

DRUM BARRACKS  
PART I---FOUNDING  
By Oliver Vickery

The town of Wilmington was just three years old when the Civil War broke out in 1861. Phineas Banning, a passionate abolitionist, became alarmed because he observed that most of the residents of Los Angeles were for the Southern cause.

Banning wrote a letter to President Lincoln stating that unless his administration made some provision to subdue the rioting and tenseness that were breaking out occasionally in the streets the Northern cause would lose California. He suggested an army camp for Wilmington.

Lincoln sent Major Richard Coulter Drum to arrange the building of a camp. Drum had considerable experience as Adjutant General heading the Department of the West for several years. Phineas Banning and Benjamin Wilson had given the Government sixty acres in exchange for one dollar. A million dollars was appropriated for the new garrison which was completed by January, 1862, in the general area surrounding the surviving Officer's Quarters today at 1053 Cary Avenue in Wilmington.

There was a large parade-ground around which were constructed the soldier barracks, hospital, powder house, guard house, commissary, laundry, command post and officers' quarters.

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Banning Residence, 1864. Front view.



Banning Residence, 1864. Rear view showing eucalyptus trees.  
---Photo courtesy Banning Residence Museum.

## DRUM BARRACKS: FOUNDING (cont.)

Soon after the camp was completed Banning directed that the wires for the new telegraph be installed at the post. This was accomplished in 1862, and the dots and dashes to San Francisco, Washington, D. C. and the East Coast were a welcome miracle.

The camp became a part of the California Militia, later consolidated with the California National Guard. The troops were housed in tents during the construction period. Drum Barracks was named for Brigadier General Drum who had been promoted through Banning's recommendation. One thing is certain, it is not a place for school kids to go to practice on their drums!

Banning also had himself made a brigadier general in the California State Militia. We quote from Maymie Krythe's book, Port Admiral (published by the California Historical Society in 1957):

"At once Banning appointed a full staff, consisting of Assistant Brigadier-General, Adjutant General, Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Ordnance Officer, Brigade Inspector, Quartermaster, Paymaster and Aide-de-Camp. At the time it was fully expected that this militia would be needed for active service."

The full encampment became so large that at one time there were over 7,000 troops stationed in Wilmington. During the length of the Civil War Wilmington had a population larger than Los Angeles.

In 1864 the Rebels sent a few pirates to sneak into the western shores of Catalina Island to try to sink ships carrying Comstock gold and silver to aid the Union. General Banning took Battery A to Catalina and subdued the pirates. A branch building of Drum Barracks at Two Harbors is still standing.

When Drum Barracks was established Fort Tejon was the only military establishment south of the San Francisco Presidio. The fort was supplied with about thirty camels and a company of trained cavalry soldiers. In 1862 they moved their entire establishment to Drum Barracks, including the camels which had been used for transporting supplies to isolated posts in the arid southwest. Now it became the duty of Camp Drum to carry out this service.

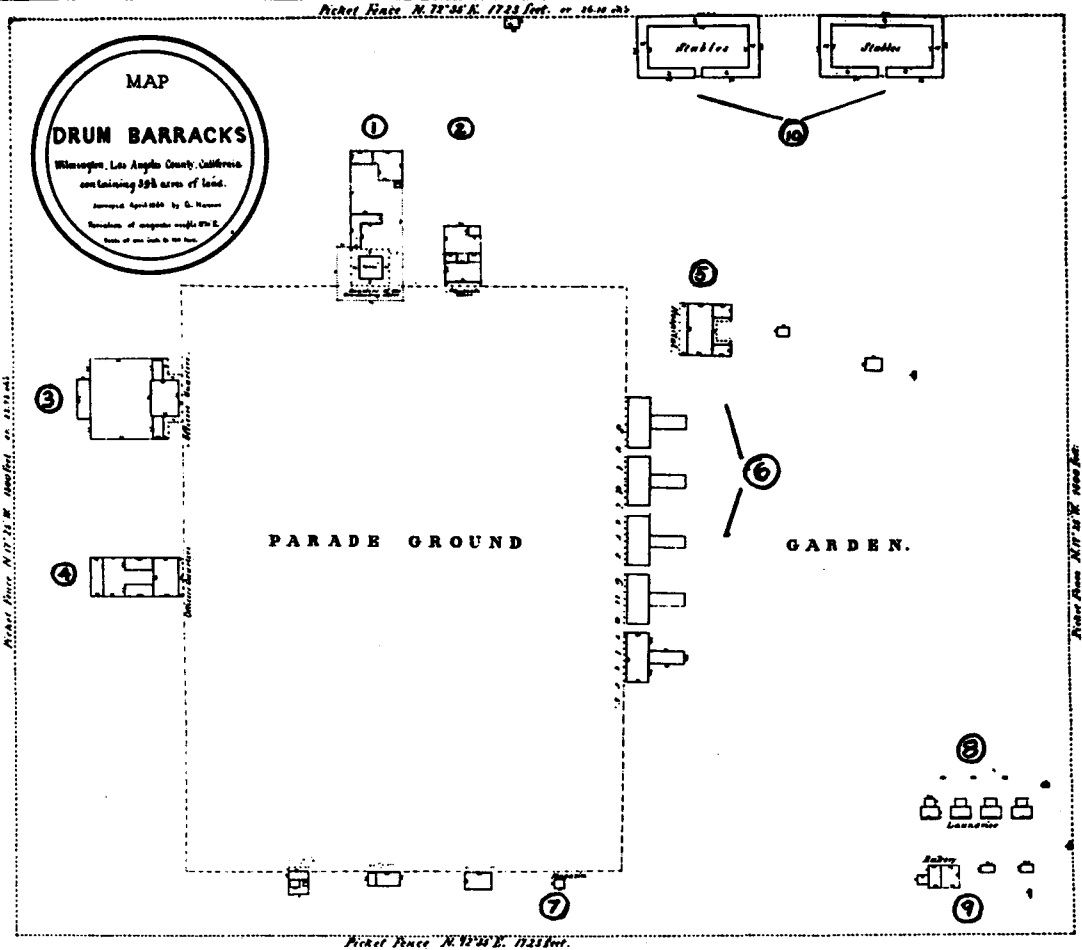
Because of Indian uprisings along the Santa Fe and the Indian trails in Arizona and New Mexico, where Indians were harassing the wagon train migration to California, Drum Barracks provided thousands of troops and cavalry after the Civil War to help quell Indians and keep wagons rolling along. Drum Barracks has indeed earned its honor as a National Monument.

## PART II---PRESERVATION

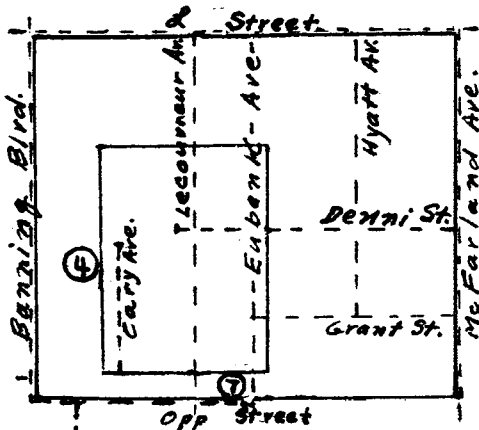
By Marilyn Lofthus

Drum Barracks, established in 1862 as a military post and supply depot for the Department of the West, was a deterrant to Californians favoring the Confederate cause: a Southern candidate named Breckenridge had received twice the votes as had Lincoln; there was a training camp for Confederate soldiers at El Monte; and the Los Angeles Star called the "unholy and unjust" war Lincoln's

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MAP OF DRUM BARRACKS, April, 1865, A.G.Hansen.--- The Lost Buildings of Drum Barracks, William A. Lockett, Journal 1974-1975, Historical Society of Long Beach.--Courtesy Historical Society of Long Beach.



DRUM  
BARRACKS  
MAP  
OVERLAY  
FOR 1982  
By  
Kathryn  
Schultz  
and  
Flora  
Baker

BUILDINGS INDICATED ON MAP

- (1) Quarters of Commanding Officer
- (2) Adjutant's Office
- (3) Officer's Quarters (a)
- (4) Officer's Quarters (b)  
(Present-day Museum)
- (5) Hospital
- (6) Soldiers Quarters
- (7) Magazine
- (8) Laundries
- (9) Bakery
- (10) Stables

## DRUM BARRACKS: PRESERVATION (cont.)

fault. Drum Barracks kept the territory between California and Texas in the Union despite the widespread harassment of the Union sympathizers by Confederate antagonists, and prevented Confederate use of the harbor during the war years. In addition, the troops were instrumental in quelling Indian uprisings from 1862 to 1864 and provided a center for registration of citizens for military duty.

By 1871 the million-dollar garrison had been officially abandoned. In 1873 Benjamin Wilson acquired land and buildings at auction for \$10,000 and, in turn, gave the estate to the Los Angeles Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In time most of the Drum Barracks structures burned down or were dismantled.

The pre-fabricated, two-story Officer's Quarters was purchased in 1910 by Thomas F. Keaveney and turned into a stately residence which was lived in by the family until 1946. Parts of the building were rented until the early 1960s when the family decided to sell it.

The Society for the Preservation of Drum Barracks raised \$8,297 by 1965 of which \$4,505 was added to \$30,000 provided by the City Council, through the efforts of then-Councilman John S. Gibson, Jr., for the purchase of the building by the City. In 1967 Sacramento appropriated \$125,000 for the building. However, only \$30,000 was sent to the City Council for reimbursement and, as then-President Walter Holstein discovered, \$95,000 of the appropriation was used by California Recreation and Parks to purchase beach property. Chairman Mott said, "No run-down old building where little boys bang on drums needs that money."

After several years, through the continuing efforts of Assemblyman Vincent Thomas and Senator Dills, a check for \$86,000 was sent to Los Angeles Recreation and Parks for the restoration. After the election of Mayor Tom Bradley a new Recreation and Parks Commission was formed. Society President Joan Lorenzen and Secretary Marilyn Lofthus attended the first meeting to report on the long lock-up of Drum Barracks' funds. Soon the new Commission Chairman, James Hadaway, began obtaining release of the money due the Museum for restoration. Drum Barracks Museum was able to open in time for the Los Angeles Bi-Centennial celebration in 1980-81.

Today the sixteen-room, colonial-design house has been furnished to recapture the past. There are large, old-fashioned fireplaces, high-ceilinged halls and spacious porches. The patio in the rear contains ferns and many interesting and rare plants, an old stone fountain and a well with an oaken bucket. On the front veranda is the ship's lantern which hung at the entrance of the camp. The building is surrounded by tall palm and cypress trees.

All of the exciting history of Drum Barracks is brought to life for visitors during conducted tours of this 120-year old Civil War museum.

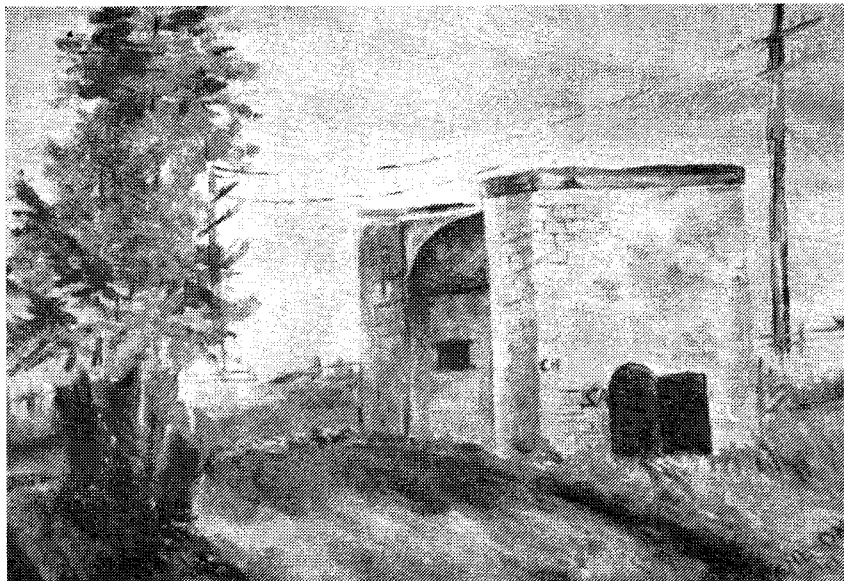
LANDMARK DESIGNATIONS: National Register of Historic Places; California Registered Historical Landmark No. 169; City of Los Angeles Historical Cultural Monument No. 21; Long Beach Parlor No. 154 of the Native Daughters of the Golden West.

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Drum Barracks, Officer's Quarters, 1862.

---Photo courtesy of Society for Preservation of Drum Barracks.



Drum Barracks, Powder Magazine, 1862.

---From 1911 painting by Irene O'Neill, lent by courtesy of Fidel Schmitz.

DRUM BARRACKS: PART III---POST-SCRIPT: THE POWDER MAGAZINE  
By Flora Baker

Up to the present time there have been only two structures surviving from Drum Barracks, the smaller of the Officer's Quarters and the powder magazine. At the time of this publication the powder storehouse on the northwest corner of Eubank and Opp streets has just been uncovered for public view.

It had been purchased by a Mr. Kohlhorst in about 1873 and preserved as a local curiosity for many years. Old-timers remember playing in and around it as children and stories went that it had been an old jailhouse. Across the dirt road to the south was a eucalyptus grove in open fields where today there is an enclosed compound of oil tanks and wells. Over the years an occasional visitor etched initials into the masonry surface, those dating from the 1880s up to the 1920s still visible today.

By 1920 a Mr. Curley Larsen had constructed a plain, wood-frame building around the stone building, the ceiling just high enough to accommodate the arched-middle, square-ended top of the structure. The building was used as a meat market or store; the storehouse portion as a refrigerator for meats, its three-foot thick, stone-and-brick walls providing insulation just as they had protected arms and unpowder from outside sunlight and heat during the 1860s.

Mexican people settling in the area needed a Spanish-language, Catholic Church and obtained the services of Father Gonzalez through the assistance of St. Peter and St. Paul Church parish a few blocks down the street. Masses were celebrated in a tent in the field across the street from the old magazine beginning in 1928. The store building was rented for services during times of wet or cold weather. The new parish was named Holy Family and finally received its own church building nearby in 1947.

The wooden building was converted into a duplex residence and several years ago was sold to Dale Mann. In the past year Mann attempted to sell the property or have the magazine moved to the Drum Barracks Museum site but the Society for the Preservation of Drum Barracks were unable to spare the funds to accept it. The San Pedro Bay Historical Society was trying to contact Mann at the time of the publication of this issue, completely unaware that the City Department of Building and Safety had condemned the wooden building and demolition had been scheduled. Society members were told that the stones and bricks of the old magazine had been removed but were investigating anyway in order to account for it in the Drum Barracks history.

Monday, March 22nd, word came that a wrecking crew had torn down the wooden building and the powder magazine was still there, exposed to the light for the first time in many decades. Eugene "Babe" Aulicino had been driving by and seeing the workmen hacking away at what appeared to be an important old building persuaded the foreman and crew to halt the demolition while he summoned police. The Police cooperated by sending officers to supervise the demolition halt and notifying appropriate authorities. Damage had been sustained only to the roof of the masonry building, a situation easily remedied. The San Pedro Bay Historical Society called for volunteer guards to protect the property from vandals and souvenir hunters already carrying off stray bricks. Society member Jacob

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## WILMINGTON'S CAMP ROSS

By Art Almeida

It is almost forty years since a group of members of the San Pedro Boys Club, of various hues, dimensions and inclinations, would walk, bike, hitch-hike or take the Pacific Electric (disembarking at Figueroa and San Pedro-Wilmington Road) to what is fondly recalled as Goose Town or, in polite circles, Wilmington.

These particular treks were to a dimly remembered army establishment named Camp Ross. It probably was built late 1942 or 1943. Few World War vets remember the facility for most joined or were drafted before its construction and returned after it was deactivated. Situated in the general area of present-day Harbor College, it was surrounded partly by fields of dried grass with Machado Lake to the west. For some inane reason the lake, also once known as Bixby Slough, is now entitled Harbor Lake. Beyond the murky waters loomed rolling hills of grass occasionally blessed with a tree or clusters of trees here and there to the upper reaches of San Pedro Hill.

Our reason for visiting the camp was to witness the phenomenal basketball teams produced by the non-segregated camp personnel, but the games generally also included young local athletes. One year the Camp Ross team thrashed a very youthful-looking U.C.L.A. team. Don Barksdale who later attended U.C.L.A. and garnered All-American honors was one of the players.

Camp Ross, Wilmington, U.S.A., was not unlike other World War II military barracks that mushroomed nationally during the hectic war days. We recall it as a transportation outfit (probably a staging area for military Port of Embarkation activity) manned by segregated black and white troops. The buildings were made of wood and the gym looked like an inflated barn with unpainted inside walls. Gusts of wind stirred up uncomfortable dust from the barren grounds.

Today western Wilmington abounds with stucco and frame houses, a beautiful college campus with gracious eucalyptus and other shade trees, and a grotesque freeway that blocks the magnificent view of hills and harbor.

Our port communities have endured despite some unwanted and undesirable changes. One good and, it is hoped, lasting institution is the college standing on a site once bustling with war-time activity and now devoted to disciplines of learning. In these days of peace it is pleasing to remember young, carefree youth crashing the line, hustling to third base or lunging to the finish after a grueling mile and playing their hearts out mostly just for the fun of it.

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**DRUM BARRACKS: POST-SCRIPT (cont.)**

Gutierrez responded immediately and stood guard day and night at the site while a fence was installed on his initiative and with agreement of the owner. The City has ordered a guard to be posted.

At the present time the future of the old storehouse is uncertain. State and local authorities and historical groups are exploring the alternatives of moving the building onto the grounds of Drum Barracks Museum nearby or buying and developing the property as a separate monument, the latter an historically more valid but much more expensive project. Recognition of the powder magazine as an historical monument is assured. Local residents have been aroused by the flurry of publicity to a new appreciation of the rich, fascinating history of Wilmington.