



Santa Cruz Mission Adobe interpreter Karma Graham in one of the display rooms at the park.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

on a Mission for History

McPherson seeking state money to preserve Spanish missions

Historic Buildings

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SANTA CRUZ

The 21 missions that shaped California's history, transportation routes and culture have fallen on hard times.

The shrines to the settling of the Golden State for the most part are decaying, as are the wealth of artifacts within them. Father Junipero Serra would be distressed.

State Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, is pushing for state money to preserve the Spanish missions, which collectively draw more than 5 million visitors each year.



McPHERSON

"The missions from San Diego to Sonoma are a critical element of our state's history," McPherson said. "We should do what we can to ensure their preservation."

That will be a big task. Not only are many of the mission falling apart, the myriad documents, artwork and artifacts that decorate them also need preserving.

"There are documents Father Serra had in San Diego that are in file cabinets," said Richard Ameil, president of the California Missions Foundation, which is also pursuing a private funding effort.

The Santa Cruz Mission, or what is left of it, is one of the less needy missions around the state.

"The adobe itself is really well-restored," said Randy Widera, executive director of the Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks.

Only a seven-room adobe completed in 1824 is left from the Santa Cruz Mission, which was built in



Jerika Barron of Half Moon Bay enjoys the grounds of the Santa Cruz Mission Adobe during a visit.

1791 along what is now School Street.

A survey of each site's needs by the California Missions Foundation showed the local mission needs about \$400,000 in refurbishing, but state parks curator for the Santa Cruz district Steve Radosevich said that number is probably high.

A \$600,000 boost five years ago built new restrooms, a bookstore and patio, and built a wall around the adobe.

Radosevich said any new money could be used

for a landscaping and interpretive exhibit estimated at \$200,000 or less. The plan would landscape the site with plants reminiscent of the original mission days, as well as create exhibits detailing the experience of Ohlone Native Americans who worked at the mission and lived in the rooms that still stand.

That plan would include recreating a small tribal village on the grounds.

"Our focus is unique in that we attempt to inter-

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

The grounds of the Santa Cruz Mission Adobe.

Missions

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pret the experience of Native Americans," Radosevich said.

The chain of missions was begun in 1769 by Serra at the direction of King Charles II of Spain who wanted to settle what was then known as Alta California. The missions were to intend to be about a day's walk apart from one another.

Native American labor was crucial to the settlements, and the Spanish sought to convert, willingly or otherwise, the natives to Christianity.

After Mexico won independence from Mexico it ended the mission system, and in 1834 privatized much of the property.

Today, two missions are owned by the state Department of Parks and Recreation — Mission Santa Cruz and Mission La Purisima Concepcion in Lompoc.

The buildings had an indelible

imprint on California, lending many cities their names. Moreover, El Camino Real — the transportation link of the missions — is generally the same thoroughfare, Highway 101, that traverses the state today.

While the mission is Santa Cruz met its demise in an earthquake in 1857, other missions still stand, but need some help to stay that way. Mission San Miguel Arcangel, for example, needs an estimated \$10 million in repairs, according to the Foundation.

The Foundation estimates about \$2.9 million is needed for work at Mission San Juan Bautista. Father Ed Fitz-Henry said money is needed to preserve papers, books, painting and other artifacts.

"We don't have a museum-quality environment to preserve them," Fritz-Henry said.

He would also unearth and restore a buried wing of the mission and redo electrical wiring that dates to the 1930s.

"These missions are landmarks that are not just national, but international," Fritz-Henry said.

Backers will look to the \$2.6 billion in bond money passed under Proposition 40 in March. Some \$267 million of that is earmarked for historic preservation.

Originally, McPherson authored a bill that would have established a fund in the state treasury for the effort. Last week, that bill was rolled into a separate measure by state Sen. John Burton, D-San Francisco, that creates a commission to dole out the preservation funds included in Proposition 40, but lists the missions as a priority for that funding.

That bill's next step is the Senate Appropriations Committee next month.

Meanwhile, the California Missions Foundation is continuing with a private effort to raise \$50 million to restore and preserve. About \$4 million has been raised, Ameil said. Not only does the foundation want to fix and preserve now, but also establish an endowment for future needs.

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