

San Miguel Arcángel



Sixteenth Mission

Founded: July 25, 1797 by Father Fermin Lasuen

Named for: Saint Michael the Archangel

Location: on old U.S. Highway 101, 8 miles north of the city of Paso Robles

The third mission founded by Father Lasuen in the summer of 1797 was quickly filled with the many friendly Native Americans in the area. Fifteen native children were baptized on the same day the mission was founded. Accompanying the padres were many neophyte (Christianized Native Americans) families from other missions that helped to quickly win the confidence of the local natives.

For many years the padres kept the natives busy making and drying large amounts of adobe bricks to be used in a new large church. When the stockpile of adobe bricks was large enough construction began and was completed in just two years.

Although the exterior of the church was simple, the interior was elaborately adorned by an artist from Spain. Fortunately, this artwork has been preserved in its original form. Scenes show false balconies and pillars, archways, and imitation marble. Above the altar is the "all-seeing eye of God" with rays of light shining in all directions.

The neophytes were so content here that even when, in 1831, in anticipation of secularization, they were told that they were now free to leave the mission, none did. They all chose to stay with the padres. A few years later, in August 1834, the mission was secularized and all the property was given to the Native Americans. But without the guidance of the padres, the mission soon fell into disrepair. By 1844 most of the neophytes had left and all of the livestock was gone.

In 1846 all the mission property, except the church, was sold into private hands. One of the purchasers was William Reed, who along with his family and servants, lived in the mission until they were all murdered by a band of tramps looking for gold to steal. The tramps were all later caught and executed.

When the church was finally put back into service, in 1878, some restoration was begun. In 1928 it was returned to the Franciscan's to be used as a monastery and a parish church.

What caused the quick success of the Mission? _____

Describe the interior of the Mission. _____

Why didn't the Native Americans leave when they were permitted to leave? _____
