CITY OF SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD

ARCHAEOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE

Monday, August 11, 2014, at 4:00 PM
Development Services Building, 1222 First Avenue
Fourth Floor, Conference Room 4C, San Diego, CA

The Archaeology Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the City of San Diego's Historical Resources Board. It is primarily composed of Historical Resources Board members who have expertise or are interested in pre-contact and historic archeology and cultural landscapes. The Subcommittee is not a voting entity, but rather a forum for discussing issues and solutions related to historic resources and their preservation. Comments at the meeting do not predispose future positions on any matter or project by the Historical Resources Board.

Members of the public will be allowed an opportunity to speak, for up to one minute each, at the end of the Subcommittee's discussion on an agenda item. Each member of the public is required to state their name and the organization (if any) that they represent prior to their one minute presentation.

MEETING AGENDA

1.   Introductions

2.   Public Comment (on matters not on the agenda)

3.   Various Issues:

3a. Presidio Collection Phase 1 Final Repot: Monies from the Historic Preservation Fund were allocated by the City Council in 2011 for implementation of the initial task discussed in the Presidio Collections Management Plan.   That task is complete and an initial Final Report was produced by the San Diego Archaeology Center. That report was reviewed by the Subcommittee in February 2014 and revisions were requested. A revised Final Report was prepared and submitted to the City. The Presidio Park Council reviewed and approved the report at their May 2014 meeting. The Subcommittee will review the revised report and provide input to staff for future studies and on the report recommendations (attached).

4.   Adjourn

Next Archaeology Subcommittee Meeting will be on November 10, 2014 at 4:00 PM.

For more information, please contact Myra Herrmann by phone at (619) 446-5372 or email at mherrmann@sandiego.gov

SAN DIEGO PRESIDIO COLLECTIONS
Phase I Final Draft
San Diego Archaeological Center
March 25, 2014

COLLECTION EVALUATION

This report outlines work completed during Phase I of the San Diego Presidio Collections Management Plan conducted by the San Diego Archaeological Center (Center). The current project was initiated on March 2, 2012. Standard size boxes containing archaeological material excavated from various projects during the 1970s and 1990s were transported to the Center. Staff, interns, and volunteers inventoried and created digital catalogues for all boxes. Phase I work on the Presidio concluded on June 15, 2013. A total of 395 boxes of archaeological material were processed.

Processing the Presidio collection during Phase I was centered on 3 primary goals:
1. Conduct a condition assessment to evaluate the general condition of the collections
2. Create a digital catalogue and verify against original catalogues
3. Identify and document particular conservation needs

Once the project was initiated, it became clear that meeting the goals would be challenging. Based on previously provided information, it was assumed that the collections were sorted and organized. In fact, they were not. Processing the collection revealed that bags from different projects were intermingled. Additionally, the majority of the boxes and bags were lacking contextual and descriptive information. There are also issues with a lack of consistency in the catalogue system. For example, there are instances where the excavator's initials were being used to describe units. However, in most cases this information was missing which prevented verification of inventory. Issues such as these became obvious from the very beginning and resulted in impeding our overall goals and objectives.

1. *Initial evaluation of the collections*

The first step of the process involved evaluating the general condition of the collection. The evaluation was carried out by SDAC Center Director Cindy Stankowski and Collections Manager Dr. Ad Muniz. Sean Cardenas was present during the initial evaluation. The collection is stored in the basement of the Balboa Park Administrative Building. All boxes, with the exception of those located inside the storage closet of the room, are stored on shelving and kept off the floor. The storage unit appears to be free of rodents, pests, and mold. No evidence of moisture was observed inside the storage area or on any of the boxes.

During initial evaluation, random boxes from different areas in the storage unit were selected and their contents observed. Artifacts, including ceramics, bone, and tiles, were stored in plastic bags that were mostly intact. Hand written labels were found in most bags. A large number of bags containing unsorted artifacts were present and appeared to be unwashed. There was dirt in the bottom of many boxes. Some boxes were deteriorated and required immediate replacement. It also became immediately evident that the boxes were placed on the shelves in a somewhat random order, i.e., not stored by project, material class or date. We were told that at some time boxes had

been combined for storage. There were no box inventories. Records were in various locations, including file cards, large-format computer printouts and notebooks with lot sheets.
There was some confusion as to which projects were represented in the collections. The Mesa College Gateway and the Williams North Wing projects were evident. (It was later determined that these probably were the only collections present, although there were some items labeled "Old Town.")

2.   *Secondary collection evaluation*
    a.   *the condition of boxes, bags, bag labels, object labels, and box labels*
    b.   *the organization of the collections by site number or locus*
    c.   *evidence of mold, insects, pests, dirt, and corrosion*

Upon transportation to the Center, the collection was stored in the Center's Federal vault until the boxes were ready for processing. Each box and its contents were examined, inventoried, and catalogued by Center staff, interns, and volunteers. The guidelines for processing boxes can be found in Appendix I.   Each box was assessed for deterioration, pests, and mold. When deemed necessary, storage boxes were replaced. If plastic bags containing artifacts were deemed to be deteriorating or had been punctured, they were replaced. This is especially true of bags containing large quantities of roofing and flooring tiles and gravel found in many of the boxes. It was clear from the start that there were a lot of bags containing unsorted artifacts. Some were mostly bone or shell, but many contained all artifact classes. These bags were not sorted.

It became clear that the boxes were not numbered in an ordinal fashion. However the original box number was retained and incorporated into the box's digital catalogue created on Microsoft Excel in case this helped in identification later. (We assigned an ordinal number to each box upon removal for use on the loan form with the City.)

Each box contained items from either project or both. There were some boxes organized by material class, mostly bulk bone or shell. Some boxes contained material from a particular locus; some from all over the site. The artifacts were left in the boxes in which they were found.

No evidence of mold or pests was found in any of the boxes inventoried and catalogued. However, dirt is accumulating in many of the bags containing artifacts since they were not cleaned prior to storage. Another detrimental factor is that bags of heavier materials (tiles, concrete, etc.) were stored on top of bone and other more fragile artifacts. This contributed directly to crushing and further deterioration of organic materials.

Metal artifacts (e.g. cannonballs, nails, etc.) have been poorly prepared for storage. Currently, the cannonballs in the collection are slowly corroding and the foam used to cushion them is only contributing to the process. Large amounts of metals were collected from the foam storage liners used in milk crates. To control the corrosion process, each cannonball was dry brushed with a soft bristle brush, wrapped in acid-free paper, and stored in boxes (rather than the open milk crates). Fragmentation of some artifacts (especially those made of organic materials such as bone and shell) is occurring and is more difficult to control. During the next phase of the project, considerable attention should be given to conservation.

    d. *catalogue verification*

The intermingling of material classes was the norm in the majority of the boxes inventoried. Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to reconcile artifacts with existing catalogues. Many of the labels found inside the bags appear to have been created some time after the end of excavation season(s). Inconsistencies include missing dates, contextual information, catalogues, and even artifact identification. Records at the storage facility are not helpful. For example, there is an entire bookcase of inventory sheets, called 'lot sheets', which appear to have a listing of the artifacts in each of the unsorted bags. In most cases, the items were only vaguely identified and quantified. Then, the objects were simply placed back into the same bag. The records lack weights, descriptions or other details that would allow for a verifiable matching to the physical inventory.

This issue is compounded by missing artifacts. Several boxes of empty bag, (though they were marked or labeled) were found in the collection. We have not determined if the artifacts are elsewhere in the collection, used on the comparison boards or missing altogether. It is difficult to determine if there are missing artifacts, especially from the Williams collection. Ultimately, it may be impossible to determine which, if any, excavated artifacts are missing if they were never inventoried or catalogued. (Anecdotally, one of the Center's student interns brought in a bag of European sherds that her son had been allowed to keep after his 6th grade class dug at the Presidio. The collection included an assortment of pearlware, Galera and unpainted earthenware. She reported that excavators were allowed to remove artifacts as souvenirs.)

We created a new catalogue in Microsoft Excel to document the material present in the collection as delivered to us. This will enable quicker sorting for continued work on the collection. The catalogue headings are excavation date, site number, catalogue number, recovery type, unit, level material class, object, material, quantity, weight, box number and comments (see Appendix I for additional specifics). If information was missing, it was left blank. If there was no apparent catalogue number, a number was assigned. Most of the material had not been weighed or counted. As previously noted, the scope of Phase I did not allow for sorting and identification of unsorted bags.

3.   Identify and document particular conservation needs

The number of problems revealed during Phase I of this project will no doubt impact the future of this collection. Most of the artifacts we have seen thus far would not require extensive conservation, other than washing and sorting by material class, and re-packaging in archival-quality bags and boxes. The following additional steps should be taken:

1.   The collections should be repacked, limiting the final weight of each box to less than 30 pounds and ensuring that artifacts are not crowded.
2.   Metal objects containing lead are already heavily corroded and require careful handling.
3.   Non-ferrous metal objects should be stabilized to impede corrosion processes.
4.   Ferrous metal objects should be bagged with desiccant sachets.
5.   It may be possible to reconstruct some of the historic ceramic objects, which would be helpful in determining minimum numbers of vessels recovered.
6.   There is a large amount of animal bone in the collection. Each specimen needs to be examined for any evidence of skin or cartilage and removed if found. The bones need to be washed, dried and repackaged with desiccant sachets according to approved methods.

PRESIDIO COLLECTIONS OVERVIEW

Number of Boxes: 395
The original box numbers were retained, although they are not ordinal. Boxes assessed:

70	182	284-287	331-338	Q63
90-97	184-232	289-298	340-352	T-093-T-098
99-122	238-262	300-320	354-360	X-001-X-012
124-150	264-279	322	363-395	
152-180	281-282	324-329	998-999	

Catalogued Bags (CB): 26,447
Since so many of the bags contained more than one item of unsorted, uncounted artifacts, we chose to use the term "catalogued bags" rather than artifacts.

Number of Individual Items: Unknown

Empty Bags: 73

Date Range of CBs: 1964 (one item of Building Material) to 2012
Note: There are 6,363 bags without the excavation date or year noted from both the Gateway and North Wing projects. The undated items include all material classes.

Projects Represented: Apparently the two collections represented in the collections are Gateway and North Wing, although there are a few items marked "Old Town." Note: It appears that some material from earlier excavations had tags that state "North Wing," although this may not be true. The best indicator of the project may be the date of excavation if known.

Material Class Overview

Material Class	Description	CB Count
Human Remains	4 human teeth were noted	4
Chipped Stone	All items marked chipped stone, Native American and Spanish	477
Ground Stone	All items marked ground stone, Native American and Spanish	69
Ceramic	All items marked Tizon, Aboriginal ceramic, etc.	3,463
Building Material	Tiles, plaster, etc.	907
Metal	All metal objects, including ammunition, buttons, household objects	1,525
Ceramic-Euro	All European/Asian ceramics, including porcelain	4,089
Glass	All glass	1,433
Bone, Modified	Buttons, beads, awls, etc.	41
Shell, Modified	Buttons, beads, etc.	53
Bone, Unmodified	Most of this bone has not been sorted, nor speciated	5,478
Shell, Unmodified	Most of this shell has not been sorted, nor speciated	3,166
Unsorted	These are bags that have not been washed, sorted and identified	5,244
Charcoal	Identified as charcoal	142

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Presidio Collection should be considered a group of collections representing some projects conducted at the Presidio. It may be possible to consider just two major collections: The Gateway Project and the North Wing Project if the research design or methodology did not change from year to year. Available documentation should be reviewed to ascertain what approach would make the most sense for future use of the collections. We recommend that the collections be separated at least by project and subdivided further if the project changed significantly during the course of the excavations.

1. Prepare a Site Plan

It is crucial to start with knowledge of how the projects were conducted from year to year using available documentation. For example, what units were dug in which year, how were the units labeled, where were they located, etc. A master site plan should be prepared to indicate this information for easy reference during the cataloguing process. This may be added to as time goes on and should be revised and finalized at the end of the project.

2. Establish Cataloguing and Storage Parameters

Each collection may have been originally catalogued independently in its own way according to recognized standards of the time. However, we now have an opportunity to use the latest information and technology to improve the collection records and facilitate use of the collection in future. For example, instead of using only the original designation for a particular unit, spatial analysis of collection materials could be improved by using GIS coordinates. Some of this mapping work is being conducted by the Presidio Heritage Development Circle.

Decisions need to be made regarding how to catalogue each item in the collections i.e., a standardized nomenclature needs to be established across the Presidio collections to allow for future comparative analysis. Robert G. Chenhall's system, although somewhat old-fashioned, is still used by many museums who want objects catalogued based on function. Another approach is to have a two tiered system, where the metadata (minimal descriptive information and location) is one layer linked to a more detailed catalogue unique to each material class. Consideration should be given at this time as to how "deep" the initial catalogue should be. We would recommend that a basic catalogue with material class, object name and material be created as a first stage. More precise information can be added at a later time when researchers examine certain components of the collection in finer detail. This is a matter of building the catalogue in a practical way over time. For example, if at the outset the attempt was made to speciate every piece of unmodified bone, it would take many years to complete the collection catalogue. Whereas, more generally designating bird, fish, and mammal bone would be sufficient for a researcher to pull meaningful categories of items and begin detailed study.

Consistency is crucial to making this collection accessible and useful. Standard spelling (Maiolica or Majolica; Tizon or Tizon Brownware); units of measure (inches or centimeters); weight (to the .01 or .1 of a gram), etc., are important to codify. In addition, photographing certain items for a type collection would be very helpful to creators and future users of the catalogue. This is especially true with the ceramics and armaments.

Finally, determine how the collection should be organized for storage. Many archaeologists sort by location, unit or trench, etc. However, at the Center we have found that material class is the

best way to sort and store a collection for ease of accessibility. Most researchers are interested in a particular type of artifact, not everything from a particular unit. Therefore, retrieving artifacts is easier when stored by material type. In addition, different materials may require different packaging or climate and separation makes this easier. For labelling boxes, each box should have a unique number. Additional information could be location, material class, etc. Bar code labels for the boxes and shelves would make inventory and inspection easier. It is also a quick way to log in and out items removed from boxes for study or exhibition.

3. Initiate Physical Sorting
Physically sort catalogued bags (CBs) by year excavated and material class. Have bins or boxes prepared for each material class. (CBs lacking date information should be placed aside in the "knotty" bin for further investigation. As one works with the collection, clues will be found that can help with sorting out these problematic bags.) This should result in identifying which CBs came from which project. It may be prudent to assign technicians to a specific material class at this juncture. This will promote consistency in cataloguing and will help with understanding the overall composition of the collection.

4. Organize and Label Unsorted Bags
There are 5,244 unsorted bags in the collection, each containing an assortment of items. The vast majority of these bags are from the North Wing project. We would recommend assigning a team to wash (when appropriate), sort, rebag and label the contents according to material class. It is quite difficult to match these items to the existing lot sheets because they do not list specific inventories, quantities or weights. However, it should be possible to match the bags in general with the lot sheets.

5. Investigate Missing Items and Type Collections
Every effort should be made to match up empty bags with any "loose" artifacts in the collection. It could be that some of the items were used in type collections. These items should be returned to the collections proper.

6. Catalogue by Project
- Within each material class, attempt to reconcile CBs with any known catalogues. Note discrepancies, although this will not be complete until all collections are rehabilitated. Refer to "knotty" bin for missing items or items that might belong to the collection.
- Verify/determine artifact identification, weights, counts, etc., and update the catalogue accordingly.
- Bag and label CB with appropriate packaging.
- Prepare temporary box inventories.
- When all artifacts have been accounted for in each project, consider the current box inventories and whether or not another sorting plan would make sense, e.g., put all the Galera Ware in one box, etc.
- Finalize collection sorting and box inventories.
- Prepare an executive summary of the collection or final report.

Appendix I

This is the template that was used to catalogue the existing Presidio collections at the San Diego Archaeological Center.

Catalogue Specifics

EXCAVATION YEAR	Obtain from the tags. If one does not exist, leave blank
SITE NUMBER	Listed as CA-SDI-38
CATALOGUE NUMBER	A unique number for each bag. It could be listed as a Lot #, CC#, or it could be blank. If blank, issue a number and write it on the bag or on the tag. If you issue an item number, use the box number as a prefix, add a period, and add the sequence. (Example: T.02, T.10, X.15). Every bag should have a unique identifier.
LOCATION	The information could be represented as: North Wing, Bld. And Rm. If the information is missing, leave blank.
UNIT #	The numbered Unit, STP, Feature, etc. recorded in the project report
LEVEL (STRATA)	Depth at which the artifact was located, 0 cm(surface), 0-10 cm, etc.
MATERIAL CLASS	Broad artifact category, e.g., shell, ceramics, chipped stone, etc. (refer to the Collection Catalogue Data Field sheet). If the material is mixed-bone, ceramics, glass, etc all mixed, use HISTORIC,
OBJECT NAME	What is it? Button, projectile point, sherd, etc. (refer to the Collection Catalogue Data Field sheet). If the material is mixed, use MIXED for this field.
MATERIAL	What is it made of, what species, what type: Metal, Tizon, Donax, Unspeciated, etc. (refer to the Collection Catalogue Data Field sheet). If the material is mixed, use UNSORTED for this field.
QUANTITY	How many objects are associated with this number? If more than one, do not count, write "BULK" in the field.
WEIGHT	We are not weighing artifacts. Leave Blank.
BOX NUMBER	Which box the artifact will be curated in. Or, if the item is missing, deaccessioned or otherwise not in the collection. Use the format: X-XXX
COMMENTS	Special information is recorded in this field. If UNSORTED then list the different objects in the bag (Example: bone, ceramic, glass)