Richard Whitehead Papers

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Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. Presidio Research Center
215 East Canon Perdido St.
Santa Barbara, California 93101
(805) 961-5369
chris@sbthp.org
http://sbthp.org/research.htm
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Richard Whitehead Papers
Dates: 1775-1988
Collection Number: MS-02
Creator/Collector: Whitehead, Richard
Extent: 13.5 linear feet (25 boxes)
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Santa Barbara, California 93101

Abstract: This collection, compiled by Whitehead, contains research materials, drafts, and published writings; facsimiles, transcriptions and translations of historic documents; correspondence; and deeds, maps, and plans, that document the history and reconstruction of El Presidio de Santa Barbara. Also included are Whitehead’s activities with other organizations in Santa Barbara related to history and preservation.

Language of Material: English

Access
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
Richard Whitehead Papers. Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. Presidio Research Center

Acquisition Information
Gift of Richard Whitehead

Biography/Administrative History
Richard Whitehead was born July 11, 1907 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After a career as a land use planner for Santa Barbara County, Whitehead joined the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation as a board member in 1969 and became President in 1972. During his retirement he worked for many years on the reconstruction of the Presidio, doing the initial surveys for the archaeology work and collecting all the documentary evidence he could find from libraries all over the world. He organized many paid and unpaid translators as well as spent many hours himself transcribing and translating many of the documents he ordered from the Bancroft Library, the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library, and the Archivo General Nacional. Whitehead established the Presidio Research Center and donated most of his personal research materials which formed the foundation of the Center's collections. His hope was that the Research Center would become a major facility focusing on the four presidios of California, with additional material on Loreto, the southwest U.S. and the northern frontier of Mexico. In addition to his research on the Santa Barbara Presidio, Whitehead also edited a new printing of An Archeological and Restoration Study of Mission La Purísima Concepción: Reports Written for the National Park Service, and Voyage of the Frigate Princesa to Southern California in 1782, as well as several articles. He was also a dedicated board member of the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library and conducted much of his research there. Whitehead died in Santa Barbara on August 25, 1988. His book on the Santa Barbara Presidio, Citadel on the Channel, was published posthumously by the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation in 1996.

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection, compiled by Whitehead, contains research materials, drafts, and published writings; facsimiles, transcriptions and translations of historic documents; correspondence; and deeds, maps, and plans, that document the history and reconstruction of El Presidio de Santa Barbara. Also included are Whitehead’s activities with other organizations in Santa Barbara related to history and preservation. The collection is organized into four series. Series 1. Presidio Reconstruction Subseries 1 Land Ownership and Acquisition Subseries 2 Presidio Reconstruction and Master Plan These materials represent the effort by Whitehead and the Presidio Volunteers, a group of archaeologists, students, educators, and other interested individuals to research property ownership and land use in the Presidio neighborhood to assist the Trust in obtaining land once occupied by the Presidio, in order to rebuild it. Subject include: title research, land acquisition, copies of deeds, Presidio master plan, Presidio background and history, and the chapel and padre’s quarters reconstruction. Many of the research files in Series 2 are directly related to the reconstruction which was based on documentary evidence. Series 2. Research and Documentary Materials Subseries 1 Documents and Indexes Subseries 2 Translations and
transcriptions Subseries 3 Subject Files The main focus of these materials is the history of the building of the Presidio and its relation with Mission Santa Barbara. These materials were procured over many years and involved the work of Whitehead and a team of interns, paid consultants, and volunteers who transcribed and translated many of the documents. Whitehead also compiled many subject files on various topics related to early Santa Barbara, mission, and presidio history. Materials include facsimiles of documents (either photocopy or photographs) and indexes; transcriptions and translations by Richard Whitehead and others in various stages of completion; and notes, secondary materials, and subject files. Series 3. Correspondence Subseries 1 General Subseries 2 Personal This correspondence is divided between general and personal files; however, material in both sections covers a variety of similar subjects, such as translations done by various researchers; requests for research material about the Presidio from various libraries; and discussion with colleagues on many topics, including the garden at Mission La Purisima. Whitehead wrote on his own letterhead as well as that of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation and the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library. Series 4. Publications Subseries 1 Writings Subseries 2 Background Material on the Presidio This series includes drafts of some of Whitehead’s published and unpublished writings as well as subject files. See also series 5 for additional writings. Series 5. Volunteer Activities Subseries 1 SB Trust for Historic Preservation 1969- Subseries 2 Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library Subseries 3 SB County Landmarks Advisory Commission Subseries 4 Other Projects and Organizations This series includes papers created while Whitehead was on the board of the Trust, as well as his activities as President and Vice-President during 1972-73. It covers such activities as working with the Presidio Volunteers, raising money for land acquisition, establishing a research center and library of material about the Presidio, with the foundation being his personal library. The correspondence concerns the Trust activities that took place in 1972 and 1973, such as the acquisition of El Paseo and Casa de la Guerra, and the purchase of the chapel site by the state. Also included are Whitehead’s resignation from the board (twice) and some of his opinions on the management of El Paseo in the early 1980s. Oral history interviews called “Conversations with Dick Whitehead” were conducted in 1986 by Linda Moore at Whitehead’s home and at the Presidio. In the interviews, they discussed most of the historical research materials that Whitehead intended to give the Research Center and other materials that were already there. This valuable resource is helpful in understanding the intent of Whitehead’s research, how he acquired many of the historic documents in the collection, his gifts to the Trust, and his hopes for the continuation of his research projects. Subseries 2 documents some of Whitehead’s activities while he was on the board of the SBMAL including the publication of the Voyage of the Frigate Princesa to Southern California in 1782. Subseries 3 includes resource files from a Santa Barbara County survey headed by Whitehead in 1974 to determine historic sites, part of a state parks resource inventory.

Indexing Terms
Santa Barbara Presidio (Calif.)
Santa Barbara (Calif.)--History.
Historic sites--California--Santa Barbara County.
Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation.
Presidio Volunteers.
Mission Santa Barbara (Calif.)
Santa Barbara County. Landmarks Advisory Committee.
Mission La Purísima Concepción (Calif.)
Santa Barbara (Calif.)

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