

MISSION CHRONICLES

*Presented by
Mission San Juan Capistrano*

Mission San Juan Capistrano is honored to present "Camposanto: A Tribute to the Mission Cemetery History."

The Tribute is on display in the historic Sala Building, which is planned for conservation in the future, but has been made available for museum space thanks to the Gate House Preservation Project.

"Camposanto: A Tribute to the Mission Cemetery History" pays homage to the landmark Mission Cemetery which is located east of Serra Chapel. The camposanto which means "holy field" was a common term Franciscan padres used for cemetery. The Mission cemetery was in active use for nearly 70 years, the first burial most likely was in 1781, and the last around 1850.

Franciscan padres kept detailed records of each person who died and was buried at the Mission. The leather bound Burial Register the padres used, lists over 3,400 individuals between 1781-1850. The cemetery tribute features each name listed in the Burial Registers by year, which include baptized Native American men, women and children, as well as Spanish padres, soldiers and their families.

The tribute also features information on the history of Spanish Colonial burial practices during the Mission period (1776-1834), disease and population decline of the Mission Native American community, the cemetery's first burial of Monsignor St. John O'Sullivan in 1934, as well as a pictorial timeline of how the Mission cemetery visually changed over time.

The cemetery tribute, funded by private donations and membership proceeds, is a temporary display while investigation of the Sala Building's needs are assessed for its eventual preservation. The Mission Preservation Foundation is currently raising funds to conserve the 18th century building.

Most recently, the Sala Building was used as a gift shop, but has previously been used as a chapel, a private residence for the Forster Family (1845-1865), a padres' dining room, living quarters for Mission craftsman, and a temporary soldier's barracks, through its long history.

If you would like to become involved in the Sala conservation campaign, please contact Mission Executive Director, Mechelle Lawrence Adams at 949-234-1311.

