

Tennessee Hollow's History

Tennessee Hollow's spring-fed tributaries were important water sources in the early days of the post. As the need for fresh water increased in the 1880s, the U.S. Army built dams to capture the watershed's natural springs. Later, the Army turned its attention to a more prolific water source at Lobos Creek, and much of Tennessee Hollow's creek system was directed into underground storm drains and concrete channels. Today, more than half the creek system is in underground pipes or lined channels. The small areas of creek that remain provide some of the most valuable habitat in San Francisco. Maps of the Presidio dating from the 1800s indicate that two locally prominent families, the Briones and Miramontes, lived near El Polin Springs, marking the first known colonial residence occurring outside the walls of El Presidio. For more than 70 years, historians and archaeologists have searched the area surrounding the springs for evidence of early adobe structures.

These searches were unsuccessful until 2003 when a Stanford University field class led by Dr. Barbara Voss discovered the foundation of a Spanish/Mexican period adobe house. Subsequent field investigations continue to deepen understanding of this early settlement and the complex relationship between these colonists and the native peoples. For more information about this research project, [view the Stanford website](#) and visit the [Presidio Archaeology Lab](#). Tennessee Hollow got its name at the end of nineteenth century. It was named after the 1st Tennessee Regiment, a group of volunteer soldier who made camp in the low ground east of Funston Avenue in 1898 just before shipping out the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. The watershed was home to many tent encampments, or cantonments, during that period; later serving as temporary housing for San Franciscans displaced by the Great Earthquake. Today, it contains some of the Presidio's oldest residential neighborhoods and is home to more than 1,200 people – over a third of the park's residential population.