

MISSION SAN FRANCISCO DE ASIS
(Mission Dolores)
320 Dolores Street, San Francisco, California
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HALS CA-83
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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HALS NO. CA-83

Location: 320 Dolores Street, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California

Lat: 37.764222 Long: -122.426611 (East facade of the Mission Dolores adobe church, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: The chain of twenty-one missions built in California between 1769 and 1823 represents some of California's earliest European habitation. Mission construction began while California was still controlled by Spain—long before Mexico gained control in 1821 or 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—including San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and San Rafael.

Mission San Francisco de Asis was established in 1776 when Juan Bautista de Anza led a group of people from Tubac, Mexico for the purpose of establishing a permanent settlement in San Francisco. The first mass, which dedicated the mission site, was celebrated on 29 June 1776. The mission was moved from its original site, about 1,100 feet to the east, to its current site in 1783, and developed as the center of the mission community that included the present-day Mission Dolores adobe church, housing, workshops and storerooms, gardens and orchards, and a cemetery. Mission Dolores, the adobe church completed in 1791, and its adjacent cemetery, which had its first burial in 1777, are significant for their associations with the Spanish era mission landscape and with San Francisco's eighteenth century origins.

Description: Mission Dolores and the mission cemetery are the only remaining portions of the Spanish era mission landscape remaining on a block of land owned by the Roman Catholic Church, under the auspices of the Archdioceses of San Francisco. This block, bounded by Dolores Street (east side), 16th Street (north side), Church Street (west side), and Chula Lane (south side), generally corresponds to the block of land south of Dolores Street that was granted to Mission Dolores in 1858 as part of the U.S. Land Commission settlement (less the area that was given to the adjacent streets and their sidewalks that were laid out in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century). Other features on this block include the Mission Dolores Basilica located just north of Mission Dolores, a row of buildings along the north side of the block that house the Mission Dolores Parish's rectory and offices and the facilities of the Mission Dolores Academy, and a building in the southwest corner of the block occupied by the Children's Council of San Francisco. Asphalt

paving, used as a parking lot and a playground for the school, covers the remaining open space on the block.

Mission Dolores and the cemetery are located in the southeast corner of the block on a .42-acre parcel (San Francisco Assessor Parcel Number 3566/002). Mission Dolores, which measures 114'-0 x 22'-0 (interior dimensions), is oriented lengthwise east/west on the northern portion of this parcel. A small, modern, restroom building (approximately 11' x 22') is located about 22' west of the church's west end. A modern, walled courtyard (approximately 22' x 26') encloses the space between these two buildings. The cemetery, located south of the church, occupies the rest of the open space on the .42-acre parcel.

The south sides of Mission Dolores, the courtyard, and the restroom building form the north boundary of the cemetery. The cemetery is enclosed on the other three sides by walls of various heights and chain link fencing, all of which were added at some point in the twentieth century. The concrete wall across the east end fronts onto Dolores Street and is the most decorative; it is constructed of concrete, finished with cement plaster to resemble adobe, and has a row or cap of clay roof tiles; a chain link fence which extends above this wall is attached to poles which are mounted in the ground on the inner side of this wall. A chain link fence which sits on top of a low, concrete, retaining wall spans the south side (Chula Lane). The west end of the cemetery is enclosed by a wall constructed of hollow, clay tile, finished with cement plaster to resemble adobe, and has a row or cap of clay roof tiles; a chain link fence which extends above the wall is attached to poles which are mounted in the ground on the outer side extends of this wall.

Public admission to the church and cemetery are through the front door of the Mission Dolores gift shop, a small addition (approximately 16' x 20') attached to the east end of the church's south side. From the gift shop, visitors enter the east end of the church and exit via a door on its north side. This door leads to a narrow outdoor passageway between Mission Dolores and the Mission Dolores Basilica where interpretive displays, with a diorama that depicts the mission's appearance in the 1790s and historical photographs, are located. This passageway provides access to the walled courtyard at the west end of the church, which in turn provides access to a museum located in a former classroom at the west end the Mission Dolores building, to the restroom building that forms the west side of the courtyard, to the basilica on its north side, and to the cemetery through a wrought iron gate on its south side. (Gates at the east and west ends of the cemetery that lead to Dolores Street and the Mission Dolores Academy playground [formerly part of the cemetery], respectively, are not open to the public.) Upon entering the cemetery from this gate, the visitor encounters a three-panel sign that provides a site plan that shows the layout of the paths, locations of headstones, and schematic arrangement of vegetation within the cemetery. The sign also has an alphabetized list of people buried in the cemetery

and a list of plants, both of which are keyed to this plan. The plan and lists were prepared by the Stephen Marcus Landscape Company during a mid-1990s renovation of the cemetery's landscape.

The cemetery is divided into an irregular grid by the layout of the concrete sidewalks that are generally 2' to 3' wide. These paths have varying widths, scoring patterns, and finishes and were added to the cemetery at different times and without an overall plan. (A review of historical photographs including aerial photographs taken in 1938 and 1946 show similar but different layouts to the present-day path system.) Within this grid approximately 200 stone headstones and burial monuments are arranged into rows. These markers date from 1830 to the last burial in 1898 and are of varying styles—including tablets, flat markers, obelisks, and box tombs—some of which are surrounded by wrought iron fencing. Although the first burial in the cemetery occurred in 1777, the wooden crosses that would have marked the earliest graves deteriorated and disappeared long ago. The approximately 5,000 unmarked Native Americans graves were in the part of the cemetery that is no longer extant (the area located to the west that is now under pavement or buildings.) A stone monument depicting "Kateri Tekawitha Our Lady of the Mohawks" (the first Native American who was beatified), located in the southwest portion of the cemetery, is dedicated to the Native Americans who were buried in the cemetery. A wooden headstone was added in 2009 to honor two Ohlone neophytes, JOCBOCME and his wife POLYLEMJA who were buried in unmarked graves in 1807 and 1804, respectively. This headstone is located in the southeast portion of the cemetery just east of a traditional Ohlone tule reed house, also added in 2009 as part of the commemoration of the role of Native Californians in the construction and operation of the mission.

Like the paths, the vegetation within the cemetery has been added at different times during the twentieth century. Two key organizational features include the remains of three rows of mature English yews (*Taxus baccata*)—specimens within each row are missing—planted in the late 1920s or the early 1930s and a rose garden in the center of the cemetery that provides a setting for "The Padre", a 6'-6"-tall, cast stone sculpture by Arthur Putnam of Father Junipero Serra. In addition to the yews, there are mature evergreen at three of its four corners (*Pinus radiata* in the southeast corner, *Cedrus deodora* in the southwest corner, and *P. muricata* in the northwest corner; the gift shop occupies the northeast corner), a row of four Lombardy poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica') along its south edge, a tree-sized Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis*) and an Italian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) in the southwest portion, and a redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) located in the central portion to the east of the rose garden. There are a variety of smaller trees which appear to have been planted where there was available space along the south edge and east and west ends of the cemetery (rather than in reference to a specific plan); a partial list includes Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*), Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), Mission fig (*Ficus*

carica), Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*), Canary Island palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), and olives (*Olea europaea*). There is a similar wide variety of shrubs, perennials, groundcovers, and vines; including species typically found in San Francisco gardens (such as *Acanthus mollis*, *Agapanthus africanus*, *Aloe arborescens*, *Bougainvillea* spp., *Camellia japonica*, , *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*, *Echium fastuosum*, *Fragaria chiloensis*, *Hedera helix*, *Jasminum polyanthum*, *Lantana* spp., *Pittosporum crassifolium*, *Passiflower alatocaerulea*, *Rosa* spp. *Strelitzia reginae*, and *Vinca minor*) and a number of native California species, some of which have cultural significance to the Ohlone, which were added during the mid-1990s renovation efforts (for example, *Arctostaphylos edmundsii* 'Carmel Sur', *Carpenteria californica*, *Ceanothus* spp., *Eschscholzia californica*, *Gaultheria shallon*, *Heuchera micrantha*, *Iris douglasiana*, *Oxalis oregano*, and *Sisyrinchium bellum*). Based on a review of historical photographs from the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, the cemetery has had a changing variety of vegetation (trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, etc.) over the years, and with exception of the large trees much of the vegetation that exists within the cemetery today appears to have been added within the past several decades. The cemetery's plantings have the romantic appearance associated with Mission Revival gardening and are reflective of twentieth century gardening tastes rather than being a documentation of the appearance of the cemetery during the Spanish colonial era.

History: The Spanish established a chain of twenty Franciscan missions, four military presidios, and three civilian settlements or pueblos along the coastal region of California in the late eighteenth century as they expanded their empire northward from Mexico and Baja California into Alta (upper) California. The missions, as part of the Spanish colonization system used throughout the New World, were seen as the instrument to integrate indigenous people into the greater Spanish Empire. They were to be largely self-sufficient, with crops grown at the mission intended to provide food for the mission, the presidio (guarding the mission), and the civic settlement or pueblo (as these were established).

The Mission San Francisco de Asis along with El Presidio de San Francisco, which housed the Spanish garrison and supported its administrative and training operations, and the Castillo de San Joaquin, which guarded the entry into San Francisco Bay, were established in 1776 when Juan Bautista de Anza led 240 people from Tubac, Mexico for the purpose of establishing a permanent settlement. The mission, named for the founder and patron saint of the Franciscan Order, was established in the interior portion of the peninsula, a few miles southeast of the presidio, in a protected basin surrounded by hills (including Diamond Heights and Twin Peaks to the southwest, Bernal Heights to the south, and Potrero Hill to the southeast) that afforded protection from ocean winds and fog. The site also was adjacent to ample fresh water supplies

including a creek, named the Arroyo de los Dolores because it was discovered on Viernes de Dolores (Friday of the Sorrows, which is the name given to the Friday before Palm Sunday), and a lake, the Laguna de Nuestra Senora de los Dolores (Lake of Our Lady of Sorrows). (Subsequently, the mission became known locally as Mission Dolores.) The size of the lake varied with seasonal rainfall, but it roughly extended between the present-day 15th Street, South Van Ness Avenue, 20th Street, and Guerrero Street, and was fed by the Arroyo de los Dolores (Dolores Creek), which originated on Twin Peaks and flowed along the alignment for today's 18th Street (Carey & Co. Inc. 2009: 16).

The first mission settlement, most likely located at present-day 14th and Mission streets, stood about 400 varas or 1,100 feet to the east of the present-day Mission Dolores site. This original site included a temporary chapel and living quarters and was surrounded by a stockade for protection. A nearby cemetery, a corral for cattle, and an aqueduct were also constructed. Then in 1783, the mission quadrangle was moved to the area of the present day intersection of 16th and Dolores streets. Construction on a permanent chapel was started in 1788, and the building was dedicated on 2 April 1791. The chapel, constructed of over 26,000 sundried adobe bricks made by the local Indians, had 4'-thick walls on the south, west, and north sides, a 10'-thick wall on the east end, and measured 114' x 22'. By the time the chapel was complete, it stood at the heart of a growing mission settlement (Carey & Co. 2009: 17).

The report of a Works Progress Administration era study of the mission identified forty-seven buildings and structures, including barracks, granaries, a soap factory, grain mills, workhouses for looms and adobe brick production, a smithy, a carpenter shop, storerooms, tanneries, a mission prison, a school, a bathhouse, and a neophyte rancheria, described as consisting of about 100 cabins by 1817 (Hendry and Bowman: 1051-52 cited in Carey & Co. 2009: 18). Although the exact extent of the mission complex is not known, it appears to have extended from about present-day Guerrero Street to Church Street and from 15th Street to 18th Street (i.e., to the banks of Dolores Creek). Corrals, orchards, gardens, and a cemetery were also established nearby. The mission's fields and gardens were mainly to the east, the cemetery was next to the chapel, and the orchard stood to its west, separated from the complex by the El Camino Real that linked the mission with the presidio and settlements to the south (Carey & Co. 2009: 18.). Brother Guire Cleary in his history of the mission noted that in 1818, at its most prosperous period, Mission Dolores "owned 11,000 sheep, 11,000 cows, and thousands of horses, goats, pigs, and mules. Its ranching and farming operations extended as far south as San Mateo and east to Alameda. Horses were corralled on Potrero Hill, and the milking sheds for the cows were located along Dolores Creek at what is today Mission High School. Twenty looms were kept in operation to process wool into cloth. The circumference of its holdings was said to have been about 125 miles" (Cleary n.d.).

Following this initial successful period of settlement and the conversion of the local Ohlone population, Mission Dolores stagnated and then declined for a number of reasons including neophyte deaths and desertions, competition from Mission San Rafael Arcangel (in present-day Marin County), and the decline in external support that followed the Mexican Revolution of 1814. By the late 1820s, the complex had fallen into ruin, and the Mission Dolores was one of the poorest missions along the entire California coast (Carey & Co. 2009: 19). In 1834, the Mexican government secularized the missions and began distributing large portions of their holdings in land grants—known as ranchos—which shifted power in colonial California from the church to secular governors and powerful ranching families (Paddison n.d.). With the loss of their vast land holdings and the demise of their agricultural, ranching and manufacturing enterprises, the missions essentially became parish churches "consisting of only the church proper, the residence of the priests and a small amount of land immediately surrounding the churches for use as kitchen gardens and cemeteries" (Cleary n.d.). During the Mexican period, this process occurred at Mission Dolores as its lands were subdivided into a number of large land grants with additional subdivision occurring following the Gold Rush and after California became a part of the United States in 1848.

The Board of U.S. Land Commissioners was created by the Act of 1851 to rule on the validity of the Spanish and Mexican land grants and to determine which lands were available for U.S. citizens who were flooding into the state. Archbishop Joseph Alemany, acting on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, filed twenty-one petitions to the board for confirmation of the California missions on 19 February 1853. The petition for Mission Dolores was finalized on 3 March 1858. This 8.54-acre grant included land on both sides of the present-day Dolores Street at its intersection with 16th Street. The archbishop donated the portion of the grant on the east side of the street, which included gardens and various small buildings, to the Order of Notre Dame de Namur who established a school for girls, the Notre Dame Academy, there in 1866. The four-acre parcel on the west side of the street remained under the control of the Roman Catholic Church and, based on hand drawn block maps from this period, included the former mission's quadrangle of buildings (the mission's adobe chapel [Mission Dolores], the rectory, stables, and storerooms), a walled garden west of the quadrangle, and the cemetery (Black 1854; Perez 1982; Cleary 2004: 40).

Following the discovery of gold in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range in 1848, San Francisco grew from a settlement with fewer than 1,000 people at the beginning of 1848 to a booming city of 26,000 by the end of that year, and the rural landscape around the former mission quickly began to develop into an urban neighborhood. The area surrounding Mission Dolores was platted into large city blocks in the 1850s and street grading began in the 1860s (Carey & Co. 2009: 21-23). The mission's chapel, now known locally as Mission

Dolores, remained intact, but the mission era buildings, gardens, and portions of the cemetery were removed as new facilities were built to serve the neighborhood's growing population. In honor of San Francisco's centennial, a large brick Gothic Revival building was constructed to the north of Mission Dolores to serve as the parish church; this building was dedicated on 4 July 1876. However, it was so badly damaged in the 1906 earthquake that it had to be torn down, and in its place a new reinforced concrete church was begun in 1913 and completed in 1918. In 1952 Pope Pius XII raised the church to the honor of a Minor Basilica, and the church is known today as the Mission Dolores Basilica. Although the cemetery continued to extend throughout the L-shaped area along the south side and west end of the block, the area along 16th had been filled with a rectory and school by 1900. (A portion of the cemetery along 16th Street was removed in 1889 when the street was extended from Dolores Street to Church Street.) Over the next several decades the size of the cemetery was incrementally reduced as new buildings were added (in 1932, 1953, and 1955) and portions of the former cemetery were paved over to be used as a playground and a parking lot. Additionally, a portion of the east end of the cemetery was removed in 1901 as the result of grading for Dolores Street and its sidewalk. These changes necessitated the consolidation and removal of remains. Although up to 10,000 people, including approximately 5,000 Indians neophytes, were originally interred in the larger cemetery, today there are only about 200 headstones in the remaining portion of the cemetery. Some of these burials were consolidated in a mass grave on site and some were relocated to various cemeteries throughout the Bay area (Cleary 2004: 72).

A restoration of Mission Dolores was undertaken in 1918 by noted San Francisco architect Willis Polk who strove for architectural authenticity and vowed to "preserve the time-worn beauties of the building without introducing the garish note of modern imitation" (San Francisco Chronicle 1918). As described in the historic context for the *Revised Mission Dolores Neighborhood Survey*, prepared by Carey & Co. Inc. in 2009, "[a]fter meticulously photographing the roof . . . Polk's design called for the roof to be removed, a steel framework to be put in place, then the original rafters and their buckskin thongs to be returned. Original tiles were used whenever possible, with new ones tinted to match the old. Similarly, [the] patchwork of the adobe walls was designed to match the existing building" (Carey & Col 2009: 52). This restoration effort was part of "a larger movement to capitalize on regional nostalgia for Spanish colonial days and Californians' growing love of the automobile and tourism" (Carey & Co. 2009: 51). This combination of historic preservation interest and tourism promotion led the efforts to restore the extant missions and to "recreate" the garden areas around the missions. To facilitate auto tourism between these newly restored sights, the new "king's road" was planned to roughly follow the original trail of the Franciscans who founded missions along the California coast during the eighteenth century. "Harriet Forbes in Southern California gathered the support of many women's clubs and

convinced a group of men to invest in recreating and paving El Camino Real from San Diego to Sonoma" (Carey & Co. 2009: 51). Road work on the El Camino Real began in 1902, and Forbes designed the mission-bell guidepost in 1906 to demarcate the new highway. Dolores Street, running in front of (east) Mission Dolores was designated as part of the El Camino Real, and one of the mission bell guideposts, designed by Forbes, is located in its median almost directly in front of the church's front doors.

Mission San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores) was documented around 1936 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS CAL 38 SANFRA 1 [HABS No. CA-113]), was designated as San Francisco City Landmark No. 1 in 1968, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Other historical designations associated the mission include California Historical Landmark No. 327 for the site of the non-extant original mission church and Dolores Lagoon and California Historical Landmark No. 784 for the El Camino Real, the original trail of the Franciscans who founded the missions along the California coast during the eighteenth century. One of the mission bell guideposts, designed by Harriet Forbes in 1906 to demarcate the California highway route that roughly follows the El Camino Real's original route, is located in the Dolores Street median, just east of the entrance to Mission Dolores.

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Photo 1. View to the southwest of the front of the Mission Dolores adobe church (1791) and the wall (ca. late 1910s) to the left of church that extends across the east end of the mission cemetery. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 2. View to the northwest from Dolores Street of the mission cemetery, Mission Dolores, and the Mission Dolores Basilica (1918), located along the east side of the parcel granted to Mission Dolores in 1858 as part of the U.S. Land Commission settlement. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 3. View to the southwest from 16th Street of the Mission Dolores Parish offices and rectory (1913) and the Mission Dolores Academy (1932), located along the north side of the parcel granted to Mission Dolores in 1858 as part of the U.S. Land Commission settlement. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 4. View to the southeast from Church Street at 16th Street of the buildings, Mission Dolores Academy (1953) and Children's Council of San Francisco (1955), which are located along the west end of the parcel granted to Mission Dolores in 1858 as part of the U.S. Land Commission settlement. This area was formerly part of the mission cemetery. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 5. View to the east of the portion of the mission cemetery that is now covered by an asphalt-paved playground. The extant portion of the cemetery is the area with vegetation in the background; and part of the gable roof of the Mission Dolores and one of the towers of Mission Dolores basilica are visible to the left (north) of the cemetery. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 6. View to the west of the gift shop, added between late 1930s or mid-1940s to the south side of Mission Dolores, through which visitors enter and exit for tours of the church and mission cemetery. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 7. Modern walled courtyard and restroom building located at the west end of Mission Dolores. Visitors enter the mission cemetery through a gate on the south side of the courtyard. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 8. Stone seat wall, stone paving, and sign added to the cemetery as part of a renovation in the mid-1990s. The sign's three panels includes a plan (prepared as part of the renovation) that shows the paths, headstones, and vegetation within the cemetery and an alphabetized list of names on the headstones and a list of plants, both keyed to this plan. View to the southwest. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 9. View to the northeast of the central portion of the extant portion of the mission cemetery. The south wall of Mission Dolores forms the boundary along the north side of the cemetery. Also visible are one of the rows of large yews.(D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 10. View to the southwest of the central portion of the cemetery. The cast stone statue of "The Padre" (1909, cast 1916-17) by sculptor Arthur Putnam was added to the cemetery in 1918 but was moved to this location sometime after 1960. The rose garden, which surrounds the statue, was donated by the Golden Gate Rose Society and continues to be maintained by volunteers from the society. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 11. View to the northwest along the north side of the cemetery, next to south wall of Mission Dolores, of examples of graves demarcated with wrought iron fencing. (D. Bradley, July 2012)



Photo 12. View to the southwest of the replica of a traditional Ohlone tule reed house which is located in the southeast portion of the cemetery. This structure was added to the cemetery around 2009 as part of the commemoration of the role of Native Californians in the construction and operation of the mission. (D. Bradley, July 2012)