

El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park



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El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park

123 East Canon Perdido Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

(805)965-0093 • www.sbthp.org

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*The 1782 site of the
original El Presidio
Real de Santa Bárbara,
the last Spanish
fortress built in Alta
California, celebrates
many diverse
communities, cultures
and traditions.*



El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park preserves and interprets the last Spanish fortress built in Alta California. The 5.74-acre park spans four city blocks, encompassing the remainder of the original 1782 Presidio. Its soldiers' quarters, *El Cuartel*, is Santa Barbara's oldest building—California's second oldest. Set between the Santa Ynez mountains and the sea, the park celebrates all of Santa Barbara's diverse cultures—starting with the first people, the Chumash.



NATIVE PEOPLE

As early as 13,500 years ago, tens of thousands of indigenous people, later known as *Chumash* (“shell bead maker” or “island people”), lived along the Santa Barbara coast and on a single island in the adjacent channel. This island eroded and submerged to become today's five Channel Islands.

Early Chumash used stones, animal skins and bones, shells, and wood for tools, clothing and ornament. They traded with each other as well as with neighboring peoples. The Chumash are renown for their finely crafted shell beads and complex economic system.

The Chumash people lived in villages with domed dwellings called *aps*, made of willow poles and woven tule thatching. They wore clothing from animal hides and woven plant fibers, decorated with colorful bird feathers. Grasses and other fibers were twisted into cords, ropes and intricate baskets. Chumash baskets were both useful and ornamental. Jug-shaped

baskets were waterproofed by rolling heated pebbles coated with *asphaltum*—natural tar washed from undersea fossil-fuel pools—within the finished baskets.

Evidence shows that about 2,000 years ago, the Chumash constructed the first wooden plank canoe, known as a *tomol*. They sealed the seams with asphaltum. The tomol enabled them to leave *Limuw* (site of



A Chumash elder explains Chumash traditions.

the largest Chumash ancestral village now known as Santa Cruz Island) to establish other villages and coastal trade networks from present-day Morro Bay to Malibu.

The strong cultural and maritime heritage of the Chumash continues today. Groups hold celebrations and pow-wows; elders teach tribal language, games, and basket-making. Descendants use tomol for an annual channel crossing to Limuw.

European Contact

Portuguese explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo recorded the first non-Chumash sighting of the Santa Barbara area in 1542. Much later, Spaniard Gaspar de Portolá's expedition passed through the channel in 1769. Portolá's findings prompted Spanish ruler King Carlos III to order Alta California's lands colonized for Spain and the California native people converted to Christianity. The Spanish built military fortresses, rancho complexes and pueblos to colonize the land; they ordered mission complexes built to hasten the conversions.

Spain initially established three military fortresses or *presidios* at natural harbors on bays along California's coast in San Diego (1769), Monterey (1770), and San Francisco (1776).

The fourth and final fortress was the Santa Barbara Royal Presidio (*El Presidio Real de Santa Bárbara*). Commandant José Francisco de Ortega brought soldiers and settlers from northwestern Mexico to the chosen site in Santa Barbara.

The presidio site was dedicated by Father Junípero Serra at its founding on April 21, 1782. Construction began, using Chumash labor contracted with Yanonalit—noted chieftain of several nearby villages.

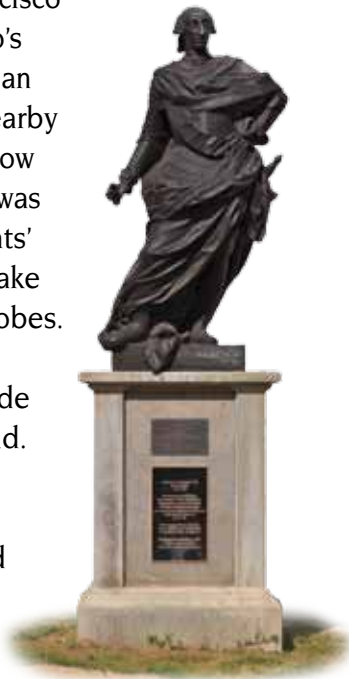
EL PRESIDIO FLOURISHES

Mandated by King Carlos III, California Governor Felipe de Neve ordered the Santa Barbara Presidio constructed to protect arriving Spanish settlers and local mission communities from the threat of British or Russian invasion.

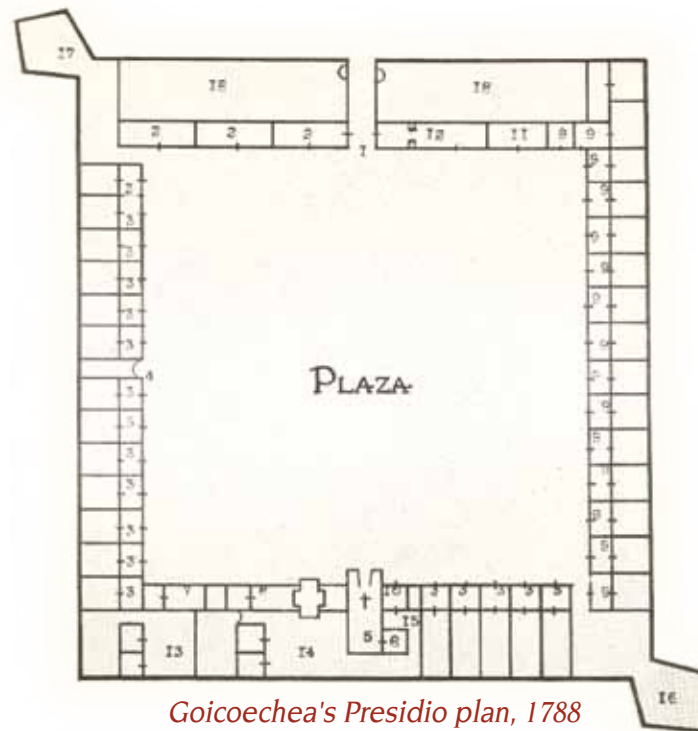
From 1782 to 1830, the Presidio served as a cultural, social and administrative center for European people living between the Santa Maria River and the Pueblo de Los Angeles.

Lieutenant José Francisco de Ortega, the Presidio's first commandant, had an aqueduct built from nearby Arroyo el Pedregosa (now Mission Creek). Water was needed for the residents' consumption and to make sun dried bricks for adobes. Work began at once on temporary shelters made of poles, reeds and mud. A palisade of pointed sticks enclosed the temporary garrison and the chapel.

Lieutenant Felipe de Goicoechea



*Statue of Carlos III,
King of Spain*



succeeded Ortega in 1784. Goicoechea oversaw construction of the permanent Presidio, built by soldiers, sailors, Chumash contract laborers, and 12 Tongva converts from Mission San Gabriel.

Adobe structures on sandstone foundations formed a quadrangle around the 300-foot-square parade ground, Plaza de Armas. Apartment-like housing for the officers, soldiers and their families lined the inner quadrangle. The chapel and the chaplain's and commandant's quarters

stood at the northern end. Garden spaces and livestock corrals created an outdoor perimeter behind the housing on all sides, surrounded by a thick defense wall. Tall sentry bastions armed with cannons flanked the northwestern and southeastern corners of the Presidio. After 1797, a second outer defense wall was built around the complex.

The need for the military at the Santa Barbara Presidio was never actually tested. However, fifth Commandant José de la Guerra's soldiers did quell skirmishes with Argentinian Hipolito Bouchard as well as an uprising of neophytes from local missions.

In 1821, Mexico achieved independence from Spain. Those Spanish soldiers and settlers who would not pledge loyalty to the Mexican government were then expelled from the Presidio, so the Presidio fell into disrepair. By the 1840s, the compound



El Cuartel, ca. 1880s



Comandancia (Commandant's quarters)
Top: Chapel altar

stood in partial ruins. The Presidio's military role ended in 1846 when Colonel John C. Frémont's troops claimed the city for the United States.

Santa Barbara's streets were surveyed in the 1850s and laid directly through the Presidio site in the 1870s. Although several portions of the Presidio quadrangle survived into the 20th century, most original structures were lost to the forces of nature and to Santa Barbara's growth as a city.

RECONSTRUCTION

In 1963 the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation (SBTHP) was formed to reconstruct the Presidio and to preserve other local historic cultural sites. Dr. Pearl Chase, founder of SBTHP, recognized that partnering with California State Parks would provide access to resources that could increase awareness of

Santa Barbara's Presidio and its role in the city.

An adobe built in 1788, *El Cuartel* was the residence of descendants of Presidio soldier Jesus Valenzuela for more than three generations.

El Cuartel, SBTHP's first acquisition, was restored and donated to the State. *El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park* was created in 1966.

Volunteers and staff of the nonprofit SBTHP have been responsible for the planning, financing and reconstruction of historic buildings. California State Parks supports historic acquisitions and interpretive projects. SBTHP, the California Conservation Corps and Presidio volunteers have reconstructed the Padre's Quarters, the Chapel and Bell Tower, the *Comandancia* (Commandant's Quarters), and the northeast and northwest corners of the quadrangle.

The Cañedo Adobe, a remnant of the original Presidio, is slated for eventual restoration. The original footprint of *El Presidio's* defense walls is replicated by inlaid paving stones or stones painted on the



Alhecama Theatre complex, part of the Santa Barbara School of the Arts

ground in portions of the four-block park.

A short distance from the park, SBTHP also owns and operates the restored period museum at *Casa de la Guerra*—home to fifth Presidio Commandant José de la Guerra and site of important historic civic and social events through the years.

SBTHP also maintains a conservation easement over nearby El Paseo, a 1920s-built complex—California's first with shops surrounding interior courtyards. El Paseo is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

ARTS COMMUNITY

The Santa Barbara School of the Arts was incorporated in 1921. After a 1925 earthquake destroyed the Dominguez and the Flores adobes—once the Presidio's *comandancia*—plans to construct a Spanish Colonial Revival complex for the art school



Memorias y Facturas in Northeast Corner

faltered. The sole Spanish Colonial Revival structure, today's Presidio Research Center, was completed in 1929; the School of the Arts closed in 1938.

The 1925 Pueblo Playhouse was renamed the Alhecama Theatre for the four daughters of Alice Schott, who purchased the school complex in 1939.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Ongoing exhibits and special celebrations are held throughout the year. An event calendar may be viewed at www.sbthp.org.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- La Purísima Mission State Historic Park
2295 Purísima Road off Hwy. 246
Lompoc 93463 (805) 733-3713
- Chumash Painted Cave State Historic Park
Painted Cave Road off Hwy. 154
Santa Barbara 93105 (805) 733-3713
- Carpinteria State Beach
5201 Fourth Street, Carpinteria 93013
(805) 684-2811

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Restrooms and most buildings and exhibits, including the Northwest Corner and the outdoor portion of the Northeast Corner, are accessible.

Some historic buildings may have doorways with a high threshold or step.



Founder's Day celebration

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural, cultural and historical features are protected by law and may not be disturbed.
- Parking is available on city streets and in public parking lots off Anacapa Street.
- Only service dogs are permitted in buildings. Pets must be on a six-foot-maximum leash while on the grounds.
- Some park buildings, marked with asterisks *, are not open to the public. Please respect the tenants' privacy.

This park is operated and supported by the nonprofit Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation
123 East Canon Perdido St.
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DIVERSE HERITAGES



Jimmy's Oriental Gardens

Constructed with Chumash labor, the native-built adobes symbolize the Spanish and Mexican eras. The campus of the Santa Barbara School of the Arts represents the city's early 20th-century cultural development. Jimmy's Oriental Gardens serves as an iconic reminder of Santa Barbara's Asian American heritage—with contributions by Chinese, Japanese and Filipino immigrants.

Filipino immigrant Antonio Miranda Rodriguez was transferred to Santa Barbara from Los Angeles as a *soldado de cuera* (leather jacket soldier) in 1783. Rodriguez, Santa Barbara's first Filipino resident, is buried beneath the chapel floor.

Chinese settlers moved into the 0-100 block of East Canon Perdido in the 1860s, opening small businesses or working as fishermen or farmhands. This "old Chinatown" was dismantled after the 1925 earthquake,

so the Chinese community moved one block to the former Presidio area, then called "new Chinatown."

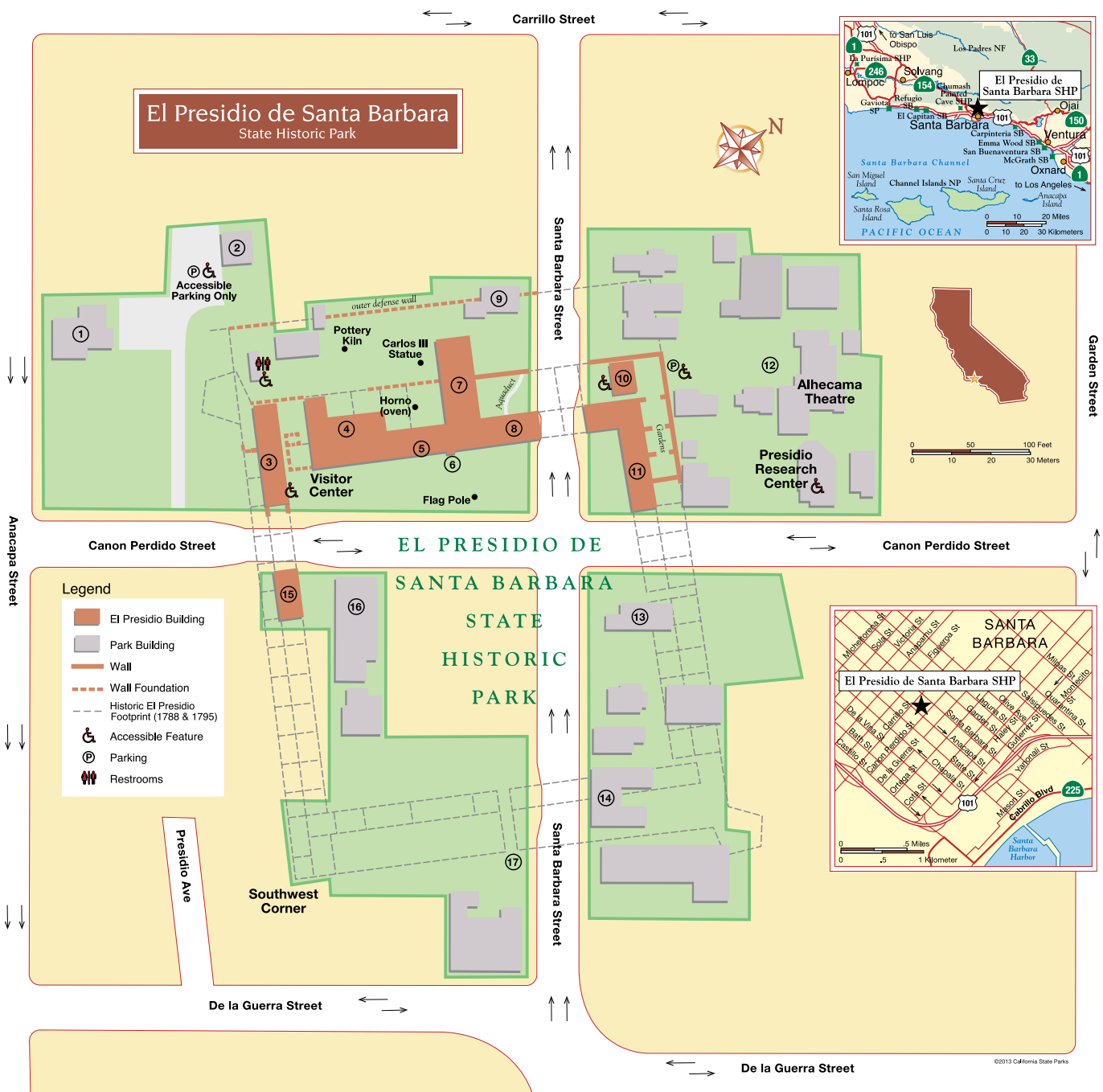
Its last addition arrived in 1947, when Jimmy Chung moved his family restaurant, Jimmy's Oriental Gardens, to 126 East Canon Perdido. The Chungs operated the last Chinese-owned business in new Chinatown for more than 60 years.

From 1900 until 1941, a few hundred Japanese lived and worked on today's restored Presidio site. Their *Nihonmachi* (neighborhood) contained the Asakura Hotel, a Congregational church and a Buddhist temple. Following the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, Japanese Americans were imprisoned in internment camps, and many lost their property. By the 1960s, very few traces of Nihonmachi remained.

Artifacts from these vibrant Asian cultures are displayed in the visitor center.



Asakura Hotel, ca. 1905



PATHWAY THROUGH EL PRESIDIO:

1. **Cota-Knox House***—built by theatre-owner José Lobero for his mother-in-law Maria de Jesus Olivera de Cota in 1871.
2. **Pico Adobe***—home of Presidio soldier Buenaventura Pico and his wife Anita, built ca. 1840
3. **Northwest Corner complex**—residences for soldiers and their families, a communal cooking area, and parts of the original outer defense wall
4. **Cañedo Adobe**—The visitor center is located within a row of rooms granted to soldier José Maria Cañedo.
5. **Padre's Quarters**—reconstruction of the original quarters for El Presidio's chaplains
6. **Chapel Bell Tower**—rededicated on Founding Day, April 21, 2001
7. **Chapel**—Many of Santa Barbara's earliest settlers lie buried beneath the tiles of this once-active parish church.
8. **Comandancia (Commandant's Quarters)**—once extended across today's Santa Barbara Street, adjoining other officers' quarters
9. **Bonilla House***—1887-built residence of stagecoach driver Florentino Bonilla
10. **Cocina**—an officers' kitchen furnished with Presidio-era equipment, foods and utensils, next to an interpretive garden
11. **Northeast Corner**—reconstructed two-story observation tower, officers' quarters and soldiers' quarters
12. **Santa Barbara School of the Arts complex**—includes the Alhecama Theatre and the Presidio Research Center, a Spanish Colonial Revival building designed as in 1928. The complex has two restaurant tenants.
13. **Moulet House**—Italianate brick home built in 1896, now leased to a restaurant
14. **Rochin Adobe***—1856 one-story, three-room adobe later covered with siding
15. **El Cuartel**—This 1788 soldier's quarters is the oldest standing building in the State Park System and sole surviving structure on the Presidio's western side.
16. **Jimmy's Oriental Gardens**—site of a popular Chinese restaurant since 1947. The Chungs lived behind the building, now leased to another restaurateur.
17. **Front Gate Site**—location of the original front gate of *El Presidio Real de Santa Bárbara*

***Not open to the public**