

# Santa Barbara Mission Exterior Walk



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# Tour Summary

Mission Santa Barbara is one of the most photographed sites in the United States, but few know its secrets. Walk through history with an experienced guide to learn some surprising information about the Queen of the Missions. This magnificent structure is not the first chapel to be built on this site. The first was an adobe structure destroyed by earthquake in 1812. Find out how the city of Santa Barbara received its name and what technology brought by the Spanish changed California's landscape. This tour will enhance your experience as you stroll the exterior grounds of Old Mission Santa Barbara. The Franciscans who have occupied this site since 1786 manage the 13 most important acres in Santa Barbara.

Cover Photo: Carol M Highsmith 1946.  
Library of Congress

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# Introduction



Please join me, Lisa Knox Burns, for a tour of Mission Santa Barbara. A docent since 2013, I try to capture the attention of my tour groups, especially 4th graders, with

fascinating facts and engaging stories about the 65-year Mission period in Alta California, from 1769 with the founding of Mission San Diego, to 1834 with the Mexican Secularization Act. Approximately 7000 4th graders with chaperones visit the Old Mission each year. Santa Barbara Mission is the number one civic attraction in Santa Barbara. The Old Mission is so much more than a pretty facade. People who stop for a photo are missing many sites hidden in plain view. Understanding what you are seeing will enhance your experience. Just ask a 4th grader who's taken my tour.

Photo credit: Betsy J. Green

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## Tips

- This tour is of the exterior grounds of Old Mission Santa Barbara, a National Historic Landmark.
- The Old Mission is located at 2201 Laguna Street, corner of Los Olivos and Laguna streets, Santa Barbara, California. It is on the Santa Barbara Trolley route. MTD no longer serves the site. The nearest public bus stop is at State and Pueblo streets, a pleasant walk of 5 blocks through a beautiful residential neighborhood which takes you to the Mission. The downtown shuttle stop at Sola and State Street is approximately 1.1 miles, or 10 blocks from the Mission.
- The tour will provide background historical information about why Spain built missions, why the Franciscans chose this site, and how the orientation of the mission was designed to send a powerful spiritual message.

- How the mission system affected the indigenous people is also addressed.
- The tour does not include access to Mission which is a separately paid admission.
- Check before you go, but as of this writing public tours with tickets are available Tuesday through Friday at 11 AM and Saturday at 10:30 AM. The gift shop is open from 9-5 every day. Visitors are given limited access to the chapel, mainly to pray, when its doors are open to the public, usually weekdays 10 AM to Noon depending on availability of volunteer docents, who welcome your questions.

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# Welcome to Old Mission Santa Barbara



Access at grade: —————

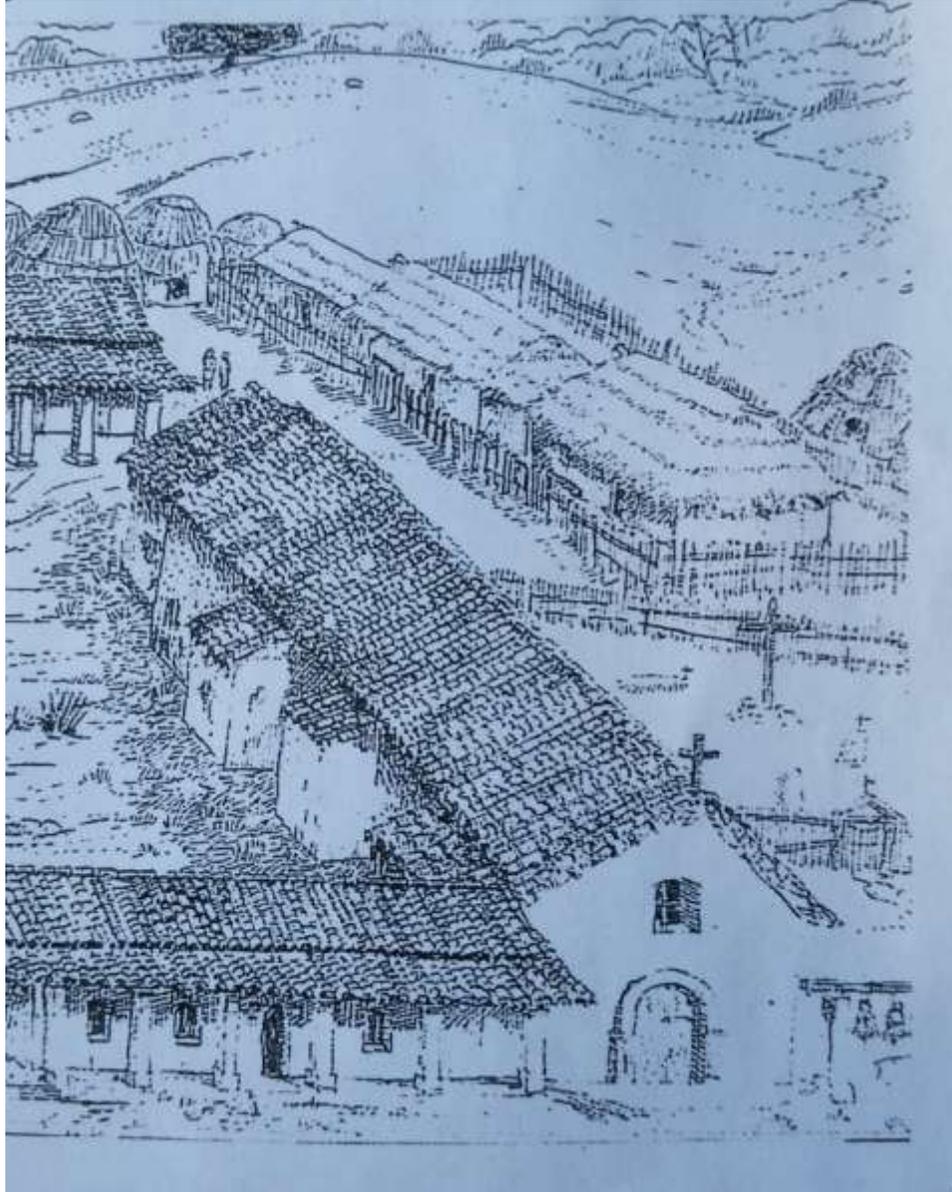


## ***Stop 1 We begin at the Moorish Fountain***

Welcome - Bienvenidos! - to Old Mission Santa Barbara. This, the tenth of 21 missions established by the Franciscans in Alta California, was unsurpassed in its design by the eleven that were later constructed. And its location, within view of the Pacific, with the islands visible in the Channel on a clear day, adds to its beauty.

Fr. Engelhardt Zephyrin, (1851-1934) was the first to call it the "Queen of the Missions" because of its size, classical design, imposing twin towers, and feminine namesake.

Photo: Library of Congress



The Old Mission is unique because a Catholic Mass has been continuously held by the Franciscans at this site since 1786.

This impressively tall structure was not the first chapel built in this location. In fact, it replaced a smaller ~26' by 124' one-story adobe chapel constructed prior to 1790, which was severely damaged by a massive earthquake in 1812 that historians estimate at 7.2, generated from the Santa Barbara Channel. Thirteen and one-half arches of the 1794 mission's sixteen arch arcade can be seen today. The larger 1820 chapel enclosed two and one-half arches for the expanded 1820 church, with a buttress to support the 73' tall bell tower.

Original drawing by Russell A. Ruiz.  
Permission by Russell C. Ruiz



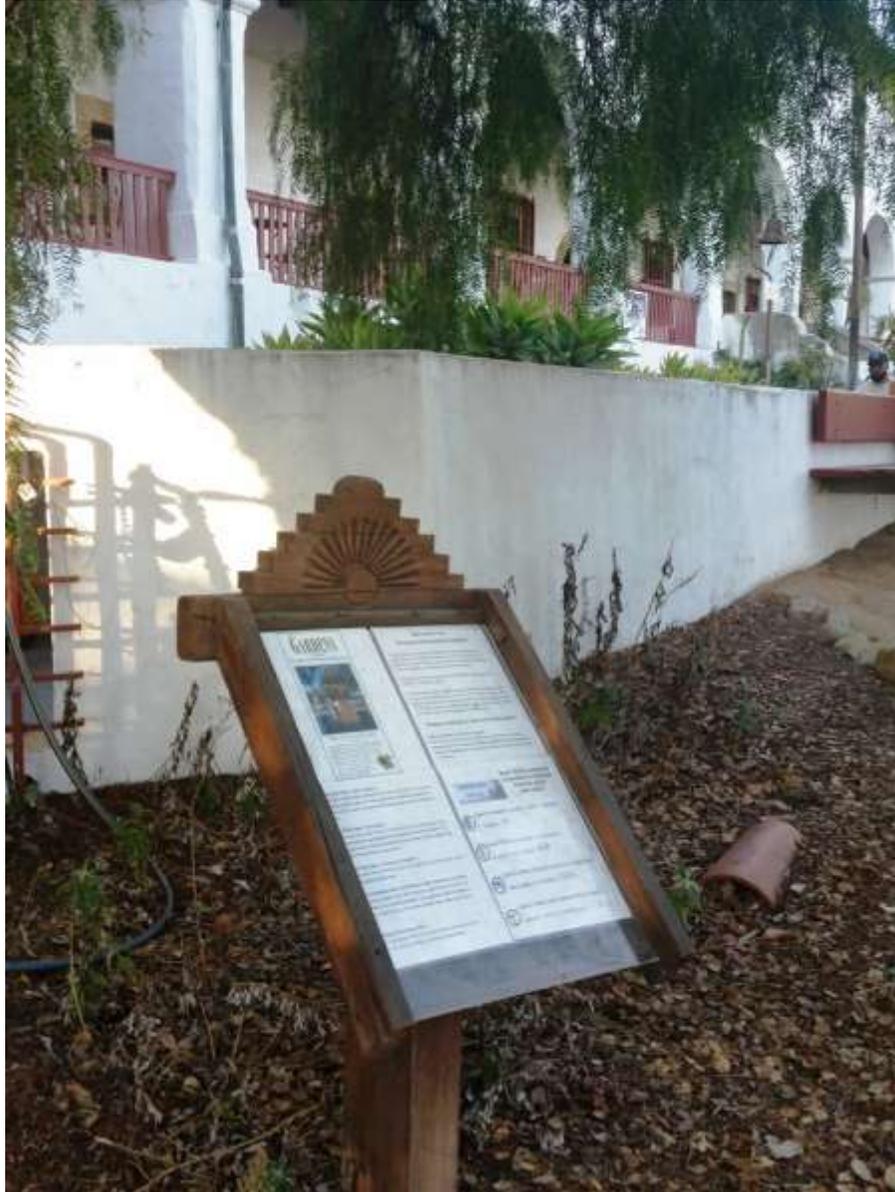
***Proceed toward the Mission Tours entrance***

Tickets are required to go inside the Old Mission to see its beautiful sacred garden,

impressive chapel, cemetery, curated museum exhibits, and video presentation. Check before you go, but as of this writing public tours with tickets are available Tuesday through Friday at 11 AM and Saturday at 10:30 AM. The gift shop is open from 9-5 every day. The Franciscans who have occupied this site since 1786 manage the 13 most important acres in Santa Barbara.

Visitors are given limited access to the chapel, mainly to pray, when its doors are open to the public, usually weekdays 10 AM to Noon depending on availability of volunteer docents, who welcome your questions.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns

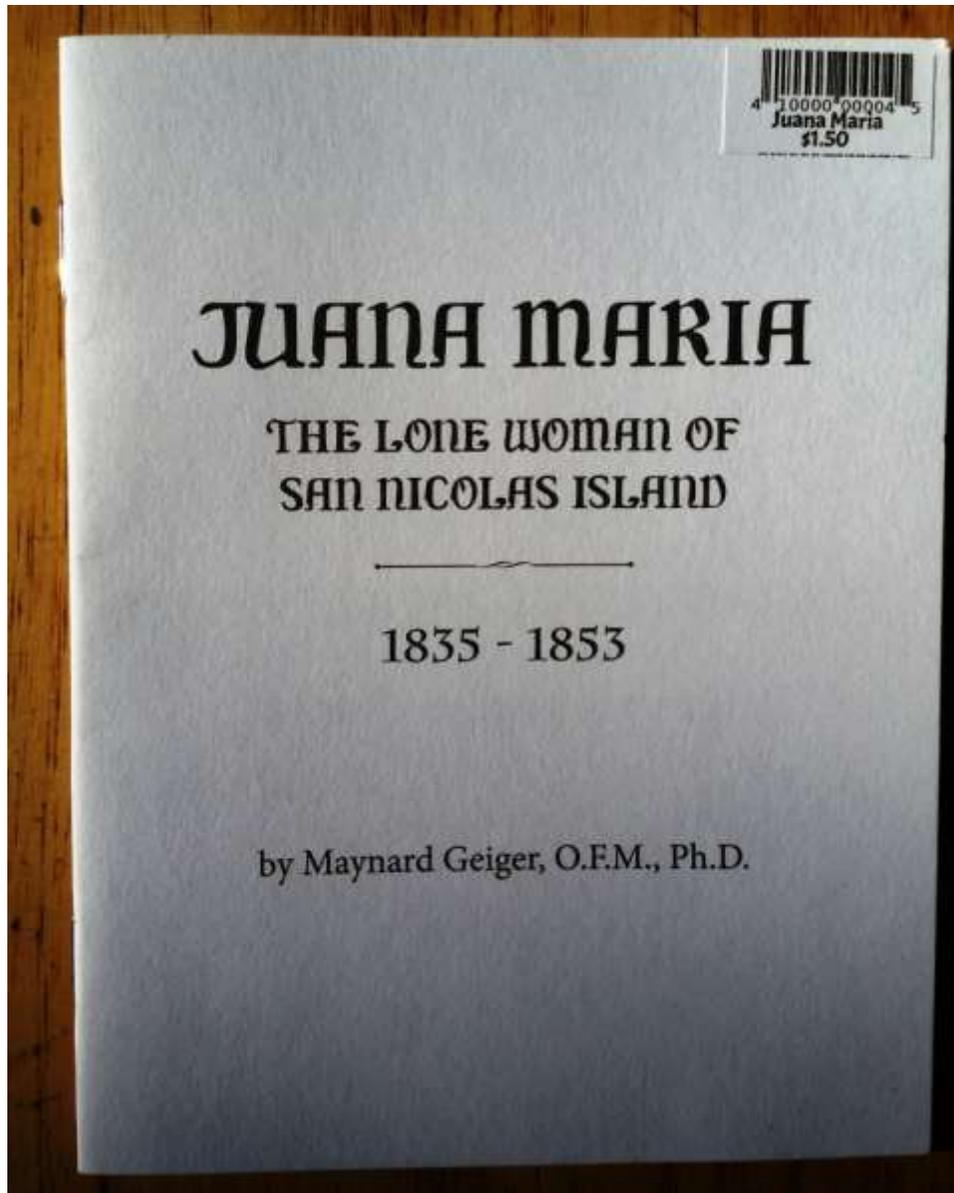


## ***Chumash Ethnobotanical Garden***

Located adjacent to the Mission Tours entrance, near a sloped access to public restrooms, is the Chumash Ethnobotanical

Garden containing California native plants used by the Chumash Indians. Acorns from the Island Oak were a primary source of food protein in the Chumash diet. Mugwort leaves applied to skin rash from poison oak are a medicinal antidote. Arroyo Willow branches were used to construct conical huts, called Aps. The bark of the willow was also used to cure fevers and inflammations because it contains salicin, the basis for aspirin. Coastal sagebrush was used after bathing by hunters to mask human scent. Deer grass, basket rush and juncus grasses were some of the materials used for tightly woven baskets used by the Chumash that are highly prized by collectors. White sage was used in rituals to promote spiritual balance.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns



The entrance to the Mission, "La Sala" was originally constructed in 1805. From this room you can purchase access to the interior of the Old Mission quadrangle with its Sacred Garden used for receptions, see

Chumash artifacts and Mission crafts, beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century art in the Chapel, and tour the cemetery, including where the "Lone woman of San Nicolas Island" is buried. Her story is told in the famous children's book, "Island of the Blue Dolphins" and a booklet, "Juana Maria, The Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island, 1835-1853" which can be purchased in the Mission Gift Shop.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns

f.º 1.

Libro de Difuntos,

En el qual se asientan las paridas de los Entierros de  
los que mueren en este ~~Real~~ Real Presidio de  
Santa Barbara y de  
de la administracion de los RR. P.ºs. Prisioneros del  
Colegio Apostolico de propaganda Fide de S.º Fernando  
de Mexico del Ord.º de N.º S.º San Fran.º de As.º  
Fundado  
a expensas, y de Orden del Catholico Rey Blas Es.  
pañal, y de sus Indias Don Carlos III (que Dios pro.  
pene eternam.) en la Superior California y playa firme  
de la Canal de S.º Barbara p.º los Relig.ºs de dho Colegio  
Comensado  
En el Domingo 3.º despues de Pasqua fiesta del Pa.  
trocinio del S.º Patriarca San Joseph Ep.ºso de Siria  
a N.º y dia 21 de Abril del año del S.º de  
1782  
En el d.º 20 el infra-escrito Fr.º Sunipero Serra Pres.º  
de esta Prision de Indios de dho y dho Colegio  
Apostolico, hechas las Bendiciones de Agua del torrente,  
y de una alta Cruz, y enarbolsamos, y adoramos, cele.  
bre en Capilla de Entramada, el S.º Sacrificio de la Misa,  
la primera de este terreno, con Sermon del Asumpto  
y falta de Comensado huvo de ser repada, y  
por la misma en lugar de Deum conchui  
la funcion con el Ab.º  
P.º Mayor Gloria de Dios Propag.º de la F.º y bien de las Almas.  
Los prim.ºs Ministros  
de esta Prision ad tempus incorporada con el Presidio,  
del q.º se ha de regregar quanto antes, se asignaran. n.º Que lo sea en  
fundacion de Pr.ºs, y no suvenido la de dho Pr.ºs, sino en el año de 1782, y se repadon  
media legua de dho Pr.ºs, y como fuere preciso para el Presidio.  
Consta este libro  
de ciento noventa, y dos folios tales, sin la prim.º y ult.º  
quedan blancas, y para q.º todo lo dho conste, lo firmo  
Fr.º Sunipero Serra  
Pres.º

The display case in the Mission entry hall contains a copy of the first page of the Santa Barbara Mission Register with Serra's signature. Note the flourish on the last letter of his name. The first line of the

letter has a word crossed-out. This is because Fr. Serra assumed he would found a Mission separate from the Spanish Fort (called a Presidio) for the large number of Chumash who lived along this coast.

Photo Credit: Santa Barbara Mission  
Archive Library



### ***King Carlos III (1716-1788)***

But when King Carlos III of Spain learned the Russians in their pursuit of sea otter pelts were planning to occupy lands north

of San Francisco Bay, he directed Governor Felipe de Neve to ensure Spain's interests were protected. In 1782, Fr. Serra presided at the founding of the Presidio in Santa Barbara, but Governor Neve sent Fr. Serra to protect Spain's territory around San Francisco Bay. Fr. Serra amended his journal entry, and obediently traveled north. He would not return to Santa Barbara. Fr. Serra personally selected the sites for the first nine missions built in Alta California. He died in Carmel in 1784. In 1786 Fr. Lasuen founded Mission Santa Barbara, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mission.

Photo from Wikipedia, Public Domain

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# Mission Chapel



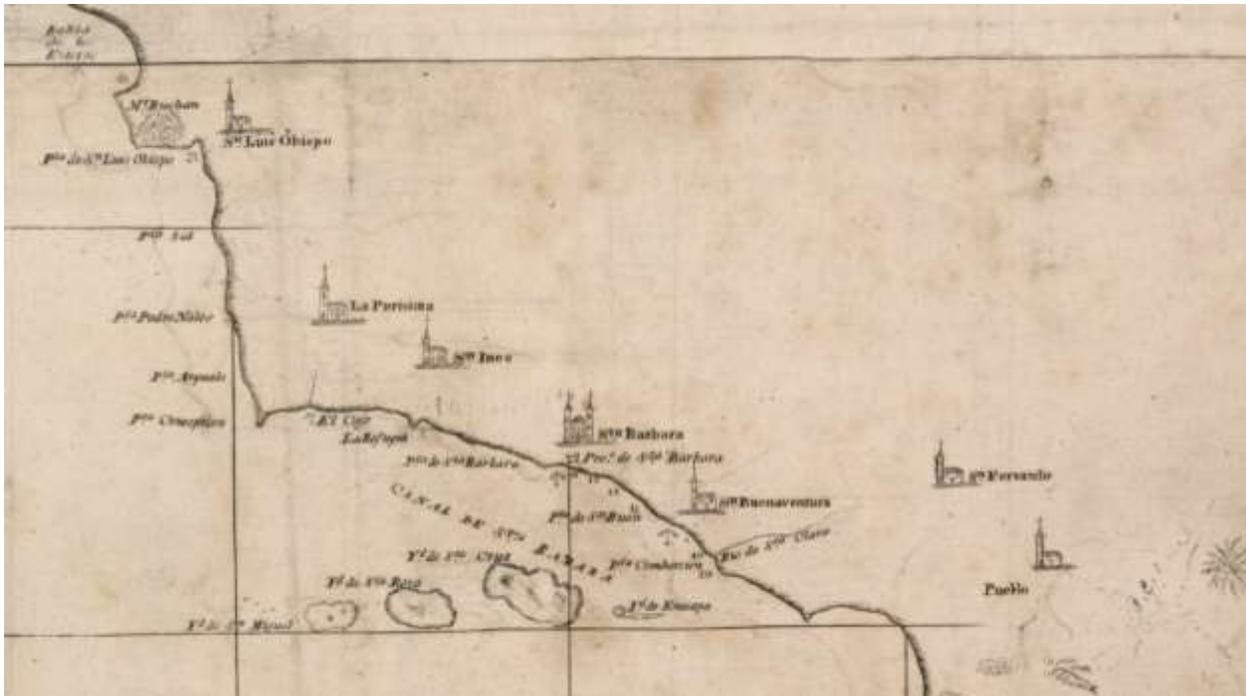
Access at grade: 



## ***Stop 2. Proceed to the Mission Towers***

Face toward the ocean and, if the weather is clear, the oil rigs offshore might seem like Spanish Galleons. Fifty years after Columbus landed in the West Indies, the Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo first sighted California in 1542.

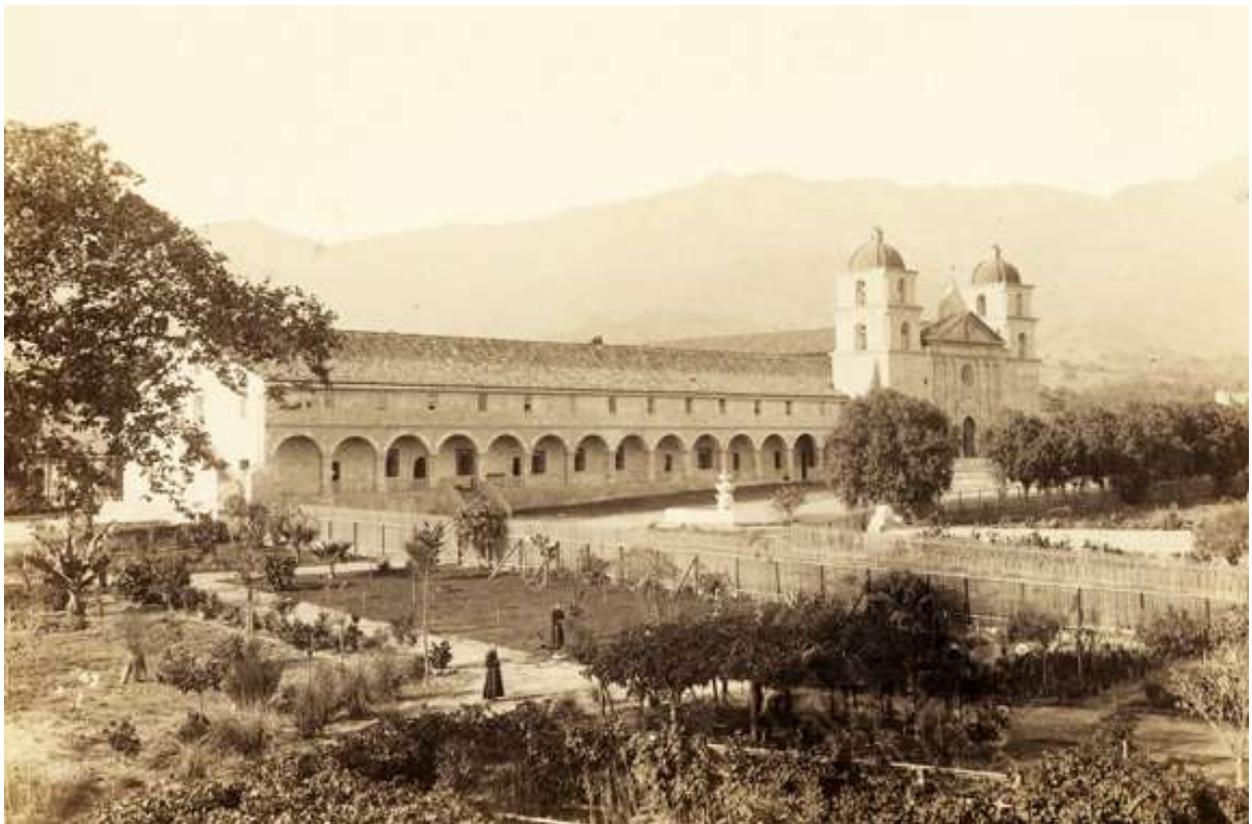
Photo Credit: GoletaHistory.com



Sixty years after Cabrillo, the second Spanish explorer to sail up the California coast, the map maker Sebastian Vizcaino provided the names using a Catholic calendar of saints as his guide. Arriving here in December, 1602 during the rainy season, his ship faced stormy weather, however they landed safely on December 4th, and were possibly so grateful for heavenly protection that not only was the land named for the Saint whose Feast Day

is December 4th, but as can be seen on maps today, the ocean passage between the Channel Islands is also named in her honor: Santa Barbara Channel.

Photo from Library of Congress



The location of the Mission in sight of the ocean, meant that ships could also see this structure built on a hill, sending a message to other countries who might want to lay claim to this area that the Spanish already occupied it. The story that these Missions were coordinated as a day's ride from one another is a myth. They were located near water and building materials, close to where the Indigenous Peoples lived to better serve

them and to provide a source of labor. This location was selected because of a nearby stream that flows during the winter rainy season, aptly named Mission Creek. There are plenty of stones for building material available at this location.

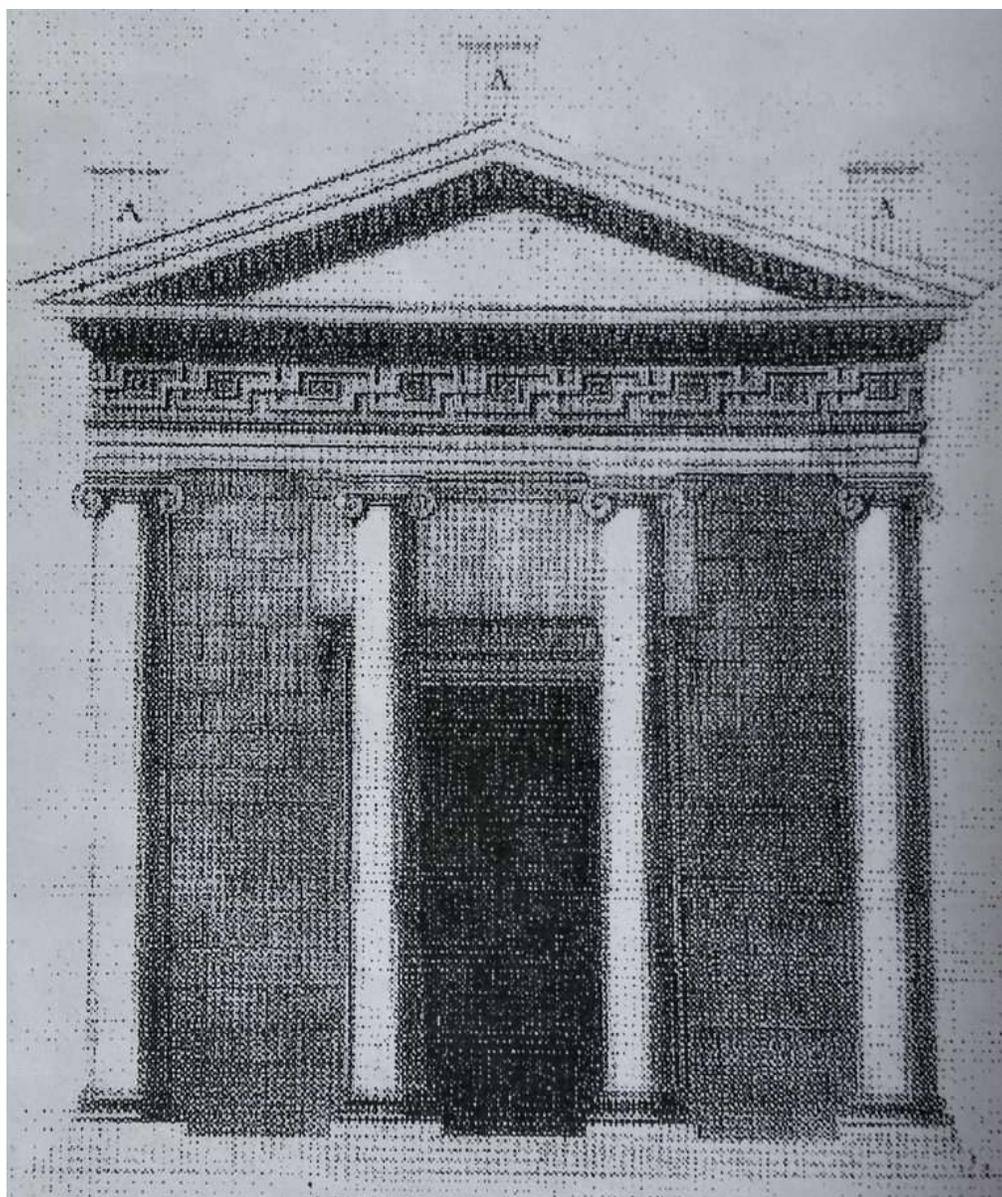
Photo Credit: Norman H. Reed 1890,  
Edson Smith Photo Collection



The Mission is named for Barbara, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy pagan tyrant who lived in the Middle East under Third century Roman rule. An early Christian monotheist, she was martyred on December 4 for disobeying her father by refusing to worship Roman gods. This plaque states significant dates in the construction (1786 1820) and restoration

(1925, 1927 & 1953) of Mission Santa Barbara.

Photo: Carol M Highsmith 1946, Library of Congress



The magnificent chapel you see today dates to 1820. It was built over and around an older, single-story adobe chapel. If it looks like a Greek Temple, it's because the Franciscans used architectural plans by the

great Roman architect Vitruvius, contained in *De Architectura* that had been recently translated into Spanish from its original Latin. His drawings closely examined how the Greeks built their temples. The original book used by Fr. Ripoll and scores of Mexican and Chumash workers to build the chapel resides in the Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library

Photo Credit: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library



Look closely at the ionic columns and the decorative Greek Key motif on the pediment, the triangular roof, where the statue of St. Barbara presides, surrounded by sculptures depicting the Franciscans' religious philosophy of "Faith, Hope and Charity."

Photo by Matthew Ross Burns



Some archaeologists who study sacred geometry think that the orientation of the Mission and Presidio chapels were designed to take advantage of a celestial event that happens only five days during Winter Solstice, the shortest number of daylight hours in the year and the most important date on the Chumash calendar. It is akin to New Year's Eve in Western traditions, except the Chumash were concerned that the shrinking hours of

sunlight might indicate the end of the world.  
Chumash solstice celebrations included  
paying off all debts owed to others.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns



On Winter Solstice, the large ocular window above the door may have guided the dawn's rays of December 21<sup>st</sup>, to light the statues of Mary and Jesus. A solemn Mass is often held around Winter Solstice when pilgrims wait patiently for this stunning visual effect, which must have impressed the Chumash.

Photo by Matthew Ross Burns



On June 29, 1925 a violent 6.8 earthquake on an early Sunday morning tore loose portions of the two bell towers, raining down large stones. One can only imagine what it must have been like to have been inside the chapel as the towers collapsed, for it occurred on a Sunday morning during Mass. The priest called out for the parishioners to stay where they were, perhaps saying a prayer, and when the

shaking stopped, no one had panicked and run outside and, miraculously, no one was hurt by falling stones.

Photo Credit: Edson Smith Photo Collection



Look up at the bell towers and observe the difference between the stone façade and the painted stones on the towers after they were rebuilt with concrete and rebar so that

they would not crumble in another earthquake.

The bells in the tower ring at 6AM, noon, and 6PM, a Franciscan tradition from medieval times. The bells do not tell the time, they ring out the Angelus devotional prayer.

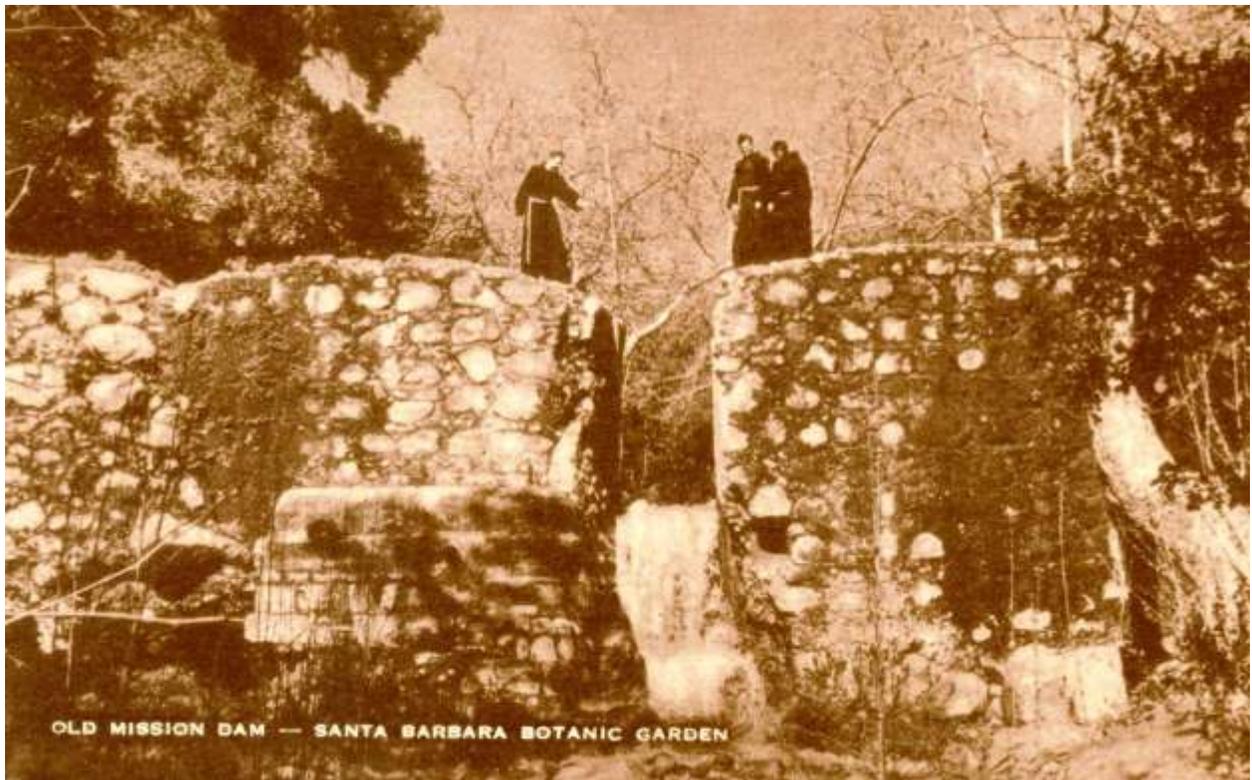
Photo Credit: Matthew Ross Burns

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# How the Missions Changed California



Access at grade: 



***Stop 3. Proceed past the Mission towers towards the street.***

The Spanish introduced water storage in dams and aqueducts that changed California's landscape forever. This allowed storage of winter rains to grow plants, like corn, that could not otherwise survive during long hot summer seasons. Unlike California native plants that go dormant during the summer for lack of rain, non-

native plants, like corn, could be grown with irrigation during dry summers. Winter rains were captured in two storage locations up Mission Canyon and in Rattlesnake Canyon.

Photo from Edison Smith Collection.  
Creator unknown.



Proceed toward the street, walking beside the mission wall and you will see a portion of the aqueduct at ground level.

Photo Credit: Lisa Knox Burns



TV's California Gold personality Huell Howser told the story of the two sycamores that were planted to shade women who used the flowing water of the aqueduct to wash the Padres clothes.

Photo Credit: Santa Barbara Public Library, Edson Smith Photo Collection



The Rattlesnake Canyon aqueduct took water to a mill reservoir which was used as power to grind wheat, barley and corn grown at the mission. The water was then stored and sent to water the fields at the Mission. That portion of the aqueduct can be seen across the street. What looks to be a stone wall is actually the aqueduct.

Photo Credit: Lisa Knox Burns



### ***Return to the Moorish Fountain.***

A second aqueduct from a dam located at what is now the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden took water to a filtration plant that used charcoal, much like water filtration plants do today, to purify drinking water. The purified water was piped to the Moorish Fountain. The Moorish Fountain at the front of the Mission supplied the drinking water

that was used for cooking. So advanced was the Spanish water filtration system that it later became part of the city of Santa Barbara's water supply. The aqueduct was acknowledged as a major engineering accomplishment with a plaque placed near the reservoirs by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Photo Credit: Lisa Knox Burns



The drinking water overflow from the fountain was connected to the large rectangular washing basin, or lavenderia, where it would spill through the mouth of a bear, a primitive sculpture constructed by Chumash artisans. The original 1806 bear broke into pieces in the earthquake of 1925 and is on display in the Mission museum. From the wash basin, the overflow was released through the sculpture of a leaping

mountain lion's mouth into the fields. Thus the Spanish, after experiencing crop failures from sustained drought, by 1808 had a water system to support agriculture and provide power to a grist mill.

Photo Credit: Fountain 1942 by Habs.  
Library of Congress



***Stop 4. Walk down hill from the fountain to the end of the lavanderia***

By the degree of the King, as enforced by his Governor, only two Franciscan priests were assigned to each Mission. Obviously, the priests did not provide the labor to build

Mission structures, the indigenous people did. Stone cutters and stone masons from other Missions were brought in to instruct the workers on how to use tools. Mission Santa Barbara was built by the Chumash, for the Chumash. This was known as the Indian Church. The priests encouraged the Chumash to use their artistic skills in painting or carving statues to create symbols at the Mission that they found beautiful and meaningful. One of the oldest sculptures made by unknown Chumash sculptors is open to public view. It is a leaping mountain lion, a puma, carved from stone with its mouth open to allow water from the lavanderia to flow to the vineyards planted at the Old Mission. The Spanish suffered from extended droughts, so they understood the value of recycling water just as we do.

Photo Credit: Lisa Knox Burns



***Stop 5. Return to the Moorish Fountain***

Head past the Chumash Botanical Garden toward the lower parking lot to the Picnic Area.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns



There are stairs down to the Stations of the Cross and the Olive Grove.

The landscape changed as a consequence of Spanish occupation of California. The

Missions took a hunter/gatherer indigenous population and taught them how to farm. In a very real way the Missions formed the root of California's world renowned agriculture. With a dry Mediterranean climate, the Spanish's technological innovation of storing winter rains in mountain reservoirs, and transporting water through an aqueduct to sustain plants grown during summer heat, changed California forever. Later pioneers saw what was successfully grown at the Missions, and gathered seeds and took cuttings to establish California's agricultural breadbasket that we benefit from today.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns



The Spanish always brought three specific plants to places where they established settlements. These were plants needed in celebration of Holy Mass: grapevines for the sacramental wine a grain, usually wheat or barley, to make the bread of Christ and, olive branches to grow the olive trees. Mission olives were essential to the operation of the Mission, for the olive oil was used in cooking, as medicine, and in lamps. It was a valuable trade item because

it was used in lamps on ships that traveled the world.

Photo used by permission of the Santa Barbara Historical Museum



The original olive trees planted in groves from the mission era still exist along the border of the Old Mission. The street is named for them: Los Olivos.

When the Spanish brought in sheep and cattle, they were released into open fields to graze, eating Chumash food sources, leaving less for them to eat. Starvation drove indigenous people to the missions for food. The indigenous people had little immunity to the illnesses brought by the

Europeans, like measles. As diseases ravaged families, they sought medical help at the Missions.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns



The Chumash probably did not understand that Baptism was a lifelong commitment to Catholicism. The Franciscans were charged by the King of Spain to learn the indigenous peoples' languages when administering oaths, under the "Law of the Indies", but likely the priests only learned languages through their interactions with the local people, without any benefit of language instruction. Often children who were adept

in speaking multiple languages were used as intermediaries between the priests and their indigenous family members. Once baptized, the Chumash were welcomed to join the activities at the Mission as "neophytes."

Photo Credit: Historic Corridor 1942 by Habs. Library of Congress



***Proceed to Mission Tours entrance.***

At the Mission Tours entrance is the National Historic Landmark plaque. Above the entrance doors is the universal symbol

of Franciscan faith. The large wooden doors date to the early 19th century and artistically portray the River of Life.

While Old Mission Santa Barbara is the private home of the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara, they welcome you in the spirit of St. Francis. Your purchase of a self-guided or docent-guided tour helps the Friars to maintain this historic, cultural, and spiritual place which means so much to all of Santa Barbara.

Photo by Lisa Knox Burns

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# Maps



## Internet Link to Interactive Map

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Old+Mission+Santa+Barbara/@34.438329,-119.714059,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x0:0x20099955553f967!8m2!3d34.438329!4d-119.714059>

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# **Author Biography**

Lisa Knox Burns is a long-time docent at the Old Mission with a professional background in city planning. This is Lisa's personal project and out of her kindness she is donating a portion of her profit to the Mission. On the walk around the grounds of the Old Mission you will see historical sites through her eyes, providing information that is both educational and entertaining.

## **Tours4Mobile by Lisa Burns**

Santa Barbara Mission Exterior Walk

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# **Publisher**

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