

The Padres of Mission San Francisco Solano

Padre Jose Altimira

Fr. Altimira was thirty-three when he arrived to Mission San Francisco de Asis (Mission Dolores) from Barcelona, Spain. Well known as a zealot, he wanted to expand the Missions. His initial idea was to close both Mission Dolores and Mission San Rafael, then move all the industries and workers to a place farther north.(5) Although the church was against Fr. Altimira's objectives, it would be Governor Argüello who settled the matter by keeping both Missions intact and opening the new one. (18)

Fr. Altimira set out on a twelve day journey on June 25, 1823, eventually setting up a cross and blessing a site. This place would not be where the Mission was built, the building of the Mission would commence at the current site as it was deemed more suitable for building and had a large central spring.(141)

Things seemed to go well at first, buildings were erected and fields sowed. However, Fr. Altimira was not successful at handling the large Indian population.(23) It was during the Fall of 1826 that he finally had enough and requested a transfer. He then decided to leave back to Spain in January 1828 instead of signing allegiance to the new National Government.(24)

Padre Buenaventura Fortuny

Father Fortuny was born in 1774 in Catalonia, Spain. He joined the Franciscan Order in 1792 and came to California in 1806. He would serve at Mission San Jose for twenty years before being transferred to Mission San Francisco Solano upon Fr. Altimira's departure. (25)

Fr. Fortuny would quickly bring order to the chaos at the Mission. Housing was refurbished and built, fields were cleared, and Indians from the surrounding rancherias returned. (25) The Mission would prosper under Fr. Fortuny. After six and a half years, being fifty-eight years old, a request for a transfer to a less strenuous Mission was placed. (39) This granted and he would go on to other Missions until his death on December 16, 1840. (73)

Padre Jose de Jesus Maria Gutierrez

Fr. Gutierrez was born in Mexico. He had just arrived to Monterey in January 1833 when he was sent to Sonoma. Although he did well in controlling the Mission industries, he was not as adept with the neophytes and surrounding tribes. (40) Only serving a year, Fr. Gutierrez would be transferred to Mission Dolores in February 1834. (47)

Padre Jose Lorenzo de la Conception Quijas

Fr. Quijas was a native of South America, came from the college of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de Zacatecas in Mexico. A beloved padre described as kindhearted, he was not afraid to stand up for his rights and those of whom he was in charge. (47) It would be during his charge that the secularization of the Missions occurred. In late October 1834 Lieutenant Mariano Vallejo was appointed Comisionado of the Mission. Sonoma would become a pueblo and the Mission cease, but Fr. Quijas would still be in charge of the church. (51) As the last padre of the Mission and the first of this new era, Fr. Quijas did not get along with the appointed major-domo Don Guadalupe Antonio Ortega. He moved to Mission San Rafael in June of 1835, of which he was also in charge. (58) Fr. Quijas would return to Mexico in 1844, eleven years after secularization. (82)

Smilie, Robert S. *The Sonoma Mission, San Francisco Solano de Sonoma*. Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1975. Print.