrieval and storage. In 2021, the stone was restored to its original location and configuration based on historic photos. In 2023, the interpretative panels and benches were installed, and the existing directional sign was updated.

6. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.A, the property is eligible for designation because the following criteria have been met. The landmark is:
  - a. 50 years of age or older. Owen Brown was interred at the site in 1889, 135 years ago; and
  - b. Associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation, state, and of the community in which it is located. Specifically, it marks the gravesite and commemorates the life of celebrated abolitionist Owen Brown.
7. Historic integrity is commonly defined as the ability of a site to convey its historical significance and is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The setting has retained its integrity as the upper foothills are relatively undeveloped, the site remains undeveloped, and the gravestone has been restored to its original location and configuration. The additions of the interpretive signs and the benches do not detract from this integrity, and they enhance the feeling of association since they inform visitors of the historic importance of the site.
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9. Pursuant to County Code Section to 22.14.080 – H, character-defining features are the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the historic character of an historic



resource that must be retained to preserve that character. The character-defining features of the subject property are attached.

10. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.090.A, the County noticed the record owner of the nomination. The owner did not certify in writing that they consent to the landmark designation and therefore a public hearing is required before the Board of Supervisors.
11. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.140, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required to authorize certain work on the landmark.
12. Two letters of support have been received for this case.
13. LA County Planning staff, Mr. Edwards presented the case to the Commission.

Three people testified in support of designation, including Ms. Zack and Mr. Burton of the Owen Brown Gravesite that led the nomination effort. In response to the Commission's inquiry, Ms. Zack testified that she became initially involved with the effort through her participation with Altadena Heritage who led the effort to preserve the property.

A testifier inquired about the CEQA determination and future site improvements. Mr. Edwards responded that the project is categorically exempt from CEQA because it involves the restoration/rehabilitation of a historic resource, and that no known improvements are planned for the property. Counsel provided additional information regarding CEQA reporting requirements.

The Commission expressed interest in participating in an effort with Supervisor Barger's office to install a landmark plaque on the property. Commissioners Kahle and Sands, and Ms. Zack volunteered to assist.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles:

1. Find the project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, pursuant to Section 15331 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation – Class 31); and
2. Adopt a resolution designating the Owen Brown Gravesite, located at the northern terminus of El Prieto Road on APN 5863-003-004 in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County Landmark.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by a majority of the voting members of the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission on July 26, 2024.



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Chair Stephen J. Sass  
Historical Landmarks and Records Commission  
County of Los Angeles

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
DAWYN HARRISON  
County Counsel

By Thomas R. Parker 7/26/2024  
Thomas Parker  
Senior Deputy County Counsel  
Property Division

VOTES

**Yes:** Commissioners: Benjamin J. Kahle, Carol A. Kearns, Sharon Sand,  
Vice Chair Yolanda Duarte-White, and Chair Stephen J. Sass

**No:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Absent:** None

Attachments: Character-defining Features

**CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES  
OWEN BROWN GRAVESITE LANDMARK  
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The Owen Brown Gravesite landmark's character-defining features are:

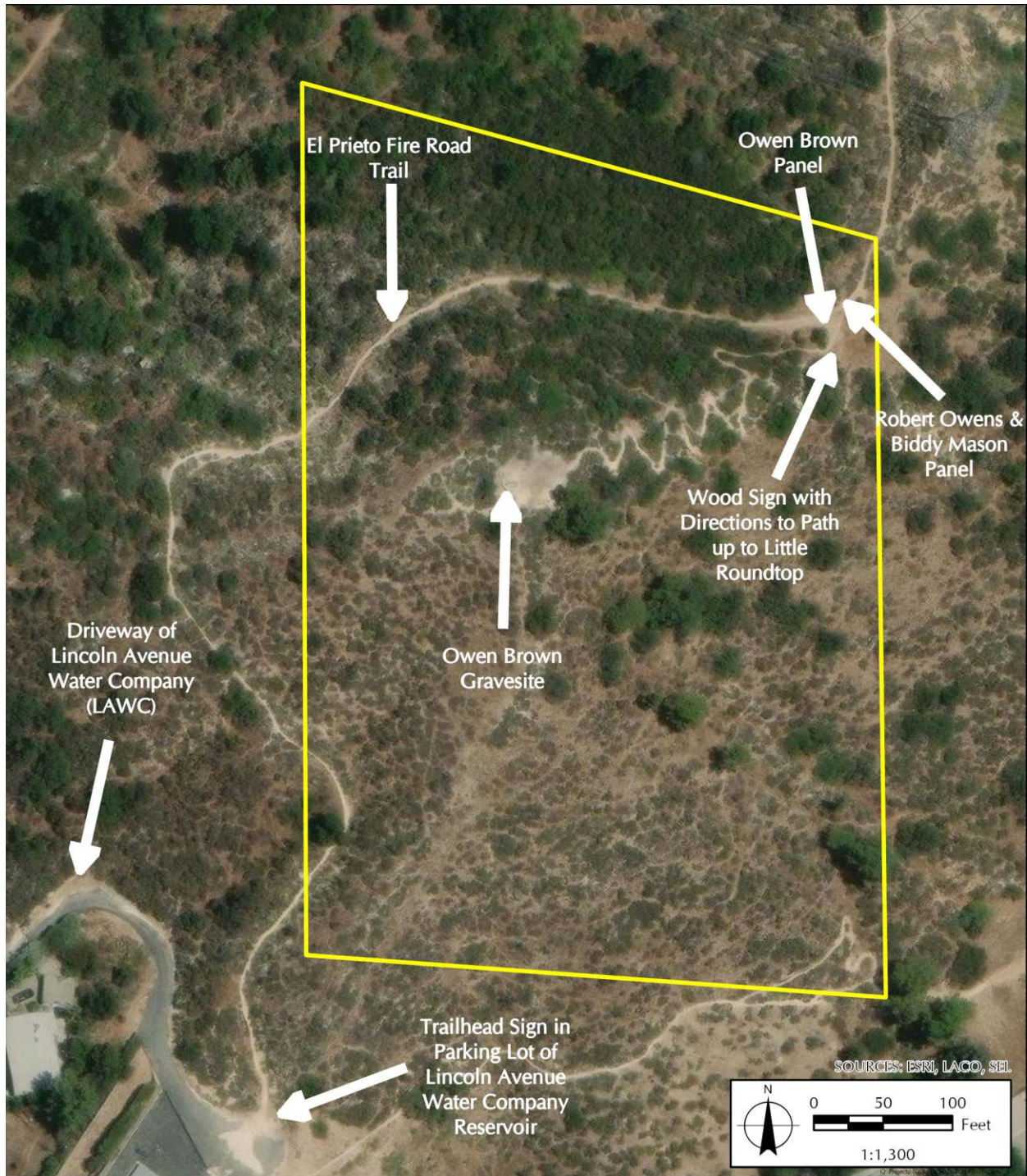
1. The rustic, partially-dressed commemorative stone;
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Owen Brown Gravesite with commemorative stone and stone ring (facing west)

3. The hill on which the commemorative stone is located;
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5. The native Southern California chaparral vegetation.
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Orthographic map of the subject property depicting the hill, gravesite and access path