

Materials Recovered from Mission Carmel

Building Materials

The types of building materials that were used to construct the mission and its surrounding structures. These are included (but not limited to) roof tile, foundation stone, which was locally gathered from the Monterey Formation, the local mountain range located about a mile east of the mission. Lumber was used as a frame to support adobe bricks that were fabricated and sun dried at the mission. Once the brick dried, they were laid into place and secured to the foundation and frame with mortar. They covered the adobe bricks with stucco or "plaster". The walls were then painted and decorated with various bright colors.

The roof was constructed with "tejas" tiles, which were constructed with adobe clay. They were shaped with logs to achieve a semicircular pattern. The floors were made with "ladrillo" tile, which was made from clay that were shaped, then stacked in a kiln, and fired. Firing the clay made them more durable and easier to clean.

Ceramics

The ceramics of Mission Carmel came from a wide range of places including New Spain (Mexico). Many of the countries represented by the ceramics recovered range from the Americas specifically the United States, China, and England. Many of these countries were not permitted to trade with the settlements of New Spain, however the demand for supplies and lack of acceptable suppliers required interaction with illicit trade vessels.



Ceramics

Many of the ceramics recovered can be identified based on the pattern of the vessel, the style of the pattern, and the clay type comprising the body. Many of the patterns and colors are specific to a manufacturer. Also, many of the clay types can be traced back to a general region based on visible variations.

Bone and Shell

Bone or "faunal" was found in abundance at the site. We have unearthed an array of skeletal remains from a variety of mammals. The Franciscans and Neophytes ate cattle and pigs (during prosperous years, pork or beef was prepared daily in a stew called "pasole"), as well as sheep and other game. Rodents and other small animals were hunted during times of droughts, when the livestock was at a minimum and the crops fail.

Fish and shellfish were a large part of the diet at the mission especially since it came out of local rivers and the nearby Pacific Ocean. Shell fragments that were unearthed at the site range from historic to the prehistoric. Olavella shell beads, shell buttons, and pendants made from abalone shell

were some of the handcrafted artifacts that have been discovered. They were a tradition of ordementation for Native Americans before and after the mission period.

Metal and Glass

A majority of the metal work was imported from Mexico and South America, as well as forged at the mission or Presidio. Metal objects, like nails, were also forged at these local blacksmiths using imported raw materials. The nails resembled modern nails, except that they were square. Square nails were less time consuming to forge but any metal was scarce and expensive. If they wanted to make nails similar to modern times (a rounded top), they would forge the square into an octagon shape, then further to a sphere.

Fragments of glass shards from wine bottles, glasses, and other containers used for a wide variety of functions. Some window glass has also been recovered. Glass is a great artifact finds at a site because they can be used for dating. The type of glass itself can be analyzed and it can be learned where the material came from, and the layer of film on the glass can be tested for the amount of oxidation, giving us an accurate time period from when the glass was last in use at the mission.



Historic Objects

Historic objects are basically human trash and always made by a process. Historic objects are found in the first layers of soil until we reach the original floor of the mission. The site where we are excavating has been used as a flowerbed for many years so we tend to find debris from recent generations mixed in with artifacts from the original mission period. We have found cans, pieces of plastic, light bulbs, and jewelry, along with pennies, etc.

Lithic Objects

When a stone is worked by human hands to become a stone tool as well as the debris is called lithic material.

Organic Material

Wood from beams and supports are organic material as well as seeds and charcoal. Seeds could be naturally placed there but it may have been a panting of the missionaries. Charcoal is especially important because the date when the wood was burnt could give archaeologists information about the destruction of the site. Charcoal should not be touched for the oils on your skin will impair the results that come from radio carbon dating.

