

Chapter One

The Presidio: The Birthplace of Santa Barbara

Two-hundred years after laying claim to California in 1542, Spain finally sent the so-called Sacred Expedition, led by Gaspar de Portolá and ~~Padre-Father~~ Junípero Serra, to take possession of the region in founding ceremonies in San Diego on July 13, 1769, and ~~another~~ in Monterey on June 3, 1770. During this pre-~~P~~presidio period, Spanish soldiers passed through the Santa Barbara region along with the ~~padres~~, including Father Serra, recently named a saint by Pope Francis. Spanish settlements to the north in San Francisco and Monterey were connected to the south in San Diego by the original El Camino Real, the so-called Royal Highway that passed through the Santa Barbara ~~Region~~region. Truth be told, most travel and communication took place by ship between ports, and the Royal Highway served more as a trunk line for delivering goods to the missions, presidios, and pueblos. More on that later.

Serra had wanted since his arrival in 1769 to have a mission in the area of today's city of Ventura, and this was finally granted by the Spanish ~~v~~Viceroy in Mexico City—the mission was founded ~~on~~ March 31, 1782. Because of an Indian uprising at the Colorado River, it was felt that a ~~Presidio-presidio~~ was needed to protect the mission, and so the Santa Barbara Presidio was founded ~~on~~ April 21, 1782, at its present location. Present at the founding ~~was-were~~ Governor Felipe de Neve, and Father ~~Junípero~~ Serra, who said the founding mass. Santa Barbara became the fourth military district of Alta California, covering the area that extended to the Santa Maria River in the north to the Pueblo ~~de~~of Los Angeles-Ángeles to the south. The ~~Pueblo-pueblo~~ had been founded ~~on~~ September 4, 1781. The last Spanish adobe fort built in North America, the

Santa Barbara Presidio₂ provides a window into ~~the~~ three-hundred-year Spanish presence in North America (1520~~-to~~-1820). This empire extended at one time all the way to the Mississippi River and into Florida. Its influence on the American southwest and California was profound. Alta California's colonization came late in the history of the Spanish empire in North America—in large part due to Spanish fear of English and Russian encroachment in the region. The ~~P~~residio served two main purposes: to protect the coast from this encroachment and to pacify the ~~i~~ndigenous population by providing military support to the ~~Mission-mission~~ system. A by-product of these purposes was to establish the first permanent and lasting European settlement of California. In fact, the town and now-modern city of Santa Barbara can trace its roots directly to the ~~Founding-founding~~ of the Santa Barbara Presidio.

[Images 6 and 7 here]

Building the Presidio

~~The years~~ 1784 to 1790 ~~was the time period~~~~were~~ when the Presidio's adobe construction took place and two missions, Santa Barbara (1786) and Mission La Purisima (1787) near modern-day Lompoc₂ were established. Serra had died in 1784 so these missions ~~came~~-were founded under the leadership of Serra's successor, ~~Fermin-Fermín~~ de Lasuén.

There were two original fort structures: a palisade version (built~~-in~~ 1782-3) and an adobe version that superseded the palisade version. The palisade structure was made of timbers and was built during the tenure of the first comandante, José Francisco Ortega, most famous for being the pathfinder who discovered San Francisco Bay in 1769 as the lead scout of ~~Pertola's-Portolá's~~

Sacred Expedition. During the early phase of the construction, Serra, who had celebrated the founding mass on April 21, stayed for over a month, probably living in a tent as the soldiers began their work. Also, by late 1783, an aqueduct had been built bringing water to the Presidio from the creek near where Mission Santa Barbara would be built later. Remains of the aqueduct were uncovered behind the comandancia during an archaeological investigation in the 1980s but ~~the aqueduct~~ has never been traced from the Presidio to the exact site of its origin. In ~~the any~~ event, it was a quite a feat to have built the aqueduct in a relatively short period of time. The section uncovered indicates it was built of stone and tile, and was plastered and covered to keep debris from getting into the water. The SBTHP came up with a project to try to trace the likely course of the aqueduct following the landform leading to Pedrogosa Creek (as Mission Creek was called then). However, no one responded to the Trust's inquiries of landowners of any possible remnants on their properties, and it is not difficult to conclude that these people were not too excited about finding something that might impact their control over their properties.

The year 1784 marked the arrival of one of the most important historical figures in Spanish Santa Barbara history, Felipe Antonio de Goicoechea (1747–1814). Unlike some of the other well-known historical personages such as José de la Guerra, José Francisco Ortega, Pablo Cota, and José Raimundo Carrillo, Goicoechea does not have a street in the city named after him. One person suggested to me half-jokingly that the reason Goicoechea hasn't been honored with a street name is that it is so hard to pronounce his name. Goicoechea is a Basque name, in fact a fairly common Basque name, and not surprisingly he was born in a Basque region of Mexico near the present-day Mexican State of Durango. His mother's lineage dated back to 16th century Durango, in that same region. Goicoechea was in charge of building the

adobe fort, then later remained as comandante, making him the chief military officer of the **Santa Barbara** **P**residio district, overseeing all the political, legal, and business affairs of the region.

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He spent ~~eighteen~~18 years in Santa Barbara, before leaving for Mexico City and Loreto in Baja California. At the latter, he served as governor and died there in 1814. I make the case for his importance in several articles I have published on him. Most important was his overseeing and guiding construction of the last Spanish adobe fort built in North America.

Spanish Adobe Building Techniques

Building an adobe fort on the frontier was no small task, and Goicoechea commenced construction as soon as he arrived. The quadrangle foundations were laid out outside the original palisade construction and the first foundations were installed at the southwest corner.

Apparently, a ceremony took place at the southeast corner of the foundations, because when it was uncovered in the 1970s, one of the stones on top looked to have been carved out for placing something in it, but no relic or the like was found.

There ~~are~~were various phases to the construction of each room. First came the foundations that had to be excavated. Stones and boulders had to be gathered at the local creeks and beach and carted over on wagons called *carretas*. Foundations that went into the ground several feet were filled in ~~the~~ with the boulders, and were finished above-ground about a foot to protect against moisture. While this was going on, adobe brick~~ing~~ making was taking place, and eventually bricks were laid on the foundations that had been leveled; the walls were raised to a certain height, beams were installed to form a pitched roof, and **Rhonda Reed** retrieved from local

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