

San Diego Mission, 1769- 1840

Robert Jackson

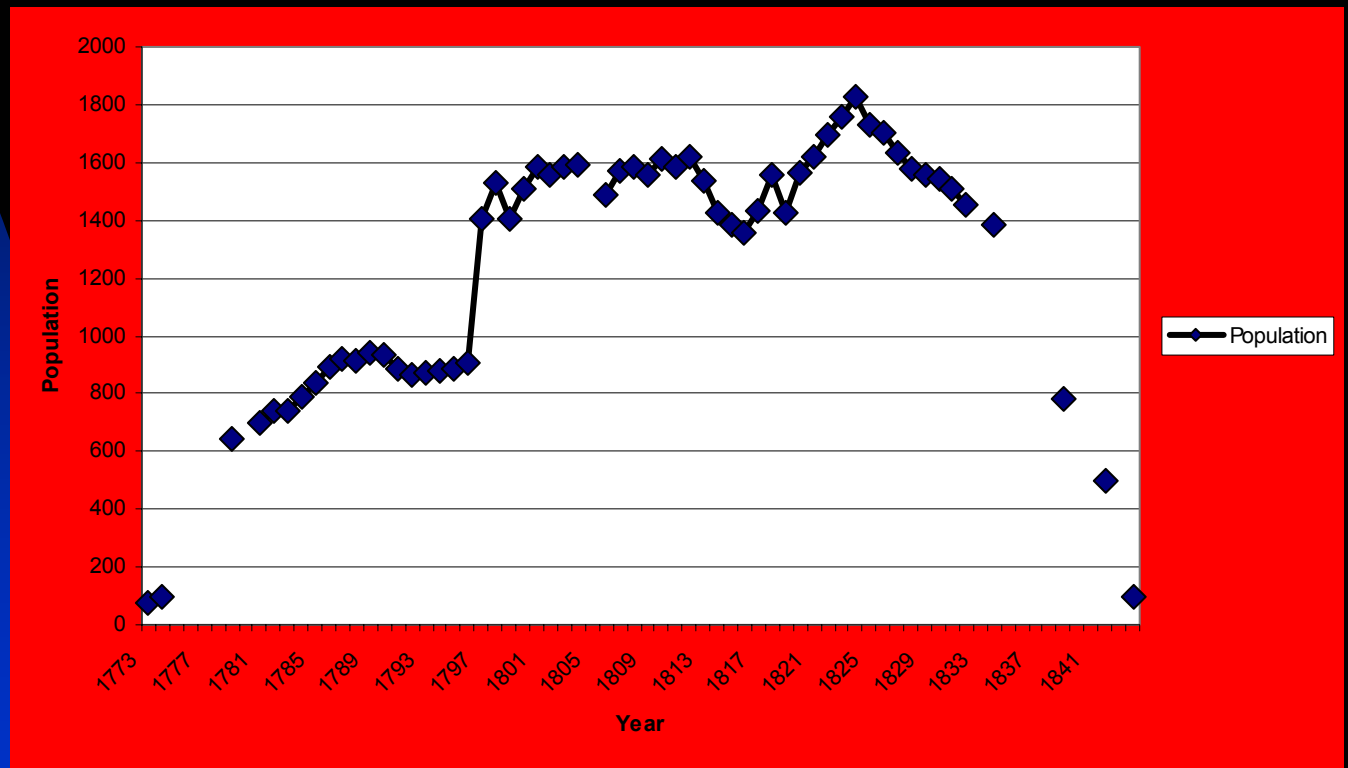
In 1769, Jose de Galvez organized the so-called “Sacred Expedition” to occupy California. Fears of British and Russian intrusions in the Pacific Basin prompted the action. The expedition, largely organized in Baja California, arrived in the San Diego area, and established a presidio (military garrison) and mission on a strategic hill. In 1774, the Franciscan missionaries relocated the mission to a site several miles up the valley from the presidio. In the following year a large force of native warriors attacked and destroyed the mission. The survivors retreated to the presidio, and remained there for several years until Fr. Fermin Francisco de Lasuen returned to the site first occupied in 1774 and began the process of reconstructing the mission.

San Diego Valley and River near the mission site. Photo from the 1880s.



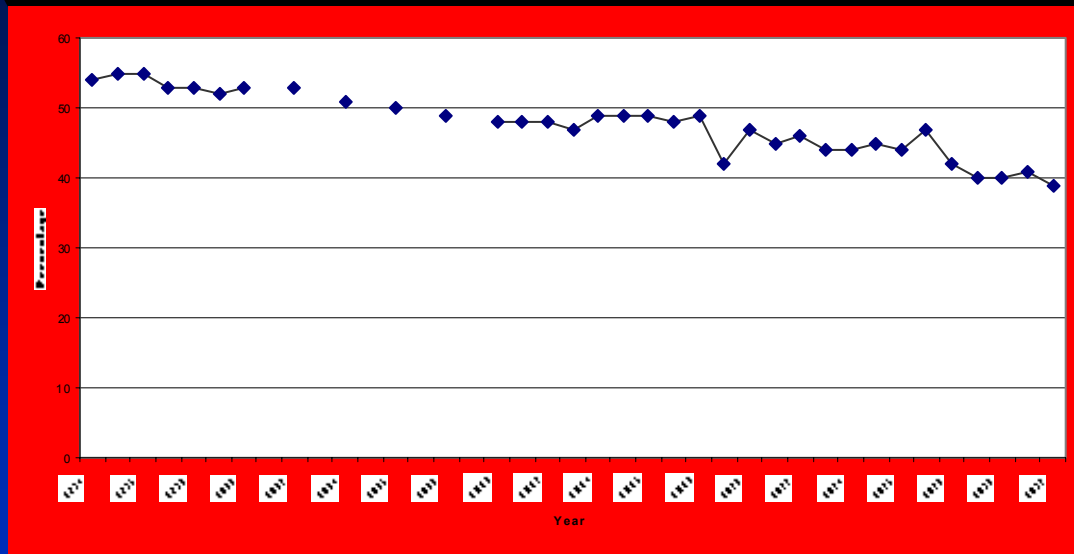
The Franciscan missionaries initiated the process of congregation and social, cultural, and religious transformation. Most of the California missions were *congregaciones*, meaning that the missionaries brought the indigenous peoples to live at the mission. San Diego was different. Because of the limitations of agriculture at the mission, the Franciscan missionaries only settled a percentage of neophytes at the central mission village and dispersed the bulk of the neophytes over a number of villages. This buffered somewhat the indigenous population from the adverse effects of disease, and the indigenous population evidenced relatively higher life expectancy when compared to the missions to the north. Life expectancy, however, was much lower than for the settler and military population in the province.

Population of San Diego mission, 1773-1844.

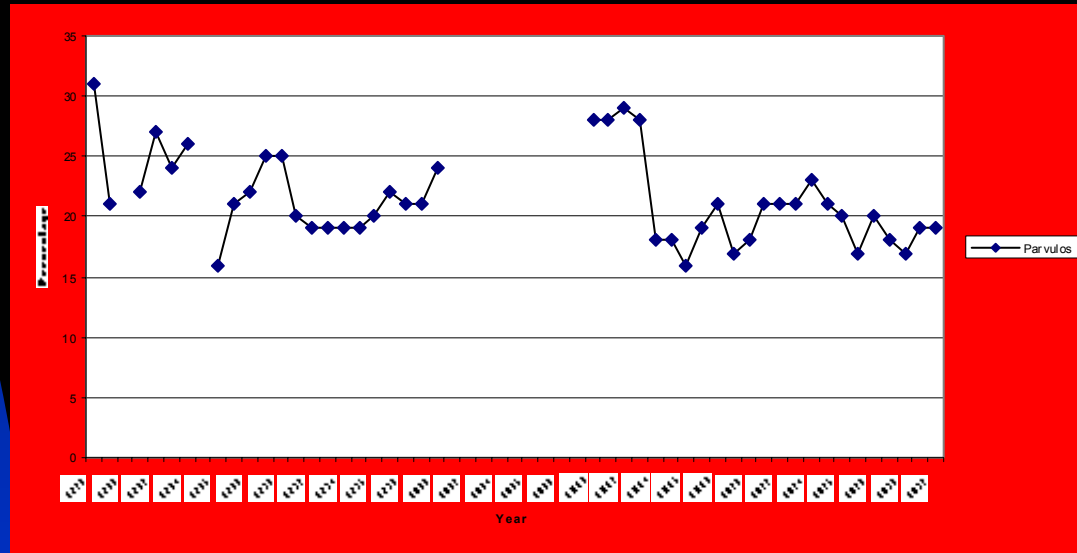


As the indigenous population declined, an imbalance developed in terms of gender and age. There were more males than females, and the number of small children was also low during certain periods in relation to the total population. During periods of active conversion when more natives were brought into the mission orbit, the gender and age structure of the mission population became more balanced.

Females as a percentage of population at San Diego mission.

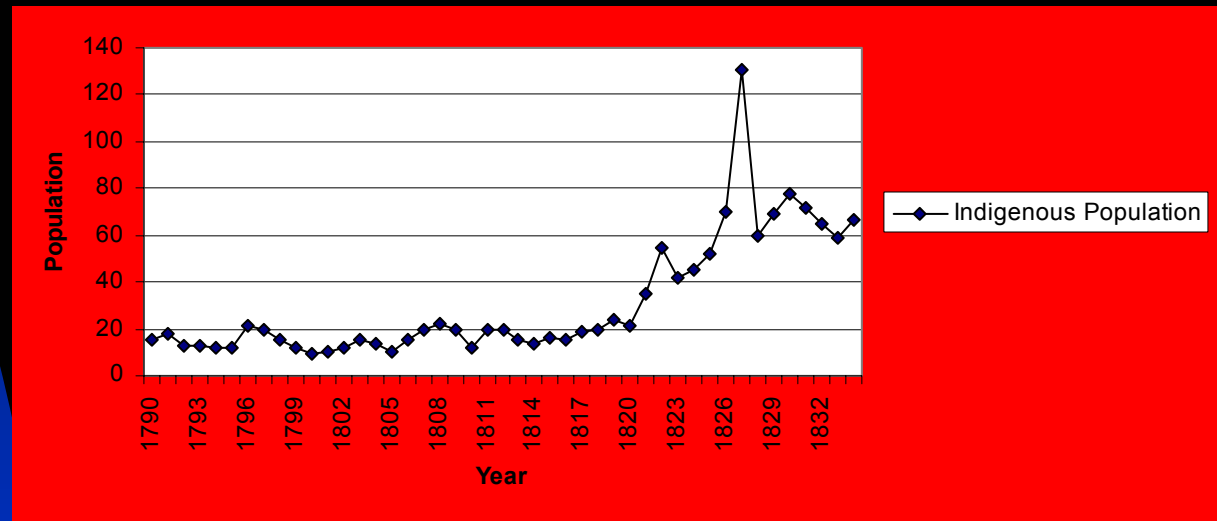


Parvulos (children under age 10) as a percentage of total population at San Diego mission.



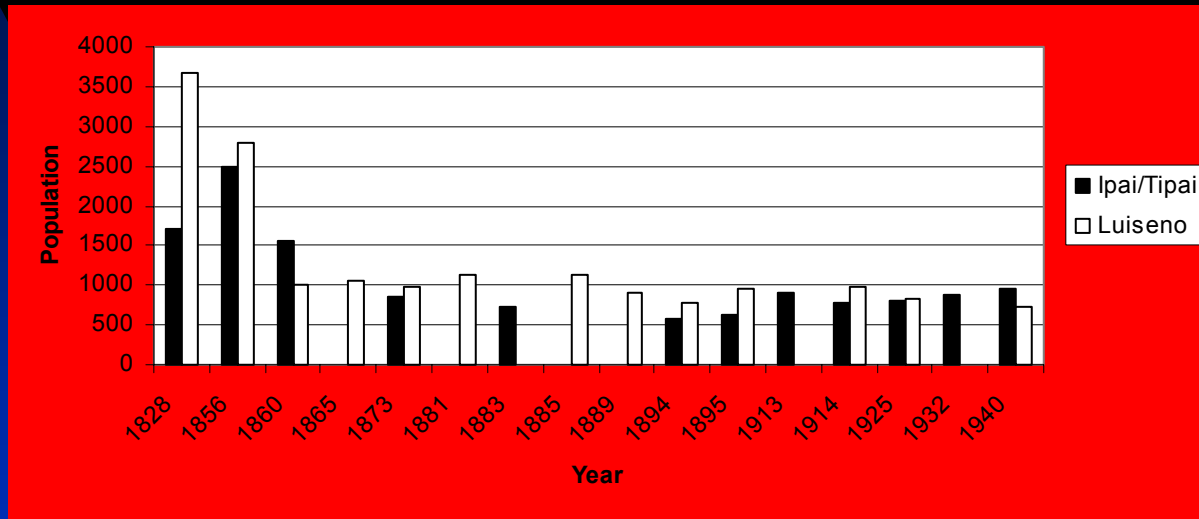
In the late 1820s and early 1830s, the local government experimented with the emancipation of numbers of more assimilated neophytes. One consequence of emancipation was the migration of numbers of ex-neophytes to the emerging towns in California, including the communities developing around the presidios.

Indigenous population of San Diego presidio.



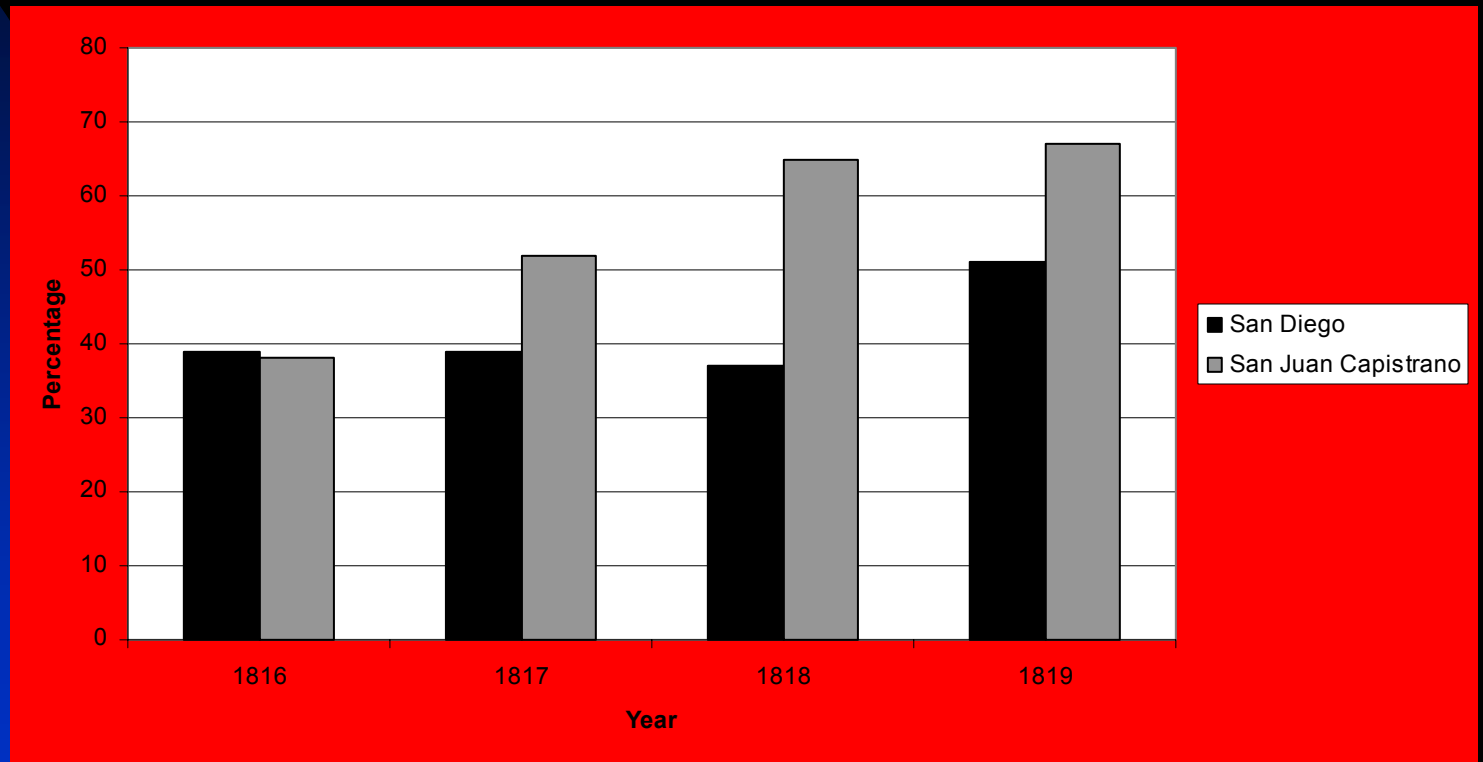
Because of the dispersed settlement pattern under the Franciscans at San Diego, a sizeable indigenous population survived the secularization of the mission in the mid-1830s. Both the Ipai/Tipai and Luiseno populations survived under United States rule after 1848, but also experienced population recovery in the 20th century.

Ipai/Tipai and Luiseno population, 1828-1950.

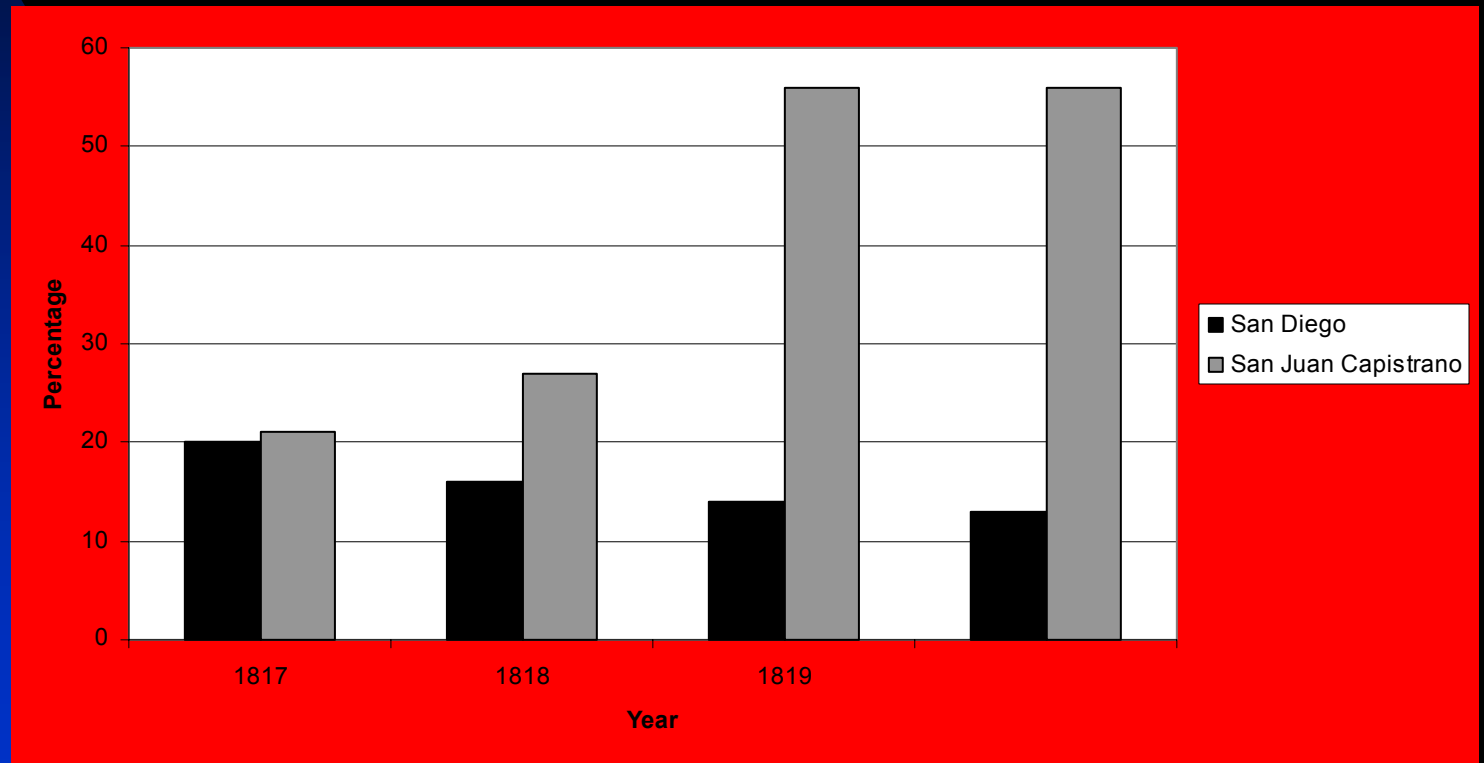


Because of the dispersed settlement pattern under the mission regime at San Diego, large numbers of neophytes received only superficial religious instruction. The level of religious conversion can be measured, in part, by the number of confessions and communions, two of the important sacraments of the Catholic Church that indicate a certain level of proficiency in basic doctrine. When compared to San Juan Capistrano, a mission characterized by a more complete congregation of the indigenous population, rates of confession and communion were low at San Diego.

Confessions reported at San Diego and San Juan Capistrano missions as a percentage of population, 1816-1819.

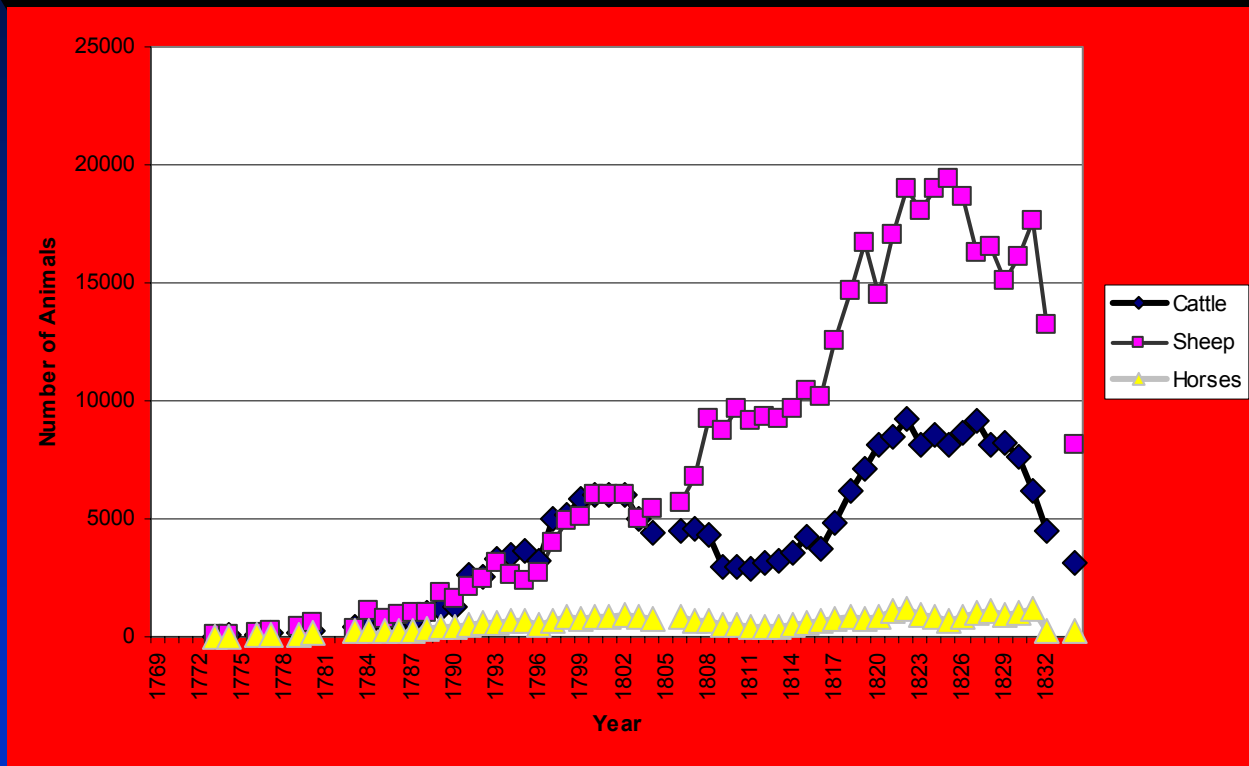


Communions reported at San Diego and San Juan Capistrano missions as a percentage of population, 1816-1819.

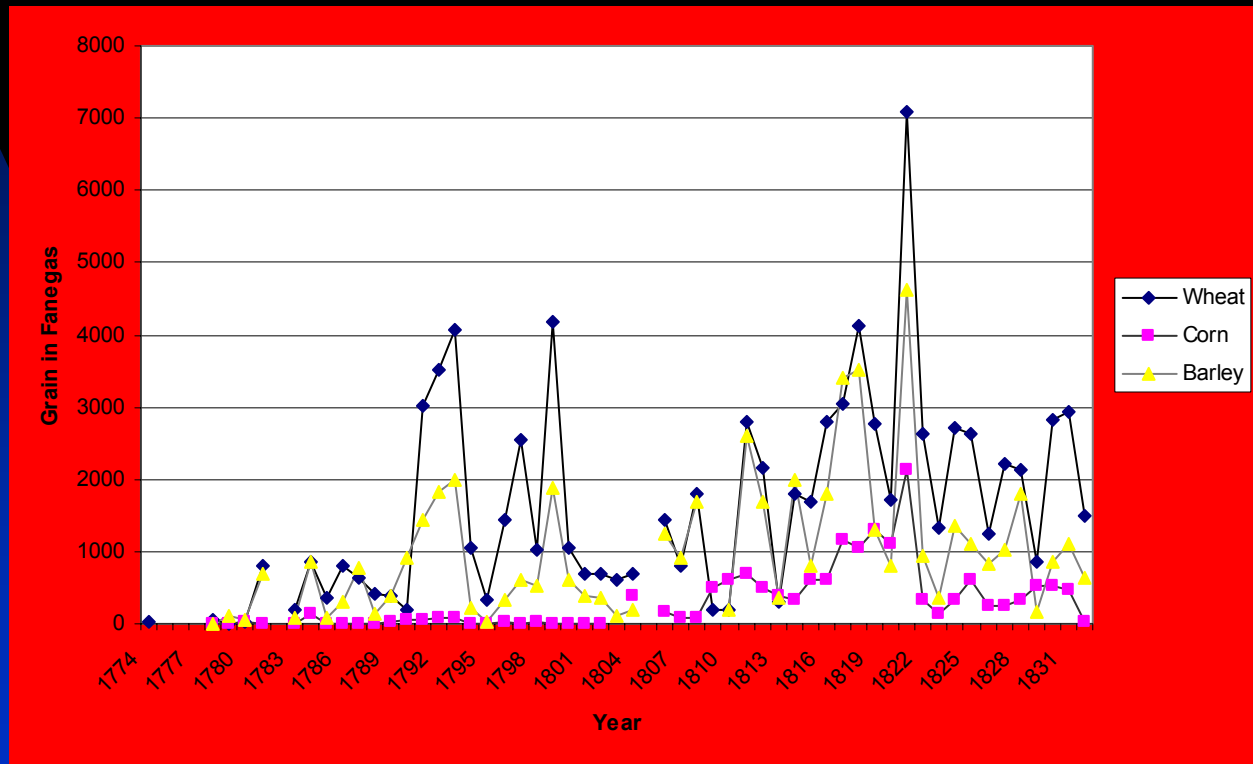


Ranching and farming were the basis for the mission economy, coupled with craft manufactures. The Franciscans at San Diego managed large herds of livestock, but there were problems with agriculture. The Franciscans directed the construction of several dams and irrigation systems, with the last completed in the second decade of the 19th century. The last dam is still preserved today.

Livestock reported at San Diego mission.

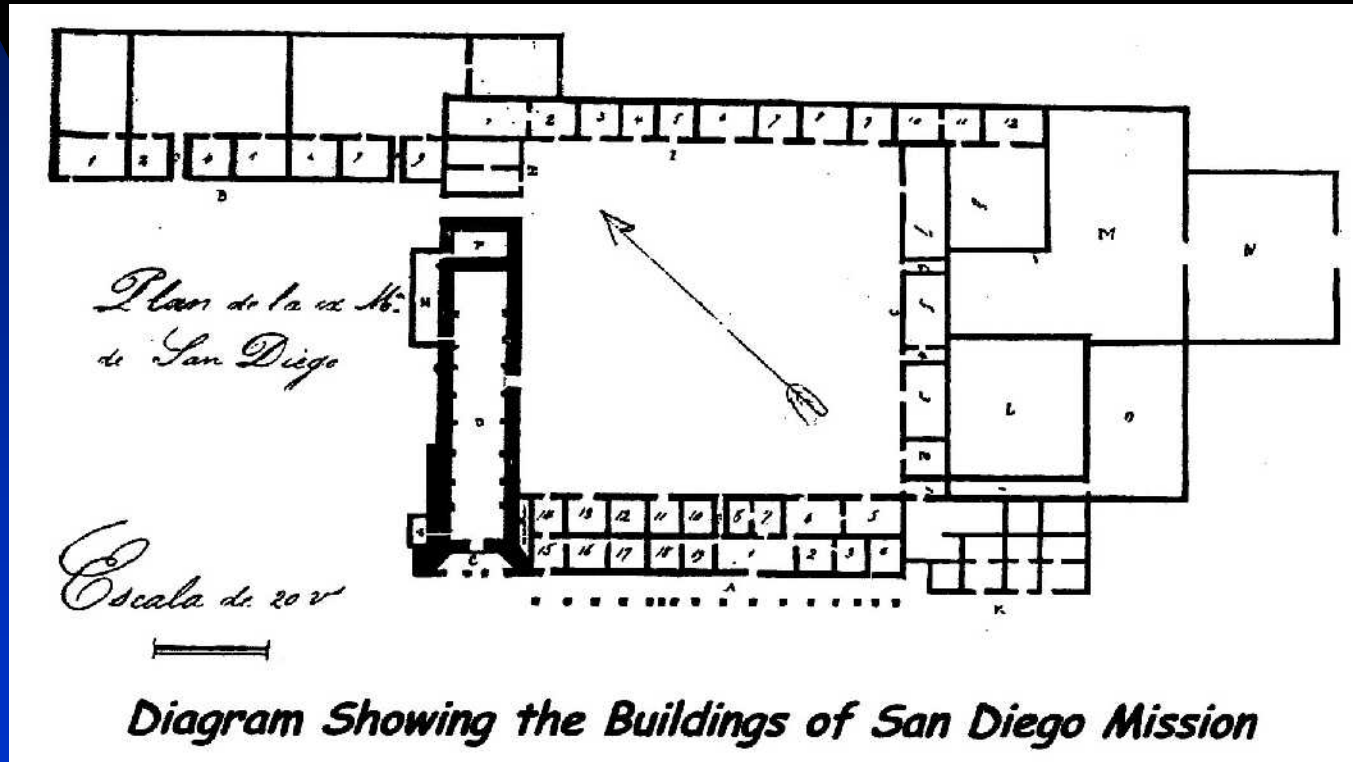


Grain production at San Diego mission.

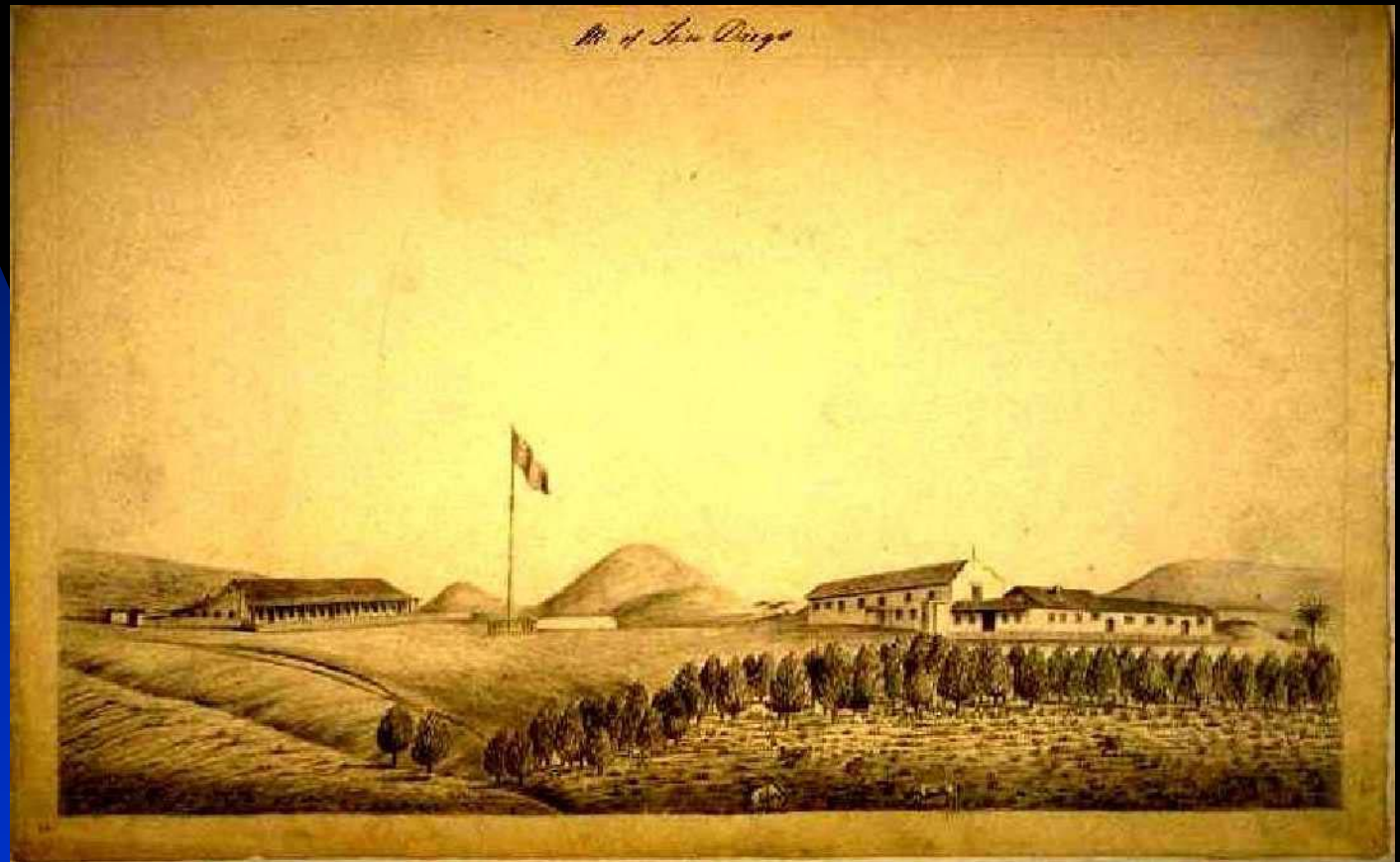


The Franciscans directed the construction of an extensive building complex. Following the secularization of the mission in the mid-1830s, the mission buildings did not receive proper maintenance, and gradually deteriorated until only ruins remained.

Diagram showing the configuration of the buildings of San Diego mission in the 1830s.



1856 Miller sketch of San Diego mission.



Ruins of San Diego mission in the late 19th century.



MISSION, SAN DIEGO.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHED JULY 16TH, 1769.

No. 2221. WATSON'S New Series.

28 New Montgomery Street, San Francisco.

Ruins of San Diego mission.



MISSION, SAN DIEGO.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHED JULY WITH 1781.
FROM THE REAR, LOOKING DOWN THE VALLEY.

No. 640 - 200100 1/2 x 2000

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Ruins of San Diego mission.



MISSION, SAN DIEGO.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHED JULY 10TH, 1769.
FROM THE EAST SIDE.

No. 1003. WALKER'S New Series.

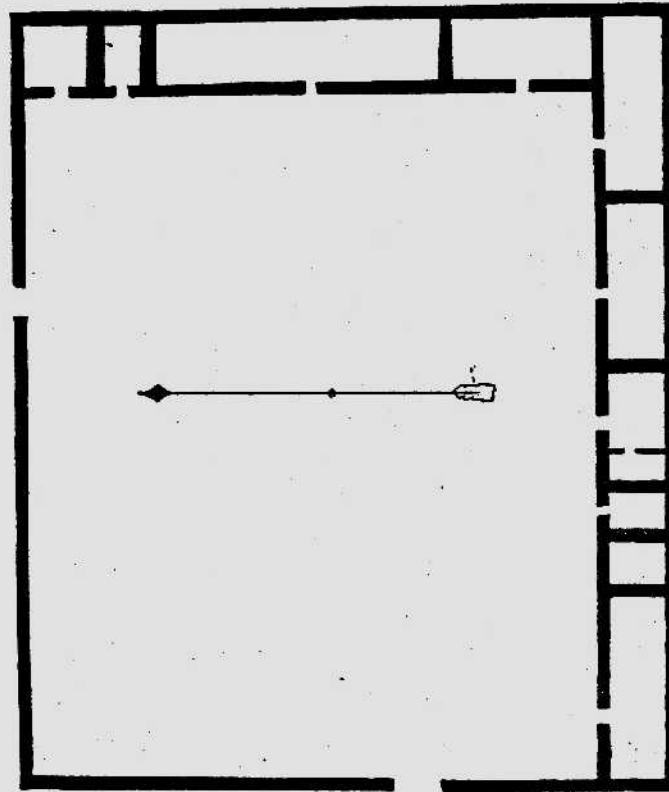
25 New Mountains View. San Francisco.

Ruins of San Diego mission in the early 20th century.



In addition to the main complex, the Franciscans directed the development of satellite communities called *ranchos*. These settlements generally were population centers, but were also developed as centers for ranching and/or farming. One such developed rancho of San Diego mission was Santa Isabel, which was also used as a base from which to reach interior indigenous populations.

Diagram showing the configuration of the buildings at Rancho Santa Isabel.



Plan del rancho de S^{ta} Isabel.

Escala de 100
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Diagram Showing the Buildings of Rancho Santa Isabel (San Diego Mission)

1880s photo of the ruins of Santa Isabel.

