

~~Mission & Historical Preservation Society~~
✓ **Historical letters**
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acquired by trust

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The Santa Cruz County Historical Trust Thursday acquired two original documents from the Santa Cruz Mission at an auction in San Francisco.

The price for the two one-page letters — the first documents the historical trust has been able to purchase — was \$3,163.

Both letters were written by Father Marcelino Marguinez, in 1812 and 1813. They are addressed to another priest at the College of San Fernando in Mexico City, the governing body of all the missions.

The letters are written on handmade paper, and one includes the original red wax seal.

Micki Ryan, historical trust collections manager, said the ink was made from oak gall — tumors on oak trees that have high tannic acid content.

Historians know the general content of the letters, but Ryan noted that an expert will be

needed for an exact translation. That's because in the early 19th century, the Spanish language had many colloquialisms that have long since gone out of use.

In the first letter, Marguinez assumes responsibility for the Santa Cruz Mission following the death, later discovered to be murder, of Father Quintana.

A second letter acknowledges a shipment of goods from Mexico, including much-sought-after paper. Ryan said the scarcity of paper was one factor that makes this period so difficult to document.

Historian Edna Kimbro, one of the bidders attending the auction on behalf of the historical trust, said bidding was "extremely intense." Final prices, she said, ran three to 10 times more than the estimates in the catalog.

There were four other documents from the Santa Cruz Mission, all from a private collection, auctioned off at the same time, but historical trust representatives could not afford them.