

MISSION SAN FERNANDO REY DE ESPANA
1511 San Fernando Mission Boulevard
Mission Hills
Los Angeles County
California

HALS CA-72
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

MISSION SAN FERNANDO REY DE ESPANA

HALS NO. CA-72

- Location:** 1511 San Fernando Mission Boulevard, Mission Hills,
Los Angeles County, California
Lat.: 34.273561 Long.: -118.461578 (Center of Fountain No. 1, Google
Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)
- Significance:** The 21 missions in California were established between 1769 and 1823. They were established for a variety of purposes ranging from providing a Spanish presence in California, settling indigenous people in fixed locations, converting indigenous people to Christian practice, developing regional economies, and spurring other development. Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana was one of the largest and most prosperous of the missions and played an important role in the early development of southern California.
- Description:** In 1846 when the mission lands were sold they included 116,858 acres.¹ The site now is limited to a small area encompassing the remaining buildings. These include the reconstructed church, reconstructed accessory buildings and a building called the Convento. A seminary dating from the 1950s occupies some of the original site. An account of 1853 speaks of two walled and irrigated gardens with olive, orange and lemon trees, fertile within but barren and gravelly outside,² but nothing appears to remain of these gardens.
- A plaza has been partially reconstructed in the area south of the church with a fountain modeled on one from Cordova, Spain but there was no fountain originally in this location. The west and south sides of the plaza consist of reconstructed buildings. The original east side is lost under recent seminary construction and new landscaping forms the east side of a reduced plaza with the added fountain. A photo in the Library of Congress archives shows barren empty space where the plaza is located.³
- The Convento has been extensively restored, and the line of rebuilt workshops running south from the church links it and the church.

¹ Francis J. Weber, "San Fernando Mission: An Historical Glance" quoted in *The Mission in the Valley*, compiled by Francis J. Weber, April 1975, Kimberly Press, Santa Barbara CA.

² Robert S. Williamson, "Report of Explorations in California for Railroad Routes", quoted in Francis J. Weber, *op. cit.*

³ HABS Photo 1934, Digital ID: .012745p.

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One of the original walled gardens was an adobe-walled orchard north and west of the church across a little stream and it included olive and fruit trees with some palm trees. Nothing appears to remain of this original orchard or stream and a large cemetery occupies the land north and west of the church. A substantial project is underway in this area involving much grading.

The Convento has two fountains on its south side and this may have been the location of the second walled garden. This area is currently a city park with landscaping but nothing appears to be from the mission period except the two fountains, one of which was moved 300' from its original location according to a plaque on its base. The HABS site plan shows the 1936 locations of the fountains. San Fernando Mission Boulevard currently runs between the Convento and the park and fountains.

The current landscaping appears to all be recent. Sidewalks have been added in the plaza and open areas. Turf has been added in the plaza and around other buildings. Recent plantings have been added around buildings and in the plaza though some of the olive trees might be as old as 50 years.

History: Mission San Fernando was established 1797 on what was then part of the Reyes rancho about 24 miles northwest of the Pueblo of Los Angeles. It was the seventeenth mission established and was located between Mission San Buenaventura and Mission San Gabriel. The mission had large herds of cattle and was a major producer of hides and tallow, common export items in early California. It also was described as having fine gardens and orchards. The entire site is much modified and only parts of the original structures remain. Mission lands were sold in 1846 after secularization. In 1862 the church and some adjoining property were restored to religious control. The original church building has been completely rebuilt after the 1971 Northridge earthquake but it had already been partially rebuilt after extensive deterioration following secularization.

Sources: Francis J. Weber, "San Fernando Mission: An Historical Glance" quoted in *The Mission in the Valley*, compiled by Francis J. Weber, April 1975.

Library of Congress, HABS CAL, 19-SANF, 2B-(sheet 1 of 8), site plan.

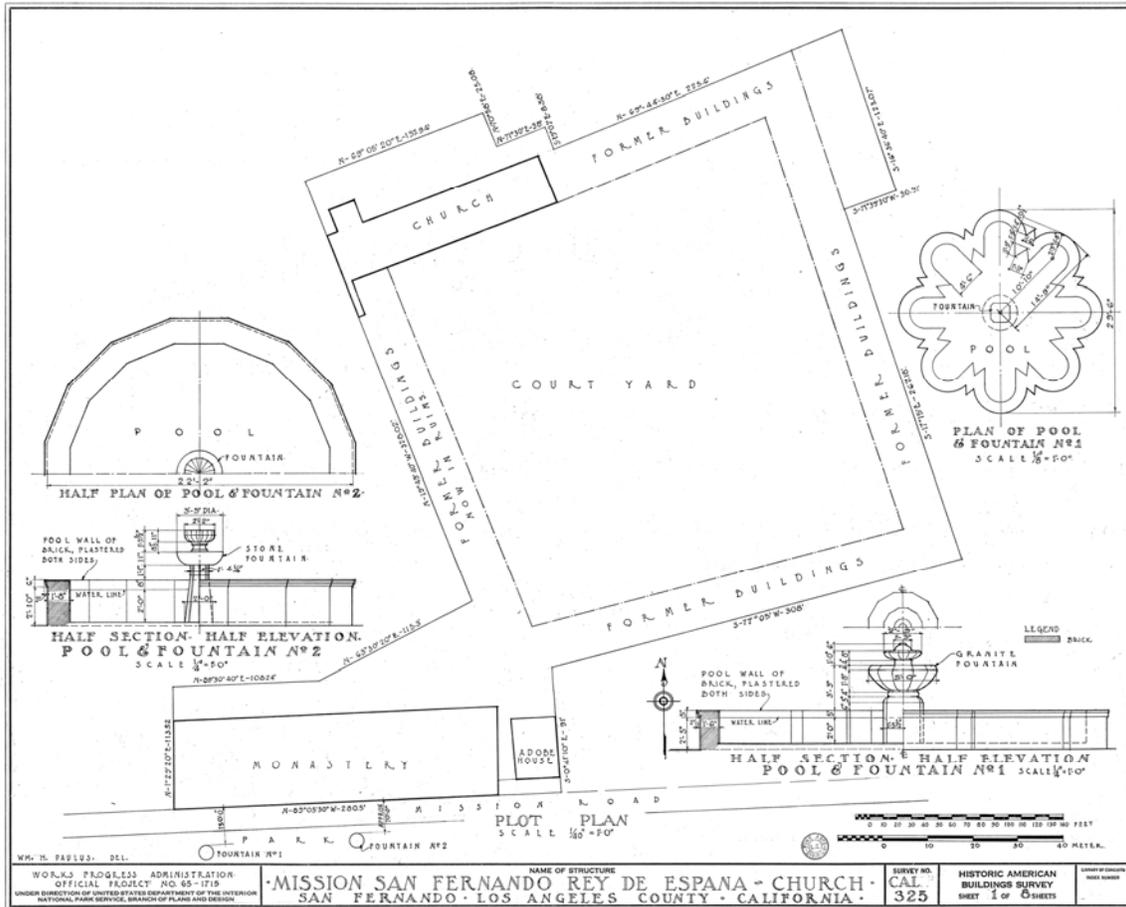
Historian: Robert Nicolais, Architect
5506 Village Green, Los Angeles, CA 90016
323 294-0892
Form completed March 15, 2012.



The reconstructed mission church is in the background (Robert Nicolais, March 12, 2012). The landscaping on the right forms the east side of the plaza. The fountain is not from the mission period.



This 1934 Library of Congress HABS photo shows the south side of the church in (HABS CAL, 19-SANF, 2B--4). The current plaza area extends to the left in the picture.



Survey no. changed to CA-325-B

This 1936 Library of Congress HABS site plan shows the fountain locations (HABS CAL, 19-SANF, 2B-(Sheet 1 of 8)). The drawing indicates that Fountain No. 1 had already been moved to its current location by 1936.