

MISSION SAN GABRIEL ARCÁNGEL
(San Gabriel Mission)
428 South Mission Drive
San Gabriel
Los Angeles County
California

HALS CA-82
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
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Location: 428 South Mission Drive, San Gabriel, Los Angeles County, California

Latitude: 34.097386 Longitude: -118.1063 (Northeast corner of Mission, Bing Maps, WGS84)

Significance: The chain of 21 missions built in California between 1769 and 1823 represent some of California's earliest European habitation. Mission construction began while California was still controlled by Spain - long before Mexico gained control in 1821, and before the United States took possession in 1846. As each mission was dedicated, it formed the core of a new community, many of which grew into major California cities - San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and San Rafael all began as missions.

Founded on Sunday, September 8, 1771, Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, was the fourth Alta California mission to be founded after San Diego de Alcalá, San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo, and San Antonio de Padua. The name for the Mission comes from the Arcángel, Saint Gabriel. The Spanish government's goal was to recruit local natives from areas that are today's El Monte, La Puente, Pomona, San Marino, Santa Fe Springs, and Santa Anita. In this case, the Tongva, later to become the Gabrieleño, were used to build the Mission. The Missionaries at Mission San Gabriel helped to found the Church of Our Lady of the Angels at the Pueblo of Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles. The orange trees in Mission San Gabriel were the first orange trees planted in all of California with the first orchard being planted in 1804.

Description: The Mission is located in what is now the area of San Gabriel, 10.4 miles east of Downtown Los Angeles. It is bordered by South Mission Road (El Camino Real) to the south, South Santa Anita Street to the west, West Broadway to the north, and South Junipero Serra Drive to the east. The site is flat with a view of the San Gabriel Mountains from the newer Cemetery.

To the south are single-family homes; to the west of the Mission are the San Gabriel Mission Theater, commercial and industrial areas, and the San Gabriel Historical Museum; to the north are businesses and commercial; to the east are multi- and single-family housing. San Marino and The Huntington Library are to the north, Temple City and Rosemead to the east, Whittier Narrows is to the south, and Alhambra is located to the west.

From the San Gabriel Mission Commemorative Booklet, "The Mission grounds include the Old Mission Church, completed in 1805, the Chapel of the

Annunciation, finished in 1958, the first cemetery in Los Angeles County, the “newer” cemetery started in the 1800s, a museum, winery, kitchen, Court of the Mission Models, Guadalupe Peace Garden, Fountain Plaza, gift shop, rectory office, priests’ housing, convent (sisters’ housing), La Casa Vieja de Lopez (adobe house), Christian Service Center, Plaza Park, San Gabriel Mission Elementary School, and San Gabriel Mission High School.”

Plaza Park, built in 1931, is a triangle-shaped grassy area on the south side of the Mission. Planted along the Mission side is a line of Mexican Fan Palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), Date Palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), and Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*). Some of these appear in photos from 1930s through the 1960s, so their age is unknown.

The asphalt parking lot has planted islands of species including Spineless yucca (*Yucca elephantipes*), cacti, Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*), California Pepper (*Schinus molle*) and Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), Jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), and Banana trees (*Musa x paradisiaca*).

At the East entrance, there is a Grapevine Walkway arbor, with running bond bricks, spanning the length of the east side, from the Old Mission Church to the newer church. The arbor’s thirteen columns are planted with thirteen-12 foot high Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*). There is a statue of Father Junipero Serra in to the left of the arbor in a plaza.

The visitor’s entrance to the Gardens is through the Gift Shop. The Gardens are set up as four long rooms from east to west with another perpendicular room, which is the original Quadrangle. Walking through the Gift Shop’s south glass door to enter the small plaza, Fountain Plaza, you see to your right a Mission Revival Style white painted stucco fountain that reads “Erected by the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West on this Beloved Spot in memory of the Pioneer Mother and Father, March 1, 1940”. The back of the fountain is covered in Creeping Fig (*Ficus pumila*), and there was no water in the fountain during the site visit. The deep planting beds include species of agave, artemesia, gladiolas, Yellow Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus sp.*) and cacti, as well as a few large Olive (*Olea europaea*) strongly pruned at the crown, two of which were possibly planted in 1860.

The Fountain Plaza is covered in many surfaces – poured red/pink concrete scored to look like stone, Rosa Arizona Flagstone, 8-1/2” bricks in running bond pattern, colored concrete scored as bricks, 8” square terra cotta tiles with ceramic tiles placed within stack bond pattern. Throughout the patios, paths, and gardens are 1930s-era concrete benches, columns, pillars, and planters.

Past the Fountain is a garden with a path of 14” x 18” pink colored concrete pavers. This leads through the Guadalupe Peace Garden and Court of Mission

Models, and to the north, another garden and the Soap and Tallow Vats and working areas. The planting areas are bordered by 8" high concrete topped with 8-12" rock, and they contain Strawberry Trees (*Arbutus marina*), (*Ficus benjamina*), hydrangeas, ferns, camellias, hibiscus, a Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), philodendrons, and brugmansias. There are a few Bauer pots from the 1930s in the planting areas.

According to the interpretive signage "The Aqua Tibia Sweet orange trees (Valencia variety), planted in 2006 in this area, are descendants from the trees planted here by the Franciscans from cuttings from Spain. They started their life in 2004 with the help of Toots Bier of the Citrus Clonal Protection Program at the University of California at Redlands." The trees on the grounds were DNA tested at 140 years old.

Across the Fountain Plaza from the Gift Shop door is a small wrought iron gate, which leads to the Campo Santo Cemetery and Guadalupe Peace Garden. The cemetery was used for burials from 1778 to 1865, and since 1939, this cemetery has been used for the burials of the Claretian Missionaries. The Cemetery is layed out in the style of a formal garden with Boxwood hedges (*Buxus mycrophylla*) lining the planting areas. The gardens were restored by Father Ramon Catalan, C.M.F. and mission craftsmen in 1939. The stations with tiles from Talavera, Mexico, were added by Father Catalan. As you travel through the paths of the Campo Santo, the planting beds are filled with tropicals, natives, and large Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) framing the paths. In the center is a round stone wall with a wooden cross and metal Crucifix. There are signs stating that they were both damaged in the windstorms of December 1, 2011 and were reconstructed and re-erected on Good Friday, 2012.

To the south of the cross and along the length of the Old Mission Church is an arbor of grapevines that runs west along the length of the Church, then turns to the north, turns and runs to the west again, and turns and runs north. A small path leads to another grapevine with a sign that reads, "Ramona Grapevine circa 1774". Further through the Campo is a Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*), that is approximately 80' high with a 50' canopy.

Walking past the Ramona Grapevine, there is another statue of Father Junipero Serra that was dedicated in 1921 on the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Mission. Also in this area is the Old Well, dug by the Franciscans for fresh water supply. Upon drying up, the Claretians filled it in with soil: according to Franciscan Ramon Catalan, CMF, "to protect the inquisitive children." All along the original tile path that was layed in 1803, and through the original Quadrangle are seven pillars of adobe that were built over the original foundations, which once supported the adobe workshops. The Quadrangle was the workplace for the trades of leather working, carpentry, candle works, soap making, basket weaving, and metal smithing. Through this Quadrangle are four very large Olive

Trees (*Olea europaea*) that have been recently topped.

Continuing to the north and then east, you connect to the area of the Aqueduct. There is a large Carob Tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) in this area. According to the interpretive signage, with the “waters flowing from the canyons of Mt. Wilson, through San Pasqual Creek,” the Franciscans and Gabrieleno Indians directed the water from the upper Zanja in clay pipes, placing them underground, and leading into the Old Kitchen to supply water to the tannery for curing the hides, irrigating the vineyards, fields, and orchards.” The remains of the old fountain are on the site.

Next to the old fountain are the original adobe brick vats that served as open fire places after the original kitchen was destroyed by fire in 1812. Through the garden next to the soap and tallow vats, there’s a replica of the Tongva’s home, “Kiiy” (pronounced key), built by the descendants of the original Tongva Indians in October 2008.

The Court of Mission Models and the Sun Dial are in an enclosed area at the west end of the garden. There are twenty-one mission models made in the 1930s by the Claretian Missionaries. The remains of the Soap and Tallow Vats at the north end of the garden are four large adobe brick cisterns that supplied soap to most of the Missions. The iron vats were stolen during the Mexican War, and the factory was abandoned after that.

To the very north of the property is the newer Cemetery, established in the 1800s. There are Chinese Juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*), Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), and (*Pinus spp.*) and lawn in the well-cared for cemetery.

History: Established by Fathers Junipero Serra, Pedro Benito Cambon, and Angel Fernandez de la Somera in 1771, Mission San Gabriel was originally located along the Rio de los Temblores (River of Earthquakes) now the Santa Ana River. In September 1775, flash floods destroyed most of the grape crop and the Mission was ruined. It was then relocated five miles towards the mountains in present-day San Gabriel, which was then the native settlement of ‘lisanchanga’. The construction was completed in 1800, with Father Antonio Cuzado as the architect. The property contained the first cemetery in Los Angeles County. In 1804, from plants brought over from Spain, the first local orange grove was planted on the grounds of Mission San Gabriel.

An earthquake of 1804 destroyed the arches on the Church, and on December 9, 1812, another more severe earthquake, (the Wrightwood Earthquake), damaged the Mission San Gabriel, and destroyed the bell tower. The Mission reached its peak in 1829 with a herd of 42,350 cattle and sheep. The Mission harvested wheat, barley, corn, beans, peas, lentils, and garbanzos. Mexico sought independence gained control of Alta California in 1821, after the Mexican War

of Independence. In 1834, Governor Figueroa issued his “Decree of Confiscation” and by 1853, the last of the Franciscans left the property. According to the Mission’s interpretive signs, at the time of the confiscation there were 163,578 grape vines and 2,333 fruit trees in the orchard. In 1862, the Mission was restored to the Catholic Church and in 1908 the Claretian Missionaries of Saint Anthony Mary Claret order started serving San Gabriel Mission. The City of San Gabriel was established in 1913 around the Mission. The Mission is quite active in the community, and The San Gabriel Mission Gardeneers group was established to take care of the garden, and the restoration projects continue.

The site is a California Historical Landmark, No. 158; is listed on the National Register of Historic Places-1971 #71000158.

Sources: *The California Missions: History, Art, and Preservation*, by Edna E. Kimbro and Julia G. Costello with Tevvy Ball, 2009

California Mission Resource Center: <http://www.missionscalifornia.com>

Library of Congress HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, ca/ca0200/ca0292/data

Los Angeles Library Photo Collection

Mission San Gabriel: <http://www.sangabrielmissionchurch.org>

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, Booklet, Commemorative Edition, published by the Claretian Missionaries, Priests, and Brothers of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, 2008

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, Handout for admission to museum and grounds, 2011

Mission San Gabriel Arcángel Interpretive Signage

A Virtual Tour of the California Missions: <http://missiontour.org/sangabriel>

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_San_Gabriel_Arcángel

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Mission San Gabriel Arcangel, south elevation, from Plaza Park (Libby Simon, July 22, 2012).



East side entrance. Newer church at right of arbor (Libby Simon, July 22, 2012).



Campo Santo, the Guadalupe Peace Garden, and remains of Bell Tower ruins (Libby Simon, July 22, 2012).