

GUIDE TO THE LA PURÍSIMA MISSION STATE HISTORIC PARK  
PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

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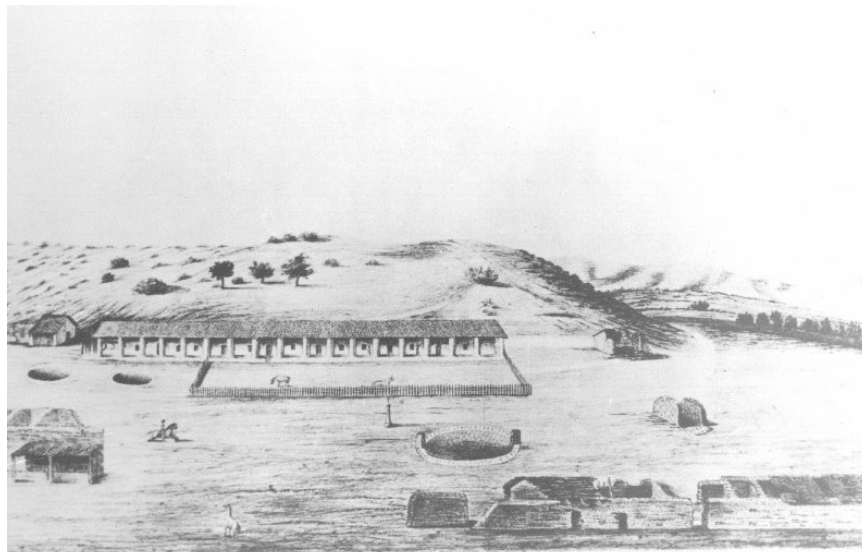
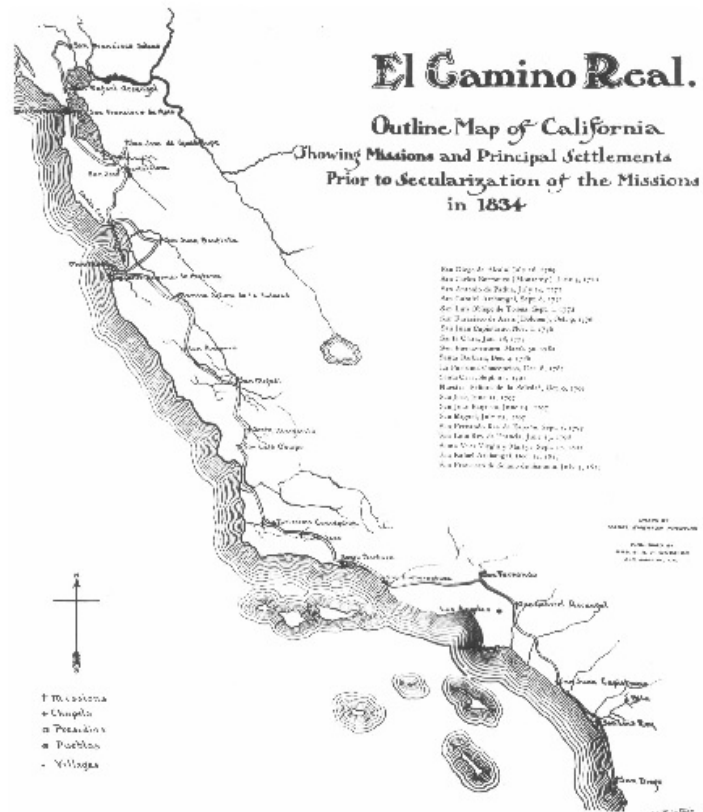
## LA PURÍSIMA MISSION STATE HISTORIC PARK PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

### Park History

La Purísima Mission State Historic Park contains roughly 1,866 acres of natural, cultural, and historical resources. Located in Santa Barbara County, the park is situated on the eastern portion of Burton Mesa on the northern rim of Lompoc Valley and is approximately two miles northeast of the city of Lompoc. The park is accessible by car via Purísima Road.

Prior to the introduction of the Spanish mission, the land containing the present-day park served as home to the Chumash Indians for thousands of years. The area provided the Chumash with an abundant variety of resources, such as plants, fish, birds, land and sea mammals, and mollusks. Indigenous villages typically consisted of several residences, a sweathouse, storehouses, a ceremonial enclosure, a gaming area, and a cemetery. The local terrain still bears Chumash rock paintings as illustrations of the native artistic culture. With the incursion of the Spanish in the late eighteenth century, Chumash lifeways were all but extinguished.

On December 8, 1787, president of the Spanish missions, Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, founded *La Misión de La Purísima Concepción de la Santísima Virgen María* ("The Mission of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary"), the 11th of 21 missions established in California. Originally located in the present-day city of Lompoc, La Purísima Mission was moved four miles to the northeast across the Santa Ynez River after a devastating earthquake destroyed the old complex in 1812. Using local native neophyte labor, Padre Mariano Payeras rebuilt La Purísima at its current location in Los Berros Canyon—adjacent to El Camino Real—the following year (**Figures 1 and 2**). In addition to its church, padre's residence, and native barracks, the mission was also rebuilt to include a blacksmith shop, tallow-rendering facilities, tanning vats, a garden, and abundant farming and grazing lands as well as an intricate water system that included storage facilities, an aqueduct, underground piping, and a filter house. The presence of two infirmaries also attests to the prominence of disease in the mission's history.



By the 1820s, La Purisima began to show signs of irreversible institutional decline. In addition to a drop in productivity, in 1824 the mission experienced a full-scale revolt. On February 21, discontented Chumash—experiencing brutal exploitation—expelled Spanish authorities for nearly a month before the mission was retaken by the

Spanish army. A decade later, in the wake of the Mexican Revolution, La Purisima, like the rest of the mission system, eroded even further under secularization, a policy that effectively removed church properties from Catholic control. On November 30, 1834, Domingo Carrillo assumed control of the property as civil commissioner, formally ending the mission era in California. In 1845, the last governor of Mexican California, Pío Pico, sold La Purisima at auction to Los Angeles rancher, Juan Temple. Over the next few decades, the land changed hands several times, with each owner primarily using the property for farming and cattle ranching. Falling victim to vandalism and neglect, the mission buildings ultimately deteriorated into ruins.

In 1874, the U.S. Federal Government returned the land containing some crumbling La Purisima ruins to the Catholic Church, while the Union Oil Company purchased the remainder of the property several years later. Meanwhile, the mission continued to deteriorate (**Figures 3 and 4**). In 1933, both the company and the church deeded several parcels of land containing ruins to Santa Barbara County. Sparking the interest of the National Park Service (NPS) to employ the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)—a New Deal work-relief program—to restore and reconstruct the old buildings, in 1935 the county transferred ownership to the State of California. Coordinating with the NPS, in 1934 seven Santa Barbara County citizens formed the La Purisima Advisory Committee and drafted a comprehensive restoration report that continues to influence management of the property (**Figure 5**). Over the course of the decade, the CCC comprehensively transformed the crumbling ruins into a revitalized mission complex (**Figures 6-9**). With the restoration of the Padre's Residence (*el monasterio*) in 1937, along with nine other mission buildings, the park unit was classified a state historic monument; it was later reclassified a state historic park in 1963. In 1970, the reconstructed La Purisima Mission complex was declared a U.S. National Historic Landmark in addition to being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although U.S. involvement in World War II ended the CCC program and temporarily halted the La Purisima Mission restoration project, the post-war years saw the launch of several restoration, reconstruction, reproduction, and archaeological excavation programs that continue to the present (**Figure 10**).



**Figure 3.** Padre's Residence ruins, ca. 1908. Catalog # 090-27064.



**Figure 4.** Padre's Residence ruins, September 1935. Catalog # 090-27078.



**Figure 5.** La Purísima Advisory Committee Proposed Development, ca. 1934. Catalog # 090-4231.



**Figure 6.** CCC enrollees building adobe walls, ca. 1930s. Catalog # 090-4383.



**Figure 7.** CCC enrollees plastering walls, ca. 1930s. Catalog # 090-4385.



**Figure 8.** CCC enrollees transplanting olive tree, ca. 1937. Catalog # 090-29702.



**Figure 9.** CCC enrollees hewing timber, January 1938. Catalog # 090-4560.



**Figure 10.** Reconstruction of mill building, 1958. Catalog # 090-4260.

California State Parks, coordinating with *Prelado de los Tesoros de la Purisima* ("Keepers of the Treasures of La Purisima")—a volunteer organization formed in 1973—maintains various natural, cultural, and historical resources at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park (**Figures 11-13**). In addition to the reconstructed Spanish mission (the most extensively restored mission in the state) the park also contains 25 miles of hiking and horseback-riding trails, picnic areas, a visitors' center and exhibit hall, and livestock. Open for guided and self-guided tours, the park also hosts several annual events, including Candlelight Tours in October and various Founding Day celebrations on December 8. The park is day-use only and is open seven days a week except on holidays.





**Figure 11.** La Purísima Mission (exterior), April 8, 2007. Catalog # 090-P53362.



**Figure 12.** La Purísima Mission courtyard with central fountain, April 12, 2007.  
Catalog # 090-P54281.



**Figure 13.** Reconstructed Chumash tule hut, April 8, 2007. Catalog # 090-P54377.

## Scope and Content

The La Purísima Mission State Historic Park Photographic Collection spans the years circa 1787-2013, with the bulk of the collection covering the years 1934-1974, 1982, 2007, and 2013. There is a total of 4,649 cataloged images, including 4,148 photographic prints, scans, and negatives, 400 35mm slides, and 101 born-digital images. Photographs originated primarily from National Parks Service (NPS) and California State Parks staff.

The bulk of the collection comprehensively documents the mission during the tenure of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), 1934-1941. Primarily capturing the mission's built environment, the collection depicts the Padre's Residence, the Shops and Quarters Building, the laundry (*lavanderia*), the cistern, and the adjacent central fountain before, after, and during restoration/reconstruction. In addition to completed buildings and structures at the mission, CCC-era images also include excavated archaeological sites and reveal several unearthed building foundations, tallow vats, the mission ovens, and a variety of artifacts—water pipes, roof tiles, axe heads, nails, keys, knives, tools, and religious items. Also documented are the numerous replicated items manufactured by CCC enrollees, including furniture, hardware, hide racks, an adobe stove, and a wooden ox cart (*la caretta*).

Aside from the abundance of restored, reconstructed, and replicated buildings, structures, and objects at La Purísima Mission, the collection's CCC-era images also document the men themselves, hard at work on a number of projects: excavating building foundations, manufacturing adobe bricks and clay tiles, erecting wood frames for reconstructed buildings, replicating period furniture, and performing a variety of other tasks. Images also depict individual and group portraits of numerous enrollees and other NPS personnel, such as Frederick C. Hageman, Edwin D. Rowe, Ralph E. Ames, Ed Negus, and H. V. Smith. The collection also includes landscape, aerial, and panorama views of the CCC living quarters at the mission, Twin Camps and Camp Santa

Rosa, as well as events, such as the 1935 Padre's Residence dedication ceremony and CCC graduation. Also included are documents generated by the CCC supervisory staff as well as mission-development drawings drafted by the La Purísima Advisory Committee.

Beyond capturing the work performed by the CCC in the 1930s, the collection also documents subsequent restorative projects at the mission. Projects include numerous excavations, restorations, and reconstructions performed in the 1940s through the 1960s for numerous buildings and structures: the infirmary, the soap kiln, the tallow vats, the native girls' dormitory (*el monjerio*), the oven (*el horno*), the aqueduct, the fireplace, the pottery shop and its attendant kiln, the Indian barracks, the domestic reservoir, the kitchen, the mill building, the springhouse, the warehouse, the tanning vats, the blacksmith shop, the soap vat, the cemetery, a Chumash tule hut, and the so-called "Mystery Column."

Collection images also depict more contemporary views of mission buildings and structures. In addition to exterior views of the Shops and Quarters building, its patio, the blacksmith shop, the cemetery, the reservoir, the central fountain, and the Padre's Residence—including the restored colonnade, walkways, and bell tower—the collection also captures the residence's interior. Images include the chapel (composed of the sanctuary, altar, sacristy, pulpit, and baptistery), the hall (*sala*), the padre's office, and the padre's and soldiers' living quarters, all with period furnishings. Contemporary images also include exterior and interior views of the Visitors Center, which document various museum displays and exhibits.

The collection also documents various activities held at the park. "Living history" demonstrations are included, which depict docents in period garb shearing sheep, making candles, dancing, weaving at looms, and interacting with visitors. Other notable events are also included, such as "Old Mission Days" in 1941, the 1946 film shoot for *Pirates of Monterey* (filmed on location), the 1948 reenactment of the Portola trek, and the 1951 cross-construction and -dedication ceremony.

Also depicted are numerous landscape, ground, and aerial views of the property beyond the mission, which capture the surrounding Lompoc Valley and Los Berros Canyon. Included in these images are various plants (prickly phlox, yucca, globe lilies, fairy lanterns, and Mariposa lilies) and trees (olive, pear, pepper, and oak) as well as the old Ziesche property, which includes numerous farm buildings from the late-nineteenth century.

The collection also includes several documents and images from the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century. These include drawings of the mission by Edward Vischer and Henry Chapman Ford, Spanish maps of California that include El Camino Real and the adjacent missions, and numerous landscape and panorama views of the La Purísima ruins that document the extent of their deterioration prior to restoration.

## **Related Collections**

California Mission and Church Miscellany, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library.

Community Development and Conservation Collection, UC Santa Barbara: Special Collections.

El Camino Real Archive, UC Berkeley: Bancroft Library.

La Purisima Mission State Historic Park Collection, California State Parks Archives.

Records of the Works Projects Administration, National Archives and Records Administration: Various Repositories.

Southern Coastal California (Chumash & Gabrielano) Indian Archaeological Collections, UCLA: Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Sue Higman Papers, Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation: Presidio Research Center.

Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL) Records, UCLA: Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

### **Catalog Subject Search Terms**

|                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Adobe                             | Drainage channel            |
| Aerial view                       | Drawing                     |
| Altar                             | El Camino Real              |
| Aqueduct                          | Entrance                    |
| Archaeological site               | Excavation                  |
| Artifact(s)                       | Exhibit                     |
| Bell                              | Father Mariano Payeras      |
| Camp Santa Rosa                   | Foundation                  |
| Caretta                           | Fredrick C. Hageman         |
| Cemetery                          | Garden                      |
| Central Fountain                  | Group portrait              |
| Chapel                            | Horno                       |
| Chumash                           | Indian Barracks             |
| Church                            | Infirmery                   |
| Cistern                           | Landscape view              |
| Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) | Lavanderia                  |
| Colonnade                         | Living history              |
| Column(s)                         | Lompoc, California          |
| Construction                      | Map                         |
| Corral                            | Mission La Purisima         |
| Demonstration                     | Mission Vieja               |
| Docent                            | "Mystery Column"            |
| Document(s)                       | National Park Service (NPS) |

Nursery  
Old County Road  
"Old Mission Days"  
Olive tree  
Padre's Residence  
Painting  
Panorama view  
Patio  
Pear tree  
Pepper tree  
*Pirates of Monterey*  
Portrait  
Reconstruction  
Replica(s)  
Reproduction  
Restoration  
Ruins

Sala  
Schoolhouse  
Shops and Quarters Building  
Sign(s)  
Soap vat(s)  
Soldiers Quarters  
Springhouse  
Statuary  
Statue  
Tallow vats  
Twin Camps  
Visitors Center  
Ziesche property