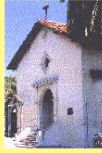


# San Rafael Arcángel



## Twentieth Mission

**Founded:** December 14, 1817 by Father Vicente de Sarria

**Named for:** St. Raphael the Archangel, patron of good health

**Location:** 20 miles north of the city of San Francisco in the city of San Rafael

This site was originally dedicated as an asistencia (sub-mission) of Mission Dolores. San Rafael was to serve as a convalescent hospital for the many sick neophytes (Christianized Native Americans) there. Concerned that the high death rate of the Mission Dolores neophytes was partly due to the damp climate, the padres decided to send the sick to a better location in order to recover.

The northern peninsula of the bay was warmer, with sunny slopes, and protected by hills from the winds and fog. After the construction of a simple building connected to a church the sick neophytes were wrapped in blankets and rowed across the bay. After a short time in this pleasant climate there was a remarkable improvement in their health. As word of this spread some of the other missions also sent their sick neophytes to San Rafael.

The padres were also converting large numbers of Native Americans living in the area and in 1822 San Rafael was given full mission status. In the short 17 years that the mission existed the Native American population reached over 1,000.

Just two years before secularization a new senior padre took over the running of the mission. Father Jose Maria Mercado had a reputation for being short tempered and not always taking the best course of action. When he saw a number of unknown natives coming towards the mission, he wrongly assumed that they were going to attack and ordered his neophytes to attack them first. What ensued was the death of 21 unarmed natives, and many more wounded. For his part in this Father Mercado was suspended from mission work for six months.

When the mission was secularized the lands were given to the Native Americans, but they were unable to properly manage it and soon lost all control of the lands to a Mexican General. He convinced the Native Americans to work for him at his ranch for only room and board.

The mission buildings were abandoned and eventually torn down in 1870 to be replaced by a new parish church. Many years later a replica of the original church was constructed.

Why was this Mission built? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did the climate affect the Mission? \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe the events associated with Father Mercado. \_\_\_\_\_

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