

Spanish Missions

Between 1697 and 1834, Catholic padres from Spain established 51 missions along the west coast of North America. These missions stretched from the southern tip of the Baja **Peninsula** to the Sonoma Valley north of San Francisco Bay. The earliest missions were built close to a presidio (military fort) to protect the new Spanish settlers. While the mission settlements existed to spread Christianity to California Indians, they also strengthened Spain's territorial claims in the New World. With the help of Indian workers, the Spaniards introduced European livestock, vegetables, fruits, and industry to this **region**. However, European diseases introduced to California caused the Indian **populations** to decline sharply.

Image below: Father Junipero Serra founded Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo in 1770. The missions served as centers of religious life in Spanish California. This particular mission is still in use by the local community.



