

Post/Hazeltine Associates Architectural Historians

213 #A, West Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805-682-5751
posthazeltine@cox.net

Historical Overview of Turf at Plaza de la Guerra Santa Barbara, California

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1.0 PREVIOUS STUDIES AND BACKGROUND

In 2008 Post-Hazeltine Associates prepared a Phase 1 Historic Structures/Sites Report for the City of Santa Barbara Redevelopment Agency as part of a proposed project to renovate De La Guerra Plaza. The report included a historic context study, descriptions, identification of contributing and non-contributing resources and an application of the significance criteria set forth by the City of Santa Barbara for historic property studies. The report was reviewed and accepted by the City of Santa Barbara Historic Landmarks Commission. In 2020, Post/Hazeltine Associates was retained by the City of Santa Barbara and RRM Architects, to provide consulting services for a proposed project to rehabilitate the Plaza. Once preliminary plans have been completed Post/Hazeltine Associates will provide an updated Phase 1 HSR and Phase 2 HSR evaluating the proposed project's consistency with relevant preservation standards and City guidelines.

The Presence of Turf in Plaza De La Guerra

After the construction of De la Guerra House in the early 1820s a rectangular area extending from De La Guerra House's entry façade to a large adobe located near what is now East Ortega Street soon transitioned into the community's primary gathering space. Throughout the era of Mexican rule the Plaza continued to serve as a public gathering space. However, few if any improvements were made during this period and the Plaza remained unpaved and un-landscaped. For the first two decades of American rule the Plaza remained little changed although it was designated as a public Plaza in 1855. Its most dramatic change took place in 1874 when a two-story brick building housing a city hall, fire department and police station was built in the center of Plaza (Exhibit 1). Between 1874 and circa-1910 the Plaza was un-landscaped and few plantings and no turf were present. The surrounding roadway remained unpaved throughout this era.

In circa-1910, City Hall was remodeled in the Mission Revival style (Exhibit 2). It appears it was at this time that a narrow expanse of turf fronting East De La Guerra Street and some curbing

was added to at least part of the roadway Exhibits 3 & 4). The area between City Hall and the future location of the News Press building remained largely un-landscaped with the exception of two Washingtonia palms.

A notable transformation of the Plaza and its environs occurred in 1924 when a new Mediterranean style City Hall was built at the northern corner of the Plaza and the former city hall was demolished. It was at this time that turf and curbing was installed to define a boundary between the grass and adjacent roadway (Exhibit 5). While several schemes for embellishing the Plaza were proposed in the mid-1920s, none of the architect-designed schemes were realized instead, the City appears to have confined improvements to turf and concrete curbing (Exhibit 6).

The configuration of the lawn has been modified at least two times since the mid-1920s as documented by period photographs (Exhibits 7 & 8). Modifications included: altering the width of the roadway paving on the northeast side of the Plaza, which originally had a jog near its northwest end, and revising the east end of the Plaza to its current curved configuration. A review of period photographs taken between early 20th century and the 2000s indicates the plaza's planting scheme has been modified several times. The oldest surviving plantings are the California Pepper tree in front of the Plaza entrance to City Hall planted sometime in the 19th century and a Washingtonia Palm located near the east end of the Plaza, likely planted in the early 20th century. The existing Queen palms appear to have been planted sometime after the mid-to-late 1960s (Exhibit 9).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pamela Post', with a stylized, cursive script.

Pamela Post, Ph.D.
Senior Partner,
Post/Hazeltine Associates



Exhibit 1, Original City Hall façade facing East De La Guerra Street in the 1870s or 1880s
Edson Smith Collection, Santa Barbara Public Library

<http://www.luna.blackgold.org/luna/servlet/detail/blackgold~9~9~3011~5201>



Exhibit 2, City Hall as remodeled in the early 20th century with curbing and lamp posts in front of the City Hall
(Edson Smith Collection: (copy on file at Post/Hazeltine Associates))



Exhibit 3, northwest end of Plaza de la Guerra from roof of the original City Hall looking towards the Casa de la Guerra

(Elsom Smith Collection:

<http://www.luna.blackgold.org/luna/servlet/detail/blackgold~9~9~535~2248>)



Exhibit 4, Photograph by Charles C. Pierce of the northeast corner of the Plaza
<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15150coll2/id/8013>



Exhibit 5, Plaza de la Guerra shortly after completion of City Hall (taken between 1924 and 1925)

Edson Smith Collection, Santa Barbara Public Library

<http://www.luna.blackgold.org/luna/servlet/detail/blackgold~9~9~2213~5083>



Exhibit 6, 1928 Aerial photograph of Plaza De La Guerra
(Flight c-311c_b-11, Geospatial Collection, Special Collections, Library, University of California,
Santa Barbara)



Exhibit 7, Plaza de la Guerra in the early to mid-1940s
(Edson Smith Collection, Santa Barbara Public Library (copy on file at Post/Hazeltine Associates))



Exhibit 8, 1956 Aerial photograph of Plaza De La Guerra
(Flight hg-an_1-47, Geospatial Collection, Special Collections, Library, University of California,
Santa Barbara)

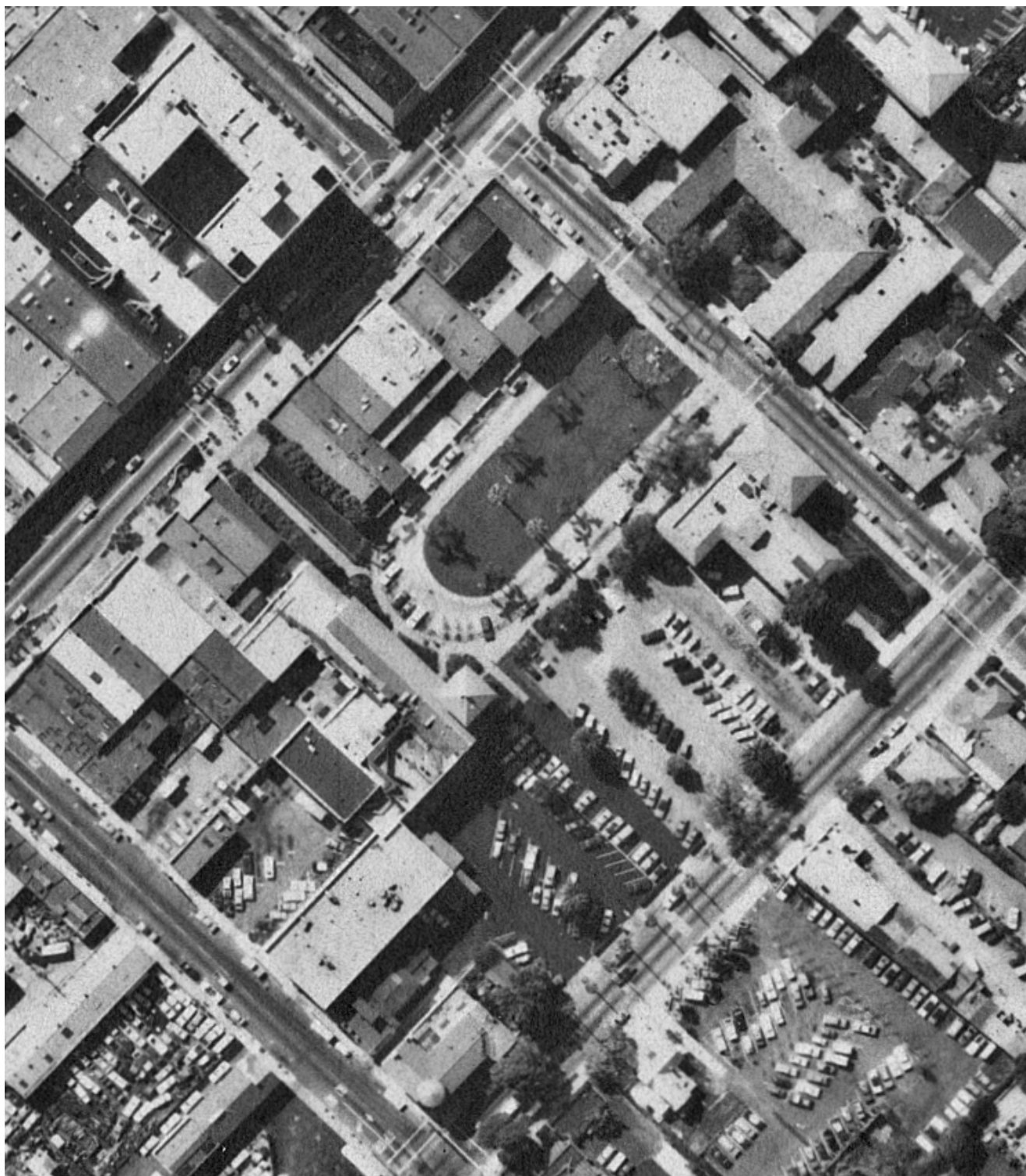


Exhibit 9, 1960s Aerial photograph of Plaza De La Guerra
(Copy on file at Post/Hazeltine Associates)