

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
San Diego Presidio

AND/OR COMMON  
San Diego Presidio

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Presidio

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
San Diego

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

40th

STATE  
California

CODE  
06

COUNTY  
San Diego

CODE  
073

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Department of Parks and Recreation for the City of San Diego

STREET & NUMBER  
202 C Street

CITY, TOWN  
San Diego

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. San Diego County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
San Diego

STATE  
California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

By 1817 the Presidio buildings were reported in a "ruinous" condition and in need of repair. In 1826 it was noted again that the Presidio was still in need of repair. By 1834, most of the people had abandoned the Presidio and established their homes below it in Old Town. At the turn of the century, weeds and ice plant covered the Presidio which had fallen into ruin. Broken red tiles were scattered there, and the foundations of adobe walls were still visible.

The Presidio site was saved from complete oblivion by George W. Marston, who donated about 37 acres to the City of San Diego for park purposes in 1929. His gift was officially accepted by the city in 1937.

It was clear that reconstructing the Presidio would be very expensive. Therefore, the ruins were indicated by an adobe wall and protected by mounds of earth placed over the ruins and planted with grass. A cross was made at the site from broken tiles from the Presidio.

Although accurate information of the appearance of the Presidio is difficult to find, recent excavations have located on the west side the church within the old ruins.

The Presidio park has been formally landscaped, and its principal architectural feature is the Serra Museum, built in 1929, which houses a large collection of archeological and historical objects related to early California and Spanish history. The museum library also contains both original and published records of the history of the city and region.

The former site of the San Diego Presidio is now located in front of the Serra Museum. Removal of a portion of the hill for fill in the construction of the San Diego River dyke and for the Mission Valley road, destroyed the remains of one row of quarters and wall. Park roads were also constructed over another section of the fort. However, some vestiges of the structures that once formed the presidio still remain in the form of grass-covered mounds, which suggest a part of the ground plan and outline of former walls and buildings. Excavations by San Diego State University are now underway.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1769

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

San Diego Presidio in San Diego, California, established in 1769, is the site of the first permanent European settlement on the Pacific coast of the United States. Here the Portola-Serra land and sea expedition united and Fray Junipero Serra founded the mission of San Diego de Alcalá.

The town served as a base of operations for exploring new routes into the interior and as the military headquarters for southern California. For a time it was the residence of the governor under Mexican rule. It is now largely unexposed and covered with park roads and landscaping.

### History

The Presidio of San Diego commemorates two important events: the founding of the first permanent European settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States, and the establishment of the first mission in California.

Here, on July 1, 1769, Father Junipero Serra said mass, the assemblage of 126 people, survivors of the 300 who had set out originally for Upper California, sang the Te Deum, and Governor Don Gaspar de Portola then ceremoniously took formal possession of California for Spain. Here again, on July 16, 1769, Father Serra founded the first mission in Upper California, Mission San Diego de Alcalá. From 1769 to 1776 the San Diego Presidio was the base of operations from which expeditions put out to explore new routes and found new missions and presidios; from 1776 until 1837 it continued to be the seat of military jurisdiction in Southern California, and under Mexican rule it was also the residence of the governor from 1825 to 1829.<sup>1</sup>

In August, 1769, following the Indian attack on the 40 settlers, a crude stockade was erected on Presidio Hill to protect the mission and colony. By January, 1770, the settlement was on the point of starvation, but on March 19, just when all hope seemed lost, a supply ship from Mexico sailed into the bay and saved the California venture from total ruin. By the end of March 1770, the stockade was finished, two bronze cannon were mounted, and houses of wood, with tule roofs, were erected. The commandant's residence was situated in the center of the Presidio. On the east side of the square were a chapel, cemetery, and storehouses; on the south were the gate and guardhouse; and the officers' and soldiers' quarters were arranged around the other two sides. In 1774 Father Serra removed his mission to a new site, located six miles to the northeast.

In 1778 work started on the task of replacing the original wooden presidio walls and

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bancroft, Hubert H., History of California, 7 Vols., San Francisco, 1884-90.  
 Engelhardt, Father Zephyrin, San Diego Mission, San Francisco, 1920.  
 Ewing, Russell C., "Presidio Hill, San Diego," National Park Service report, San Francisco, 1935.  
 Hagen, Olaf T., "San Diego California," Historic Sites Survey Report, HSS Property tiles, 1940.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 18

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,1	48,20,8,0	3,62,410,7,0	B	1,1	48,16,3,0	3,62,44,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,1	48,19,8,0	3,62,46,0,0	D			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Presidio is located within Presidio Park. The boundary has been drawn to include any potential archeological remains which may still exist, beginning where the center line of Palm Canyon could intersect Taylor Street, then proceeding south-west along the south curb of Taylor Street, continuing as it turns south to Chestnut Street then east along the north curb of Chestnut Street continuing in a straight line across Jackson Street to Presidio Drive at the point where Cosoy

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Boundary determined by Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project, original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1963.

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

Landmark Designated Oct 9, 1960  
date

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

Boundary Certified  
George T. Emery  
April 16, 1978  
date

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST:

DATE

11/24/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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History

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buildings with adobe. Its garrison by 1790 comprised 51 men, of whom 28 garrisoned the fort, six men guarded each of the three missions in the presidio district, and four more were stationed at the pueblo of Los Angeles. Including the soldiers, about 100 people lived within the presidio walls.

Captain George Vancouver visited San Diego in November 1793, and reported: "The Presidio of St. Diego seemed to be the least of the Spanish establishments. It is irregularly built, on very uneven ground, which makes it liable to some inconveniences, without the obvious appearance of any object for selecting a spot. With little difficulty it might be rendered a place of considerable strength, by establishing a small force at the entrance of the port, where at this time there were neither works, guns, houses, or other habitations, nearer than the Presidio, five miles from the port, and where they have only three small pieces of brass cannon." His was the first foreign ship to visit San Diego, and this event, together with the Nootka incident, led to a further strengthening of the fort. In 1795-96 an esplanade, powder magazine, flagpole, and several houses for the soldiers, were added to the presidio. The first harbor defenses were also erected in 1797, when Fort Guijarros, which included an adobe magazine, barracks, and battery designed to mount 10 cannon, was built on Point Loma.

In 1799, to help men the additional post, 31 men were added to the garrison raising the total to about 90 soldiers. In 1810 the force numbered about 100 men, of whom 25 were detached to protect the four missions in the district, and 20 were stationed at the Los Angeles pueblo. Spain maintained the garrison at this level until 1819, when some 50 cavalrymen joined the force. The total white population of the San Diego District that year was about 450, and the Indian neophytes numbered about 5,200.

Under the Mexican Government, some 120 men comprised the San Diego Presidio force in 1830, of whom 100 lived at the presidio; the total district population then included 520 Mexicans and 5,200 Christian Indians.

After 1830, however, the San Diego Presidio military force soon declined rapidly. By 1835 only 27 soldiers were on duty, 12 at the presidio and 13 at two missions. Visiting in 1836, Richard Henry Dana noted: "The first place we went to was the old ruinous presidio, which stands on a rising ground near the village [Old Town], which it overlooks. It is built in the form of an open square, like all the other presidios, and was in a most ruinous state, with the exception of one side, in which the commandant lived, with his family. There were only two guns, one of which was spiked, and the other had no carriage. Twelve, half clothed, and half-starved looking fellows, composed the garrison; and they, it was said, had not a musket apiece."

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Fort Guijarros was also in ruins by 1835, and of its seven cannon, only two were serviceable. The last of the presidio troops were sent north in 1837, and the San Diego Presidio was completely abandoned as a military post. By 1839 the Presidio was reduced completely to ruins, and not a structure was standing. Much stone and adobe had been removed from the Presidio to erect houses in the new pueblo of San Diego that had been founded in 1835.

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San Diego Presidio

CONTINUATION SHEET Boundary

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Way joins it above "The Bowl," then north east along the north edge of Cosoy Way <sup>250'</sup> to a point in line with the beginning point, then northwest to the point of beginning as shown on Sketch Map A-Plan of Presidio Park. Only the archeological remains constitute the landmark. Any other features of the park do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.