

# Ynformes de Sn. Jn. Bautista

Dedicated to the Preservation of Our Mission's Historical Resources



A Report of the Mission Conservation Program of San Juan Bautista, California – Volume 1, Number 5 – May 20, 2006

## A Moving Tribute

By Ruben G. Mendoza, Project Manager

As we pass through this life we sometimes encounter genuinely moving experiences. This was clearly the case with recent efforts to relocate the bronze statue of Fray Junipero Serra that once stood immediately adjacent the southeast pier of the Church portico. Excavations conducted in January 2006 determined that Serra's statue was situated directly atop the foundations of the former Victorian era bell tower, and moreover, the modernity of the piece detracted from the historicity of the entryway to the Old Church. In addition, the scheduled installation of an Ohlone Mutsun tribute garden at the left or south side of the portico required the relocation of the statue in question. Given these considerations, electrical contractor Dane Whitehead and his crews facilitated the move with a crane made available by All Advantage Electric of California, Inc.

So that the statue might serve to beckon visitors via the arcade of the Old Mission convento fronting the plaza, the statue is now situated immediately adjacent the gateway to the cemetery, and on alignment with the center of the arcade corridor itself. As such, upon entering the arcade off of Second Street, both parishioners and visitors will spy the friar standing at the far ends of the corridor overlooking the Old Mission Orchard and the rich agricultural fields that lie below. Already, the monument has attracted a sizeable number of photo ops from visitors who have as such rediscovered Junipero Serra in this way.

### Voices from the Convento Attic

If at any time during the past couple of weeks you have had occasion to hear voices emanating from the eaves or attic of the Old Convento...don't be alarmed. For

the past two weeks the crews from All Advantage Electric and Killian Construction have been working diligently to upgrade the electrical systems, and install new heating units or furnaces, for the Old Mission Museum and Convento. Because the Old Mission Museum and Gift Shop remain vulnerable to power outages and failing circuits, a decision was made to move expeditiously on the upgrade of existing electrical systems. Moreover, the lack of a safe and convenient shut off valve for gas lines to the Old Mission Museum (beyond those located in the attic itself) in turn prompted action to install and upgrade those systems as well. On another note, two electricians have noted that they had an otherworldly encounter or electrifying experience with a "ghost" or phantom whose long shadows and footprints were seen trekking dust through the attic areas of the Old Convento this week.



Killian Construction crew members reinstall the Serra statue at its new location adjacent the cemetery gateway on May 8, 2006. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2006.

### **More from the Old Mission and Its Attic**

As is often the case when one undertakes the restoration of an old building, it's not uncommon to find one upgrade leading to another. As noted above, we have since moved on upgrading both electrical and gas lines in the attic. During the course of the coming week, contractors from Killian Construction will undertake two major projects.

First, having upgraded gas lines to the attic, said crews will soon move to install two gas furnaces that will permit us to fend off the very cold interior temperatures that characterize the Old Mission Museum and Gift Shop during the early morning hours throughout much of the year. Second, carpenters will work to complete the installation of both wire mesh screens in the upper eaves of the Old Convento roof area, and redwood inserts in the lower eaves of both the arcade fronting the Plaza, and the corridor walkway spanning the interior courtyard and gardens of the Old Mission. Because pigeons, squirrels, bats, and related creatures have used the summit of the adobe walls along each corridor for nesting...and relieving their bowels, Mission personnel have long been plagued by the need to sweep up and hose down bird droppings since the original timber framework was modified for roofing repairs in the 1970s and 80s. So as to minimize the roosting of such creatures in the alcoves, nooks, and crannies of the Convento arcades, and thereby minimize the need to hose down and wash its "adobe" walls, the coming week will see the completion of both screens and redwood inserts...thereby sending them darned pigeons back to San Juan Capistrano where they belong!

### **New Redwood Posts for the Old Cemetery**

So as to upgrade the cemetery walkway, the SJB Mission Conservation Program recently acted on the replacement of the splintered, rotted, and toppled redwood posts that once lined the walk leading from the Church into the Old Mission Cemetery or *Campo Santo*. These post and chain barriers act as a means of keeping visitors from wandering into the cemetery proper and disturbing such hallowed and sacred ground. In addition to the installation of replacement

posts, a redwood post and chain barrier was also installed at the exterior gateway to the cemetery so that visitors to the Plaza might view the cemetery from that vantage point as well.



The crews from Trujillo Construction completed the replacement of the redwood posts and chain barriers in the Old Mission Cemetery in April 2006. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2006.

### **More Mission Secrets Revealed**

As the result of recent videotaped project interviews with the Reverend Dennis Gilbert, Mr. Bill Cagney, and Ms. Carla Hendershot, more Mission secrets have been brought to the light of day. Father Dennis revealed that Sir Harry Downie once used a mixture of lime water to age redwood...and guess what, it worked! We will be using this mixture to "age" new redwood where needed. Second, Mr. Cagney revealed the former existence of the "All Seeing Eye of God" on the Sacristy ceiling...and that based on recollections from his youth. According to Mr. Cagney, at the age of nine years, he used to conduct tours of the Old Mission Museum in the afternoons for a "dollar and a quarter." Finally, Ms. Hendershot revealed that the former indoor latrine to the Old Mission was originally located in what today constitutes the Old Mission Archives room. Being a professor, scholar, and writer of yarns like this one...I can appreciate the very appropriate nature of situating the latrine right where most scholars dredge up some of their most incriminating ideas. Oh, and by the way, for those who might spy a glance into the Archives Room, the latrine comes equipped with a cabinet...and nail hangers for those sorely needed manuscript pages.