The Soldiers of Spain's California Army, 1769-1821

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Barrie Earl Malcolm for the Master of Arts in History presented October 19, 1993.

Title: The Soldiers of Spain’s California Army, 1769-1821

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

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Spanish authorities used two agencies to occupy and control California as a royal province from 1769 to 1821: the church and the army. While the story of the missions and the missionaries has been thoroughly chronicled, little attention has been focused on the men who comprised Spain’s military forces. This thesis examines the experience of the royal soldier in California to determine his significance in the Golden State's Spanish colonial era.
The journals, diaries, and correspondence of the soldiers, missionaries, explorers, traders, and foreign rivals who visited or occupied the province comprise a major part of the source material. The variety of viewpoints represented by these documents facilitated examination from several perspectives. Another valuable primary source was the Spanish frontier regulations, which provided the royal perspective on the military enterprise. Published materials based on documents in the major archival repositories such as those in Mexico, Spain, and the Bancroft Library in California were accessible through works in the Portland State University Library and the Oregon Historical Society which supplied sources pertinent to this investigation. Secondary works by historians provided both a historical background and data on specific aspects of a soldier's life. Cited periodical articles concentrated more specifically on the military experience both in California and the Spanish northern frontier.
THE SOLDIERS OF SPAIN'S CALIFORNIA ARMY, 1769-1821

by

BARRIE EARL MALCOLM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Spanish army played a vital role in maintaining royal control over New Spain's province of California. During the fifty-two years of service, 1769-1821, the king's soldiers constructed four defensive forts or "presidios," fought pitched battles with both native tribesmen and Latin American revolutionaries, protected the Franciscan priests and their missions, founded two towns, and established the non-indigenous population. Yet despite five decades of duty against a potentially dangerous indigenous population and such foreign rivals as Great Britain and Russia this military force has been largely overlooked by historians. No single book has focused on Spain's California army despite the attention paid to the colorful history of this nation's most populous state.

The reason for this neglect is the domination of the Spanish era by two giants of California history: Franciscan missionaries Junípero Serra and Fermín de Lasuén. Serving as California mission presidents from 1769 to 1803, they accounted for the founding of eighteen of the province's twenty-one missions. Through the mission system agriculture, stock raising, and various crafts were introduced to the province. The religious compounds during the Lasuén era were responsible for 50,000 converts compared to a population of only 3,700 non-Indian inhabitants of the presidios and towns at the end of the Spanish era. The Franciscans initiated trade with American ships and the missions were the economic backbone of the province, often providing food and other essentials necessary for the soldier's survival. The legacy of these two men is still seen today in the restored missions along the king's highway.
As a result the mission system in general and Junípero Serra in particular have been the subject of numerous studies. Cast in the shadow of the missionaries the royal troopers are the forgotten players of Spanish California history. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate their roles as defenders of the province by examining the elements of their service. This thesis is not intended to be a history of this era and a discussion of the missions is avoided unless relevant to the military institution. I believe that by concentrating more directly on the soldierly aspects of the presidial units can their garrison duty be evaluated and appreciated; hence the emphasis on conditions of service rather than major historical figures or events. Only in this way can the contribution of the presidials be properly acknowledged.

The Spanish military first occupied California in 1769 to improve the defenses of New Spain by creating a defensive buffer against such foreign powers as England and Russia whose naval and commercial elements were known to be operating in the north Pacific region. This step was part of a program throughout the northern borderlands of New Spain to create a more efficient and effective defensive posture against both foreign threats and the intractible natives of the Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona frontiers. The purpose of this effort was to protect the valuable silver mines of northern Mexico whose riches were vital to the economies of both New Spain and the mother country. Part of this program was the appointment in 1765 of José de Gálvez by King Charles III as visitador general to New Spain. He received broad powers to improve administrative and economic efficiency in the region. In the same year the Spanish monarch also commissioned Cayetano María Pignatelli Rubí Corbera y San Climent, the Marqués de Rubí, to inspect and reorganize the presidios in northern New Spain to better control the Indian threat to frontier security. The result of Rubí's activities was the Reglamento de Presidios, in 1772, which realigned the frontier forts and established the administrative machinery for all borderland presidios. While Rubí dealt with native uprisings Gálvez heard rumors of foreign threats to New Spain's
Pacific shores. In the 1740's British captain George Anson had touched the viceroyalty's west coast. The myth of the Strait of Anian, a water passage across the North American continent, caused Spanish fears of British expansion from the north. Stories circulated of a force of three hundred Russians killed in battle with Pacific Northwest tribesmen. In 1768 the Spanish ambassador to Russia sent Madrid a report indicating that Empress Catherine II had ordered secret preparations for exploration designed to expand Russian New World territory. This information resulted in a dispatch to Gálvez warning him of planned Russian settlements on the California coast. The visitador general recommended to New Spain's viceroy, Carlos Francisco de Croix, that California be occupied to prevent Russian and British incursions. In October 1768 Gálvez received news of the king's approval.

Gálvez planned to use the port of San Diego as a base in the south of the new province, and Monterey, long on the naval charts since its discovery by Sebastian Vizcaíno in 1602, would serve as California's defense bastion and port of call for the Manila Galleon. The visitador general had established the Pacific coast port of San Blas in Baja California in 1768 as a base for naval operations and logistics center for Sonora Indian campaigns. San Blas also became the primary supplier of California.

In January 1769 the ship San Carlos with sixty-two men sailed from La Paz harbor in Baja California, followed in February by the San Antonio with a complement of twenty-eight. They landed at San Diego in April and were soon met by two land expeditions. Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada arrived from Velicatá in Baja California with twenty-five soldiers in May and on July 1 Gaspar de Portolá, the governor of Baja California, reinforced the expedition with a squad of soldiers and Father Junípero Serra, president of the Baja California Franciscan missions. Despite many deaths from scurvy Portolá journeyed north with sixty-two soldiers, friars, and Indians to establish a presidio at Monterey. Unable to recognize it from Vizcaíno's description the Baja California governor returned to San Diego. He led a second
expedition the following year that founded the Presidio of Monterey as the capital of the new province. The Spanish military presence in California had been established. Eventually two additional presidios were built at San Francisco and Santa Bárbara.

The presence of Father Serra in the original founding expedition underscores the importance of the mission on the frontier in general and in California in particular. Indeed, the role of the military was often seen as subservient to the mission enterprise. With an initial occupying force of only fifty-one soldiers to control the estimated 70,000 natives living near the settled area missions were needed to introduce and encourage white civilization. Successful religious establishments enabled Spain to control vast territories like California with few troops by attempting to create new Hispanic citizens. The Franciscan fathers changed Indian society by introducing European agriculture, food, and draft animals. Education in language and manual trades enabled the neophytes to build most mission compounds. By 1806 over 20,000 natives lived at the California missions which numbered twenty by the end of the Spanish era.

The Spanish authorities promoted the missionaries' role in California. In the *Reglamento de Presidios* Viceroy Antonio María Bucareli is ordered by King Carlos III to place "special attention" to California's security and "above all" the spread of Christianity. In 1781 Commandant of the Interior Provinces Teodoro de Croix, who had jurisdiction over California, encouraged the founding of new missions to "reduce docility the numerous small bands of barbarians that are vagrant in the territory..." In a 1794 report to Viceroy Marqués De Branciforte on California's security royal engineer captain Miguel Costansó viewed the primary duties of the province's soldiers as assisting in the conversion and civilizing of the natives, and maintaining peace between neophytes and intractible tribes. He believed that the best defense for California was to populate the territory with more settlers from New Spain, to provide a larger military force and more quickly control the natives.
Despite the small garrisons and preeminence of the religious enterprise in civilizing the province the soldiers still played a vital role. Indeed, the Franciscan fathers depended upon the small military escort garrisons at each mission for survival. They protected the missionaries, served as policemen to prevent trouble from recalcitrants, and tracked fugitive neophytes. The soldiers also served as a Christian example to the mission population. Their character and actions could often determine the success or failure of the religious conversion effort.13

By guarding the missions the troopers protected the efforts to create a loyal Spanish population and thereby prevent foreign encroachment in the province. Eventually the presidios themselves became centers of California social and political activity. The military families were the basis for the later Hispanic population and the soldiers often retired to the two civil pueblos founded during the Spanish era, San José and Los Angeles. These towns in turn provided recruits for the presidios.14

The following chapters will illustrate the difficulties the military experienced in fullfilling these roles. Inadequate complements garrisoned the presidios. Recruits often lacked education, training, and good character. Uniforms, weaponry and ammunition were usually in poor repair or short supply. Starvation threatened the province's initial presidials. The last decade of Spanish rule witnessed a complete breakdown of the salary and supply system, the troopers serving without pay and their families destitute. Outnumbered troopers fought pitched battles with both natives and Latin American revolutionaries. However, when the Spanish flag was lowered in California for the last time in 1822 it was not due to battlefield defeat or retreat. Events occurring outside the province had caused a change in sovereignty. Spain's California army had fulfilled its duty.15
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. For clarity and ease of reading, current geographical names will be used. The term "California," describing the Spanish province that later became the U.S. state, was referred to as "Alta" (upper) or "Nueva" (new) California when under Spanish rule. "Baja" (lower) or "Viejo" (old) California refers to the Mexican peninsula and state still retaining that name.


6. Warren L. Cook, Flood Tide of Empire; Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 47-48; Bannon, 154. Even after the occupation of California two further expeditions were undertaken by Spain in 1774 and 1775 to claim Pacific Northwest territory because Spanish authorities believed the California presidios were not adequate to deter the Russians. Cook, 54.

7. Bannon, 155; Cook, 50.

8. Bannon, 154-57; Charles E. Chapman, A History of California: The Spanish Period (New York: the MacMillan Co., 1926), 221-25. Initially, California was under the jurisdiction of the governor of Baja California who was headquartered in Loreto, as both Californias were considered one province. The military commander in Monterey served as lieutenant governor although he controlled Alta California independently. In 1776 the roles were reversed, with Monterey becoming the seat of government in the Californias. In 1804 the two Californias were officially separated as


15. Mexico had actually achieved independence from Spain in 1821, but the news did not reach California until the spring of the following year. Bannon, 228.
CHAPTER II

RECRUITING AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The men who served in the garrisons of California were generally not ideal military material. As was the case throughout the Spanish borderlands the average recruit was poor, illiterate, ignorant of weaponry and often of questionable character. Born on the frontier their low social status often caused conflicts with their superiors and Franciscan missionaries. Inadequate supply, meagre salary and long enlistment terms encouraged desertion. Many officers also lacked the necessary leadership ability. However, their borderlands background created tough soldiers used to hardship and deprivation. Possessing the skills necessary for successful duty in a frontier environment, they were able to meet the challenges posed by California service.

Recruiting for service in the California presidios was controlled by the Marqués de Rubí's Reglamento de Presidios, which governed the entire line of New Spain's frontier presidios from Texas to California. This ordinance stipulated that recruits must be between sixteen and thirty-six years of age and at least five feet tall. Recruiting captains were not to ignore any faults in "health, hardiness, or resolution." Because frontier troops were in a constant state of war with the borderlands Indians they "must be of the highest quality and calibre" and had equal right to promotion, honors, rank, salary, and retirement pay as the regular Spanish forces. The term of enlistment was ten years.

Despite generally ignoring these enlistment qualifications recruiting officers had difficulty gathering inductees for frontier service. California duty was particularly unpopular because low pay and problems in supplying the somewhat isolated presidios
caused real hardships among the soldiers who posted there. A private's pay was 290 pesos annually from which the paymaster deducted the amount needed to purchase horses, uniforms, weapons, and equipment. The soldier actually received two reales a day in coin (eight reales equalled one peso) for himself and his family's subsistence. In addition, twenty pesos a year were withheld for five years to be given to the soldier upon discharge.³ For a period of time California troops were paid entirely in goods and were forced to pay high surcharges on supplies due to the expense of shipping goods to San Diego and Monterey. A letter from Commandant General Teodoro de Croix reveals the impact of these salary policies upon California recruiting:

   The false interpretation which the people have given to the Reglamento de Californias, persuading them of the greatest detriments in the surcharges or discounts there made against the salaries of Officers, troops, and pobladores, may prevent many from taking advantage of the opportunity... for gaining an honorable and happy berth and of performing a loyal service to the King...⁴

New regulations enacted in 1781 corrected this "false interpretation" by stipulating that goods in California be sold at the same prices as in Mexico and the soldiers paid their two reales a day. The reduction of a private's salary to 217.50 pesos was compensated by increased buying power.⁵

Despite this improvement problems with pay and supply would always hamper recruiting for service in California. Even soldiers currently serving on the frontier and used to frontier conditions tried to evade assignment to California garrisons and once assigned, often tried to desert.⁶ Francisco Palóu, a mission father, wrote, "In view of this [referring to low salary] and of the privations they suffer... it is surprising that anyone be found willing to be a soldier, whereas formerly it was necessary to use testimonials or influence to obtain such a place."⁷

Nevertheless, there were some advantages of joining the frontier military forces. The army offered steady employment, retirement benefits, a pension for widows, and
access to the only skilled medical attention in the borderlands. There was opportunity for promotion, as junior officers on the frontier had generally risen through the ranks. The men earned the same ranks and privileges of the regular Spanish army and, because the royal authorities wanted to colonize the borderlands region, land was easily obtained near the presidio after discharge. Finally, as an added inducement, the regulations provided that soldiers were entitled to any spoils of war after a successful engagement with the Indians. The men who answered the call to arms were generally mixed-blood mestizos from the ranches and villages of the northern borderland provinces of Baja California, Sinaloa, and Sonora. There were some Indians as well. Usually from poor families, they joined the army because it was the best opportunity available to them. In New Spain most good soldier material was prohibited from joining the military due to occupational deferments so these men were the only ones eligible for service. Miners, farmers, muleteers, and hacienda managers were all excluded from army duty. The California recruit averaged thirty-two years of age and, during the early California colonial period, was usually unmarried.

A common practice in New Spain was to release convicts from prison directly to the military in order to relieve crowded jails and alleviate the army's manpower shortage. Some men found themselves sentenced directly to the military or were given the option of being a prisoner or a soldier. Some of these convicts ended up in the California garrisons.

While most of these men may have stemmed from rather humble social backgrounds, the ones raised in the borderland provinces possessed frontier experience that made them ideally suited to service in California. Strong, tough, and used to harsh weather, these men often more resembled cowboys than soldiers. They often did not understand the use of firearms, their military duties, or penal law, but their skill at horsemanship amazed foreign visitors to the province. George Vancouver, a British sea captain who visited California in 1792, witnessed the roping and slaughter of
several wild cattle for a feast at Santa Clara Mission. Commenting on the "skill and adroitness" necessary to catch the wild bulls the British captain was impressed by the "great dexterity" displayed by the mounted California troopers during the roundup.\(^{14}\)

If a frontier rearing gave these men equestrian skills and a mental and physical toughness to the elements, it also caused them to lack much formal education. Illiteracy was a major problem among the California forces. In 1785 only fourteen out of fifty soldiers at the Monterey presidio could read and write and in the same year only seven of the thirty men at the San Francisco garrison were literate. By 1794 there was not one literate enlisted soldier at San Francisco.\(^{15}\) Governor Felipe de Neve recognized this problem by requiring that candidates for vacant sergeancies be "from among those who have most distinguished themselves for good conduct and bravery; taking care, as far as possible, that they shall know how to read and write."\(^{16}\)

According to regulations, an illiterate could not achieve the rank of corporal, thus making literacy a key to promotion. If soldiers were literate and could handle the presidial accounts promotion tended to be rapid, which reflected the value of an educated soldier in California. Ex-convict Hermenegildo Sal, sent to the province from the prisons of Mexico and a man of some education, eventually became commander of the Santa Bárbara and San Francisco presidios.\(^{17}\)

Despite regulations there was a general lack of educated non-commissioned officers in the army of New Spain thus making the education of good soldiers difficult. No schools were established in California until 1795 when Diego Borica had assumed the office of governor. Previously officers had taught their own offspring and military wives had instructed the presidial children and a few soldiers who wanted advancement to corporal. Many of the first schoolteachers were soldiers, some of whom were retired.\(^{18}\) In 1815 Governor Pablo Vicente de Solá brought two educators from Spain to Monterey in an attempt to establish a school of higher learning. Upon discovering the lack of possibilities for advanced education in the province both teachers
immediately returned to Madrid. Governor Solá later established a school in Monterey and paid the teachers from his own private funds but eventually political upheavals deprived him of his income and forced him to abandon the project.19

Bachelors were preferred in both the frontier forces and regular army units of New Spain because married men were often more concerned about their families and neglected their duties. The first presidial troopers in California at Monterey and San Diego were veteran Indian fighters from the fort at Loreto in Baja California who had come with Portolá in 1769. In 1773 the Spanish population of California consisted of sixty-one soldiers, eleven friars, and no women. Although six soldiers had taken native brides, the rest were either single or had left their wives in Mexico.20 It became obvious, however, that in California married men with families possessed more desirable attributes for garrisoning the province. The Indians reacted hostily to single men, believing them to be outcasts who had come to their land to steal their women. The mission fathers were especially concerned about interaction between single men and the natives. The soldiers spread venereal disease and concubinage was common. As a result the president of the California missions, Junípero Serra, wrote to Viceroy Bucareli in 1774 and urged him to select twenty to thirty men with families from the Sonora presidios in Mexico to replace the current California garrison in order that "the land would be purged of all the scandalous and we would have soldiers suited to the nature of these [spiritual] conquests."21 The introduction of families also helped to populate the province and assure Spanish control.

Beginning in 1774 the emphasis was to bring married soldiers and families into the province. Rivera y Moncada led fifty-one people of all ages and both sexes to San Diego from Sinaloa, thus bringing the first white women into California, and providing brides for the soldiers there. Several families were also included in this group. The next year, following Bucareli’s orders, Captain Juan Bantista de Anza recruited in Sonora and Sinaloa some twenty soldiers with families "submerged in poverty" and ten married
soldiers from the Sonora presidios. These men were used to establish a new presidio at San Francisco.22

In 1781 Teodoro de Croix ordered Rivera y Moncada to bring fifty-nine new recruits and soldiers from the provinces of Sonora and Jalisco to found a new presidio at Santa Bárbara. These men were to be married and "healthy, robust, and without human vice or defect." Twenty-one married men and twenty-five men with families were signed up. Only eight men were single. Without exception the sons and daughters of these soldiers stayed in California and later intermarried with the other soldiers' or settlers' families in the province. An additional twenty-four families were enlisted to establish a pueblo at Los Angeles. One of the enticements for these pioneers was that the unmarried female members were offered "the possibility that they may marry members of the troops who remain single in California for lack of Spanish women."23

These three expeditions formed the basis of the California population during the Spanish period. By 1790 two-thirds of the two hundred soldiers then in California were married and living with families. The presidios themselves eventually became large settlements with families living on the ranches outside the forts. These families and the ones in the civil towns of Los Angeles and San José furnished the new recruits to replace the original presidials of Anza and Portolá whose enlistments had expired.24

Despite bringing wives and families to California the attempt to create a more socially stable environment was not altogether successful. The character of the soldiers was often held in question, especially by the mission fathers. Class prejudice that was prevalent in Mexico did not disappear in California. The soldiers were often disrespectful to the European-born priests, who treated the mixed-bloods with equal discourtesy. The priests feared the sexual appetites and irreverent attitudes of the presidials. Eventually the soldiers refused to aid in the construction of missions or their own presidial chapels, even when under orders by their officers to do so. The military guards attached to Mission San Juan Capistrano were forced at gunpoint to assist in
building the mission because they rebelled at a reprimand given by a mission father. Father Lasuén was to complain that "Little is gained... by assigning to the missions soldiers who are less efficient, weak in discipline, and poorly equipped." In 1783 Father Palou of Mission San Francisco refused to say mass at the presidio because of the negative attitude of the soldiers who ridiculed anyone who conversed with a priest with the derogatory name of "frailero."25

Presidials assigned guard duty at the missions were a constant source of trouble to the priests. Ignoring admonitions to be good Christian examples to the mission Indians, the soldiers were accused by the missionaries of gambling, selling equipment, shirking duties, drinking and pursuing Indian women. Father Serra wanted removed from the mission guard any soldier who "sets a bad example, especially in matters of chastity."26

Perhaps the worst example of poor character among soldiers assigned to missions occurred during the building of San Gabriel Mission in 1771. The men refused to work, engaged in fights, and did not obey the corporal in charge. They would go out in groups of six or more and lasso Indian women like cattle to rape them. Young boys who came to the mission also were molested. An assault on a chief's wife finally led to a minor Indian revolt.28

Every effort was made to prevent assaults on Indian women. Soldiers were prohibited from entering Indian villages for any reason except to accompany a priest and even then a soldier could not leave the presence of the missionary. Any infraction of these rules would result in severe punishment. Father Serra always located the missions at a distance from the presidios and segregated the housing for married and unmarried women.29

Gambling and drinking were also problems among the soldiers. An American visitor to the California coast described the presidials as a "mixed breed" who "are of an indolent, harmless disposition and fond of spirituous liquors." This fondness was
strictly prohibited and hard labor, imprisonment and time in the stocks were the result of violations. Card playing was also forbidden, not on moral grounds but because of the soldiers’ addiction to it. Officers even lost horses and weapons in card games. All decks were to be seized and burned. Desertion was a problem in the early years of the Spanish occupation before social stability and adequate food supplies were established. In 1771 ten men deserted from the San Diego presidio but the commandant was so desperate for troops that he sent out a priest with a blank pardon to bring them back, which he did. Two weeks later six more men from the same garrison deserted, stole some beef cattle, armed themselves, and when confronted by the commandant, refused to surrender. They were also later returned by a priest. The shortage of military forces during the early days of the California colony was so acute that Viceroy Bucareli granted the military commandant at Monterey the power to proclaim a general pardon for all deserters. Considering the low pay, supply problems, and menial tasks that these troops were often asked to perform they had little incentive to become good soldiers.

Despite these problems and the various complaints by the mission fathers, most men were rarely convicted of crimes. The occurrences of rape and murder were isolated enough to indicate that the presidial troops were not any more prone to immoral behavior than any of the other military forces of New Spain. This is especially true when one considers that the regular Spanish units of the time were filled with various undesirables of the lower socio-economic classes. Even the convicts sent to California were released because of good behavior to relieve prison overcrowding. In the criminal cases that did reach the trial stage often the evidence against the soldiers was not conclusive and the commandant may have brought charges to appease the mission fathers or maintain discipline.

The officers who commanded the presidial rank and file were generally from the frontier themselves. This was different from general practice in New Spain as most officers of regular regiments were either peninsulares (born in Spain) or criollos (born
in America of European bloodlines) and there was often rivalry between the two groups. Spanish officers especially had racist attitudes towards the common Mexican soldiers who they often regarded as "contemptible colonials" and frequently attributed their failures to inferior breeding. European officers were not enthusiastic about commanding the principally mestizo forces in the isolated borderlands presidios. In the 1790's the French revolution forced the Spanish military establishment to keep experienced officers at home, thus decreasing the number of peninsulares available for command. \(^{33}\) The attitude of peninsular officers, the diminishing number of European officers in New Spain, and the special demands of frontier leadership made it apparent that the best candidates for borderlands command were men with frontier experience. The presidial regulations themselves stipulated that men with frontier experience be given preference for officer vacancies. The 1781 regulations for governing the Californias stated that the governor was to propose candidates for all commissioned officer vacancies to the commandant general and presidial commanders were to nominate soldiers for the non-commissioned officer openings to the governor, thereby ensuring that men with local frontier experience would be elevated into leadership positions. The religious community also recognized the value of borderland experience. Father Serra urged the viceroy to fill officer vacancies with frontier veterans, because California soldiering was "totally different" from the regular military. \(^{34}\)

Promotion to officer status in California usually occurred after enlistment in the ranks and several years of service. Because of their undistinguished birth officers did not qualify as soldados distinguidos, which might have earned them a cadetship. A cadetship made it necessary for a soldier to equip himself, provide for a horse and possess the financial means to associate with other officers on a social basis. This required a wealthy family or contacts at the royal court, which California officers generally did not have. \(^{35}\)
The initial presidial commanders were veteran Indian fighters, but as this threat diminished managerial and accounting skills became paramount in order to oversee the presidial economy and properly receive foreign visitors to the California ports. San Francisco commandant José Darío and Santa Bárbara commandant Felipe de Goycochea both received their appointments because of skillful public land distribution in the pueblo of Los Ángeles and the successful transference of presidial treasuries during the reorganization of forts in the interior provinces. Lieutenant José Francisco de Ortega, a trailblazer with the De Anza expedition, was passed over for promotion and eventually forced to retire because of mismanagement of presidial accounts. Conversely, the ex-convict Hermenegildo Sal was quickly promoted to presidio command because of his business acumen in managing the San Francisco presidio warehouse.36

Promotion to command did not necessarily mean good leadership. Frontier officers were often related by blood or marriage to the men they commanded thus making it difficult to maintain discipline. They often had the same vices but inadequate literacy skills. Commandant General Croix especially complained about their gambling and drinking: "Very few gave any hope of improving their behavior and conduct. They openly embrace all the abominable excesses... do not observe orders, (and) hide the truth... I have no others to whom to turn."37

In 1777 California Governor Neve wrote to the viceroy about the lack of good commissioned officers. Presidios and expeditions were often led by sergeants and corporals whose poor leadership had caused disorder among the troops and deaths to the Indians. In 1787 Lieutenant Diego González, commandant at San Francisco, was put under arrest for insubordination, gambling, failure to prevent gambling, and trading with the Manila Galleon. He was eventually removed from California. His replacement, Leon Parrilla, suffered from fits of insanity.38
It was especially difficult to find officers capable of keeping the presidial accounts. Governor Pedro Fages divided the officers into two classes according to their accounting ability, the intelligent and the stupid, and made certain any presidio did not have two from the same class. Ensign Lasso de la Vega, paymaster, was arrested for general incompetence in handling accounts and was eventually dismissed from the army after having to reimburse the presidio from his own salary. Often the positions of commandant and paymaster were combined due to a lack of qualified personnel.39

While there may not have been much difference in the social backgrounds of the officers and enlisted men, this was not true of the officers in charge of the California military establishment. Suspicion regarding the trustworthiness of the criollos resulted in Spanish peninsular officers being appointed to all important military posts in New Spain, including California. With only two exceptions, all of the men in charge of the California forces, either as governor or military commandant, were full blooded Spaniards born in Spain. The two exceptions, Fernando Rivera y Moncada as military commandant and José Darío Arguello as acting governor, were both criollos. Forty-eight of the fifty-two years of Spanish colonial rule saw peninsular leadership in California. Also, all except Rivera y Moncada were of the noble class40.

Because of the threat of both foreign and Indian attacks extensive military experience was also a prerequisite to command of the province. The average length of military service among these men was twenty-six years. Combat experience varied from European battlefields to Mexico’s revolutionary struggles and the borderlands Indian campaigns. Lieutenant Pedro Fages was the only individual below the rank of captain to assume control of the region, most officers being lieutenant colonels. Promotion to colonel was achieved by all those who were formally named governor of California.41

The half-century of Spanish rule in California was primarily a time of establishing and building a new royal province, with defense taking a secondary role.
The frontier background of the province's soldiers made them well-suited to the task of borderland colonization, with ranching and farming skills more necessary for survival than disciplined military drill or marksmanship. If Spanish occupation of the territory had been seriously contested by the Indians or foreign powers the troopers' lack of martial prowess would have proven a serious handicap. The absence of such major combat allowed the small Hispanic population to create a viable colony despite isolation from New Spain's commercial, military, and civil bases. Agriculture and stock raising continued to develop and became important California industries and four presidio sites are major population centers today.
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER II


5. Beilharz, 91.

6. Ibid., 86.


11. Archer, 223; Campbell, 66.


20. Archer, 258; Bancroft, 18:115; Chapman, 249.


22. Chapman, 202-3; Palóu, 4:2.


27. Langellier and Peterson, 8; Palóu, 3:14.


29. Beilharz, 73; Langellier and Peterson, 8.


34. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 29; Lummis, 92; Palóu, 3:9.

35. Campbell, "Presidial Society," 589. There was at least one exception. José María Amador, the son of sergeant Pedro Amador, was granted a cadetship despite his California birth. Ibid., 590.

36. Ibid., 591-2


38. Beilharz, 83; Bancroft, 18:470, 678.


CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT

The troopers manning the California presidios were organized and armed according to regulations that were designed to modernize New Spain's military presence. Equipped as heavy cavalry their weapons were designed to control the Indian population living between San Diego and San Francisco. However, the role of a heavy cavalryman was actually better suited to fighting a traditional foe rather than combating the hit and run tactics of native warriors. Serious supply problems also made it difficult to adequately outfit the California soldiers for combat. Fortunately for Spain, however, these burdens did not prevent the royal forces from keeping the province firmly under Spanish control.

The California presidios were initially organized and administered under the Reglamento de Presidios, as were all the frontier garrisons of northern New Spain. However the difficulties of providing supplies and manpower to the isolated province caused a separate set of rules for California to be issued by Governor Felipe de Neve in 1781.¹

According to Neve's regulation California was divided into four military districts, each with a presidio. The military post was to be commanded by a lieutenant assisted by an ensign, sergeant, and two to five corporals. The commandant had military, civil, and criminal jurisdiction within his district. The governor was the military commander of the province and was aided by an assistant inspector of captain's rank. Presidial soldiers were enlisted according to the 1772 regulations which
designated them as regular colonial troops but only as part of a presidio garrison. They had no regimental or larger unit designations.  

While the majority of troops in California enlisted into the presidio companies, other units served in the province's forts as well, including a regular light infantry unit from Spain. In 1767 the Compañía Franca de Voluntarios de Cataluña was formed in Catalonia, Spain, to add strength to the forces in New Spain. Created from the Second Regiment of Light Infantry of Catalonia the Franca or "free" designation indicated that the unit was unattached and not assigned to any one place or regiment. As a result the company's one hundred men and four officers sent to America served wherever additional manpower was needed, including Nootka Sound, California, and the northern provinces of Mexico.  

Twenty-five Catalonian Volunteers traveled with the original expedition to establish a Spanish presence in California in 1769. They assisted in the founding of the San Diego and Monterey presidios and served in their garrisons until transferred from the province in 1774. A larger contingent of three officers and seventy-two men reinforced California in 1796 after war with France was declared. They were withdrawn in 1803.  

Late in the Spanish era authorities dispatched two additional units to protect the province from attacks by Latin American revolutionaries. In 1819 the San Bias Infantry Company joined the Escuadrón de Mazatlán, a cavalry unit, in augmenting the presidial forces. Each company's one hundred men were distributed among the four posts. The cavalrymen mustered in as good soldiers but the San Bias troopers apparently were criminals and vagabonds taken from jails or picked up by press gangs. Ignorant of discipline or military drill the California settlers blamed them for many crimes that occurred after their arrival.  

The existence of shore batteries to protect the harbors at San Diego, San Francisco, and Monterey required the presence of trained artillermen. Eighteen
gunners arrived in California from colonial artillery units in Mexico in 1796 and in 1820 twenty additional cannoneers reinforced them. The creation of the only official militia formation in California as an artillery unit reveals the importance of trained gunners to the province. In 1805 Spanish authorities sent Ensign José Roca to organize a militia artillery company of seventy men. Primarily enrolled from the pueblos the men received two hours of instruction every Sunday. This unit was called into active service on several occasions.6

Indian auxiliaries often assisted the presidial troops in skirmishes against other Indians. The only attempt to organize them into a militia unit occurred in 1820 when fear of an invasion by revolutionaries from Mexico led the Franciscans at the Santa Bárbara mission to form the *compañía de urbanos realista de Santa Bárbara*. This force consisted of one hundred Indians armed with bows, fifty equipped with machetes, and thirty picked lancers. Despite a pledge of loyalty to the Spanish king their weapons were locked away when not used for drill and California mission president Mariano Payeras had some well-justified doubts about their conduct in battle.7

One item that separated the presidial soldiers from regular and militia units on the frontier was their mode of dress. The *Reglamento de Presidios* stipulated a colorful uniform to be worn by all the presidial troops throughout the borderland provinces. The garb consisted of a short blue woolen jacket with small cuffs and a red collar, blue woolen breeches and cap, and a black neckerchief, hat and shoes. Over this was worn a heavy leather jacket and a bandoleer of antelope hide embroidered with the presidio name. Leather leggings were wrapped around the lower leg and tied below the knee. A cartridge box completed the uniform requirements.8

Contemporary accounts indicated that the soldiers adhered closely to the regulations. American southwest explorer Zebulon Pike found the standard uniform made even more colorful with the addition of a red cape and the high crown of a wool hat wrapped with ribbons of various colors, usually a woman's gift. A blue woolen
cape and a plume of red wool attached to the hat supplemented the regulation uniform on occasion. Sometimes a striped woolen pancho was worn and officers added embroidered boots with large spurs.9

The dress of the Catalanian Volunteers is more typical of the European uniforms of the period. Wearing the same uniform as the Second Regiment of Light Infantry in Barcelona, Spain, the officers donned a blue overcoat with a high yellow collar and stitchings, blue breeches, a yellow waistcoat with white buttons, a black cravat, cotton stockings and black shoes. A gallooned hat of silver thread with a cockade topped the outfit. The enlisted men's uniform was similar except that it was made of inferior material.10

The cuera or leather jacket most distinguished presidial troopers from regular colonial soldiers and gave the frontier fighters the nickname "leather jacket soldiers." A coat without sleeves, it was constructed of several thicknesses of dressed deer skins and effectively stopped arrows except at very close range. Weighing eighteen pounds some cueras were embroidered around the edges and pockets. Their regulation color was white, although a few were dyed a cinnamon color preferred by some officers because of the camouflage effect.11

Despite regulations which dictated that a sufficient reserve of uniforms be kept at each presidio the commandant found it difficult to adequately clothe his soldiers. Hard use and supply problems caused California governor Felipe de Neve to report in 1777 that the soldiers' uniforms were "bordering on indecency" and supplemented with civilian items. Neve's 1781 regulations addressed this problem by requesting additional uniforms because one pair would not last a year's service. Nevertheless, the problem continued to persist. In 1795 Governor Diego de Borica reported that soldiers lacked uniforms and their families did not possess enough decent clothes for mass. Officers wore a frilled white dickey under their vests for lack of a shirt and enlisted men had patched and ragged garments. Many soldiers wore blankets and went barefoot. The
supply authorities often sent cloth instead of uniforms and the men, without tailors, often ruined it by poor cutting. The situation later improved because of increased trade with the Russians, French, English, and Americans.\textsuperscript{12}

An effort to extend the life of the uniforms resulted in the use of a work uniform in some of the presidios. For livestock herding, timber cutting, and other hard tasks the men were permitted to wear an overcoat of turned antelope hide with gilded buttons and cuff and collar edging of red velveteen. Breeches were also of the same material. On feast days, presidial guard duty or off duty the regulation uniform was required.\textsuperscript{13}

Weaponry also set apart the California soldiers from the colonial regular forces. According to the \textit{Reglamento de Presidios} presidial troopers were to be armed with a lance, shield, musket, sword, and two pistols. The lance and shield had long been abandoned by the regular regiments, and the musket employed was a distinctly frontier type. To keep these weapons in serviceable condition one soldier from each presidial company was designated as the unit armorer and was exempt from fatigue duties. The regulations also stated that each presidio was to have a reserve supply so that "no soldier shall ever lack complete armament."\textsuperscript{14}

The principal weapon of the presidial troopers was the lance. Handled with great skill by the cavalymen, this weapon was deadly when natives were caught in the open, the troopers often using the kidneys as an aiming point.\textsuperscript{15} Regulations specified that the lance head was to be 13 1/2 inches in length and 1 1/2 inches wide with a double cutting edge and a projection to prevent deep thrusts that would cause difficulty in removing the lance. However, as local blacksmiths forged most of the blades few were to official specifications. Mounted on poles that varied from seven to eight feet in length, the troopers carried the lance fixed to the left side of the saddle at a forward slant five feet above the horse.\textsuperscript{16}
The soldiers also carried a shield made of three thicknesses of bullhide stitched together to deflect lance thrusts and arrows. Worn on the left arm and carried on the back when not in use, the shield measured approximately twenty inches in height and two feet in width. Officer's shields were often painted with a family crest or the royal arms of Spain. Enlisted men's shields were generally plain.17

The musket specified by the Reglamento de Presidios was designed for the cavalry and was similar to a civilian model that had been employed on the frontier since the middle of the seventeenth century. The light, muzzle loading carbine used the inexpensive, durable, and easily maintained miguelet ignition system which made the weapon a good choice for the frontier. While regulations dictated a .66 calibre gun with a barrel length of 38 1/2 inches there were variations in both aspects. While on horseback the soldiers carried the musket in a case to the front of the saddle, crosswise, the breech to the right hand.18

The two pistols issued to the frontier troops were standard Spanish cavalry pistols of .66 calibre with the same ignition system as the carbine. The barrel was not to exceed ten inches in length. Officers sometimes carried pistols with elaborate engraving. As with the musket there were variations as to calibre and barrel length. The mounted soldiers carried their pistols on each side of the saddle behind the rider.19

The sword designated for the presidial horsemen was also standard regular cavalry issue. The wide blade was double edged, 36 1/2 inches long, with an iron hilt and wire wrapped grip. On the frontier however, these sabres were often cut down to make a short sword that was employed as both a weapon and a tool and had widespread civilian use. The blade was approximately eighteen inches long and was useful as a brush knife. Cavalrymen carried the sword in a leather scabbard attached to the left side of the saddle under the rider's leg, hilt facing forward. When dismounted the scabbard was attached to a sling on the soldier's right shoulder.20
A cartridge box completed the soldier's kit. Although the regulation box carried twenty rounds in two rows of holes there were variations. Some boxes were attached to the belt and some to a sling. The arms of Spain were often embroidered on the flap.

This military article was considered of such importance by Governor Neve that in his 1781 regulations for the province he outlined the design of a new box. Describing the regulation box as "inconvenient," he requested a leather-covered tin box of twenty-four holes in a single row, attached to a belt.21

For men trained to fight primarily on horseback proper saddlery was obviously important. The 1772 regulations specified a vaquero style saddle already popular in the frontier presidios and produced cheaply by local craftsmen.22 The saddle had a high pommel and the hardwood tree was covered with two or three layers of carved and embroidered leather. Wooden stirrups were closed in front and often carved into the figure of a lion's head or some other animal. Attached to the back of the saddle was a decorated armor rump for the horse made of seven panels of leather. Fastened to the front of the saddle and extending over the rider's legs was a leather apron intended to protect the cavalryman from brush and foliage. A saddlebag and blankets completed the soldier's tack.23

Finally, each soldier was to have a string of six serviceable horses, one colt and one mule. One was to be saddled and ready for instant use in case of a surprise attack. Six horses were necessary because the weapons, uniform, tack and rations added 159 pounds to the rider's own body weight. Troopers needed at least three replacement mounts per year due to fatigue, theft, and stampede.24

While the regulations provided for a well-armed and well-protected soldier the reality was often different. The weapons required by the royal decree in 1772 were just arriving on the frontier in 1780, and few were available for several years afterward. Ammunition was also in short supply and often the cartridges did not fit the guns. In 1777 Governor Neve reported on the poor condition of the weapons in the California
presidios. He found the guns old, of the wrong calibre, and often unsafe to use. The swords were of poor quality and some were broken. A few troopers had neither swords nor lances and the cavalry mounts were so few and so old they had to be used in relays. The following year at San Francisco two thirds of the men lacked cueras and twelve men had no weapons or mounts. Gunpowder was also scarce, and only three pounds were issued annually to each soldier.25

Compounding the supply problem was the lack of training regarding the use and care of weapons. Many troops relied on their lances in combat and were completely ignorant of the operation of their firearms. To remedy the situation Teodoro de Croix, the military commander of the frontier, ordered target practice to take place at each presidio with pistols and carbines but there was little compliance. The commandant at San Francisco required his men to draw twenty cartridges each week for practice at a blank wall, but the governor suggested that they hunt bears instead. One officer felt that the use of pistols should be ended because they were too dangerous to the men using them. They needed great care and were despised by the troops, who often tried to lose them on purpose.26

Even when the frontier soldier was well supplied there were questions as to whether he was given the right tools to accomplish his task. Armed and equipped as a heavy cavalryman, European style cavalry charges with sword and lance were effective against an enemy that would stand and fight hand-to-hand but were useless against the borderlands Indians who preferred fast, mobile combat. General Croix was especially critical of the cuera and believed it prevented the soldier from properly using his best weapon against the Indian, the musket. He also felt that its weight slowed the trooper’s horse and made the frontier fighter less aggressive. Croix proposed replacing the leather jacket soldiers with light troops not equipped with the cuera, lance or shield and would rely on speed and surprise instead. However, due to tradition and cost, this change never took place. The lance was cheaper than the muskets which were in short
supply and the soldiers often ill-trained to use them. To further discourage firearm use troopers were also personally charged for cartridges fired over their allotment. The well-protected cavalryman was reluctant to discard his leather armor, despite its weight, because an Indian could shoot ten arrows at a soldier while a carbine is reloaded for a second shot. Some officers felt that the cuera created a more courageous trooper, reduced casualties, and made the Indian less confident in battle.²⁷

Lacking training, weapons, and proper tactics the California soldier was fortunate not to be faced with an intractible native population or a full-scale European invasion. His punitive expeditions against the natives rarely brought great victories and in his only battle against a modern foe he was soundly beaten. That the presidial trooper proved equal to the task of maintaining Spanish control over the province is more a credit to his individual courage, determination and frontier background rather than an overwhelming superiority of weapons and tactics.²⁸
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER III


4. Ibid., 174.


10. Sanchez, 161-62.


12. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 21; Beilharz, 76; Lummis, 164; Langellier and Peterson, 6, 10.


15. The garrisons maintained their skill with the lance long after the Spanish era had ended. In 1846 California lancers defeated American dragoons at the Battle of San Pascual during the Mexican War. Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Hubert


17. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 70.

18. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 21, 73; Brinckerhoff and Chamberlain, 18-19; Pike 2:87.


20. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 21, 71; Brinckerhoff and Chamberlain, 74-75.


22. The Spanish vaquero saddle was the forerunner of the American western saddle. Brinkerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 21.

23. Ibid., 23, 77; Pike, 2:87-88.

24. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 23; Moorehead, 46.

25. Brinckerhoff and Faulk, Lancers, 27, 90; Beilharz, 76; Langellier and Peterson, 6.


27. Brinckerhoff and Chamberlain, 89; Thomas, 57; Moorehead, 44-46.

28. Pike, 2:89; Faulk, 27.
CHAPTER IV

PRESIDIOS AND CASTILLOS

The Spanish military in California confronted a defense problem that was unique to the western borderlands. Whereas military resources in northern New Spain had concentrated primarily against the threat of Indian rebellions, California soldiers prepared for European invasion by foreign powers as well. Spanish forces built two types of defensive structures for protection against this dual threat; the presidio to serve as a bulwark against native attacks and the castillo to shield against naval assault.

The royal army established presidios at Monterey, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Bárbara. The Spaniards adopted the Roman concept of deploying legionary fortresses on the empire's borders to control barbarians and these California forts performed a similar function by policing an area of occupation and, in addition, assisting the missions in a spiritual conquest. Despite the obvious danger to an isolated military post in an essentially foreign land, the protection provided by the province's presidios was minimal but sufficient to discourage Indian assault.

Initially the soldiers built a palisade structure of poles set close together in a trench, tied with willows and reeds, and plastered with mud. The buildings' flat roofs were covered with leaves, branches and sod. Eventually the garrison troopers built a quadrangle of adobe buildings grouped around a parade ground and surrounded by a defensive wall which also served as the back wall of the presidio buildings. In case of attack the defending troopers climbed on the building roofs and fired over the wall. To contend with a greater threat, the commanders located the presidios between two
thousand and four thousand feet from the shoreline to be out of cannon range from enemy ships.\textsuperscript{2}

The 1772 royal regulations gave few instructions regarding presidio construction. The ordinances stipulated outer walls built of adobe with small bastions at two of the corners. The interior contained the chapel, guardhouse, barracks, and residences for the commandant, officers, and chaplain.\textsuperscript{3} In 1781 Gerónimo de la Rocha, the military engineer of the commandant general of the interior provinces, supplemented these guidelines with additional requirements. Adobe bricks were to be mixed with wood scraps and rock and allowed to dry completely before use. Foundations were to consist of rock and rubble and perimeter walls as well as the walls of the commandant's headquarters and the chapel were to be almost three feet thick. The barracks height was set at almost fourteen feet with the exterior wall extending four and one half feet above the roof top to form a parapet. Difficulties in obtaining building materials, shortages of manpower, and local climate conditions often caused these regulations to be largely ignored.\textsuperscript{4}

Monterey Presidio founded in June, 1770, served as the capital of the California province. Don Miguel Costansó of the Royal Corps of Engineers selected the site and traced out lines for the buildings and defense works. He supervised construction of two storehouses for temporary living quarters for the officers and missionaries. Another storehouse functioned as a powder magazine. A palisade enclosed the buildings which provided a rudimentary defense. Missionaries dedicated one building as a church, but the mission was moved the following year to separate the neophytes from the soldiers.\textsuperscript{5}

In November, 1773, Captain Pedro Fages, commandant of the Monterey Presidio, sent a report on California and the development of his presidio to Viceroy Bucareli. According to Fages the fort's dimension was about 140 feet square. A small adobe church with a bell tower was located along the south wall. Attached to the church was a single room dwelling for the visiting fathers. The soldiers built six small
rooms along the east wall of the presidio for the mail couriers, blacksmith, carpenter, muleteers, servants, and Indians who slept at the presidio. The west wall contained two barracks and the pharmacy and in the north wing there were two storehouses, a prison, a guardhouse, the presidio store, and the commandant's quarters. At the four corners of the presidio were ravelins each armed with two bronze cannon.  

The church and the buildings along the north wing employed adobe wall construction with stone foundations. Wooden beams supported flat roofs which were covered with cane and lime. The rooms located along the east and west wings used pine poles and lime plaster for the walls and earth topped roofs. The doors to the presidio dwellings were pine, redwood, and cypress. Fages reported that beams had already been cut so that the construction of the east and west wings would be similar to the other buildings. Three sides of the outer wall were built of pine and wood logs and the front wall consisted of adobe blocks on a stone foundation. Due to wood rot caused by the humid climate Fages planned to replace the pine log walls with stone and adobe. Beyond the presidio walls were hogstyes, two corrals for cows and mules, a powder magazine, a guardhouse, wheat fields, and a vegetable garden protected by a small blockhouse.

In 1777 California Governor Neve, who had replaced Fages, reported that despite his predecessor's efforts the condition of the California presidios was totally inadequate for defense, even against Indians. Monterey's fortification had deteriorated to such an extent that it was entirely open to assault, the troops being the only means of protection.

Neve immediately began to strengthen the perimeter and in July, 1778, he reported to Commandant General Croix that new stone walls and bastions were completed. The walls were 369 feet long on each side, eleven feet high and almost four feet thick. They enclosed ten adobe houses, each with a frontage of nineteen feet and a
depth of twenty-two feet. A guardroom and barracks were sixteen by ninety-six feet and built of double walls. These structures replaced the initial construction of Pages.9

In September, 1791, a Spanish scientific expedition led by Alessandro Malaspina visited Monterey and illustrators made sketches of the presidio. They reveal substantial walls of stone or adobe and roofs of both cane and tile. Blockhouses occupy the corner angles of the perimeter fence. Apparently some improvements were still in progress, as a building is drawn while under construction.10

The following year Captain George Vancouver visited the California presidios and paid particular attention to their location and defenses.11 He found the Monterey fort poorly situated three-quarters of a mile from the port anchorage near low swampy ground and distant from drinking water. In front of the presidio entrance the troops had mounted 4 nine and 3 three-pounder cannon but the guns were without breastworks or weather protection. Additionally there were four dismounted nine-pounders that, together with the mounted guns, were intended for a battery to be built on a hill that commanded the anchorage. While the guns could control the anchorage they were useless after a landing by enemy forces had taken place. The hills behind the cannon could easily be taken and the battery forced to surrender. Vancouver found such a defensive scheme to be of limited usefulness and believed that Monterey could only be defended with "an extensive line of works."12

Regarding the interior dwellings Vancouver noted that the commandant's house had five or six "spacious" rooms with boarded floors but no glass in the window openings. All the buildings were located along the walls on the inside of the enclosure, the chapel standing opposite the main entrance. Small blockhouses stood at each of the four corners to protect the perimeter. Overall the presidio, when seen at a distance, reminded Vancouver of a prison.13

The presidio at Monterey deteriorated steadily during the last twenty years of the Spanish period in California. In 1800 Commandant Raimundo Carrillo reported
that all the structures were in bad condition after being rebuilt on insufficient foundations following a fire. A storm had destroyed the main gate and new rooms were needed at the barracks and jail. The presidio commandant’s house had been demolished due to the death of the previous commander by disease. Several walls throughout the presidio were cracked.¹⁴

Carrillo’s report recorded the changes that had taken place at the fort over the years. Each side of the square was 330 feet long and the four walls were of adobe and stone. The north side contained the main entrance, guard house, and storage warehouses. Opposite the main gate were the chapel and nine houses. The governor’s house and dwellings of other officers stood along the west wall. Located at the east wing were nine soldier’s houses and the blacksmith’s shop.¹⁵

In 1815 a visitor to the California coast reported that Monterey was located on a "beautiful and extensive" plain and consisted of fifty houses built in a square and surrounded by a stone wall. The disposition of the structures are the same as in Carrillo’s report and 2 six-pounder guns are located in the center of the plaza. Three years later an attack by revolutionary privateer Hippolyte Bouchard destroyed much of the presidio but the rebuilt fort was essentially unchanged from Carrillo’s description, except the defense wall was now separated from the rear of the buildings.¹⁶

Next in significance to the California capital at Monterey was the San Francisco presidio located on a strategically important bay. Despite its vital position, this presidio constantly needed repairs due to ravages of weather, inadequate supply, or poor workmanship. Founded in September, 1777, the first garrison built palisade structures with flat roofs around a square of ninety-two yards. The initial dwellings were a commandant’s house, chapel, warehouse, and apartments for the soldiers.¹⁷ The soldiers constructed adobe walls but heavy rains in the winter of 1778-1779 caused them to collapse. They were replaced on three sides by walls of turf plastered with mud but the fourth barrier consisted solely of abatis.¹⁸
A spring 1792 report from presidio commandant Hermenegildo Sal to the governor indicated the difficulties of maintaining the facility. Most buildings, especially the chapel, could collapse at any time. None of the fort's dwellings were original structures, as each year some houses fell and were replaced with new dwellings built with poor materials. Sal described walls that were out-of-plumb and wider at the top than the bottom, roofs of grass and reeds, poor adobe and a shortage of timber. The commandant blamed the poor construction on a lack of intelligent workmen and poor supervision.19

George Vancouver reported on the San Francisco presidio during his 1792 California visit. He found the fort located in a "spacious verdant plain" occupied by flocks of sheep and cattle and two gardens. Three of the perimeter walls were built of sod and the fourth was "very indifferently fenced in by a few bushes here and there, fastened to stakes in the ground." Inside these weak barriers the Spanish fabricated thatched roof houses that extended uniformly into the square, which was empty. Opposite the main entrance was the church and the commandant's house, which consisted of two rooms and a closet. All houses had dirt floors, open windows, and very little furniture. According to Vancouver, these houses "in the winter, or rainy seasons, must at the best be very uncomfortable dwellings." This presidio offered protection to San Francisco bay solely with a brass three-pounder cannon mounted on a rotten carriage and another lashed to a log.20

Over a decade later Doctor Georg Von Langsdorff accompanied a Russian visit to the settlement and wrote that it resembled a German farm. The commandant's house was depicted as "small and mean" and still poorly furnished, although half the floor was now covered with straw matting. The basic layout of the presidio was the same, as Langsdorff found low, one-story buildings surrounding a quadrangular plaza.21

As at Monterey, the final years of the Spanish period saw the constant deterioration of the San Francisco bay area fort caused by the elements. In 1794
Commandant Sal, with Governor Borica’s consent, proposed moving the location of the presidio but the viceroy refused for financial reasons. Drifting sand had covered the powder magazine and gales and a hurricane damaged walls and roofs. According to Sal, the garrison was so small and busy with duties that repairs could not be made, and he continued to ask for workmen and funds for restoration.22

Other commandants fared no better than Sal in maintaining the presidio. By 1808 a barracks had only half a roof and was not secure for convicts. Two years later earthquakes cracked house walls and in 1810 storms had reduced the granary and some houses to a barely useable state, and completely destroyed the chapel and some barracks.23

The first California presidio was founded at San Diego in June, 1769. At the outset this establishment consisted of a fortified camp on the beach protected by earth parapets and two cannon. The camp was soon moved to a hill overlooking the bay where the Spanish built a stockade presidio similar to the early construction at Monterey and San Francisco. The mission at San Diego shared the same grounds as the presidio until the religious facility was moved in August, 1774, and the mission buildings turned over to the military.24

In 1773 the compound consisted of a church, missionary dwellings, a hut for the soldier’s barracks, and a warehouse. The troopers used logs and adobe for the structures with tule for the roofs. Log perimeter walls and two bronze cannon provided defense against attack. A new church foundation was being built.25

Few descriptions of the San Diego presidio construction and condition are available. In 1782 Captain Pedro Fages noted that the presidio was in good condition with the garrison erecting a chapel and an adobe defense wall. A decade later George Vancouver wrote that San Diego was irregularly built on uneven ground in barren country. The following year Governor Borica reported to the viceroy that three sides of the outer walls were in ruins due to poor quality timber but that the warehouse,
officer's quarters and church were all in good condition. In 1796 the soldiers dedicated new houses to accommodate reinforcements sent into the province. Despite the absence of the harsh weather that ravaged the more northerly presidios in 1817 Governor Pablo Vicente de Solá found the buildings in such poor shape that he recommended moving the entire presidio but this was not undertaken.26

The Spanish established the Santa Bárbara presidio in April, 1782, to protect the missions along the Santa Bárbara channel from Indian attack. After establishing temporary lodging of brush and mud huts surrounded by a log palisade the soldiers began constructing permanent quarters around a piece of ground 320 feet square. These final dwellings used adobe bricks set on stone foundations, roofed with bright red tile and whitewashed. Heavy oaken doors protected the rear of the houses and windows were small openings that could be closed by shutters. Deer skins covered the dirt floors of the houses each of which was divided into two rooms with a kitchen often attached. The construction did not conform to any exact standard reflecting a lack of supervision by an architect or engineer. As a result, buildings were often of a different length or height.27

The general plan of the fort was similar to the other three presidios. Opposite the entrance, which faced the ocean, was the chapel. Next to the chapel were the officers' quarters. The soldiers constructed storehouses to the right of the entrance, a guardhouse and sergeant's house to the left, and soldiers' dwellings on the other sides. A significant difference between Santa Bárbara and the other provincial presidios was the location of an outer defense wall to surround the buildings and be unattached from them. This provided an open space of eighty feet between the buildings and the wall for a "killing zone" should an Indian assault breach the outer barrier. The outer wall itself was formidable, being built of adobe with a stone foundation, seven feet thick and twelve feet high. A corner bastion containing a small iron cannon added to the
defenses. Two other iron cannon and a brass six-pounder faced the entrance in the square.28

The Santa Bárbara presidio, benefitting from fair weather and an ample local supply of building material, presented a neat and solid appearance.29 George Vancouver wrote: "These buildings surpassed all the others I had seen, being something larger, and more uniform; and the apartments were infinitely more commodious, and were kept extremely neat and clean."30 The British sea captain also commented that Santa Bárbara appeared more "civilized" than California's other presidios.31

The Spanish authorities knew that these four forts could not stop an invasion by a European power. Designed only to prevent Indian attacks, Governor Felipe de Neve believed they were even inadequate to do that, as so many soldiers were at the missions on escort duty there were not enough troopers to man the ramparts. Vancouver reported that the Spanish defenses, instead of deterring a foreign attack, were so weak that they actually encouraged an invasion. Viceroy Conde de Revillagigedo notified the king in 1792 that the California presidios were totally incapable of repelling a foreign attack. Although the troops could defeat the natives they were not trained or equipped to defeat Europeans. They were especially lacking in artillery to defend harbor entrances against ships of war.32

The Spanish responded to international political pressure, the Nootka Sound incident and possibly even Vancouver's visit by attempting to strengthen the province's means of resistance.33 The result was the construction of the second type of defensive structure employed in California, the castillo. Built on a level esplanade of wood planking, the castillos were fortified gun batteries in which cannon were emplaced behind embankments of dirt, adobe, or stone. Engineers located them on hilltops overlooking the harbors to prevent enemy ships from attacking the ports.34 The emplacements were placed close to at least three of the presidios.35
In July, 1793, California governor José Joaquín Arrillaga sent a report to the viceroy on the state of California defenses. He related that Monterey had eight cannon, San Francisco possessed two useless guns, Santa Bárbara's garrison mustered no artillerymen for its two cannon, and San Diego's three guns were dismounted. Upon receipt of this news Viceroy Revillagigedo ordered castillos built at the presidios and artillery sent to Monterey. These guns arrived in time for Vancouver to observe in October, 1793, that eleven dismounted nine-pounder cannon were lying on the beach awaiting the completion of a barbette battery being built by soldiers and Indians. The following month the British sea captain inspected a completed gun battery at Monterey but was not impressed with its defensive possibilities.36

Revillagigedo's successor as viceroy, the Marquis de Branciforte, continued the strengthening of California's defenses. In 1794 he sent royal engineer Miguel Costansó on an inspection tour of the province's fortifications. His account indicated the difficulties of adequately defending a territory so isolated from New Spain. Because of a lack of both human and material resources in the province to support the military in the event of an attack Costansó felt that populating the territory with Spanish settlers was the best possible defense. If the presidios should be lost to foreign invasion they would be very difficult to recover because royal troops and supplies would have to cross barren deserts or face contrary sea winds to reach the province. Protecting the 520 miles of coastline between San Diego and San Francisco with the 218 men then in the four presidios against foreign invasion was simply not possible. Nevertheless, he did recommend the establishment of batteries of 8 twelve-pound cannon with trained artillerymen at the entrances of Monterey, San Francisco, and San Diego harbors. These would be protected by breastworks of dirt faced with adobe.37

In response to Costansó's report Branciforte convened a special commission in July, 1795, to determine what specifically must be done to defend California. The members including Costansó, Royal Navy frigate captain Salvador Fidalgo, and
artillery brigadier Pablo Sánchez, offered several recommendations. First, only the three principal ports of San Francisco, Monterey, and San Diego should be fortified due to financial limitations. The castillo already begun at San Francisco should receive supplies and reinforcements in as much as there was no shot or powder for the guns and no one to man them. They urged construction of a battery at Monterey and San Diego where no adequate naval defenses currently existed. Eighty new troops, including eight to ten trained gunners were needed for the artillery. Even if these suggestions were implemented, the commission recognized that these defenses would only be successful against corsair attacks. An assault in force by a European power should be met with a retreat to the interior and guerrilla tactics. 38

Two weeks after receiving the commission's report Branciforte took steps to bolster California's defenses against seaborne invasion. He ordered shot, guns and powder sent to the province to arm the fortifications recommended by the commission. Seventy-two men from the First Company of Catalanian Volunteers under the command of Lt. Colonel Pedro Alberni provided reinforcements to man the new castillos. From artillery companies came an additional sergeant, three corporals and fourteen soldiers to train the gunners for the batteries. Finally, a royal engineer, Captain Alberto de Córdoba, was transferred to California to organize and supervise the construction and maintenance of the province's defenses. Branciforte now reported to the king that this isolated territory could be defended against corsairs and other small scale attacks.39

Captain Córdoba spent three years trying to improve the harbor defenses at Monterey, San Francisco, and San Diego. The engineer extensively modified the log battery at the California capital, which he found useless for port defense. The battery of ten cannon could only hit a ship if it deliberately placed itself in front of the guns. The cannon themselves were of such short range they could not hit ships which could easily anchor in port and still be out of range. Under Córdoba's direction a V-shaped wall
with sixty foot wings was built to overlook the main anchorage. The wings formed a massive platform of adobe bricks laid by an expert mason. A crenelated protective wall could mount ten to twelve cannon of various calibre. A rough cobblestone esplanade stretched across the open end of the V-shape and a powder magazine occupied the area near the apex. Finally, the Spanish built an adobe barracks for the gunners.40

Córdoba established two batteries to protect San Francisco bay. The garrison completed a fortification known as the Castillo de San Joaquín in 1794 at Fort Point to guard the entrance to the port. Built in a horseshoe shape with walls of adobe and bricks, San Joaquín mounted thirteen guns ranging from half-culverins to twenty-four-pounders. Córdoba found the cannon poorly placed and none of them capable of firing completely across the mouth of the entrance to the bay. Gun discharges caused the battery walls to shake and shot was lacking for the weapons which were too small and in poor condition. Only ten men had been assigned to the castillo, four of which had no knowledge of artillery. Obviously the engineer found San Joaquín useless to repel even a minor assault.41

Córdoba improved the firepower and protection of the castillo by properly emplacing the cannon and repairing the walls. He also established a second castillo at Yerba Buena, a location east of the presidio to command the eastern part of the channel leading into San Francisco bay. Less elaborate than San Joaquín, this castillo consisted of brushwork fascines with eight embrasures and 5 eight-pound guns. Without a permanent garrison, Yerba Buena was visited daily by a sentry.42

In 1796 Córdoba inspected the harbor defenses at San Diego and found its best advantage as being that an enemy would be ignorant of its weaknesses. Originally a wooden platform that mounted four guns, the royal engineer eventually constructed an adobe and brick castillo that mounted eight guns at Point Guijarros, at the entrance to San Diego bay.43
Captain Córdoba was aware that these small naval batteries were not the answer to ensuring California's safety from attack. A report to Viceroy Branciforte indicated that numerous unprotected anchorages existed along the California coast which was guarded by a total presidial force of only three hundred soldiers. Because only excessive expenditures could provide the fortifications necessary for adequate defense he recommended increasing the provincial cavalry complement as a mobile response force to a landing. He also suggested that several warships constantly patrol the coast thereby providing the firepower to repel a naval invasion. 44

Despite the royal engineer's best efforts the bulwarks he built did not present a very formidable appearance to foreign vessels. An American visitor to the California coast, trader William Shaler, wrote in 1804 that the guns of Castillo de San Joaquín "afford only the show of defense; and the place could make no resistance against the smallest military force..." Calling the Monterey battery "altogether inadequate" and the San Diego defenses as not meriting "the least consideration as a fortification" Shaler believed that the conquest of the province could be accomplished easily by a minor military force. Two years later Langsdorff noted the inadequacy of the San Joaquín naval defenses in protecting San Francisco bay. 45

The castillos during the final years of the Spanish era fought the same battles with deterioration that had plagued the presidio complexes. At San Francisco storms in 1804 blew down the walls at Yerba Buena and San Joaquín's barricades were improved the following year. In 1816 San Joaquín was rebuilt and at the end of the Spanish period boasted twenty guns. In 1817 California governor Vicente de Solá inspected the province's defenses and reported that the artillerymen at the castillos were few, disabled, and unskillful and the cannon were defective and short on ammunition. As a result he ordered a general reconstruction of the Monterey battery including the creation of a new three gun battery. This rebuilding included a resupply of shot and powder and was motivated by the threat of attack by South American revolutionaries.
When such an attack did take place, in 1818 by a small force led by privateer Hippolyte Bourchard, the Monterey castillo was captured and all the guns destroyed.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite the best efforts of the Spanish authorities California's presidios and castillos were never formidable defenses. Inadequate supply and manpower, unskilled workmanship, and occasional bad weather combined to keep the fortifications in almost constant state of disrepair. Without the aid of intimidating bastions for protection California's small military contingent was fortunate in not being seriously challenged for control of the province. The soldier's best defenses were not adobe walls or iron cannon but the disunity and tractibility of the natives and the disinterest of foreign powers. In many ways the presidios and castillos were symbolic of the entire Spanish effort in California. Small and undermanned they served primarily to establish a presence in New Spain's last frontier that, although weak, proved to be adequate in maintaining royal control.
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Beiharz, 80.


7. Ibid.

8. Beiharz, 80; Bancroft, 18:331.

9. Whitehead, 89.


11. Some of the information given by Vancouver's report is inaccurate. He states that the dimensions of the presidio are three hundred yards by two hundred fifty yards which is much too large. He also states that the fort had not undergone any alteration since its founding, obviously ignorant of the improvements made by Neve. Vancouver, 2:43; Bancroft, 18:681.


13. Ibid.


17. Palóu, 4:124; Bancroft, 18:289.

18. Beilharz, 81.

19. Whitehead, 71; Bancroft, 18:695.


27. Walter A. Hawley, *The Early Days of Santa Barbara, California; From the First Discoveries by Europeans to December 1846* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Heritage, 1987), 49-51.

28. Ibid.

29. One of the soldier's family quarters survived two hundred years and is now renovated. Whitehead, 89.


31. Ibid., 2:451.

32. Beilharz, 82-83; Vancouver, 2:501; Fireman, 113.

33. Spain and Great Britain had almost gone to war over the seizure of four British trading vessels in 1789 by the Spanish at Nootka Sound, an inlet claimed by Spain on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Because of military weakness Spain yielded to British demands that each nation was to be free to trade and establish settlements on unoccupied land. Bannon, 225; Cook, 146-99.
34. Whitehead, 70.

35. There is some question whether a castillo was built at Santa Bárbara during the Spanish period. Although one may have been built in 1794 Santa Bárbara historian Richard Whitehead argues that a castillo was not constructed there until 1830. Diane Spencer-Hancock and William E. Pritchard, "El Castillo de Monterey: Frontline of Defense," *California History* 63 (Summer 1984): 240.


37. Servín, 223-29; Fireman, 115.

38. Fireman, 118-120.

39. Ibid., 121-23.

40. Bancroft, 18:682; Spencer-Hancock and Pritchard, 223; Fireman, 126.

41. Fireman, 124; Bancroft, 18:699-701.

42. Bancroft, 18:702.

43. Fireman, 127; Bancroft, 18:652.

44. Fireman, 126.

45. Shaler, 68-77; Langsdorff, 77.

CHAPTER V

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Besides the usual dangers of frontier service, the isolated nature of the California province caused additional hardships for the presidial forces stationed there. Until mission agriculture and presidial ranching became well established food was in short supply. Revolutionary activity in Mexico completely disrupted the supply system so that the soldiers received no pay during the last decade of Spanish rule. The small pueblos did not offer many opportunities for diversion from military life. Schools existed infrequently at the towns or presidios and only one physician served the entire province.

However, frontier service offered some advantages, especially in California. Low prices offset the trooper's low pay, especially for livestock which became abundant in the province. California goods went directly from the supply ships to the presidio's warehouse, thereby eliminating the middleman's price gouging that was too common in other frontier territories. The difficulty of reinforcing the isolated province with new recruits encouraged promotion from within the presidio's complements. Military justice was strict but fair and the possibility of land acquisition at retirement made a decent post-military life attainable.

Soldiers serving in California received their pay under three different sets of regulations. Initially, the Reglamento de Presidios, dictated annual army pay (in pesos) as shown in Table 1.1.
TABLE I

CALIFORNIA ARMY PAY, 1772

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>3000 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>700 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensign</td>
<td>500 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>350 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>300 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>290 p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However from this salary the soldier supplied his horse, arms, and uniform, but these were obtained at cost. Also, twenty to twenty-five pesos annually were deducted from the trooper's pay to accumulate a one hundred peso trust fund for his family's welfare on retirement. Finally, a yearly ten peso deduction created a presidio common fund for the payment of "general expenses." The soldier received very little of his compensation in coin as most of his pay was kept on account in the presidio commissary. These accounts were used as credit to supply his and his family's needs and also to withhold salary for damages, fines, and penalties against the state.²

In 1773 revised statutes solely concerning California went into effect. These regulations, inspired by California mission president Junípero Serra, tried to reduce government expense in supplying the remote province by increasing the troopers' pay but placing a 150 per cent surcharge on all stocks shipped there. Furthermore, soldiers were not to be paid in cash but entirely in goods.³

The new yearly pay scale is shown in Table 2.⁴

TABLE II

CALIFORNIA ARMY PAY, 1773-1781

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>3000 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>450 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>400 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>365 p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the pay increase the surcharge greatly reduced buying power. As a result desertion increased and troopers evaded California duty. To remedy the problem Governor Felipe de Neve promulgated a new regulation that became law in 1781 and would remain in effect throughout the Spanish period. It reduced soldiers' pay and eliminated the surcharge; one quarter of the salary was to be paid in coin. The net result was a considerable increase in buying power. The new pay scale in Table 3 illustrated the wage decrease.5

TABLE III
 CALIFORNIA ARMY PAY, 1781-1821

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>550 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensign</td>
<td>400 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>262 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>225 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>217.50 p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative worth of the presidia's salary can be seen by comparing it to the regular Spanish infantry unit, the Catalonian Volunteers, which served in California. Their salary is shown in Table 4.6

TABLE IV
 CATALONIAN VOLUNTEER PAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>840 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>480 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensign</td>
<td>384 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>192 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>156 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>132 p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, presidial lancers incurred the added expense of maintaining horses and saddlery. To equip themselves for combat, the troopers paid the prices shown in Table 5.7

### TABLE V

CALIFORNIA MILITARY EQUIPMENT PRICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>9 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shield</td>
<td>2 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddle</td>
<td>12-16 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>4 p 4 reales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun</td>
<td>4 p 4 reales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunpowder</td>
<td>1 p per pound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance</td>
<td>7 reales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spurs</td>
<td>1 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirrups</td>
<td>1 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridle</td>
<td>1 p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun case</td>
<td>1 p 4 reales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuera</td>
<td>10-20 p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Governor Pedro Fages in 1788 fixed the prices on many provisions which gives a further indication of a soldier's buying power. Cows and work oxen cost five pesos apiece and bulls four pesos. A trained mule was worth twenty pesos. One real purchased over three pounds of jerked beef or ten pounds of fresh beef. A dozen eggs, two chickens, or four rabbits cost two reales apiece. To buy a *fanega* (1.6 bushels) of wheat required two pesos and a *fanega* of corn one peso. Luxuries were available for a price. Chocolate was valued at between three and five reales a pound. Sugar cost two reales a pound and six reales purchased a pint of brandy. An expensive luxury item, silk stockings, cost over four pesos.

The commissary accounts were often disorganized and there was little incentive for the soldiers to save their wages. To settle a deceased soldier's account authorities often sought descendants to inherit funds. That failing, the money went to clerics for
masses for the trooper's soul and small sums were simply kept by the government. As a result military personnel used all their pay rather than have it lost in muddled records or returned to the bureaucracy.  

There were also complaints concerning the salary amount. In 1799 the province's officers requested an annual increase of 150 pesos because the current sum was inadequate to feed and clothe an officer's family. They stated that their children were barefoot and in rags while wives took in sewing and washing. There is no outcome recorded for this request.  

During the last decade of Spanish rule revolutionary activity seriously disrupted the regular government supply ships to California and the military received no pay at all. Tobacco was often substituted for wages and the missions became the primary source of presidial supply for food, cloth, and produce. In 1816 a Russian visitor recorded that the troopers had not received pay for seven years and had no decent clothing or European goods. Occasionally Russian ships and Yankee traders could furnish supplies, but not pay, to the presidios.  

Besides salary, a basic army ration was given to each soldier. Married men received extra food according to the family size, with the ration's amount and consistence determined by availability. During the early years of California occupation before mission or presidio agriculture was well established food was often scarce. In 1772 Governor Fages and thirteen men spent three months hunting bears to supply the Monterey presidio with meat. The presidio also had some vegetables and milk and relied on the natives to augment their meagre stocks. Two years later a soldier at the San Diego presidio received a weekly ration of one almud (approximately 13.6 pounds) of corn, one-half an almud of beans, one-eighth an almud of chile and one-quarter an almud of jerked beef. Married troopers acquired two additional almuds of corn and a larger portion of beef. Each child was allotted one-half almud of corn. Despite
occasional amounts of garbanzos, rice, lentils, brown sugar loaves and chocolate the bulk of the ration was an inadequate amount of corn and beans.¹²

By 1777 the situation slightly improved and the San Diego military personnel received an extra one-half almud of corn weekly but were expected to shoot wildfowl as a dietary supplement. The same year the San Francisco garrison, after replenishment by supply vessels, ate corn, beans, lentils, chick peas, rice, lard, brown sugar, chili and biscuit. Fresh meat, dried fish, and hardtack soon became regular features of the presidial ration.¹³

The establishment of presidio livestock ranches and the growth of mission agriculture greatly improved the food situation. Visitors to the military establishments commented on the abundance and variety of the province's crops created by good soil and climate. In 1786 French explorer Jean La Pérouse commented that "European cultivators can form no conception of so abundant a fertility" as his ship was supplied with corn, beans, peas, poultry, milk, cattle, and garden stuffs.¹⁴ Five years later Alessandro Malaspina found grapes, pears, peaches, and plums available at certain missions. In 1792 George Vancouver found the Monterey presidio garden growing peas, lettuce, cabbage, and beans. Monterey also possessed well-stocked poultry pens. The San Francisco garrison supplied him with oxen, sheep, and some "excellent" vegetables. At nearby Mission Santa Clara the British officer found gardens containing peaches, apricots, apples, pears, figs, grapes, and he dined on beef, mutton, fish, fowl, vegetables, tea, and chocolate. Vancouver also commented on the abundant harvests.¹⁵

In 1806 Russian Nikolai Rezanov was supplied at San Francisco with oxen, sheep, onions, garlic, chocolate, lettuce, cabbage, and several other kinds of vegetables. The following decade a fellow Russian, naval lieutenant Otto von Kotzebue, received a fat ox, two sheep, cabbage, gourds, and a great quantity of fruit that included watermelon and apples.¹⁶ These reports and mission statistics listing 140,000 cattle, 190,000 sheep
and an average harvest of 113,625 bushels of wheat, barley, corn, beans, and peas in 1820 indicate that the inhabitants of California probably ate well.\textsuperscript{17}

In return for their salary and ration soldiers performed a variety of duties. At the presidio troopers drew sentry detail three hours a night. Lancers also built the presidios, their own quarters, and the castillos that protected them. Serving as \textit{vaqueros}, shepherds, and butchers, the enlisted men managed the livestock herds at the presidio ranches. They also carried the mail and escorted officials traveling the Camino Real. Expeditions to arrest neophyte runaways, locate possible mission sites, gather intelligence about inland natives or punish recalcitrant Indian villages provided excitement to an otherwise dull routine.\textsuperscript{18}

Soldiers generally disliked guard duty at the missions due to the monotonous tasks performed and the padres' strict discipline. A corporal and four or five soldiers lived at each religious establishment to enforce good order and prevent disturbances. A soldier stood guard with a sword during daytime and a musket at the four night watches. Lancers escorted the priests whenever they left the compound. Married soldiers and their families shared small houses provided for their use but all troopers, married or single, slept in the guardhouse to prevent the rape of native women. The padres provided extra pay to corporals serving as the mission mayordomo and also furnished the rations to the mission guard.\textsuperscript{19}

Military personnel also performed tasks at civilian pueblos. A small guard was established at the towns of Los Angeles and San José with the corporal acting as \textit{comisionado}, a position with considerable power. Reporting directly to the commandant of the local presidio, the \textit{comisionado} observed the actions of the mayor and councilmen, ensured the settlers performed their duties, enforced order, justice, and morality, and monitored the use of natives as laborers.\textsuperscript{20}

A muster list from the San Diego presidio in 1784 illustrates the number of activities executed by the troopers. The presidio reserve consisted of a lieutenant,
ensign, sergeant, and twelve lancers. A corporal and five soldiers stood guard duty. Three soldiers protected the horses and cattle. Guard details of six soldiers each served three local missions. Three men guarded Los Angeles and two men performed special duty in San Francisco. Two men were assigned to the governor and three men transported supplies with the mule train.

Non-military tasks also occupied the soldiers' time. Men cut wood and procured items for their families. Some worked at occupations necessary for the military community, such as shoemaker or tailor. Literate troopers taught school. Although some civilians were employed as blacksmiths, carpenters, mechanics, and muleteers, a labor scarcity forced the lancers to do extra work necessary for the presidio community's survival. In 1791 a Spanish naval visitor wrote that "It would be very lengthy to express in detail all the jobs to which these soldiers . . . lend themselves." The report added that the only leisure time available was standing guard because non-duty time was spent in domestic work.

Nevertheless, some diversions relieved the daily routine. Bullfights were popular and often staged on special occasions. During Malaspina's visit a daily bullfight in the center of the presidio provided recreation and an alternative to alcohol. The Russians in the Rezanov party also witnessed the sport and troopers killed four bulls during Governor Vicente de Solá's inaugural celebration in 1815. Other violent spectacles included bull and bear fights and cockfighting that involved knives attached to the bird's legs.

Special occasions prompted another common pastime of dancing which involved the presidio ladies. Following dinner and fireworks the officers of Vancouver's ships joined in a dance with Spanish officers and ladies. Accompanied by soldiers playing violins and guitars, Rezanov's officers taught the Californians English country dances which became very popular in the province. The dance at Governor Solá's inauguration lasted until dawn and featured the Monterey women dressed in their finest gowns.
Whether on or off-duty, California's soldiers were subject to frontier military law. Discipline tended to be strict and, according to regulations, was enforced by the presidio commandant. Penalties included pay forfeiture, hard labor in a chain gang, imprisonment and increased terms of service. Soldiers were also subject to physical punishments like running a gauntlet of men armed with ramrods, whipping, parading in the hot sun wearing several cueras, and the ultimate penalty of death.

Nevertheless officers could not inflict discipline capriciously. The commandant was not allowed to increase penalties and even minor offenses resulted in an official investigation and trial with the accused often choosing his own defense representative. In 1778 a dispute between two soldiers involving drawn guns led to a formal trial with thirty-two pages of testimony, and after five months, a decision was rendered. In 1818 a soldier stood trial for insulting his sergeant. The trooper's choice for the role of defense attorney traveled from San Diego to Monterey to participate in the hearing.

More serious cases also carefully followed legal procedure. In 1773 near Mission San Diego some lancers were charged with attacking two Indian girls and killing one. The case took over five years to resolve and produced forty-two documents covering ninety-three pages of manuscript. All statements of the accused and witnesses were recorded before the legal advisor to the viceroy finally declared a judgement. In 1800, at the trial of a young soldier at the Santa Bárbara presidio accused of bestiality with a mule, an ensign served as prosecutor, a cadet became clerk and a retired sergeant was defense counsel. The trooper's death sentence, given by the viceroy, was carried out by the firing squad with the entire presidio present.

As that case illustrated, a guilty verdict often meant a stiff sentence. In 1799 for receiving stolen goods a soldier was sentenced to five years service on the royal vessels. The following year two lancers began serving a year's labor on the presidio for breaking open a trunk. In 1818 fifty lashes were meted out for the theft of two pesos. In 1811 four soldiers were imprisoned at San Diego for plotting a presidio takeover as
part of the Mexican revolution. Three of the troopers died in captivity and the fourth was not freed until the revolution’s success in 1821, having served a decade in chains.29

Good conduct or an officer’s rank often mitigated the sentence. For example a good service record might lead to a reduction of punishment. In 1777 the commandant released a soldier at Monterey with a warning after being convicted of an illicit friendship with a native. In 1784 the Monterey commandant, arrested for gambling, insubordination, and smuggling, was relieved and sent to another frontier post. A fight between two lieutenants, nearly causing bloodshed, was resolved with only a reprimand.30

On the other hand a good service record often meant promotion. According to regulations the California governor would propose candidates for post commandant vacancies to the commandant of the interior provinces. All other promotions were executed locally with the presidio lieutenant promoting troopers to sergeant and corporal with the governor’s approval. The statutes also dictated that the nominees should be distinguished by bravery and good conduct.31

Historian Herbert Bancroft lists 115 presidial soldiers who served in California between 1769-1800. Of these, thirty-seven advanced to corporal or sergeant, promotion occurring after at least one term of ten years service. Educated troopers moved through the ranks more quickly as literacy was a requirement to earn a corporal’s status. Occasionally lancers also received battlefield promotions.32

There were other paths to higher rank. Appointed by the viceroy, a few cadets served in the presidio companies. They lived with the officers but did duty in the ranks. Required to live and dress as gentlemen, they were promoted directly to ensign. Soldados distinguidos were mustered in as enlisted personnel but by producing evidence of noble birth they were exempt from menial tasks and given the title don. A
commissioned officer's son could claim this privilege. Before receiving an ensign's commission a soldado distinguido would have to serve as corporal and sergeant. 33

The final reward for honorable duty was retirement. Soldiers were required to serve a minimum of eighteen years to retire as an invalid on a half-pay pension. Corporals and privates with thirty years in the king's army received upon retirement the honorary rank of ensign and could wear the uniform of the new grade. A forty year veteran earned honorary lieutenant status. 34

Despite official separation from active duty many invalids remained at the presidios, performing some military tasks. Literate retirees occasionally became school teachers, and often invalids and soldiers eligible for discharge remained on active service due to a shortage of recruits. In 1795 seventy troopers in the four presidios were entitled to retirement but there were no replacements available. Pensioners were also called back to serve as volunteers or artillery militia for presidio defense. 35 In less urgent times the invalids living near the presidios raised chickens, cows, and vegetables to supplement their income. 36

Most soldiers retired to the pueblos of San José or Los Angeles and with their families constituted the majority of the civilian population. They received grants of land to support themselves and the presidio food stocks as well. The pueblo invalids served as a provincial militia and instructed the next generation in military obedience. Some retirees gained civil office as mayors, justices, or teachers. The local presidio commandants appointed all the pueblo officials and the office holders received a measure of respect and honor. 37

A few veterans received land grants to establish livestock ranches. The authorities seldom refused land requests by soldiers who had served two or three enlistment terms honorably. The grantees were required to live in the pueblos but this rule was often ignored. Governor Pedro Fages in 1784 gave the first land permits to three San Diego presidio soldiers and by 1820 thirty-eight ranches existed in the
province, although this number included some neophyte farms.38 Despite the small number they were large in size. Juan José Domínguez received 74,000 acres in the Los Angeles vicinity and authorities granted Manuel Nieto and José María Verdugo each over 30,000 acres. Luis Peralta, a corporal at the San Francisco presidio, acquired land that is now Oakland, Alameda, and Berkeley. Because of their low social background most veterans remained on their grants because of the enhanced status and social mobility that land ownership bestowed.39

Service in California was typical of frontier duty throughout northern New Spain. Low pay, strict discipline, occasional danger, and a myriad of monotonous time-consuming tasks marked presidial life in any territory. Inadequate supply and manpower caused by California's isolation placed additional hardships on the troops stationed there. Emphasis upon posting married soldiers in the province created a force that needed to balance military duty and domestic concerns. That soldiers who were not generally considered military professionals could endure a closely regulated existence for long service terms in the borderlands is a credit to their perseverance and character.
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER V


4. Palóu, 3:59. Palóu omits the pay grades for lieutenant and ensign.

5. Beilharz, 44, 86; Lummis, 158, 163.

6. Sanchez, 166.


8. Cutter, 80-82; Bancroft, 18:443, note 27.


10. Ibid., 18:634.


13. Mason, 408; Beilharz, 41.


15. Cutter, 59; Vancouver, 2:2, 7, 14, 18-20.

16. Langsdorff, 4: Kotzebue, 278.

18. Langellier and Peterson, 7, 11, note 39; Bancroft, 34:45.

19. Langellier and Peterson, 8; Beilharz, 79; Bancroft, 34:239-40, 299.

20. Mason, 420; Bancroft, 18:461.


23. Cutter, Malaspina, 31; Langsdorff, 84; Conley, 26.

24. Langsdorff, 83; Kotzebue, 288; Conley, 23.

25. Vancouver, 2:36; Langsdorff, 82; Conley, 26.


31. Lummis, 169.

32. Langellier and Peterson, 8; Campbell, 591; Bancroft, 19:91.


34. Bancroft, 18:635; Bancroft, 34:295.

35. Bancroft, 18:602, 635; Conley, 26; Bancroft, 19:379, 141, note 42.

36. Mason, 420.

38. Langellier and Peterson, 9; Mason, 420; Bancroft, 19:414, note 3.

39. Langellier and Peterson, 9; Campbell, "Presidial Society," 593.
CHAPTER VI

DEFENDING THE FLAG

In maintaining Spanish sovereignty over California the presidial soldier fought three different categories of opponents. Indians living in the colony constantly threatened missions, settlements, and presidios throughout the Spanish period of occupation. Both mission neophytes and intractable natives challenged royal military power though ambushes, revolts, and pitched battles. A second challenge was Russian and American fur traders and trappers whose purpose was commercial gain and not conquest. Nevertheless, presidial soldiers greeted violators of Spain's mercantile restrictions and territorial integrity with arrest, confiscation, and even bullets. Finally Spain's European rivals and revolutionary forces were potentially the most serious threat to the royal colony because these opponents possessed the military resources to invade and occupy California. This danger finally materialized in the last years of Spanish rule with an assault by South American insurgents upon the California capital at Monterey in the only European style battle to be fought by presidial troopers. Despite inadequate training, supply difficulties, and insufficient numbers the California soldiery met these three challenges to ensure Spanish control over this isolated borderland province.

To prevent foreign encroachment in California the Spanish government tried to create loyal, Catholic subjects out of the local Indians. This was necessary because New Spain could not provide enough citizens to send to the new province. The soldiers' primary duty was to protect the missions where the natives underwent conversion. The military's two fold mission was to prevent the Indians from
determining their numerical advantage over the small Hispanic population and to quell mission uprisings.¹

Foreign visitors to California certainly did not perceive the natives as a threat to Spanish occupation. George Vancouver in 1792 described them as a "compound of stupidity and innocence" with a "careless and indifferent" attitude toward their existence.² He also observed that "they are certainly a race of the most miserable beings I ever saw, possessing the faculty of human reason," and believed that the mission fathers had no trouble in subjugating them.³ French maritime explorer Jean La Pérouse echoed Vancouver's comments and described the mission neophytes as small and feeble with no desire for freedom.⁴ When apprehended as mission runaways the Frenchman called the Indians "so destitute of courage, that they never oppose any resistance to the three or four soldiers, who so glaringly violate the rights of nations in their persons."⁵ Alessandro Malaspina simply called the California natives "degraded," "stupid," and "irrational beings."⁶

However, these are descriptions of those mission inmates who had lost their freedom and will to resist. Indians were quite capable of spirited resistance to the Spanish. An observation by royal engineer Miguel Costansó of the Chumash tribes living along the Santa Bárbara coast was made before the mission system was in place. Reporting that "These natives are well built and of a good disposition, very agile and alert, diligent and skillful," he stated that they handle their canoes with "indescribable agility and swiftness."⁷ Their primary weapon, the bow and arrow, was made of wood and skillfully tipped with flint. La Pérouse observed that "These Indians are very adroit in the uses of the bow, and killed the smallest birds in our presence."⁸ The natives were also accustomed to warfare, although on a small scale with few casualties. Proud of their martial prowess, the Indians would often scalp or tear the eyes out of their victims as trophies or eat parts of the bodies of slain chiefs or brave warriors to increase their own courage.⁹
The Indians of California lived with kinsmen in villages that varied in size from several hundred people to over one thousand occupants. Except for the Yuma Indians of the Mojave desert, the Diegueños of the San Diego area, and the Yakuts of the San Joaquin Valley the natives had no tribal organization. They lived a peaceful existence and although lacking agriculture or domestic animals their food staples were fish and acorns which were gathered easily. 10

Vastly outnumbered by this native population the Spanish adopted some guidelines to enable them to maintain control. Military policy in dealing with Indian problems featured mildness reinforced with certain, swift retribution if necessary. Likewise the Spanish effected a benevolent image by bearing both material gifts and the spiritual gift of salvation. For example Governor Felipe de Neve always presented small gifts to natives he met while traveling. Neve believed that the natives should be treated with respect because any offense against them could have serious consequences due to the small military force at his disposal.11

To prevent offenses from occurring, strict rules regulated the conduct of the soldiers. To protect native women from abuse all soldiers, including sergeants and corporals, were forbidden to enter the Indian villages for any reason, unless in the company of a mission father. All Indian labor must be freely given and paid and contracted in formal discussions between corporals and chiefs. To discourage theft Santa Bárbara presidio troopers for a time were prohibited from owning cattle. Trade with local tribes had to be fair and no one was to be Christianized by force. Soldiers who committed offences were to be punished by flogging or imprisonment. To avoid arbitrary enforcement serious crimes perpetrated by Indians had to be reported to the governor who ordered the punishment. Investigations and formal trials also attempted to protect the rights of native defendants. Punished Indians were often given gifts of corn upon release.12
The mission, where the process of Christian conversion occurred, was the focal point of friction between white and Indian cultures. The Spanish, fully aware of the potential for trouble, assigned a guard detail consisting of a corporal and five soldiers for the Franciscan establishments. A day sentry was posted with a sword and a night watch carried a musket. Soldiers escorted the padres whenever they left the mission compound regardless of whether the priests wanted the protection. Troopers were even to attend mass wearing their leather jackets and armed with shields, muskets, and swords but this rule apparently was not observed.¹³

The missionaries appreciated the necessity of a military presence at the missions. Father Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, continually asking for increased protection, complained the soldiers often lose their fear of hostile action and neglect their guard duty. California mission president Estevan Tapis reported to the viceroy in 1804 that the guard details were inadequate to deal with revolt because the soldiers were often sick or busy with other duties.¹⁴

Events had proven that these fears were justified, as trouble began at the missions from the outset of the Franciscan presence in the region. Shortly after Father Serra proclaimed the first California mission at San Diego in July, 1769, natives often came into the Spanish camp to steal and even attempted to board the ship San Carlos in the harbor. Fighting finally resulted after the local tribesmen tried to take bedding from the sick. A volley from the soldiers killed three natives, wounded several others, and curbed the theft problem. A stockade was soon built around the mission.¹⁵

Six years later San Diego was the site of the only major mission revolt during the Spanish period. During the early morning hours of November 5, 1775, a group of 800 Indians attacked the mission. A second planned assault by another 1,000 natives on the presidio never materialized. The natives set several buildings on fire and killed the mission blacksmith, carpenter, and Father Luis Jayme. The four sentries, although wounded and surrounded in a small adobe kitchen, defended the remaining Spaniards
until morning when the warriors retreated. The reason for the revolt is somewhat
obscure, but it was believed that two runaway neophytes initiated the raid, apparently
fearful that the Franciscans would convert all the local villages to Christianity.  

In 1778 the Spanish discovered a further threat to the San Diego mission. Four
local village chiefs prepared a stack of weapons to be used in an attack on the
missionary establishment. A warning sent to the chiefs brought only a defiant reply so a
small force of ten soldiers launched an early morning surprise attack on the village.
The troopers killed several Indians and destroyed a large cache of bows, arrows, and
clubs. The soldiers captured the four chiefs and took them to the presidio where they
were tried and executed before a firing squad. The chiefs had broken a pardon given
them for a previous attempt at rebellion.

Other missions experienced similar native resistance, especially during the early
years of their existence. One month after the founding of the San Gabriel mission in
September, 1771, a large group of local warriors attacked two soldiers. The troopers
shot and killed a chief, decapitated the corpse, and impaled the severed head on a pole
as a warning. The tribesmen later told the mission fathers that the attack was in
retaliation for a soldier's assault on an Indian woman of a nearby village. At the
founding of Santa Clara Mission in 1777 local natives stole some mules belonging to
soldiers. A military detachment from the Monterey presidio raided a village and caught
the thieves roasting the animals. A firefight ensued and the soldiers killed three Indians.
Natives shot arrows at the San Francisco mission during its founding.

Even when established the missions suffered problems. In 1776 Indians burned
the San Luis Obispo mission and in the same year some warriors threatened Father
Serra and his military escort near San Gabriel. The following year a Spanish force
attacked some villagers near Mission San Juan Capistrano who had threatened local
neophytes. Three Indians were killed. In 1819 a party of Yumas from the Colorado
River region killed two soldiers at San Buena Ventura Mission when refused permission to trade with the neophytes and locked in the guardhouse.19

The natives did not limit their acts of resistance to the missionary establishments. Pack trains and dispatch riders were also inviting targets. In 1775 a northbound pack train was attacked along the Santa Bárbara coast. Two years later tribesmen ambushed four soldiers with dispatches near San Diego. The corporal in command was killed and the other troopers managed to escape only after an hour-long battle. In 1778 warriors killed another soldier near San Diego and wounded two others. Governor Neve ordered an escort of five soldiers for mail dispatches due to the attacks.20

The primary Spanish tactic in controlling the native population was to send military expeditions, during which the presidial forces took full advantage of their superior mobility, firepower, and protection. Groups of soldiers traveled on horseback for days or even weeks and attempted to stage an early morning surprise assault on the targeted village. Generally troopers fired carbines and pistols first and then executed an mounted charge followed by close quarter combat with the lance and short sword. The California tribesmen found it difficult to kill the presidial soldier protected with his heavy leather coat and shield. Often the Spanish military would use large numbers of mission neophytes as auxiliary soldiers on these expeditions. These natives would use their own traditional weapons.21

The effectiveness of Spanish tactics was proven when Indians attacked Father Lasuén and a small military escort in a tribal village along the Santa Bárbara coast. Initially the soldiers' guns misfired and later shots were ineffective. Retreating to level ground where their horses could be used to advantage twelve soldiers charged with lance and sword and killed six warriors, ending native resistance. No soldiers were wounded despite a large number of arrows fired.22
The native warriors were intentionally denied the weapons and mobility available to the presidial lancers. By viceregal command the Indians could not ride or handle horses, although the missionaries would use neophyte vaqueros to manage the horse herds due to inadequate Spanish help. The sale or giving of arms to tribesmen was also strictly prohibited. Troopers even collected discarded lance points and bits of broken knives and returned them to the presidio.

Allowed only traditional means of defense the warriors initially stood in masses and fired swarms of arrows. Discovering their missiles to be useless against the lancer's leather armor they resorted to guerrilla tactics of ambush and retreat or sniping from cover. In some instances the natives even dug trenches in villages to use as fortifications to prevent mounted attacks. Often the natives in the interior of California would retreat into the tule swamps after battle to discourage determined pursuit. Despite the somewhat futile nature of these tactics the Indians' constant resistance limited Spanish settlement to the coastal region.

Because the leather jacket soldiers were the only armed force in the province and the presidios provided the sole means of confinement the Spanish military served as the police force for the entire community, including the missions. As a result, expeditions were undertaken for a variety of reasons. Sorties were sent out after deserters, runaway neophytes, native horse and cattle thieves, tribesmen suspected of crimes, and recalcitrants. Expeditions were also sent out to discover new mission sites, explore unknown territory, or to evangelize natives. Even these peaceful campaigns often involved skirmishes with warriors as the Indians resented the white intrusion into native lands.

Most expeditions undertaken in the first years of the Spanish occupation were exploratory or evangelical and generally found peaceful and friendly natives. As the Franciscans began to bring more natives to their establishments the soldiers encountered increasingly hostile Indians who had heard negative tales of mission life. The
campaigns became more punitive and by 1813 most expeditions endeavored to capture neophyte runaways or punish hostile native villages. A dispatch by Governor José Joaquín Arrillaga to his presidial commanders illustrated the change in emphasis. He wrote that "By frequent expeditions on the part of the commander we might be able to achieve their [the Indians] total conquest or reduction." By 1820 the natives of the interior valleys and hills, where many mission fugitives fled, had a general behavior of physical resistance to the presidial forces.26

Indian attacks usually brought quick retaliation to demonstrate Spanish strength and will. In 1797 raids on Mission San Miguel's cattle herd resulted in a punitive expedition by nine soldiers. The same year twenty-two soldiers left San Francisco Presidio to punish natives who had attacked a group of neophytes searching for runaways. A pitched battle in a village left two soldiers wounded and seven natives killed. The expedition returned with eighty-three fugitive Christians and nine prisoners. In 1798 warriors killed eight neophytes near Mission San Juan Bautista. A retaliatory raid left one chief dead and four tribesmen captured. In 1805 warriors ambushed two soldiers escorting a San José Mission father on a sick call to a native village. A soldier and three neophytes were killed. The Spanish quickly launched a punitive expedition led by a sergeant with thirty-three troopers. The Spanish killed ten of the offending tribesmen near the San Joaquin River. Finally, in 1810 eighteen soldiers attacked a village across San Francisco Bay to punish the killers of sixteen mission neophytes. The lancers battled 120 warriors before killing several and capturing eighteen.27

Expeditions to return fugitive mission neophytes often resulted in battles with large groups of hostile warriors in the interior valleys of California. In 1813 thirteen soldiers and one hundred neophyte auxiliaries traveled to the San Joaquin Valley in search of runaways from Mission San José. They attacked a large village at dawn but the tribe had been previously warned of the impending conflict. The assault force soon faced over one thousand warriors but managed to repulse them with gunfire. The battle
lasted three hours before the tribesmen retreated into the marshes. The Spanish killed a "considerable" number of warriors while losing one auxiliary native.\textsuperscript{28}

Two years later thirty troopers searched the King's River and Tulare Lake region for neophyte fugitives. The lancers raided numerous villages, captured runaways, and slew several Indians in a firefight. The leather jackets also found 238 stolen horses that tribesmen had slaughtered for food.\textsuperscript{29}

By 1819 Indians were stealing horses to increase their mobility in combat and there was concern that California might become a battle ground similar to the southwestern borderlands where lancers had to face mounted Apache raiders. An expedition of twenty soldiers with an auxiliary force of mission neophytes departed from San Francisco with the purpose of recovering stolen horses from some local tribesmen. The two forces met in battle near the present-day city of Stockton. Native arrows killed one auxiliary and wounded three or four soldiers. The missile attack was met by gunfire and a charge with lances that killed twenty warriors. The Indians fled leaving behind twenty wounded, sixteen prisoners, and forty-nine horses.\textsuperscript{30}

The same year a large expedition was sent against the Colorado River tribes who had occasionally caused trouble in the province. Thirty-five cavalrymen, fifteen foot soldiers and four artillerymen armed with a small cannon were joined by a large force of Indian auxiliaries. This unit, unable to find enough forage or water in the arid Mojave Desert, had to return without experiencing combat.\textsuperscript{31}

The last major military expedition of the Spanish era is noteworthy because it was directed against whites and not Indians. In 1821 Governor Vicente Solá heard rumors of an English or American party established about one hundred miles north of San Francisco. Solá sent a formidable force of four officers, thirty-five cavalry, twenty infantry and a cannon to drive the intruders out. The unit traveled up the Sacramento Valley as far north as present-day Shasta or Weaverville but found no foreigners. The
troops did fight minor skirmishes with natives before they returned to their base at San Francisco.32

A less dangerous foe to the Spanish military in California but one that nonetheless caused concern among the royal authorities were American and Russian traders and fur trappers. Beginning in 1796 Yankee traders began to operate off the California coast, moving south from their previous base of operations in the Pacific Northwest. Competition with the Russian American Company and increasingly violent incidents with hostile northwest coastal tribes caused the Americans to try bartering trade goods for otter pelts with the Spaniards instead. The Yankees then took the pelts to China and sold them for a large profit. However, California regulations in effect since 1774 revealed the mercantile attitude of the royal administrators. Trade between the province's residents and foreign vessels was prohibited. One of the roles of the presidial forces was to enforce these regulations.33

The Spanish were not solely concerned with illegal enterprise. They also feared that the Americans would use the information gathered from the traders about the California coasts and launch an attack on the province. Another concern was a hostile vessel masquerading as a Yankee trader entering the California ports during wartime. At one point in 1803 the royal authorities even suspected that two well-armed Yankee ships, the Hazard and the Alexander, might attempt to capture the capital at Monterey. The effort to stop the American presence was motivated by more than economic concerns.34

A typical Yankee ruse was to sail into port claiming to need supplies or repairs in order to continue the voyage. The sea captain then surreptitiously traded for otter skins and obtained supplies to continue trading along the coast with Indians, mission fathers, or even soldiers. Presidial commanders soon became aware of the ship's true purpose, however, and posted guards to closely watch the activities of the crew.35
Eventually Yankee persistence and enforcement of viceregal law collided in armed conflict. In March, 1803, the *Lelia Byrd* commanded by William Shaler and Richard Cleveland sailed into San Diego harbor and requested supplies. Presidio commander Manuel Rodríguez placed guards aboard the vessel and ordered the ship to leave the next day after reprovisioning. That night Rodríguez arrested three sailors who had rowed ashore attempting to trade and kept them under guard on the beach. The following morning, upon hearing of the sailors' captivity, Shaler and Cleveland first disarmed the ship's guard then rowed to the beach where they freed their crewmen at gunpoint. Returning to the ship, they prepared to run past the castillo guarding the entrance to the harbor. Despite exposing the captured guards on deck Shaler and Cleveland began receiving fire from the battery as they moved with a slow wind to the harbor entrance. When abreast of the Spanish guns the ship and castillo exchanged broadsides and the *Lelia Byrd* received a hole in the side. Shaler claimed his fire caused the royal forces to abandon their guns except for one soldier on the ramparts waving his hat to urge the ship to cease fire. The American captains sailed out of the bay and soon released their Spanish captives.36

The battle at San Diego and other increased Yankee activity caused the Spanish authorities to adopt a tougher stance against the traders. Viceroy José de Iturrigaray proposed sending a warship to cruise the California coast and establishing a mission and military guard on one of the Santa Bárbara channel islands. Although the Spaniards never occupied the islands the viceroy sent the frigate *Princesa* in 1806 to patrol the coast. That same year Governor Arrillaga issued strict instructions to presidial commanders that no supplies be given to foreign vessels and a guard posted to prevent any transactions between ship and shore.37

This new Spanish policy made it difficult or impossible for the Americans to do business on the California coast. Turning to the Russian American company which was operating off northwest shores the Yankees borrowed Aleut fur trappers which they
transported to California waters and kept supplied in small camps. The Americans and Russians agreed to split the profits. Operations began in late 1803 and by 1806 four Yankee ships were involved. 38

This violation of Spanish sovereignty quickly led to conflict with the presidial troopers. In April, 1806, three sailors from the Peacock were captured and imprisoned at San Diego while ashore for supplies. Three months later Captain Joseph O'Cain led fifteen armed men ashore in Baja California, captured four soldiers and threatened to destroy both the San Diego castillo and presidio unless the three sailors were released. The commandant refused this demand and O'Cain later lost five more men to capture in Baja California. 39 In September, 1807, seven Aleuts were imprisoned in the San Francisco presidio and in October five more were taken. Two years later a patrol of nine men from the same presidio intercepted seventeen Aleuts who had landed in San Francisco Bay. The presidial troopers killed four hunters in the ensuing firefight. In May, 1811, a patrol of twenty men killed two Aleuts in a night ambush. San Francisco soldiers greatly reduced hunting in their region by guarding fresh water supplies and closely observing the harbor. 40

In 1814 and 1815 vigorous military enforcement essentially ended foreign fur trapping in Spanish California waters. In July, 1814, eleven Aleuts were captured by lancers after going ashore to purchase fresh meat at San Pedro. Two months later a patrol ambushed Russian American Company official Boris Tarasov and twenty-seven trappers. Tarasov and twenty-four were captured and imprisoned in Los Angeles. In September, 1815, fourteen soldiers from Santa Bárbara ambushed twenty-two men at Refugio and captured seven. 41

As fur trapping activities were being curtailed opportunities opened for legal trade. The beginning of the Mexican revolution in 1810 had disrupted the regular supply service from San Blas in Baja California and made the authorities in California
more receptive to the Yankee traders. The last decade of the Spanish era witnessed inconsistent enforcement of the mercantile regulations by the military forces.

In 1812 California residents welcomed Captain George Eayrs but on a return voyage the following year his ship *Mercury* was boarded and captured while at anchor at San Luis Obispo by fifteen men from the Spanish merchant vessel *Flora*. In December, 1815, twelve lancers from Santa Bárbara almost captured several sailors from the *Forester* as they landed to get fresh beef at the same harbor the *Mercury* was taken. In January, 1816, troopers disrupted two trading voyages at Refugio by capturing Captain William Smith and five men from the *Albatross* who had landed for "provisions" and taking Captain Henry Gyzelaar with his crew and ship *Lydia*. The men and ships were later released. In 1816 Governor Solá approved the trade of two Yankee ships, the *Sultan* and *Atala*, partly because some soldiers desperately needed cloth for their uniforms. The following year Captain James Wilcocks also received approval from Solá. In 1821 Captain Eliab Grimes was able to conduct business with Commandante José de la Guerra at the Santa Bárbara presidio but San Diego commander José Estudillo refused him permission to trade.42

A far more dangerous seaborne threat was an invasion by a foreign country or by Latin American revolutionaries. These rivals possessed both the firepower and manpower to decisively defeat the small presidial forces and occupy the province. Rumors of such an attack had occurred throughout the Spanish era. In 1776 the viceroy warned Governor Felipe de Neve not to allow English captain James Cook to land or discover the extent of California's defenses. Cook did not appear. In 1780 war between England and Spain caused Neve concern over a possible invasion by British admiral Hughes. In 1794 royal engineer Costansó's California defense report warned the viceroy of a British threat to the province. In 1796 seventy-two Catalan volunteers reinforced the province because of the war with France. The Yankee traders were seen as forerunners to a possible American invasion.43
The Spanish authorities were aware that their forces were not adequate to repel such an attack. Governor Neve complained that with so many troops on guard duty at the missions there were not enough to protect the presidio. Armed escorts traveled with dispatches and pack trains which further reduced available manpower. Governor Solá reported to the viceroy that their long experience in using frontier tactics against Indians rendered presidial companies incapable of fighting an enemy with firearms. The presidios were not built to withstand a European style assault.44

Such an attack did appear. On October 6, 1818 the American brig Clarion arrived at Santa Bárbara where Captain Henry Gyzelaar warned the commander that two ships were fitted out in Hawaii for an attack on California. This information was sent to Governor Solá. On November 20 the two ships under the command of Hippolyte Bourchard, a Frenchman operating as a privateer for General San Martín's insurgent forces in South America, arrived at Monterey. Bourchard was captain of the Argentina with forty-four guns and a crew of 260. An Englishman, Peter Corney, commanded the Santa Rosa with eighteen guns and one hundred sailors. Their exact purpose in making an attack on California is somewhat unclear. Lacking the forces to occupy the province perhaps they expected its inhabitants to join them in common cause or possibly they were after plunder and the chance to defeat royal forces.45

At dawn on November 21 the Santa Rosa began cannonading the castillo which promptly returned fire. However the gun duel was ineffective because the battery was located at an elevation too high for the ship to hit. An improvised three gun battery on the beach damaged the Santa Rosa to the extent that after two hours of battle the ship's flag was lowered in a token of surrender and three men sent shore to request a cease fire. These men were sent by Solá to the guardhouse. The presidial soldiers had fought well at the castillo, Solá reporting that they "bore themselves with an unspeakable serenity despite the balls that were falling about them." Bourchard later sent an officer
with a flag of truce to Solá demanding surrender of the province, which the governor defiantly refused.\textsuperscript{46}

The troopers remained at arms all night in a drizzle while families evacuated the presidio and went to Soledad Mission. The following morning the \textit{Argentina} landed nine boats loaded with a large force at Point Pinos, three miles west of the castillo.\textsuperscript{47} Solá sent a cavalry force of twenty-five soldiers under Ensign José Estrada to intercept them but greatly outnumbered, he retreated. Hawaiian islanders armed with pikes led a charge up the hill behind the castillo and hauled down the royal flag. The Spanish mounted their horses and retreated. After taking the battery the insurgents turned the guns on the presidio where the royal forces tried to make a stand. After firing a few rounds Corney led an assault against the presidio where the defenders fired their field pieces and fled. The establishment was entered without opposition. Solá retreated with all forces to Rancho del Rey, approximately ten miles distant at the present-day city of Salinas.\textsuperscript{48}

Monterey was plundered and the barracks, king’s stores and governor’s house were all burnt. Bourchard’s losses had been three killed and three captured although several intoxicated insurgents were unfit for duty after the town was sacked. Solá was reinforced by soldiers from San Francisco and San José, but he decided not to counterattack. After several days Bourchard left and sailed southward.\textsuperscript{49}

On December 4 the insurgents landed at Refugio and plundered the Ortega Ranch after the inhabitants had fled. Lancers from Santa Bárbara Presidio lassod three sailors who had wandered from the main landing party and took them to the presidio. Bourchard sailed into Santa Bárbara harbor two days later and demanded the release of the three crewmen in return for sparing the presidio and the exchange of a Spaniard captured at Monterey. This arrangement was completed and Bourchard again sailed south, stopping at Mission San Juan Capistrano on December 14 for supplies. The mission was abandoned upon the insurgents’ approach and although Bourchard’s force
was watched by troopers from San Diego, there was no fight given. After obtaining a few provisions Bourchard sailed south into Mexican waters. The short campaign had ended.

The presidial soldiers maintained Spain's precarious sovereignty over California by a combination of valor and good fortune. Although small in numbers they were energetic in pursuing combat with both internal and external foes. However the troopers were also fortunate that the subjugated native population never united effectively to oppose them and that foreign powers like England or France were indifferent to the possession of the province. The loss of California's strongest position, Monterey, to a small privateer force indicates the weak position of the territory. Nevertheless, Spanish sovereignty was maintained for fifty years in an isolated province against a number of different challenges. That this was accomplished by a small, ill-trained and inadequately supplied force is a significant achievement in the history of Spain's borderlands.
ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER VI

1. Langellier and Peterson, 3.
3. Ibid., 2:13, 15.
4. La Pérouse, 197.
5. Ibid., 214.
6. Cutter, Malaspina, 64.
8. La Pérouse, 214, 197.
11. Ibid., 72-73.
12. Ibid., 72-74; Bancroft, 18:374.
17. Beilharz, 71.
20. Beilharz, 70; Bancroft, 18: 315.


22. Lasuén, 1:46.


26. S.F. Cook, Conflict, 1:4, 32, 76; Bancroft, 19:331.


29. Ibid., 127-68.


32. Ibid., 445.


34. Bancroft, 19:18. 32; Ogden, 40.

35. Ogden, 35-36.

36. Ogden, 37-38; Shaler, 15-19.

37. Ogden, 41; Bancroft, 19:35.
38. Ogden, 42, 47.

39. Ibid., 54-59.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., 61-62.

42. Ibid., 66-75.

43. Beilharz, 82; Servín, 223-24; Bancroft, 18:535; Bancroft, 19:32.

44. Beilharz, 82; Bancroft, 19:214.

45. Bancroft, 19:222, 249; Spencer-Hancock and Pritchard, 234; Corney, 217.

46. Spencer-Hancock and Pritchard, 235; Bancroft, 19:228-30; Corney, 217-18; Conley, 30.

47. Some sources state that 400 men were in the landing force. This number would exceed the total complement of both ships. Corney, 217.

48. Bancroft, 19:231-33; Spencer-Hancock and Pritchard, 236; Corney, 218. Some accounts state that the Spanish spiked the castillo's guns before they were captured. Conley, 30; Bancroft, 19:232.


50. Corney, 219-20; Bancroft, 19:236.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A study of Spain’s California soldiers places them alongside the mission fathers in deserving recognition for their role in colonizing and controlling the province. Each aspect of the trooper’s experience presented by this thesis reveals their challenges and achievements.

Perhaps the successful colonization of Spanish California was the most significant accomplishment. Notably, this was achieved by military personnel denigrated by the mission fathers for poor character and social background. Certain factors mitigated the padres’ judgment and made the frontier soldiers good choices for the task of colonization. A borderlands background created the self-reliant population necessary to survive an inadequate supply link with New Spain. If royal authorities had sent urban colonial units or regular regiments from Spain to the isolated territory the effort might have failed. Furthermore, the emphasis upon posting married troopers in California over time certainly produced a generally more stable, responsible soldier than that often reviled by the missionaries. The second generation of recruits was generally raised at the presidios, providing soldiers accustomed to a martial atmosphere. It is noteworthy that visiting foreign military professionals from Britain and Russia commented favorably regarding the quality of personnel they found. The result was a stable community that represented the only permanent Hispanic settlements in the colony, the mission system collapsing when secularized during the Mexican era.

The Spanish authorities possessed no illusions regarding the inadequacy of California’s physical defenses. Royal engineers, the province’s governors, Yankee
traders, and foreign officers all recognized that any serious attempt to conquer the province would succeed. The Nootka Sound incident, the 1812 Russian establishment of Fort Ross in northern California, and the Bourchard raid indicated potential challenges to New Spain's control. Although these threats were more apparent than real, an established military presence was believed necessary. The challenge to the California troopers was not to defeat a foreign assault but to maintain the presidios and castillos as deterrents to infringements upon Spanish sovereignty. This was achieved despite inadequate supplies of weaponry and proper building materials, unskilled workmanship, small presidio musters, general deterioration and poor weather conditions at San Francisco and Monterey. With the exception of the short time the royal engineers Costansó and Córdoba spent in the province, there was no professional management of the defense bastions. Even after construction a constant lack of personnel in general and trained gunners in particular made the physical defenses even less intimidating than they seemed. The province's strongest fortification, the castillo at Monterey, was easily taken by Bourchard. However, in 1821 the presidios still remained where they had been established and were viable military communities. Today they remain as California population centers, long after the original walls have crumbled to dust.

Overall the conditions of service became generally favorable after the military and religious elements were firmly established. Plentiful food, controlled prices, and opportunity for promotion and land ownership were positive aspects of service in the province. Strict discipline and a full routine were made more tolerable by fair treatment in accordance with regulations.

Mission guard detail was the most important duty performed by the troopers. The missions were both the chief agent for reduction of the natives and the province's agricultural backbone. Adequate protection of the religious compounds and their missionaries was vital to Spain's California enterprise. Soldiers not only had to contend
with potential violence from the large neophyte populations but with the strict
Franciscan rules and the temptation of Indian women. Despite occasional lapses in
discipline and disagreements with the padres, the presence of soldiers ensured the
growth of neophyte populations and mission agriculture and ranching. Troopers
pursued runaways, patrolled the compounds, supervised the livestock and farming
activities, directed construction efforts, and escorted the missionaries. Soldiers are the
forgotten factors in the success of the California missions whose produce and livestock
enabled the military community to survive.

Regulations attempted to provide the frontier fighter with adequate weaponry to
deter threats to royal control of the province. However, supply difficulties and small
presidio garrisons produced a force that was barely sufficient to control the native
population. Added to this task was the often violent enforcement of sovereignty and
mercantile regulations against Yankee traders and Russian fur trappers. Conquest by
foreign powers always remained a possibility, and an attack by Latin American
revolutionaries became a reality. Despite the meagre forces available, the military
record is a good one. The settled areas remained under firm royal control despite
Indian resistance. Russians and Yankees eventually abandoned their fur trapping
activities due to interference from the province’s troopers. Yankee trade ships were
closely monitored until finally welcomed during the last decade of viceregal rule.
Soldiers built, manned, and maintained the castillos to prevent rival powers from
conquering the territory’s vital ports. The Bourchard raid revealed the precarious nature
of California’s military establishment.

Today all of the Spanish missions have been rebuilt as a reminder of the
missionaries’ role in developing the Golden State. Only one presidio at Santa Bárbara is
being restored to its original form. Perhaps it will serve as a reminder that California’s
soldiers played more than a secondary role during the Spanish colonial era.
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