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THE ROYAL PRESIDIO CHAPEL OF SAN CARLOS DE BORROMEO

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THE ROYAL PRESIDIO CHAPEL OF SAN CARLOS DE BORROMEO

The proud Spanish transport San Antonio rode at anchor in Monterey Bay the morning of Sunday, June 3, 1770. A lone, robed figure stepped out upon deck. As he gazed shoreward he raised his arms heavenward, exclaiming "What a beautiful port!"[1] The speaker was Father Junípero Serra, founder of the missions in Upper California.

Landing at the cove in the southern end of Monterey Bay, where a great and spreading oak tree stood near the water's edge, Serra was prepared to consecrate the place in the name of civilization. All was bustle and activity. Only once before in all the ages that had passed had the localities of Monterey known a similar scene. That had taken place more than one hundred and fifty years before when Sebastián Vizcaíno landed there on his voyage of exploration up the coast.

In preparation for the ceremony a shelter of branches and leaves was erected, the ground was cleared off and a cross was set up near the old oak. Water was blessed, and a number of bells were hung from the limbs of the great tree. When all the preparations had been completed, the whole company, composed

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1. Fr. F. Palóu, Life and apostolic labors of Fr. Junípero Serra, 98.

of the members of the land and sea expeditions, assembled before the altar which had been constructed under the arbor.

The men who had come aboard the San Antonio were Father President Junípero Serra, Captain Juan Pérez and First Mate Miguel del Pino with their crew, Engineer Miguel Costansó, Doctor Pedro Prat, and several soldiers. They had brought all the equipment and supplies for the new presidio and mission. In the land party had come Governor Don Gaspar de Portolá, Captain Pedro Fages, with twelve Catalan volunteers and seven soldiers, Father Juan Crespí, two muleteers and five Lower California Indians. The assemblage at that historic celebration thus consisted of some sixty or more persons.[2] All the officers and soldiers were in uniform and fully armed.

It was the holy day of Pentecost and the feast was begun by the peals of the bells which had been hung under the tree. This was done to call all the company together, and Father Serra also hoped to attract some of the native Indians from the surrounding country by the noise. The Indians, however, were frightened out of most of their curiosity and were quite content to witness the strange Christian rites from the shelter of some convenient rock or tree at a safe distance.[3]

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2. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, I, 168-171;
   T. H. Hittell, History of California, I, 229-231;
   Z. S. Eldredge, History of California, I, 266-270.
3. G. Atherton, California; an intimate history, 24-25.

Father Serra then donned his alb and stole to conduct the religious ceremonies. The entire company knelt and chanted the Venite Creator Spiritus, after which Father Serra blessed the water and with it the great cross which had been constructed and which all helped to raise into position. Serra sprinkled the surroundings and the shore with holy water in order to drive away all infernal enemies. After that was done, a high mass was commenced at the altar, upon which was placed the image of the Holy Virgin, which had been donated for the expedition to Monterey at the request of Don José de Galvez by the Most Reverend Francisco de Lorenzana, Archbishop of Mexico. This first holy mass was sung by the father president, who also preached after the Gospel. At the same time, repeated salutes from the cannons of the San Antonio and volleys from the muskets and other firearms were fired to take the place of musical accompaniment. At the close of the holy mass the Salvo Regina was sung before the lovely statue of the Virgin, and the religious ceremony ended with the Te Deum Laudamus.[4]

At the conclusion of Father Serra's part of the program, Governor Portolá proceeded to take formal possession in the name of Charles III. The royal flag of Spain was hoisted

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4. F. Z. Engelhardt, Missions and missionaries of California, II, pt. I, 74-75; Bancroft, History of California, I, 170; Hittell, History of California, I, 331.

and saluted, after which those present went through the usual form of procedure of taking formal possession by pulling grass and shrubs, throwing stones, and making a record of the act in the prescribed written document. This statement was signed by Portolá, by all the army and ship officers and by the friars as witnesses.[5] Finally the officers and friars had their lunch together under the shade of the oak near the shore, while the soldiers and others enjoyed their meal a little apart.

Thus divine worship began at that place, and the famous port of Monterey passed into the dominion and command of the Spanish kings. On that same day of Pentecost the reverend father president, in the name of the king and of the reverend father guardian of the Apostolic College of San Fernando in Mexico, established a new mission under the title of San Carlos Borromeo. He named as the principal patron of the new church the Most Holy Patriarch Saint Joseph, and named Father Crespí as his assistant minister. At that time the Presidio of Monterey was also founded by Portolá. A few humble huts were at once erected on a site surveyed by Miguel Costansó, a gunshot from the beach and three times as far from the port, on

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5. Eldredge, History of California, I, 270-271; Engelhardt, Mission and missionaries, II, pt. I, 76-77. The full text of the act is given by Engelhardt.

an inlet which communicated with the bay at high tide. Those buildings constituted both presidio and mission. The day was brought to an end with rejoicing and feasting.[6]

There was another ceremony which took place on that same day, but of a nature different from the first. On the day before, Alejo Viño, the ship calker of the San Carlos, died. Immediately after the cross and rite had been blessed the solemn funeral took place, and was followed by the high mass. The remains were buried at the foot of the large cross which had been planted and venerated in front of the proposed chapel.[7]

As soon as the business of the day was finished, Governor Portolá prepared his dispatch for the viceroy and Visitor-general Galvez, giving them an accout of all that had been done. He then asked for volunteers to carry the report to Mexico. From those who offered themselves he chose a young soldier, and a sailor boy belonging to the crew of the San Antonio.

Between the 3d and the 14th of June the company was busy erecting the rude buildings that were to constitute the presidio and mission. When finished, these were surrounded by

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6. Eldredge, History of California, I, 271; Engelhardt, Missions and missionaries, II, pt. I, 78-79; Bancroft, History of California, I, 171; Hittell, History of California, I, 332.
7. Engelhardt, Missions and missionaries, II, pt. I, 78.

appalisade for protection. The largest and best of the rude huts was blessed, as it was to serve as a chapel. On June 14, the first celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi took place. High mass was sung and a solemn procession with the blessed sacrament was held in the open air amid the thundering of cannons, the rattle of musketry and the chiming of bells.[8] This feast was a source of great joy to all those present.

On the afternoon of June 15, 1770, the two volunteer messengers set out on horseback to take Portolá's reports to Lower California. They proceeded along the coast to a point about a day's journey south of San Diego, where they met Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada. He, with twenty soldiers, was driving a large number of cattle and sheep.

Captain Rivera, seeing that he was close to his destination, detached five of his soldiers to escort the messengers on their southward journey. They took the most direct road down through the center of the peninsula of Lower California and on August 2, 1770, arrived at the mission of Todos Santos, near Cape San Lucas, where Governor Matias de Armona received them. He immediately had a vessel made ready which took them to San Blas.[9]

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8. Hittell, History of California, I, 332; Engelhardt, Missions and missionaries, 78-79.
9. Hittell, History of California, I, 333.

Meanwhile, Governor Portolá, having finished establishing the port at Monterey, turned over the military command to Lieutenant Pedro Fages and sailed on the San Antonio for San Blas on July 9. He reached the latter port on August 1, and, finding that he had arrived there before his messengers, prepared new despatches and sent them on to Mexico City. There was great rejoicing at the capital when Viceroy Croix and Don José de Gálvez received the new of the successful founding of Monterey. The bells of the great cathedral were rung and they were answered by the bells of every other church in the city; this was followed by a public thanksgiving mass and feast of celebration.[10]

Meanwhile, at Monterey Father Serra had begun his labor for the conversion of the Indians. During the first two weeks of the Spanish occupation, they had been frightened away by the continual noise of firearms and for a long time remained hidden. It was only by slow degrees and in small groups that they began to reappear, allured partly by presents and partly by curiosity. The rude shed erected under the Vizcaíno Oak was improved and converted into a sort of church, and on June 16, was solemnly consecrated as such; but there was no congregation other than the Spaniards.

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10. Eldredge, History of California, I, 272-273,
Hittell, History of California, I, 333-334,
Bancroft, History of California, I, 172-173.

Fathers Serra and Crespí were making attempts to convert the Indians who appeared at the presidio but unfortunately there was no one among the Spaniards who knew the Indian language, so their task appeared insurmountable. In the land expedition was a Lower California Indian boy who offered some possibilities. Father Serra put him to associating with the natives and after some months of such contacts the boy learned enough of the local language so that he was able to act as interpreter between the friars and the Indians. By that method, with great patience the fathers finally conveyed the idea to the natives that they had come from far away to bring them happiness. Some of the heathens were willing to listen, and thus it came to pass that on December 26, 1770, Father Serra happily recorded the first baptism among the natives of Monterey and the Indian was given the name of Bernardino de Jesús.[11]

During the latter half of 1770 and the first half of 1771, the mission remained on the beach, in front of the anchorage, where it had been originally located. But as there was little land suitable for tillage in the vicinity, Serra decided to move the mission to a spot on the bank of the Carmel River about five miles south of Monterey, where the cultivable grounds were rich, extensive, pleasantly situated and well watered. With that object in view, Serra, in the summer of

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11. Engelhardt, Mission San Carlos Borromeo, 29.

1771, caused timber to be felled and several structures to be erected at the Carmel site. These included a chapel, dwellings, barracks, corrals and stockade; and near the end of the year, about December 1771, he moved the mission into them, leaving the presidio and chapel as before on the beach guarding the harbor.[12] The new mission then took the official name of San Carlos Borromeo, and the old mission at Monterey came to be called The Royal Chapel of the Presidio of Monterey.[13]

As has been stated already, the first building set up for the presidio chapel was a crude affair made of logs standing on end, the interstices filled with twigs and plastered with mud. The roof was made of beams over which was laid a layer of sticks about an inch or two thick; then several layers of branches and leaves were spread on top and the whole thing covered with earth to the depth of four or five inches. When this was tamped down it made a fairly waterproof roof, there being just enough of a slope to it so that the water would run off.

During the first year and a half that the chapel was established and up to the time when Father Serra finished the first buildings for the new mission on the Carmel River, Father Crespí was assigned to serve the presidio church and the white

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12. Hittell, History of California, I, 334-335.
13. T. L. Ford, Dawn and the dons, 62.

people. As soon as the Carmel mission was constructed, Father Crespí was ordered to join the father president there, and thereafter the chapel at the presidio was left without a resident priest, but one from Misión San Carlos would go there once a week to hold services for the officers and men at the presidio. While Father Crespí was at the Monterey chapel he was assisted by two new missionaries who arrived in 1771. They were Fr. Joseph Cavaller and Fr. Domingo Juncosa, who took charge of Misión San Luis Obispo when that establishment was founded.

By December 1773, the original wooden and mud chapel had been discarded and another one with adobe walls and mud-covered roof was built on the south side of the presidio square opposite the north gate of the presidio stockade. Adjoining it was a little room of the same material for the use of the missionary father who went there to celebrate holy mass every Sunday and holiday of obligation. On the other side of it was the dwelling of the commandant, also of adobe.[14] When the Anza colony arrived, in 1776, they were quartered at the presidio and held services in the chapel.

For twenty years that rude chapel served as the presidio church. During that time it was visited by several distinguished persons. The first to arrive was Captain Jean

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14. Engelhardt, Mission San Carlos Borromeo, 56.

Francois Galoup de la Pérouse and his scientific expedition that was on a voyage of discovery round the world. He and his staff, with their two ships, the Boussole and Astrolabe, entered Monterey on September 14, 1786. The Frenchmen were received by Governor Pedro Fages, Captain Estevan Martínez of the Spanish navy, and Father President Fermin Lasuén. The guests were given a fine reception of welcome with all military honors and attended services at the presidio chapel. These men also visited Misión San Carlos during their stay in Monterey, and after about ten days departed for the Orient and South Sea Islands on September 24th, 1786.[15]

The next person of note to visit the presidio and its church was Captain George Vancouver with his naval expedition to the North Pacific and round the world. That British naval officer and his company arrived in Monterey on November 27, 1792. Governor José Argüello, Captain Bodega y Cuadra of the Spanish navy and Father Lasuén received the distinguished visitors with a salute of thirteen guns and a reception at the presidio including services at the Royal Chapel. That visit lasted until January 15, 1793, when the expedition sailed for the southwest. Vancouver made two subsequent visits to Monterey, on November 1, 1793, and November 6, 1794. The last time he stayed until December 2, 1794, when he sailed for England

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15. Bancroft, History of California, I, 429-433.

around Cape Horn.[16] In 1789, a new building for the Royal Presidio Chapel was begun at Monterey. It was finished in 1791. In August, 1789, a fire destroyed about half of the buildings at the Presidio of Monterey so Governor Fages set to work to have them rebuilt. Three masons who had been taken to Monterey by the transport that year were set to work quarrying stone with the help of some eighty Indians from Misión Santa Clara. The masons were employed as architects and builders. Kilns for burning tiles and making lime from shells were set up, and by 1791 a new stone chapel and houses were erected.[17]

The materials used in the construction were all found in the neighborhood. The stone and timber were from the hills in back of the church, the lime came from shells in the bay and the sand from the nearby beach. The Indian labor was paid for in blankets, cotton cloth, beads and shells to each worker. The Indians were also fed by the government while on the job. Their breakfast consisted of a ration of beef, and the dinner and supper of pozol, a mixture of boiled corn and beans. During the months that the natives were employed, they were treated with kindness and were allowed rest periods and time off to go

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16. Bancroft, History of California, I, 509-529.
17. Eldredge, History of California, II, 12-13.

to the beach to collect shells. They were also given presents of strings of beads and other trinkets, all of which kept them in good humor and working industriously. The results were excellent.[18] The plan of the new church was in accordance with a design made by Antonio Velasquez, the director of the Royal Academy of San Carlos; and it was followed as closely as circumstances would permit. By the time the building was complete it had cost the royal treasury the very small sum of three thousand pesos, and in this expense were included a number of other buildings and repairs to old ones, all of which formed parts of the presidio.

The church of Monterey, as built in 1791, was a building more than one hundred feet long and some forty feet wide, rectangular in shape, of the basilica type. The front of the chapel was to the north, and its carved stone facade had ornate columns and a massive arched doorway. Over the doorway was a medium sized almost square window. The bell tower rose at the northeast corner of the building. Halfway up the front wall was a small window about two feet square. The belfry had two arches, one faced north and the other east. Each contained six bells, which had been cast in Spain. The tile roof was the low arched type. The interior was quite plain and simple, the white-washed wall being decorated with a few pictures and images of

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18. Hittell, History of California, I, 538-539.

saints. The altar and pulpit were at the south end of the building. This chapel continued to serve unchanged until the middle of the 19th century when it was reconstructed and its form altered to the shape of a cross.[19]

The new chapel saw many important functions take place within its walls in later years, besides the weekly services and holiday feasts. Every time a new governor arrived a great celebration took place in Monterey in which solemn religious services were held in the chapel. This was especially true during the Spanish era. When Governor Diego de Borica took office, in 1794, a high mass was held in the chapel. At the time that Governor Don José Joaquín de Arrillaga arrived in Monterey, on January 20, 1806, there were two days of feasting and celebration with the church taking a full part in the affair.[20]

When Arrillaga died the new governor was Don Pablo Vicente Solá. On his arrival at the presidio, on August 30, 1815, he found the place all decorated with greenery and flowers. That evening there was a great banquet and the place was illuminated by many lamps and flares. The next day friars, settlers, and Indians came to Monterey from all the country

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19. L. B. Powers, Old Monterey, 52. Gives a picture of the church as it was orginally.
20. Bancroft, History of California, I, 530-540; II, 204-207.

round. Father President Señan, with twenty friars and thirty native musicians and singers headed by José el Cantor, marched in procession to the presidio chapel to chant a Te Deum. They were followed by Governor Solá with his officers and soldiers amid the booming of artillery salutes. When the mass was concluded the president made a speech of welcome. Then the religious ceremonies ended and were followed by a review of the troops in the plaza and an address by the new governor, all of which received the loud acclaim of the populace. The rest of the celebration took place at the executive mansion.[21]

For the next three years the Royal Presidio Chapel led a very quiet existence, with an occasional wedding, a baptism, a funeral, and the weekly services to keep up the usual routine. On November 21, 1818, there occurred one of the important events in the career of that church. This was the arrival in Monterey of the two insurgent ships from Buenos Aires under the command of Captain Bouchard. He had brought his fleet up to California to attempt to induce the Californians to join the revolution against Spain. But instead of landing to persuade them by peaceful arguments, the Frenchmen immediately opened fire on the fort. The Californians put up a stout defense, but finally, being greatly outnumbered by the

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21. Bancroft, History of California, II, 208-209; Atherton, California; an intimate history, 59-60; Hittell, History of California, I, 634-636.

insurgents, the governor ordered the people to evacuate the port. He and his few soldiers and their families then took refuge at Rancho del Rey, near the present town of Salinas. The pirates were thus left in undisputed possession of Monterey. During their stay of some ten days they managed to loot the town and the church. The presidio chapel was stripped of everything of value, and just before sailing they set fire to the house and presidio. Only the chapel escaped unharmed. As soon as the pirates had gone, Governor de Solá and his people returned to Monterey, in time to extinguish the smouldering ruins of their homes.[22] Monterey was quickly rebuilt.

Four other uneventful years passed by with only the usual services taking place at the presidio church. In 1822, another great celebration took place in Monterey during which the chapel played an important part. This was held at the time California passed from Spanish dominion to that of the Republic of Mexico, following the war of independence in that country. At that time the government of Mexico sent a priest by the name of Agustin Fernandez de San Vicente as a commissioner to California to effect the change of flag.

Canon Fernandez arrived in Monterey by water on September 27, 1822, and was received by Governor de Solá and

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22. G. Tays, Revolutionary California, University of California, Ph.D. thesis, Ms., 73-84; Bancroft, History of California, II, 224-234; Hittell, History of California, II, 643-646.

Father President Payeras. During that day and the next, receptions and dinners both private and public were given in honor of the distinguished guest. On September 29th, the ceremony of lowering the Spanish flag and hoisting the Mexican flag took place in the center of the presidio parade ground, at noon. It was attended by everyone who could be present. The officers and soldiers were in full uniform and the civilians in their Sunday best. They formed a hollow square about the flagpole in the center of the plaza. The artillery had the east side, the infantry the south side, the cavalry the north and the populace occupied the west side of the square. When all was in readiness a bugle sounded and Governor Solá and Commissioner Fernandez in full panoply appeared from the governor's mansion and, followed by a color guard bearing the new flag, advanced to the flagpole.

The troops were standing at attention and the people were bareheaded and silent. When the procession reached the staff, Fernandez gave the order to strike the Spanish Royal banner and Governor de Solá received it as it reached the ground. At the commissioner's command, the new Mexican flag was raised. This was followed by a salute of twenty-one guns and three rounds of musketry while the spectators raised their voices with the cry "Long life Mexican independence."

Immediately following the flag raising, a solemn

service was held in the Royal Presidio Chapel at the south side of the square. During the preceding two days other services had also been held there, but that of the 29th was a special one. A solemn high mass was conducted by Father President Payeras himself, followed by a sermon and an address by Fernandez. Then the Te Deum was sung, and the services closed to the ringing of bells and the thunder and rattle of artillery and musketry.[23]

From 1822 onward, little of note took place at the presidio chapel except the weekly services conducted by the friar from San Carlos, and an occasional wedding, baptism or funeral. The next big feast to be held there was in May 1827, when Governor Echeandia arrived at the capital from San Diego. Then the high mass was held and the usual formal ceremonies of welcome to the governor were held.

Again, when Governor Manuel Victoria took office, in January 1831, religious services were held at the presidio chapel as was the procedure when a new governor arrived. There was little religious activity during the following two years of revolutionary turmoil, but there was a grand feast when Governor Figueroa arrived in Monterey. The reception to the new official included a high mass and other religious ceremonies.

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23. Tays, "The passing of Spanish California," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XV, No. 2, June 1936, 139-142; M. G. Vallejo, History of California, I, 287-289, Ms. in Bancroft Library.

The governor brought with him ten new missionaries from the College of Zacatecas who were to take charge of the eight northern missions, including San Carlos.[24]

In December 1834, the complete secularization of the missions was begun. At that time the Franciscan friars from the College of San Fernando retired to the missions of Southern California, leaving the friars from Zacatecas in possession of the northern missions. Father José María del Real then became the minister at Misión San Carlos, and he also assumed the duties of conducting services at the presidio chapel. Within a year or two after Alvarado became the governor in 1836, the Misión San Carlos was in ruins due to the activities of the civil administrators. Father del Real moved to the Royal Presidio Chapel and it became the parish church of Monterey.[25]

Father Real was very poorly supported by his congregation at Monterey during the years after he took up his duties there. On May 3rd, 1845, he wrote to the acting governor asking aid for the maintenance of the church and its minister. He proposed that a subscription of the citizens be taken for the purpose of supporting divine worship and the priest, in accordance with an agreement which had been reached between Bishop Diego and Governor Micheltorena.

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24. Engelhardt, Mission San Carlos Borromeo, 182-183.
25. Powers, Old Monterey, 127-130.

Governor Pico wrote to the judge at Monterey to assemble the people in order that they might contribute to a fund for Father Real. Nothing seems to have come from that move and the friar was forced to accept fees for baptisms, marriages, burials and other services.[26]

Father Antonio Real was transferred to Misión Santa Cruz in November 1845, leaving Monterey without a priest for some months. José Castro wrote to Bishop Diego on February 6, 1846, requesting that Father Real be returned to Monterey, but the request was denied. Later in the month, however, the bishop appointed Father Doroteo Ambris as minister of Monterey to fill the vacancy.[27] He served there for several years.

Early in 1849, Father Ramirez took charge of the presidio church. In November 1849, he was asked, in company with the Reverend Mr. Willey, to open with prayers, the sessions of the constitutional convention in Colton Hall.[28]

After 1850, the presidio church was badly in need of repairs, and so, in 1855, Governor Romualdo Pacheco donated the money for its repair and reconstruction. At that time Father Bautista Comellas was the pastor of the church, and the work was done under his direction.

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26. Engelhardt, Mission San Carlos de Borromeo, 212-213.
27. Ibid., 213.
28. G. MacFarland, Monterey, cradle of California's romance, 62-63.

The new church was built, in the form of a cross, of the white limestone found in the vicinity. The nave was formed by the old chapel, whose length was increased by thirty feet, and when complete was 120 feet long by 40 feet wide. Transepts of the same material were added, and the whole was completed in 1858. The facade is the original one built in 1790, except that the bell tower was given a peaked roof instead of the flat one of former years and crosses were added to the top of the tower and the front of the nave. The large and ornate main altar was built at that time, and is said to have been the work of an Indian. The interior was decorated with many objects of interest, principally with the furnishings, pictures and vestments belonging to Misión Carmel. These articles were taken to Monterey from San Carlos by Father Real at the time he took over the Presidio Chapel when the mission was abandoned. Father Ramirez also was able to secure other objects that had been stolen from the mission at the time of its secularization. The sacred vessels of San Carlos were also deposited in the new church, as was the reliquary, all of which are kept in an iron safe of ancient design. This also is evidently the work of Indians. It is rudely carved and gaudily painted. On the back is a list of contents in Father Serra's handwriting. The record books, the most valuable of all things in a church, also came from San Carlos. The beginning records in the books are in Father Serra's hand. This contains the records of all

baptisms, marriages and deaths which occurred at Misión San Carlos during the life of that mission.[29]

The walk in front of the main entrance to the church was paved with the sections of vertebrae of whales, taken from the old whaling station in Monterey. Just in front of the door these bones are arranged in the form of a star.

The reliquary already mentioned contained a number of interesting relics which Father Serra brought and prized very highly. Some of these were bones from the Catacombs of Rome, and an Agnus Dei of wax. Father Serra used to carry the reliquary in procession on each November 14th. Since it has been in the presidio church it has been used on similar occasions.

In the altar space or sanctuary there are a number of fine chairs, evidently brought from the Philippine Islands or China by the Manila galleons. The frames are of teak, ebony, or ironwood, with seats of marble, and disks of marble in the backs. In the sacristy is the iron safe in which Serra kept the sacred vessels as well as the important papers connected with his office. It is sheeted with iron bands and covered all over with basses. It is about three feet wide and four feet high. To this church were also brought the copes, stoles, maniples, and other vestments which were once used by Father Serra at Misión San Carlos.[30]

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29. Mrs. A.S.C. Forbes, California missions and landmarks, 190-191.
30. G. W. James, In and out of the old missions, 130-132.

After Father Comellas, the Reverend Angelo Casanova became the minister at the presidio church and served there from 1868 to 1893. During his long pastorate he did much to keep his church in repair and active service. It was he who first undertook the restoration of Misión San Carlos.

Father Casanova was succeeded by the Reverend R.M. Mestres. Under his care the church has been kept in repair and many improvements have been made. His refinement and culture are evident in the interior remodeling of the church and in all its improvements.[31]

About 1910, the old oak tree under whose shade Vizcaíno and Father Serra landed, and which had stood for centuries at the spot, died from injuries received to its roots from workingmen engaged in digging a ditch. The tree was then uprooted and tossed into the bay. Father Mestres, hearing about it, had the trunk rescued and set in concrete in the back yard of the church, where it stands today.[32]

During recent years Father James Culleton, D.D., has reassembled a large part of the library which Father Serra started and which was formerly housed at Misión San Carlos before it was sold by Governor Pico, "for debt." This library

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31. A. G. Andresen, Historic landmarks of Monterey, 8; F. Rider, Rider's California, 500.
32. Forbes, California missions and landmarks, 191.

is now at the presidio church; some of its volumes are several hundred years old and many are priceless first editions. It is hoped that most of the books which were lost at the time of secularization will some day be recovered. They all bear the device of Misión San Carlos on the backs and were catalogued by Father Lasuén.

It is a long time since the first part of the Royal Presidio Chapel was built. From the day in 1791 when the stone chapel was first dedicated, the little red lamp in the sanctuary has never ceased to burn, the symbol of everlasting life. From 1770 until this day the Monterey church has been in continual use, the only sanctuary to serve California from its very beginning, without a break.

The architectural characteristics of the church are derived directly from the classic spirit prevailing in the churches in Mexico at that time. The carvings over the main door and side entrances are distinctive features. The winding stone steps leading to the choir loft are also characteristic.

The church was originally built in basilica form, as were most of the California missions. When it was rebuilt in 1858, a Romanesque altar was added, followed by other changes which did much violence to the original architectural plan. One of the worst changes was the use of Gothic windows instead of the Hispanic ones. Within recent years the old church has been acquiring a good collection of museum pieces

pertaining to the mission life.

The Right Reverend Phillip S. Scher, Bishop of Monterey, has recently made up a plan to restore the old church to its original Hispanic form, still keeping the transept. This will be started when the funds are available.[33]

It is to be hoped that the movement to build a brand new church for Monterey will be forgotten, and that the old presidio church may continue to serve and its everlasting light burn as it has these many years, a living symbol and a link between an era which is gone and the one to come.

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33. Powers, Old Monterey, 207-211.

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