

RESTORATION

The Museum has been improved with the help of Dr. Ruben Mendoza and the students of California State University, Monterey Bay. Our future goals include rebuilding the guard tower where the Spanish soldiers lived and rebuilding the missing wings of the Mission whose foundations have been uncovered by Dr. Mendoza. Obviously this is an expensive process and we deeply appreciate any donations you can make to the Mission.

Visit our website at: www.oldmissionsjb.org

If you wish to become a Benefactor of the Mission, please call (831) 623-2127 for information.

For Tours / School Projects, please call (831) 623-4528.

Address: Second & Mariposa Streets
P. O. Box 400
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045



Welcome to

OLD MISSION SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

FOUNDED JUNE 24, 1797



Mission Open
9:30 am to 4:30 pm
(Daily Except Major Holidays)

Masses:
Saturday: 5:00 p.m.
Sunday: 8:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m. (English)
12:00 p.m. (Spanish)

Monday-Friday: 12:00 Noon
Guadalupe Chapel
(enter through the garden)

Please remember the church, buildings and grounds of San Juan Bautista Mission are over 200 years old! We urge you to be careful as you explore its wonders. Be mindful of low doorways and uneven surfaces. The Mission is beautiful but it is not perfect. Only GOD IS PERFECT. Thank You.

THE OLD MISSION SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

...BEGAN with a group of leather-jacketed soldiers and a few native Americans watching a tonsured Franciscan priest raise his eyes and hands toward the sky...

“In the name of our blessed Father, and the saint whose feast we commemorate today, St. John the Baptist...”

The day was June 24, 1797, a Saturday, and the priest was Fr. Fermin de Lasuen, Presidente of the California Missions, successor to Blessed Juniper Serra. This mission was one of four established by Fr. Lasuen that summer of 1797 and the fifteenth of the twenty-one missions in Alta, California.

Construction began almost immediately under the care of Father Jose Manuel de Martiarena and Father Pedro Martinez. By Christmas, because of the friendly and cooperative indigenous people, not only was there an adobe church built but also a granary, barracks, a monastery and some adobe houses.

In June 1803, the cornerstone was laid for the present church. With three naves or aisles, it became the widest of all the mission churches. It was dedicated on June 23, 1812. Padre Esteban Tapis is buried in the sanctuary of the church. He was, at one time, Presidente of the Missions and he is the founder of Mission Santa Ines. When he retired from office, he came to San Juan Bautista where his musical talents brought fame and a new name to San Juan, “THE MISSION OF MUSIC.” Two of his handwritten choir books can be seen in the Museum.

Interior completion of the church continued through 1817 when the floor was tiled and the main altar and reredos (which holds the six statues) were completed by Thomas Doak, an American sailor who jumped ship in Monterey and who painted them in exchange for room and board.

As you walk through the church, please note the animal prints in the tiles which were made while the tiles were left outside to dry in the sun. Also, note the “Cat Door” carved into the rear side door. This allowed the cats access at all times to catch mice. Mice were serious pests in the 1800’s eating much of the harvest.

The “convento” wing is all that remains of the quadrangle that had enclosed the gardens. The kitchen served 1200 people three times a day. Our collection of books and art works are in many cases older than the Mission itself. Some of the fine vestments in the Museum are from China, Russia and Venice, and were used at the Mission as recently as the 1930’s.

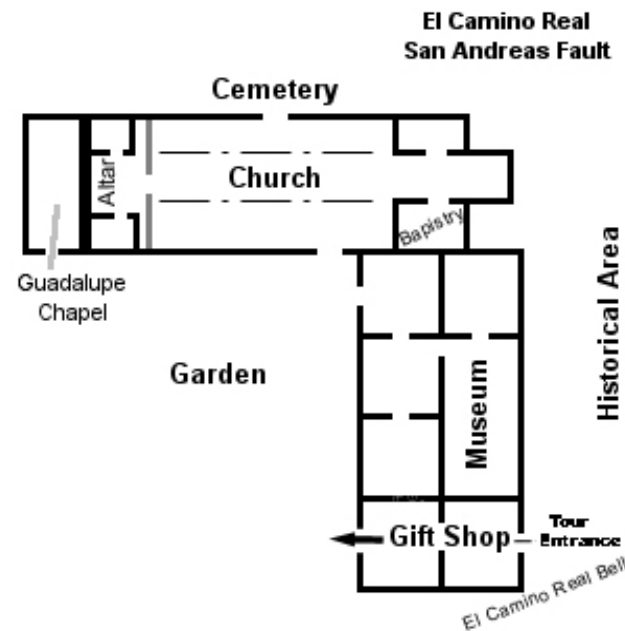
The cemetery which is accessible from the inside of the north side of the church contains the remains of over 4,000 Christian Native Americans and Europeans. There is also the grave of Ascencion Solórzano the last pure-blooded Native of this mission.

The church was secularized in 1835 when the Mexican government seized much of the Mission property. In 1859, the present mission buildings and 55 acres were given back to the Church by Federal decree of the United States government. San Juan Bautista has the only original Spanish Plaza remaining in California, and the Church has had an unbroken succession of pastors from its foundation.

The present museum rooms were once the padre’s living quarters and workrooms for the Natives. Over the years, the rooms were used for Mass (1906) and storage.

The gardens were the center of activity. Here were learned the skills of carpentry, tanning, weaving, and candle making.

The present Gift Shop was a storeroom. In 1847, it was a temporary home for the Breen family who had survived the Donner Party tragedy. Their family Bible is in



the Museum. The second room was known as “La Sala.” Here the padres entertained their guests.

The San Andreas Fault runs along the base of the hill below the cemetery. In 1906, there was a violent earthquake which shook the greater part of central California. The sidewalls of the Church collapsed and were restored in 1976. Vestiges of the original El Camino Real can still be seen north of the cemetery.

In 1957, Alfred Hitchcock filmed scenes from his classic movie “Vertigo” at the Mission.

In 1997, the site of the original chapel was restored and dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is here that daily Mass is held.

