

# The history of mission san francisco de asis essay sample



The History of Mission San Francisco de Asis On June 27th, 1776 Father Palon and Pedro Cambon, ten Christian Indians driving pack mules, and almost 300 head of cattle arrived at the Arroyode los Dolores which Anza and Father Font had selected for a mission site. They put up a camp, erected an arbor (gazebo) as a temporary chapel and on June 29th, 1776 Font celebrated mass. This was the beginning of California's sixth mission.

Missions were settlements where padres (priests) from the Catholic Church taught their religions beliefs to the people nearby. The padres knew when they left Spain to serve God and carry the word that they might never return.

Father Serra wanted the Indians to give up their culture and to live and work at the missions. In exchange he would offer them a new way of life. Since Agriculture was an important activity on the missions they were taught farming skills and took care of the animals. Their crops and animals supplied most of the food needed to feed the padres, the Indians, and the soldiers living nearby. Women grind corn and spun the wool while children gathered olives to make oil for lamps, medicine, and in cooking. The Indians were also taught tradecrafts like tanning leather so they could support themselves. At the mission de Asis Indians began making adobe brick and, in 1778, work on the present church. They constructed and repaired mission buildings. They also began building forts and presidios to protect the entrance to the enormous Bay. Towns and pueblos were also started near the missions for settlers from Mexico. The Padres at the missions were very friendly offering visitors a place to stay.

The padres hoped to convert the Indians and thought they should learn the Spanish Culture in order to be good Christians. It was new and exciting to many Indians so they joined the missions and worked very hard. However, not all Indians were happy so they ran away. Some rebelled and accused any one related to the missions of trespassing upon the land of their forefathers. For the many that stayed Mission Dolores had its share of sorrows. There were long periods of fog and damp- cold, unhealthy weather. Thousands of Indians died from diseases brought by the Spanish like measles and smallpox. Some died from the change in their diets.

Through the years Mexican leaders wanted to get rid of anything connected with the Old Spanish Government and a civil commission was assigned to take over the mission in 1834. The land was divided among Indians, Californians, and New Mexican Settlers. They started ranchos on the land. Some Indians stayed to work. Many ran off to the mountains or deserts. Padres returned to Mexico and Spain. By 1841 the mission buildings were falling to pieces because of neglect. The property was restored to the church after the United States acquired California in 1846. The mission grew again in importance as a parish church in the brawling, booming gold rush city of San Francisco.

Mission Dolores survived the great earthquake and fire of 1906 but the structure to the parish church was damaged. The ruined modern church had to be replaced. It was completed in 1918, and dedicated on Christmas.

Today, Mission Dolores is a small adobe church and a tiny cemetery packed with historic headstones. Its thick adobe walls and its roof timber and tiles

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are original. The ceiling still shows the decorations by the Indians and many of the sculptured figures of the mission's patron saints are the work of neophytes (converts). Three bells are still hung from rawhide thongs. The mission is simple in style without the usual arches and arcades. It is recognized for a massive facade front and its cleanliness unusual in church architecture for its time.

On the left side of the church is a small graveyard where much of San Francisco's history is recorded in stone. It includes both the famous and unknown. Here is a list of some of the buried: James Casey and Charles Cora, hung by the Vigilantes in 1856; A plaque honors the memory of Father Palou, 1st priest at the mission; William Leidesdoff, a blackman who was an early civic leader; Don Luis Antonio Arquello, the 1st governor of Alta California under Mexican authority; Don Francisco de Hara, San Francisco's 1st mayor. The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine marks the place of these forgotten dead. There is a statue of Father Junipero Serra in the cemetery. To the right side rises the great basilica which was completed in 1918.

Today, there are visitor tours of the mission where you can see the Ornate altar, Moorish-Corinthian architecture, the garden cemetery, Indians, public figures, and museum. The church is used only for weddings, baptisms, funerals, and special masses. In the small church religious services are held twice yearly, on Memorial Day and on June 29th, the anniversary of its first mass.

We Americans are attracted to the missions as exotic ruins. The missions remind us that California was once the New Spain. Mission Dolores is located

in the middle of San Francisco, California on Dolores Street between 16th and 17th streets.