



Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation

PRESS RELEASE

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**Annual Archaeological Field School at El Presidio de Santa Barbara State
Historic Park Offers Students a Chance to be “Real Life” Archaeologists**
*Students help piece together the story of Santa Barbara’s birthplace and make
fascinating discoveries in the process*



Visitors to El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park are in for a special treat this month with the opportunity to observe thirteen students from around the country participating in the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation’s (SBTHP) annual Archaeological Field School. **Co-sponsored by SBTHP, California State Parks and Cal Poly Continuing Education, the intensive six-week course consists of a combination of excavations and laboratory analysis of historic archaeological materials from the northern courtyard of El Presidio de Santa Barbara—the city’s 1782**

birthplace.

Led by SBTHP board member and Professor Emeritus of anthropology at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Dr. Robert L. Hoover, the Archaeological Field School is now in its seventh year at El Presidio de Santa Barbara

State Historic Park. A California State Park since 1966, the original site of Spain's Royal Presidio has avoided major development over the years, helping make ongoing archaeological research possible. While two portions of the original presidio remain, other sections have been reconstructed by SBTHP using extensive documentary research and data collected from over forty years of archaeological excavations at the site. **Dr. Hoover explains that the presidio is an ideal location for the Field School as the site "provides students with the opportunity to collect and catalog data that will help ensure historically accurate education, restoration and reconstruction work at El Presidio." One of only four presidios established in California, Dr. Hoover adds, "The students learn by doing at one of the most unique archaeological sites in the state."**



This year's class is focusing their efforts on determining the original Spanish ground surface level of the Santa Barbara Presidio within the first and second outer defense walls (constructed between 1782 and 1797), while also helping to explain any subsequent disturbances in the area. Numerous layers of soil from later occupation of the site lie above the Presidio-era level. Students hand-excavate five foot square test units one to two feet deep to uncover the "Spanish grade." During the excavation process they often discover fascinating objects from other eras. **To date the class has**

found fragments of English pottery from as far back as 1810, ivory buttons, glass bottles, animal bones, a Chinese coin and pieces of carved jade. SBTHP archaeologist Michael Imwalle explains, "This is the oldest neighborhood in Santa Barbara. The students' work not only sheds light on the history of El Presidio, but also provides insight into the Spanish, Mexican, and later Chinese, Japanese and Anglo-American communities that have inhabited the neighborhood over the last 227 years. Their work is contributing to the understanding of other people and periods in Santa Barbara."

Before excavation begins, Field School students attend introductory lectures and are given extensive tours of the presidio grounds to strengthen their understanding of the archaeological history at the park. California State Parks helps secure a temporary home for students, many of whom travel from out-of-state to participate, as they camp together at El Capitan State Beach for the duration of the course. After excavations are completed the class will begin cataloging their discoveries in the Presidio Archaeology Laboratory. **The 2009 Santa Barbara Presidio Archaeological Field School is scheduled to conclude on August 14, 2009.**

ABOUT Archaeology at the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation—Archaeological research has played an integral role in the development of El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park for nearly forty

years. James Deetz conducted the first known archaeological excavation of the Presidio site in 1961. During the late-1960s and early 1970s a dedicated group known as the “Presidio Volunteers” focused excavations on the chapel site and the adjoining padre's quarters. Using the 1788 Goicoechea/Fages plan of the presidio as their guide, they also excavated at various locations around the quadrangle in order to determine the alignment and location of the original presidio quadrangle. During the past four decades the site of the Santa Barbara Presidio has been the focus of numerous archaeological education programs, including the Field School. Under the direction of Senior Archaeologist, Michael Imwalle, SBTHP’s archaeological staff continues to conduct field, archival, and laboratory research on a number of ongoing projects within El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park as well as other SBTHP owned properties.

ABOUT Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation (SBTHP)— Since 1963 the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation has worked to protect, preserve, restore, reconstruct, and interpret historic sites in Santa Barbara County. SBTHP operates El Presidio de Santa Bárbara State Historic Park under a unique agreement with California State Parks and recently purchased the building that housed Jimmy’s Oriental Gardens restaurant, providing an opportunity to interpret the history of Santa Barbara’s Asian American community. SBTHP owns, has restored and operates as an historic house museum Casa de la Guerra, the 1820s home of Presidio Comandante José de la Guerra and his family. In 2008, SBTHP signed an agreement with State Parks to operate and develop the Santa Inés Mission Mills, located near the town of Solvang, as a future California State Park. Learn more about SBTHP by visiting www.sbthp.org.

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