

# Music at the Mission

Before the Missions had pipe organs they created indigenous bands performing before, during and after church services and accompanying singers with strings, trumpets, flutes and percussion. Mission bands often played popular tunes blending secular with sacred music; with the guitar as the central instrument of the whole Mission sound.

## José María Telésforo de la Rosa

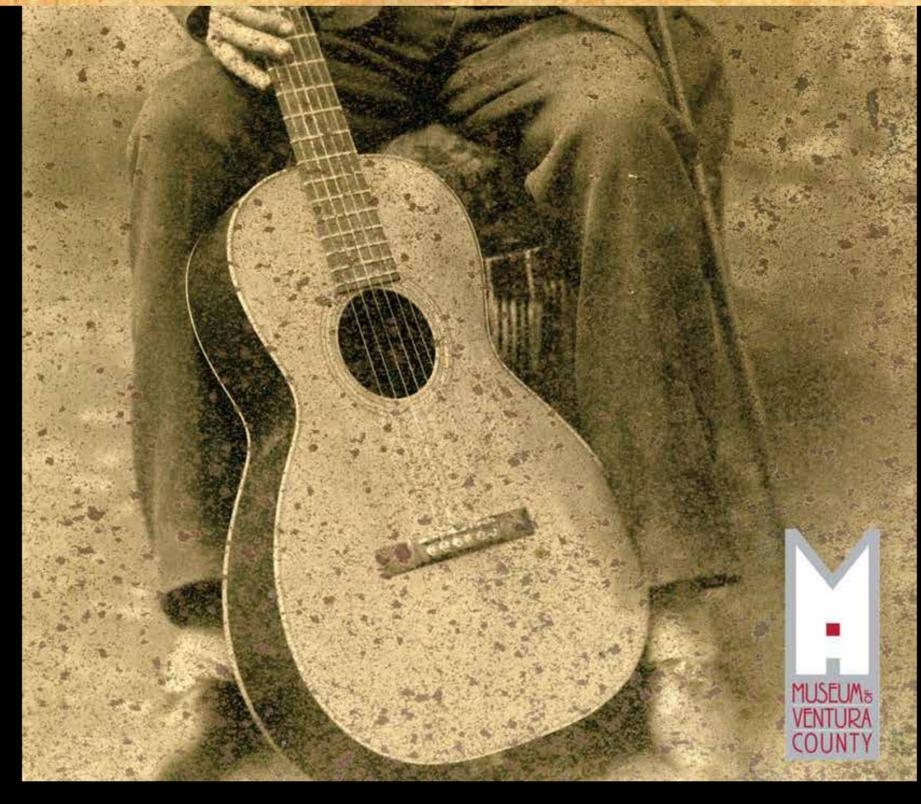
*Singer, guitarist, early musicologist  
& “the oldest printer in California”*



on the brig Natalia and arrived in Monterey Bay on December 21, 1834. De la Rosa quickly set up shop in Monterey.

Between 1834 and 1845, nine publications were to bear de la Rosa's imprint, although he actually printed many more works attributed to others.

In 1845 José de la Rosa moved to “Santa



Born in 1802 in Puebla, Mexico, José de la Rosa learned a number of trades as a young man and later studied for the priesthood “up to the point of being ordained.” When Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821, he enlisted as a soldier and worked at the government printing office in Mexico City.

In 1834, de la Rosa, his wife María Dolores López Cárdenas and their two daughters joined two hundred colonists gathered together by José Maria Hajar and José Maria Padrés, collectively known as Compañia Cosmopolitana. The Compañia left San Blas on August 1, 1834

In 1845 José de la Rosa moved to “Santa Buenaventura.” This new home was located on Santa Clara Street, between Oak and Palm Streets.

De la Rosa, or “Don Pepe,” as close friends knew him, became a familiar sight on the streets of San Buenaventura, where he was known as “the oldest printer in California,”



as well as a singer and guitarist. José de la Rosa died on December 9, 1891 and was buried at the San

Buenaventura Mission.

In his lifetime, de la Rosa recorded some of the oldest-known transcriptions of Mexican-Californian Californio song lyrics in a notebook now archived in the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Los Angeles.



## Mission Orchestra Music & Instrument Making

Many of the instruments, especially of the viol family were made at the missions. The rare photograph of the last Indian band at Mission San Buenaventura shows the cello made by the Chumash in Ventura. The exact year that it was made is not known. Close examination of the photograph shows that the flute was cleverly made from the barrel of an old gun.

Besides contributing to the solemnity of special church celebrations, these mission bands and orchestras added much to the life and happiness of the Indian village. Not only did the musicians have to perform at church but also as members of the village band and dance orchestra. Because of this, the line between secular music and sacred music was often blurred. At times the music played before, after, and during services were dance tunes of the time. While played well, they were not really appropriate for church!

# The Mission Orchestra

At the missions as a rule, the singing at mass was accompanied by instruments often playing identical notes sung by the choristers. At other times it seems the accompanists simply played short introductions and interludes. The purpose of the accompaniment was to keep the singers on pitch as well as enhance the music.



From the few accounts that are left, we know that ordinarily only string instruments and flutes were used in church, with perhaps a drum or triangle to keep time. The customary instruments used at the missions were the violin, the viola, the violincello, the bass viola, the flute, the trumpet, the bandola (lute), the guitar, the drum and the triangle. No mission possessed an organ at this time.



# The Acoustic Guitar:

## *A Cultural Phenomenon That No One Planned*

The guitar evolved from European and Asian instruments during the Middle Ages (oud, tanbur, and lute). The first guitars were brought here by the Spanish in the late 1500s, and the English brought their own versions on the boats that followed the Mayflower.

It gave players a sense of musical and personal freedom. Its image became inextricably linked with those who followed their own path, from balladeers and Gypsies in Europe to cowboys along the American frontier, slaves and sharecroppers.

*The guitar is arguably the single most enduring icon in American history.*

*Not baseball, not football, not hot dogs....the guitar.*



*BB King and his guitar "Lucille"*

In the 20th century, the guitar continued to evolve, as mass production became a possibility. Acoustic guitars began to be produced in factories across the globe in the early part of the century, and the electric guitar arrived in the early 1930s.

During the 1950s and 60s protest singers and teenage rebels all used the guitar as a vehicle to question the ways of the world....giving birth to the blues, folk music, and rock and roll.