

# CITY OF SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL RESOURCES BOARD

## ARCHAEOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE

Monday, February 10, 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 Report: 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 a Final Report has been produced by the San Diego Archaeology Center. The Subcommittee will review the report and provide input to staff for future studies and on the report recommendations (attached).

4. Adjourn

Next Archaeology Subcommittee Meeting will be on May 12, 2014 at 4:00 PM.

For more information, please contact Cathy Winterrowd by phone at (619) 235-5217 or email at [cwinterrowd@sandiego.gov](mailto:cwinterrowd@sandiego.gov)

## **San Diego Presidio Collection Phase I Final Report**

The current report outlines work completed during Phase I of the San Diego Presidio Collections Management Plan. The current project was initiated on March 2, 2012. Standard size boxes containing archaeological material excavated from various projects excavated during the 1970s and 1980s were sectioned and transported to the San Diego Archaeological 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 407 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 and doubtful as to whether or not all of these goals could be met. Based on previously provided information, it was assumed that the collections were sorted and organized. In fact, it was not. Processing the collection revealed artifacts from the different projects were incorporated and intermingled. Additionally, the majority of the boxes and artifacts 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 created an entire issue-preventing the verification of inventory. Issues such as these became obvious from the very beginning and resulted in impeding our overall goals and objectives.

### *1. Evaluating the general condition 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 Ad Muniz. Sean Cardenas was present 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 area appears to be free of rodents, pests, and mold. No evidence of moisture was observed inside the building or on any of the boxes. Boxes from several parts of the storage were randomly selected and their contents observed. Artifacts including ceramics, bone, and tiles were stored in plastic bags that appeared to be in acceptable condition. Hand written labels were found in each bag. During the initial evaluation, it was observed that some boxes, due to their deteriorating condition, would require replacing. It also became immediately evident that the boxes were placed on the shelves without no thought the corresponding excavation or field season. It also observed that collection records or artifacts catalogues were absent.

### *2. Creating a digital catalogue to verify against original catalogues*

*a. the condition of boxes, bags, bag labels, object labels, and box labels*

Upon transportation to the Center each box and its contents were examined, inventoried, and catalogued by Center staff, interns, and volunteers. The collection was stored in the Center's Federal vault until the boxes were ready for processing. The guidelines for processing boxes can be found in Appendix I. Each box was assessed for deterioration, pests, and mold. When deemed necessary, replacements of storage boxes were made. 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 gravels found in many of the boxes.

Unique numbers were assigned to all boxes and artifact bags. The collection boxes inventoried did not always have a previously assigned collection ID number. If an identification number did exist, that original box number was kept and incorporated into the box's digital catalogue created on Microsoft Excel. In many instances, the original boxes were recycled and contained several numbers written on their exterior. To overcome this situation, an ordinal number (ascending) was assigned to each box when the collection was transported to the SDAC. These numbers became the main identifier in cataloguing the collection. However, artifacts containing labels with previously assigned catalogue numbers took precedence and were recorded as such. When present, the catalogue number, included series (CC#), lot (L#) or catalogue (Cat #). Unfortunately consistency was lacking and except for items catalogued with 'Cat #', the system remains a mystery.

*b. the organization of the collections by site number or locus*

The organization of the collection was problematic in the majority of boxes inventoried and catalogued because artifact types have been intermingled. It is possible this approach was taken to indicate all artifacts came from the same excavation unit or level. For instance, the vast majority of the Williams collection boxes contain bags of unwashed, unsorted mixed material classes. Most bags contain an assortment of pottery sherds (both native ware and European), animal bone, metal, glass fragments, clay tile fragments, various organic materials and dirt.

*c. evidence of mold, insects, pests, dirt, and corrosion*

No evidence of mold and pests has been found in any of the boxes inventoried and catalogued. Unfortunately, dirt is accumulating in many of the bags containing artifacts as they were not cleaned upon storage. Another factor to consider is the heavier materials (tiles, concrete, etc.) are directly aiding in the further deterioration of organic materials. Bags of heavier material were stored on top of bone and other more fragile artifacts directly crushing them. As well, metal artifacts (i.e. 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 (as opposed to the open milk crates). Unfortunately, deterioration in some artifacts (bone and shell) fragmentation is occurring and is more difficult to control; however, during the next phase of the project, considerable attention should be given to conservation.

### *D. catalogue verification*

Unfortunately, is practically impossible to reconcile artifacts with existing catalogues (if they exist). Many of the labels found inside the bags appear to have been created some time following the excavation season. Inconsistencies include missing dates, contextual information, catalogues, and even artifacts. 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 bag. In most cases the items are only vaguely identified and quantified, no weights, descriptions or other details. Then, the objects were simply placed back into the same bag. Regardless, the intermingling of material classes was the norm in the majority of the boxes inventoried.

This issue is compounded by missing artifacts. Several boxes of empty bags, (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. It may be impossible to determine what 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

### *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.

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 quantities of vessels found.

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.

## **Recommendations**

Regardless of the current state of the collection, it is still significant and deserves to be thoroughly studied. In my opinion, this cursory inventory project is just the first step in a process that may take 3-5 years. Initially, we presumed that community volunteers would be able to carry out more in-depth cataloguing, but the complexity of the collection and disorganization would require more

qualified personnel with supervision to ensure consistency.

The current facility space is adequate for storage, but the collection would have to be relocated for access to adequate sorting space, water and drying racks.

If funding can be found, we would recommend a resorting of the bags of artifacts according to date, i.e., which excavation they came from. It is easier to determine what was going on during a discrete unit of time.

Next, we recommend that the unsorted material be washed and sorted by material class and context and catalogued. This is the most time consuming part of the process. It will greatly expand the number of catalogued items in the collection and require a terabyte of data storage for manipulation of the data. Most researchers are interested in a particular material class and don't want to sort through other material. The researcher can then provide deeper level detail for the catalogue.

## Appendix I

### Presidio of San Diego Inventory Verification

The San Diego Archaeological Center and the Presidio of San Diego Foundation are currently involved in the first of several phases to curate objects recovered from excavations at the Presidio of San Diego. Phase I of the project is to verify inventory. Our goal is to account for each bag or lot of artifacts and create an inventory of the contexts of each box. The methods for carrying out this phase follow. Please read through the entire procedures before beginning your inventory verification. If you are uncertain about a specific part of the procedures, ask.

- I. Facts you should be aware of:
  - A. Location of files: All files for processing the Presidio collection are stored:  
**I:\Collections Department\Center Collections Databases\SDAC Collections\SDAC LOANS\Presidio Collection**
  - B. A read-only template is required for setting up an inventory verification catalogue.
  - C. Make certain the box you are assigned is logged into the **Master Box Inventory** form.
  - D. Be extremely careful when reaching for a bag of artifacts. Many of the boxes contain broken glass, nails, and other sharp objects.
  - E. This phase is only inventory verification; we are not counting and weighing artifacts during this phase.
  - F. If you are unable to complete a box before the end of your day, please tag the box and leave written instructions.

#### Procedures for Verifying Inventory

- A. Create an inventory verification catalogue. Go to: **I:\Collections Department\Center Collections Databases\SDAC Collections\SDAC LOANS\Presidio Collection** and double-click on the **Excel** file **Master Catalogue Template**.
- B. You will need to rename and save the file. Save the file in the same folder. Name the file using the box number (written on the box). Be certain to use the letter before the number (Example: X-002, T-045). Use a three (or greater) digit name (example: X-034; X-134).
- C. Change the name of the worksheet (tab at the bottom left of the Excel spreadsheet).
- D. You will notice the sheet is almost identical to the Center's inventory sheets. There are, however, a couple of added columns.
- E. Have a copy of the Center's Standardized Typology (attached) at your disposal.

#### Verification Catalogue Format

The Center utilizes Microsoft Excel to produce catalogues. All Center catalogues consist of 12 fields relating to site or vault location, research potential, or contain valuable information that explains the origin, type, or specific information about a specific artifact. For this project, we

have added an additional date field. The catalogue should be consistent with the following guidelines:

- Catalogues should contain at least 13 fields
- Text in each of the fields is to be in Times New Roman or Arial 11 pt.
- Text and number fields are to be formatted as such.
- Abbreviations or unclear nomenclature should not be used in the fields. Refer to the Collection Catalogue Data sheet.
- All information should be Center justified except the Comments Field which is left justified.
- Each Master Catalogue will contain a header with the full title of the project, site number, year of excavation, and the date the Catalogue was created. For formatting information see the example below.
- Each Master Catalogue will also include a footer that includes the date the Catalogue was printed, page number, number of pages of the entire Catalogue, and the text "Acid-Free Paper."
- Each Master Catalogue will include three additional pages listing Missing/Deaccessioned Items, NAGPRA related material and oversize objects (as needed).

#### EXAMPLE OF CATALOGUE FIELD HEADINGS

<b>Exc Year</b>	<b>Site #</b>	<b>Cat #</b>	<b>Locat ion</b>	<b>U nit #</b>	<b>Lev el</b>	<b>Material Class</b>	<b>Obj ect</b>	<b>Mate rial</b>	<b>Qt y</b>	<b>Wt _g</b>	<b>B ox N o</b>	<b>Comm ents</b>
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#### DESCRIPTION OF FIELD HEADINGS

<b>EXCAVATION YEAR</b>	Obtain from the tags. If one does not exist, leave blank
<b>SITE NUMBER</b>	Listed as CA-SDI-38
<b>CATALOGUE NUMBER</b>	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.
<b>LOCATION</b>	The information could will be represented as: North Wing, Bld. And Rm. If the information is missing, leave blank.
<b>UNIT #</b>	The numbered Unit, STP, Feature, etc. recorded in the project report
<b>LEVEL (STRATA)</b>	Depth at which the artifact was located, 0 cm(surface), 0-10 cm, etc.
<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	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,
<b>OBJECT NAME</b>	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.
<b>MATERIAL</b>	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 MIXED for this field.
<b>QUANTITY</b>	How many objects are associated with this number? If more than one, do not count, write "BULK" in the field.
<b>WEIGHT</b>	We are not weighing artifacts. Leave Blank.
<b>BOX NUMBER</b>	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
<b>COMMENTS</b>	Special information is recorded in this field. If MIXED then list the different objects in the bag (Example: bone, ceramic, glass)

Excavation Date	SITE (S DI )	CAT #	Location	UNIT #	LEVEL (cm )	MATERIAL CLASSES	OBJECT	MATERIAL	QUANTITY	WT ( g )	BOX #	COMMENTS
9/19/1987	CASDI-38	333	North Wing	II	3	Ceramic	Fragments	Brown ware	Bulk		T-001	333-465
9/26/1987	CASDI-38	1842	North Wing	2	4	Historic	Fragment	Metal	1		T-001	
10/3/1987	CASDI-38	3776	North Wing	II	4	Ceramic	Fragments	Tizon	Bulk		T-001	3776-3976
10/3/1987	CASDI-38	3976	North Wing	II	4	Ceramic	Fragments	Brown ware	Bulk		T-001	3976-4275
10/3/1987	CASDI-38	4276	North Wing	II	4	Ceramic	Fragments	Brown ware	Bulk		T-001	4276-4275

	DI - 38												
10/3/1 987	C A- S DI - 38	447 6	Nort h Wing	II	4	Cera mic	Frag ment s	Brown ware	B ul k	T- 00 1	4476- 4675		
2/18/1 989	C A- S DI - 38	100 528	Nort h Wing	VI	3	Histori c	Frag ment	Glass, Black	1	T- 00 1			

**SDAC Standarized Collection Catalogue**

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
Associated Records	Audio	Compact Disk
	Catalogue	Floppy
	Field Notes	Other
	Image	Paper
	Map	Photograph
	Other	Slide/Negative
	Report	Tape Recording
	Video	

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
Bone, Modified	Awl	Bird
	Bead	Cetacean
	fishhook	Fish
	Gorget	Mammal, Large
	Needle	Mammal, Medium
	Whistle	Mammal, Small
	Ornament	Amphibian
	Other	Reptile
	Unknown	Other
		Unknown

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
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Bone, Unmodified	Cranial	Bird
	Longbone	Cetacean
	Shortbone	Fish
	Vertebrate	Mammal, Large
	Pelvic	Mammal, Medium
	Teeth	Mammal, Small
	Fragment	Amphibian
	Unknown	Reptile
	Rib	Other
		Unknown

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Ceramic	Rim	Tizon
	Body	Desert Buff
	Base	Other
	Olla	Unknown
	Pipe	
	Tube	
	Other	
	Unknown	

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Chipped Stone	Blade	Course Metavolcanic
	Chopper	Cryptocrystalline
	Core	Fine Metavolcanic
	Crescentic	Granitic
	Debitage	Obsidian
	Drill	Other
	Flake	Quart
	Hammerstone	Quartz Crystal
	Other	Quartzite
	Point	Sandstone
	Scraper	Seatite
	Unknown	

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Ground Stone	Bead	Basalt
	Bowl	Course Metavolcanic

	Discoidal	Cryptocrystalline
	Donut	Fine Metavolcanic
	Mano	Granitic
	Metate	Obsidian
	Net Weight	Other
	Other	Quart
	Pipe	Quartz Crystal
	Plestle	Quartzite
	Shaft Straightner	Sandstone
	Unknown	Seatite
	Warming Stone	

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
Historic	Bottle	Ceramic
	Bullet Casing	Fabric
	Coin	Glass
	Construction Material	Leather
	Farming Item	Metal
	Hardware	Mixed Material
	Household Item	Other
	Machine Item	Plastic
	Mining Item	Porcelain
	Other	Unknown
	Personal Item	Wood
	Tableware	

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
Human Remains	Cranial	
	Longbone	
	Rib	
	Shortbone	
	Vertebrate	
	Pelvic	
	Teeth	
	Fragment	
	Unknown	

<b>MATERIAL CLASS</b>	<b>OBJECT</b>	<b>MATERIAL</b>
Shell, Modified	Bead	Astraea

	Bowl	Balanus
	Fishhook	Chione
	Ornament	Chiton
	Other	Crab
	Unknown	Donax
		Haliotis
		Land Snail
		Lottia
		Mytilus
		Olivealla
		Ostera
		Pecten
		Polinices
		Prototrhaca
		Semele
		Tegulsa
		Tivela
		Other
		Unknown
		Unspeciated

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Shell, Unmodified	Shell Speciated	Astraea
	Shell Unspeciated	Balanus
	Shell, Radiocarbon	Chione
		Chiton
		Crab
		Donax
		Haliotis
		Land Snail
		Lottia
		Mytilus
		Olivealla
		Ostera
		Pecten
		Polinices
		Prototrhaca
		Semele
		Tegulsa

			Tivela
			Other
			Unknown
			Unspiciated

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Stone, Other	Adobe	
	Aspaltum	
	Brick	
	Cement	
	Cobble	
	Crystal	
	FAR	
	Mineral	
	Ochre	
	Plaster	
	Other	
	Soil Sample	

MATERIAL CLASS	OBJECT	MATERIAL
Vegetal, Modified	Other	Juncus
	Sandal	Other
	Twine	Unknown
	Unknown	Wood
	Weaving	Yucca