

**SOHO & Armed Forces Day 18 May 1996**  
**The Historic FORT ROSECRANS**  
**Staging Area: Argonaut Hall @ 13:00**

**1. Fort Rosecrans Buildings-Pre-Boarding**

The first structure to be built on the military reservation was the light house completed in 1854 as one of the first of eight lights for the Pacific Coast. Four major periods of building development defined primarily by the war years and the change of command from an Army to a Navy base.

The first period, establishment of Fort Rosecrans, lasted from 1897 to 1916. The batteries were constructed on Ballast Point. The barracks and officers quarters were built on terraced hillsides overlooking the bay. The residences, hospital and service club were built in a row above the sole road connecting the Fort with the mainland. The second period World War I and Isolationism, lasted from 1917-1939. Additional frame buildings, including barracks, mess halls and officers quarters were constructed of a more temporary nature. The majority of these buildings were demolished after World War I. The two service clubs constructed during this period remain in use today. The third period, World War II, lasted from 1940-1959. A large addition was made to the hospital building tripling its original size. The Army dredged the harbor and filled in the bay at Ballast Point. After the U.S. entered WWII the Army added new barracks, mess halls, ordnance building, a church and other buildings.

The current period, the Navy era, is from 1957 to present. The Navy has gradually removed the majority of buildings near the bay. The architectural style used for a majority of the buildings during that time was the popular Colonial Revival.

**2. Argonaut Hall-Pre-Boarding**

Originally built in 1918 by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) for use as a library and social hall, its current use is as a social hall by the Navy under the name Argonaut Hall. The War Department had created commissions for associations such as the YMCA to provide recreational and educational facilities for the young men during their training on the site.

This two story, long rectangular shaped building has a medium side facing gable roof with a shed roof portion that extends over the two story porch and balcony. A decorative centered two story gabled roof section divides the building in two. Large square wood supports extend through the second story to the bracketed roofline. Decorative porch railings have a criss-cross and square pattern. The building is sheathed in medium clapboard siding and rests on a concrete foundation. Changes to the exterior include the enclosure of the south side of the second story balcony. The roof originally had two decorative shed dormers that appear to have been removed and are presently being restored. The stairway at the north end of the porch appears to have been built after 1940. The interior of the building has retained some of its original features, such as the retention of the stage at the south end, paneled wainscotting, and a fireplace on the west side. Stylistically the building has characteristic features of the Craftsman Bungalow period.

**BOARD BUSES IN FRONT OF ARGONAUT HALL**

**3. Battery White and environs-Walk Through**

Construction began in 1915 on Battery John White, an emplacement of four 12-inch caliber mortars in two separate pits. Battery White was named for Col. John Vassar White, a veteran of the Artillery Corps. This battery, in conjunction with Battery Whistler, enabled Fort Rosecrans to fire on enemy ships which might approach from other sides of Point Loma. It was located 1,000 feet northwest of the old lighthouse, with the towers located between the two.



#### **4. State markers and La Playa Trail History-Drive/Stop**

The California State markers are here for the following historic sites; Fort Rosecrans, Fort Guijarros, Whaling Station and the Cabrillo Landing. From 1770 to 1870 this was San Diego's port. Over the Brookline Hide House, Americans officially raised a U.S. Flag in 1829. Legend had it that a group of sailors came ashore from a Navy sailing ship, retrieved a flag, returned to shore and raised it (the plaque was installed in 1934 by the Girls Scouts of America).

At that time La Playa was a thriving trading and shipping village. Richard Henry Dana's account of the hide business in 'Two Years Before the Mast' is based on his hide-drouging experience here in 1935-36. The U.S. Navy later acquired the site and operated a coaling station and a quarantine station here. the Old La Playa Trail was a trail that ran from Fort Guijarros to the San Diego Presidio.

#### **5. Bayside Fig Tree-Drive/Stop**

In 1984 Navy workers, who were parking their cars under the tree, complained that birds roosting in the tree making a mess of their cars. The workers wanted the tree cut down. there was also a small building under the western part of the tree. Because the area around the tree was completely paved the tree was not receiving adequate water and was showing severe signs of trauma. If left alone it would in all probability be dead in the next five years.

A three foot high earthen berm was constructed around the tree at a thirty foot diameter/ The area was filled with water and several bags of fertilizer every week for several months. The tree began to revive. The pavement was the removed, thereby removing the cars, and the small building was demolished. A park was constructed with a curb and barrier of natal plum plants around the perimeter of the tree. To further protect the tree a sign was erected. It is not known for sure whether the sign if factual or whether it repeats a myth, but it has been effective. The sign reads to the effect that 'Upon observing the tree in 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt asked Congress to pass legislation protecting the tree.

#### **6. Quarantine Station-Walk Around**

Established in 1893 the Quarantine Station was later used to separate soldiers during the Spanish influenza outbreak of 1917-1918. Soldiers were forbidden from gathering in the recreation buildings and theatres in San Diego. It was operated by the Public Health Service up until 1937. At that time the land was transferred to the Naval Fuel Depot and eventually disestablished in 1964. The original complex consisted of a surgeon's quarters, a men's quarters, a cottage hospital, and a wharf with a warehouse and boathouse. Building #190, now the Dolphin Club, was one of the original buildings and was the attendants' quarters.

Building #190 meets criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and the procedure for nomination has been initiated. NRAD hosts many scientific symposia of international interest. It also serves a social center and many receptions are held in conjunction with the symposia. Building 121 was a convalescent barracks constructed sometime between 1902-1910. Although the building has been maintained in exceptionally good condition consistent with its original design, however, it was moved from its original location.

#### **7. Machine gun nests-Walk Around**

Three positions of 'temporary' dug-in wooden emplacements at the most northwesterly part of Fort Rosecrans aligned with Battery Gillespie. They were outfitted with .30 caliber MGs because .50 caliber weapons were not available. The .30 had a limited vertical range, but could have been used at low altitude fighter or possibly dive bomber aircraft. However, it appears that ground defense would have been much more likely.



#### **8. Trans Dec Pool-Drive/Stop**

This pool is a six million gallon anechoic (echo-free) pool used for research and underwater sound projects. There are no supports for the structure above the pool. There are no projections within the pool and there are no fish in the pool. It is completely free from biological and man made noises which could cause errors in performance calculations. The pool is smooth and perfectly round. In fact, there is a smaller pool in the middle of the big pool that you see. It is about 40 feet to the bottom. It loses about 10,000 gallons of water a day by evaporation caused by the wind. The structure above is a space-frame truss design that completely spans the pool to provide the unobstructed acoustic environment.

The turnout and interpretive trail are being built by Navy personnel as volunteers. The trail will be a display of 29 native plant species when finished.

#### **9. Battery Strong Base End Station-Walk Around**

This two-story observation and fire control bunker was built to service Battery Strong, the first of the 'modernization' period improvements begun in 1936. It was designed to function as the Btry. Commander's Station and ultimately be one of eight base end stations for the long-range capacity (33,000) of that battery's 8" naval guns.

#### **10. Model Range and Arch-Drive/Walk**

NRaD's model ship shop has a brass model a 1/40th scale of every class of ship in the Navy. One of the primary mission's is develop new communication systems. Many of those systems are designed to go aboard ships. Before a prototype is manufactured, costing potentially a million dollars to fabricate and install on a ship, a model is made at a 1/40 scale and installed on the model ship. The model is then taken to the arch. The ground plane is covered with lead which most simulates the acoustic properties of the ocean. It is then placed on a turn table in the middle of the ground place so it can be rotated 360°.

A bent wooden arch used to be used to transmit signals to the antenna but the wooden arch required a lot of maintenance, was not stable in winds, and had a lot of metal connectors and tracks causing excessive interference or reflection in the signals.

The three legged arch was constructed so it would be much more stable. It is made of fiberglass, including bolts, base plates and transmitter track. When a ship is in place and rotating, the transmitter on the nearby arch leg runs up and down the track emitting a signal. If the antenna is not functioning in the location it is placed, it is moved to another location. If the antenna isn't designed quite right, it is reengineered and the process is retested. This process saves millions of dollars each year besides being an effective way to work all the bugs out of the system.

#### **11. Battery Strong-Walk Around**

Battery Strong consisted of two, 8" Navy guns mounted on barbette carriages with underground ammunition magazine facilities situated between gun emplacements. Small gauge tracks, with hand trucks for delivery of all ammunition, appear to have been the only such installation of this type in any western U.S. coastal defense installation. The primary facility was constructed largely between 1937-38, although gun carriages were not available until much later. The guns were proof-fired at a remote site in Maryland in August 1940 and emplaced here in 1941. The range is approximately 33,000 yds or essentially the horizon. Named for Major General Frederick S. Strong who organized the 40th Division of Camp Kearney in 1917 and commanded it in France during WWI; he died in March of 1935

### **RESTROOM OPPORTUNITY**



#### **12. Battery Woodward-Selective walk around**

Battery Woodward consisted of two 6" guns protected with 4" to 6" wrap-around cast steel shields. Underground support facilities were situated between the gun emplacements. The facility was completed and proof-fired in November 1943 although not officially transferred by Army Engineers until August 1944. Upon completion of the installation Btrys. Gillespie and Zeilin were discontinued. Battery Woodward is in use for on-going electronics applications with the exception of the Power Room. In that room, original equipment of three diesel engines (Worthington), generator, back-up equipment, switchgear, engine repair lifts, wiring, mufflers, etc., in in place and virtually pristine as if personnel had just walked away. Named for Col. Charles G. Woodward commanding officer of Fort Rosecrans from 1906-07; he died in November of 1939.

#### **13. Battery Zeilin-Walk Around**

This was a 'temporary' battery of two 7" navy guns acquired on loan from the Marine Corps. These guns augmented three 5" navy guns at nearby Btry. Gillespie. This installation strengthened defense along the northwest corner of Ft. Rosecrans, but only marginally extended the western ridge. Btry. Zeilin was manned for over a year from July 1942 until completion of Btry. Woodward in 1943. This battery was named for Brig. General Jacob Zeilin, USMC, who aided Gen. Kearney after the Battle of San Pasqual and was a former Commandant of the Corps; he died in 1880.

#### **14. Battery Gillespie-Walk Around**

The site of this battery has two different gun emplacements. The first emplacement consisted of four, 155mm Grande Puissance Filloux (GPF) guns, installed prior to December 1941. They were emplaced with 'Panama' mounts (large circular turning bases, named for the location of their development. The battery provided defense against submarines and light surface aircraft. Together with Btry. Zeilin both Btrys. provided cover for the west and northwest until completion of Battery Woodward. Named for Marine Corps Major Archibald H. Gillespie who participated in the first American occupation of southern California in 1846; he died in August of 1873.

#### **15. Searchlight-Walk Around**

Searchlight #4 (1916-1920) atop of the southerly tip of Point Loma, was designed as an underground elevating lift type facility, with a retracting roof. It was paired with Searchlight #3 which was located at the base of the Point. Recruited for service in WWII, it's elevator mechanism and light assembly were salvaged to become the primary equipment for the new and improved Searchlight #15 supporting Battery Cliff.

#### **16. Battery Humphreys-Walk Around**

This 'modernization' battery was designed for two 6" guns with underground support facilities situated between them. Construction of the facility began in February of 1942 and was substantially completed by July 1942. However, the guns and carriages were not available upon completion and 155mm GPF guns were substituted for a year. When the new 6" guns arrived and test fired in July of 1943, Battery Humphreys replaced Btry. Point Loma in the tactical plan for defense of the harbor. Construction was continuous work during daylight hours, stopping only for nightfall as there existed a clear, perceived threat of a coastal attack. Named for Capt. Charles Humphreys the first commanding officer of Ft. Rosecrans 1898-1900.

#### **17. Battery Cliff-View**

Battery Cliff was a supplemental emplacement with 37mm guns and referred to as anti-motor torpedo boat batteries whose primary mission was to defend against fast moving surface craft and submarines and secondarily against aircraft. Btry. Cliff and Point Loma worked in conjunction with fast reacting 90mm Btry. Cortez on the Silver Strand, Btry. Fetterman at Ballast Point and Btry. Cabrillo west of Btry. Point Loma. Btry. Cliff appears to have been named in respect to its physical location at the edge of the most precipitous and visible cliff on the Point.

#### **18. Coast Guard Station-View**

Not only is the Coast Guard Facility responsible for operating the lighthouse, it has another reason for fame. The scene in the movie 'Top Gun' where Tom Cruise goes to his Commanding Officer's home to talk to him, was filmed on this site.

The Commanding Officer (Captain) of the Coast Guard Station on Harbor Drive lives in the more easterly house. The enlisted man who has the duty to maintain the light and turn it off and on stays in one of the other houses for a week, rotating with other personnel each week. When an enlisted man has this duty he can bring his family out to the tip of Point Loma to live with him for the week. It's a pretty good vacation considering it is free. Needless to say, the Coast Guard never has any trouble getting watchstanders.

#### **19. Battery Point Loma-Drive Optional, Time Allowing**

This battery of four mobile 155mm GPF guns ranging 17,400 yards, was deployed at the tip of the Point to provide cover for ships approaching the harbor entrance. Panama mounts were constructed during 1941 and completed in January 1942, to facilitate an increase in the speed of fire.