

Purcell House
308 Mission Boulevard,
San Gabriel, California.
Los Angeles Co.

HABS No. ~~37-0~~ CAL 35

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19-SANGA
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 37

• Historic American Buildings Survey,
Henry F. Withey, District Officer,
906 Architects Building,
Los Angeles, Calif.

PURCELL HOUSE,
308 Mission Boulevard,
San Gabriel, California.

HABS NO. ~~37-2~~ CAL-35 HABS
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This structure is said to be the very oldest house in San Gabriel, presumably constructed three years before the Mission Church as a dwelling place for the friars in charge of the Mission. An incident that seems to bear evidence of its antique origin occurred a few years ago. When renovating a room in the older portion, a floor of six-inch pine, laid some forty years ago was taken up and beneath this was found a floor of eight-inch red wood. This, when taken up, revealed irregular planks of native liveoak, almost completely disintegrated. "A liveoak log with the bark still on it forms a lintel over one of the windows of this house and quite possibly the woodwork was all of this type originally, then replaced with more durable lumber, as the native liveoak disintegrates rapidly.*

Under the liveoak floor was found the first floor of all - the old tiles - among which was the corroded remnant of an archaic steelyard, small cast iron cannon balls, old Dutch coins, and bronze grapeshot.

This small ranch was formerly known as Las Tunas Rancho and was completely surrounded by a hedge of "Tuna," or cactus, such as the Mission Fathers planted to protect their groves and orchards from the inroads of marauding Indians or cattle. In 1880 the hedge was about fifty feet thick.

The grounds of this house contain the first orange seedlings planted in California, four gnarled olive trees, two large pecan trees, a coconut palm and a lemon-verbena tree, all dating from the orchards of the padres. Some of the cactus hedge also remains. Now owned and used as a residence by Colonel Purcell.

* Footnote 1, p. 31, "In Pursuit of Vanished Days", Marion Parks, 1928 Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California.

Approved

Henry F. Wilkey
District Officer