

# ❖ Casa de la Guerra ❖

## ❖ History

The Casa de la Guerra has been at the heart of Santa Barbara's history since its construction in the 1820s by Presidio Commandant José de la Guerra. During his lifetime, the Casa Grande was the economic, political and social center of the *pueblo* of Santa Barbara. Among Santa Barbara's wealthiest and most influential citizens, don José stood out as the patriarchal figure to whom the entire community looked for protection and assistance in time of need. That legacy survived in the political activity of his son Pablo during the early years of U. S. statehood, in the volunteer social service to the community of his granddaughters, Herminia and Delfina, and in the early Fiesta celebrations planned around the Casa. The Casa has also been a keystone of Santa Barbara's architectural history. Built during a time when

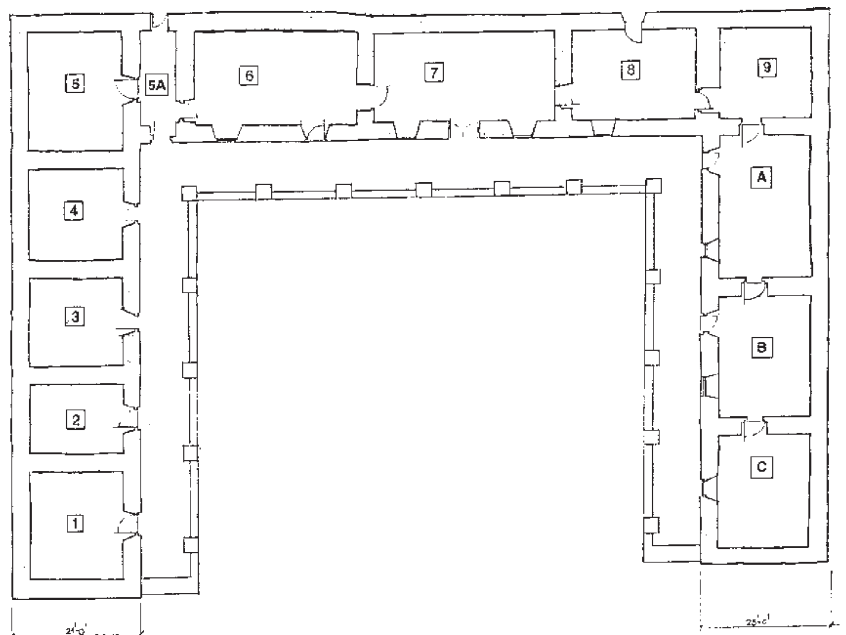
the average residence was a one-room adobe with perhaps a small attached wooden lean-to, the house set the pattern for adobe construction during later, more affluent times. Remodeled from time to time to fit changing family needs, it also reflected the changing aesthetic tastes of the community. In the 1920s, the El Paseo complex was designed and built around the Casa. Following the devastating 1925 earthquake which destroyed much of downtown, the Casa and El Paseo served as models for rebuilding Santa Barbara.



TOP RIGHT: Daguerreotype of José de la Guerra.

ABOVE: José de la Guerra's descendants gather for the first Old Spanish Days Fiesta, 1924. (Courtesy of Santa Barbara Historical Society)

RIGHT: The Casa's original architectural configuration as determined by archaeology.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



## ❖ Restoration

In 1990, the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation began conducting exhaustive archaeological and documentary research to determine the structural history of the Casa, with particular emphasis on its original configuration. The Casa has been restored to its appearance during the time José de la Guerra resided there, a 30-year period between 1828 and 1858. Wherever possible, historic fabric was protected in the restoration process, and materials and building methods similar to those originally used were employed. For instance, pine timber for door and window lintels, roof beams, etc. was logged in the Los Padres National Forest, stripped of its bark and, where appropriate, hand-adzed for use in restoring the Casa.



ABOVE: *The Casa Victorianized. Note the sparse landscape.*

BELOW: *Rendering by Henry Lenny of Casa de la Guerra as it was during the lifetime of its builder, José de la Guerra.*



## ❖ The Trust and Future Use of the Casa

The Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation was founded in 1963 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings and sites in Santa Barbara County. Since then, the Trust has been the primary force in the development of El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park, just one block from the Casa. The Casa de la Guerra is again becoming a social center for the community, with an exciting living history program recalling Santa Barbara's early years as a Mexican *pueblo*, while the nearby reconstructed Presidio interprets Santa Barbara's beginnings as a Spanish military outpost.

For more information about the Casa de la Guerra and the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, please contact Jarrell C. Jackman, Ph.D., Executive Director  
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Casa de la Guerra is located at 15 East de la Guerra Street, Santa Barbara, California