

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Mission Anniversaries**

During the month of December three of California's old missions were founded - La Purisima Concepcion, Dec. 2, 1787; Santa Barbara, Dec. 4, 1786; and San Rafael Archangel, Dec. 14, 1817.

Santa Barbara Mission has been in continual use to this date, San Rafael became a complete ruin as did La Purisima. Both of these have been restored and are visited by many tourists every day in the year.

Mission San Rafael Archangel, founded in 1817 as an asistencia from Mission Dolores in San Francisco, achieved mission status and Independence in 1823 after San Rafael mission priests had taken the oath of allegiance to Mexico. Its only importance in the mission system was as a hospital for ailing neophytes and fathers from Dolores. No trace of this settlement is now existent.

Mission Santa Barbara, founded in 1786 by Fathers Lasuen and Paterna, was the first to be established after Father Serra's death. It is the only California mission which has remained continuously in the hands of the founding Franciscans and one of the very few whose records maintain an unbroken chain of sequence.

The present great sandstone church, the fourth chapel to be built at the mission, was dedicated in 1820. It measures 40 by 175 feet, with walls six feet thick. It was seriously damaged in the earthquake of 1926, and restored, with great sympathy under the direction of Ross Montgomery.

A more recent restoration does not meet with such approval by most people who visit the historic buildings of Santa Barbara. Three adobe structures in succession, each larger than the other had been, preceded the present stone structure. The adjoining stone buildings as they stand today were built gradually between 1811 and 1905.

This mission was built for the Christian education of the Chumash Indians who lived under the supervision of the padres in a village close to the church. Between 1788 and 1846, 4,715 of these entered the church. They were taught the crafts and arts from agriculture to music. An irrigation system, including massive dams in the foothills and the beautiful fountain in front of the mission were built in the years 1807 - 1808.

After mission days, the buildings served as an apostolic college from 1854 to 1885, then in 1896 became a seminary for future Franciscan priests, who still labor among the Indians in Arizona. The mission is also a parish center. The museum within the mission building, under the management of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, has a rich collection from Indian, Spanish Mexican and early American days. Santa Barbara is known as the "Queen of the Missions."

La Purisima Concepcion was founded in 1787, and with the usual early history of quarrelsome Indians, seasonable crops, floods and earthquakes, the mission sank into decay after secularization. At Purisima, however, a truly modern drama was unfolded.

Since 1935 a real construction has been in progress and we expect the work has been about completed since we last visited there, inspired research into old plans, records, materials and methods of construction has been followed by equally inspired builders. Under the supervision of the National Park Service, the California Division of Beaches and Parks, and the C.C.C. all combined in making adobe bricks and tile and brought this mission to life again.

The few ruined walls and pillars have been incorporated in the new buildings. Material available to the padres has been used, work has been done in the old way as much as possible. The mission is a state museum, its gardens and 500 acres a state park, a trip to this place is a joy, and a real education is in store for those who motor off the usual beaten path.