

Nuestra Señora de la Soledad



Thirteenth Mission

Founded: October 9, 1791 by Father Fermin Lasuen

Named for: Our Lady of Solitude

Location: in the Salinas River valley, 3 miles south of the town of Soledad and 1 mile west of U.S. Highway 101

The name of this mission tells a lot about it. Father Lasuen dedicated the site to "the Solitude of Most Holy Mary, Our Lady". It was a dry, windy plain that was very hot in the summer and freezing cold on winter nights. It was through the missionaries irrigation of the Salinas river that the area was transformed to allow the growth of crops and livestock herding by the missionaries.

Due to the inhospitable climate and land, there were very few Native Americans living in the area. Hence building and conversions were slow. It was six years before a large church was finally built. And since the desolate plain offered no protection against the floods of the Salinas river, the church was twice destroyed by the overflowing river banks. During a reconstruction in 1832 a third flood hit that was latter seen as the beginning of the end for the Mission Soledad.

It was also a very difficult assignment for the padres. Those sent there soon complained of rheumatism and poor health. After a year, many padres asked to be reassigned to a more pleasant site. In the short span of this mission's existence, almost thirty different padres were assigned here.

In spite of all the difficulties, the mission did prosper. Eventually the padres performed more than 2,000 baptisms and 700 marriages. The crops were bountiful and large herds of horses, cattle and sheep grazed the plains.

After secularization the mission site was soon abandoned and left to decay for over one hundred years. Finally, in 1954, the Native Daughters of the Golden West began restoring what little was left of the Mission Soledad. Today a small wing of seven rooms and a small chapel can be visited. Although the original quadrangle is gone, the lines of it can be traced in the mounds of the adobe ruins.

Who was this Mission named after? _____

Describe the climate where this Mission is located. _____

Was the Mission successful? How do you know? _____

Where is the Mission located? _____
