

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 30 1988
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana Convento Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 15151 San Fernando Mission Boulevard NA not for publication

(Post Office: Mission Hills) (Incorporated City:) Los Angeles

city, town NA vicinity of

state California code 91345 county Los Angeles code 037

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Roman Catholic Seminary of Los Angeles

street & number P.O. Box 1071

city, town San Fernando NA vicinity of state California (91341)

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Los Angeles County Hall of Records

street & number 227 North Broadway

city, town Los Angeles state California (90012)

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service; also, Library of Congress

city, town Washington state District of Columbia

7. Description

Condition
 excellent deteriorated unaltered original site
 good ruins altered moved date _____
 fair unexposed

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana Convento is a long, low rectangular adobe with tiled gable roof. It contains a ground floor, an attic and a small cellar. The eave of the roof extends on one long side to form the cover of a 19 arch colonnade. It is believed the building was built in stages between 1810 and 1922. The original physical appearance of the convento, or monastery, is not documented, but there is strong reason to believe it has not changed greatly over the years. An 1868 drawing of the mission buildings indicates at least by that time the building had attained the general appearance it retains today. Over the years new windows have probably been pierced, glass panes have been added, thin wall partitions have been added on the interior, an exterior door has been boarded up, the roof tiles were removed and then replaced after a new wood frame was built, broken floor tiles have been replaced with tiles from the chapel, the bell tower which crumbled in 1971 has not been reconstructed. The convento, along with a fountain across the street on city property, is the only original feature which remains from Mission San Fernando Ray de Espana.

The convento is a rectangular building, containing a ground floor, an attic, and a small cellar. It is 234' 2" in length (east to west), and 64' 11" in width (north to south). The roof, covered with red clay tile, is peaked in form, with the ridgeline parallel to the long dimension of the building and centered over the principal volume of the building, the adobe walls of which have exterior dimensions of 234' 2" by 50' 4". The roof also extends over an arcade in front of the entire south facade of the building. The outer surface of the arcade is 14' 7" from the corresponding surface of the main building volume. The arcade contains one arched opening at each end and nineteen along its south facade; these vary slightly in size, but typically have 10' to 11' openings; the spring line of the curves is approximately 8' above grade. The arches are separated by 2' by 2' square piers. All exterior surfaces of the building and arcade are stuccoed. The south wall of the building is penetrated by eight doors and eleven windows, all arched. The north wall is penetrated by nine doors (all arched) and nine windows (six arched and three rectangular) on the first floor, and fourteen windows on the second floor, all rectangular. The east facade contains two rectangular windows on each floor, and the west facade, a rectangular door and the outline of another, now walled up. The adobe walls (both the exterior walls of the main volume and an interior wall extending down the center of the building, except for the easternmost room) are 3' 10" in thickness. The interior volumes created by these major walls are subdivided into smaller rooms by thinner walls, now set up with period furnishings as museum displays illustrative of the history of the Mission. The attic is also divided by the central wall, except on the east end, where a transverse room corresponds to that below. The small cellar is below the first-floor transverse room.

The original physical appearance of the convento is not documented, but there is strong reason to believe it has not changed over the years. The present
(CONTINUED)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1810–1835 **Builder/Architect** (Unknown)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary of Significance: The convento building of the Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana is the oldest surviving building in the San Fernando Valley district of the City of Los Angeles (hence its significance in architectural history), the only one in that area surviving from the era of Spanish occupation of California (hence its significance to the history of the exploration and settlement of California), and the only surviving one in that area built as part of the development of the chain of Franciscan missions of Spanish and Mexican California (hence its significance in the history of religion in California); additionally, it appears to be the largest surviving building of Spanish California, which adds to its significance in architectural history.

The Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana was founded on September 8, 1797, by Fr. Fermin Francisco de Lasuen, then Presidente of the Franciscan missions of Alta, California. The chain of missions had been developed in conjunction with Spanish settlement, to convert the native peoples to Christianity. The converts, or "neophytes", were, in addition to religious instruction, taught agricultural techniques and handicrafts. San Fernando, like the other missions, thus developed extensive farming and ranching operations. Early structures were replaced with a substantial church built in 1804–06. At this time, there were about 1,000 neophytes attached to San Fernando. From 1810 to 1822, construction was carried out in stages on what contemporary documents referred to as a "house for the Fathers" (i.e., the Franciscan missionaries assigned to San Fernando). This is the convento, or monastery, which survives today. It exceeded the residential needs of the two Franciscans customarily assigned to San Fernando, and accomodated such other uses as the provision of rooms for visitors and other travelers. Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, communicated to and accepted by California the following year, brought individuals to political power far less sympathetic to the Franciscan missions than the Spanish government had been, and the ultimate result was the "secularization" of San Fernanco and the other missions in 1835. By this act the neophytes and nearly all of the lands were taken from the control of the Franciscans. The neophytes dispersed and there ceased to be financial resources available for maintenance of the mission buildings. Following cession of California by Mexico to the United States government in 1848, Bishop Alemany petitioned the government in 1853 for title to the San Fernando Mission buildings and immediate grounds; this resulted in the issuance of a patent, signed by President Lincoln on May 31, 1862. The convento was sufficiently intact for continued use by various tenants, but the church decayed badly and the other buildings virtually disappeared. (CONTINUED)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Books) Engelhardt, Fr. Zephyrin, O.F.M., San Fernando Rey, The Mission of the Valley (Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1927) Weber, Msgr. Francis J., The Mission in the Valley: a Documentary History of San Fernando, Rey de Espana (1975)
 (CONTINUED)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property One half

Quadrangle name San Fernando

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>11</u>	<u>365500</u>	<u>3793200</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Bounded on the south by San Fernando Mission Boulevard, on the west by the property line (which is approximately the west wall of the building), on the north and east by lines parallel to the corresponding facades of the building and distant ten feet therefrom.
 (CONTINUED)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title (P.O. Box 611, Santa Monica, CA 90406-0611; (213) 452-0914)
 David G. Cameron for Msgr. Francis J. Weber, Director

organization Archival Center, San Fernando Mission date April 15, 1988

street & number 15151 San Fernando Mission Boulevard telephone (818) 361-0186

city or town Mission Hills state California

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Kathryn Weather*
 title _____ date 9/26/88

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Entered in the National Register

John M. Brown
 Keeper of the National Register

date 10-27-88

Attest:
 Chief of Registration

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appearance is substantially identical to that documented by photographs in the late 19th century; since then, only rehabilitation and repairs of earthquake damage have occurred. For economic reasons, the building would not have been altered following secularization in 1835, hence the present appearance should fairly represent the building as of the end of the Mission era. The one minor exception to this is the loss of a small bell tower from the roof over the southwest corner of the building, which was destroyed in the 1971 earthquake and not replicated.

As to the surroundings, there has been a paved street directly in front of the building since the early 20th century. On the west, property under separate ownership virtually abuts the wall of the building. On the north and east, any historic gardens or outbuildings went to waste and ruin following secularization and throughout the remainder of the 19th century; this area has now been developed with gardens incorporating plant materials known to have been used during the Mission era.

Resource Count:

1 Contributing building

Total: 1

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The Landmarks Club of Southern California, under the leadership of Charles F. Lummis, began rehabilitation efforts by leasing the San Fernando Mission buildings from Bishop Montgomery on May 1, 1897, for a five-year period at \$1 per year, renewable for an additional five years. The Club installed a shake roof on the church; on the convento, it removed the tile roof, installed a new pine framework, and replaced the tiles. Following the expiration of the Landmarks lease, Bishop Conaty turned the Mission over to the care of the Calretian Fathers. The Club continued its interest; Candle Day at the Mission on August 16, 1916, raised over \$3,400 for repairs. Major rehabilitation undertaken during the 1930s was undone in 1971, when the great earthquake of that year damaged the church beyond repair, leaving only the convento surviving from the Mission era.

0-7864X

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(Anon.) The California Missions: A Pictorial History (Menlo Park, Calif., Lane Book Co., 1964)

(Papers) Cameron, David G., Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Landmarks Club of Southern California: Pioneering in Historic Preservation (given at the Charles F. Lummis Centennial Symposium, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, California, February 2, 1985)

(Measured Drawings) Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana - Church (Sheet 1 of 8 Sheets) and Monastery (Sheets 1, 2 and 3 of 7 sheets) in Historic American Buildings, California (David G. De Long, ed.) (New York, Garland, 1980), pp. 174 ff. in Volume II)

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The boundaries on the south and west are the original boundaries of the 1862 patent; the boundaries on the north and east are approximate, representing the current setting of the convento in gardens planted with historically relevant plant materials. Beyond these boundaries is the remainder of the historic Mission grounds, with reconstructions of the church and other long-since-destroyed buildings sited on the original foundations.

SKETCH MAP/SITE PLAN

MISSION SAN FERNANDO REY DE ESPANA CONVENTO BUILDING

by David G. Cameron, April, 1988

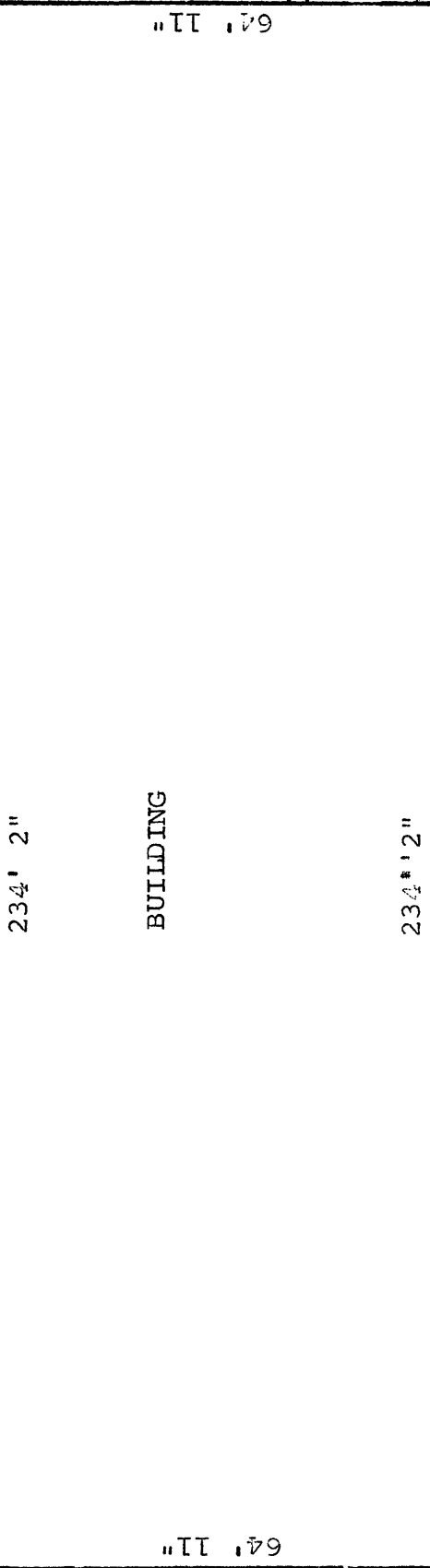
*15151 San Fernando Mission Blvd.
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, CA*

North



Property under separate ownership

Modern gardens using historic plant materials



San Fernando Mission Boulevard
(City of Los Angeles street right-of-way)