

Not-Society

Mission-era letters obtained

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Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz Historical Society scored a coup last week when it outbid several universities and private collectors to purchase two historical letters written from Mission Santa Cruz in 1812 and 1813.

The letters were written by Father Marcelino Marguinez, a priest at the mission, and sent to Father Pedro Martinez at the College of San Fernando in Mexico City.

One letter states that Father Marguinez had assumed responsibility for the Santa Cruz mission following the death (later discovered to be a murder) of Father Quintana. The second letter acknowledges a shipment of goods from Mexico, including much-sought-after paper.

"Paper was so incredibly scarce that the letters are full of abbreviations," said local historian Micki Ryan. "Someone who can read standard Spanish would be floored trying to read them."

Starr Gurcke, a local specialist in antiquarian Spanish will work on translating the letters fully.

The letters are written on a fine rag paper with indelible ink made from oak gall, a type of tree infection. Padre Marguinez wrote his letters in an elegant spidery hand, with numerous flourishes and curlicues.

The wax seal of the Viceroy of Mexico is still visible on the letters.

The letters were purchased from the estate of Santa Barbara collector Rosario Curletti, and cost

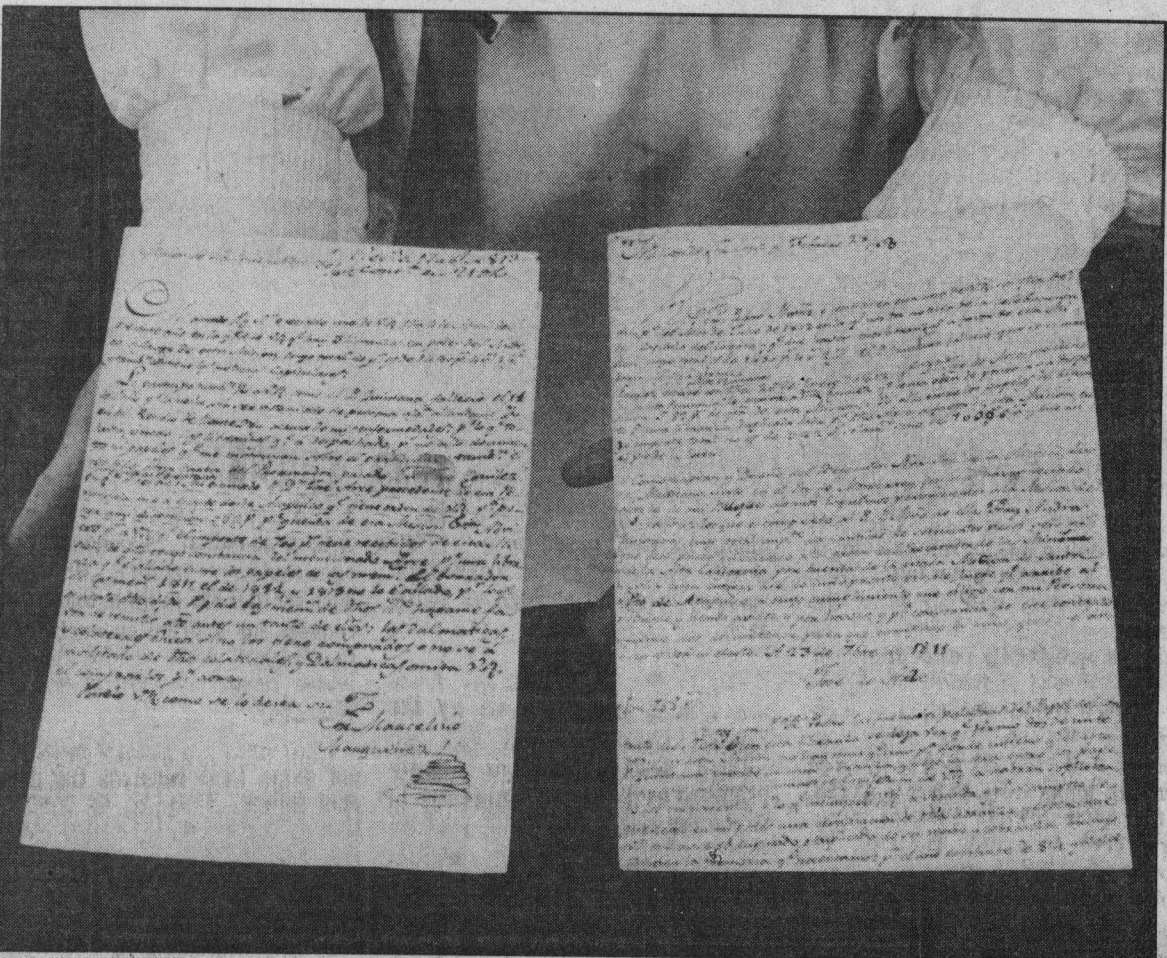


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Local historian Micki Ryan.

the Historical Society \$3,163. In all, six documents relating to the Santa Cruz Mission were auctioned off, but the Historical Society only had funds to buy two.

The society eventually hopes to house the documents in an environmentally controlled vault in the new museum planned for the old County Jail.



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The antiquarian Spanish is filled with abbreviations, and experts must translate it.