

Balboa Park, California Tower  
Balboa Park, El Prado Area  
San Diego  
San Diego County  
California

HABS No. CA-1963-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BALBOA PARK CALIFORNIA TOWER

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CAL  
37-SAND 1,  
16-A-

Location: Balboa Park - El Prado Area, San Diego, San Diego County, California.

Present Owner: City of San Diego.

Present Occupant: Museum of Man.

Present Use: Museum of Anthropology.

Significance: One of the most outstanding examples of Spanish Baroque reproduction in North America. The Tower was designed in the Spanish Chereguesque style to express the Spanish heritage of California by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue of New York.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The building was built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition by the city. The exposition celebrated the completion of the Panama Canal linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The California Building is a memorial to the marriage of the two cultures of the Old and the New World.
2. Date of erection: The building was built in 1914. The official opening of the exhibition was on January 1, 1915.
3. Architect: Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue was the architect for the building with Carlton Monroe Winslow, Sr. as the project architect. Bertram Goodhue came to San Diego from New York City specifically to master plan the exposition buildings and design the California Tower.
4. Building: Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue supervised the building of California Tower. The use of multi-colored ceramic tile in the building was designed by Mr. Goodhue and created in National City by Walter Nordhoff who faithfully followed historic precedent in the medium. The basic structural material is of natural stone from Mexico and concrete. The Italian artist Alfonso Lanelli, did the high relief sculptures on the tower entrance which depict Father Junipero Serra, King Philip III and King Charles V of Spain, Sebastian Viscaino and Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo.

5. Alterations and additions: The California Tower was one of the few buildings, built for the 1915 Exposition, constructed of permanent materials. Over the years the ornamentation and the anchorage which holds it to the building had deteriorated to the extent that pieces began to fall off at various locations around the structure. Repairs and restoration has been made. Structural strengthening has been incorporated. The restoration cost \$600,000.

In the 1940s carillon chimes were installed in the tower. The chimes can be heard for 25 miles under proper conditions. In 1966 a gift of quartz-iodine lamps with 48,000,000 candlepower lighted the Tower making it visible for many miles.

B. Historical Context:

The opening day of the Panama-California Exposition on January 1, 1915 was a big affair for San Diego. The opening address was presented by G. A. Davidson, President of the Panama-California Exposition. Many distinguished persons were in attendance; such as the personal representative of the President of the United States, the personal representative of the King of Spain, several senators, governors of many States, and mayors of many western cities.

The California Tower building was used as a hospital training unit by the Navy throughout the war.

The buildings of the Exposition were not thrown up with careless concern but displayed an aspect of permanence and far-seeing design. The noble quadrangle of buildings of which the California State Building is the dominant feature was a blend of the old Tepotzotlan culture and the present. It has become a landmark, the very symbol of San Diego.

The California Building has been the home of the Museum of Man since the Exposition. This museum is the dedication to the study of man in the western hemisphere.

C. Sources of Information:

Historical Site Board Files-San Diego Historical Site No. 1-on the National Register 12/12/76.

Magazine and Newspaper Articles.

Official Opening Address of G. A. Davidson, President Panama-California Exposition.

San Diego Library Files (California Room).

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See also HABS field records accompanying this report for copies of various articles that have been published on the structure.

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