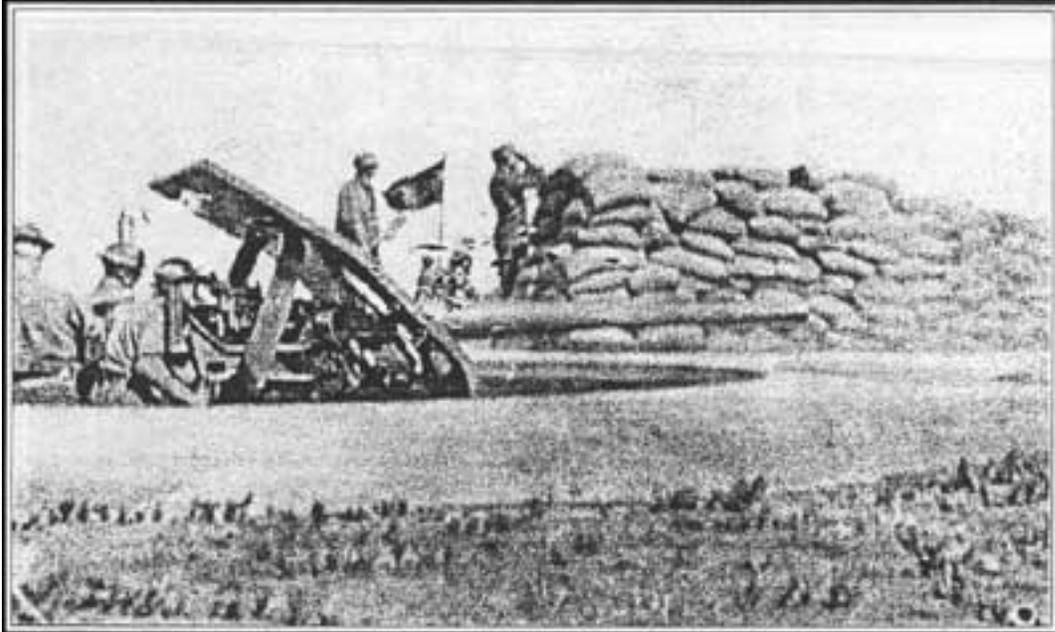


## Field Guide to Coronado History:

### Coronado's Big Gun Defenses

By Bruce Linder



Coronado's Fort Pio Pico about 1916

There was an era in American history when strong coastal fortifications were important elements of national defense. Concerned about enemy attacks on our harbors and invasions across coastal beaches, the government built massive fortifications to guard the nation's many harbors. Fort Sumter in Charleston and Fort McHenry in Baltimore were good examples.

But what of little Coronado? Coronado should have been a prime candidate for coastal defenses. It had a lengthy coastline of perfect beaches (perfect, no doubt, for invasion as well), a nearby international border, and a location commanding the entrance to one of the most important harbors on the West Coast.

Along the West Coast, the federal government built a seacoast fortification at Fort Point in the 1850s to guard San Francisco and the Golden Gate and work began on a strong, multi-tier masonry fort at Ballast Point in 1873 to guard San Diego Bay.

Although the 1873 plan for San Diego Bay included revetments at North Island, the project ultimately fizzled for lack of funding and it was not until 1889 that a new blueprint surfaced for multiple 10-inch and 8-inch guns at Ballast Point and Point Loma. Importantly for Coronado this new plan included two weighty 8-inch guns with four 12-inch mortars guarding the channel from North Island.

By 1891 this recommendation expanded to also include installation of a new battery at what was referred to as “the Brickyard” a site just down the Silver Strand from the Hotel del Coronado that could direct fire across the Bay’s entrance channel and protect against beach landings.

Throughout this entire time, it was not beyond the realm of possibility that large brick or cement fortifications with impressive walls and great guns would be built along Coronado’s shores. For everyone, it appeared as if the Army was coming to defend Coronado in a big way!

As things played out, serious construction work did not begin on North Island fortifications until 1898. Cement was poured for multiple gun emplacements with sandbags and revetments built for use of defending infantry. Two 3-inch rapid-fire guns were installed and the site was christened, somewhat grandly, as Fort Pio Pico (named for the last Mexican governor of Alta California) with the gun emplacements referred to as Battery James Meed (for an American infantry captain killed in action during 1813). Coastal defenses at “the Brickyard” to defend Coronado’s pristine beaches from marauders were postponed and later cancelled.

Although Fort Pio Pico was damaged during a winter storm in 1914, stalwart defenders of Coronado continued to serve at their posts at Zuniga Point throughout World War I. Coronado’s guns were ultimately dismantled and transferred to Point Loma in 1918 when it was discovered that beach erosion had further undermined Battery Meed.

Fort Pio Pico was unceremoniously decommissioned in 1919 – ending, for Coronado, its own grand experiment in coastal defenses.

EDITION OF MARCH, 4, 1914.  
REVISIONS: DEC. 7, 1915, JUNE 9, 1916.

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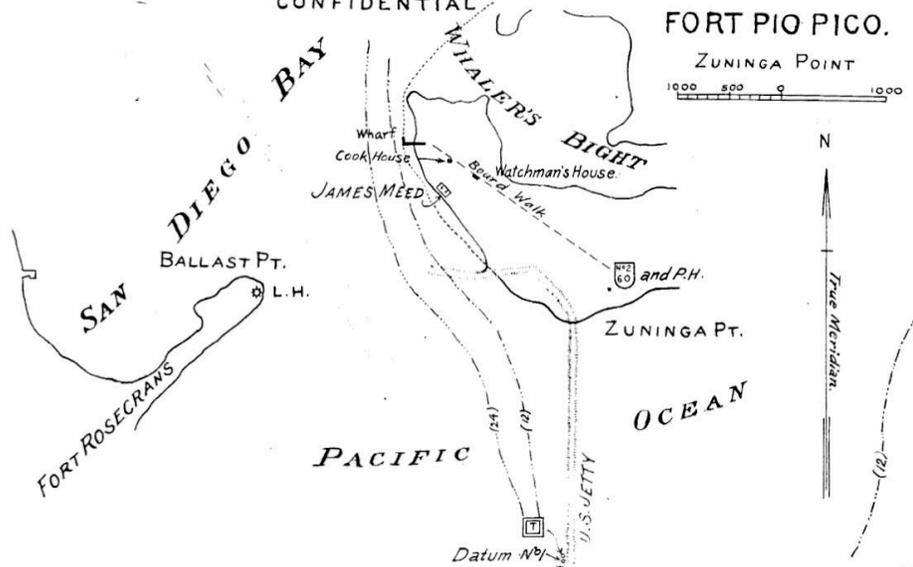
SAN DIEGO HARBOR CAL.

BATTERIES  
MEED.....2-3'PED

**FORT PIO PICO.**

ZUNINGA POINT

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1914 (plan) shows a caretaker cottage, cookhouse, boardwalk and searchlight installation and a wharf for the landing of gun crews and troops from Fort Rosecrans.

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