

= Presidio of Santa Barbara =

El Presidio Real de Santa Bárbara , also known as the Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara , is a former military installation in Santa Barbara , California , USA . The presidio was built by Spain in 1782 , with the mission of defending the Second Military District in California . In modern times , the Presidio serves as a significant tourist attraction , museum and an active archaeological site as part of El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park .

The park contains an original adobe structure called El Cuartel , which is the second oldest surviving building in California , only the chapel at Mission San Juan Capistrano , known as " Father Serra 's Church " , is older . The Presidio of Santa Barbara has the distinction of being the last military outpost built by Spain in the New World . The Presidio became a California Historical Landmark in 1958 and was listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 1973 .

= = Contemporary setting = =

The current El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park site sits between Anacapa and Garden Street on East Canon Perdido Street in downtown Santa Barbara . The main portion of the site is across the street from the Santa Barbara city Post Office , and is about two blocks from city hall , De la Guerra Plaza and two other museums , the Santa Barbara Historical Museum and the Casa de la Guerra .

Only two portions of the original presidio quadrangle survive to this day : the Cañedo Adobe , named for José María Cañedo , the Soldado de Cuera to whom it was deeded in lieu of back pay when the Presidio fell to inactivity , and the remnants of a two @-@ room soldiers quarters , called El Cuartel . The Cañedo Adobe is currently the visitor ? s center for the state park , and El Cuartel is largely unmodified . The site ? s operator , the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation ( SBTHP ) , reconstructed the rest of the site , with the most recent construction ? two rooms in the northwest corner of the site ? finished in May 2006 . The reconstruction is ongoing , with the construction of two more rooms in the northwest corner beginning in December 2007 .

= = History = =

The site of the Presidio was chosen by Felipe de Neve , the fourth governor of Las Californias . Perceiving that the coast at Santa Barbara was vulnerable to attack , he located a spot near a harbor which was sheltered from severe storms . In addition , there was an ample supply of both building materials and water nearby . Construction began on April 21 , 1782 , and Padre Junípero Serra blessed the site . By the next year , a temporary facility had been completed , and a wheat field planted by the local Chumash Indians of Chief Yanonalit . The early Presidio consisted of mud and brush walls around a quadrangle 330 feet on a side . The post had 61 officers and men in 1783 .

The first comandante , José Francisco Ortega , planned the fortifications and irrigation works . He obtained livestock for the presidio from Mission San Buenaventura , established orchards , and began large @-@ scale farming . In 1784 , Felipe de Goicoechea took over as comandante , supervising construction of the fortifications and living quarters for the soldiers and their families . Two years later , construction of the nearby Mission Santa Barbara began in 1786 . The pueblo or town of Santa Barbara developed around the Presidio , which offered protection for the residents . The chapel in the Presidio was the primary place of worship for the residents of early Santa Barbara , until its destruction by the 1857 Fort Tejon earthquake . The mission , located a mile and a half inland , was mainly intended for use by the native Chumash ( Barbareño ) neophytes after their conversion to Catholicism .

The Presidio was built to standard plans for a Spanish colonial military headquarters , using locally available materials , so the buildings forming the outer square were constructed with thick , solid adobe outer walls . The main gate opened into an open parade ground / plaza in the center of the square . The chapel stood at the center of the back of the square , facing the gate across the plaza .

While it was never attacked by a strong military force during its sixty years of operation , the Presidio was subject to the assaults of nature . Several devastating earthquakes in the early 19th century destroyed much of the structure .

In 1855 the Presidio Chapel grew into the Apostolic College of Our Lady of Sorrows , which soon became Our Lady of Sorrows Church at the corner of Figueroa and State Streets , and then at the corner of Anacapa and Sola streets in 1929 . However , both still stand separately as vibrant churches of a richly Catholic history .

= = Mexican @-@ American War = =

At the time of the Mexican @-@ American War in Alta California , very little of the fortress remained in usable condition , and on December 27 , 1846 , John C. Frémont ascended San Marcos Pass during rainy weather and came up on the Presidio and the town from behind . The Presidio surrendered without a fight , as the garrison was far south in the Pueblo de Los Angeles . Frémont had heard that the Mexican army was lying in ambush for him at Gaviota Pass , the only other sensible route over the mountains at that time , and had crossed the difficult muddy track on San Marcos Pass to outflank them , but this move turned out not to have been necessary . Mexican General Andrés Pico later surrendered his force to Frémont , recognizing that the war was lost .

= = Preservation = =

In 1963 , the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation ( SBTHP ) was founded , with the primary mission of restoring the Presidio . In 1966 , the land on which the Presidio is located became a State Historic Park . On December 27 , 2006 , the SBTHP renewed their ongoing agreement with the California State Parks Department to manage the Presidio . Work on the restoration is currently taking place . On November 26 , 1973 the Presidio of Santa Barbara was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places .

= = = Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail = = =

The Presidio of Santa Barbara is one of the designated tour sights of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail , a National Park Service unit in the United States National Historic Trail and National Millennium Trail programs .