

San Juan Bautista

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(831) 623-4881**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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San Juan Bautista State Historic Park

Second Street

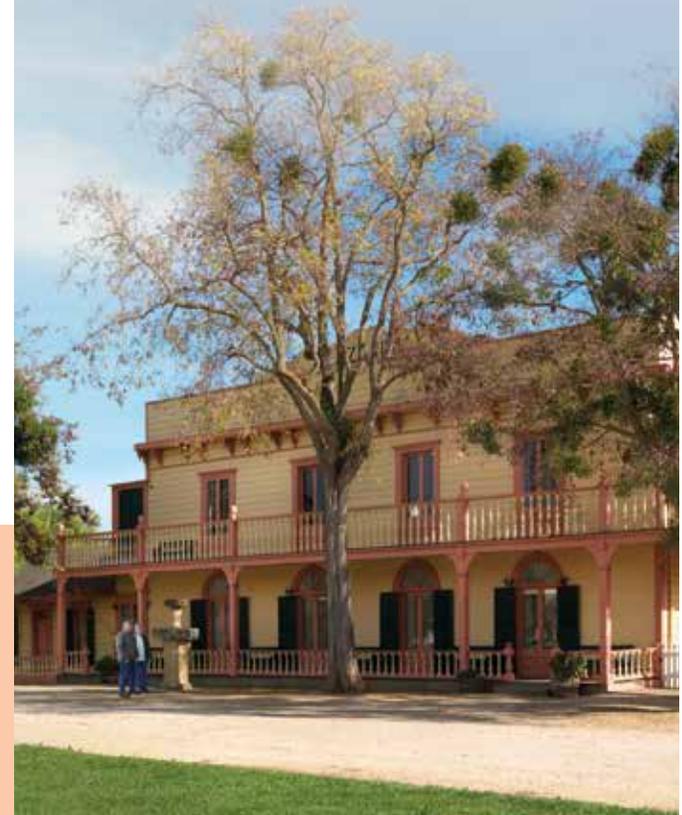
at Washington & Mariposa

San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

(831) 623-4881

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*San Juan Bautista
echoed with the ring
of the blacksmith's
anvil and the whinnies
of stagecoach horses
carrying passengers from
all over the world.*



Imagine a place where you can step back into history and walk the paths of Native Californians, Spanish padres, Mexican government officials, European immigrants, miners and Victorian ladies all in one place.

Mission San Juan Bautista, California's fifteenth mission, was built in the southern portion of the San Juan Valley, at the foot of low hills along the San Andreas earthquake fault line. Although the mission played a central role in San Juan Bautista's development, it is not part of the state park.

San Juan Bautista State Historic Park encompasses historic buildings, gardens and picnic areas that offer visitors the opportunity to experience life as it was in early California between 1859 and 1890.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

For thousands of years, this area was originally populated by the Mutsun people, who lived in the basin surrounding the Pajaro River. The region they called *Popeloutchom* is now called the San Juan Valley.

Each Mutsun village had dome-shaped tule homes (*ruk*), granaries, a sweat house and outlying camps. A Mutsun village called *Trahtrahk* (place of many springs) stood on the site of present-day San Juan Bautista.



Travelers at the Plaza Hotel, ca. 1875

Mission San Juan Bautista. Named after Saint John the Baptist, the mission was one of 21 built to convert local Native Americans to the Spanish way of life, subject them to Spanish civil law, and teach them to run a *pueblo* or self-sufficient community.

Father Lasuén's padres used Mutsun labor and recruited Yokuts and Miwok people from as far away as the Sierra foothills. The Franciscan fathers called the native people "neophytes" after their conversion to Catholicism. As the mission's labor force, the native people made adobe bricks, constructed buildings, raised crops and cared for livestock. The mission's olives, wheat, wool, hides and tallow supplied the growing colony.

Thousands of the mission's neophytes were eventually buried in the church cemetery. Following Mexico's independence

Colonization

On June 24, 1797, Father Fermin Lasuén, Franciscan successor to Father Junípero Serra, founded

from Spain in 1821, the missions were secularized—converted from church property to private property. Mexico's civil administrator for the region, José Tibúrcio Castro, oversaw the seizure and sale of mission property. Many of the neophytes who survived the mission experience formed communities with other Mission Indians. Today, their descendants continue to honor and practice aspects of their traditional culture.

PARK BUILDINGS

Castro/Breen Adobe—José Tibúrcio Castro commissioned this adobe home in 1838 for his son, Mexican General José Antonio Castro. General Castro was appointed commander of the Monterey District of Alta California in 1834 and acted as governor until 1836. In 1846 western pathfinder John C. Frémont and frontier legend Kit Carson planted the first U.S. flag over California on Gavilan Peak (now Fremont Peak), above the San Juan Valley. General Castro demanded that Frémont's group leave Mexico's territory; they left after three tense days.

The adobe was completed in 1841, but General Castro's duties elsewhere kept him away from his new home.

In 1848, Patrick and Margaret Breen arrived penniless in San Juan with their seven children. The



General José Antonio Castro



Castro/Breen Adobe courtyard



Zanetta House parlor



Plaza stable



Preparing bread for the horno

family had survived 111 days in the Sierra Nevada snow as members of the 1846 Donner party. General Castro allowed the Breens to live in the adobe until they could pay to buy it.

Soon after sixteen-year-old son John Breen set off for the gold fields in 1848, he returned with more than \$10,000 in gold dust. The Breens used John's profits to purchase the Castro adobe with 400 acres of prime farmland. The Breens owned the adobe until 1933, when it became part of the State Park System.

Plaza Hotel—The hotel, now a museum and park entrance point, was a one-story adobe built in 1814 in the Spanish colonial style. The building first served as barracks for the Spanish soldiers who protected the mission.

In 1856 Italian immigrant Angelo Zanetta leased the building and added a redwood

second story; the building then became the Plaza Hotel. The hotel opened in January 1859, attracting patrons for both its fine French and Italian cuisine and its saloon. Travelers from around the world stayed at the hotel.

Plaza Hall/Zanetta House—Angelo Zanetta remodeled the hall on the site of an earlier mission building; he later moved in with his family. Many elegant events were held in the grand ballroom upstairs. Period furnishings are on display, and one child's room in the exhibit features 1800s-era toys.

Plaza/Courtyard—Spanish pueblos were usually built around a central courtyard or plaza that was used for bullfights, bearfights, cockfights, parades and social gatherings. Early residents baked bread in igloo-shaped outdoor ovens called *hornos*, and they dried cowhides in the plaza. The

courtyard behind the Castro/Breen Adobe has a gristmill, an *horno* and a tallow display.

Plaza Stable, Blacksmith Shop—Horses pulled the busy stagecoach and wagon traffic through San Juan Bautista when it was a transportation hub on El Camino Real between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Up to eleven stages arrived and departed daily. Eventually, trains replaced stagecoaches; when the railroad line bypassed the town for Hollister in 1876, San Juan Bautista declined. Exhibits in the stable and blacksmith shop area include stages, wagons, carriages and fire wagons.

Several buildings at San Juan Bautista SHP today stand on the sites of or incorporate earlier mission structures, probably built by native people. The stone foundations of two narrow adobe row houses that once housed neophyte families lie hidden

underground in the Taix lot south of the park headquarters. The original buildings are no longer visible, but the stories of their inhabitants are preserved in the archaeological deposits that remain.

NATURAL HISTORY

Due to the town's location along the San Andreas fault, San Juan Bautista's buildings have sustained severe earthquake damage. Up to six temblors per day shook the town for 19 straight days in 1800. The 1906 San Andreas quake also left cracks in many of the town's buildings.

The San Andreas fault is located at the end of the plaza east of the hotel. At the top of the hill near a statue, visitors can stand on the edge of the Pacific tectonic plate. The fault scarp formation, where the earth shifted between the Pacific and the North American tectonic plates, can be seen at the base of the hill.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Living History Days—On the first Saturday of each month, costumed docents reenact daily life in California history, such as the stagecoach era and the hotel's heyday.

Each Father's Day weekend, the Early Days event features costumed early California residents and mountain men, blacksmithing demonstrations, sarsaparilla tasting and other activities.



ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The Castro/Breen Adobe, the first floor of the Plaza Hotel/ Museum Store, the gardens and the restrooms are accessible. A ramped entry allows access to the stables, the blacksmith shop, and the Plaza Hall/Zanetta House. Call the park staff in advance at (831) 623-4881 to arrange access. For updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- San Juan Bautista's climate can be either foggy or very hot in spring and summer; it is often rainy and cool in winter.
- All features of the park are protected by law and must not be disturbed.
- Pets are not allowed in park buildings, except for service animals on leash.
- The park is open for day-use only. Call the park at (831) 623-4881 or visit www.parks.ca.gov/sjbshp

NEARBY STATE PARKS

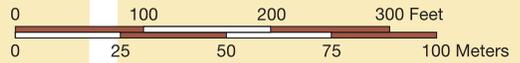
- Fremont Peak State Park (and Observatory www.fpoa.net), Off Highway 156, 11 miles south of San Juan Bautista on San Juan Canyon Road (831) 623-4255
- Henry W. Coe State Park, 9000 E. Dunne Ave., Morgan Hill 95037 (408) 779-2728
- Monterey State Historic Park, 20 Custom House Plaza near Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey 93940 (831) 649-7118

This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact Plaza History Association, P.O. Box 813, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045 <https://sites.google.com/site/phahistoryassociation>

Original El Camino Real

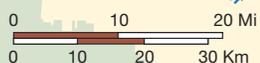
San Juan Bautista State Historic Park

MISSION CEMETERY



Legend

- Street
- State Park Property
- Urban Area
- Accessible Feature
- Non-Park Building
- Park Building
- Restrooms
- Visitor Center



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