

**Little Hoover Commission
June 26, 2012 Hearing on the California State Park System**

**Testimony of Jarrell C. Jackman, PhD, Executive Director of the Santa
Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with the Commission the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation (SBTHP) 45-year partnership with California State Parks in developing and operating El Presidio de Santa Barbara SHP. In addition, under a lease back agreement, the SBTHP operates the Santa Ines Mission Mills state property, a future State Historic Park, and I will be happy to share with you our approach to managing this National Historic Landmark site. The SBTHP is past winner of the Dewitt State Park Partnership Award and this past October at the National Trust Conference in Buffalo the SBTHP received the prestigious Trustee Emeritus Award for excellence in the stewardship of historic sites. (<http://www.preservationnation.org/take-action/awards/2011-national-preservation-awards/the-santa-barbara-trust.html>)

I bring to you a personal commitment to California's State Parks as a past president of the California League of Park Associations and one of the few people alive who has visited all 279 of California's incredible state park units. They are irreplaceable and to borrow and slightly alter a quotation from conservationist and novelist Wallace Stegner referring to our National Park System, our State Park System is the greatest idea our government in Sacramento has ever had.

I read in a report several years back that in America the nonprofit sector generates 10 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, a surprising number, but one that tells us that there is room for growth in this area with regard to helping preserve our State Park System. With the passage of AB42, the Parks Department is now able to sign operating agreements with nonprofits around the State. Before its passage, specific individual legislation was needed to sign operating agreements with nonprofits, such as was created in 1988 in the Public Resources Code for the SBTHP to operate El Presidio SHP. This legislation built on a previous partnership between the SBTHP and DPR, leading to a bill that our local Democratic State Senator Gary Hart and Assemblyman Jack O'Connell carried, and was signed into law by then Republican Governor George Deukmejian. I mention party affiliation because it is an example of bipartisanship.

With AB42, a new day has arrived. But the question is can nonprofits rise to the occasion? I think they can, but they will not all be able to do it in the way we have. Each situation will have some unique qualities. The advantage of El Presidio SHP is that it has considerable rental income within the park — including restaurants, retail stores, a theatre, a school, and a few residences. The Park itself has evolved over the years, and the Trust has purchased most of the properties and then sold them to the State to form the historic park. The money from the sale of the property has been reinvested in the park.

The Park's primary educational goal has been to interpret the military and civilian life of early Spanish California. But we also interpret the Japanese and Chinese history of Santa Barbara as part of our program because these ethnic groups settled in the Presidio neighborhood in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Basically, when we started there were two rooms of the original presidio that formed the Park — El Cuartel, built in 1788. Today the Department, in cooperation with the SBTHP, has acquired nearly the entire original footprint of the fort in a four-block area in downtown Santa Barbara, while the SBTHP has rebuilt 20 rooms, including a chapel, restored two other adobes and rehabilitated a 2,500 square-foot artist studio into a new research center. We have also parlayed agreements with other nonprofits such as Built Green Santa Barbara into the restoring historic buildings to meet “green standards.” At present we are preparing a major interpretive plan for developing a state of the art museum for the park. We contracted on the first phase with a leading museum design company in London, which does blockbuster exhibits at the British Museum.

We currently have 20 part-time and full-time employees, less deferred maintenance than most parks, and are a financially sound organization. How have we done it?

First of all we have an endowment of close to six million dollars, and a membership and fund-raising team that raises money for the park. In a wise move, the SBTHP sold a famous historic commercial complex called El Paseo previously gifted to us, placed an easement over it protecting it, and have used the proceeds to form the corpus of our endowment. We have a board of professionals — lawyers, a CPA, bank executives, commercial real estate developers, several historians, an anthropologist, museum professionals and an adobe contractor. On staff we have historians, a business manager with a CPA background, an archaeologist, a development director, an education coordinator and a team of young history students from UCSB who work weekends and summers as paid museum attendants.

We are, in short, the model for nonprofit operation of a State Historic Park. But I often hear from people — well, you are from Santa Barbara, which is a rich community. It's no wonder you can do what you are doing. The fact is that Santa Barbara in total is not a Beverly Hills, nor a San Marino. The city has a very large low-income Latino presence, a long-time resident middle- and lower-middle-class population, and a nonprofit for just about every cause you can think of, all of which are seeking funding for their worthy causes from the wealthy sections of town located in nearby Montecito and Hope Ranch.

Why the SBTHP has succeeded has everything to do with having very smart professional people committed to its success, and that culture has been perpetuated over the years. The organization was founded by Pearl Chase, an enormously influential person, who was named Los Angeles Times “woman of the year” in the 1960s, and who was described by one admirer as a “Force of Nature,” a woman who never took “no” for an answer. It was she who

established relations with the State and commissioned a study that said that El Presidio was worthy of becoming a State Historic Park.

My impression of other cooperating associations and nonprofits around the state serving California State Parks is that they, like the SBTHP, have very talented, educated and committed people. I have encountered these people during my tenure on the board of the California League of Parks Association.

It is really a matter of finding ways to let them become like us. The buzzword is capacity building, and a commitment on the part of Department to this end will bear fruit. To be specific, I would suggest that funds in the Park budget be set aside to identify and train individuals in the private sector to serve on the boards or as staffers of nonprofits.

I believe there is some legislation pending to do just this, and already the State Park Foundation has set aside funding for this purpose and has hired someone to work with cooperating associations the Foundation believes have the potential of assuming larger roles in the operations of various parks. It is important that the Department and Foundation work in tandem, and most important that all of us embrace the notion of shared governance.

It is a Brave New World out of which a symbiotic relationship can be fostered between the Parks Department and the volunteers and paid staff running the nonprofits. I think at this point both sides are earnestly trying to find their way in this process, and I am optimistic that we can find solutions to the unparalleled challenges facing the Park system.

I am happy to share in more detail how we have grown the SBTHP to what it is today and answer any questions you have regarding how what we have done can be applied to the wider world of the State Park System. Thank you.