

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Marine Corps Stewardship Preserves Landmark California Ranch House MCB Camp Pendleton, San Diego County, California



“For 13 years, the base and the university have worked together to bring the building back from the brink of collapse. Today, the buildings and site are well on their way to recovering the grace and beauty of an earlier era. In the process, the partners have chronicled the history of the ranch, retrofitted the building to protect it from earthquakes, conserved the many surviving architectural features, and are currently involved in the rehabilitation of the surrounding landscape.”

— DOUGLAS PORTER  
Research Associate, University of  
Vermont

Photos: Above, scaffolding along the south elevation during stabilization (2002); Right, Adobe prior to stabilization (c.2000). The corridor roof failed where it joins the main block, and doors and windows are boarded up; The corridor following exterior repairs (2013), (photos courtesy MCB Camp Pendleton)



### THE STORY

In 1841, the last Mexican governor of California obtained a land grant from the Mexican government for 133,441 acres called Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores on what was once a Spanish mission. In 1868, Las Flores Adobe was constructed as a family home on the ranch. The property changed hands several times until the Magee family acquired the ranch in 1888. The Adobe and the surrounding ranch came into federal ownership during World War II. While the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) established Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton as a training facility at the site, the Magee family retained a life tenancy in the ranch from 1942 until 1968. Designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1968, Las Flores Adobe, with its original carriage house, is one of a small number of surviving 19th century Monterey Colonial style residences, a style typified by a mix of New England and Southwestern building techniques.

### THE PROJECT

In 1969, MCB Camp Pendleton proposed the demolition of the Adobe, triggering a Section 106 review. Formal comments by the full membership of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation called for preservation of the Adobe, which staved off demolition. The property remained vacant from 1968 to 1974 when MCB Camp Pendleton entered into a 25-year lease agreement with the Boy Scouts of America, during which time the property was utilized as a playground. The National Park Service (NPS) listed the Adobe as a damaged and threatened NHL in 1987, describing the Adobe as highly deteriorated and recommending preservation efforts. MCB Camp Pendleton began planning the stabilization of this landmark in late 1999.

### THE 106 PROCESS

USMC, the federal agency carrying out protection, stabilization, and rehabilitation efforts, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on



Photos: Above, historic windows were repaired in a training workshop in 2003; Right, lime stucco repair and repair of wood moldings (photos courtesy MCB Camp Pendleton)

those properties. Federal agencies are also required to consult with parties that have an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects are likely to occur. MCB Camp Pendleton partnered with the Intermountain Region of the NPS to study and develop a plan for long-term stabilization measures approved by MCB Camp Pendleton engineers and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In 2002, MCB Camp Pendleton and the SHPO entered into a Memorandum of Agreement for a phased approach to restoring the Las Flores Adobe NHL with support from the Intermountain Region Office.

In cooperation with the University of Vermont, the first phase, beginning in 2002, consisted of seismic and structural stabilization of the ranch house, repair of wood floors, reconstruction of two-story porches, and installation of new roof coverings. The second phase, restoration of windows and doors in the ranch house, was completed in 2003. Seismic and structural stabilization of the carriage house was completed in 2004.

## THE SUCCESS

Through the Section 106 process, an important piece of California's Hispanic heritage was first saved from demolition and then restored for the benefit of future generations. It stands as a model for other military installations seeking to achieve both historic preservation successes and mission goals. Since 2005, in cooperation with MCB Camp Pendleton, staff and students from the University of Vermont's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation have spent summers at the Adobe implementing preservation efforts. Students and volunteers learn valuable restoration techniques while also contributing to the rehabilitation of the NHL, carrying out building envelope and site drainage improvements, plaster repairs, landscaping, and fire and security system installation. MCB Camp Pendleton continues its commitment to the preservation of Las Flores Adobe with a proposed long-term budget for the restoration and maintenance of the property through 2021. Currently, the Adobe can be toured upon appointment and is utilized for heritage events.



### Consulting Parties:

National Park Service  
 MCB Camp Pendleton  
 California State Historic  
 Preservation Officer  
 University of Vermont

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)

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