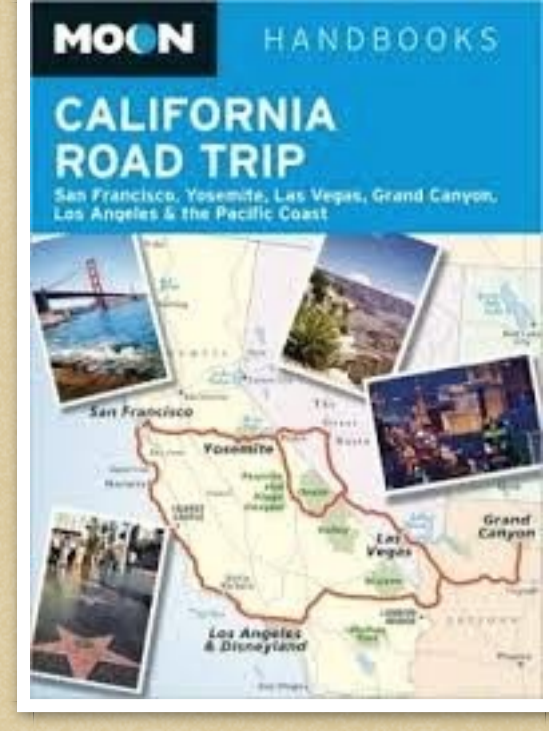


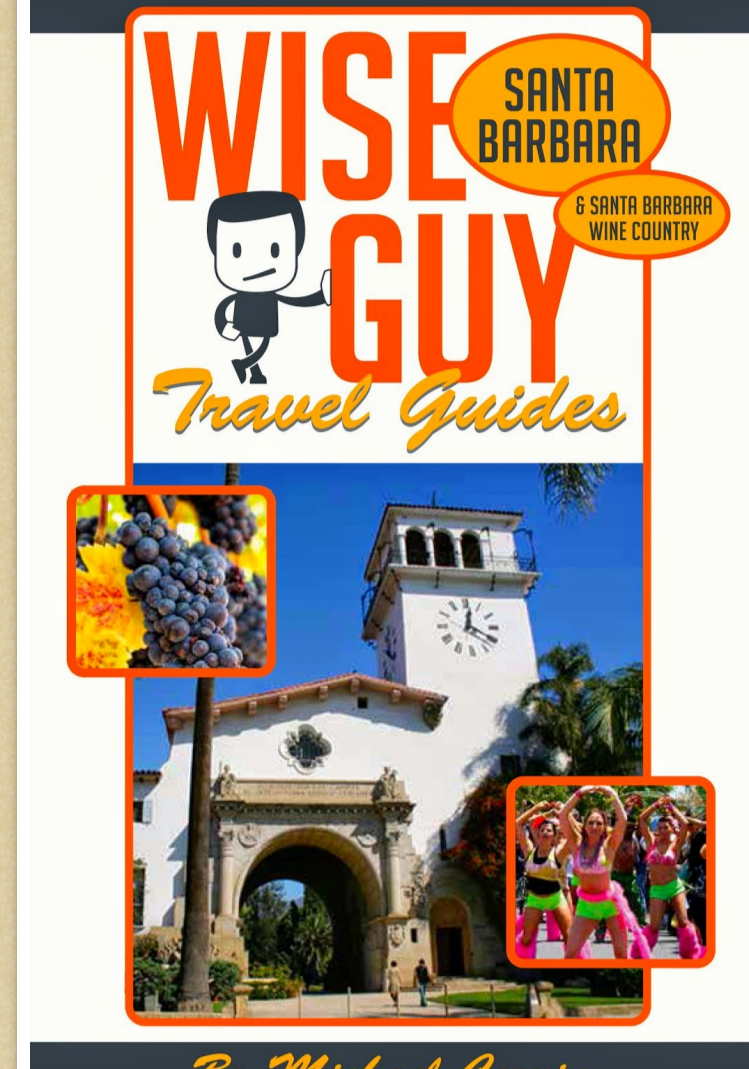
Cervins Central Coast

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Wise Guy Travel Guides: Santa Barbara, & Monterey



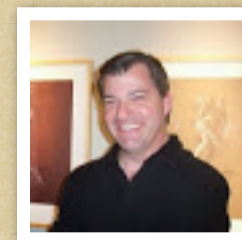
COMING IN DECEMBER!

MY PRINTS AND GREETING CARD PORTFOLIO FROM FINE ART AMERICA



(Click on the above photo)

About Me



Michael Cervin
Santa Barbara, CA, United States

I am a writer, author and speaker with an emphasis on Food, Wine and Travel. I am the restaurant critic for the Santa Barbara News-Press, author of three national travel books, and contribute to some of the top wine and spirits magazines in the world.

[View my complete profile](#)

Uncover These Great Businesses On The Central Coast

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CHOCOLATES DU CALIBRESSAN - The best chocolates in all of Santa Barbara!

CULINARY HOUSTON - OK, this isn't anywhere near the California Coast, but if you head to Texas, do check this out!

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VENTURA LIMONCELLO - the best damn lemon liqueur you will ever taste. I promise.

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Friday, April 12, 2013

Murder at the Mission: The Haunting at San Miguel

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When Mission San Miguel was founded on July 25, 1797 just north of Paso Robles, the founding fathers could never have imagined the terror that would occur at this sacred site just 49 years later. The **scene of a horrific murder**, many people believe this mission is haunted. We may not know about ghosts, but here's what we do know about that cold December night. The original temporary church built in 1797 burned in 1806, and a stone foundation church was completed in 1821. After Mexico fought against and won their independence from Spain, the Mission system began to collapse and by 1834 the Mission had become secularized. On July 4, 1846, Petronillo Rios and his business partner **William Reed** purchased the floundering mission for a few hundred dollars, operating it as a lodging and trading post and Reed and his family lived there. Reed, usually wearing a blue peacoat, required that guests pay in gold, and he bragged that he'd amassed a small fortune, hiding it somewhere at the mission. Remember that California was not part of the U.S. at this time and any currencies from Mexico, the U.S., and even money from Spain were probably considered worthless. Gold was what mattered.

On the afternoon of December 4th, 1848, six men arrived at Mission San Miguel. Pete Raymond, Joseph Lynch, Peter Remer, Peter Quin, and Sam Bernard, accompanied by someone only known as "John," an Indian from Soledad. They stayed that night but left the next morning heading south to San Marcos Creek just a few miles down the road but then they returned to the mission and spent the rest of the day and part of the evening there on

December 5th. It was during these early evening hours that this gang of cold-hearted men **murdered everyone** at the Mission including William Reed and his wife, Maria who was expecting a baby, and their 4-year old son. Also killed was Josefa Olivera, Maria's mid-wife, and 3 other children; 11 people in total. The men had been warming themselves near a fire when Bernard offered to go outside to get firewood. He returned with an axe hidden in his armload of wood and struck Reed several times while John the Indian stabbed him with a knife. Sam Bernard and the others stalked and killed the women and children, then took the bodies to the carpenter's shop. When their blood-drenched bodies were found they were still wearing daytime clothes.



Based on the interrogations of Joseph Lynch, Peter Quin and of Peter Remer, this is what happened that cold December night. After the ruthless murders they drank wine stealing any valuables they could find, which wasn't much, ransacking the place in search of Reed's gold – but they never found any. They left the mission that evening and spent the rest of the night south of present-day Templeton, and spent the next night south of Mission San Luis Obispo, but by this time a **posse had been formed and was tracking them**. What they didn't know was that on the very

night of the killings, a man named James Beckwourth was carrying mail from Nipomo to Monterey when he stopped at the mission and discovered the bodies. Shocked, he rode on to Monterey and informed the military governor of the murders. The gang left San Luis Obispo and traveled down to the Los Alamos area and obtained, we presume, fresh horses at a ranch. They rode through Santa Barbara stopping at Rancho Ortega, at present day Summerland, where the posse caught up with them, but this was not to be a bloodless arrest. Sam Bernard was mortally wounded. Pete Raymond jumped into the surf attempting to escape, and was drowned. Peter Quin was wounded and captured having killed a member of the posse; Joseph Lynch and Peter Remer were also captured, and later confessed to their parts in the murders. John the Indian had peeled off from the group around San Luis Obispo and was never found.

Reed's partner Petronillo Rios, helped bury Reed and the other victims in the cemetery of Mission San Miguel, "just outside the rear door of the sacristy; a little to the southwest and near the old first church wall," according to one account. All 11 people were buried in **one mass grave** and it must have been a disturbing sight seeing the bodies of the children. Lieutenant Edward O. C. Ord (Fort Ord in Monterey was named after him) from Monterey and nine soldiers were dispatched to Santa Barbara to act as a firing squad.

According to accounts Joseph Lynch, Peter Remer and Peter Quin were **executed by firing squad** in Santa Barbara on December 28, 1848, near the corner of De la Guerra and Chapala Streets. Reports said they were buried in the cemetery of Mission Santa Barbara, but that seems highly unlikely that they would have been buried there considering the murderous acts they had committed at Mission San Miguel. At any rate, following the murders Mission San Miguel converted rooms into a hotel, saloon, and retail shops. Over the years many people have claimed they have seen the ghosts of William Reed, wearing his peacoat and a **lady in a white dress** around the mission grounds.



Some swear they have heard **muffled screams** coming from near the chapel, and images of the young boys who were killed that night. Are ghosts real? And do the tortured souls of innocent victims attempt to make contact with the present world? Is the gold still there, or was it ever there? Does William Reed and his wife, Maria call out from their graves? That's for you to decide. Perhaps when you visit Mission San Miguel you might find the answers.

Watch my "2 Minute Travel" video shot at Mission San Miguel at **midnight: GHOSTS OF THE COAST**



Posted by **Michael Cervin** at 5:05 PM

Labels: **firing squad, ghosts, gold, mission san miguel, Monterey, murder at the mission, paso robles, santa barbara, william reed**

Reactions: funny (0) interesting (0) cool (0)

2 comments:

Eric Hill August 17, 2013 at 3:24 PM
What "haunts" the California mission system is the fact that was kept from all of us who went to California schools and were asked to make sugar cube missions out of what were essentially U.S. version so of Auschwitz and Dachau. When you learn about what happen to the Chumash et al tribes at the hands of the "Christian" friars, you start to feel about as uneasy as you might reading "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee." The American Holocaust is what haunts the missions. Manifest Destiny.

[Reply](#)

Michael Cervin August 17, 2013 at 8:04 PM
I cannot disagree with you Mr. Hill. The Mission period incident a horrible segment of the California experience, one which I address in my travel books. This specific incident at Mission San Miguel is distinct from the Mission/Chumash period in that 11 innocent people were ruthlessly killed after the secularization of the missions.

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Santa Barbara's best place to see a movie or concert. The interior is designed as a Spanish courtyard. You've gotta see it!

Got Ideas?

If you have a favorite restaurant, winery, site to visit, surf spot, hiking trail or anything else which shows off the Central Coast - let me know. I'll add it to this blog and who knows, it might make it into the 2nd edition of my travel book, Santa Barbara & The Central Coast!