History Overview

Kumeyaay

Tipai-Kumeyaay village & groups approx. 300 people
- Located on flat area at the base of Presidio Hill
- Lived in small groups
- Each group had a specific territory, 10-30 square miles
- Each group had political and economic control of that area

Agriculture & Trade
- Tipai-Kumeyaay managed the land to provide food for the surrounding families:
  - Plant and land management techniques in the foothills, the canyons and hillsides, the river bottoms, and the marshes
  - Used slash and burn agriculture techniques, controlled burning served two purposes: 1) allows the chaparral to re-seed and produce more food 2) controls what would be spontaneous and life-threatening fires
- Traded food to people in other regions/ecological zones access to hunting, fishing, and gathering areas

Housing, Tools, Clothing
- Before Spanish contact in 1769, lived in tules (pronounced toolees), woven grass-like homes
- Extended families lived together in one tule
- Villages or groups consisted of populations of approximately 300 people
- Tools and implements made of sandstone, stone, wood, bone, and soapstone from the Channel Islands
- Temperate climate: minimal clothing except during periods of cold weather
- Used rabbit skin or willow bark robes for clothing and bedding

Spain

The first Kumeyaay contact with European explorers: September 28, 1542
- 1542 - Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed into San Diego Bay (did not stay)
- 1602 - Sebastian Vizcaíno entered the bay and renamed the spot San Diego de Alcala

Spanish Crown ordered establishment of settlements in Northern California to provide a buffer to Russian and English ships in 1768
1749 Father Junípero Serra leads The Sacred Expedition of 1769 from Mexico
1750 Presidio Hill selected as strategic location for the Spanish to establish control over the land and its people
1751 July 16, 1769 Father Serra dedicated the mission and the Presidio to San Diego de Alcala
1752 Constructed garrison, became the first European settlement in California
1753 First structures made of wood and brush huts, later, stronger wooden and adobe structures
1754 1774 Mission moved 6 miles inland near the Diegueño village of Nipaguay and Presidio official military outpost

Changes to area:
Spanish practices of land management and use of resources dominate the region
European animal husbandry depleted native grasses and drove game into less accessible inland valleys
Intensive agricultural and livestock husbandry changed the landscape surrounding Presidio Hill
Impact Tipai-Kumeyaay land management practice

Mexico

War for Mexican independence the Spanish relinquished the Presidio to Mexico
1833 new Mexican leaders divided the former mission lands as well as lands held by the Kumeyaay into large ranchos
Land structure promotes grazing lands for cattle, now in demand by American east coast population
Also create social and economic ruling class of rancho owners

San Diego developed into one of California’s highest revenue ports
San Diego became prime location for hide trade (described in Richard Henry Dana’s Two Years before the Mast)
Central town developed at the base of Presidio Hill, known today as Old Town
Old Town granted Pueblo Status in 1834
Old Town was center of social and political life

Mexican American War
During the Mexican-American War, Commodore Robert Stockton used Presidio Hill as a garrison until 1849
1850 California became a state and began defining its boundaries and laws
Battles for retaining land rights, Mexican Californios and Native Americans
Native Americans under the Department of the Interior moved to reservations
By 1851 22,000 Native Americans had died:
  1862-1863 smallpox epidemic
  1864-1865 drought

United States

San Diego flourishes:
  Gold rush in northern California brought San Diego new wealth
  Entrepreneurs came to San Diego with many schemes for development
  1871 Center of town moved to present downtown location called "New Town"
  Presidio Hill remained abandoned until 1920

Presidio Hill becomes a Park:
  • 1920 preservation meant the beautification of nature
  • 1907 George Marston, a merchant and prominent San Diegan, began to take an interest in Presidio Hill
  • Marston commissioned John Nolen to develop urban plan for Presidio Hill
    Nolen was a city planner and landscape architect from Cambridge, Mass.
  Landscaping reflected earth 20th century American values:
    Tied to European standards of landscape design and reflected the 20th century perception of beautification, pastoral landscape
  Today, Presidio Hill remains a tribute to George Marston's dream to create a park for all people to enjoy.