

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849



LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849

Prepared for:

City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
Office of Historic Resources



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PREFACE

This context is a component of Los Angeles' citywide historic context statement and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to Spanish Colonial and Mexican era settlement in the area that is now the city of Los Angeles. Refer to www.HistoricPlacesLA.org for information on designated resources associated with this context as well as those identified through SurveyLA.

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INTRODUCTION

The Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement context examines resources dating from the time that Los Angeles was a part, first, of the Spanish Empire and, then, of the Republic of Mexico. It begins with the establishment of the pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781 and ends with the incorporation of California into the United States in 1849. It includes resources from that time within the current boundaries of the city of Los Angeles. It relates these resources to the exploration, settlement, and social/cultural history of the period and, when applicable, to significant individuals and families.

Resources relating to Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era settlement are highly significant to the early history and development of Los Angeles and the State of California. For that reason, it appears that resources from this period have been identified and are designated under local, state, and federal programs. These are referenced throughout the text. Only one additional resource was identified through SurveyLA, which is discussed on page 36.

Evaluation Considerations

The Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement context may have some overlap with other SurveyLA themes and contexts as follows:

- Properties significant for their architectural quality may also be eligible under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Spanish and Mexican era contained three distinct social institutions that produced three distinct architectural forms. First, the fusion of church and state that characterized the Spanish period, from 1781 until the early 1820s, gave us the mission and its architectural vocabulary. Second, the large-scale private landholding that replaced the mission during the Mexican period, from the early 1820s until 1849, provided us with the rancho and its ranch house. Third, the pueblo of Los Angeles, which endured through both the Spanish and Mexican periods, left us the plaza and its concept of a community outdoor gathering space.

The Ideal of New Spain

Any understanding of life in Spanish California requires a familiarity with the ideas that governed the Hispanic New World. At the core of the vision was a society which integrated church and state into a single authoritarian and hierarchical entity. The settlements of New Spain were organized as tightly controlled communities that combined religious and secular institutions, in which individuals had specific economic and social roles. This concept was first laid out in the 1570s through regulations issued by Spain's Council of the Indies and later codified in 1680 in the Laws of the Indies.¹

Economically this was accompanied by the doctrine of mercantilism. The doctrine maintained that the relationship between a mother country in Europe and her colonies was a closed system. The colonies produced raw materials for the mother country and in turn received manufactured goods. This relationship was to take place under tight control, with little if any room for individual initiative, and trade with other countries was forbidden. All the European powers practiced mercantilism in the period during which Spain controlled California, but the Spanish version, on paper at least, was the most authoritarian.²

This theory of society and its economy governed the Spanish territories in the New World from their founding the 1500s. But it took more than two hundred years, until the 1760s, for it to reach Alta California. The motive for the reach was not a desire to open the region for settlement, but rather to protect it from perceived foreign threat. For generations there had been a fear of British intrusion, dating back to the time of Sir Francis Drake in the 1570s. To this was added a more recent concern with the extension of Russian fur trading down the Pacific Coast from Alaska.³

Spain acted on these fears in 1769. Captain Gaspar de Portolá mounted a combined overland-maritime expedition to Alta California from his home base in Baja. Accompanying him was the Franciscan

¹ Kevin Starr, *California: A History*. (New York: Modern Library, 2005 [2007], 28.

² Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, edited by Ramon A. Gutierrez & Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 113.

³ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 113; Starr, *California*, 22-28.

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Junípero Serra. These two individuals embodied the combined authority of church and state that characterized Spanish rule. Their assignment was to create institutions that would secure Alta California and make it safe from foreign incursion.⁴

Portolá and Serra reached San Diego by July of 1769 and then proceeded further north. By the next year, 1770, Portolá completed his expedition and Alta California was established as a separate territory from Baja. The Portolá Trail Campsite (California Historical Landmark No. 655), at the entrance to Elysian Park, is said to be the place where his party stayed on August 2, 1769, before heading west and then north along the coast. The Serra Springs (California Historical Landmark No. 522), located on the campus of University High School in the Sawtelle neighborhood, is the supposed site of a mass performed by Father Serra.⁵

During the next three decades the social order of Spanish California took form. It followed from the union of church and state symbolized by the partnership of Portolá and Serra. Three institutions formed the basis of this social order. The first was the presidio.⁶ This was the military institution that protected the territory from foreign incursions and, if needed, domestic unrest. The second was the mission. This was the religious institution that was to convert the Native Americans into Christians and loyal subjects. The third was the pueblo. It was the secular entity that supported the missions and the presidios and would, eventually, be the basis for expanded settlement.⁷

The goal of these three institutions was the creation of an Alta California that would be self-sufficient, with government support to the presidios as the only cost to the Crown. Ideally, the missions and the pueblos would eventually produce enough foodstuffs and handicrafts for sale to the presidios. A single annual Spanish supply ship, sailing north from the New Spain Pacific port of San Blas, would provide, it was hoped, all that was needed in the way of more sophisticated goods. Self-sufficiency was needed to maintain the prohibition of any direct trade with foreign vessels. Officially only the port of Monterey was open to ships of other lands, at which point they could arrange with Spanish officials to take on needed supplies or undertake scientific expeditions.⁸

The government that emerged under this system was, like that of the other territories of New Spain, hierarchical and authoritarian. The governor, located in Monterey, was appointed and held both military and political power. He combined legislative, executive and judicial functions in his single office. He was represented by captains at the presidios and by *comisionarios* elsewhere. The pueblos, with

⁴ Andrew Rolle & Arthur Verge, *California: A History* (Wheeling IL: Davidson, 1963 [2008]), 33-34.

⁵ Kurt Baer, *Architecture of the California Missions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 1; Landmark Adventures Website Entry for Portola Trail Campsite; Starr, *California*, 36; Wikipedia Entry for "Serra Springs (California)."

⁶ There were five presidios: San Diego (1789), Monterey (1770), San Francisco (1776), Santa Barbara (1782), and Sonoma (1810).

⁷ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 41.

⁸ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 41; Henry P. Silka, *San Pedro: A Pictorial History* (San Pedro: San Pedro Bay Historical Society, 1984 [1993]), 16.

their *alcaldes*, or mayors, and *ayuntamientos*, or city councils, had a small degree of autonomy, and the missions had a good deal more. But both the pueblo and the mission functioned under a society that acknowledged authority and hierarchy at the local level as well as at the top in Mexico City and Madrid.⁹

Contemporaries of Spanish California complained of a lack of development and a failure to use the land to its best advantage. But it must be remembered that the goal of the Spanish Crown was never to develop Alta California in the way that the Anglo-American frontier was developed. Instead, the goal was the creation of a self-supporting system of defense posts against foreign penetration. By this measure, despite all its inefficiencies and internal frictions, the goal had been met.¹⁰

The Missions

Of the three Spanish institutions – mission, presidio and pueblo – the mission became the most important economically. By 1832, Alta California had a chain of twenty-one missions that extended from San Diego to Sonoma. They were placed no more than one day's journey apart along the coastal route known as *El Camino Real*, the King's Highway. Each was situated where it had arable land for crops, an ample water supply, and a substantial Native American population.¹¹

The missions served two purposes. The first and more immediate was to supply the presidios with food and handicraft items. Here the missions were quite successful and allowed Alta California to achieve a relatively high degree of self-sufficiency. The missions generally sold enough to the presidios to create a surplus with which they could import religious items and more sophisticated goods from New Spain.¹²

The second and longer-term purpose was that of converting the Native American population into a civil community of loyal Christians. The missions themselves were in theory to be temporary. The expectation was that, once the Native American population had been converted to Christianity and had been taught economic skills and the practices of what was considered a civilized life, the missions would disappear and the land would devolve to the Native Americans.¹³

The material success of the missions can be seen from what few statistics we have. In 1783 they produced around 22,000 tons of grain. By 1790 this had increased to 37,000 tons, and by 1800 to 75,000 tons. The same kind of success came with livestock. Between 1783 and 1790 mission holdings of horses, mules and cattle grew from 4900 to 22,000 head. By 1805 the missions possessed at least

⁹ Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 19.

¹⁰ Iris H. W. Engstrand, "Seekers of the 'Northern Mystery': European Exploration of California and the Pacific," in *Contested Eden*, p. 103; Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 111-112.

¹¹ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 41, 45.

¹² Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 116-117.

¹³ Starr, *California*, 28-29.

95,000 total head of all types of livestock. In addition, there were other forms of agriculture such as fruit orchards and vineyards.¹⁴

The economic success of the missions came from the exploitation of Native American labor. Most labor was used for agriculture, but there developed as well a growing corps of craftsmen. To encourage this development, between 1791 and 1795 the Crown sent about twenty skilled artisans north from New Spain to provide instruction. These artisans included brick and stone masons, carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, and shoemakers. By the 1820s Native American craftsmen from the missions were carrying out masonry and carpentry work at the presidios. Yet the relative number of Native American able to learn a trade was small, and very few were taught to read and write.¹⁵

The missions may have been economically successful, but their impact on the Native American population was devastating. Exact numbers are hard to come by, but perhaps one third of the Native Americans in the mission system died in the period from 1769 to 1832. The primary cause was lack of resistance to European disease, but the damage done by uprooting a people from its civilization and imposing a foreign way of life took its toll.¹⁶

In spite of this rather brutal impact on the Native American population, the missions were romanticized by later Anglo-Americans. This was due in large part to the attractive nature of their architecture. Notable is the relative simplicity of the Alta California missions in comparison to the earlier missions further south. This followed from changing tastes in ecclesiastical design by the late 1700s, when throughout New Spain the more florid architecture of the Baroque had given way to the more restrained approach of the Neoclassical.¹⁷

A second and perhaps more important reason for this simplicity was the lack of professional designers and builders. Alta California was too far away to draw upon the pool of skilled masons and other artisans that populated the regions to the south. It also lacked the indigenous Native American building tradition that shaped the missions of New Mexico. The result was what Kurt Baer in his study of the Alta California missions has called the California Franciscan style.¹⁸

This label is particularly appropriate in that designs for the missions came from the Franciscan missionaries themselves. Occasionally they had the aid of pattern books and drawings of well-known churches in both Old and New Spain to use as guides. More often they had the aid of a few master masons, such as José Antonia Ramírez, who assisted with the more complex aspects of construction.¹⁹

¹⁴ Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 114.

¹⁵ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 120-123.

¹⁶ Cary McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 29-37; Starr, *California*, 40-41.

¹⁷ Baer, *Architecture of the California Missions*, 13, 33-39.

¹⁸ Baer, *Architecture of the California Missions*, 14.

¹⁹ Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 14, 16.

A standard layout and common set of forms came to characterize the missions. The layout drew from earlier arrangements typical of the Mediterranean world and long used in New Spain. Living quarters for the missionaries and spaces for workshops and storage were in long, narrow structures, one or at most two rooms deep, which faced covered porches or *corredores*. If the mission were large enough these long, narrow structures were arranged in two-, three-, or four-sided ensembles to form courtyards.

At one corner or along one side of the ensemble was the worship space, relatively more monumental in scale. It featured a public entrance that opened directly to the community beyond the mission enclosure. Any architectural flourishes that the mission contained were to be found at this entrance. Flanking the entrance was a structure for the bells. It could be a tower (or perhaps two), a *campanario* consisting of a wall with a curved top (*espadaña*), or a simple wooden framework.

The construction of the buildings themselves combined forms of the Mediterranean world and New Spain with the skills and materials at hand. The tradition of massive walls and small openings was carried out in stone, if proper materials and masons with the necessary skills were available, or more commonly in adobe coated with mud plaster and lime whitewash. If adobe were used, certain sections supporting a particularly large load, such as the arches of a *corredor*, would be constructed of *ladrillos*, or hard bricks fired in an oven.

A few missions, such as San Juan Capistrano and San Gabriel, attempted stone vaulting, but this proved unwise in light of California's earthquakes. More common were timber roofs. Because of the limitation of locally available lumber, the sanctuaries were long and narrow as spans had to be kept short. Eventually the early flat roofs, covered in reeds or *brea*, were replaced with sloped roofs of clay tile. The result was the set of architectural forms – massive whitewashed walls with few openings, long sloped roofs of red clay tiles, and *corredores* opening onto gardens complete with fountains – that formed the popular ideal of mission architecture.²⁰

²⁰ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 18.

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Mission San Fernando, Photo circa 1890s

Church in Left Background, Convento in Foreground

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument, California Historical Landmark, National Register
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

One mission is within the current boundaries of Los Angeles. It is the Mission San Fernando Rey de España (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 23, California Historical Landmark No. 157, listed in the National Register). Mission San Fernando was dedicated to Father Lasuén in 1797. The church was constructed in 1806 and rebuilt after an earthquake in 1812.

The church itself was relatively modest and has undergone much change. The original façade consisted of an unornamented gable end with a single arched door and rectangular window. A baptistery extended as a wing to the left and bell tower to the right. The building fell into ruin after secularization and was restored in 1941. However the earthquake of 1971 so damaged the church that it had to be demolished and replaced by a replica.²¹

Overshadowing the church architecturally was the *Convento*. It is actually several attached buildings, two rooms deep, unified by a monumental arched *corredor* that extends 243 feet. This grouping is topped by a single massive gabled roof of red clay tiles. The *Convento* was begun in 1810 and

²¹ Baer, *Architecture of the California Missions*, 101; Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 18-19; Jeffrey Herr, *Landmark L.A.: Historic-Cultural Monuments of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, 2002), 231, 246, 422.

completed in 1822. It contained over twenty rooms and included quarters for the missionaries, a chapel, a reception room, the refectory, the kitchen and various storerooms.²²

There are several nearby sites related to the Mission San Fernando. The first is the Chatsworth Calera Site (California Historical Landmark No. 753)/Chatsworth Reservoir Kiln Site (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 141). This is the location of the kiln that provided ladrillos and clay tiles for the mission. The second is the Mission Wells and the Settling Basin (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 50). The presence of *ciénegas*, or swamplands, in this area was one of the reasons that the mission was established where it was. The third is Brand Park (Memory Garden) (California Historical Landmark No. 150). It is part of the original land of the mission. The fourth is a remnant of a dam on the north side of Rinaldi Street, east of Sharp Avenue, in Mission Hills. It is about three thousand feet to the northeast of the *Convento*. The remnant dates from around 1808.²³

The Pueblos

Settling Alta California with immigrants from New Spain was not the primary goal of Madrid or Mexico City. They in fact has difficulty finding people willing to make the trek, and saw conversion of the Native Americans as a means of creating a loyal population in the face of Russian threats to the north. But the authorities believed some secular civilian presence was necessary. The institution created for this was the pueblo. The goal of the pueblo, according to one historian, was to concentrate immigrant population into urban centers “the better to insure defense and the preservation of order.”²⁴

The pueblo as a physical setting was specified in detail in the Laws of the Indies. A series of ordinances set out standards for site selection, street patterns, facades and the appropriate distribution of land uses. The authoritarian nature of this approach to town building followed from the concern for control that characterized the entire Spanish colonial endeavor. One historian holds that the rules were “probably the most complete set of instructions ever issued for the founding and building of new towns, and in their widespread application and longevity they were certainly one of the most effective planning documents in the history of urban settlement.”²⁵

The heart of the pueblo was the *plaza*, or town square. The ordinances were quite specific as to its nature. It should be square or rectangular in shape and, if rectangular, should “have least one and a half its width for length inasmuch as this shape is best for fiestas in which horses are used and for any other fiestas that should be held.” The size should be adjusted to the expected population of the pueblo. Streets should extend from the center and from the corners of the plaza, and the buildings around the

²² Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 19.

²³ City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks Website Entry for Brand Park Community Center; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 432, 424; Information provided by the Office of Historic Resources, City of Los Angeles. The dam remnant was identified for SurveyLA.

²⁴ Charles E. Chapman, *A History of California: The Spanish Period* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 393.

²⁵ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 21.

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plaza should have arcades “for these are of considerable convenience to the merchants who generally gather there.”²⁶

Extending away from the plaza, the standard pueblo covered four square Spanish leagues, or about 17,000 acres, with the undeveloped land help in common. Settlers were provided an allotment of the common land, livestock, and allowance for clothes and supplies, and a five-year exemption from taxes. They were expected to dig irrigation ditches, cultivate the land, and increase their livestock. After five years of fulfilling the requirements successfully, pueblo dwellers were to receive the right of permanent use of their cultivated allotments, while the pueblo continued to hold the pasture as common land.²⁷

In spite of the promise of a free city lot, subsidies for expenses, and eventual permanent use of an agricultural plots after five years exemption from taxes, the pueblos were failures at attracting immigrants. Only about 3270 immigrants had moved north by 1820. As an alternative to immigrants, the pueblos became, like the missions, dependent upon Native American labor.²⁸

Alta California had two successful pueblos. San Jose was founded in 1777 and Los Angeles in 1781. (A third, Branciforte, located near present-day Santa Cruz, failed to develop.) The precise official name of the southern endeavor is a matter of debate, but is generally accepted to have been some variation of *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles* (The Settlement of our Lady the Queen of the Angels). The goal was to establish a pueblo close to Mission San Gabriel, and a site was chosen on the *Rio Porniúncula* (today’s Los Angeles River). The settlement was formally established on September 4, 1781.²⁹

The first settlers came primarily from Sonora and Sinaloa. They traveled via Baja to Mission San Gabriel, and then to the designated site for the pueblo. The travelers numbered forty-four civilians and four soldiers. The civilians consisted of eleven couples and their twenty-two children. Two of the settlers considered themselves of pure European ancestry. Sixteen more were *mestizo*, or of combined European and Native American background. The remaining twenty-six had mixed backgrounds that included African ancestry. None was literate enough to write his or her name.³⁰

²⁶ Quoted in Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 26.

²⁷ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 46; David Samuel Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.: Race, Space, and Municipal Power in Los Angeles, 1781-1894* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 44-46.

²⁸ Hackel, “Land, Labor and Production,” 117-118; Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. “Alta California’s Trojan Horses: Foreign Immigration,” in *Contested Eden*, 299-300; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 35.

²⁹ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 20, 214. Jean Bruce Poole and Tevvy Ball, in *El Pueblo: The Historic Heart of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum), 8-9, maintain that Portola’s expedition named the river *El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles de La Porniúncula* in 1769. The feast day of Porniúncula, a commemoration of Saint Francis of Assisi, had occurred the day before the discovery of the river. The settlement of 1781 was thus officially called *El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Ángeles (sobre [on] el Rio de La Porniúncula)*.

³⁰ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 47.

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The site was chosen because of its apparently dependable water supply. A plaza was laid out according to the ordinances of the Laws of the Indies that measured the recommended two hundred by three hundred Spanish feet. House lots faced three sides of the plaza, each about fifty-five feet wide and one hundred ten feet deep. On the fourth side were to be the church, the guardhouse and the granary. A schematic plan dating from 1786 exists, showing the location of the buildings around the plaza and the allotments to each head of household to which land was granted.³¹

The key to success was distribution of the *Pornicúncula's* water. The *zanja madre*, or mother ditch, was a canal that tapped the river and ran parallel and just to the west of today's Alameda Street. (The location is marked where it crossed today's northern extension of Olvera Street just to the south of Cesar Chavez Avenue.) Smaller ditches fed by the *zanja madre* led to individual parcels. The *ayuntamiento* controlled distribution of the water, which was a community resource. There was no concept in Spanish law of the private ownership of water rights.³²

During the Spanish period the population of Los Angeles grew slowly but steadily. In 1791 the pueblo had thirty-one families and 139 total residents. By the early 1800s it had perhaps 315 inhabitants and was producing enough grain to market a small surplus. By 1820 sixty-one families lived in the pueblo. Most of its population growth came, not from immigration from the south, but from presidio soldiers deciding to remain in Alta California once their military service was complete.³³

The economy of the pueblo was overwhelmingly agricultural. Of the eleven heads of households among the original settlers in 1781, only four practiced a craft. One considered himself a cobbler, one a tailor, and two were blacksmiths. In 1791 about one-third of the heads of households worked as farm laborers and another one-fifth as *vaqueros*, or handlers of cattle. Six had skilled trades. But as late as 1816, once the population reached several hundred, only three out of the eighty-seven males who listed occupations worked outside of agriculture. These three were a cobbler, a scribe, and a potter.³⁴

Despite its relative success as an economic entity, the pueblo had difficulties deciding upon a permanent location for its center. The original location of the pueblo's church and plaza was not its final setting. It was moved at least twice, as the *Porniúncula* tended to overflow its banks. In the winter of 1814-1815 flooding required demolishing the original center and moving the entire population to higher ground. This second location washed away three years later. In 1818 Governor Pablo Vicente de Sol recommended that the pueblo's church be moved once again. Its new site required the creation of a new plaza. The current church and plaza, completed in 1822, are at this third location.³⁵

³¹ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, p. 26; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 19.

³² Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 27, 30, 48.

³³ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 214; Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 127; Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 47; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 26

³⁴ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 118; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 26

³⁵ William David Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 30; Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 22-23; John R. Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*

The relocation accounts for the somewhat irregular shape of today's plaza and the layout of the streets surrounding it. Unlike the rigid rectangle of the legally-defined plaza and the right-angled grid of streets, the new plaza had irregular edges and the streets extending from it did not follow straight lines. The land upon which the relocation was placed had already been allocated for housing and farming, and the new plaza and streets had to deal with this reality. Added to this was the relative weakness of the new government under the Mexican regime after the revolt against Spain in 1821, and the lack of a plan from which to work. The result was that in 1822, when the new plaza and its church were dedicated, it failed to measure up to the neatness envisioned by the Laws of the Indies.³⁶

During the years between its 1822 completion and the Americanization of Los Angeles after 1849, the plaza hosted the kinds of activities typical of Latin America. It was in the newly completed plaza that officials gathered in April of 1822 to lower the old Spanish flag, raise the new Mexican flag and swear allegiance to the new government, ten months after the actual revolution had taken place. It was the site of both religious festivals and less elevated activities such as bullfights and bull-and-bear fights. Surrounding adobes occupied by commercial activities also housed games of chance and, in the yards behind, staged cockfights.³⁷

The plaza, although much altered, remains as the Los Angeles Plaza, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 64. The plaza is also included in the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument (also known as Los Angeles Plaza Historic District, California Historical Landmark No. 156 and listed in the National Register). Its nature during the Mexican period can best be seen in the earliest known view, a sketch done by William Rich Hutton in 1847. The view is from a high elevation just to the west of the plaza and shows the plaza church, from the rear, on western edge. The plaza itself is an open space, per the Spanish tradition, and surrounded, besides the church, by low adobe structures. In place of the recommended arcades there are covered porches supported by wooden posts.³⁸

Of the buildings around the plaza only one from the Spanish and Mexican eras still exists. This is the Plaza Church (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No.3, California Historical Landmark No. 144), together with the First Cemetery in Los Angeles (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 26) along its southern edge. The only illustration that exists of its original form is the 1847 drawing showing it from the rear.³⁹

The church was twenty-seven feet wide and 135 feet long, with transepts extending out about eleven feet on each side. The façade was a curved *espadaña*. The entrance facing the plaza (not visible in the 1847 drawing) has been described as a single arched door with a single rectangular window above. The

(Pittsburgh PA: Dorrance Publishing Company, 1997), 80; Francis J. Weber, editor, *The Old Plaza Church: A Documentary History* (Libra Press, 1980), 25-28.

³⁶ Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 44-45; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 27-29.

³⁷ Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 29-30.

³⁸ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 25, 29; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 80, 426.

³⁹ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 26, 71, 421, 423.

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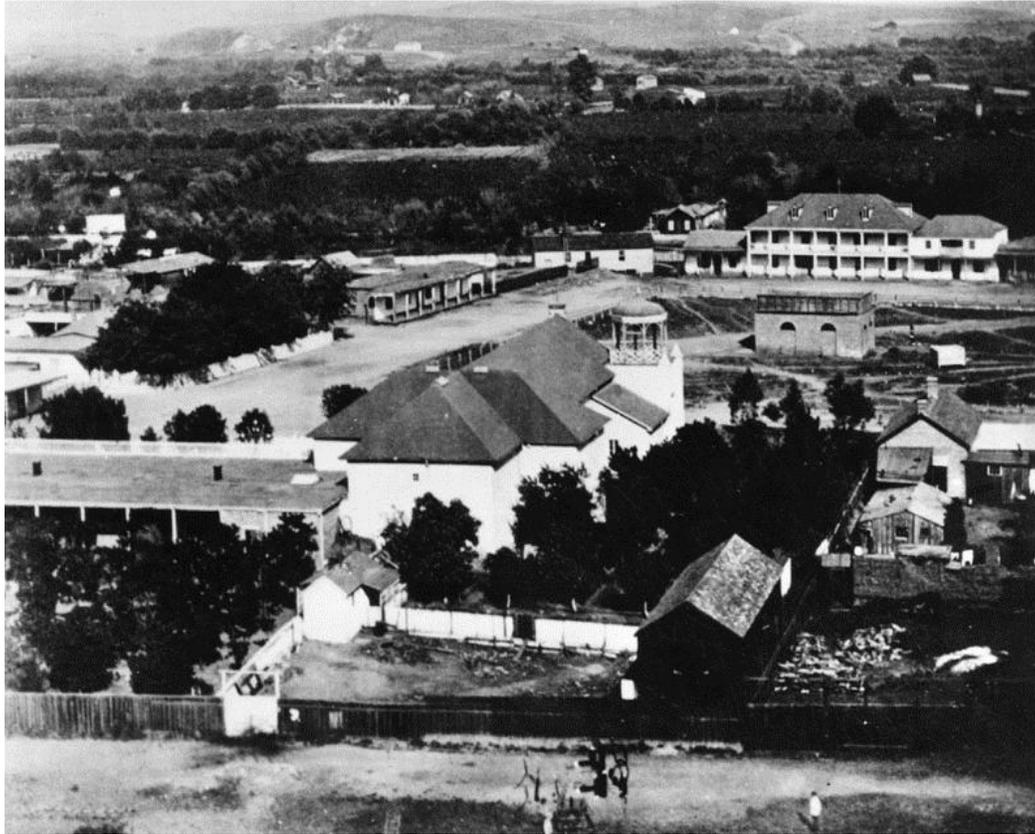
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bells were housed in a *campanario* that consisted of a perforated wall with an *espadaña* lower than that of the façade. There was a baptistery just behind the *campanario*.⁴⁰

The Plaza Church has undergone a great number of changes over the years. In the 1860s it received a pitched roof, a fired brick façade with a higher gable, and a different upper window arrangement. It also received a new bell tower in Victorian form in place of the original *campanario*. In 1912-1913 the rear of the church was removed and a new addition as wide as the outer walls of the transepts added that extended to the west. The Victorian bell tower was eventually replaced by new *campanario* that resembled the original, albeit somewhat higher. In 1960 a new interior wall was installed that split the enlarged church into two, with the smaller portion to the east approximating the area of the original church.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Weber, *The Old Plaza Church*, 25-30.

⁴¹ Weber, *The Old Plaza Church*, 39-42, 49-50, 189, 192-194, 199.



Plaza, Photo circa 1869

Rear of Plaza Church in Foreground

Lugo Adobe on Opposite Side of Plaza

Later American-Constructed Water Reservoir in Center of Plaza

(Los Angeles Public Library)

North of the plaza, facing today's Olvera Street, is the Avila Adobe (California Historical Landmark No. 145). It dates from around 1818 and is the oldest existing house in Los Angeles. It is of adobe construction and originally had a flat roof covered with *brea*, later replaced by the current pitched roof. The adobe is a long, narrow rectangle, its long side parallel to Olvera Street, with two rows of rooms. The front rooms face the street and the rear rooms face a patio. Both front and back have a *corredor* or covered porch. It is believed that the rear corridor is original, while the front is a later addition. Originally a wing extended from the northern portion of the building toward the west, forming an ell and closing off Olvera Street. Although damaged severely in the 1971 earthquake, the Avila Adobe has been restored to a generally accurate state, albeit with the later pitched roof.⁴²

⁴² Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 40; Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 25; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 80, 82.



*Avila Adobe
California Historical Landmark
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Avila Adobe was the home of Francisco Avila, who served as *alcalde* of Los Angeles in 1810 and later became a significant landowner. In 1823 he received the land grant for the 4439-acre Rancho Las Cienegas, near today's La Brea Tar Pits. Avila ran the affairs of the rancho from this adobe. Avila's family retained ownership of the adobe until 1868. This was long enough to see it used by Commodore Robert Stockton as a temporary home and headquarters for a few days in January of 1847, during the American conquest.⁴³

On the east side of the plaza is the Site of Lugo Adobe (California Historical Landmark No. 301). It was constructed in 1830 by Vicente Lugo, one of the large landowners who also maintained a country house in what is now Bell Gardens. The demolition of the Lugo Adobe in 1951 resulted in increased support for protecting the plaza by making it a landmark. Two years later, in 1953, the City of Los Angeles combined with Los Angeles County and the State of California to create El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic

⁴³ Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 28-29; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 80-81, 86-89.

Park. In 1992 control was transferred to the City of Los Angeles, and the name later changed in to El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.⁴⁴

From Spanish to Mexican Rule

In the early 1820s Alta California shifted from Spanish to Mexican rule. With this shift in government came a change of philosophy. Gone was the ideal of an isolated and rigid society based on a union of church and state, with its mercantilist goal of enhancing the wealth of the European mother country. In its place was an effort to create a secular society open to foreign trade and immigration from non-Hispanic sources. But the physical isolation of Alta California from the provinces to the south, together with internal political unrest and increasing economic dependence upon the growing United States, led to the failure of this effort.⁴⁵

The end of Spanish rule was a result of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808, and for the next fourteen years the ability of Madrid to manage its colonies progressively decreased. In 1810 Mexico revolted and the contacts between Alta California and the provinces to the south were increasingly interrupted. By the time Mexico finally achieved its independence in 1821, and the news reached Alta California in early 1822, the links to Mexico City had been seriously weakened. An independent-thinking *Californio* culture began to evolve.⁴⁶

Politics in Mexican Alta California were a reflection of the disarray to the south. Mexico between 1821 and 1848 experienced constant instability. The struggle in Mexico City was a fundamental split between conservatives, who wanted to maintain the old regime, based on a controlled economy and the unity of church and state, and liberals, who sought to establish a secular society and free trade. The liberals were more often dominant, but disorder continued unabated and the army frequently had to intervene, typically under the leadership of a *caudillo*, or strongman, who for a brief time re-imposed authoritarian rule. The result in reality was the increasing devolution of actual power to the provinces and their local leaders. This is what happened in Alta California.⁴⁷

During the entire period the question of who precisely had the power to govern Alta California was constantly being contested. Mexico City would assign a governor who would be opposed by the *Californios*. They would revolt and in turn put forth a candidate for governor that might or might not be recognized by Mexico City. All of this would take place during a time in which it took weeks if not months for communications to pass. The result was that officially Alta California had twelve different governors and fifteen different administrators between 1822 and 1846.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Estrada, *The Los Angeles Pueblo*, 245; Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 25, 35, 42; Poole, *El Pueblo*, 4.

⁴⁵ Starr, *California: A History*, 45.

⁴⁶ Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1991 [2009]), 210-214.

⁴⁷ Enrique Krauze, *Mexico, Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997 [1998]), 91-151.

⁴⁸ Harlow, *California Conquered*, 26-30; Starr, *California: A History*, 45-47.

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Spain had actually granted the *Californios* a limited degree of self-government in 1812, and the Mexican Republic allowed for the continuation of these institutions. At the territorial level was the *Diputación*, an advisory body of limited power selected by the governor, who himself was appointed by Mexico City. The *Diputación* was generally made up of the large landowners from the prominent families. That of 1829 consisted of seven members that included a Pico, a Castro, and two Carillos.⁴⁹

The reality was that the *Californios* were generally left to rule themselves. In a general sense a *Californio* was anyone of Spanish or Mexican descent who had been born in California. They were generally the children of the original settlers or of the presidio soldiers, and included their offspring following the American takeover in 1847. The term continued to be used in this broad sense until the late 1800s.⁵⁰

But the large landowners liked to think of themselves as the true *Californios*, and referred to those of lesser status, such as skilled workers, ranch hands, and independent farmers, as *vecinos*, or neighbors. At the bottom of this self-defined social structure were the field hands and unskilled workers. They were called *cholos*, a term that originally referred to offspring of a *mulato* and a *mulata* in the old Spanish *casta* system of racial categorization.⁵¹

The self-defined *Californios* at the top of the social scale labeled themselves *hijos del país*, or sons of the country. The political differences among the *Californios* were usually personal, and one's allegiance was to a particular individual or family, rather than to a coherent set of ideas or mutual economic interests. The leading *Californios*, such as Juan Batista Alvarado and Pío Pico, generally combined some sort of military status, and at least a minimal amount of battlefield experience, along with their land holdings.⁵²

Perhaps the most important political division in Alta California was a regional north-south split. Various leading families were identified as *noteños* or *sureños*. The Alvarados, Vallejos and Castros were *noteños*, while the Picos, Carrillos and Bandinis were *sureños*. This north-south split was reinforced by intermarriage and by *compadrazgo*, or the status of being a godfather. The marriage of Pico's sister into the Carillo family was typical.⁵³

Adding to this *noteño-sureño* conflict was the increasing importance of Los Angeles. By the beginning of the Mexican period it was well on its way to becoming Alta California's most important secular entity. By 1830 it had about 1000 inhabitants and rated first among non-mission settlements. In 1835 it

⁴⁹ Poole, *El Pueblo*, 30; Carlos Manuel Salomon, *Pío Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 23-24; Dorris Marion Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California: Abel Stearns, 1798-1848* (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hubbard, 1977), 10

⁵⁰ Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 4.

⁵¹ Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 40.

⁵² Douglas Monroy, "The Creation and Re-Creation of California Society," in *Contested Eden*, 180-181, 189-190; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 34-40, 67.

⁵³ Harlow, *California Conquered*, p. 22; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 30, 76; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 15.

became the only settlement in Alta California to be elevated to the status of *ciudad*, or city, by the Mexican government. As such it was also declared the formal territorial capital.⁵⁴

It took ten years for the *noteños* finally to allow for the permanent relocation of the capital to the south. Between 1835 and 1845 the two factions continued to fight, with both Monterey and Los Angeles serving as the *de facto* capital at different times. Of particular importance was control of the territorial treasury based on import fees gathered at the port of Monterey. When Governor Pío Pico made Los Angeles his official capital in 1845, he tried to gain control of the treasury as part of his preparation to face what he saw as an inevitable invasion by the United States.⁵⁵

By the early 1840s Los Angeles had also developed into the closest thing that Alta California had to a commercial center. It became the place at which the landowners gathered to do business. Many acquired adobes in town in addition to, or in place of, a residence on their ranchos. Among these were Pío and Andres Pico, Jose Antonio Carillo, and Vicente Lugo. Carillo petitioned for a lot for his adobe in 1822 and Pico in 1834. Also of note with adobes near the plaza were Ygnacio Coronel, the owner of the Rancho La Cañada, and Francisco Sepulveda, owner of the Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica.⁵⁶

In spite of this growing administrative and commercial importance, the economy of Los Angeles remained largely agricultural. By 1836 it had roughly 170 farms, orchards, vineyards, and gardens within its boundaries. At the same time, its population changed to include more craftsmen and professionals. By the 1830s there were more than thirty-one different occupations registered. This change apparently came about when artisans left the secularized missions and settled in the nearby pueblo.⁵⁷

The pueblo continued to be governed by its *alcalde*, who functioned as judge, jury, and chief executive combined into a single official, and its *ayuntamiento*, or council. The relative weakness of government in general during the Mexican period meant that architecturally Los Angeles continued to grow in the disorganized manner that first appeared with the relocation of the church and plaza. The original pueblo grant of four square leagues was more than enough to contain the increase in population without a perceived need for control. No plat or city plan is known to exist from the Mexican period, and both streets and house lots were laid out in an irregular pattern.⁵⁸

The Fate of the Missions

The most traumatic change undertaken by the Mexican government was the secularization of the missions. The principle of secularization was included in the Mexican Constitution of 1824. Behind it

⁵⁴ Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 46; Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967 [1993]), 7.

⁵⁵ Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 68, 77; Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 112, 120.

⁵⁶ Poole, *El Pueblo*, 15; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 29-30.

⁵⁷ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 135.

⁵⁸ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 32-33; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 24; Starr, *California: A History*, 73-74.

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was the anti-clerical liberal belief that the land would be more productive in privately-owned hands and that the Native Americans would benefit from not being under the control of the friars. The members of the California *Diputación* publicly supported secularization as a way to end what they described as Indian bondage.⁵⁹

The actual process of secularization did not begin until the mid-1830s. Although there was a flurry of talk about closing the missions in the 1820s, little was done. Then in August of 1833 Mexico City decreed that all the missions would be secularized gradually. A *Comisionado* was appointed for each of the missions. The process of secularization in Alta California began in 1834 with ten missions. An additional six were secularized in 1836. The process was complete by 1844.⁶⁰

The regulations governing the process of secularization specified that half of all the land controlled by a mission would become property of that particular mission's Native Americans. The mission churches would become parish churches for the Native American communities. However, in reality most of the land ended up in the hands of local governments, which saw to it that politically favored large landowners gained possession. Thus as a liberal reform to help Native Americans, secularization was a failure. Few Native Americans were able to gain land, and those that did found it difficult to keep possession.⁶¹

Mission San Fernando was one of the first to be secularized in 1834, although its lands remained under government ownership until 1846. The Andres Pico House (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 7)/Romulo Pico Adobe (California Historical Landmark 362, listed in the National Register) is related to the secularization of the missions and the transfer of mission land to private hands. The original core of the adobe dates from 1834, the year of secularization. It was built by Native American labor from the Mission San Fernando and is located about two thousand feet to the southwest of the *Convento* in the midst of what were the mission's orchards and vineyards.⁶²

The building was originally a one-story, forty-foot long adobe with a single room. Its purpose is unknown. It may have been an agricultural structure of some kind, perhaps a storage building, tool shed or housing for field workers. The single original room now forms the current first-floor living room. Additional first-floor rooms were added between 1846 and 1860, and a second story with the current roof and a heavy-timber *corredor* were added in 1873, giving the adobe its present-day appearance.⁶³

⁵⁹ Fernández-Armesto, *Our America*, 131; Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 132; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 8-9; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 45

⁶⁰ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 28; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 37-38; Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 81; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 45-51.

⁶¹ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 28; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 37-38; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 66.

⁶² Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 3-4

⁶³ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 33; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 239, 421; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 3-4, 18-19.



Andres Pico House/Romulo Pico Adobe

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument, California Historical Landmark, National Register
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The fate of this adobe was part of the secularization process at Mission San Fernando. It is also linked to the Pico family and its role in secularization. The story is illustrative of the personal, rather than ideological, nature of politics in Alta California under the Mexican regime. Andres was the brother of Governor Pío Pico. Like his better-known sibling, Andres was involved in political and military affairs as well as ranching. He had reached officer rank when he joined Pío in a revolt against a governor sent by Mexico City in 1831, and was involved in another revolt in 1838, this time against the *noteño* Governor Juan Alvarado.⁶⁴

Both Andres and Pío were briefly imprisoned by the *noteño* José Castro when the 1838 revolt failed. But, typical of the shifting politics of the day, Alvarado soon released the Picos and then gave them land grants. Pío Pico gained the governorship for himself early in 1845 after leading yet another revolt, this time against Governor Manuel Micheltorena, with the support of the *noteño* Alvarado and Castro

⁶⁴ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 4-6.

families. As a reward Pico was allowed finally to move the capital officially to long-designated Los Angeles.⁶⁵

In April of 1845 Governor Pico prohibited further grants or sale of mission property. He then appointed Andres one of two commissioners with the duty of inspecting all mission lands still in the hand of the government and estimating its value. The apparent motive was the governor's realization that he would have to raise funds to defend against an anticipated American invasion, and that the undistributed mission property was his best source of revenue. The lands of Mission San Fernando fell into this category. The task of inspection and estimation was completed in August of 1845.⁶⁶

Governor Pico then leased the remaining property that once belonged to the Mission San Fernando to Andres and his fellow commissioner, Juan Manso, in December of 1845. The lease covered most of the San Fernando Valley and amounted to 118,000 acres. It also included the mission buildings. Andres moved into the *Convento* and made it into his home and ranch headquarters, while continuing to maintain his town house in Los Angeles. The status of the Andres Pico Adobe at this time, while part of the leased property, remains unknown.⁶⁷

By early 1846 Governor Pico realized that he would have to use the San Fernando Mission land as a means of raising immediate funds. Between May and June of that year he either used it as collateral for a loan or sold it at auction (sources differ). By 1847 ownership of the Mission San Fernando land was in the hands of Eulogio de Celis, a Spanish immigrant and successful Los Angeles merchant who was a friend of the governor. At the same time, Andres maintained his lease and his residence in the *Convento*.⁶⁸

In 1853 Celis returned to Spain and the next year, 1854, Andres purchased half interest in the property, including the mission and the adobe that now bears his name. This was apparently a financial stretch, for in the early 1860s Andres sold most of his half interest to his brother Pío, keeping ownership of 1000 acres that became known as the "Pico Reserve" and that included the mission and the adobe. At this point Andres or his son Romulo moved into the adobe and, before Andres' death in 1876, made many of the changes that give the adobe its present-day appearance.⁶⁹

The Ranchos

The era of the ranchos began with the secularization of the missions. At this point the privately-owned ranchos assumed from the missions the role of the primary economic and social institution in Alta California. The ranchos became the basis of a social organization based on the clan, or extended family, and on the exploitation of Native American labor. The ranchos, with their extensive land holdings and

⁶⁵ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 4-6, 9-10.

⁶⁶ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 9-10; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 84-85, 87

⁶⁷ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 10; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 91.

⁶⁸ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 10-11; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 92, 114.

⁶⁹ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 17-19.

their employment of large numbers of individual with different skills, provided the region with what Carey McWilliams in *Southern California Country* characterized as a feudal aspect similar to the *hacienda* system in Mexico.⁷⁰

In 1784 the Spanish governor of Alta California had been given the power to make land grants, but during Spanish rule relatively few were handed out. There was a reluctance to allow settlement outside the pueblo. The few grants that were made generally went to retired soldiers as a reward for loyal service. There were fewer than thirty such grants during the Spanish period. Within the greater Los Angeles area, including northern Orange County and eastern Ventura County, there were twelve Spanish-era ranchos. These Spanish ranchos were rarely developed and did not challenge the missions for economic predominance.⁷¹

The attitude toward private ownership of large tracts of land changed radically with the Mexican Revolution. The new government abandoned the Spanish reluctance to grant property to private owners and encouraged individuals to apply for land. In the years between 1833 and 1846 somewhere between five hundred and six hundred land grants were handed out. Within the greater Los Angeles area, the twelve Spanish-era ranchos were joined by forty-three dating from the Mexican period.⁷²

The size of a Spanish land grant was relatively small as compared to its Mexican successor. The Spanish grant could not be more than three square leagues and could not infringe upon mission or pueblo land. The later Mexican grants were up to eleven square leagues in size. Much of this land was carved out of what had been held by the missions. The boundaries themselves were loosely delineated by natural features, and the grants often included the phrase *poco mas o menos* (somewhat more or less) with the actual quantity of land remaining imprecise.⁷³

The rancho system perpetuated a social order based on land ownership. At the top were the large landowners and the military officers. Then came the artisans, small landowners, and the major-domos and *vaqueros* on the ranchos. All were *gente de razón*, or a person of reason, so long as they practiced Catholicism, spoke Spanish, and paid their taxes. The Native Americans were the manual laborers and unskilled farm workers. They were typically paid with supplies granted on credit and thus often existed in a state of debt peonage much like the later sharecropping system in the American South.⁷⁴

At the same time there was a degree of social flexibility in Mexican California that did not exist elsewhere in Latin America. The formal system of categorizing individuals by *casta*, or racial caste,

⁷⁰ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 39. See also Starr, *California: A History*, 49-50.

⁷¹ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Chapman, *A History of California*, 393; Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 116, 132.

⁷² Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 7; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 38-40; Monroy, "The Creation and Re-Creation of California Society," 177-178.

⁷³ Chapman, *A History of California*, 393; Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 61.

⁷⁴ Harlow, *California Conquered*, 24-25; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 53-54; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 11, 33-34.

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which was part of Spanish law, was abolished between 1824 and 1829. African slavery was outlawed, and a similar set of laws pertaining specifically to California emancipated Native Americans from missionary control.⁷⁵

A prime example of this openness was the Pico family. Under the Spanish *casta* system the paternal grandmother had been listed as a *mulata*, of mixed race with African ancestry, and the paternal grandfather as a *mestizo*, or mixed Spanish and Native American blood. They had several sons, all but one of whom were listed as a *mulato*. One son, the father of Pío and Andres, was listed as a Spaniard. This category was earned, most likely, as a reward for exemplary military service to the Crown. Pico was a prime example of the fact that wealth and comportment, rather than ethnic background alone, determined status and rank among the *Californios*.⁷⁶



Rancho Los Encinos Adobe
California Historical Landmark, National Register
(Los Angeles Public Library)

The best architectural remnant of the rancho period is located in the Los Encinos State Historic Park (California Historical Landmark No. 689, listed in the National Register). Its story is indicative of the combination of politics and land ownership, and if the role of Native Americans, during the Mexican era.

⁷⁵ Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 15, 46.

⁷⁶ Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 15, 19; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 41.

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The Rancho Los Encinos had originally been on land given to the Mission San Fernando. When the lands were dedicated in 1791 to mission use, Francisco Reyes, a former *alcalde* of Los Angeles, was given a 4460-acre parcel around the springs located in the current park in Encino, as compensation for rights he had claimed to the more expansive mission lands. After several decades, Reyes eventually abandoned the grant after rumors spread of his having abused the Native American labor he employed.⁷⁷

In turn, Governor Pío Pico allowed the Native Americans who had been working the land to take possession in 1845, along with a co-grantee by the name of Vicente de la Osa. De la Osa had been involved in both politics and ranching during the Mexican period. The Native Americans sold their interest in Los Encinos to De la Osa and he was able to gain clear title to all of the Rancho for himself in 1851 after the American conquest. De la Osa had earlier received a grant to the Rancho Providencia, a tract of 4064 acres in current Burbank, from Governor Alvarado in 1842. De la Osa sold Providencia in 1851 once he had uncontested possession of Los Encinos.⁷⁸

One of the structures on the Rancho Los Encinos dates from 1849, between the time when De la Osa gained a partial grant in 1845 and when he obtained ownership of the entire rancho in 1851. It was built by De la Osa as his residence. Even though it dates from the very end of the Mexican era, it is, of the rancho adobes, the best preserved in its original configuration. It is a long, narrow structure, one room deep, with *corredors* along both the front and back. It is much like the Avila Adobe in Los Angeles, from around 1818, and shows the stability of architectural forms during the Mexican era.⁷⁹

A second historic site, the Sanchez Ranch (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 487), is related to the Rancho La Cienega o Paso de la Tijera. There are two original adobe structures, now encapsulated within a variety of newer buildings. The origin of these adobes is obscure. Until the early 1840s the land upon which they stand was public land owned by the pueblo of Los Angeles. It is possible that they were built by squatters as early as the 1790s. If so, they would be the oldest adobes in Los Angeles. They were part of the Rancho La Cienega o Paso de la Tijera grant made in 1843. They then most likely served some function associated with the ranch, perhaps housing the *mayordomo* in charge of ranching operations.⁸⁰

The story of the Rancho La Cienega o Paso de la Tijera is again illustrative of the link between land ownership and political power, and the importance of personal relationships. The rancho was granted by Governor Manuel Micheltorena to Vicente Sanchez in 1843. Sanchez was a member of the *Diputación* in 1829 and served as *alcalde* of Los Angeles in 1830 and 1831 and again in 1845. He also often found himself on the wrong side of factional battles, generally in opposition to the Picos and other *sureños*. He was jailed in 1822 for opposing a member of the Carillo family. As *alcalde* in 1831 Sanchez

⁷⁷ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 33.

⁷⁸ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 33-35.

⁷⁹ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 37.

⁸⁰ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 21, 461; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 115-118; *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1990.

supported Governor Victoria in his losing struggle against the Carillos and the Picos, and again found himself in jail. Nonetheless he was able to maintain his property and his social position as one of the wealthier men of the pueblo.⁸¹

The grant of the Rancho, with its 4481 acres, was a reward for supporting the newly appointed Governor Manuel Micheltoarena when he arrived in Los Angeles in 1841. The new governor was sworn in at the Sanchez town house, a large two-story structure on what is now Sanchez Street just south of the plaza. Once again Sanchez appears to have supported the wrong side. Micheltoarena was ousted in the rebellion led by Pico in 1845 that was followed by Pico's assuming the governorship. At the same time, Sanchez was elected again that year as *alcalde* and appears to have suffered no misfortune for his political errors. At his death the ranch, with its adobes, passed to his heirs and remained in the Sanchez family until 1875.⁸²

Also remaining from the rancho era is the Pascual Marquez Family Cemetery in Pacific Palisades (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 685). The cemetery dates from 1848 and served the family of Francisco Marquez. Marquez and Ysidro Reyes were the co-grantees of the Rancho Boca de Santa Monica, which they received in 1839. The Rancho consisted of 6656 acres in today's Santa Monica and Pacific Palisades. Ranch adobes originally sat on the property, with that of Marquez having a view of the cemetery. Marquez established the cemetery since he felt that the nearest Catholic cemetery, a day's trip away, was too distant.⁸³

The Leonis Adobe (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1) is related indirectly to the rancho era. The adobe dates from the mid 1840s and its original use is unknown. There is speculation that it was an inn for travelers. This would fit with its location along the El Camino Real, on what was originally common land now located at the far west end of present-day Woodland Hills. The adobe was acquired after the American conquest by Miguel Leonis, the owner of the 1100 acre Rancho El Escorpión, located in present-day West Hills. Leonis gained possession through the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed individuals to gain title to parcels of unclaimed public land after having improved them. The adobe was a ruin at the time, having been abandoned sometime in the 1850s.⁸⁴

The original adobe portion still exists under an exterior covering of wood siding. It appears as though it was originally two floors in height, in that the adobe wall construction continues unbroken for the full two levels to the roof. This makes it most unusual for Spanish and Mexican rancho structures and supports the idea that it was originally some kind of lodging for travelers. It is one room deep, with the current single first floor room an apparent conversion from a two-room arrangement of a large and a small space. The second level is divided into a center hall with rooms on either side. The partitions are

⁸¹ Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 84, 116-117.

⁸² Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 117-118.

⁸³ Herr, editor, *Landmark L.A.*, 384, 476; *Los Angeles Examiner*, September 25, 2009; *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2009.

⁸⁴ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 237, 421; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 41, 45.

wood and may have been added later. There is no evidence of an internal stairway. Most likely there was some kind of two-story *corredor* with an exterior stairway. The adobe as it exists today is the product of a remodeling by Leonis, beginning in 1879, and the result is a Monterey style home with Queen Anne detailing.⁸⁵

The Coming of the Anglo-Americans

The shift from Spanish to Mexican rule resulted in a drastic change in the attitude toward foreigners. Instead of being excluded, they were welcomed. While the original goal was to encourage migration from many different places, citizens of the United States became by far the largest group of outsiders. The result of this hospitality may have added to the economic vitality of the territory. But it led to inevitable cultural conflict and, in the end, loss of Alta California to the United States.

At first the liberalization of the attitude toward foreigners came from the desire to encourage trade with non-Hispanic nations. The new Mexican government rejected the old Spanish concept of mercantilism and accepted the increasingly prevalent belief that a limited amount of seaborne commerce with other nations was necessary for economic development, particularly in a region as isolated as Alta California.

To be sure, illegal trade had occurred long before 1822, dominated by the so-called Boston Ships from that city. But making this trade legal created what was essentially a colonial economy in Alta California tied, not to Latin America, but to the United States. The Mexican government tried to maintain control over this trade, going so far as to make Monterey the sole official point of entry for foreign ships after 1826. San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and San Diego were also open as *puertos menores*, or secondary ports, to the coastal trade that flourished along the Pacific Coast of Latin America as far south as Lima. But the inadequacy of coastal patrols made enforcement of what regulations existed impossible.⁸⁶

The basis of this trade was the market for cattle hides and tallow. The ranchos specialized in raising cattle for the export market. In turn, ships imported manufactured goods. There was little cash involved. Instead the hides themselves served as currency, and a dried steer hide, known as a California Bank Note, was valued at about one American dollar.⁸⁷

There was no incentive for the *Californios* to diversify. Instead they increasingly relied on credit extended by the shipping companies. This dependence meant that, when the market for hides collapsed in Boston in the mid-1840s, tensions that already existed between the *Californios* and the increasing number of American settlers was intensified.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 38; Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, 45.

⁸⁶ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 129-130; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 20; Nunis, "Alta California's Trojan Horse," 303; Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 11.

⁸⁷ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 62.

⁸⁸ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 130-134.

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The Site of the Casa de San Pedro (California Historical Landmark No. 920) on the grounds of present-day Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, is related to this trade. The Casa was the warehouse of the first non-Hispanic trading company granted the right to deal directly with *Californios*. It became one of the most important trading points between the American shippers and their *Californio* customers. Its story is illustrative of how this economic relationship worked, and in particular the increasingly important role played by immigrants from the United States.⁸⁹

In 1822 the British trading firm of McCulloch, Hartnell and Company was granted a three-year monopoly on purchasing Alta California's surplus hides and tallow. To carry this out they received permission to build warehouses in Monterey and San Pedro. In 1823 Native American labor completed an adobe structure about twenty feet by fifty feet, known commonly then as the Hide House.⁹⁰

McCulloch, Hartnell and Company's original contract was with the missions. McCulloch and Hartnell experienced business reverses and in 1829 sold the warehouse to Mission San Gabriel. The mission then allowed the building to deteriorate. In 1834, after the missions were secularized, the structure was purchased by the American immigrant Abel Stearns.⁹¹

Stearns is a prime example of an American who made good in Mexican-era California, first through trade and then through land ownership. He was born in Massachusetts in 1798 and reached California in 1829. He sought to establish himself as a middleman between the missions and ranchos on one hand and the shippers of goods from abroad on the other. He began by establishing a retail business in Los Angeles in the early 1830s. To aid this business he began looking for a storage facility accessible to ships delivering goods and saw the abandoned adobe in San Pedro as ideal.⁹²

Stearns officially gained ownership of the Hide House in August 1834 and transformed it into the Casa de San Pedro. Renovations began in early 1835. Stearns added four rooms to the original one, and then added three more later to form an el-shaped structure. All the additions were adobe like the original, but the additions featured wooden floors.⁹³

Business was conducted primarily on a barter basis. Area *rancheros* brought hides and tallow to the Casa, occasionally along with small quantities of wine and other agricultural items. The value of these items was credited to their accounts. Customers then selected imported items, the value of which was deducted from the accounts. The hides were generally shipped to New England, the tallow to South America, and the other items, such as the wine and agricultural products, consumed aboard the ships.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Silka, *San Pedro*, 16

⁹⁰ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 130-131; Silka, *San Pedro*, 16; Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 39.

⁹¹ Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 33-35.

⁹² Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 5, 29-31.

⁹³ Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 32, 37, 39.

⁹⁴ Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 42-43.

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The goods brought by the ships to California consisted of a variety of manufactured products. In particular demand were bolts of cloth, hardware of all sorts, and cookware such as dishes, pots, pans, and cutlery. Stearns also dealt with special order items, in particular furniture and musical instruments like pianos. Most manufactured items came from New England.⁹⁵

Stearns owned the Casa de San Pedro for eleven years. By the early 1840s business had begun to fall off and he sold the facility in 1845 to two other Americans. Stearns then moved on to the more respectable activity of land ownership. He was able to do this because of another change that came from the shift from Spanish to Mexican rule. This was the willingness to allow Americans and other foreigners to acquire land grants.⁹⁶

Under Spanish rule, foreigners had been prohibited from taking up permanent residence and owning property in Alta California. In 1821, the last year of Spanish rule, there were seventeen foreigners in all of the territory. Five of them were citizens of the United States. Once Mexican rule began and Alta California was opened foreigners, citizens of other countries increased in number. There were about 150 by 1830, 300 by 1835, 380 by 1840, and 680 by 1845.⁹⁷

The reason for opening Alta California to land ownership by non-Mexicans was the continuing inability of the Mexican government to encourage immigration from the more populated regions to the south. Alta California was simply too distant via overland routes. Often the few Mexican immigrants who did come were generally those who had no choice, such as foundlings and convicts.⁹⁸

The framework for legal immigration of foreigners to Alta California consisted of two laws from the 1820s. The Colonization Act of 1824 and the Supplemental Regulations of 1828 made it possible for foreign citizens to settle in Alta California and to request grants of land. Foreigners had to convert to Catholicism and become Mexican citizens, and to reside in Alta California for two years during which time they had to exhibit good conduct. The result was that perhaps one third of the grants handed out in the 1840s were given to settlers with non-Spanish surnames, primarily English.⁹⁹

The increase in the number of foreigners can be seen in the population of Los Angeles. The first census of Los Angeles, taken in the 1830s, recorded the presence of fifty foreigners. They included twenty Americans, five French, four English, three Portuguese, two Africans, and the rest from a variety of European countries. By 1844 the number of foreigners had increased to fifty-three, including twenty-six Americans. This was out of a population of perhaps twelve hundred.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 42-43, 45-46.

⁹⁶ Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 41, 47-48.

⁹⁷ Nunis, "Alta California's Trojan Horse," 299, 317.

⁹⁸ Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," p. 130; Starr, *California: A History*, 47

⁹⁹ Fernández-Armesto, *Our America*, 38; Hackel, "Land, Labor and Production," 132; Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 61.

¹⁰⁰ Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 10; Nunis, "Alta California's Trojan Horse," 329.

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Up until the early 1840s most of the Anglo-Americans learned Spanish, adopted *Californio* ways and generally fit into the social order without conflict. Once converted to Catholicism they were considered *gente de razón*. Abel Stearns was perhaps the most successful example. In June of 1841 he married into the Bandini family and came to occupy a large house known as *El Palacio de Don Abel* at the corner of today's Main and Arcadia Streets. In July of 1842 Stearns purchased the Rancho Los Alamitos, a Spanish-era land grant around today's Long Beach. He continued to add additional blocks of land to his holdings so that by 1860 he was the largest landholder in Southern California.¹⁰¹

By the early 1840s, however, the nature of the Anglo-American migration had changed. The earlier Anglo-Americans had come by ship as part of the opening of commerce to the outside world. But increasingly after 1840 United States citizens came overland. The first significant party of Anglo-Americans to reach Los Angeles by an overland route was the Workman-Rowland party in November of 1841, coming via the Old Spanish Trail through Yuma.¹⁰²

This was part of a broad penetration of Anglo-Americans along the entire border with Mexico, and included American immigration into Texas and American trade along the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico. The overland immigrants in Alta California, unlike the earlier settlers, made no effort to fit into *Californio* society. Instead they settled in self-contained colonies, primarily in northern California and the Sacramento Valley, and increasingly made clear their desire for annexation to the United States.¹⁰³

The influx of Anglo-Americans, and the weakness of the Mexican government, was such that some *Californios* considered eventual affiliation with, or annexation to, the United States to be inevitable. Their requirements were that the American government would have to recognize the language, customs, religion, and land titles of Mexican California. Some *Californios* were negotiating for such an arrangement when open conflict began.¹⁰⁴

Typical of these *Californios* with conflicted allegiances was Juan Bandini. Bandini allied himself with the United States and aided its officials. His son-in-law, Abel Stearns, was, perhaps due to his immigrant background, more cautious. He tried to mediate between the *Californios* and the Americans, with the goal of making California an independent nation under the protection of the United States.¹⁰⁵

Most likely some kind of affiliation with the United States was inevitable. But the Mexican War, which lasted from May of 1846 until June of 1848, decided the form in which this affiliation was to come

¹⁰¹ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 28-29; Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 26-27; Lisbeth Haas, "War in California, 1846-1848," in *Contested Eden*, 336; McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 52-53; Wright, *A Yankee in Mexican California*, 90, 100, 145.

¹⁰² Starr, *California: A History*, 62-63.

¹⁰³ Haas, "War in California," 336; Harlow, *California Conquered*, xv.

¹⁰⁴ Harlow, *California Conquered*, xvi; Starr, *California: A History*, 64-65.

¹⁰⁵ Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 103.

about. The annexation of California was one of the primary war goals of President James Polk, in large part because of the attraction of San Francisco Bay as a strategic asset.¹⁰⁶

The primary theater of the Mexican War was Mexico itself, with the result determined by General Winfield Scott's landing at Vera Cruz and conquest of Mexico City. Because of its remoteness, the struggle in California remained a separate and somewhat different sort of campaign. It involved fewer people, and was waged on a smaller and generally less violent scale. The American forces were a combination of settler militias and army regulars. The *Californios* had almost no professional military, although many leaders fashioned themselves officers, and had to rely on volunteers.¹⁰⁷

American intervention in California actually began with John Charles Frémont's 1845 expedition. The leader of earlier forays into the west, Frémont's stated purpose this time was to survey a route for a transcontinental railroad. He entered Mexican territory from the east during the summer and reached California by December. He was thus in place when hostilities between the United States and Mexico began the following May. Meanwhile, noting Frémont's progress toward the Pacific coast, Governor Pico in the late summer of 1845 sent a call to *Californios* to prepare themselves for an American invasion.¹⁰⁸

The war in California started in June of 1846 with the so-called Bear Flag Revolt of American settlers in Sonoma. In July United States forces landed in Monterey and, supported by militias commanded by Frémont, officially claimed California for the United States. The capital of California had earlier been transferred to Los Angeles and what few Mexican forces remained in the north retreated south toward it. Governor Pico then called for all loyal *Californios* to take up arms against the Yankee invaders.¹⁰⁹

By the end of summer, 1846, American forces had reached Los Angeles. In a series of moves that produced relatively little bloodshed, the United States army occupied the territorial capital. It had been abandoned by the *Californios* in August and Governor Pico had fled south. Then, believing that the city was secure, most of the American forces returned to the north. In late September, *Californio* forces advanced from the south and re-conquered Los Angeles. The small force of remaining Americans surrendered.¹¹⁰

Early in 1847 the American forces again moved south against the *Californios*. On January 9th at the Battle of La Mesa, near present-day Vernon and sometimes referred to as the Battle of Los Angeles, American forces defeated the *Californios*. The result was the reoccupation of Los Angeles by the United States after what was the last battle of the Mexican War in California.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Haas, "War in California," 336; Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 102

¹⁰⁷ Harlow, *California Conquered*, xvi.

¹⁰⁸ Haas, "War in California," 337.

¹⁰⁹ Haas, "War in California," 337-341; Starr, *California: A History*, 66.

¹¹⁰ Haas, "War in California," 342-343; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 151, 159, 165; Starr, *California: A History*, 69.

¹¹¹ Haas, "War in California," 342-345; Harlow, *California Conquered*, 214-216.

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On January 13, 1847, the two sides concluded the Treaty of Cahuenga, sometimes referred to as the Capitulation of Cahuenga. The Campo de Cahuenga (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 29, California Historical Landmark No. 151, listed in the National Register) in present-day North Hollywood is the site at which the ceremony took place. Andres Pico signed the treaty on behalf of the *Californios*.¹¹²

The treaty was relatively generous. It required that the *Californios* surrender and return home, obey the laws of the United States, and not renew hostilities while the war with Mexico continued. It guaranteed protection of their lives and property, relieved them of the requirement that they take an oath of allegiance to the United States until the war with Mexico was concluded, and guaranteed them equal rights with American citizens. Later supplements to the treaty allowed for the retention of local officials in office, popular elections, protection for the Catholic clergy, and recognition of the Alta California public debt. It also allowed the *Californios* to take home with them their personal arms and horses, and required them only to surrender larger pieces of artillery.¹¹³

This brought an end to the war in California, which was then governed as an occupied territory. The Mexican War itself was formally ended by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo a year later, in February of 1848. At that point Mexican rule formally ended and California became a militarily-governed territory of the United States. One year after that, in September, 1849, a constitutional convention met at Colton Hall in Monterey and agreed upon a governing document that was published in both English and Spanish. Of the forty-eight delegates seven were *Californios*, and the proceedings of the convention were kept in both languages. In November of 1849 voters submitted bi-lingual ballots and Alta California became a state.¹¹⁴

However, the Hispanic way of life in Southern California did not suddenly disappear. The initial impact of American rule was felt primarily in the northern part of the state, specifically around the port of San Francisco and in the gold fields of the Sierras. Spanish remained one of the two official languages of the state until 1879. While the legislature repealed the provision that all laws had to be printed in both Spanish and English in 1855, Los Angeles continued the practice.¹¹⁵

Once the Gold Rush of 1849 began Los Angeles quickly lost its status as the largest settlement in the state and all of Southern California became a backwater. The rancho system was able to maintain itself, at least in the short run, with the American promise to honor Spanish and Mexican land grants. The Gold Rush and the rapid urbanization of San Francisco actually revitalized the ranchos for a brief time by providing them with a convenient market for beef.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 244, 423; Salomon, *Pío Pico*, 107.

¹¹³ Harlow, *California Conquered*, 232.

¹¹⁴ Rolle & Verge, *California: A History*, 109, 126-128; Starr, *California: A History*, 92.

¹¹⁵ Starr, *California: A History*, 92; Torres-Rouff, *Before L.A.*, 118.

¹¹⁶ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 62; Starr, *California: A History*, 111.

By the 1870s, however, the rancho system was collapsing. Competition from better-fed American cattle, combined with a devastating drought from 1862 to 1864, led to the end of the cattle boom. The Land Act of 1851 formally recognized as valid the Spanish and Mexican land grants but required that they be confirmed and, for the first time, taxes were imposed on property and its improvements. Vague grant titles combined with the need to raise capital led most of the large *Californio* landowners to lose their holdings.¹¹⁷

Within a generation of the conquest Mexican Los Angeles became an Anglo-American town. A few new urban structures, such as the Pico House, clustered around the Plaza. But the bulk of new construction arose to the south and the old pueblo became a slum for those excluded from Anglo society, primarily poor Mexican, Chinese, and African-Americans. It was not until the late 1920s, and the creation of the Olvera Street district, that historic Los Angeles regained a degree of respect.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

There are three architectural inheritances from the Spanish-Mexican Period. The first and most obvious is what can be called, in a broad sense, Mediterranean architecture. It was particularly prevalent in the years between 1890 and 1930. First came the Mission Revival and then the Spanish Colonial Revival. They both had multiple variations, which could be as simple as the modest contractor-designed stucco bungalow with no more than a parapet topped with red clay tiles, and as sophisticated as the abstract proto-modern works of architect Irving Gill. As Reyner Banham has pointed out, the Spanish Colonial Revival style is so deeply embedded into the culture of Southern California, and so appropriate to the environment, as to be something that is ever-present and taken for granted.¹¹⁹

The second inheritance is the concept of the California ranch house. This is more a matter of layout and of relationship to the setting than a matter of architectural style. It is best exemplified historically by the adobe dwelling at Los Encinos. As early as 1903 Charles and Henry Greene built a variation on the ranch house in Pasadena for Arturo Bandini, the son of *Californio* Juan Bandini. It was a one-room-deep U-shaped single story structure with a *corridor* connecting the rooms.¹²⁰

More widespread was the influence of designer Cliff May, whose dwellings and publications such as the *Sunset Western Ranch Houses* of 1946, made the California ranch house a nationally known form in the years following the Second World War. To be sure architects of other regions, such as O'Neal Ford of Texas, found similar indigenous forms in their locales. But the spread-out single-story dwelling, informally planned and with easy access to the outdoors, was in the public mind linked to the ranch adobes of Hispanic California.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 62

¹¹⁸ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 38-47.

¹¹⁹ Banham, *Los Angeles*, 60-61

¹²⁰ Randell L. Makinson, *Greene & Greene: Architecture as a Fine Art* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1977), 70-73.

¹²¹ Editorial Staff of *Sunset Magazine*, *Sunset Western Ranch Houses*, in collaboration with Cliff May (Menlo Park CA: Land Publishing Company, 1946 [1955]), passim.



*Plaza, Photo circa 1890
Pico House on Left, Plaza Church on Right
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The third inheritance is the idea of the plaza as a public space. The Hispanic plaza is in essence an empty outdoor room. Its emptiness allows for a variety of functions, which in traditional Iberian society ran from religious festivals to public executions. This concept of an empty public space was one that Anglo-Americans found difficult to accept. Anglo-American society has instead held up the ideal of the public square filled with a monumental structure, such as a courthouse, or transformed into a park with walks and benches set among elaborate landscaping.

It is telling that, once they gained control of Los Angeles, the Americans put a fence around the plaza, placed a major structure – at one time the city reservoir—in its center, and began landscaping it. Today the plaza seems to be a comfortable combination of the two cultures. It contains four monumental Moreton Bay fig trees and a bandstand, in the Anglo-American form of a park, but a good portion is paved and filled with ever-changing activities in the Hispanic tradition.¹²²

Finally there is a fourth inheritance. It concerns the layout of the city itself. Spanish tradition required that the grid of the original pueblo be laid out at a forty-five degree angle to the cardinal compass points of north, south, east, and west. This was done so that sides of every street received a bit of sun. The tradition was followed as closely as possible when the Plaza was relocated in the early 1820s. The early surveys from the Anglo-American period, those of Ord and Hutton in 1849 and of Henry Hancock in 1858, accepted this orientation for new streets. The result is that the central part of Los Angeles, as far

¹²² Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 41-42.

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as Hoover Street on the west and Martin Luther King Boulevard on the south, varies from the grid based on the cardinal points found elsewhere in the city.¹²³

Resources from the Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement

Resources relating to Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era settlement are highly significant to the early history and development of the city of Los Angeles and the state of California. At the time of SurveyLA, it was assumed that these resources were all known and designated under local, state, and federal programs, and therefore, no eligibility standards have been developed for evaluation. The large number of California Historical Landmarks (CHL) under this context evidences their statewide importance.

The list below is in chronological order with known dates. Dating for some can be difficult and the problems are discussed below. Designation types are listed in parenthesis: National Register (NR), California Historical Landmark (CHL), and City Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

- 1769 Portola Trail Campsite (CHL 655)
- 1769 Serra Springs (CHL 522)
- 1791 Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana (NPS-8802147, CHL 157, HCM 23)
Chatsworth Calera Site (CHL 753) / Chatsworth Reservoir Kiln Site (HCM 141)
Mission Wells and the Settling Basin (HCM 50)
Brand Park (Memory Garden) (CHL 150)
- 1818 Avila Adobe (CHL 145)
- 1822 El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument (also known as Los Angeles Plaza Historic District and previously known as El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park) (NPS-72000231-9999, CHL 156)
- 1822 Los Angeles Plaza Park (HCM 64)
- 1822 Plaza Church (CHL 144, HCM 3)
- 1823 First Cemetery in Los Angeles (HCM 26)
- 1823 Site of Casa de San Pedro (CHL 920)
- 1830 Site of Lugo Adobe (CHL 301)
- 1834 Romulo Pico Adobe (NPS-66000221, CHL 362) / Andres Pico House (HCM 7)
- 1840s Leonis Adobe (HCM 1)
- 1843 Sanchez Ranch (HCM 487)
- 1847 Campo de Cahuenga (NPS-72001602, CHL 151, HCM 29)
- 1848 Pascual Marquez Family Cemetery (HCM 685)
- 1849 Los Encinos State Historic Park (NPS-710000142, CHL 689)

The mass by Serra at the Springs is assumed to have occurred during the Portola trek. The three resources linked to the Mission San Fernando are assumed to date from around the founding of the mission. The Mission *Convento* was constructed between 1810 and 1822. The date for the Plaza and its

¹²³ Glen Creason, *Los Angeles in Maps* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010), 32-33, 36-37.

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church is the known completion date for the church and the accompanying dedication of both it and the adjoining third plaza. The date for the original structure that forms the center of the Leonis Adobe is guessed to be sometime in the 1840s. The date for the Sanchez Ranch is the year of the land grant for the surrounding rancho. The original adobe buildings may be much older.

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Summary Statement of Significance: Prior to the incorporation of the City of Los Angeles in 1849, the area had a rich history associated with Spanish Colonial and Mexican era settlement, including the founding of the Pueblo de Los Angeles. Resources within this context are significant in the areas of exploration/settlement, social history, and ethnic history for their association with important events, families and/or persons. Significance may be associated with the early settlement of the area that would become the City of Los Angeles as well as the State of California.

Period of Significance: 1781-1849

Period of Significance Justification: Los Angeles was established as a pueblo in 1781 by the Spanish government. California joined the United States in 1849, a year before the incorporation of the City of Los Angeles in 1850.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of the city of Los Angeles

Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement, Social History, Ethnic History

Criteria: NR: A/B CR: 1/2 Local: 1/2

Property Type Description: Property types include individual resources, historic districts, and cultural landscapes such as residences, religious buildings (Mission/church), cemeteries, sites, and the Los Angeles Plaza (El Pueblo de Los Angeles).

Property Type Significance: The property types are significant for their association with important events, families and/or persons dating from Spanish Colonial and Mexican era settlement in the area that would become the City of Los Angeles and State of California. Mexican Los Angeles lived by providing examples of their residences, places of work, and sites for social life.

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