



## Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation

*El Presidio de Santa Bárbara SHP • Casa de la Guerra  
Santa Inés Mission Mills • Jimmy's Oriental Gardens*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2025

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### **“Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making” at Casa de la Guerra Reflects on a Romanticized Past**

Please join the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation for the opening of a new exhibit at Casa de la Guerra, *Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making*.

Though it lasted less than three decades, California’s Mexican period (1822–1846) helped shape the distribution of land, wealth, and power after California officially entered the union in 1850. *Telling Stories of Mexican California* reflects on this past, and how romanticized retellings made lasting impacts on the state’s culture and popular understandings of its history.

*Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making* broadly outlines California’s history leading up to statehood as a backdrop to the factual and fictional stories that emerged after the US takeover. It considers nineteenth-century Mexican American individuals and families who told their stories and looks at some of the early narratives that helped create an enduring California mythos, as well as the stories that were ignored in favor of this new, often exaggerated or fictionalized lore.

Some of the stories of individuals revealed in the exhibit may surprise people, including examples of the extraordinary agency of women during this period. Curators of the exhibit Rose Marie Beebe, Professor Emerita of Spanish Literature and Robert Senkewicz, Professor of History Emeritus at Santa Clara University shared, “This exhibit wonderfully demonstrates the manner in which many women in Mexican California shattered the boundaries of patriarchy and became active participants in social, political, and cultural life. The de la Guerra women of Santa Barbara were outstanding examples of this and set the stage for the extensive participation of American women as initiators of many public activities in US California.”

William Deverell, Divisional Dean for the Social Sciences at the University of Southern California, who worked as an Advisor on the exhibit said, “As seen through the creative eyes and brilliant minds of scholar curators Rose Marie Beebe and Robert Senkewicz, this exhibit invites viewers to participate in the two centuries of tug-of-war between myth and history as it pertains to Mexican California.”

*Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making* was organized by the California Historical Society, features the [CHS Collection at Stanford](#), and tours through [Exhibit Envoy](#).

The exhibit will be on display at Casa de la Guerra, 15 East De la Guerra Street, Santa Barbara, from June 26 – August 31, 2025. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors (62+), Free for SBTHP members, SNAP/EBT and CalFresh cards, and children 16 & under. Includes admission to [El Presidio de Santa Bárbara State Historic Park](#).

### **About the CHS Collection at Stanford**

The Stanford University Libraries are a dynamic network of libraries, librarians, information technology specialists, and a vast collection of academic resources that are dedicated to supporting research, teaching, and learning at Stanford. Containing materials from the early eighteenth century to the most recent past, the California Historical Society (CHS) Collection at Stanford University Libraries encompasses more than 600,000 items and is renowned for its rare and diverse range of materials, making it one of the most significant collections of California state

and local history. Learn more at <https://library.stanford.edu/california-historical-society-collection-stanford>.

### **About Exhibit Envoy**

Exhibit Envoy provides traveling exhibitions and professional services to museums throughout California. For more information, visit [www.exhibitenvoy.org](http://www.exhibitenvoy.org).

### **About the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation**

Founded in 1963 by Dr. Pearl Chase, the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation (SBTHP) stewards the past and present of the Presidio Neighborhood and inspires preservation advocacy throughout the County in order to create a more vibrant community. SBTHP operates El Presidio de Santa Bárbara State Historic Park, Santa Barbara's 18th century birthplace, under an agreement with California State Parks. In addition to portions of the Spanish fort, El Presidio SHP includes the Alhecama Theatre (1925) and the campus of the Santa Barbara School of the Arts, and Jimmy's Oriental Gardens (1947) the last visible connection to Santa Barbara's Chinatown. The organization also operates Casa de la Guerra, the 1820's adobe home of Presidio Comandante José de la Guerra, and the Santa Inés Mission Mills near Solvang, CA. SBTHP produces dozens of community and school programs throughout the year to provide access to these special historic places. SBTHP is 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; learn more at [sbthp.org](http://sbthp.org).

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El Presidio de Santa Bárbara State Historic Park • Casa de la Guerra • Santa Inés Mission Mills • Jimmy's Oriental Gardens 123 East Canon Perdido Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2215 • (805) 965-0093 • [sbthp.org](http://sbthp.org)