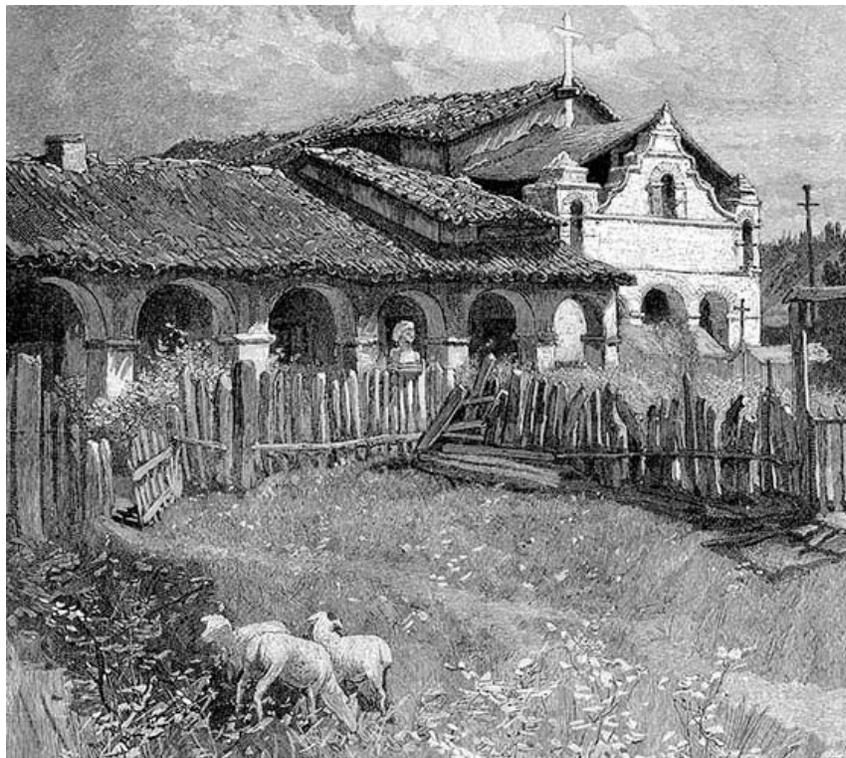




California Missions  
*Keeping the Past Present*

## California Stories

### How William Randolph Hearst Helped Preserve Mission San Antonio de Padua



The California Stories are a collection of interesting and historical stories from early California and the California Missions written by David J. McLaughlin.



## How William Randolph Hearst Helped Preserve Mission San Antonio de Padua

There wasn't a more powerful man in America at the beginning of the 20th century than William Randolph Hearst. Hearst had built the San Francisco Examiner into the country's first media empire. Just before the turn of the century, he had heavily influenced U.S. foreign policy. He supported the Cuban Revolution of 1895 and encouraged war with Spain. When an explosion sank the U.S.S. Maine in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, the Hearst papers ran the headline: "WAR? SURE!". Hearst and his reporters covered the war aggressively, on the scene.



*William Randolph Hearst  
(1863-1951)*

For a time, Hearst had political ambitions. He served in the Congress from 1903-1907 and then ran for Mayor and later Governor of New York.



*Marion Davies  
(1897-1961)*

Hearst's journey back west began in 1916 when he became infatuated with a Ziegfeld Follies dancer named Marion Davies. Legend has it that when he was first courting her, he reserved two seats (one for himself and one for his hat) at every performance of the follies for two months.

Hearst was married. He and his wife Millicent did not want to divorce (they had five boys). So, as the affair developed into a long-term relationship he remained married but effectively relocated to California. In 1919 Hearst began planning what would become a 28-year endeavor to build a grand



European-style castle in the Santa Lucia Mountains, along the California Coast. Construction of the complex, San Simeon, extended from 1922-1947 by which time it had 130 rooms and contained a vast collection of antiques and art.



*View of San Simeon*

Hearst expanded his land holdings in the area, ultimately owning all the land surrounding [Mission San Antonio de Padua](#). Hearst became interested in the plight of the old missions, and he donated land (20 acres surrounding the mission) and money for the restoration of Mission San Antonio de Padua.



*San Antonio de Padua Mission, by Henry Sandham, 1883*

Hearst continued to give seed money for restoration of the missions throughout his life. His biggest contribution to San Antonio de Padua, though, was how he disposed of his San Simeon holdings. In September 1940, he sold all his Valley of the Oaks land to the government, which created the Hunter-Liggett Military Restoration, thus protecting the area from the development that has ruined the setting of many of the old Spanish missions. The mission was guaranteed access.

In 1948, after World War II, the Franciscans decided to rebuild the original quadrangle of San Antonio. The initial contribution came from a \$500,000 donation made for mission restoration by the Hearst Foundation, 10% of which was earmarked for San Antonio de Padua.

Today, Mission San Antonio de Padua is the only mission with a setting that is almost identical to the landscape of the mission era, more than two centuries ago.



*San Antonio de Padua, Detroit Publishing Company,  
from Library of Congress*

William Randolph Hearst died at the age of 88 in 1951. Marion Davies remained with him to the end.