

Very Friendly Members, Excellent Food, Great Town



Santa Barbara Club, California

by Lew Toulmin

My wife and I visited the Santa Barbara Club (SBC) and had dinner and a tour in July 2017. We stayed in the allied Upham Hotel nearby for three nights.

HISTORY AND THE BUILDING: The club was founded in 1892 and is the oldest club in the area. It was founded by local ranchers and businessmen, and by visiting industrialists from the East. The members moved into the current, lovely two-storey clubhouse in 1904.



Originally for men only, the club admitted women as full members in 1991.

The SBC is in an excellent location, two blocks from the spectacular County Courthouse and only a block to State Street, the main

shopping area. Santa Barbara is one of the most attractive towns in America, with a unified, consistent Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, which came about when the Moorish Revival town center was levelled in a violent 1925 earthquake. The SBC clubhouse survived that quake with no problems.

FACILITIES: The club facilities and activities include meeting rooms, dining rooms, patio and outdoor dining, a large lawn for outdoor events (no tents ever needed or used, given the excellent climate!), and billiards/pool upstairs.





Parking is free when dining at the club.

Staff were very helpful, friendly and knowledgeable. We were given a full tour of the building and even the kitchen, a first.

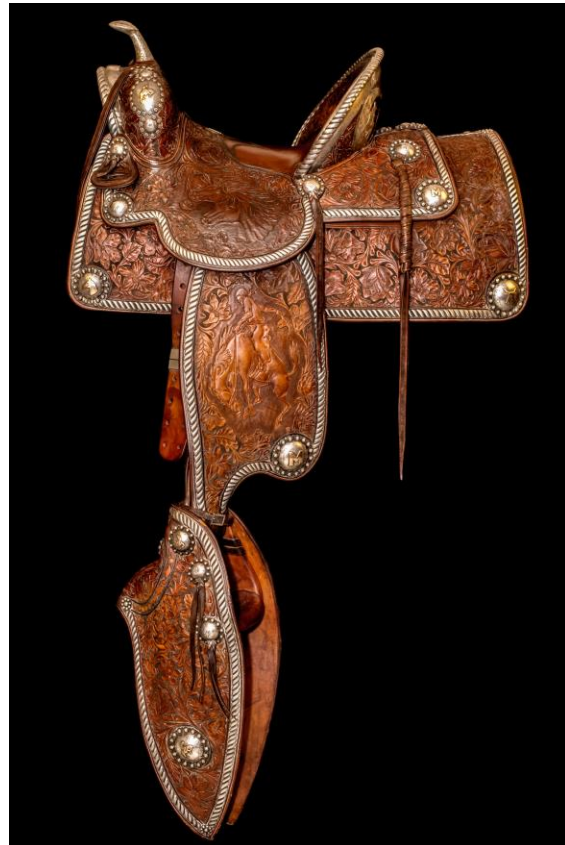
Another first was when two club members introduced themselves and then invited us to see their privately owned historic “adobe,” Casa de la Guerra, built

in 1818, part of the historic downtown section. These members were descendants of the original Spanish settlers, and during our visit we got to see their original Spanish land grant documents in Santa Barbara and for a ranch of over 20 square miles, in a valley north of town. Never before in visiting 40+ clubs have we been invited by members who were strangers to visit their private home! That visit then led to an invitation to attend a super lecture on the art and history of the gorgeous saddles of California at the Historical Museum of Santa Barbara.

There is no overnight accommodation at SBC, but the club has a substantial discount arrangement with the nearby boutique Upham Hotel. There the rack rate was \$375 per night, while we were able to get a reciprocal rate of only \$199 for our room, a junior king suite, a discount of 47 percent. We stayed at the Upham for three days and were quite pleased. This hotel discount is available to reciprocal members, just mention the SBC (or the University Club of Santa Barbara) and ask for a club rate.

The club used to have 12 bedrooms upstairs, but these have been converted to offices for staff, and rental offices for members. These are quite popular, due to the low rate of only \$600 per month, and there is a waiting list.

The dress code is generally business casual.



FOOD: Like its nearby rival the University Club of Santa Barbara, the SBC is oriented toward weekdays-only dining, since weekends are usually devoted to weddings. Lunch is served Monday to Friday, and dinner is only served on Wednesdays and Fridays. On Wednesday happy hour lasts from 5 to 7 pm, with \$5 mixed drinks, \$1 soft drinks, \$9 entrees and \$4 desserts. Theme nights on Fridays feature Japanese, Mexican, French, Hawaiian and other foods.

Our dinner included an excellent burger and a salmon, both an “A-,” followed by an “A-“ chocolate mousse and a terrific lemon tart, an outstanding “A+.” We are tough graders, and this is one of the only times we have given all “A”s to our dishes at a club. Well done!

More good news: prices were a bit lower than at the rival University Club of Barbara Club, with SBC charging about two dollars less per dish.

Note that since the club is closed for member activities on the weekend, and only open for weddings, reciprocal members should not even attempt to call the club or set up any meal or event on the weekend.

MEMBERSHIP: Members are drawn from local businesspersons, lawyers, bankers, government officials and academics. The club is an excellent venue meeting leaders and the society of Santa Barbara. There are only 200 members, the club recently hit that ceiling number, and there is now a three month waiting list for full membership slots. As a result, the club is in excellent financial shape.



The membership process is invitation only and includes the nominee attending two social events, followed by review by a committee and the club board.

Additional photos of the club and Upham Hotel are shown below.



Below: the Upham Hotel



Below: the Santa Barbara Club

