



Sonoma State Historic Park

Draft Recommendations
Section for the new
Interpretation Master Plan

California State Parks

Draft 75% Completion Review Copy
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INTRODUCTION

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

This document presents a DRAFT section on interpretive recommendations from a two-part Interpretation Management Plan (IMP) currently being written for Sonoma State Historic Park. The recommendations and an associated Challenges and Proposed Solutions section are provided at mid-point in a one-year planning process to provide opportunity for public comment.

To date, months of input from California State Parks staff, management, resource specialists, cooperating associations, state park volunteers, teachers, visitors and other stakeholders has been gathered to inform these draft recommendations. The methodology used included in-park visitor surveys, one-on-one interviews, stakeholder planning charrettes, a public meeting, and a teacher focus group. It is anticipated these recommendations will evolve in the coming months through stakeholder and public review. The final draft of the Interpretive Management Plan, which will include an Interpretive Action Plan for implementing recommendations, is expected to be completed in December.

California State Parks has contracted with Frank Binney & Associates, a professional interpretive planning firm, to produce the Interpretive Management Plan. The firm has helped plan visitor experiences at Yosemite National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and numerous other state and federal parks across the country.

For more information on the IMP process visit:

www.parks.ca.gov/SonomaPlan



Sonoma State Historic Park's historic buildings represent a dynamic period in California's history, when the community of Sonoma served as a focal point for state and international events. Each of these buildings and sites has preserved an important part of the California story that needs to be told.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous Interpretive Direction section of this plan identified 11 broad Goals for interpretation at Sonoma State Historic Park, along with general Guidelines for implementing the goals. In this section, specific Objectives and Strategies for accomplishing the interpretive Goals are presented.

Together these four elements—Goals, Guidelines, Objectives and Strategies—provide a road map for guiding efforts to improve interpretation at Sonoma State Historic Park over the next decade and beyond.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

Goal 1: Foster Spirit of Place

Interpretation will provide for the public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the qualities that define the unique spirit of place found at Sonoma State Historic Park.

Spirit of Place Objective 1A: Integrate the park’s interpretive themes and stories into its interpretive facilities in a way that enhances the park’s unique spirit of place.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Develop an **Interpretive Exhibit Plan** for replacing, refreshing or updating all exhibits in the park.
 - a. Create a unifying feel across all exhibits in the park through the consistent use of common “spirit of place” exhibit elements such as custom color palette, fonts, motifs, designs, frames, bases, materials, and techniques.
 - b. Incorporate a custom Sonoma State Historic Park symbolic device or logo throughout the park’s various exhibit areas.
2. Develop an **Interpretive Signage Plan** for developing and installing

custom interpretive panels throughout the park.

- a. Create a unifying feel across all interpretive signage in the park through the consistent use of common “spirit of place” signage elements such as custom color palette, fonts, motifs, designs, frames, bases, materials, techniques.
 - b. Incorporate a custom Sonoma State Historic Park symbolic device or logo across all interpretive signage in the park.
3. Develop a **Park-wide Directional and Informational Signage Plan** for new, refreshed or updated directional and informational signage in the park.
- a. To the extent allowed by Departmental guidelines for various types of signage, create a unifying feel across all non-interpretive signage in the park through the consistent use of common “spirit of place” signage elements such as custom color palette, fonts, motifs, designs, frames, bases, materials, techniques.
 - b. Incorporate both the State Parks logo and a custom Sonoma State Historic Park symbolic device or logo on non-interpretive signage in the park whenever possible.
4. Use thematic architectural elements to separate park sites from adjacent non-park areas and to create an entry experience for visitors.
- a. Define park areas from non-park areas wherever possible with symbolic walls, walkway surfaces, landscaping and/or other elements that can be applied consistently across the park.
 - b. Consider the use of low “mission architecture-inspired” walls to define the Casa Grande-site boundaries of the park adjacent the Cheese Factory and to link this area thematically to the Servants Quarters.
5. Provide thematic and period-appropriate visitor amenities, such as benches and tables, to reinforce the spirit of place for visitors.

- a. Benches in front of the Toscano Hotel, for example, should evoke the 1890–1910 interpretive period while benches in front of the Servants Quarters or in the Barracks courtyard should reflect their mid-1800s interpretive period.
6. Align merchandising at cooperating association Sales Areas in the park to reflect the interpretive themes of the park and support spirit of place perception.
 - a. Non-conforming merchandise (e.g.: off-theme trinkets, 3-D postcards of dogs and cats, etc.) should not be offered.
 - b. Designs and materials of merchandising displays and sales related-signage should reflect the cultural landscape and interpretive themes of the park

Spirit of Place Objective 1B: Provide interpretive programs and media that express the park’s unique spirit of place.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Offer immersive visitor experiences in authentic architectural settings.
 - a. Incorporate audio (period music, period voices) to transport visitors into the past.
 - b. Incorporate visual techniques (projections, life-size cut-outs or mannequins, life-size video images, etc.) to bring past people and events to life.
2. Expand the use of Living History programs and thematic special events like reenactments and history days.
 - a. Staff and docents in period costumes, playing period roles.

- b. Visitors invited to participate in period activities and interact with replicas of period objects and materials.
- 3. Expand the use of interpretive objects in programming to interpret past people, cultures and events.
 - a. Use replicas and consult with tribal representative for Native American interpretive objects.
 - b. Use replicas, where appropriate, to allow touching and other interaction by visitors.
 - c. Use positioning and “invisible barrier” techniques to display actual artifacts without reliance on visually obtrusive protective barriers.
 - d. Follow the park’s Scope of Collections guidelines and Departmental policies related to use of museum collections.

Goal 2: Engage and Connect

Interpretation will illuminate the significant cultural resources of Sonoma State Historic Park in ways that engage visitors and encourage them to make meaningful and personal connections with the park’s valuable cultural landscape.

Engage and Connect Objective 2A: Expand opportunities for visitors to connect with the park’s resources and stories.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

- 1. Expand interpretive programming related to the Native American stories, past and present, of the various park units and historic structures.
 - a. Consult with tribal representatives when developing interpretive programming related to their cultures and histories.
 - b. Use replicas and reproductions to provide tangible objects for interpretation of Native American-related themes at the park.
 - c. Reconstruct example(s) of the Native American dwellings that once ringed the Mission as housing for neophytes.

- d. Interpret the currently under-interpreted Native American stories and themes related to the Sonoma Barracks, Servants Quarters and Vallejo Home.
2. Develop a variety of self-guided interpretive opportunities.
 - a. Brochure with maps for a self-guided “discovery tour” of park historic sites and nearby non-park historic sites of the Sonoma Plaza.
 - b. Self-guided tour with audio and video components developed via “New Media” technology, e.g.: QR codes readable by visitors with smartphones, Antennae Audio-style rentable devices, etc.
 - c. Expanded use of interpretive panels throughout the park to connect visitors to the stories and themes of the various sites, e.g. Servants Quarters, Toscano Kitchen, Vallejo Fields, etc.
 3. Add or expand presented interpretation (guided walks, talks, special activities or demonstrations) by park staff or volunteers at currently under-interpreted sites, e.g. Blue Wing Inn, Servants Quarters, Casa Grande site, Toscano Barns, Vallejo Fields, etc.
 4. Develop project plans for new interpretive signage and exhibits throughout the park. (See earlier strategies for Objective 1A)

Goal 3: Inspire Stewardship

Interpretation will inspire visitors to practice stewardship of the resources of Sonoma State Historic Park.

Inspire Stewardship Objective 3A: Incorporate park stewardship and resource protection messages in all interpretive services.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Include stewardship and resource protection messages in programs, exhibits, web content, and park publications.
2. Include stewardship and resource protection messages in training for staff and volunteers involved with presenting interpretive services.

Goal 4: Provide Universal Access

Interpretation services will be accessible to all visitors.

Universal Access Objective 4A: Evaluate all existing interpretive services and facilities to identify and correct accessibility deficiencies.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Use most current California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines to evaluate interpretive services, including facilities, programs, and media.
2. Prepare summary of findings and develop plan to correct accessibility deficiencies.
3. Use existing or develop new procedures to review and approve proposed interpretive services to ensure universal access.
4. Develop a list of sign-language interpreters who will be able to assist deaf visitors at activities when requested in advance of their visit to the park.
5. Explore opportunity for providing portable assistive listening devices.
6. Create an audio tour of the park that provides flexibility for learning levels, multilingual capabilities, descriptive text for the visually impaired, and volume control.
7. Develop large-format materials for interpretive panels and publications.
8. Provide an accessible entrance to the Chalet visitor center at the Vallejo Home, possibly by reconstructing the historic carriage shed on the uphill side of the building.
9. Explore the possibility of installing an elevator in the Barracks to allow accessible interpretive use of the 2nd floor.
10. Follow current California State Parks Accessibility Guidelines to provide Equivalent Facilitation at sites where historical significance or integrity do not permit universal access. For example, provide videos or virtual tours of inaccessible areas of historic buildings.

Goal 5: Support Interpretation With Park Facilities

Park facilities, both existing and future, will support the delivery of interpretive services.

Park Facilities Objective 5A: Make interpretation the highest priority for use of space in all historic structures in the park..

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Reduce the amount of space used for association sales in historic structures by reducing clutter, eliminating non-conforming merchandise and reorganizing merchandise display areas.
2. Reduce the amount of space used for staff work areas in interpretive areas (e.g. : Mission, Barracks, Chalet at Vallejo Home) by reducing clutter and reconfiguring/reorganizing work space.
3. Evaluate all existing interpretive spaces and remove/replace items that detract from effective interpretation, e.g. : off-theme and/off-interpretive time period items; obsolete signage, exhibits or interpretive aids; etc.
4. Develop site-specific interpretive plans for any historic structure operated by an interpretive concessionaire or an adaptive reuse lessee to ensure optimal delivery of interpretive services to the public.
5. Explore feasibility of moving Barracks sales area to the front, first floor offices of the Toscano Annex building now used for non-park offices.

Park Facilities Objective 5B: Ensure that the park's interpretive facilities are maintained according to Department standards.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Inspect all interpretive facilities annually and report results to park's Maintenance Chief, District Interpretive Coordinator and District Maintenance Chief.

2. Utilize appropriate inspection tools, e.g., Museum Collection Facility Index (MCFI), District Interpretive Facility Inspection Form, etc.
3. Proactively engage with Management Team to identify specific funding needed to maintain interpretive facilities throughout the park.
4. Ensure that all interpretive facilities, existing and future, are entered in the Park Infrastructure Database (PID) and Computerized Asset Management Program (CAMP).

Goal 6: Provide Meaningful, Memorable Programming

Interpretive programming will be visible, readily available, entertaining and educational.

Programming Objective 6A: Offer a variety of entertaining, innovative interpretive services to capture the attention of and involve visitors.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Increase the visibility of interpretive services by presenting programming in the Plaza-facing open space of the Casa Grande site and along the Plaza-facing exteriors of the Toscano, Barracks and Mission.
2. Use volunteers or staff in period dress to greet passersby in visible locations outside historic buildings (e.g.: in front of the Toscano Hotel or the Barracks) to attract visitors into the park and provide initial contact information.
3. Partner with local interpretive providers, history associations, educators and cultural organizations to offer special lectures and evening programs related to park themes, stories and history.
4. Develop new special interpretive events around various park resources.
 - a. Consider thematic food-related events for venues such as the Toscano Kitchen, Barracks Courtyard, Vallejo Home picnic grounds, Mission Courtyard.
 - b. Consider natural history-related or agriculture-related special events

on the grounds and fields of the Vallejo Home.

- c. Involve cultural groups and stakeholders related to the people and events in park history to develop cultural heritage special events.
5. Increase the use of storytelling as an interpretive method.
 - a. Research folktales from the park's interpretive periods and incorporate storytelling into the park's interpretive programs.
 - b. Cultivate relationships with local storytellers and utilize them in interpretive programs and training.
 - c. Develop interpretive training that incorporates storytelling methods and content in interpretive programs.
6. Increase the number, variety, and authenticity of craft demonstrations offered by the park.
 - a. Cultivate relationships with local craft demonstrators (e.g.: Native American, Mission-period, Mexican-period, American pioneer/Gold Rush-period, Italian immigrant-period crafts period, etc. and incorporate them into the volunteer base or schedule as guest presenters.
3. Develop and distribute monthly and semi-yearly programming schedules for the park, listing all interpretive activities, special events, etc.
7. Distribute to park visitors and other interested stakeholders.
8. Post on the park and/ or cooperating association website
9. Promote interpretive programming using engaging tools such as the Department's interpretive activity templates.
10. Develop thematic, eye-catching tools such as flags and banners to be used during programs, activities, and special events.

Goal 7: Address Diverse Audiences

Interpretation will reach diverse audiences, including those that have been traditionally underserved..

Programming Objective 7A: Develop new interpretive services to reach underserved audiences.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Develop programs to reach teen-to-under-30 visitors.
 - a. Explore the feasibility of a volunteer program for teenaged docents recruited from local schools (e.g.: Hanna Boys Center).
 - b. Include representatives of the teen-to-under-30 audience in program planning activities.
2. Develop programs to reach Latinos.
 - a. Include bi-lingual materials.
 - b. Actively recruit bi-lingual volunteers and docents from the Latino community.
 - c. Include representatives of the Latino audience in program planning activities.
3. Develop programs for seniors.
 - a. Consult or partner with area providers of senior services during program planning activities.
4. Increase outreach to the Sonoma community
 - a. Offer special "free admission" days for the local community
 - b. Utilize local media to publicize interpretive activities
 - c. Produce interpretive news releases for the local media
 - d. Cultivate relationships with local media staff via personal tours, lunches at park sites and other outreach activities.

Goal 8: Increase Usage Of Underutilized Sites

Increase visitor interest and usage of underutilized sites within the park by increasing the interpretive services provided at those sites..

Underutilized Sites Objective 8A: Increase the level of visitor interest in underutilized areas of the park

Strategies for meeting this objective

1. Move the primary visitor contact station/association sales area from the Barracks to the front, first-floor rooms of the Toscano Annex building at 20 E. Spain Street.
 - a. Replace low steps into the Annex building with a ramp for universal access.
 - b. Install a Visitor Center sign with State Park logo above the entrance to the building.
2. Evoke a “spirit of place” perception of Casa Grande site (area between the Cheese Factory and the Toscano Hotel) and a sense of it being part of the park via new landscaping, iconic interpretive features and the addition of unifying architectural elements, including:
 - a. A low, symbolic adobe wall and vegetation separating park property and the Cheese Factory
 - b. A low, symbolic adobe wall along the Spain Street sidewalk, framing a spacious entryway into park property. Wall would run a short distant along the sidewalk from both the Toscano Hotel side and the Cheese Factory side.
 - c. Paint the symbolic adobe walls and the Servants Quarters to match the color of the Barracks and Mission.
 - d. Install, in the area between the Spain Street sidewalk and the Visitor Center (Toscano Annex), a large, walk-around 3-dimensional model of the Plaza and Mission as they appeared circa 1836. Low profile interpretive signage around the model would interpret the Casa

Grande and other period buildings along with various themes related to the site and the early history of Sonoma.

- e. Draw visitors into the site by displaying near the Spain Street sidewalk one or more large, vandal resistant, interpretive reproductions of iconic objects from the Casa Grande interpretive period of 1836 – 1852. For example, an ox cart similar to one displayed in the Barracks courtyard.
 - f. Install interpretive displays/ house museum vignettes in the ground floor area of the Servants Quarters that can be viewed by visitors standing at the various doorways to the structure.
 - g. Install visitor amenities such as picnic tables and benches where landscaping, shade or other ambiance would make them inviting for use.
 - h. Add thematic outdoor interpretive signage for the Servants Quarters, Toscano Hotel/Kitchen/Annex. All new exterior signage in this area and at other park sites should share common, unifying design and style elements that increase perception of all sites being part of the same State Park.
3. Create a thematic, highly visible wayfinding system for the bike path between plaza-adjacent park sites and the Vallejo Home.
 - a. Wayfinding graphics and icons (e.g. painted footprints on the pavement, thematic arrows on posts, printed handouts, etc.) will encourage visitors to make the walk from the Mission to the Vallejo Home.
 4. Create temporary signage and exhibits for the Blue Wing Inn
 - a. Signage and exhibits could be installed inside the building to be viewed through the windows, and/or near the side of the structure.
 - b. Any signage or exhibits must not detract from the aesthetic values

and visual appeal of the historic adobe structure as viewed from the street.

Goal 9: Optimize Educational Value For School-aged Visitors

Align interpretive services directed at school-aged visitors with California Department of Education Content Standards.

Educational Objective 9A: Collaborate with educators and related stakeholders to develop Standards-based interpretive and educational programming for school-aged visitors to Sonoma State Historic Park

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Develop special interpretive programming for school groups and specific grade levels, e.g.: 4th graders.
2. Design an educational plan to meet California's K-12 educational content standards that fit well with the park's significant interpretive resources.
3. Establish working groups made up of park staff and educators to ensure success of program development efforts.
4. Provide teacher-training workshops to equip educators to successfully participate in park-provided educational programs.
5. Develop a new teacher' guide to the park that incorporates current content standards and reflects Department best practices for educational materials.
 - a. Make the teacher's guide available for download from the web.
6. Ensure that all interpretive services related to public schools are standards based.
 - a. Consult with Education Departments at UCSB, SBCC for assistance.
7. Train park staff and volunteers in techniques for interpreting to children
8. Consult with other State Historic Parks to share successful techniques and program ideas for school-aged interpretation.

9. Explore opportunities for other education levels (e.g. : high school and colleges classes) to use park resources for educational purposes.
10. Explore opportunities to link to interactive web-based programs conducted by other interpretive/educational service providers

Goal 10: Build Interpretive Capacity

The capacity of Sonoma State Historic Park to provide high-quality interpretive services will be continually strengthened.

Capacity Building Objective 10A: Establish a proactive recruitment program to ensure that seasonal and volunteer interpreters are well-matched to program and visitor needs.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Review and update duty statements of staff and volunteers engaged in interpretation program as needed to ensure accurate description of expectations.
2. Network with other agencies and organizations to share volunteer opportunities.
3. Develop and use effective recruiting materials that communicate interpretive opportunities.
4. Work with Office of Community Development to develop strategies for reaching into communities through job-fairs, posting opportunities on-line, etc.

Capacity Building Objective 10B: Provide regular training and evaluation for all staff and volunteers involved with delivering interpretive and educational programs

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Develop seminars and other training to provide subject-matter learning opportunities related to park's themes and stories.
 - a. Open some trainings to the public for recruiting purposes.
2. Conduct joint training with similar groups, e.g., Sonoma League for Historic Preservation, Sonoma Valley Historical Society, etc.
3. Continue developing park training materials to inform staff, docents, and concessionaires about the park's history, sites, significant stories, landscapes, historic crafts and trades, interpretive methods, park media, accessibility, and park values.
4. Ensure that all interpretive presenters receive feedback as required by the Department's RAPPOR standard for evaluating interpretive performance.

Capacity Building Objective 10C: Maintain an up-to-date, well-organized reference library accessible to staff, docents, and concessionaires.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

1. Inventory existing reference materials.
2. Determine needed references and prepare a prioritized list of acquisitions.
3. Assign responsibility for maintaining the library to one person who will be responsible for setting up and administering the library, including a check-out system.

Goal 11: Utilize Long Term Planning For Interpretation

The interpretive program at Sonoma State Historic Park will employ long term planning to guide interpretation at the park.

Long Term Planning Objective 11A: Implement a comprehensive planning strategy using appropriate planning tools.

Strategies for meeting this objective:

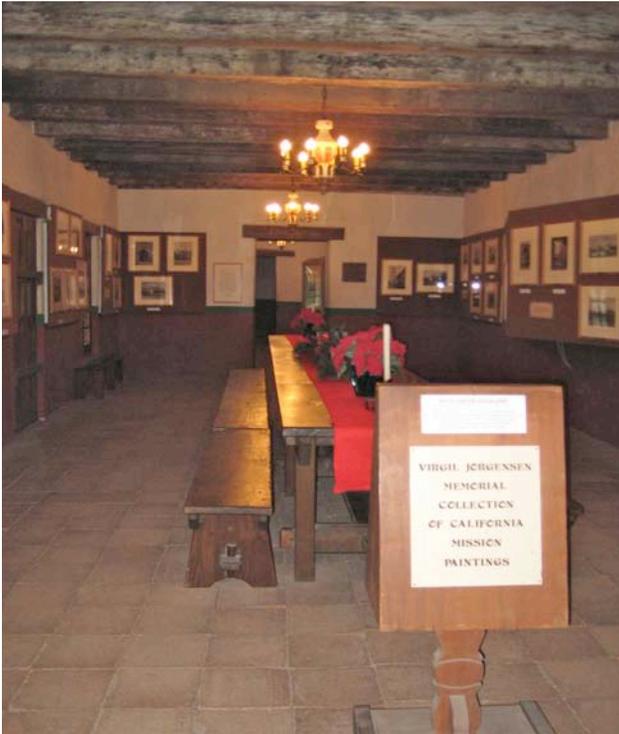
1. Implement the Interpretive Action Plan that will be added as the final section of this document.
2. Develop specific Interpretive Project Plans for individual interpretive needs identified in this IMP, including the following:
 - a. Park-wide Interpretive Signage Plan
 - b. Barracks Exhibit Plan
 - c. Mission Exhibit Plan
 - d. Casa Grande Site and Servants Quarters Exhibit Plan
 - e. Toscano Hotel Interpretive Furnishings and Exhibit Plan
3. Conduct a feasibility study on using the Toscano Annex as a visitor center/sales area in place of the current Barracks location.
4. Continue studies and planning to stabilize, restore and open to the public the Blue Wing Inn, whether as a State Parks-run interpretive facility, an interpretive concession or a commercial adaptive reuse with a public interpretive element.

CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

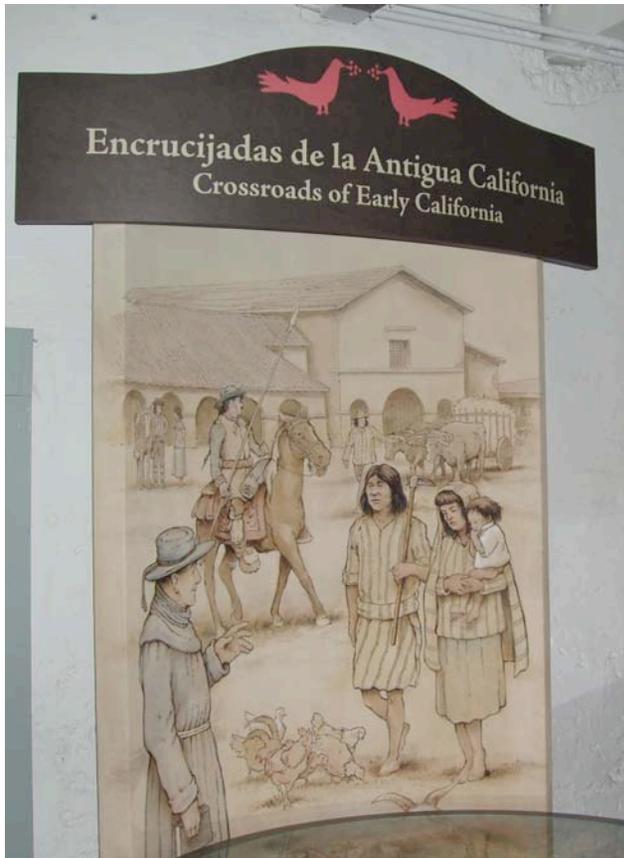
Mission “Dining Room” and the Jorgensen Collection

Challenges:

- Historically inaccurate and misleading to visitors: The Mission Convento (priest’s quarters) consisted of small rooms. The mission had no long dining room as presented here. Visitors and travel writers perceive this furnished space as a restoration of original use: a large dining room where many priests—the mission had but one—sat down for meals at a long table surrounded by walls lined with paintings.
- The Jorgensen Collections occupies the largest exhibit space in the mission yet does not interpret the Sonoma mission or any of the primary themes or the 1823-1846 historic time period specified for interpretation in the park’s General Plan.
- The Jorgensen Collection, while a nationally significant resource for historians, does not address the needs or expectations of the visitor group making up 70% of the Mission’s annual visitation: 4th grade students visiting either in classes or with their families to satisfy California Education Standards.
- The Jorgensen Collection captures a moment in time in the early 20th century, well outside the historic time period of 1823-1846 interpreted at the Sonoma mission.



The Jorgensen collection of watercolors of the 20th Century ruins of 17 California missions occupies the majority of exhibit space at the Sonoma Mission, yet does not interpret the Sonoma Mission or any of the primary interpretive themes specifies in the park’s guiding General Plan.



Replacing the Jorgensen Collections with exhibits and visuals that tell the story of life at the Sonoma mission will create a richer, more meaningful visitor experience as well as meet the needs of the school-age visitors who comprise an estimated 70% of Mission visitation.

Proposed Solutions:

- Keep the Jorgensen Collection at Sonoma State Historic Park, but move the collection out of the Mission. A temporary new home for the collection might be in the Barracks “theater room”. A permanent home in the park at some later date might be at the Blue Wing Inn (*see Blue Wing Inn recommendations that follow*) or in an upstairs room of the Barracks –if an internal elevator were ever able to be installed in the Barracks to make the upstairs accessible.
- Rename and refurnish the “Dining Room” to interpret the primary themes and historic time period for the Sonoma mission specified in the General Plan. (This renovation would be part of the blend of new exhibits, house museum vignettes and environmental living areas recommended for the Mission elsewhere in this Interpretive Master Plan).



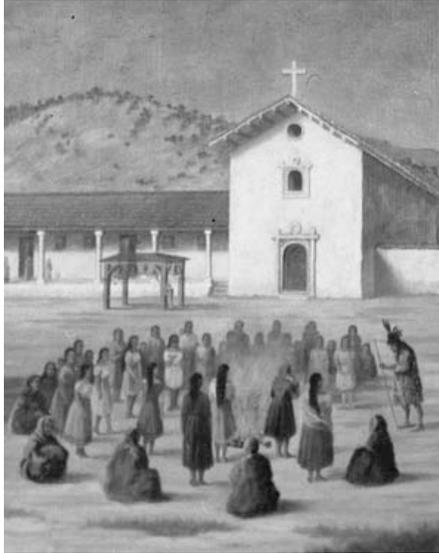
Touchable reproductions of historic artifacts help visitors experience personal connections with Early California history at San Juan Bautista State Historic Park

CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

NATIVE AMERICAN INTERPRETATION AT THE MISSION

Challenges:

- Although Native Americans neophytes played the major role in the story of the Sonoma mission, and themes related to this role are required for interpretation by the park's General Plan, very little of their story is currently interpreted at the Mission.
- Presented programs communicate Native American-related themes, but the subject is poorly communicated by existing interpretive signage and exhibits.
- Descendants of the Native Americans who lived and worked at the Mission still live in the area, and are very involved with matters relating to their heritage, yet their viewpoints on Mission era history are poorly presented in current interpretation at the Mission, if at all.



Courtesy of Sonoma Valley Historical Society

Native American built the Mission and comprised its population but their story is poorly told.



- Most of the architecture and tangible objects visible to visitors at the Mission evoke the Spanish and Mexican culture of the Mission-era, but not the Native American cultures involved.



Courtesy of Sonoma Valley Historical Society

Recreating one or more of the Native American dwellings that once surrounded the Mission would communicate a strong visual message about the interwoven cultures of Native American neophytes and Hispanic colonizers.

Proposed Solutions:

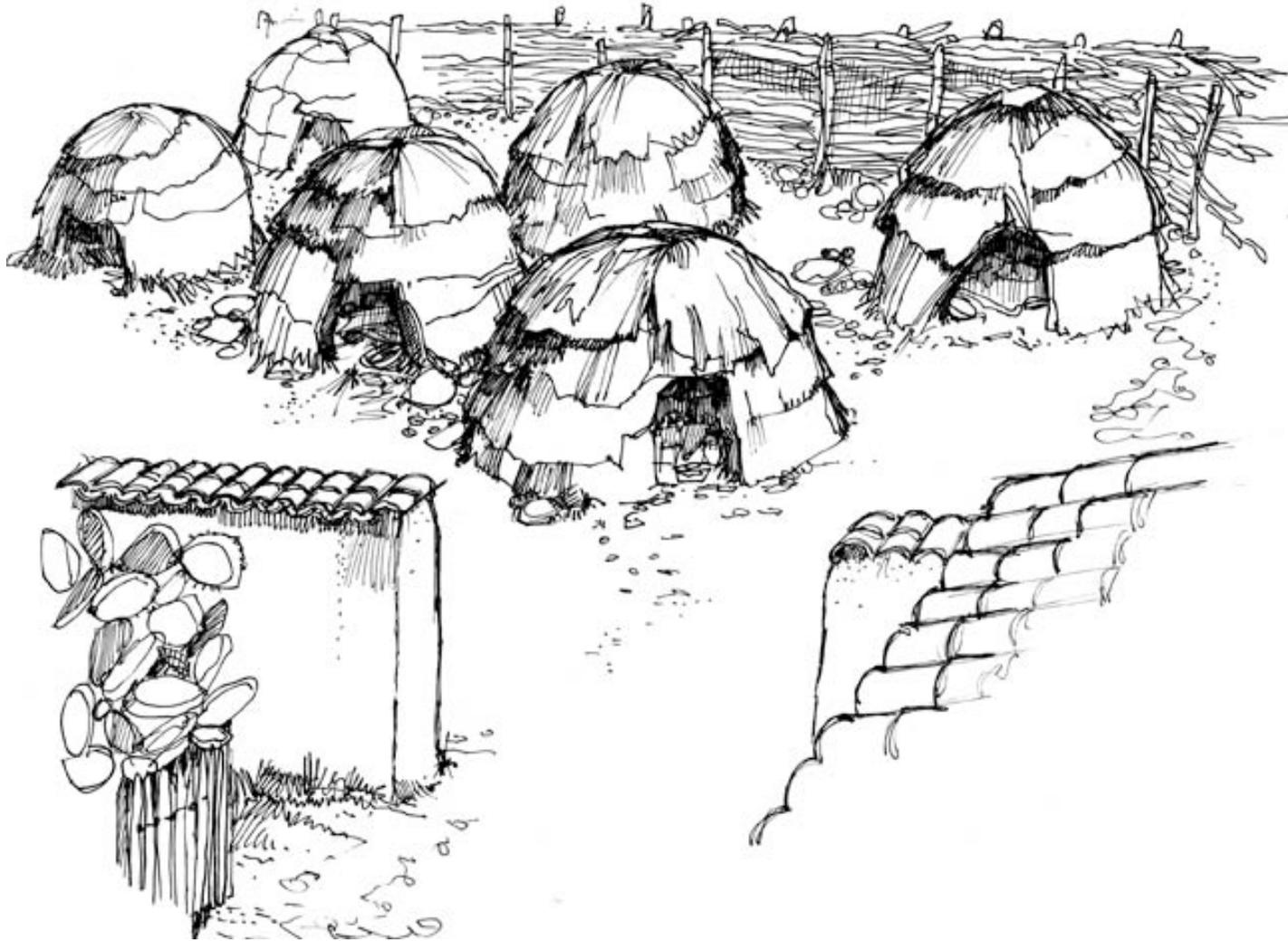
- Prepare a new Exhibit Plan for the Mission, in consultation with local tribal representatives, to ensure Native American culture and history of the Mission is properly interpreted.
- Include maximum hands-on experiences at the Mission with reproductions of objects and furnishings used by Native American neophytes of the period.
- Consider adding one or more of the tule-thatched domed dwellings that provided housing for Native American neophytes at the Mission, and which were organized in rows in various locations surrounding the Mission buildings.
- Note that traditional tule-thatched dwellings were not intended to be permanent structures, so recreating these structures outdoors at the Mission would either require special materials treatment or a regularly scheduled maintenance/replacement.
- See examples that follow of both indoor and outdoor recreations of tule-thatched Native American dwellings as they might be constructed at the Mission to allow visitor entry and interactivity..



Artist's concept of how a Native American dwelling might be recreated as part of new exhibitry in the current Mission "Dining Room".

Mural on wall behind the dwelling could illustrate how hundreds of these dwellings once surrounded the Mission buildings.

Artist's concept of how a rancheria of Native American dwelling might be recreated in the State-owned vacant lot behind the current courtyard wall of the Mission. Special preservation techniques would be needed to protect the traditional building materials from deterioration and heavy visitor use.



CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Casa Grande Site and Toscano Annex Area

Challenges:

- In spite of its high visibility, high foot traffic location on the Sonoma Plaza adjacent vibrant businesses, this is the least visited and least vibrant area in Sonoma State Historic Park.
- Plaza visitors and most visitors to SSHP do not perceive this area to be part of the park; there is no “entry experience” of entering a special historic area, no “spirit of place” within this area.
- The highly visible, modern Cheese Factory façade, and the commercial signage they have installed facing into the site, diminishes visitor perception of this area being a historic place that is part of Sonoma State Historic Park.
- Modern amenities (kiosk, modernistic benches, etc) installed by State Parks in this area do not support visitor perception of a historic site that is part of SSHP.
- There is no interpretation provided in this area, no communication of the primary themes in the General Plan related to the Casa Grande, the Servants Quarters and the Toscano Hotel/Kitchen/Annex.
- There is little reason for visitors to enter this area, beyond travelling to and from the back parking lot.

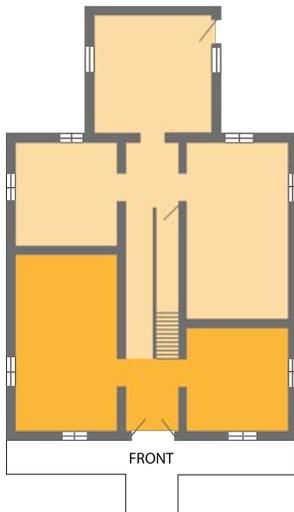


The area of the park with the highest visibility and highest foot traffic receives the lowest visitation and offers no interpretive services.



Moving the park visitor center and sales area from its current low-visibility location in the Barracks to the high-visibility, high-foot traffic Toscano Annex location will revitalize this area and draw more Plaza visitors into the park.

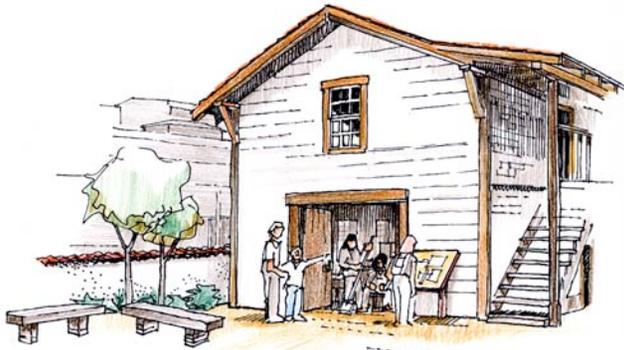
TOSCANO ANNEX - FIRST FLOOR
20 East Spain Street



Front two rooms of the Toscano Annex could house an information desk and sales area.

Proposed Solutions:

- Move the SSHP visitor center/gift shop from its low visibility location in the Barracks to the high visibility and retail optimal location of the Toscano Annex. Replace low steps into the Annex building with a ramp for universal access.
- Evoke a “spirit of place” perception of this area and a sense of it being part of SSHP via new landscaping, iconic interpretive features and the addition of unifying architectural elements, including:
 - A 4’ to 5’ high adobe wall and vegetation separating SSHP property and the Cheese Factory
 - A low 3’ to 4’ adobe wall along the Spain Street sidewalk, framing a spacious entryway into park property. Wall would run a short distance along the sidewalk from both the Toscano Hotel side and the Cheese Factory side to create a park “entry experience”. (See attached artist’s conception)
- Paint the adobe walls and the Servants Quarters to match the color of the Barracks and Mission.
- Install, in the area between the Spain Street sidewalk and the Visitor Center (Toscano Annex), a large, walk-around 3-dimensional model of the Plaza and Mission as they appeared circa 1836. Low profile interpretive signage around the model would interpret the Casa Grande and other period buildings along with various themes related to the site and the early history of Sonoma.
- Draw visitors into the site by displaying near the Spain Street sidewalk one or more large, vandal resistant, interpretive reproductions of iconic objects from the Casa Grande interpretive period of 1836 – 1852. For example, an ox cart similar to one displayed in the Barracks courtyard.
- Install interpretive displays/ house museum vignettes in the ground floor



Three-dimensional displays interpreting the stories of the Native American servants who lived in the adobe “Servants Quarters” during the time of Vallejo’s Casa Grande will attract visitors to this currently unused historic resource.

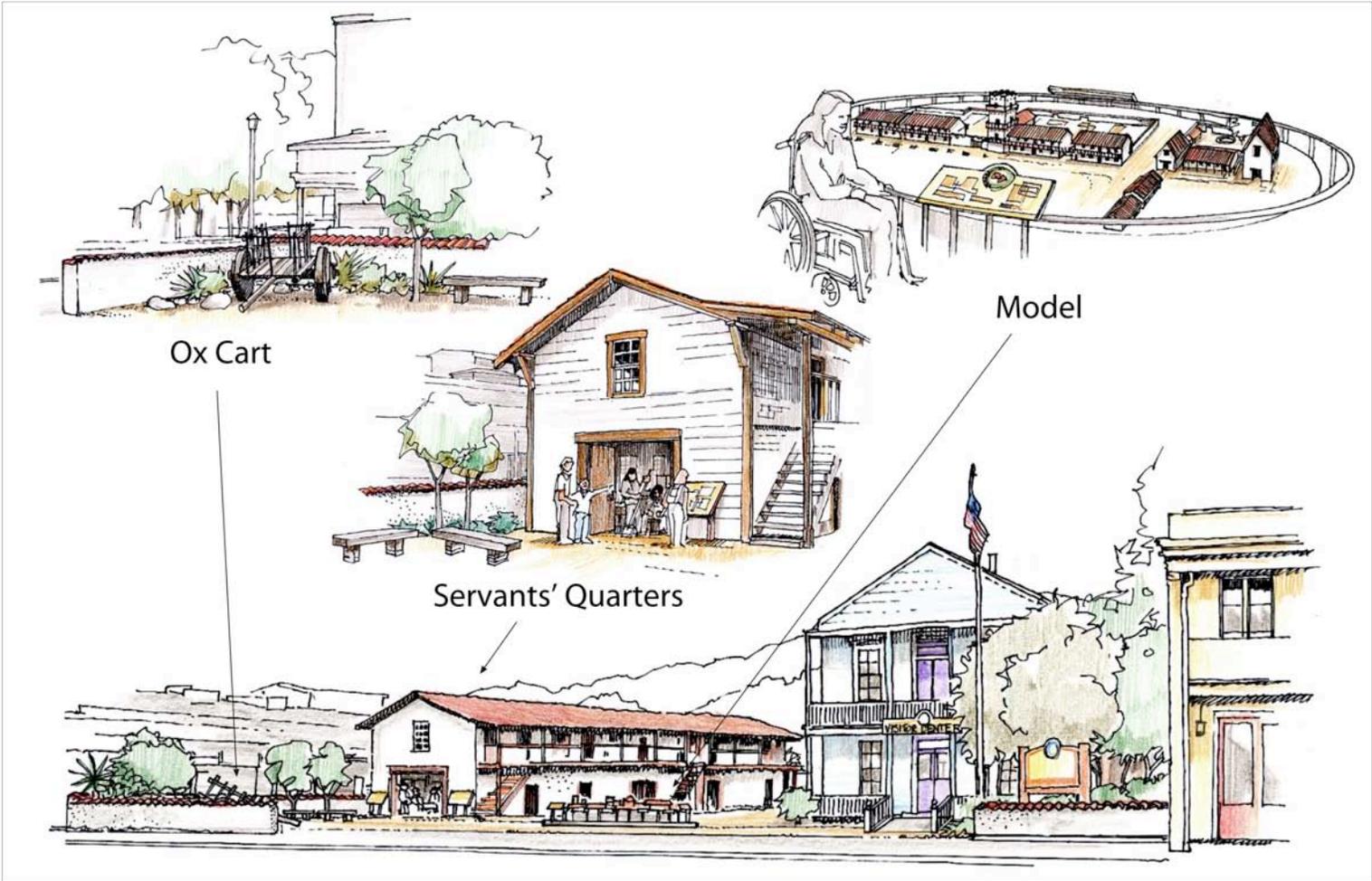


Cut-out figures at the Servants Quarter would help visitors connect emotionally with the people who lived there.

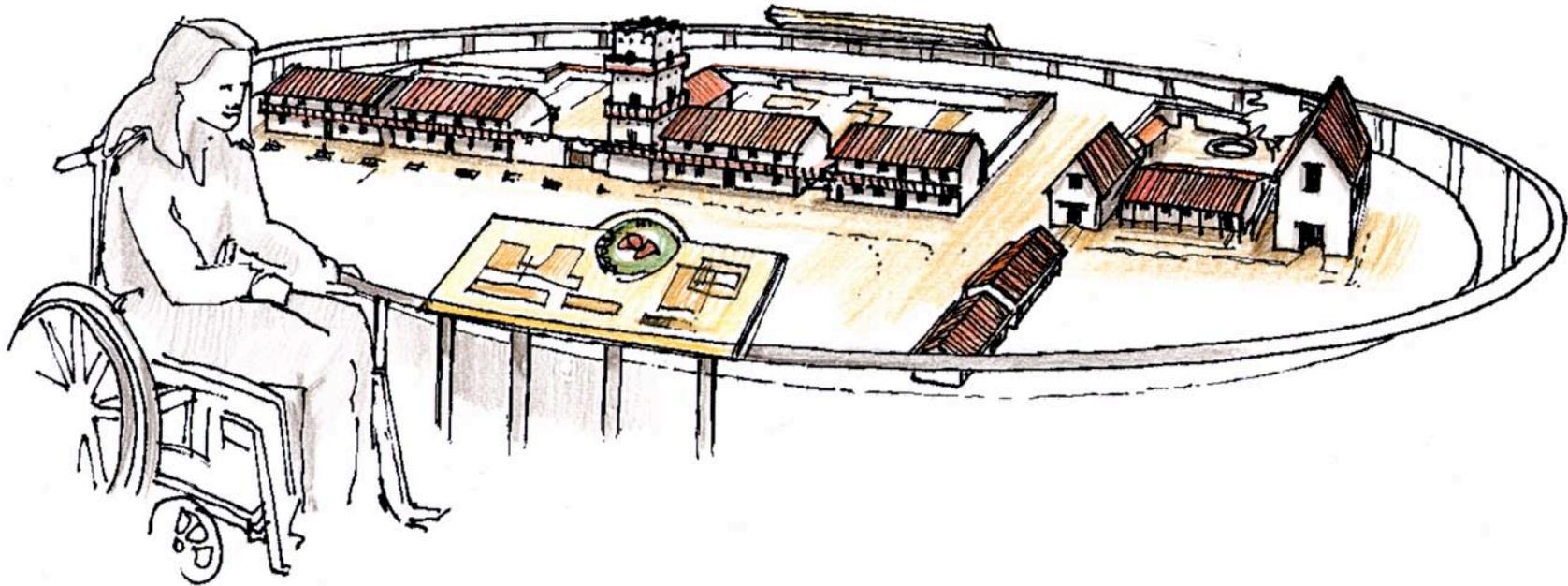
area of the Servants Quarters that can be viewed by visitors standing at the various doorways to the structure.

- Install visitor amenities such as picnic tables and benches where landscaping, shade or other ambiance would make them inviting for use.
- Add thematic outdoor interpretive signage for the Servants Quarters, Toscano Hotel/Kitchen/Annex. All new exterior signage in this area and at other SSHP sites should share common, unifying design and style elements that increase perception of all sites being part of the same State Park.
- Convert the first floor of the Toscano Tank House into an exhibit space for interpreting the Toscano Hotel complex and related themes. Replace the entry steps with a ramp to make the first floor accessible.
- Consider a new visitor traffic plan for the Barracks where visitors, after buying park admission tickets at the Toscano Annex Visitor Center, would enter the Barracks via the entrance near the restrooms on the Casa Grande side. The breezeway through the Barracks out to Spain Street could be made an “exit only” portal. Visitors within the Barracks could exit via this portal or the entrance on the Casa Grande side. Potential visitors walking along the Spain Street sidewalk would be able to look into the Barracks through the breezeway but would be directed by signage to the Toscano Annex Visitor Center for tickets and entrance.
- Note: office space users displaced by the above proposals could be relocated to upstairs locations in the various SSHP buildings. For example, Sonoma Ecology Center could be moved to upstairs rooms of the Toscano Kitchen or Tank House. Docent Operations could be moved to a room in the Toscano Annex or upstairs of the Toscano Kitchen. These locations are not ADA accessible but current locations are not accessible either.

Following are artist's concepts of how a revitalized Casa Grande site might look. Actual details of design, signage, landscaping and other site changes would be developed in an Interpretive Project Plan following necessary studies and reviews:

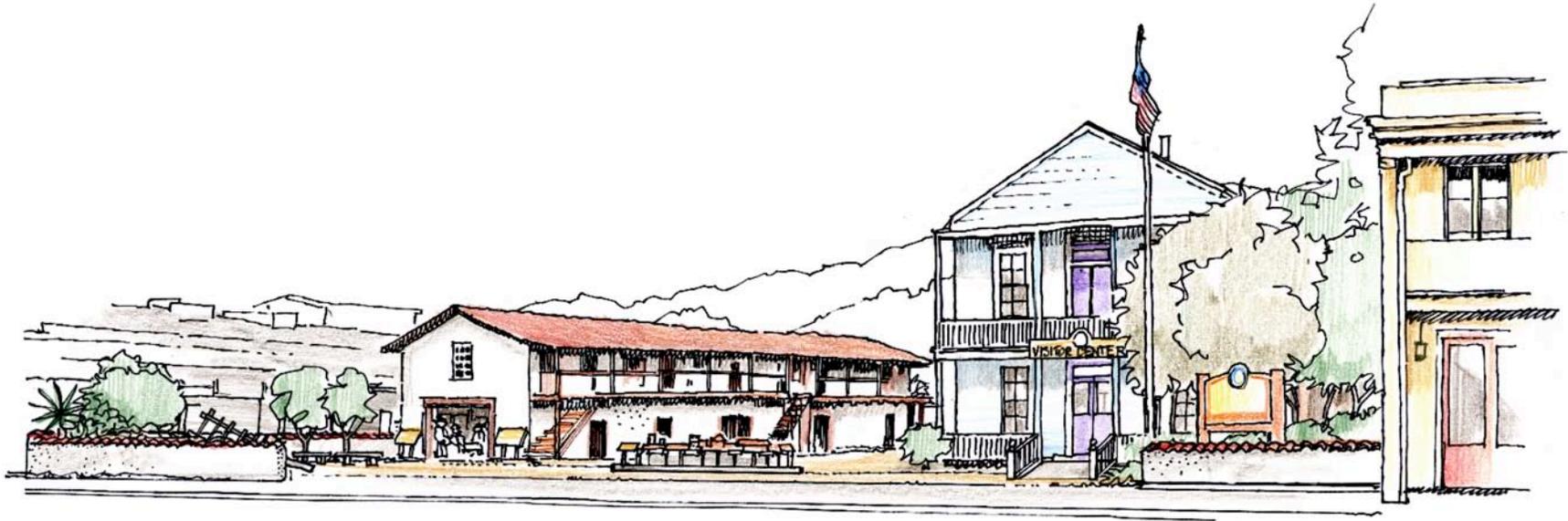


Outdoor model of Vallejo's Casa Grande Home and the northern side of the Sonoma Plaza circa 1836 – 1846

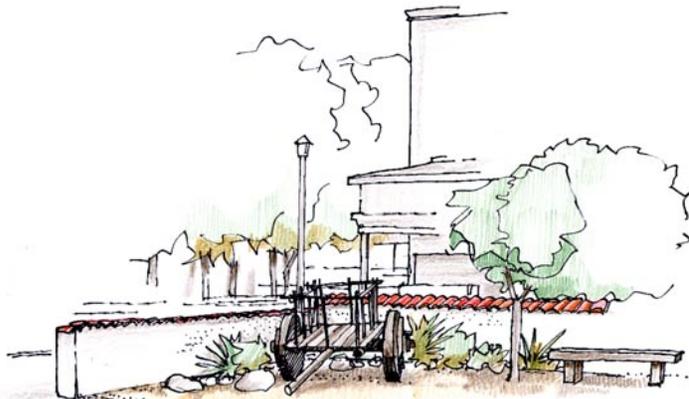


A large, touchable model located between the Spain Street sidewalk and the entrance to the new Toscano Annex visitor center would draw visitors into the area and provide a powerful, tangible resource for interpreting the Casa Grande site and the early history of the Sonoma pueblo.

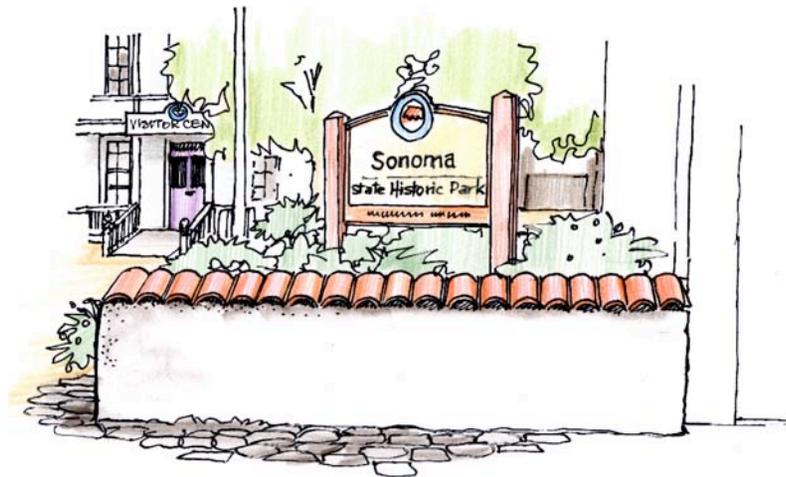
Current exhibit fabrication technologies now make exterior exhibits of this type possible, using weather and vandal-resistant materials.



Creating an Entry Experience and Evoking a Spirit of Place: Low, Early California-themed walls defining the borders of the State Park property would help visitors make a mental transition into engaging experience of exploration and discovery.



Iconic objects from Sonoma's past add richness to the visitor experience.



CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

TOSCANO HOTEL: MAIN BUILDING

Challenges:

- Current furnishings and interpretation are consistent for a typical Victorian house museum but do not communicate the historic reality of a simply furnished 1895 place of lodging for bachelor laborers recently arrived from Italy.
- Primary themes for the Toscano Hotel specified in the General Plan are not communicated by the furnishings, exhibits and many of the docents.
- A primary theme for the Toscano is “Italian immigrants struggle to establish new roots”, yet no Italian heritage groups were involved in the development of the current interpretation and furnishing of the hotel.
- The dominant feature in the hotel lobby is a large floor-to-ceiling wrought-iron cage. Unlike the Vallejo Home where visitors only peer through similar iron work to see into furnished rooms, at the Toscano Hotel visitors touring the hotel experience the cage as the overriding visual element in the room.
- On days when the Toscano Hotel is not open for tours, few passersby on the Spain Street sidewalk realize the closed front door is unlocked and they are permitted to enter “the cage” to view the lobby. For those few who do try the door and enter the cage, there is no accessible interpretative signage provided.



Current furnishings in the Toscano Hotel do not reflect the historic reality of usage in the 1890s and miss the opportunity to connect visitors to the real stories of the Italian immigrants who lived here while struggling to establish new roots in the American soil.



Courtesy of Sonoma Valley Historical Society

A new furnishings and exhibit plan for the Toscano Hotel would determine how the interior of the building likely looked in the 1890s. The photo above shows another Italian-owned business on the Sonoma Plaza during that period – Augustino Pinelli’s Victoria Saloon.

Proposed Solution:

- Create a new furnishing plan and exhibit plan for the Toscano, with input from Italian heritage representatives, that correctly address the site history and the General Plan mandated themes and historical time period for the site’s interpretation.
- Combine the Toscano docents with the State Parks docent program for unified training and consistency in interpretive presentations.
- Remove the wrought-iron cage from the lobby. Leave the Spain Street entrance door locked when the hotel is not open for tours but add a low profile interpretive panel about the hotel on the sidewalk near the entrance.
- On days when the hotel cannot be staffed by docents, consider offering one or more daily scheduled tours of the hotel and kitchen that would start at the new Toscano Annex Visitor Center.