1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Mission San Miguel Arcángel

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 801 Mission Street Not for publication: X

City/Town: San Miguel Vicinity: X

State: California County: San Luis Obispo Code: 079 Zip Code: 93451

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	X	Building(s):	___
Public-Local:	___	District:	X
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
2	5 buildings
3	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
5	5 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: RELIGION	Sub:	Religious Facility Church–related Residence
Current: RELIGION	Sub:	Religious Facility Church-related Residence

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Colonial/Spanish Colonial

Materials:

Foundation:	Stone
Walls:	Adobe
Roof:	Ceramic Tile
Other:	Ceramic Tile

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

INTRODUCTION

Mission San Miguel is located on the left bank of the Salinas River about a half a mile from the water's edge in what is now San Miguel, California. Mission Road and a Southern Pacific Railroad track separate the mission complex from the remains of the neophyte village to the east. The mission complex includes a quadrangle of buildings with a church in the northeast corner and a second wing extending from the southwest corner, cemetery, restroom building, carport/storage shed, and novitiate building. The features that contribute to the significance of the district are the church building, the courtyard inside the quadrangle, the cemetery north of the church, and the *convento* that extends south from the church. These two buildings and two sites retain their physical integrity from the period of significance of 1797 to 1834. In addition, the neophyte village is a contributing discontiguous site that contributes to an understanding of the mission community and helps present the story of the mission. The remaining wings around the courtyard were reconstructed during the 1930s. The other buildings were constructed even later.

BACKGROUND

The buildings, structures, and sites related to the missions share a common history of damage by fire and/or earthquake, a state of abandonment and disrepair after they were secularized by the Mexican government, followed by a period of rediscovery and restoration, and in some cases envelopment by urbanization. Compared with the other missions in the chain, Mission San Miguel retains a high level of physical integrity. The church is one of the very few that has not been either reconstructed or extensively restored. The interior of the church has remained unaltered since the murals were painted in 1821. The mission is also unusual in that it retains the large quadrangle of buildings, which is a combination of restoration and reconstruction.

The plan for the mission in Engelhardt's *San Miguel Arcángel: The Mission on the Highway* depicts all of the typical components of a Franciscan mission including a group of buildings surrounding a large courtyard. These included a church in the northeast corner with a sacristy wing on the north, a cemetery surrounded by an adobe wall on the north side of the church, and a *convento* with an irregular arcade forming the east wing. Also shown were two smaller courtyards on the south. The one on the west was fully surrounded by buildings, while the one on the east was created by an extension from the *convento* and an adobe wall. A neophyte village partially surrounded by an adobe wall was located to the northeast and an orchard was due east.

Typically the north and west wings off the main courtyard were used as workshops, as is the case at San Miguel based upon the historical records and physical evidence. The courtyard was simply an open space that was protected by walls and buildings on four sides from any threatening forces, but normally functioned as an outdoor extension of the workshops. The south wing was probably used as the quarters for unmarried women and girls, but there is no specific mention of the use in the historical records. There is no mention of soldiers' barracks or a guardhouse, but they would typically have been located south of the *convento*. Surveyors used the adobe walls surrounding the neophyte village as boundaries when a portion of the mission land was being returned to the Catholic Church in 1855. Fragments of these walls remain visible today. Old highway 101, now called Mission Road, and a Southern Pacific Railroad track pass directly in front (east) of the mission complex through a portion of the neophyte village.

By the late nineteenth century all traces of the secondary quadrangles had disappeared. Photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show a single adobe wall enclosing the south side of the main quadrangle. When Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation was prepared for the mission in

1934, the church and *convento* had been restored and portions of the original adobe walls of the other buildings around the main courtyard were standing, but generally in ruin.

DESCRIPTION

Contributing Resources

Church

Constructed between 1816-18 the mission church has a plain and simple exterior, but is the most significant building on the site. It stands in the northeast corner of a quadrangle of buildings that form the primary Mission complex. The church is actually a freestanding building with a rectangular volume covered by a pitched roof. It measures 144 feet long, 27 feet wide, and 40 feet tall. The adobe walls are five to three feet in thickness. The sacristy covered by a shed roof is attached to the north side of the church at the west end. The exterior walls are finished with a cement plaster.

The church has an east-west orientation, which conforms to the Franciscan or so called monastic plan. The pitched roofs are fitted with clay tiles that are now green from the growth of moss. The structural members of the roof are visible in the overhanging eaves. There are only a few windows, all of which are small and set high. Centered on the east elevation is the main entrance to the nave. A second entrance is located on the south elevation under the arcade that connects the church to the *convento*.

The interior of the church is a single-aisle nave. As previously mentioned, the sacristy forms a wing off the sanctuary to the north and projects into the cemetery. About halfway down this wall there is a niche that serves as a confessional. Originally it was used as a baptismal niche and had doors to close when not in use. Opposite is the door leading into the arcade of the *convento*. The ceiling has heavy *vigas* with fine corbels that in most places extend through the thick walls to the outside. In some places they extended a foot, however in other places they are just visible. The corbels, rafters, and ceiling are colored light green, pink, blue, and white. A shallow choir loft extends wall to wall inside the main entrance.

In 1821, Estevan Munras, with help from the local Native Americans (Salinans), painted murals on the walls. The wall decorations were created by first brushing a lime plaster wash over the surface of all of the plaster walls. Next, the pigments mixed with lime plaster were applied to the walls. The extensive decoration is organized by a series of fluted columns, colored blue, on the north and south walls. The spaces between are decorated with stylized leaves, carved designs, and two large fan patterns. Above is a frieze painted in reddish brown representing a gallery with railings and pillars. Ten oil paintings brought by the original founders hang on the walls. The original wall pulpit still remains on the north wall, colored deep blue, green, red, yellow, black, gold and silver. The domical canopy is equally ornate. The floor is of burnt brick, laid in alternating rows of oblongs and squares.

The sanctuary has curved stone steps leading up to it from the floor of the nave. The decorations on the reredos on the west wall are painted on a wood substructure. The reredos has three large panels divided by columns mottled to resemble marble. The columns have Egyptian-styled capitals and appear to be supporting a cornice of generous proportion. Each panel is outlined by red flowers and green foliage, and form a background for the wooden figure standing before it. In the center panel above the altar stands a wooden statue of the patron saint, Michael the Arcángel, above is the Moorish All-Seeing Eye surrounded by radiating rays of light. To the right of the altar stands the brightly painted statue of St. Joseph, holding the infant Jesus in one arm and bearing on the other the shepherd's staff. Opposite stands the statue of St. Francis de Assisi, the founder of the order of Franciscan monks. Beside the altar is a painting of St. John the Evangelist, with one foot resting upon a skull.

Chalices above each side panel are joined by a garland formed of clusters of grape leaves. The dado below the panels has the mottled effect of marble.

On November 13, 1912 two large slabs were placed over the graves of the Fathers Martin and Cipres, within the sanctuary of the church. On the wall above the graves are corresponding plaques, bearing the names of the fathers.

The sacristy is rectangular in shape and extends from the west end of the north wall of the church. There are two small niches in the north wall. At the southwest corner there is a secondary entrance off the cemetery. The walls of the sacristy are also painted with frescos. In this case there is a uniform pattern with a fruit motif above a solid dado. The effect is much like wallpaper. The walls are the work of the Salinan neophytes, as Munras had already left by the time they were painted. The floor is the same as the rest of the church, and the ceiling has wood planks supported by rafters. These too are decoratively painted.

The church retains a high level of physical integrity due to the fact that it never fell into a state of ruin like some of the other buildings at the mission. Historic photographs of the building taken during the late nineteenth century illustrate that large portions of the exterior plaster were missing, but that the walls and roof remained intact. The walls have been re-plastered and whitewashed several times. The interior decoration has not been altered since it was completed in 1821.

Restoration work commenced in 1928 with the return of the Franciscans under the direction of Father Modesto. The entire roof was taken down and a steel framework replaced the old supports. The tiles covering the church roof were removed and afterward replaced in kind. In 1929, the window to the choir loft was replaced. In 1938, the floor to the choir loft was replaced and the stairs to the loft were rebuilt.

Cemetery

Located on the north side of the church and the rest of the north wing is the original Mission cemetery established in 1797. A low adobe and brick wall that was constructed in 1937 surrounds it. The cemetery can be entered from the breezeway between the church and the north wing to the rear or from two entrances along the adobe walls – one on the east and one on the north. It does not appear that the cemetery was ever landscaped, which was not the tradition in any case. The historic photographs do not show any trees. Graves were unmarked, flush to the ground, or wood that has since disappeared. Mission records indicate that there are over 2,000 dead in the cemetery. The existing headstones and monuments date from the late nineteenth century. During the late 1920s and early 1930s ornamental trees were planted. There are a few mature pine, ash, and olive trees in no particular pattern. In 1934, a large cross about fifteen feet in height was erected in the center. A stone *campanario,* visible from inside the cemetery, was added to the wall of the north wing in 1937.

Convento

Constructed at approximately the same time as the church, the *convento* is a one-story adobe building that extends south from the church for 422 feet. There is a breezeway between the church and the *convento*. The most distinctive feature of the *convento* is an arcade extending from the church for 225 feet on the east side. It is irregular in design with twelve arched and square openings all supported by square pillars of burnt bricks. The two center arches are elliptical and larger than the others. Four smaller semi-circular arches and then a still smaller one on either side balance these. Between the church and the small arch at the north end of the arcade are three square pillars. A shed roof covered with tile shelters the arcade, thereby forming and exterior corridor. The floor is paved with bricks set in alternating rows of horizontals and verticals. Doors and windows open onto this corridor. Wood grilles cover the larger windows. The doors are all solid wood, but not uniform in design.

Like the church, the *convento* had fallen into a state of disrepair by the late nineteenth century, but not ruin. In 1901, the building was plastered and generally renovated. By 1931, the north portion had been rehabilitated and converted into living quarters for the fathers. The southern portion, which was in worse condition, was rebuilt, but with the same materials and design as the original. It now houses a museum. The garden in front of the *convento* was developed in 1933. The wall between the *convento* and the road was erected in 1937. The fountain in the garden was built in 1942.

Courtyard

The courtyard of the main quadrangle from pillar to pillar measures 200 feet from east to west and 238 feet from north to south. It is informally landscaped with a fountain in the center of a largely grass lawn. The plants consist of a variety of fruit and ornamental trees. The fountain is not original and the date it was constructed is unknown. The courtyard retains a high level of physical integrity. Unlike the courtyards at Santa Barbara and San Juan Capistrano that were transformed into lush gardens, the courtyard at San Miguel remains mostly open space with minimal landscaping.

Neophyte Village

The plan for the mission in Engelhardt's *San Miguel Arcángel: The Mission on the Highway* shows the neophyte village northeast of the Mission complex. In most cases, the only neophytes who lived within the walls of the mission were unmarried girls. Villages for neophyte families were constructed outside of the mission walls so that they remained close by for religious instruction and labor. The village at San Miguel was rectangular in shape with continuous rows of adobe rooms extending north from the church. There was a north and east wing as well, but the village was open on the south. The mission's annual reports indicate that between 1805 and 1814 120 dwellings were constructed. The dwellings were approximately 17 feet square. At first the roofs were covered with tules, but later tiles were used. These dwellings would have housed only a small number of the neophytes who lived at the mission as the population was as high as 1,076. Others would have lived in traditional dwellings of their own construction, most likely huts constructed of tule, which were burnt when they began to decay and then replaced with new structures. The precise location of these structures is unknown.

The entire site was returned to the Church in 1855, but shortly thereafter a portion was taken by the Southern Pacific Railroad and then by the State Highway Department. Each right-of-way is approximately fifty feet wide. The remaining portion of the neophyte village is now located on a separate legal lot of 4.7 acres in size. The railroad track and highway destroyed many of the rooms on the west; those on the north and east have mostly decayed naturally, but are still visible in some locations.

In 2002 grading for a proposed housing development next to the Neophyte Village commenced. The Neophyte Village generally sits on a terrace east of the Mission. There is a slope between the Neophyte Village and the development site to the east, but not a fence. The County of San Luis Obispo issued an order to cease grading, and the developer complied, when local citizens noted that the activity might have encroached upon the Neophyte Village.

In 2003, Greenwood Associates, a qualified archeological firm, was hired to investigate whether or not any cultural resources were disturbed, the integrity of the resources, and what types of information may have been lost or disturbed. The archeologists did not attempt to define the boundaries between the two properties during the fieldwork because at one point in time they were both owned and used by the Mission. They concluded that mission-related cultural resources on both properties appeared to have been impacted and recommended additional archeological testing.

In 2004, a subsequent, more detailed report was prepared. The report concluded that grading occurred mostly along the slope between the two properties. The grading disturbed the east side of the neophyte village, but that the foundations and fire pits were still present. The adobe walls had already melted into the soil, and that it was this soil that was disturbed. The kiln on the slope was significant and retained its physical integrity. It should be noted that the kiln is not actually located on the lot included in the NHL application. The report states:

"It is probable that the bluff line has been mechanically straightened and impacted but to what degree is unknown. One of the questions is whether or not the east wall of the neophyte quadrangle would have been built on the very edge of the bluff. It would seem unlikely since it would be susceptible to erosion or slope failure. If the terrace originally extended farther to the east from its current configuration that would mean that the kiln was probably built deeper into the slope, or that the angle was steeper in the past than it is now. It is likely that the slope was consistently plowed away and eventually bulldozed to the property line. While it is doubtful that this question can be resolved with any fine degree of detail, it would seem that the slope has been modified by plowing and later by grading. It is likely that both of these activities would have impact the kiln, possible waster pits, and other associated objects or structures along the slope."

The report recommended standard mitigation measures including a substantial archeological study of the Neophyte Village, which has been funded.

The reports suggested that the remains of the neophyte village retain a relatively high level of integrity and have excellent data potential. Near the northeast corner of the site a segment of adobe wall remains. The overall length is 7.05 meters. For most of this length the wall is four or less adobe brick courses high; however, a taller section at the east end is nineteen adobe brick courses at the apex. The mud plaster, whitewash, or other coating has eroded leaving the adobe bricks exposed. The bricks used in the construction of the wall are typically 45-46 cm long, 29-32 cm wide, and 9-10 cm thick. The wall's coursing is irregular. Stone foundations show the location of partition walls for ten single-room dwellings. Within seven of the dwellings are concentrations of ash, which likely represent the locations of hearths. There is no indication of floor tiles, implying that the floors were simply dirt. The mission period deposits are also largely intact and have the potential to provide a more complete picture of the neophyte village as well as Hispanic and Native American culture. The archeological record is expected to yield evidence of historic and pre-historic trade networks, social interaction spheres, and the organizational principles of life at Mission San Miguel.

Noncontributing Resources

North and West Wings of the Original Mission

Reconstructed between 1938 and 1939 the north wing extends west from the church. There is a breezeway between the church and the north wing that connects the main courtyard to the cemetery. The north wing now includes a library and a chapel. These two rooms were constructed on the ruins of the original church that was destroyed by fire in 1806. The foundations and exterior walls of the old church were incorporated into the reconstruction of the north wing and measure 3 feet thick on the south and 4 feet thick on the north. On the north side of this wing is a non-original stone and masonry campanile, which faces the cemetery and the site of the neophyte village.

The west wing, 402 feet long, was constructed in 1808. It included a tannery, carpenters' room, and storage shed. The wing was reconstructed in 1938 on the original foundation. Original exterior walls were restored where present. The wing now comprises workshops, a kitchen, dining room, and living quarters.

A corridor supported by 66 pillars of burnt brick surrounds the courtyard and visually connects the buildings.

Restoration began in 1934 and was completed in 1938. All four walls of the corridor are painted in various colors around the windows and doors. Below the ivy design dado the walls are green and above they are white. The surround of the dining room door, the surround of one of the entrances to the retreat wing, and the surround to the Friars Chapel is extensively decorated. The corridor around the courtyard is much like the arcade in front of the *convento*, except the openings are not arched. The original floors are burnt brick in alternating rows of oblongs and squares. At some locations it has been replaced with standard 4 x 8 inch bricks laid in a herringbone pattern. The structural members of the roof are exposed. Round candelabras hang at various locations from the beams.

A variety of windows and doors are used throughout the mission complex. Segmented arches top some openings, while those that are rectangular typically have exposed wood lintels. All of the windows are wood with multiple lights, some are casements and some are double-hung sash. Originally window openings would have been covered with animal skin.

South Wing and Annex

The north wall of the south wing was all that remained by the turn of the century. It was stabilized in 1934. In 1937, the south wing was reconstructed. In 1947, the foundation was laid for an annex. It extends south from the west wing where the second, smaller courtyard was located. These two wings share an internal corridor, in the south it is single loaded and on the west it is double loaded. Commonly referred to as the Retreat Center, the two wings were built with the idea that San Miguel would become a training school for candidates who wished to become brothers.

Unlike the south wing that blends seamlessly with the rest of the wings around the main courtyard, the annex is subtly different. The exterior plaster is scored while in the rest of the mission it is smooth. There is also a consistency in the doors and windows and a more refined quality to the roof that is not found in the rest of the mission.

Novitiate Building

The Novitiate Building was constructed in 1959. Like the annex, it is architecturally compatible with the original mission buildings, but distinguishable as new. It is located south of the main mission complex. It is a one-story, T-shaped building with a smooth stucco exterior. Intersecting gabled roofs are fit with clay tile. The roofs are further characterized by overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. Wood-framed windows are set in recessed openings. There are several entrances to the building, but the main one is located in the center of the south elevation.

Restroom

A public restroom building is located in front of the *convento*. It was constructed in the 1960s, but the precise date is unknown. It is a one-story, rectangular-shaped building with a stucco exterior. Certain portions of the stucco were left missing, under which there is a faux adobe finish. A gabled roof with an east-west orientation is fit with clay tile. Rafters are exposed in the overhanging eaves. A vestibule in the center of the north elevation has doors to the men's room, ladies' room, and janitor's closet.

Carport/Storage Shed

A carport/storage shed is located south of the main mission complex, just west of Mission Road. The date it was constructed is unknown. It is a one-story adobe structure covered by a shed roof. There are solid walls on the north, south, and east sides. The west side is largely open with columns supporting the roof and dividing the interior into individual car spaces. A few of the spaces have been closed to create protected storage areas.

INTEGRITY

The twenty-one California missions are in various states of preservation, restoration, and reconstruction. Six of the missions are basically gone: Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Soledad, San Jose, San Fernando, and San Rafael. Santa Clara became the foundation of the University of Santa Clara. The quadrangular plan was incorporated into the campus but the buildings are all gone. The existing church is a reconstruction completed in 1929. At Santa Cruz a one-third sized replica of the original church was constructed in 1931. Soledad was the last mission founded in 1823. The complex was never extensive and the church collapsed in 1831. A small chapel was built soon after. When the rubble was cleared away for reconstruction in 1954, all that remained was the front corner of the chapel. At San Jose only a portion of the *convento* survives. It was restored between 1916 and 1917. In 1985 a reconstruction of the original adobe chapel was completed. At San Fernando the mission complex was damaged by an earthquake in 1971. The site was cleared and in 1974 the church and *convento* were reconstructed. At San Rafael the ruins of the mission were razed in 1870 and a new parish church was completed. In 1949, a replica of the original church was completed.

La Purisima is a more unusual case of reconstruction. Listed as an NHL in 1970, the site was acquired by the State of California in 1935, and between 1935 and 1941, it was accurately reconstructed by the National Park Service. San Juan Bautista is also somewhat unique. All that remain are the church and the convento, however they are part of a larger NHL district with an expanded historic context.

San Miguel enjoys unusual integrity not only for the remaining buildings, the quadrangular plan, the artwork within the church, but also for the fact that the site of the neophyte village survives largely undisturbed and the surrounding landscape remains rural. The integrity of San Miguel is comparable to that of the other missions that have been designated NHLs, and in some cases superior. Only nine missions, including San Miguel, retain large portions of their original buildings, which usually formed a quadrangle. Santa Barbara is probably the most authentic as it remained well preserved through 1925 when it was damaged by an earthquake. The front portion of the church and the entire *convento* had to be reconstructed. Santa Inez is one of the few missions to retain its historic setting and related features; however, two wings of the quadrangle lay in ruins.

San Miguel is located on 4.7 acres on the outskirts of the town of San Miguel. In addition, there is the 4.7-acre neophyte village across the road from the mission. The church, *convento*, courtyard, cemetery, and neophyte village retain their physical integrity from the period of significance, and therefore are identified as contributing resources. The church retains an extraordinary level of physical integrity. It was completed in 1818, and the murals for which it is famous were finished in 1821. It underwent general repairs in 1901, 1928, and 1938. Only ten of the mission churches, including San Miguel, can be described as well preserved or restored. The others are reconstructions and the church at San Juan Capistrano is in ruin. A large portion of the *convento* at San Miguel remained standing after secularization, and also underwent general repairs in 1901 and 1928. The southern portion was beyond repair but was accurately rebuilt between 1931 and 1932. The remaining buildings around the courtyard were reconstructed during the 1930s. The north and west wings are identified as a single non-contributing building as they are connected to each other, but separated from the church by a breezeway. The south wing and the annex are identified as a single non-contributing building as they share a common interior corridor. The novitiate building, restroom building, and carport/storage shed are the remaining noncontributing resources.

The Mission was damaged as a result of the San Simeon Earthquake in December 22, 2003. Damage included structural cracking in unreinforced adobe walls, spalling of large areas of wall and ceiling plaster from substrates and rotation (leaning) of tall adobe walls out of plane. Shoring at the north wall of the sacristy, at the windows and doors of the church, and at the east arcade was installed as a temporary measure.

In August of 2003, prior to the earthquake, a preliminary Preservation Plan was prepared to access existing conditions and to make recommendations regarding seismic retrofit, weather-proofing, and conservation of the church and sacristy. A new report was prepared in May of 2004 to provide a comprehensive and coordinated set of recommendations based on data collected during an intense on-site investigation. The scope of this report was not limited just to earthquake damage, but also included the following topics: Hazards and Hazardous Conditions, Code Compliance and Life Safety, Earthquake Damage Assessment, Infestation, Weather Protection, M, P&E Building Systems, and Decoration, Art and Artifacts.

Recently, restoration work began on the convento building. Additional funding is being sought for the restoration of the church. The proposed work will be carried out according to current restoration and rehabilitation philosophy that stresses maintenance of physical integrity. For example, in the past when mission frescos were "restored" they were often painted over, whereas today the approach of art conservators is stabilization. Likewise in the past, restoration of adobe walls usually entailed reconstruction or skimming walls with concrete. Recent approaches have involved inserting structural supports through cores drilled through the top of adobe walls. The exact approach at the Mission has not been resolved, but in the case of the Church it has been decided that the work will take place on the outside, but not be visible, out of respect for the frescos.

One would be hard pressed to find an historic building in California that has not suffered from an earthquake to one extent or another. This is especially true of unreinforced adobe buildings that are few and far between. Many of the early mission churches completely collapsed as a result of earthquakes during the nineteenth century. Amazingly, Mission Dolores survived the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, but many of the others have not been so lucky. In 1925 Mission Santa Barbara was earthquake damaged. The east tower collapsed and the front of the church and the convento were rebuilt. In 1971 Mission San Fernando was severely damaged. The site was cleared and the buildings were reconstructed in 1974. In 1987, Mission San Gabriel sustained severe earthquake damage and rehabilitated in 1996.

Only six of the missions in the chain (including San Miguel) retain the sites of their neophyte villages. The others include Santa Barbara, Santa Inez, San Antonio, San Luis Rey, and La Purisima. The village at Santa Barbara has been somewhat disturbed by a soccer field. The one at Santa Inez has been disrupted by the construction of a school; however, it is still included in the NHL district as a contributing site. The village at La Purisima has been excavated, while the ones at San Antonio and San Luis Rey have not.

While Mission Road (old Highway 101) and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks run between the Mission and the neophyte village at San Miguel, the integrity of the setting is not compromised. Because the roadway and track are at a slightly lower elevation, they are hardly visible from the neophyte village. The fact that the *Camino Real*, the historic route between the missions, evolved into Highway 101, a modern-day route, is a part of how the missions helped shape the development of California. The portion of the highway that passes by Mission San Miguel was eventually rerouted. Today Mission Road is a sleepy passageway for local traffic.

Many of the missions have been enveloped by urban development. In a few cases such as San Francisco (Mission Dolores), San Gabriel, and San Buenaventura all that remain are the church and perhaps the cemetery. In other cases such as San Diego and San Luis Obispo the churches and a small portion of the quadrangle remain. In either case, the rural landscape and accessory buildings, structures, and sites have all been lost. Along with San Miguel, only San Antonio, Santa Inez, and La Purisima continue to be set in rural landscapes.

San Miguel with its rural setting and remaining components is important in demonstrating the holistic

nature of a mission community as a residential and economic institution as well as a religious establishment.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A_X_ B_ C_X_ D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A_X_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G
NHL Criteria:	1 & 4
Criteria Exceptions:	1
NHL Theme(s):	I. Peopling Places 4. Community and neighborhood 5. Ethnic homelands 6. Encounters, conflicts, and colonization II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements 3. Religious institutions III. Expressing Cultural Values 2. Visual and performing arts 5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
Areas of Significance:	Architecture, Exploration and Settlement
Period(s) of Significance:	1797-1834
Significant Dates:	1797, Mission founded 1821, Church and *Convento* completed
Significant Person(s):	N/A
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	N/A
Historic Contexts:	II. European Colonial Exploration and Settlement A. Spanish Exploration and Settlement 4. California XVI. Architecture A. Colonial (Spanish Colonial) XXVI. Decorative and Folk Art

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

INTRODUCTION

Mission San Miguel Arcángel is eligible for listing as a National Historic Landmark under Criteria 1 and 4. The Mission qualifies for listing under Criterion 1 as it reflects a broad pattern of American history. It was the sixteenth of the twenty-one missions established in California by the Franciscan order between 1769 and 1823. This chain of missions was the first European settlement of California and had a major effect on the future development of the state. Mission San Miguel is exceptional in its ability to convey this important aspect of American history. It is unique among the remaining missions in the integrity of its buildings as well as its setting. Only five other missions retain the sites of their neophyte villages. The conversion of Native Americans to Christianity was the raison d'être of the missions. In turn, the labor provided by Native Americans was a key factor in the mission system.

The mission also qualifies for listing under Criterion 4 in the context of Spanish Colonial architecture. The mission is an excellent and rare example of Spanish Colonial architecture in the primitive style. The Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were inspired by the architecture of the missions. The interior of the church is nationally significant as the best and only surviving example of unrestored colonial art in any of the California missions.

The mission may also qualify for listing under Criterion 6 but has not yet been evaluated for its archeological significance. The site of the neophyte village now separated from the mission by a road and railroad right-of-way appears to have the potential to yield important information about the life of the Franciscans as well as the Native American Indians who lived there. The site is extremely rare in that it is one of the few neophyte villages in the mission chain that has not been disrupted by modern development and that has never been excavated.

Early Exploration

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Spain dominated the New World. After recovering from a series of internal wars and power struggles lasting for centuries, Spain became a unified nation under Ferdinand and Isabella. Having drained the surrounding countryside, Ferdinand and Isabella sought out new sources of wealth. They funded expeditions in search of spices, silks, pearls, and precious metals. Whenever the Spanish found abundance, they claimed the land for the Crown. In due time, colonies were planted to restrain the natives and to serve as depots for the accumulation of resources for shipment to Spain. Seeking a quicker route to the Indies, Christopher Columbus set sail west and discovered America for Spain in 1492. The islands that he first reached are still called the West Indies. Although Columbus returned to America three more times, he died believing that he had reached Asia.

Columbus, of course, never saw the mainland of the present-day United States, but the first explorations of the continental United States were launched from the Spanish possessions that he helped establish. The first of these took place in 1513 when a group of men under Juan Ponce de Leon landed on the Florida coast near the present city of St. Augustine.

With the conquest of Mexico (originally called New Spain) by Hernan Cortes in 1522, the Spanish further solidified their position in the Western Hemisphere. The ensuing discoveries added to Europe's knowledge of what was now named America – after the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, who wrote a widely popular account of his

voyages to a "New World." By 1529 reliable maps of the Atlantic coastline from Labrador to Tierra del Fuego had been drawn up, although it would take more than another century before hope of discovering a northwest passage to Asia would be completely abandoned.

Among the most significant early Spanish explorations was that of Hernando De Soto, a veteran conquistador who had accompanied Francisco Pizzaro during the conquest of Peru. Leaving Havana, Cuba in 1539, De Soto's expedition landed in Florida and ranged through the southeastern United States as far as the Mississippi River in search of riches.

Another Spaniard, Francisco Coronado, set out from New Spain in 1540 in search of Cibola, the mythical Seven Cities of Gold. Coronado's travels took his expedition to the Grand Canyon and Kansas, but failed to reveal the gold or treasure his men sought. However, Coronado's party did leave the peoples of the region a remarkable, if unintended gift; enough horses escaped from his party to transform life on the Great Plains.

Like so many explorers before him, Jacques Cartier set sail west in 1534 in hopes of discovering the Northwest Passage to Asia. Cartier's expeditions along the St. Lawrence River laid the foundations for the French claims to North America, which were to last until 1763.

Following the collapse of their first Quebec colony in the 1540s, French Huguenots attempted to settle the northern coast of Florida two decades later. The Spanish viewing the French as a threat to their trade route along the Gulf of Mexico destroyed the colony in 1565. Pedro Menendez would soon establish a town not far away. Founded by Spain in 1556, St. Augustine is the oldest continuous settlement in the United States.

The earliest European exploration of the California coast was by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. Sailing up the coast from Navidad, New Spain (Mexico) he reached what is now San Diego in 1542. After Cabrillo came Sebastian Vizcaino with instructions to survey the west coast as far north as possible. Leaving Acapulco with three small ships, he reached what is now Monterey on December 16, 1602. Neither Cabrillo nor Vizcaino discovered the great harbor of San Francisco.

The Building of New Spain by Sword and Cross

Spanish settlement was developed under close cooperation between the clergy and the military. It was customary for early Spanish explorers to travel with a priest to act as a chaplain for the troops. However, their function was more than religious as they were often the most educated and literate members of the expedition. As such, they were expected to keep a written record of the journey. Their duties also included the naming and mapping of important landmarks.

Eventually, the clergy would play a key role in Spain's colonization of the New World. Sometimes military invasion set the stage, as in Mexico, and the conquered land was later consolidated under the clergy and ultimately, civil authority. In some areas, where the natives were known to be docile, the clergy opened the frontier with only a military escort for protection. This was the method used in establishing the colony of Alta California.

Based in New Spain, the Spanish continued to colonize territories to the north. In 1598, the Spanish founded New Mexico, which included the present states of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Few Spaniards, however, were willing to colonize the newest land on the far reaches of the empire. With no one available to follow the clergy, they established missions by transforming the natives into Spaniards by Christianizing them and teaching them Spanish. Thereby the natives were to colonize their own land. Once the natives were

appropriately civilized, the missions were to give up the land to create a *pueblo* (or town) for the natives.

The Franciscans had been the principal missionaries for over two centuries in the northern part of New Spain, except for those parts where the Jesuits had their missions. In 1767, the Spanish king expelled the Jesuits from the entire New World for treason. Their expulsion immediately put a heavy burden on the other orders to provide priests to the numerous missions abandoned by the Jesuits. The Franciscans were put in charge of all of the Jesuit missions in Baja California. The Dominicans petitioned for a share in the colonization of Alta California. Through a negotiated settlement with the government, the Franciscans relinquished control of the missions in Baja California to the Dominicans in exchange for the exclusive control of a new chain of missions that they would develop in Alta California.

The mission system the Franciscans developed differed from those of other orders. Father Pedro Perez de Mezquia in Texas had first developed the Franciscan method in the eighteenth century. It had been further tested and refined in the Sierra Gorda Missions after 1744 and thereafter became the blueprint for all missions sponsored by the Franciscans. One of the guiding principles of the Franciscan mission was that all of the natives who were being instructed in Catholicism had to live close to the mission and become a self-supporting community. The goal was not just to change their religious beliefs, but their culture and language as well which involved living in a permanent community, working regular hours, and wearing European-style clothes. In addition neophytes received instruction in farming, ranching, building, weaving, and so on, as well as Spanish. A small guard of soldiers helped maintain discipline inside the community and prevent attacks from outside, with the final decisions about discipline always resting with the clergy. To maintain their control over the missions the Franciscans founded them far enough from *presidios* (or forts) and *pueblos* to avoid conflicts of interest.

The California Missions

By the mid-eighteenth century, the eastward push of Russian forts and the presence of Hudson's Bay traders at the mouth of the Columbia River, insured that the settlement of Alta California was an important part of the massive reorganization of the northern frontier of New Spain launched in 1765. Under the direction of Visitador General Jose de Galvez, the plans for a new chain of California missions were formulated. Don Gaspar de Portola, who had been recently appointed governor of Baja California, was placed in charge of the expedition, while Father Junipero Serra was placed in charge of the missionaries. Based in Baja California, four separate expeditions, two by land and two by sea, set off in 1769 to colonize Alta California. Three primary targets for exploration and occupation were determined long before 1769: San Diego, Monterey and the so-called Bay of San Francisco. Of the 219 members from the original expedition only half made it to San Diego, as many deserted along the way while a quarter of them died en route.

The founding and establishment of missions depended on three factors that eventually made them great centers of farming and industry. The first requisite was a large native population that would provide labor and become Christians. The second requisite was a site with fresh water and fertile land for crops and grazing. Third, but of less importance, was the proximity of the site to the ocean for the eventual transportation of goods back to Spain when the missions became towns.

Padres were typically assigned in pairs so that they did not become too lonely. At the start, each mission received $1,000 from the government to purchase bells, tools, seeds, vestments, and other needs. Originally this money came from the Pious Fund, first set up and administered by the Jesuits. When the Jesuits were expelled, the government confiscated the fund. In addition, missions already established nearby were expected to donate breeding stock, fowl, grain, seeds, cuttings, wine and other supplies. The mission properties were

held in trust by the padres for the natives who were expected to become civilized in ten years. The padres would then return the land, livestock and produce, and move on to found other missions that would eventually become towns.

The first mission was founded in San Diego in 1769 while the final, twenty-first mission was founded in Sonoma in 1823. Each mission was identified with one of four military districts, each with a *presidio*, which maintained troops to protect the colony from foreign invasion and maintain internal order. Presidios were constructed at San Diego, Monterey, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara. Of the three civilian *pueblos* founded, only San Jose and Los Angeles have survived.

Almost from the beginning there were clashes between the religious and military authorities. The missions subsidized the military and supported the colonization of the province through the sale of food and crude textiles to the military at remarkably stable prices. In turn the missions received protection as well as goods from central Mexico that could not be produced locally. In other words, the missions subsidized the cost of the garrisons to the Spanish government. The more the missions were able to provide, the less the Spanish had to spend on supplies. The material success of the missions, however, aroused the jealousy of soldiers as well as civilians who relied on them for food and labor. The fact that the missions maintained strict controls over land and labor actually stymied civilian settlement and economic growth.

Given time, the orderly transfer of wealth from the Franciscans to the natives might have happened. But secularization took place in the turbulent period that followed the creation of the Mexican Republic. All Spanish-born padres were expelled and Mexican settlers, who were legally barred from owning land, were enabled to buy land from the natives. More often than not the Mexican settlers hoodwinked the natives out of their land or they outright appropriated it. The land was subdivided and ended up in the great ranchos that were established at the time. Within a few short years the bulk of the missions' resources – land, crops, livestock – had been dispersed. With a few exceptions, the missions were abandoned.

The History of Mission San Miguel

The padres chose the sites of their missions so that only a day's journey separated one mission from another. Thus San Miguel was midway between the missions at San Luis Obispo and San Antonio de Padua in Jolon. Founded on July 25, 1797 by Father Fermin Francisco de Lasuen, Mission San Miguel Arcángel was established next to a large Salinan Village known as Cholam or Cholami. Lasuen succeeded Serra as Father Presidente of the Alta California missions. He founded three other missions that year including Santa Clara, San Juan Bautista, and San Fernando. The first administrator of the mission, Father Buenaventura Sitjar, had ministered to the Salinan people for twenty-five years at Mission San Antonio. He spoke their language fluently, and was one of the few missionaries to record it for posterity. Father Juan Martin replaced Father Sitjar in 1799. Martin is credited with much of the growth and development of the mission and was buried in the sanctuary in 1824.[1]

A temporary church was built in 1797 but was lost to fire in 1806. Preparation for a new adobe church began soon thereafter. In 1808, the fathers built a granary, carpenter's room, and a sacristy. Tiles and adobe blocks were made and stored for ten years before the stone foundation of the church was laid in 1816. It was soon ready for a roof, but it took a long time to bring the roofing timbers from the nearby mountains, located forty miles away, and the church was not completed until 1818. By 1821 the entire church was completed along with the interior murals designed by Estevan Munras. A *convento* was also constructed at this time to house the

[1] Msgr. Francis Weber, Provincial Annals, 1797-1938, Mission San Miguel Archive, San Miguel, California.

padres.[2]

The success of each mission was directly related to the number of Native Americans converted and retained to cultivate the lands and preserve the produce. In 1814, the number of inhabitants at Mission San Miguel reached its highest. There were then 1,076 registered neophytes (or 1,096 depending on the source). From the church, the property extended eighteen miles to the north and eighteen miles to the south; the property extended sixty-six miles to the east, and as far as the Pacific Ocean thirty-five miles to the west. Reports that there were 20,000 cattle, as many sheep, and 14,000 horses in 1818, may have been an exaggeration or an indication of the beginning of the end.[3] In preparation for the secularization of the missions, Governor Jose M. Echeandia issued a proclamation requiring all of the missions to report the extent of their property. In 1827 Father Cabot of San Miguel reported that the land was not particularly suitable for the cultivation of crops due to the lack of water for irrigation. Wheat and barley fields were dependent upon rain. There were two streams and the Nacimiento River (now called the Salinas) but they ran dry in the summer. At Rancho San Simeon there was an adobe house, 800 cattle, and some tame horses. The mission also possessed other outlying ranchos: Santa Isabel where there was a small vineyard, San Antonio where barley was planted, Paso Robles where wheat was sown, and Asuncion. In the case of the last two there were adobe buildings constructed to hold grain. The herds of the Mission consisted of 2,130 cattle, 120 oxen, 7,904 sheep, and 62 pigs.[4] Mission San Miguel was secularized in 1834 and put under the control of a civilian administrator. With the exile of Spanish Franciscans, the Salinan neophytes left Mission San Miguel for their ancestral homelands throughout the Central Coast. By 1841, there were only thirty neophytes remaining at the mission.

On July 4, 1846, Petronillo Rios and William Reed took possession of the mission buildings and the Reed family occupied the recently abandoned mission.[5] Following the murder of eleven Reed family members and household staff, the mission rooms were converted to commercial stores such as a hotel, saloon, and retail shops. The mission buildings and surrounding property were returned to the Catholic Church in 1859 by President Buchanan. A resident priest was assigned to Mission San Miguel in 1878 and the mission parish was established. In 1928, the mission was returned to the Franciscans becoming a novitiate training school for those becoming Franciscan Friars as it remains to the present.

Impact of the Missions

Along with the *presidio* and the *pueblo*, the mission was one of three major institutions used by Spain in the colonization of the New World. In California the influence of the mission far outweighed the other two. The expeditions which led to the establishment of the California missions as well as the chain of missions, established place names and important transportation routes that are still in use today. The *El Camino Real* (or Royal Highway or King's Highway) was the primary route between the missions. This route became an important stagecoach line used by Mexican and American settlers who formed towns along its route. With only a few variations this route is now U.S. 101. San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco, of course, became major centers of industry and important ports for the transportation of goods. After secularization, the missions became the nucleus for the formation of several towns, including San Fernando, Sonoma, San Juan Bautista, San Gabriel, San Luis Obispo, San Juan Capistrano, San Jose, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. Perhaps the greatest impact of the missions was in the area of agriculture. Prior to the missions, there was not a single

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Weber, Msgr. Francis, *Mission on the Highway: A Documentary History of San Miguel Mission* (Hong Kong, Japan: Libra Press Limited, 1979), 57.
[4] Ibid., 22-24.
[5] John Berger, *The Franciscan Mission of California* (New York, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 244.

cow, horse, sheep, goat, grain of wheat, or grape in California. The origins of today's wine industry can be traced to the vineyards planted at the missions.

The impact on the native population was the most profound change of all. Prior to European settlement, there were more Native Americans living along the coast of California per square mile than any other part of the United States. Spanish colonization led to modifications in Native American cultural practices and religious beliefs, but did not result in the complete acculturation and conversion process the Franciscans had hoped for. Native Americans selectively adopted elements of Spanish culture and Catholic beliefs and ignored others. The survival of cultural practices and religion is unfortunately related to the high mortality rate among mission neophytes. At the beginning of the mission period Franciscans were able to recruit new Native Americans to replace the acculturated ones who died. By 1810 recruitment began to decline, by 1820 Native American resistance had grown and by 1830 several revolts had taken place.

There were only a few violent incidents with Native Americans at San Miguel. These did not involve the neophytes, but rather tribes in the surrounding area. An undated essay appearing in the San Francisco Chronicle (circa 1890s) reported, "…the Tulare Indians made war against the San Miguel, San Antonio, and Soledad missions. Sergeant Ignacio Vallejo headed an expedition against the hostiles and had a desperate encounter with them at Pleyto. Afterward he stood a siege at the Mission San Miguel, behind thick, high adobe walls, which concluded by the Indians being routed and driven back."[6]

Mortality rates were particularly high for women and children. While children represented 21% of the neophyte population, they accounted for 44% of all deaths. While part of this devastation can be attributed to epidemics of measles and chickenpox, syphilis, malnutrition, and poor sanitary conditions were also major factors.[7] Ironically, early explorers and missionaries remarked at the good health of the Native American population.

Mission San Miguel was not immune from these sad statistics. In 1813, Father Presidente Jose Senan requested all of the missions to respond to a questionnaire about the Native American population. Called the *Interrogatorio*, the questionnaire was developed by the Spanish government. Fathers Martin and Cabot of Mission San Miguel responded that "the dominant infirmity is the *Galico* (Spanish for syphillis), which sends them to the grave quickly; for it has been experienced that in the first years we had more births than deaths, afterwards as many deaths as births; but at present there are four deaths to three births."[8]

Architectural Significance

Mission San Miguel is significant at the national level under Criterion 4 as it constitutes a unique record of the art and architecture of the Spanish Colonial period in the United States. The mission represents a fine example of Franciscan mission architecture, which later became the source of inspiration for the Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival architecture that continues to characterize the Southwestern United States to this day. It is nationally significant as the best of the primitive type of architecture that characterized the California missions.

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[6] Weber, *Mission on the Highway*, 48.
[7] Robert Jackson and Edward Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 118.
[8] Fr. Zephyrin Englehardt, O.F.M., *Mission San Miguel: The Mission of the Highway* (Santa Barbara, CA: Mission Santa Barbara, c. 1929), 17.

The founding of a mission was always celebrated with a mass, and the chapel or church (along with a stockade) was always the first building to be completed. Yet the actual house of worship was only part of a much larger complex, which in some cases spread over as much as six acres (in the case of San Luis Rey). The term "mission" does not apply to the church alone, but the entire complex, which also included quarters for padres, quarters for girls and unmarried women, storehouses, workshops, granaries, mills and tanneries. The complexes were almost always constructed in the form of a quadrangle with a patio in the center. Access was limited to one principal entrance to guard against hostile Indians and trespassers. The only mission that varied from this plan was La Purisima.

The church was usually located at the northeast corner of the quadrangle on and east-west axis with the sanctuary at the west end. Situated on the north side of the church was a cemetery, often surrounded by a wall. The wing adjacent to the church was the padres' quarters known as the *convento*. It also included guest quarters and sometimes libraries and chapels. The *convento* opened on both sides, one faced a public plaza next to the church and the other faced an interior patio. Additional, smaller quadrangles were sometimes added as the missions grew. Dwellings for Indians, soldiers' barracks, guardhouses, kilns, mills, cisterns, and *lavanderias* were typically outside of the mission walls.

When it came to the construction of the missions, the fathers had limited resources to work with. Many of the features of the missions that later entered the vernacular architecture of the American Southwest were products of necessity. Only at San Carlos Borromeo, San Gabriel, San Juan Capistrano, and Santa Barbara was stone employed. Since adobe brick was used otherwise, the walls had to be thick and the arches squat simply to support their own weight. The long eaves and graceful overhangs served to protect the adobe walls from the elements. The rounded roof tiles served the same purpose. The corridors extending along the front of the *conventos* and surrounding the inner patios, allowed for dry passage between the rooms during the rainy months of winter and a cool place to sit during the hot summer months. Using adobe alone it was difficult to construct a four-sided bell tower. Hence the development of the *campanario*, a single high wall with clean, arched spaces where the bells could hang. Sometimes the *campanario* was found in an *espadana*, a pedimented façade at the front of the church. In some cases, however, *espadanas* were purely decorative features.

In his seminal book *The Architecture of California Missions*, Kurt Baer identifies the characteristics of the missions and divides them into four groups according to style: the primitive, the fortress, the baroque, and the neoclassical. Mission San Miguel is by far the best example of the primitive type. Also in this group are San Rafael, Soledad, and San Jose, though virtually nothing remains of the original buildings at these missions. The other two missions in this group are Solano and Santa Inez. "The walls of most of the mission churches of the primitive type were made of adobe, wood, brick, and tile. The plan of the church was very simple: a long, rather narrow rectangle, fairly high walls, a single ridgepole or gable roof. One end was walled off for the sacristy; however, in some cases it was built to the side as an addition or lean-to. Over the entrance, in churches of the later forms, was the choir. The roof was supported by a framework of timbers and covered with rushes and tile. Timber was also used for door framing although brick was sometimes used. There was no bell tower in these primitive missions nor a *campanario*; the bells were hung from beams erected usually near the entrance to the church."[9]

The primitive type is important in documenting the evolution of mission architecture as the form was used at most of the missions. Some mission churches are basically primitive in form with slight elaborations. The church at Santa Inez is a good example of this. It is similar to the church at San Miguel, but also includes a *campanario* and simulated pilasters that vaguely remind one of the neoclassical style found at Santa Barbara.

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[9] Kurt Baer, *Architecture of California Missions* (Berkeley: CA: University of California Press, 1958), 26.

In some cases, churches started as primitive types but changed as new more elaborate facades were added and as churches were enlarged. Santa Barbara, for instance, had four different facades, each one more elaborate as the next as the church was enlarged.

The church is also significant under Criterion 4 for the high artistic value of the murals on the interior. The church was accorded the mixed blessing of restoration considerably later and to a lesser extent than most of the other missions. As a result, the original artwork and craftsmanship are still in evidence. Mary Gordon Holway states in her comprehensive study of Spanish Colonial art entitled *Art of the Old World in New Spain and the Mission Days of Alta California*: "Of the mission wall paintings untouched by a despoiling hand, decorated by neophytes or wandering artists, all that remain are those at San Miguel and Santa Inez."[10] Unlike Mission Santa Inés, however, whose interior church walls have been whitewashed and repainted, San Miguel is singular in its integrity.

In *Indian Life at the Old Missions* Edith Buckland Webb discusses the use of pigment by California Indians prior to European settlement which included cave and body painting. She states: "Seeing the natives with their persons painted in several colors it is not strange that the Padres at once began considering ways and means of turning this custom to practical advantage."[11] It was more likely that decorative painting was viewed by the missionaries as a practical means of imitating the elaborate architecture of the churches of Mexico and Spain. The older mission churches in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were also painted in a similar way. The first record indicating that California mission churches had been decorated with paintings was at Mission Santa Clara. In most instances churches were decorated at the direction of the missionaries. At Mission San Gabriel records indicate that the missionaries ordered one dozen artists brushes and a book entitled "Painting Without an Instructor." There were only three instances where other artists painted or directed the painting at mission churches or other buildings. These included Thomas Doak at San Juan Bautista, Augustin Davila at Santa Clara, and Estevan Munras at San Miguel.

Little is known of Doak and Davila, but Munras' daughter communicated his story to the noted California historian Hubert Bancroft who recorded it for posterity in his *History of California (1884-1890)*. A native of Barcelona where he was trained as an artist, Munras traveled to Monterey to settle the estate of his brother who died after serving the Spanish Viceroy. He arrived in 1814 by way of Peru. He eventually became an agent of the Spanish government and operated a trading store agent to his house. It may have been a connection with other Catalonians that led him to Mission San Miguel. He was married at Mission Soledad by an old friend, Father Pedro Cabot, whose brother, Father Juan Vicente Cabot, was a priest at Mission San Miguel. Today his name is well preserved in Casa Munras, which he built in 1822 for his wife Catalina Manzanelli, though little remains of the original structure, and in Munras Avenue, one of the principal routes in downtown Monterey.

Accounts of church murals in the mid-nineteenth century usually describe them as crude, grotesque, and gaudy. Rexford Newcomb spoke of the contrast between the exterior and interior San Miguel in *The Old Mission Churches and Historic Houses of California*. He stated: "The simple bare exterior walls of the church are not of great interest, but the interior, due to its curious and ostentatious wall paintings, is full of interest."[12] In 1940 all of the missions south of San Miguel were surveyed for decorative art by the Index of American Art program sponsored by the Works Progress Administration. The quality and design of decorative art varied widely from mission to mission and depended on the natural media available, the interest and skill of the native groups, and

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[10] Mary Gordon Holway, *The Art of the Old World in New Spain and the Mission Days of Alta California* (San Francisco, CA: A.M. Robertson, 1922), 109.
[11] Edith Buckland Webb, *Indian Life at the Old Missions* (Los Angeles, CA: Warren F. Lewis, Pub., 1952), 234.
[12] Rexford Newcomb, *The Franciscan Mission Architecture of Alta California* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1916), 250.

the educational background and artistic abilities of the instructors. Holway emphasized in *Art of the Old World in New Spain and the Mission Days of Alta California* the Moorish and Byzantine character of the mural work:

> Except in few instances the decoration of the main space of the building was confined to a running border above a flat dado on the walls, a running vine on other pattern outlining window space, door, and other niches containing the statues, which were usually of wood. Elaborate decoration was reserved for the chancel space and often the sacristy walls were more extensively beautified comparatively than those of the church itself. Frequently the form offered a better opportunity to study native work than any other part of the building interior. The church ceilings, especially those of wood, were either ornamented directly or covered by a decorated canvas.[13]

The murals at Mission San Miguel are more elaborate than those of the other missions and were organized around an architectural design scheme that exhibits Classical and Greek influences, as well as Moorish and Byzantine. How much of the decoration was freehanded by Munras is unknown but the wall paper-like quality of the sanctuary and sacristy walls strongly suggest the use of stencils. These were most likely cut from rawhide and assured a regularity of line and brush stroke. The All-Seeing Eye over the statue of Saint Michael on the wall behind the altar is Moorish in origin and appears frequently in mission decoration. The Greek key pattern found at the top and bottom of the frieze panel was not common to the missions, but is also found at Santa Inés. It has been suggested that Munras may have had a hand in the murals at Santa Inés, but more likely Munras drew his designs from a book that was shared by the fathers of both missions. The unique fan-pattern on the north and south walls of the nave are painted in alternating shades of pink and green. These have also been described as shell-patterns in honor of Saint James, as the shell is the attribute of that saint.[14]

The national significance of the interior is highlighted in many scholarly works on the subject. In one of the earliest architectural studies of historic buildings in California, *California Missions and Landmarks*, Harrie Rebecca Piper Forbes stated: "Mission San Miguel is now one of the most interesting missions of California, principally because of the artistic and beautiful interior decorations…The altar is a valuable piece of decorative work as representative of the best art of the mission period of California."[15] There are no comparable examples of such artwork in any of the California missions. The only other missions that retain original wall paintings are Mission Santa Inés and Mission Santa Barbara. The paintings at Santa Inez are extensive but have been white washed. In 1936, artists employed by the Works Progress Administration restored them. The NHL application for Santa Inés states: "Only one other California mission, San Miguel, possesses substantially original interior decorations superior to those of Mission Santa Inés."[16] The paintings in Santa Barbara remain as well but are not as extensive as those at San Miguel and are not the central decorative element of the church. As previously stated the church at Mission San Miguel is one of the more primitive churches in the chain. It is the simplicity of the exterior that makes the interior decoration all the more striking.

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[13] Holway, *Art of the New World*, 107.
[14] Harrie Rebecca Piper Forbes, *California Missions and Landmarks* (Los Angeles, CA: El Camino Real, 1925), 200.
[15] Ibid., 201.
[16] Julia Costello, Edna Kimbro and Larry R. Wilcoxon, *Santa Inés Mission, National Historic Landmarks Survey Nomination* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Department of Interior, 2001).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Mission Complex - 4.739 acres
Neophyte Village - 4.714 acres
Total – 9.453

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	10	708292	3957802

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the mission complex are delineated by the modern-day roads of San Luis Obispo Road on the north, Mission Road on the east, and San Luis Obispo-Monterey Road on the west. The southern boundary was delineated by Estrella Road; however, it was abandoned in 1948 and eventually acquired by the Church.

Boundary Justification:

The NHL boundary includes the buildings and sites that have historically been part of Mission San Miguel and that retain their physical integrity. The boundaries of the mission complex and neophyte village correspond with the boundaries of those parcels of land returned to the church in 1855 with additions made in 1889. The Church also acquired the land further south. An adobe wall now surrounds it, and there is a campanario at the southern terminus. The land is mostly open space with minor improvements such as the addition of a handball court in the 1950s. It is not included in the boundaries as its original purpose and significance is unknown.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
January 24, 2007