

THE STORY OF MISSION SANTA BARBARA

Mission Santa Barbara was the tenth of the California missions to be founded by the Spanish Franciscans. It was established on the Feast of St. Barbara, Dec. 4, 1786. Padre Junipero Serra, who had founded the first nine missions, had died 2 years earlier. Serra had planned to build this mission, raising the cross at the presidio of Santa Barbara in 1782. It was Padre Fermin Francisco de Lasuen, his successor, who raised the cross here and placed Padre Antonio Paterna, a companion of Serra, in charge. Paterna put up the first buildings and made the first converts.

The original buildings were of adobe and unpretentious. As the years passed, there was progress and development. There were three adobe churches here, each larger than the other, before the present church. The third was destroyed by earthquake in 1812. Thereafter the present church was planned. It was finished and dedicated in 1820. The present friary residence was built gradually, first one story, then a second was added. It was not finished until 1870. The beautiful fountain in front of the mission was built in 1808. The earthquake of June 29, 1925, damaged the mission church and friary considerably. Restoration work was completed in 1927 and the towers reinforced in 1953.

Prior to the Spanish arrival the Chumash inhabited the area from Malibu to San Luis Obispo. They were hunters and gatherers oriented to the sea. They built plank boats (tomols) which were capable of traveling to the Channel Islands. Their religious practices and ceremonies included the creation of elaborate polychrome rock art located in remote caves and rock outcroppings. Chumash villages were autonomous, headed by a hereditary leader. Houses were dome shaped with tules covering a willow frame. Basketry was a major art form as were stone bowls and tools. Chumash manufactures were noted by early explorers as being high in quality. Their skilled handiwork greatly contributed to the mission's success.

Chumash leaders such as Chief Yanonali became Christians, leading many villagers to join them. Native customs did not die out all together in arts or belief, however. In the 1880's Rafael Solares (pictured in museum room #1 in spiritual leader's garb) was the last Antap (Native spiritual leader) and also the sacristan of mission Santa Ines and an active Christian leader. Many Chumash descendants still live in the Santa Barbara area today. A number of Indian community groups keep culture alive and provide social, cultural, medical, and preservation programs that benefit the Indian community.

The Franciscans introduced agriculture to the Indians. The principal products of the field were wheat, barley, corn, beans and peas. Orange and olive trees were planted and vines were cultivated. Water was brought from the mountain creeks to irrigate the fields and for domestic use. To impound these waters the Indian Dam was built in 1807, about two miles upstream. The water was led to the mission by an aqueduct, the water flowing by gravity. The ruins of these, together with a mill, tanning vats, a storage reservoir, and a filter may be seen near the mission today.

Mission Santa Barbara had cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, mules and horses in great number. In 1809, there were 5,200 head of cattle, and in 1803, 11,221 head of sheep. At the mission the Indians made adobes, tiles, shoes, and woolen garments, learned the trades of carpenter and mason, and became herdsmen and farmers. They also learned to sing and play European instrumental music. Church services were accompanied by an Indian choir and instrumental ensemble of violins, cellos, woodwinds and brasses rather than an organ.

The original purpose of the mission was the Christianization of the Chumash Indians. This was considered accomplished by the 1830's. With no new converts the mission's Indian population started to go down. Spain had lost California to Mexico in 1822 and in 1834 the mission was secularized. Indians were placed under civil jurisdiction not church authority. Civil administration resulted in a deterioration of lifestyle and buildings. Fr. Duran was then appointed administrator in 1839 and in 1843 the missions were returned to the Franciscans. Two years later the Governor confiscated the lands and in 1846 the mission was sold. The missionaries were allowed to conduct services in the church (unlike many California missions which were abandoned or turned into barns). In 1865 the mission was returned to the Catholic church by Abraham Lincoln (California having become part of the U.S. in 1848).

When the mission period was over, the buildings were used for a number of purposes. From 1868 until 1877 the Franciscans conducted a high school and junior college for boys, both for boarders and local students. In 1896, a seminary was opened at the mission for candidates studying for the priesthood. Until the summer of 1968 the School of Theology for the Franciscan Province of St. Barbara was located in the mission buildings. The Friars work in various apostolates in the western states. They continue to serve the Indians of Arizona and New Mexico as well as the foreign missions. The mission church today is used by the Parish of St. Barbara.

When Santa Barbara's Presidio was founded in 1782, in expectation of founding a mission here, the Spanish soldiers were of varied ethnic backgrounds. Indian tribes of Mexico, Sephardic Jews, and Africans as well as Spaniards were all represented in the ancestry of California's early settlers. Some of those settlers soon intermarried with native Chumash people. There are numerous Santa Barbarans today who trace their ancestry to the Chumash and a Presidio soldier or early settler. When the Americans arrived in 1848, further intermarriage occurred resulting in the diversity of Santa Barbara's heritage reflected in the names and backgrounds of those buried in the mission cemetery. Early Manila galleons and China clippers brought Asian cultural influence to California as well. Some visible examples of this cultural infusion are the Philippine crucifix and the Chinese silk vestments in the museum Chapel room and the variety of Chinese porcelain alongside the English China, Mexican Majolica and California Indian basketry seen in the Kitchen display. The obvious Moorish (African) cultural influences are clearly visible in the architecture of the mission itself, while the art works that decorate the mission are primarily from Mexico's rich cultural traditions. Santa Barbara mission today is a monument to the cultural diversity of California's heritage.



DECEMBER 4, 1786

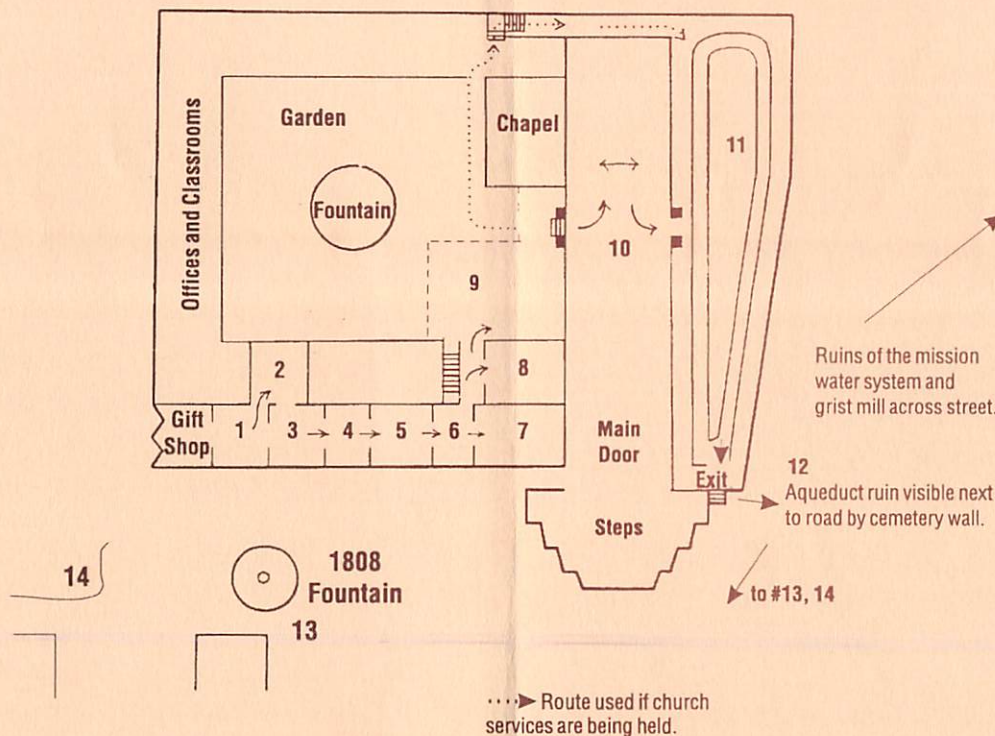
THE MUSEUM

These present day museum rooms were originally used as living quarters for the missionaries and guests. Today these rooms display a rich collection of historical artifacts, some of which date from the earliest mission period.

The museum rooms and important areas are in the following sequence:

- 1. CHUMASH INDIAN PEOPLE AND THE FOUNDING OF MISSION SANTA BARBARA** — This room contains Chumash baskets and tools as well as items from the early mission period.
- 2. THE BUILDING PERIOD AND THE OLDEST KNOWN PHOTOGRAPHS** — Examples of tools and building materials are displayed.
- 3. A MISSIONARY'S BEDROOM** — Features mission period antique furnishings and clothing.
- 4. CHUMASH INDIAN ART ROOM** — Especially noteworthy are the only known examples of large Indian made sculptures in California.
- 5. MISSION TRADES** — This display features a few of the skills of the colonial period which were taught at this mission. They include candlemaking, pottery, weaving and ironwork.
- 6. THE FIRST BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA** — Artifacts belonging to Bishop Garcia Diego are housed here in his original quarters.
- 7. THE KITCHEN** — The variety of Mexican, English and Indian tools and dishes are typical of early California.
- 8. THE CHAPEL ROOM** — Containing the original mission altar and music books as well as vestments, musical instruments and art works.
- 9. GARDEN** — Originally this garden was a working area where many of the Indians learned the trades. The workshops and some of the living quarters for the Indians were located in the surrounding buildings. Today the quadrangle buildings house offices and classrooms.
- 10. CHURCH** — In the mission church are many examples of 18th and 19th century Mexican art. The two paintings toward the front are the largest in the California Missions and are approximately 200 years old. The two stone plaques on the floor bear the names of the early missionaries and laymen buried in the crypt below the floor. The facade design was taken from Vitruvius' book of Roman Architecture (circa 25 B.C.).
- 11. CEMETERY (1789)** — The skull carvings above the door tell you that you are now entering the cemetery. Santa Barbara's culturally diverse early settlers are buried here as well as approximately 4,000 Indians, including Juana Maria, the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island. Her life is portrayed in the book "Island of the Blue Dolphins." She was buried here in 1853 (location unknown today).
- 12. AQUEDUCT** — Aqueduct ruins are visible on the sidewalk edge outside the cemetery wall. Further ruins of the mission water system are across the street.
- 13. FOUNTAIN** — The beautiful Moorish fountain was built in 1808. The large basin is a lavanderia and was used by the Indian women to wash clothes.
- 14. BOTANIC GARDEN** — Dedicated to native plants used by the Chumash Indian people. The mission grounds also display plants introduced by the Spanish such as olive, orange, pomegranate and pepper trees.

Visitor's Guide to Old Mission Santa Barbara



ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The colonial art collection of this mission is rich and varied. Most of the pieces are of the baroque or neoclassical eras, and nearly all were imported from Mexico and South America. Some notable exceptions include the three stone statues in the museum depicting St. Barbara, along with the virtues of faith and charity. These three were carved by a mission Indian using pictures in books as a guide, from which he carved three dimensional images. The figure of charity has very pronounced Indian features. These are the only existing large sculptures done by California Indians.

The paintings and statues in the church and museum depict angels, saints, and Bible stories. Some of the more notable works include the large crucifix portraying the suffering of Jesus on the cross. The straining body and streaming blood from the wounds are meant to emotionally involve the worshipper in the passion of Christ. The small statues of St. Dominic and St. Francis are especially fine sculptures whose faces display a sense of emotional intensity typical of baroque art.

The church building is similar to those built in the countryside of Mexico in the early 1800's. It is primarily neoclassical in style, utilizing decorative devices and features from the time of the Roman Empire. The ionic capitals on top of the pilasters echo the ones on the facade of the building, and were considered appropriate by the Romans for a temple dedicated to a goddess. Since this church is dedicated to St. Barbara, the designers utilized these "female" architectural attributes. The church was probably constructed under the direction of a master mason, Jose Antonio Ramirez. It represents the greatest engineering achievement of the combine efforts of the Indian, Spanish and Mexican artisans here in Santa Barbara.