



HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

The Mission of the Archangel



Mission San Miguel, likely photographed between 1890 and 1910

Mission San Miguel Arcangel

San Luis Obispo County is fortunate in having two California Missions in its boundaries and each of them founded by a president of the Missions. San Luis Obispo de Tolosa founded by Fr. Presidente Junipero Serra in 1772 and San Miguel Arcangel founded by Fr. Presidente Fermin Francisco de Lasuen in 1797, a quarter of a century later.

Fr. Serra founded the first nine missions and Fr. Lasuen founded the next nine, so eighteen of the twenty-one missions were founded by the two men.



Originally all of the missions of Alta California were Franciscan and were administered by the grey robed friars. Today there are only four, San Miguel Arcangel, San Antonio de Padua, San Luis Rey de Francia, and Santa Barbara, Virgen y Martir. The friars wear brown robes now.

San Miguel was one of the very large missions using a tremendous acreage, perhaps because of its climate. The stunning interior of the mission has never been retouched in any way and still shows the artistic genius of Estevan Munras, the Spanish artist from Monterey, and his Indian assistants, and these would have been Salinans. The clear primitive colors, especially the vibrant green and vivid pink, are most arresting.

The California missions had the first cattle brands of California and each had its own brand. San Miguel had the numeral "3" with an elongated top. This "3" symbolized the Holy Trinity.



There is a large oil painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patron Saint of Mexico, in the church. When Mexico owned California, from 1822 to 1846, the Little Dark One, as she is affectionately called, was placed in each of the 21 Missions.

San Miguel Mission experienced devastating fires and at another time the church of the day was greatly damaged by the earthquake of 1812, as were all the Missions, but they all did extensive restoration after that and carried on.

The pine beams of San Miguel Mission came from Cambria, as did those of Mission San Luis Obispo. A whole tree was used for each beam, which was never spliced.

The mission was one of the last of the 21 Missions to be secularized - in 1836. After that it fell into a gradual decay. At one time it was owned by William Reed. In 1849 the Reed family of four and their six servants were murdered by prospectors returning from the gold fields. The five criminals were all apprehended and paid for their crime "by pistol and cord", and one by drowning.

For years, the Mission has displayed an ancient Spanish cannon under one of its arches. The small cannon was used by the Mexicans against Fremont in 1846. Several years ago, the cannon was stolen. The entire county felt bereft but they rejoiced with the Mission when it was found in King City. Today the little bronze cannon, dated 1697, has taken its place again under one of the arches of the former convento.



The Franciscans of San Miguel not only maintain a parish church but have preserved the feeling of history and antiquity in the 16th Mission. One steps back centuries when he enters the venerable Mission and feels that he is touching hands with history.

The Mission was made a State Historical Landmark in 1939. It received its bronze plaque in 1966.

Written by Louisiana Clayton Dart in 1978. Please wait to visit until shelter-at-home orders are lifted.





Giving Tuesday Now

#GivingTuesdayNow, on **May 5** is an opportunity for people around the world to stand together in unity - to use their individual power of generosity to unite and heal communities. A global threat like COVID-19 touches every person on the planet, and it presents an opportunity to come together as a global community.

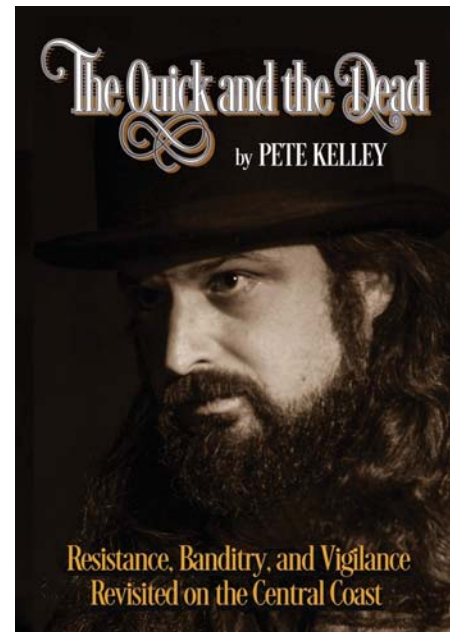
The History Center is asking for your support. As the guardians of our county's history, we are working every day to ensure that history gets passed down to future generations. We can't do it alone, we need your help.

DONATE NOW

Tune in for Local History

Local historian Pete Kelley will be on KCBX's *Issues and Ideas* this coming Monday to discuss his new book, *The Quick and the Dead*. Pete tells the story of the Committee of Vigilance, digging deeper into that tumultuous time when California was taken from Mexico and bringing those events into sharper focus.

Tune in to 90.1 FM on Monday, May 4th at 1:00 pm.



Looking for more to do?

- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#). In addition to our regular Theme Monday and Throwback Thursday posts, we'll now be posting every weekday with photos from our collection that will inspire activities you can try in your very own homes.
- Take a [virtual walking tour](#) of historic San Luis Obispo. These video series feature short vignettes about significant local landmarks.

If you have any ideas of content you'd like to see, share it with us! And if you enjoy what we share with you, and if you are able to, would you please consider [supporting us](#)?

Thank you for being a part of our community. Everybody stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,



Thomas Kessler
Executive Director

History Center of San Luis Obispo County
696 Monterey Street, SLO | (805) 543-0638 | historycenterslo.org
[Become a member now, click here!](#)

STAY CONNECTED:



History Center of San Luis Obispo County, 696 Monterey Street, San Luis
Obispo, CA 93401

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by info@historycenterslo.org in collaboration with

Constant Contact 

Try email marketing for free today!