

Toypurina, the Tongva “Sorceress”

Upon the arrival of the Spanish missionaries, the native Tongva people, also called “Gabrielino”, were used as laborers to help build the San Gabriel Mission complex and tend to the crops and livestock. The Spanish encouraged the Tongva to abandon their traditional spiritual beliefs in favor of Christianity—often at a heavy price.



After more than 10 years of living under Spanish rule, some Tongva people grew weary of the suppression and organized a revolt in an attempt to reclaim their independence. Legend tells us that a shaman named Toypurina played a leading role in the revolt, convincing the Tongva warriors her spiritual power would help them succeed.

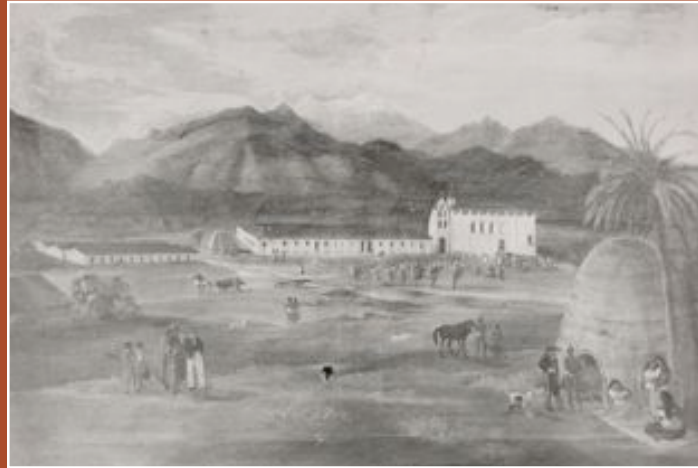
The Founding of the City of Los Angeles

The success of the San Gabriel Mission was a springboard to the founding of Los Angeles. On September 4th, 1781, 44 settlers marched from the mission to the Pueblo de los Angeles—the original civic center of what was to become present-day Los Angeles. This march is reenacted every year by the group, Los Pobladores.



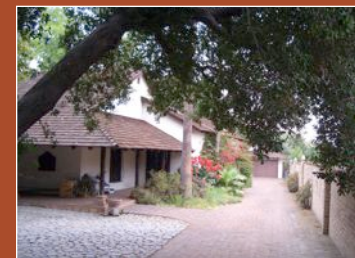
Father Zalvidea, the “Industrious Padre”

In 1805, the mission received a new leader in Padre José Maria de Zalvidea. Described in historical accounts as a “model missionary”, Zalvidea was driven and energetic. Unlike his predecessors, Padre Zalvidea learned the Tongva language and used it in his religious teachings. Under his administration, San Gabriel became one of the most prosperous of all the California missions.



San Gabriel Mission History

Originally founded in 1771 on the banks of the San Gabriel River, the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel was relocated in 1775 to its current location due to frequent flooding. Expansion projects in the early 1800s included a new, larger church, tannery and granaries, water-powered mills, and dormitories. The mission was used by the Spanish missionaries until the mid-1830s, when it was secularized by the Mexican government.



Joseph Chapman, the “Yankee Pirate”

One of the major excavation sites at San Gabriel is Chapman’s Mill, which was designed in 1820 by an engineer from Boston named Joseph Chapman.



Taken prisoner by the Spanish while working on a pirate ship, Chapman’s engineering skills were recognized by his captors. They commissioned him to build many different structures including a fulling mill at Mission Santa Inés, a 60-ton schooner, and the Los Angeles Plaza Church.

Why Dig Here?

Archaeologists started work in December 2011 to excavate and catalog numerous artifacts located in the railroad right-of-way near the San Gabriel Mission. The work precedes the start of construction work by the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority on the San Gabriel Trench grade separation project. The area being excavated was once part of the San Gabriel Mission, and the archaeological findings may prove important to our understanding of California's Mission period.



Archaeologists learn about how people lived, what they ate, what they wore, how they worshiped, and their hobbies by examining the materials left behind, and their 'provenience', or the exact location where an object was found. Archaeologists use many methods to track provenience.

They dig in units and levels. Units record where objects are found, and levels record the depth. They dig by hand to avoid destroying delicate objects and screen the dirt to collect any small artifacts that are present.



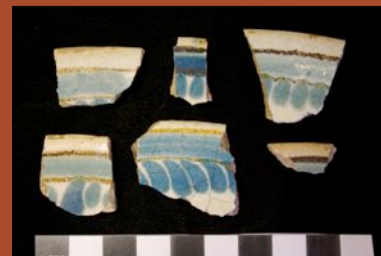
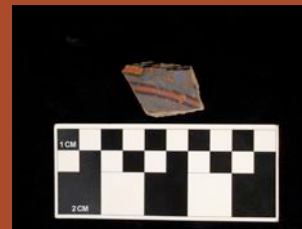
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Material Culture Discoveries



This copper alloy medallion has inscriptions and depictions on both sides. The obverse shows a profile of a person. The reverse shows Mother Mary with Christ the Child sitting on her lap.



Artifacts (clockwise, from top): Horse bridle and charms; Shell beads; Majolica with San Elizario Polychrome pattern; Mexican pottery fragment. Insert: archaeologists on-site at the Mission (top and center); Chapman's Mill excavation (bottom).



ALAMEDA CORRIDOR-EAST
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San Gabriel Mission
Archaeological Excavation