

S. county missions rich in history

San Antonio, Soledad offer glimpse of past

By **THAIS SHUBIN**
For South County Life

If you're craving a piece of California's rich history, south county offers two of the state's missions within easy reach of Highway 101.

Traveling from north to south, you first encounter the Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad off the Arroyo Seco Road exit at 36641 Fort Romie Road in Soledad.

Founded in 1791 by Father Fermin Francisco de Lasuén, the mission is a quaint retreat nestled among row crops with a brilliant view of neighboring vineyards.

"We ... have people who come out to sit and paint because it's so quiet, and the views are just so beautiful," said Carrie Costa, a volunteer in the Soledad Mission gift shop.

The original grounds were damaged by floods, but a portion of the old adobe still remains. The chapel has been renovated, and continuous upgrades are made each year.

This year, the chapel received a new heater and the bathrooms a complete overhaul. It's the perfect place for a picnic on the lawn in front of the padre's quarters.

"The best part about our mission is that it really is an unspoiled look at how mission life really was," said Donna Booker, also a gift shop volunteer.

Around the back of the mission, the children will love searching for goldfish in the stone fountain. The gift shop, run by Nancy Morrison, is a treasure trove of unique finds for that special person.

Mass is held in the mission's chapel on the first Sunday of each month. An annual fiesta barbecue is held the last Sunday of June. This is a fun day for the whole family, with festivities such as music, a grape stomp and a wine auction. The grounds are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, closed only on Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

About an hour farther south,



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A statue of mission founder Father Junipero Serra welcomes visitors to Mission San Antonio at Fort Hunter Liggett in south Monterey County.



SCOTT MACDONALD/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE

Statues of saints line the walkways at Soledad Mission.

travelers who take the Jolon Road exit near King City will find the Mission San Antonio de Padua at the end of Mission Road. This mission, established in July 1771, was the third founded by Father Junipero Serra.

The first thing one will notice about the mission is the serene quiet. It is perhaps the mission that transports one back to that time period the most, as much of the grounds remain as they

were in the busy days of the mission.

Much larger than the Soledad Mission, Mission San Antonio's grounds are spread out, with signs that mark various points of interest. There is a Native American cemetery, a rose garden and the Great Church, which was erected in 1810.

Depending on the time of year, the weather can be quite hot, but there are plenty of shade trees. The Roman Catholic Dio-

DETAILS

■ **SOLEDAD MISSION**, 36641 Fort Romie Road, Soledad. Phone: 678-2586. Mass is held in the mission's chapel on the first Sunday of each month. The grounds are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, closed only on Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

■ **MISSION SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA**: End of Mission Road, Jolon. Mass is held at the mission each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Museum hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Information: www.SanAntonioMission.org, phone 385-4478.

cese of Monterey hosts retreats regularly at Mission San Antonio because it is so peaceful and serene.

A self-guided tour explains the mission's history, including how priests taught Gregorian chant. The surrounding oak trees and hills are breathtaking; visitors are welcome to bring cameras and video recorders.

Mass is held at the mission each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Museum hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

For more information visit www.SanAntonioMission.org.