



California Missions  
*Keeping the Past Present*

# California Stories

## Goypurina



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



## Toypurina

This is the remarkable tale of a twenty-five year old woman who inspired a revolt at [Mission San Gabriel](#) in 1785.

When an uprising against the Spanish at San Gabriel was foiled in 1785, one of the few individuals to freely admit her role was the only woman conspirator, a twenty-five year old Tongva medicine woman, Toypurina.



*Toypurina*

San Gabriel was the fourth California mission, founded on September 8, 1771. It was located astride three prominent trails and was a frequent jumping-off point for military expeditions. Relations with the Native Americans (The Tongva) deteriorated over the years. When the Spanish built a new town (Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles del Río de Porciúncua) on tribal land in 1781, the Indians were furious.

A group of San Gabriel neophytes and Tongva Indians who lived outside the mission plotted to attack the mission and kill all of the Spanish missionaries and soldiers. The attack was to take place on the evening of October 25, 1785.

The plot was discovered and twenty conspirators were captured and put on trial. The only woman who was accused was the daughter of a prominent chief of the native village of Juvit. She was known for her wisdom and communication skills and thought to have special powers.



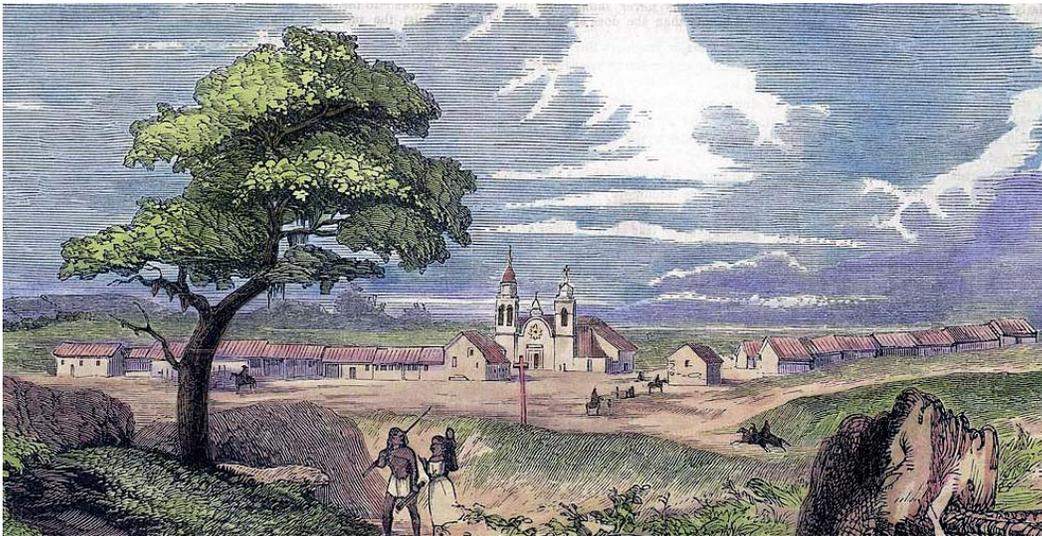
*Mission San Gabriel, by Ferdinand Deppe, 1832*

Under Spanish law, the leaders of the revolt could be sentenced to death. During the long trial, most of the Indians denied any knowledge of the plot. A common response to questions was: “I don’t know anything.” Some of those who testified attempted to put all of the blame on Toyपुरina. One man claimed she tricked him into coming.

Toyपुरina not only freely admitted her role, she stated that she had instructed the head of her village to join in the revolt and was present at the time of the attack “to encourage the men to be brave and fight.” She declared that she did all of this “because I am angry with the fathers and with all the others at this mission for living on Tongva land.”

This remarkable woman outwitted the authorities during the many months it took to get approval of a sentence. She had her young son (born just before the revolt) baptized and then declared she wanted to be baptized. This changed her status, and virtually eliminated any chance that she would be executed. After extensive discussions, the Spanish decided to transfer her to another mission “far away from San Gabriel” if she agreed to be baptized, an event that took place on March 7, 1787.

Toypurina took the Christian name of Regina Josefa. She and her son were then relocated to [Mission San Carlos Borromeo](#).



San Carlos Borromeo by William Smyth, 1827

Within two years (the baby’s father had died or abandoned her), Toypurina married a former soldier, Manuel Montero, in what would be considered in those days a “high status” union. Montero, who had helped establish the pueblo of Los Angeles, had received a large tract of land in the Monterey area. He and Toypurina had three children together. Their descendants still live in California.



The story of Toyipurina continues to inspire successive generations. A large 60-foot wide mural was erected in her honor on the main wall of Ramona Gardens, a public housing complex in the Boyle Heights Section of Los Angeles.



*The Toyipurina Mural, by a group of local artists*