

Throughout the Presidio are markers indicating points of historical interest, such as the one locating the Old Indian Burial Grounds, situated in front of Building 103 on Montgomery Street, and another at the junction of Ruger Street and Lincoln Boulevard near the Lombard Street entrance, which reads, "On the hillside south of this point and in the area immediately to the north was located Camp Merriam. The 1st and 7th California, 51st Iowa, 1st Idaho, 20th Kansas, 1st New York and 1st South Dakota Volunteer Regiments of Infantry and other units which participated in the war with Spain were quartered in this camp."

Standing on the high hills of the Presidio, one gets a spectacular view in every direction. To the southeast, one can look down on the City of San Francisco; to the west, the flag flying above Fort Miley can be seen, and beyond, the Pacific Ocean with the Farallon Islands far in the distance; to the northwest across the Golden Gate are Fort Barry and Fort Cronkhite, where batteries of fast-firing missiles are poised and ready to repel a sudden air attack by an enemy. To the north is Fort Baker, home of the 6th Region, U. S. Army Air Defense Command; to the northeast across the bay is Angel Island; slightly to the east of Angel Island is Alcatraz Island, formerly a U. S. Military fortification, later a Federal Penitentiary, now abandoned (1963); and to the east along the bay shoreline is Fort Mason.

The Presidio today is the home of the Headquarters, Sixth United States Army, which has an area of responsibility extending from the Canadian to the Mexican Border and from the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains. Within this area are located 30 installations and activities at which almost 50,000 military and 10,000 civilian personnel perform their duties under the direct control of this headquarters. In addition, Headquarters, Sixth Army, provides service and support for 40 other installations that employ an additional 35,000 persons. Headquarters, Sixth Army has direct control over the training activities of almost a quarter of a million U. S. Army Reserve personnel, and supervises and coordinates the training of almost 50,000 U. S. Army National Guard.

As an outpost of empire under three flags, the Presidio of San Francisco is one of the oldest of the nation's military reservations. Its long succession of changing garrisons has stood guard over the western coast since the first year of the American Revolutionary War. It has been the headquarters for American military commands defending the territory west of the Rocky Mountains since 1857. At various times since the Spanish-American War, it has directed troops who have guarded the United States' interests in Alaska, the Panama Canal Zone, the Hawaiian Islands, China, and the Philippines.

END

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# THE PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO



## ITS HISTORY and POINTS OF SCENIC INTEREST

## HISTORY

In 1776, while the American colonies on the Atlantic Coast were putting into effect the Declaration of Independence, the Spanish rulers of Mexico sent exploring parties northward along the California Coast, establishing missions and military posts and taking possession of the land in the name of Spain. The northernmost of these posts was the Presidio of San Francisco.

At a point that is now the center of the main post, the Spaniards laid out their Presidio. The name, "Presidio," is derived from the Roman word, "praesidium," meaning a garrison of a fortified camp. The original Presidio was a walled camp of approximately 200 yards square surrounded by palisade-type walls. The old quadrangle is marked by bronze plaques placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1928. The Presidio continued to be used by the Spanish until it was taken over by the Mexicans when they gained their independence in 1822 and was garrisoned by the Mexicans until the United States took forcible possession in 1846. The Presidio was formally occupied by American troops under the command of Major James A. Hardie on March 27, 1847.

The Presidio reservation consists of approximately 1,400 acres occupying the northernmost point of the peninsula of San Francisco. The entire reservation originally consisted of bare sand hills and rocks and was in that condition until the 1880's when large areas were planted with eucalyptus and pine trees. This, with the building of roadways and other general improvements by the U. S. Army, has made the Presidio one of the beauty spots of San Francisco.

The reservation contains many points of interest, and some of the Army's most illustrious names are associated with the Presidio. Major General Irwin McDowell, General William Tecumseh Sherman, Lieutenant General Phillip H. Sheridan, Lieutenant General Hunter Liggett, Brigadier General Frederick Funston, and Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur, the father of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, all commanded the post at one time during their Army careers. General John J. Pershing, when in command of the Eighth Brigade, was stationed at the Presidio in 1914 before leaving on the Mexican Expedition. It was here that his great personal tragedy occurred, the death of his wife and three daughters in a fire which destroyed their home on the post on August 27, 1915. Today, the area surrounding the main flag pole is known as Pershing Square, in memory of the General's family. In February 1963 the Presidio was named as a Registered National Historic Landmark. Two huge Rodman cannons and a historic plaque near the south end of Pershing square commemorate this honor. During the Civil War, the Army trained Union regiments at the Presidio and maintained the defense for the Western frontiers during the Indian campaigns of the 70's and 80's. During the Spanish-American War, volunteers trained for service overseas on what is now known as Infantry Terrace.

When a major earthquake, followed by a devastating fire, struck San Francisco in the early hours of April 18, 1906, Presidio troops, under the command of General Frederick Funston, reported to the city's chief of police to help keep order, assist refugees, and fight the fire. A model refugee camp was set up on the Presidio grounds where rations, tents, blankets, and medical attention were provided for thousands of the city's homeless.

During World War I, the Presidio was an officers' training camp for 11 western states. At the outbreak of World War II, the Presidio served as the Headquarters for the Fourth Army and the Western Defense Command under Lieutenant General John R. Dewitt. Early in 1946, the Sixth U. S. Army, which had fought through 25 major assaults from New Guinea to the Philippines during World War II, was stationed at the Presidio when the War Department replaced the nine service commands in the Zone of Interior with six Continental Army commands. The Sixth U. S. Army area comprises the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Arizona.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

Crissy Field, once a racetrack, was selected by the late General Henry H. Arnold as a site for an airport in 1919. It is now a landing strip for light aircraft. Crissy Field was named in honor of Major Dana H. Crissy, U. S. Army Air Corps, who lost his life October 8, 1919, while on the first transcontinental mass flight, which originated from Crissy Field.

Letterman General Hospital, the Army's largest hospital west of the Mississippi, was founded during the Spanish-American War to accommodate the wounded being returned from the Philippines. It has served as a debarkation hospital through four wars--the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean War. It was named for Major Jonathan Letterman, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, one of the Union armies in the Civil War. Major Letterman was also the organizer of the Army's first Ambulance Corps.

The Presidio Officers' Club, located at the head of the parade ground, is the site of what is generally considered the oldest building in San Francisco. The original structure, a crude flat-topped log house, was constructed in September, 1776, to house the first Spanish Commandante. The building was still in use when the first American troops formally occupied the Presidio in 1847. Extensive repairs were made on the building, which then became Headquarters for the newly-arrived U. S. Army. After many years of use in that capacity, it became the Officers' Club. In 1934, the building underwent extensive remodeling and was restored as nearly as possible to its original architecture.

On December 8, 1794, the Spanish completed the fortification, El Castillo de San Joaquin, at what is now the south end of the Golden Gate Bridge where Fort Point is located. The Castillo was built in the

form of a horseshoe with 10-foot thick palisade-type walls. Eight bronze cannons, cast in Lima, Peru, in the 17th century, were placed in the embrasures that pierced the fort walls. Six of these cannons may be seen today; two flank the entrance to the Officers' Club, two others flank the main flag pole, and two are at Fort Mason. In 1847, when the U. S. Army occupied the Presidio, the Castillo was falling into ruin. During 1853, the old Castillo was razed by the U. S. Army, and the 100-foot cliff on which it had stood was cut away to a solid rock foundation 16 feet above the water. Work on Fort Point began the same year and, in 1861, it was garrisoned by two companies of the 3rd Artillery. Fort Point, somewhat on the Fort Sumter plan, is in the form of an irregular quadrangle. The width is 150 feet, the longest side is 250 feet, the height 45 feet, and the thickness of the walls about 7 feet. On November 25, 1882, Fort Point was renamed Fort Winfield Scott in honor of Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott. The fort was considered obsolescent in 1905 when construction was started on a new fort on the hills to the south. The new fort was named Fort Winfield Scott and the old fort was once again referred to as Fort Point. In 1914, the old fort was abandoned, after 60 years of service. During World War I, it was used for a time to house German prisoners, and in World War II a 3" gun battery and a searchlight detachment manned the old fort in support of San Francisco's harbor defenses. Today, massive Fort Point stands as a classic example of the fortification of its time--the greatest on the West Coast of North America and one of the very best examples of this type of architecture in the United States.

Still serving the function for which it was constructed in 1856 is the Post Dispensary, the first building erected after American occupancy of the Presidio.

The old powder magazine at Sheridan Avenue and Anza Street has changed little since its construction in 1863. It has walls of native stone more than 3 feet thick. The walls are double, with an air space to ensure dryness, and two narrow slots for ventilation pierce the east wall near the heavy door.

Also of interest is the group of officers' family quarters, still in use, which were constructed along Funston Avenue in 1873.

On July 23, 1852, Private John Brown became the first American soldier to be interred in the San Francisco National Cemetery. Since then, many famous soldiers have been buried within its walls. A few are: Lieutenant General Hunter Liggett, Major General Irwin McDowell, Major General William R. Shafter, Major General Frederick Funston, Brigadier General John Henry Parker, Brigadier General Robert O. Van Horn, and Brigadier General Harry O. Rethers. Of romantic interest is the name of Pauline Cushman Fryer, a beautiful and talented actress, who became famous as a Union spy during the Civil War. She was made a Brevet Major after the war.

Also of interest is El Polin Springs which was the source of water for the early Spanish settlers. According to an old Indian legend, all maidens who drank of its waters in the full of the moon would be happily married and have large families.

# VICTORIAN MAP PRESIDIO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

FORT BAKER

FORT POINT  
MINE DOCK

FORT POINT COAST  
GUARD STATION

CRISPIN ARMY AIR FIELD  
ESTABLISHED 1919 • WW I & II OPERATIONS  
FIRST MAILS TRANSCONTINENTAL FLIGHT

POST HEADQUARTERS, P.S.F.

POST DISPENSARY  
BLDG #2-OLD STA-  
TION HOSPITAL-OLD  
EST BUILDINGS ON  
POST CONSTRUCTED  
BY U.S. ARMY

LETTERMAN GEN. HOSPITAL  
LARGEST AND BEST EQUIPPED  
GENERAL HOSPITAL IN THE WEST

OLD PALACE OF FINE ARTS  
BUILT DURING PANAMA PACIFIC  
EXPOSITION 1915

MAIN GATE  
LOMBARD STREET

NCO MESS-OLD YMCA BUILT DURING  
PANAMA PACIFIC EXPOSITION -1915

FORT POINT  
CONSTRUCTION STARTED  
BY U.S. IN 1863 ON SITE  
OF CASTILLO DE SAN  
JOAQUIN, ERECTED BY  
SPANISH IN 1794

SERVICE CLUB  
MEMORIAL TO MEN WHO  
DIED IN WWII

SITE OF OLD SPANISH  
INDIAN BURIAL  
GROUND

SPANISH-AMERICAN  
WAR CAMP  
GROUNDS

XV U.S. ARMY CORPS  
HEADQUARTERS

OLD POWDER MAGAZINE  
1853 POWDER STOR-  
AGE FOR EARLY AMERI-  
CAN FORCES

SIXTH U.S. ARMY HEADQUARTERS

POST THEATRE

PERSHING SQUARE  
OLD PRESIDIO MARKER-OLD SPANISH CANNON  
HISTORICAL LANDMARK

CIVILIAN REFUGEE  
AREA, SAN FRANCISCO  
EARTHQUAKE 1906

OLD STABLES

POST LIBRARY

PRESIDIO CHAPEL  
BUILT TO CONFORM TO  
EARLY SPANISH MISSION  
ARCHITECTURE

OFFICERS' MESS  
ORIGINAL COMMANDANCIA  
BUILT 1776. CANNON CAST  
IN LIMA, PERU IN 1673

CHAPEL OF OUR LADY  
BUILT ON SITE OF  
ORIGINAL SPANISH  
CHAPEL BUILT 1776

EL POLIN SPRINGS  
LOCATION OF  
LEGENDARY  
INDIAN SPRINGS

VIEW OF OUTER HARBOR  
OLD GUN EMPLACEMENTS

OLD HEADQUARTERS  
FORT WINFIELD SCOTT

SAN FRANCISCO  
NATIONAL CEMETERY  
EARLY SETTLERS AND  
SOLDIER GRAVES-AMERI-  
CAN WAR DEAD SINCE 1852

VIEW OF INNER HARBOR  
GOOD VIEW OF SIXTH ARMY HQ  
AREA AND INNER HARBOR

TUNNEL

MOUNTAIN LAKE  
ANZA'S CAMPSITE MARCH  
1776

ARGUELLO GATE

JANUARY 1962