

WINTER 2008

# AT THE PRESIDIO

A SEASONAL GUIDE TO THE PARK



*Historic Presidio Homes  
Rehabilitated (story on p. 2)*

# OFFICERS' ROW HOMES REBORN

## 19th Century Buildings Are Presidio Landmarks

by Randolph Delehanty, Ph.D., Presidio Trust Historian

Four large, nearly identical quarters were built in 1885 to house the post's highest ranking officers and their families. Designed by Captain D. D. Wheeler of the Presidio Quartermaster's Office, the two-story homes were prominently placed at the head of The Alameda, the formal Victorian-era entrance to the post at Presidio Boulevard and Funston Avenue.

Though commonly referred to as "Queen Annes," these handsome houses are best described as Eastlake, or Stick style, because of their angular design. Presidio soldiers built the stone and concrete foundations, and contractor John J. Crowley erected the wood-frame buildings. They exhibit a variety of wood sheathing including clapboard, decorative shingle work, and vertical boards under their eaves. Their steep gable roofs, now covered with asphalt shingles, have deeply overhanging eaves supported by decorative brackets. Ornamental cast iron cresting once crowned their roof ridges. Their wrap-around verandas were later glassed in to make them more useful in San Francisco's windy climate.

Originally painted in two shades of brown, their current white color and red roofs date from after 1910 when the Presidio assumed a Mission-style color scheme inspired by the Spanish Presidio's whitewashed adobes with red tile roofs. These are the most elaborate Victorian houses

in the Presidio, though they are considerably more restrained than the exuberant, bay-windowed houses that were erected in San Francisco in the booming 1880s. The homes are distinguished by their forested setting and are indicative of the landscape changes happening in the Presidio in the late 19th century when Major W.A. Jones plan began planting the sandy reservation with eucalyptus and cypress.

### Preserving the Buildings and Landscapes

In 2006 and 2007, the Presidio Trust rehabilitated these homes, updating them for modern living while carefully preserving their historic character. In addition to seismic strengthening and new electrical, plumbing, and heating systems, kitchens were redesigned, and access to the attic bedrooms was improved. The surrounding historic landscape, once the post's major gateway, was enhanced with new lawns and formal palm islands, invoking the feeling of the original Alameda entrance. Monterey cypress were planted along the east side of nearby Funston Avenue, restoring the lost character of a closely spaced hedgerow that was planted even before the four homes were built (*see historic photo*).

“

The secretary of war authorized \$12,400 for these four field officers' quarters in 1885.

~ from *Defender of the Gate*

”



*This late 19th century photo depicts the row of cypress trees along Funston Avenue.*

*The landscape around the homes was enhanced with formal plantings of Kentia and Parlor Palms.*





# Nature Watch: reports from the field

## 2008 is a BIG YEAR in the Parks!

### Join a Race to See and Save the Park's Endangered Species



The Golden Gate National Parks is home to nearly three dozen endangered species, more than any other national park in continental North America - more than Yosemite, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks combined.

To spread the word about the incredible diversity in our backyard and the importance of caring for our rarest plants and animals, Bay Area non-profits have created the BIG YEAR 2008 Endangered Species campaign. Big Year is a race against time to see each of the 33 endangered and threatened species found in the parks, while taking 33 conservation actions that will help prevent these species from going extinct. Anyone can participate in this competitive event. The person who sees and helps the most species between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008, will win the Big Year.



Explorers can report their sightings on the Big Year website and blog about exciting discoveries. Big Year also includes guided trips and walks, presentations, volunteer days, and even happy hours.

Big Year is sponsored by the Sierra Club, the SF Zoo, Nature in the City, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

**Download your checklist, wildlife viewing principles, calendar, and more: [www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org).**



*Photos from top left: Presidio (Raven's) Manzanita *Arctostaphylos hookeri* ssp. *Ravenii*; Birdwatchers, Western Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrius nivosus* (Crissy Field beaches in summer, fall and winter); Presidio Clarkia *Clarkia franciscana* (blooms April-July in Inspiration Point's grasslands); San Francisco Lessingia *Lessingia germanorum* (blooms July-November in Lobos Creek Valley)*





## In the BIG YEAR Spotlight

### Brown Pelican: An Endangered Species Act Success Story

A squadron of Brown Pelicans flying high over the bay in V-formation or diving for fish offshore is a thrilling sight. While its short legs, webbed feet, and incredibly long beak (at 18 inches its the longest beak of any bird) make it look ungainly on land, the Brown Pelican's seven-foot wingspan allows it to navigate the waters off the west coast of North America, from the Gulf of Mexico to British Columbia, with grace, agility, and speed. Birds returning to their feeding grounds in the north from their rookeries to the south like to roost in the Presidio.

One of two species of pelican found in North America (the other being the American White), the Brown Pelican appears to be the next big success story for the Endangered Species Act. Brown Pelicans on the Atlantic coast have already been removed from the endangered species list.

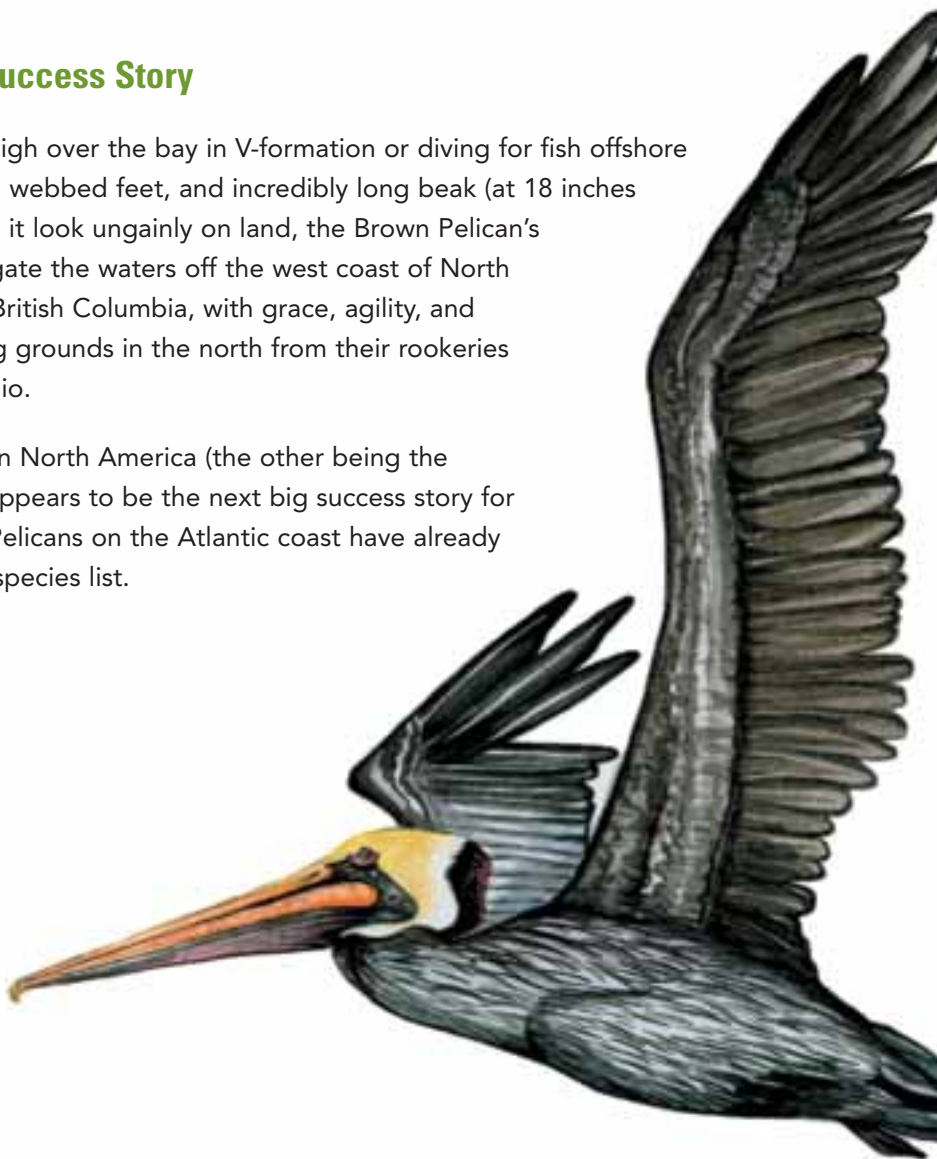
Forty years ago, these birds flew perilously close to extinction. Their numbers had been declining due to predation, over-fishing, the loss of habitat, and it was later learned, pesticides in agricultural runoff. By 1969, barely 1,100 nesting pairs were reported on Anacapa Island, an important rookery off the coast of Southern California. Typically, those birds would have produced approximately 360 fledglings, but that year, there were a mere handful. The following year, the situation was even worse: half as many nesting pairs, and just one fledgling.

This catastrophe was traced to an unexpected source—a Southern California firm was discharging the pesticide DDT directly into the sea. There, DDT levels had built up in the tissue of fish which were then poisoning the pelicans, which feed

on the sardines, anchovies, and mackerel they scoop up in their enormous pouches when they plunge-dive. The poison impaired the birds' ability to form calcium, so their eggshells became too brittle to support their weight. Once the poisoning stopped, the pelicans began to recover. There were approximately 4,000 nesting pairs on Anacapa Island in 1997.

Today, Brown Pelicans are ubiquitous along our coastline, and can be seen regularly from the shorelines at Baker Beach and Crissy Field.

~excerpted from  
[www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org)



# THE TRANSFORMING ART OF CHRIS HARDMAN:

## A New Exhibition Presented by Antenna Theater

Where does reality end and illusion begin? How much is in the art and how much is in our brain, in our perception? Come explore these questions in a new exhibition by Antenna Theater coming to the Presidio in 2008. It is interactive art at its most dramatic, intriguing, and stimulating.

In *Transforming Art*, artist Chris Hardman's multi-gallery installation reveals how our minds transform the visual and aural information we receive to create our view of the world. The exhibit fuses light, movement through space, 3-D art, mirrors, sculpture, slotted furniture, and textured sound in an immersive environment that reminds us that we are all active participants in the world we experience. This exhibition is site-specific and has been custom-designed for the Presidio galleries.

"I want to change the way we experience the world, so I've created art pieces that reveal how our minds are involved in the process of perception," said Hardman. "The exhibit will present art forms that reveal the visual clues we commonly use to view the world. With this information, we can rethink our relationship to our surroundings and experiences."

Antenna Theater of Sausalito is a non-profit arts organization which



creates original work in many disciplines. Artistic Director Chris Hardman founded Antenna in 1980 to experiment with sound, sculpture, and live performance. Antenna's work has been presented at the Smithsonian Institution, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Spoleto Festival, the Cervantino Festival in Mexico, and the Roundhouse in London.

In addition, Antenna Theater has brought their unique combination of sound, image, and movement to adventurous audiences in surprising settings--recycling centers, high schools, Army barracks, the desert playa at Burning Man, and the Pacific Ocean's edge. The most recent productions were supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group Future Audiences program, and Antenna Audio. For more, visit [www.antenna-theater.org](http://www.antenna-theater.org).

### NEW EXHIBIT!

January 23 –  
May 4, 2008  
Wednesdays to  
Sundays,  
11 am to 5 pm  
FREE  
Presidio Officers' Club,  
50 Moraga Avenue

On the web:  
[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

Events Line:  
(415) 561-5500

### Related Programs:

An Evening with Artist  
Chris Hardman  
Wednesday, January 30,  
7 pm

The Eye and the Brain:  
The Latest Science  
Wednesday, March 26,  
7 pm  
Dr. Julie Schnapf  
UCSF, Department of  
Ophthalmology



{CALENDAR FEATURE}

# HOLIDAYS AT THE PRESIDIO



## **Holiday Lights: Tree Lighting Ceremony**

**Friday, December 7**

**5:30 pm**

Meet at Corner of Lincoln Boulevard/Funston Avenue

Join the Presidio community for a magical tree-lighting ceremony. Light refreshments will follow at the Presidio Fire Station.

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)  
415/ 561 5500

## **Season's Greenings**

**Saturday, December 8**

**10 am - 2 pm**

Crissy Field Center, 603 Mason Street

Looking for holiday gift ideas? Make gifts such as snow globes, digital greeting cards, or container gardens from reusable and recycled materials. Enjoy organic hot cider and popcorn. Toddler Zone for kids 2-5 years. Fee: \$1-\$5 each

[www.crissyfield.org](http://www.crissyfield.org)  
415/ 561 7765

## **Breakfast with Santa**

**Saturday, December 15**

**9 am - 10:30 am**

Presidio Golf Course Café,  
inside the Arguello Gate

Enjoy a family style breakfast of pancakes, scrambled eggs, country potatoes, bacon, juice, and coffee. Santa and his elves will be on hand to take pictures. The cost is \$20 per adult, \$8 for kids under 12, and free for kids under 3. For reservations call the Café.

[www.presidiogolf.com](http://www.presidiogolf.com)  
415/ 561 4661 x209

## **A Child's Christmas in Wales & Holiday Animation Film Festival**

**December 22, 26, 27, 28, 29**

Exploratorium

On December 22, see A Child's Christmas in Wales and The Sweater at a 2 pm showing. December 26-29 enjoy a selection of short documentaries and animated films capturing playful situations, with screenings at noon and 2 pm. Free with admission.

[www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu)  
415/ 561 0363

## **Artists and Writers Holiday Exhibition**

**Through January 5**

**Monday to Friday**

**10 am - 5 pm**

Arion Press Galley, 1802 Hays Street

Kiki Smith and Emily Dickinson: Featuring prints and an artist book with 200 Smith images for poems of Emily Dickinson. Jess and Michael McClure: Original drawings and facsimile edition of 1957 Jess artist book, The Boobus and the Bunnyduck, a children's story by Michael McClure. Free.

[www.arionpress.com](http://www.arionpress.com)  
415/ 668 2548

## **Christmas Eve Service at the Main Post Chapel**

**Monday, December 24**

**8 pm**

130 Fisher Loop, Main Post

Sponsored by the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. The public is cordially invited!

[www.interfaith-presidio.org](http://www.interfaith-presidio.org)

# PARK CALENDAR

## ONGOING EVENTS

### Natural Heritage Volunteerism

Help make a place for nature in the city. Hands-on, fun and educational!

Wednesdays & Saturdays

9am - Noon: Habitat

Restoration programs in the field

1 - 4 pm: Native Plant Nursery programs

[www.presidio.gov/experiences/volunteer](http://www.presidio.gov/experiences/volunteer)

415/ 561 5333



### Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Public Meeting

Second Tuesdays, 7 pm

Presidio Officers' Club,

50 Moraga Avenue

RAB is a citizen's group that works with the

Trust's environmental cleanup program.

415/ 561 4255

### Tours of Arion Press

Thursdays, 3 pm

See the historic typefoundry, pressroom and composing room, and bookbindery.

Reservations required, \$7.

Visit the gallery weekdays

9am - 5pm, free.

[www.arionpress.com](http://www.arionpress.com)

415/ 668 2548



### Presidio RX Running Group

Mondays & Wednesdays

6:30 pm

[www.woohoo.org/presidiorex](http://www.woohoo.org/presidiorex)

### Fantastic Friday- Parent & Tot Playtime

Through May 30 (no program Jan. 4 or March 28)

10 am - noon

Crissy Field Center,

603 Mason Street

[www.crissyfield.org](http://www.crissyfield.org)

415/ 561 7765

## DECEMBER

Holiday Lights



see **Calendar Feature** for a listing of holiday events in the Presidio, including **Holiday Lights!**

# 3

### PRESIDIO TRUST PUBLIC MEETING -

#### Cultural Institutions RFP

Monday, December 3

6:30 pm

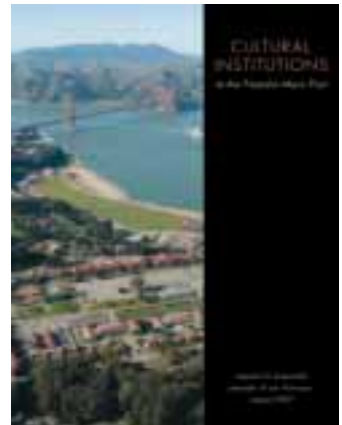
Presidio Officers' Club,

50 Moraga Avenue

The Trust will provide an update on proposals submitted to the Cultural Institutions on the Main Post RFP.

[www.presidio.gov/trust/projects](http://www.presidio.gov/trust/projects)

415/ 561 5418



# 10

### PRESIDIO TRUST PUBLIC MEETING - Budget

Monday, December 10

6:30 pm

Presidio Officers' Club,

50 Moraga Avenue

The Trust will provide an overview of the organization's budget for the current fiscal year.

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

415/ 561 5418



# 15

## **FROGS AND AMPHIBIANS:**

### ***River of Words***

Saturday, December 15

noon to 2 pm

Crissy Field Center,  
603 Mason Street

Free opening event celebrating a dazzling and informative children's art and poetry exhibition from the River of Words Contest, co-founded by former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Haas and Berkeley writer Pamela Michael. See fifty works of art and poems created by children.

[www.crisseyfield.org](http://www.crisseyfield.org)

415/ 561 7765



# 15

## **PRESIDIO TREE TOUR**

Saturday, December 15

10 am - noon

Meet at parking area on Ruger Street, first left inside the Lombard Gate. Call to RSVP. Presidio Trust forester Peter Ehrlich takes you on a walking tour including the unique trees of Simonds Loop, Letterman, Lovers' Lane, and West Pacific Grove. Heavy rain cancels.

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

415/ 561 4299

# 17 - 28

## **PRESIDIO COMMUNITY YMCA WINTER DAY CAMPS *A Misummer Night's Dream***

For K-8th Graders: Session 1  
Dec. 17 - 21; Session 2 Dec. 24,  
26, 27 & 28. For 2nd & 3rd  
Graders Presidio Explorers:

Dec. 17 - 21; 9 am - 4:30 pm;  
Extended Care:

7:30 am - 9 am & 4:30 - 6 pm

Kids enjoy field trips, arts and  
crafts, swimming, group games,  
and sports.

[www.ymcasf.org/presidio/  
camping.html](http://www.ymcasf.org/presidio/camping.html)

415/ 447 9692

# 12

## **WINTER WARM-UP**

Saturday, January 12

10 am - noon

Crissy Field Center,  
603 Mason Street

Get ready for winter through  
hands-on art, science and  
media activities. All ages;  
drop-in OK. Children must be  
accompanied by an adult.

[www.crisseyfield.org](http://www.crisseyfield.org)

415/ 561 7765

# 18...

## **INTERNET FOR OLDER ADULTS**

Fridays

January 18 to Friday, May 23;

1:10 - 4 pm

(No class Feb. 15, March 28  
or April 4)

Dr. R. Wood Massi leads this  
weekly survey of the Internet in  
an unhurried environment.

Learn how to surf the web, use  
email, conduct research on the  
Internet, and create web  
pages. Prerequisite: basic  
computer literacy. FREE.

On-site registration available.

[www.crisseyfield.org](http://www.crisseyfield.org)

415/ 561 7765

# JANUARY

# 12

## **QUAIL HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

Saturday, January 12

9 am - noon

Call for location.

California Quail are still holding  
on to their place in the  
Presidio. Help secure their  
future by enhancing habitat in  
key natural areas of the park.

[www.presidio.gov/  
experiences/volunteer](http://www.presidio.gov/experiences/volunteer)

415/ 561 5333



# 24 & 25

## **Pacific Union Presents: CONCERTS AT THE PRESIDIO *Piano Concert from the SF Conservatory of Music***

Thursday, January 24

Friday, January 25

7:30 pm

Golden Gate Club,  
135 Fisher Loop

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

415/ 447 6274

# 30

## TRANSFORMING ART EXHIBIT

*An Evening with the Artist: Chris Hardman*

(see p. 6)

Wednesday, January 30

7 pm

Presidio Officers' Club,  
50 Moraga Avenue

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

415/ 561 5500

## FEBRUARY

# 2...

## ANIMAL ADVENTURES

Saturdays. Feb. 2 - March 1

9:30 am - 2 pm

Crissy Field Center,  
603 Mason Street

Join the Center's new younger kids club to learn about the critters that call the Presidio home. Animal lovers and nature enthusiasts will explore the Urban Ecology Lab and then visit the Art Lab to design origami mobiles and marble mazes. Grades 2nd & 3rd. \$145 for 4-session club; Pre-registration required.

[www.crissyfield.org](http://www.crissyfield.org)

415/ 561 7765

# 2

## THE LAST GUN

Saturday, February 2

11 am

Battery Chamberlin, north end  
of Baker Beach parking lot

The National Park Service demonstrates a "disappearing gun" dating from World War II. Help load and aim the last operational weapon of its kind. Rain cancels.

415/ 561 4232

# 14

## VALENTINE SPECIAL AT THE EXPLORATORIUM

*Xara Flower-Making Workshop*

Thursday, February 14

noon - 2 pm

Exploratorium

Burning Man artist and attorney Mark Hinkley will show participants how to create a bouquet of artificial flowers, cut and unfolded from recycled soda bottles.

[www.exploratorium.org](http://www.exploratorium.org)

415/ 561 0363

# 23

## THE SEEDS OF THE WORLDS' MOST ENDANGERED PLANT

Saturday, February 23

10 am - 11 am

Presidio Native Plant Nursery  
1244 Appleton Street

View rare Presidio Manzanita seeds and find out about recent attempts to make these seeds viable (see p. 4).

Maximum 20 participants; RSVP required.

415/ 572 6982



## MARCH

# 26

## TRANSFORMING ART EXHIBIT

*The Eye and the Brain: The Latest Science*

(see p. 6)

Wednesday, March 26

7 pm

Presidio Officers' Club,  
50 Moraga Avenue

[www.presidio.gov/calendar](http://www.presidio.gov/calendar)

415/ 561 5500

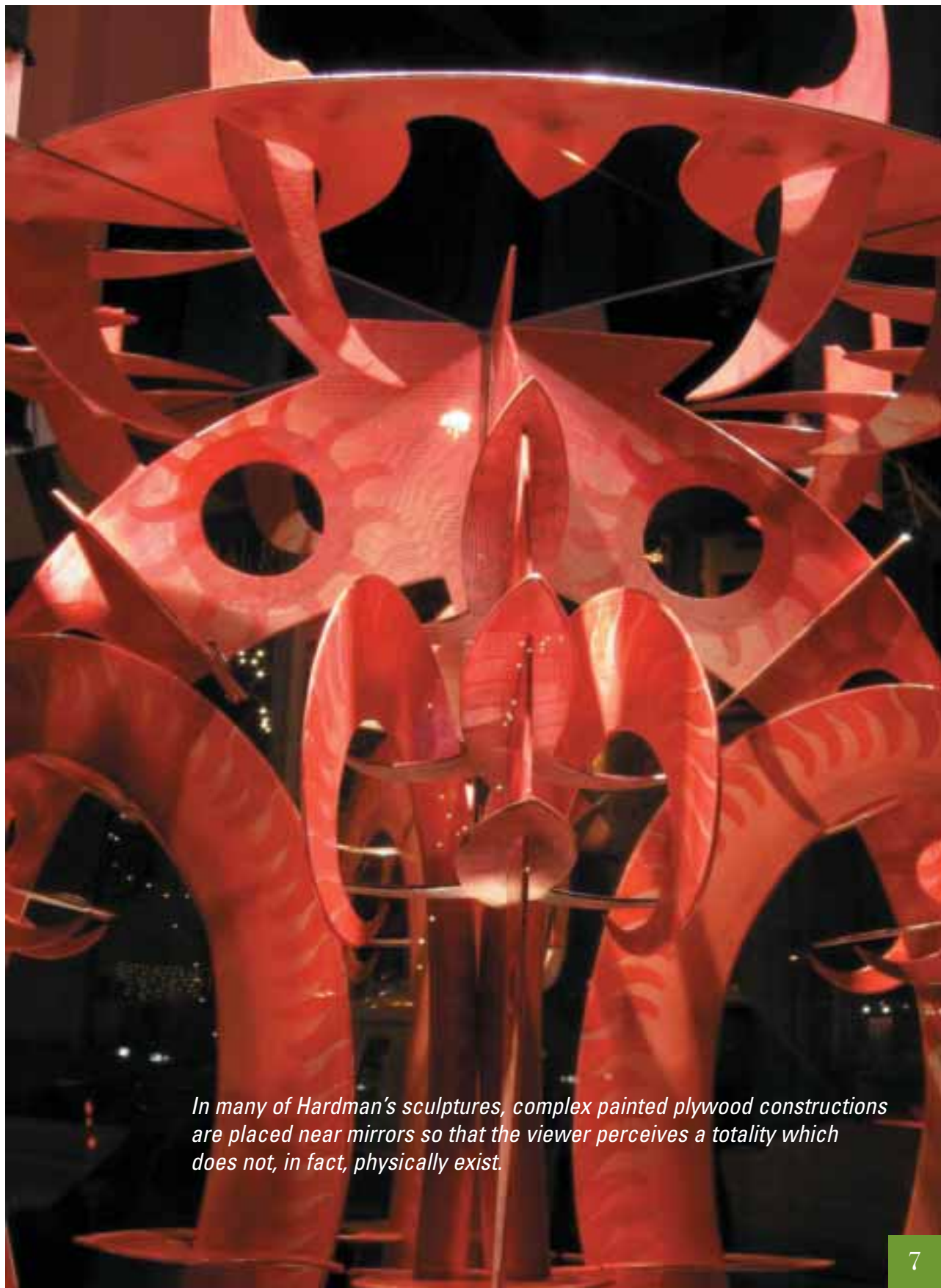


## NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

2008 will be an exciting year for volunteerism in the Presidio. New opportunities will include helping to preserve the Presidio's gardens, forests, trails, and more. For more, contact the Presidio Trust Volunteer Coordinator at 415/ 561

5333 or [volunteer@presidio.gov](mailto:volunteer@presidio.gov). Visit

[www.presidiotrust.gov/experiences/volunteer](http://www.presidiotrust.gov/experiences/volunteer).



*In many of Hardman's sculptures, complex painted plywood constructions are placed near mirrors so that the viewer perceives a totality which does not, in fact, physically exist.*

# CLEANUP ON THE BLUFFS

## Ambitious Landfill Removal Complete

Though it may be hard to imagine today, in the early and mid-1900s it was regular practice for the Army to dispose of debris by dumping it over the Presidio's western coastal bluffs. During this very active period of post expansion, waste included soil exhumed during building construction, household waste, and debris from demolished structures. Much of the material was burned at the top of the bluffs using incinerators the Army installed alongside the concrete gun batteries in 1922 and 1934, and ash was deposited over the cliffs. The practice of dumping ended in the 1950s.

As a result of a 1999 agreement with the Department of Defense, the Presidio Trust, in cooperation with the National Park Service, is the lead agency cleaning up such problem areas, as well as petroleum from former fueling stations and vehicle repair areas, and underground storage tanks. In the last eight years, dozens of sites have been repaired, and five major landfills have been removed. No site has been more complex and dramatic than the fall 2007 effort to clean up the bluffs above Baker Beach.

### Acrobatics on the Bluffs

Between August and November of this year, skilled engineers and contractors began the arduous process of unearthing the debris and lifting it 250 feet up the craggy slopes to trucks waiting at the top of the bluffs to transport the waste to licensed hazardous waste landfill sites. Specialized spider excavators which can perform amazing

acrobatics on precipitous slopes were used to retrieve waste from normally inaccessible areas, and a system of hydraulic conveyors and long-reach excavators relayed the materials to the top of the cliffs. The operation was conducted 12 hours a day, six days a week. Staff from the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy was onsite to explain the project to trail users and beach goers.

### What's Next

In all, an amazing 73,000 tons of refuse was hauled out of the bluffs. Other, smaller cleanups will occur in nearby areas of the bluffs during the next few years. Within the next year the nearby Coastal Trail will be restored, complementing the beautiful revitalization of the "Batteries and Bluffs" trail recently completed by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. Efforts to preserve the 1890s historic gun batteries, which once guarded the entrance to the Golden Gate, will also get underway.

The Presidio Trust is aggressively working to clean up sites throughout the park, and will be removing and/or capping additional landfills in other parts of the Presidio in the next several years. For more on the cleanup program, visit [www.presidio.gov/nature/cleanup](http://www.presidio.gov/nature/cleanup).

### Unexpected Discoveries

A number of startling discoveries were surfaced during the dig: dog tags, mess kits, even horseshoes. However the "stop everything" finds included two eight inch cannon balls and two eight inch armor piercing shells designed for the 1870s-era Rodman guns. Upon such instances, all excavation must stop until the ordnance, old but still potentially dangerous, could be properly destroyed.



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**AT THE PRESIDIO** is published  
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415/ 561 5418.

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## THE PRESIDIO TRUST

34 Graham Street  
P.O. Box 29052  
San Francisco, California  
94129-0052

[www.presidio.gov](http://www.presidio.gov)  
415/ 561 5418



### { DID YOU KNOW? }

The endangered Brown Pelican has a 7-foot wingspan, and its pouch can hold three gallons of water. The bird dines on anchovies, sardines, and mackerel (see p. 5).

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