

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO 2009

CITY: Incorporated in 1961 as a general law city with a Council-Manager form of government, which may only exercise those powers expressly given by State law. The population was 33,826 at the 2000 census. The city was created around Mission San Juan Capistrano, and many of the homes and strip malls resemble the Spanish architecture that compose the building. It is home to the widest variety of homes in Orange County, with 10 million dollar homes in the gated communities of the hills, homes built prior to 1900 in its central district — some being adobes from the 18th century — and working ranches in its foothills. San Juan Capistrano is probably best known for the annual migration of the cliff swallows that reputedly migrate each year from Argentina to the Mission.

MISSION SJC: was first founded by Fa. Lasuen of the Franciscan Order in 1775. There was an Indian attack at the San Diego Mission, so Fa. Lasuen & party buried the bells and fled. The second founding was by Fa Junipero Serra on All Saints Day November 1, 1776 (now the official date). It is the 7th mission in a chain of 21. It has 10 acres of grounds. The church was built between 1797-1806. Dignitaries from all over CA came for the dedication in 1806. The serra Chapel, built in 1782, is the oldest bldg. still in use in CA today. it is the only extant structure where it has been documented that the padre Junipero Serra celebrated mass. It is the only extant structure where it has been documented that the padre Junipero Serra celebrated mass. The alter is 300 yrs. old, made of cherry wood with gold leaf overlay & came from Barcelona.

EARTHQUAKE: Dec. 12, 1812 destroyed much of the church. After 9 yrs. of building it, the people were too down hearted to rebuild. The church was built in the shape of a cross 180 ft. long and 90 ft. wide. The sanctuary rose five stories high, and the vaulted concrete roof was capped by seven domes; a bell tower 120 feet tall graced the main entrance.

In 1821 Mexico won independence from Spain & wealthy Californians wanted the land. The mission was sold at public auction in 1845 for \$710,000. to Mr. Forster & Mr. McKinley and the mission fell into ruin.

1865 Abe Lincoln signed a bill that returned the mission to the Catholic Church, but not the vast lands it once held.

TODAY: UCI & Chapman College are conducting archeological research & have classes on site. About half-a-million visitors, including 80,000 school children, come to the Mission each year.

BELLS: Larger ones date to 1796, smaller ones to 1804. Not certain if they are original, recast, or new. They ring for births, deaths, weddings, St. Joseph's Day, etc. If a male dies, both large bells are rung at the same time-3 times. If a female, each bell is rung twice. A Juanco Indian, Paul Arbisio, rang the bells for 30 yrs. He started in 1910 for \$1 a day. He held the job on and off for 60 yrs & died at the age of 99. He also took care of the rose gardens and retired from gardening at age 93.

SWALLOWS: The Mission is perhaps best known for the annual "Return of the Swallows" which is traditionally observed every March 19 (*Saint Joseph's Day*). And stay until Oct. 23, St John's Day. The swallows winter in Goya, Argentina & Brazil, 2000 miles away. The swallows return was first recorded by missionaries in the late 1700's. It appeared in a book by Charles Saunders, in 1930, *Capistrano Nights*. The song was written by Leon Rene in 1939.

Since then, Mission San Juan Capistrano has served as a favorite subject for many notable artists, and has been immortalized in literature and on film numerous times, perhaps more than any other mission.

LIBRARY: Architect/Designer was Mr. Michael Graves, of Princeton Univ. It is Post Modernist with Guatemalan Towers. The theme is an X and squares. It was completed in 1983 at a cost of 1 M \$600. It features a generous children's library, a reading room with fireplace, courtyard with fountain & a community meeting room.

CHURCH: In 1984, a modern church complex was constructed just north and west of the Mission compound; the design is patterned after the old stone church, and is twenty percent larger.

SOLANO CAPISTRANO MALL & BISHOP'S COURT:

HORSES: SJC is an equestrian town and when there is a parade, no motorized vehicles are permitted.

LITTLE HOLLYWOOD: These houses go back as far as 1870's. The majority are owner built, many using scavenged materials and having had numerous changes & additions through the years. Home to some of SJC's longest term residents – some spending 70 yrs or more in the same home. In 1994 a city program began to stabilize & retrofit these homes. This area served as a location for The Mark of Zorro and other 1920s silent films.

CATALOGUE HOUSE: Gray house with a treehouse in front yard. A Craftsman Sears catalogue house owned by John Taylor.

TEA HOUSE: Was about to fall down when Claudia & Allan Niccola came to the rescue. Today it is used to take tea and celebrate occasions. In the garden is a shower from Paris, C. 1890, now used as a fountain and overtaken by morning glories.

MONTANEZ ADOBE: Built in 1794 is one of 40 original Mission adobes. Named for Polina Montanez who had charge of religious instruction of the village children. The City restored the adobe in 1980 and it continues today.

RAMOS HOUSE CAFÉ: 1881 cottage with mulberry tree. The bandit, Juan Flores hid in the wine cellar. He never went to trial. A lynch mob stormed his jail cell and hanged him on Feb. 14, 1857.

LOS RIOS ADOBE: When Felician Rios, a Spanish soldier, retired, he was given the adobe built by Am Indians. This is one of 40 built between 1794-1807. As the family grew, they kept adding rooms. It reached 14. In the 1930's the family operated a restaurant in the home that was visited by Henry Fonda & Bette Davis. It is still home to the Rios family (11th generation) and is the oldest residence in CA continuously occupied by a single family.

OLIVE TREE: In front of Rios house was brought from Holy Land as a seedling more than 100 yrs. ago by a priest of the mission & given to Mrs. Rios.

SILVAS ADOBE: 31861 Los Rios St. Built in the 1790's is a typical example of one-room adobes. Where Indians working within the mission could reside outside mission grounds.

PRYOR HOUSE: A restored Victorian house built for a saloonkeeper in the 1880's. It now houses the O'Neill Museum, home of the SJC Historical Society.

JONES FAMILY MINI FARM: Millie & Gil Jones bought it in 1980. they now have a petting zoo, pony rides, small train, and lots of animals.

EL ADOBE: Originally 2 homes – Miguel Yorba Adobe, built in 1797 and the Juzgado (court and jails), established in 1812. The ground beneath the foyer served as a passageway for Seeley & Wright stagecoaches, until the advent to the Santa Fe Railroad in 1888. The properties were united in 1910, then sold to Clarence Brown who built the El Adobe restaurant which opened on July 8, 1948. Pres. Nixon enjoyed eating here.

THE JUDGE RICHARD EGAN HOME: He came to SJC at age of 26 in 1868 and became a local farmer. He was elected Justice of the Peace & served from 1870-1890. Bricks for his home were bought from his friend, Juan Forster. With the “leftovers” he built his home called “Harmony Hall”. While he was judge, there were no jury trials in SJC. He said the people couldn’t speak English. He never took fees. Those that were assessed went to help the poor. In his lifetime he served as a surveyor, County Supervisor, Chairman of OC Bd. Of Commissioners and was on the school bd. Of trustees. He was also the director of the Santa Fe Railroad Co. and a Hwy, commissioner. He died in 1923. It now houses a museum.

EXTRA NOTES:

Large house on his is/was owned by Robt. Wish, the developer of Mini Storage.

San Juan Institute: run by Doug Mack from JPL. They conduct scientific experiments & research.

Ceramic Mural by Mozart’s Restaurant is by Bruce Wynton, a local artist.