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**Mission District** (San Francisco, Calif.): Primarily Latino residential and shopping district. The Mission District was originally inhabited by Costanoan Indians. Its first white settlers were Spaniards who founded the Mission San Francisco de Asis, known today as Mission Dolores. Middle-income professionals built detailed Victorian-style homes in the area in the 1860's. After World War II, nearby freeway construction and the creation of new subdivisions prompted many residents to move to newer neighborhoods, and the district became affordable to lower-income people.

The Mission District has been home to various immigrant groups including Italians and Irish people in the 1940's and 1950's, Mexicans in the 1960's, Central Americans in the late 1970's to mid-1980's, and Chinese and Southeast Asians in the 1980's and 1990's.

*La Misión*, as the district is called in Spanish, covers an area of about three hundred square blocks, from Fourteenth Street to Thirtieth Street north to south, and from Potrero Avenue to Dolores Street from east to west. Mission Street is the main artery of the mostly residential district. Its old Victorian houses are often split up into apartments, with shops often occupying the bottom flat. Mission Dolores, restored since the gold rush days, is one of the area's many historical landmarks.

The Mission District is a remarkably diverse area with a distinct Latin flavor. More than half of its roughly fifty-eight thousand residents are Latino, and many of them are recent immigrants. Palm-lined Mission Street is a colorful bustle of activity with ta-

querias, fruit markets, Mexican bakeries, Latin music stores, Spanish-language bookstores, wall murals, and Mexican and Central American restaurants. The area serves as an important cultural and political hub for Latinos in the Bay Area, with the Galeria de la Raza and Mission Cultural Center producing art, music, film, and theater events. Various Latino service agencies and activist groups also operate out of the district. Two yearly street festivals, Carnaval and Festival de las Americas, draw people from the surrounding Bay Area.

Other influences add to the Mission District's cosmopolitan atmosphere. Low rents attract many non-Latino artists, musicians, and political activists as well as theaters, small cafés, and bookstores. The district is home to the city's first distinctly lesbian neighborhood. Remnants of the area's European immigrant past survive in several businesses and restaurants alongside newer Asian fish and produce markets.

The Mission District is not without problems, notably alcoholism, drug dealing and addiction, poverty, unemployment, deteriorating housing, and prostitution. Pockets of the neighborhood have some of the city's highest crime rates. Gang activity increased in the 1980's and early 1990's, a sign to some of the lack of opportunities for youth. Many of the area's young people are immigrants, some from war-torn Latin American nations, and services to them as well as other immigrants are limited. Citizen and business groups have gone to City Hall to demand better services and conditions in their community. With increased GENTRIFICATION, the influx of Asian-owned businesses, and foreign investors buying up inexpensive property, some Mission District residents became concerned in the 1990's about preserving the Latin flavor of the neighborhood.

**Mission schools:** From the 1560's to the 1820's, more than 150 missions and *asistencias* (minor missions built for Indians) were established in an area covering the present states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This activity ended in 1821 with Mexican independence from Spain and the 1834 secularization of the missions.

Through the missions, Spain tried to establish its dominion in the New World against competition from other European nations. In the sixteenth century, Spain claimed most of the Americas. It tried to advance the frontiers of its empire using a three-pronged approach: the missions, PRESIDIOS (military fortress settlements), and PUEBLOS (civilian townlike settlements).



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**Mission District (San Francisco, Calif.):** Primarily Latino residential and shopping district. The Mission District was originally inhabited by Costanoan Indians. Its first white settlers were Spaniards who founded the Mission San Francisco de Asís, known today as Mission Dolores. Middle-income professionals built detailed Victorian-style homes in the area in the 1860's. After World War II, nearly five years of reconstruction and the creation of new suburban housing prompted many residents to move to newer neighborhoods, and the district became affordable to lower-income people.

The Mission District has been home to many immigrant groups including Italians and Irish people in the 1940's and 1950's, Mexicans in the 1960's, Central Americans in the late 1970's to mid-1980's, and Chinese and Southeast Asians in the 1980's and 1990's.

*La Misión*, as the district is called in Spanish, covers an area of about three hundred square blocks, from Folsom Street to Thirteenth Street north to south and from Francisco Avenue to Dolores Street west to east. Mission Street is the main artery of the neighborhood. The old Victorian houses are often split up into apartments. The area, which was the gold rush days, is one of the area's many historical landmarks.

The Mission District is a remarkably diverse area with a distinct Latin flavor. More than half of its roughly fifty-eight thousand residents are Latino, and many of them are recent immigrants. Palm-lined Mission Street is a colorful bustle of activity with its

stores, Spanish-language book stores, wall murals, and Mexican and Central American restaurants. The area serves as an important cultural and political hub for Latinos in the Bay Area, with the Galería de la Raza and Mission Cultural Center producing art, music, film, and theater events. Various Latino service agencies and activist groups also operate out of the district.

Two yearly street festivals, Carnaval and Festival de

the Arts, draw people from the surrounding Bay Area. The area's diversity adds to the Mission District's cosmopolitan feel. Low rents attract many artists, writers, and political activists as well as teachers, small cafés, and bookstores. The district is also home to a large and active lesbian neighborhood. The area's European immigrant past survives in several businesses and restaurants along with newer Asian fish and produce markets.

The Mission District is not without problems, notably alcoholism, drug dealing and addiction, poverty, unemployment, deteriorating housing, and prostitution. Pockets of the neighborhood have some of the city's highest crime rates. Gang activity increased in the 1980's and early 1990's, a sign to some of the lack of opportunities for youth. Many of the area's young people are immigrants, some from war-torn Latin America. Community groups and services to them as well as to the elderly are limited. Citizens and business groups have gone to City Hall to demand better services and security. With its mix of Asian-owned businesses, and foreign investors buying up inexpensive property, some Mission District residents became concerned in the 1990's about preserving the Latin flavor of the neighborhood.

**Mission schools:** From the 1560's to the 1820's, more than 150 missions and dispensaries (early hospitals) were established in an area covering parts of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The majority of the missions were founded by Franciscan friars, and the 1834 secularization of the missions.

Through the missions, Spain tried to establish its dominion in the New World against competition from other European nations. In the sixteenth century, Spain claimed most of the Americas. It tried to advance the frontiers of its empire using a three-pronged approach: the missions, presidios (military fortress settlements), and pueblos (civilian townlike settlements).

# THE LATINO ENCYCLOPEDIA

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