



Santa Barbara, California

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY Stephen Harby



Santa Barbara Mission

by Stephen Harby
graphite and watercolor on paper, 21x13

Santa Barbara, California, is named after the patron saint of architects, builders and masons. It's an appropriate name-sake, as this scenic seaside city offers architectural marvels that will appeal to any artist.

Located 90 miles west of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara was a key way station along the Camino Real, the route that linked the Spanish missions in the 18th century. Each settlement consisted of a religious complex, the *mission*, and a military outpost, the *presidio*. Referred to as "Queen of the Missions," Santa Barbara's mission, established in 1786 and rebuilt in its present form in 1820, is one of the grandest examples. Its facade, consisting of engaged columns supporting a triangular pediment or gable surmounted by two bell towers, could have been based on the Pantheon in Rome, which at that time also had two bell towers.

After the completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad linking Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1901, the community became an important winter resort for the gilded-age titans of industry, who built lavish estates in the hills above the town. In 1925, a major earthquake destroyed much of the town's Victorian-style architecture. Disaster became opportunity, and the rebuilding effort reflected the crazes for Spanish Colonial Revival and Mediterranean architecture then gripping California. Civic leaders made a conscious effort to revert to the Spanish colonial past, including creating one of the nation's first municipal design ordinances requiring the use of elements of Spanish colonial design, including white stucco walls, red tile roofs and massing and fenestration similar to

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Santa Barbara Courthouse Portal

by Stephen Harby
graphite and monochrome wash on paper, 15x12

that found in southern Spain. Interestingly enough, the “look” that was legislated bore little resemblance to the style of the historic missions and was more in keeping with the architecture of southern Spain, which was at the time spreading across Southern California, as well as other resorts such as South Florida.

Thanks to the continued reliance on careful and thoughtful design review, Santa Barbara today is one of the most architecturally consistent and harmonious settings in the world. 🍷

Stephen Harby is an architect, watercolorist, faculty member of the Yale School of Architecture and founder of Stephen Harby Invitational, which organizes travel opportunities for small groups.

LOCAL PICKS

What to See and Do in Santa Barbara



SIGHTS

Your visit should start with a tour of **Mission Santa Barbara**, completed in 1820. From there, stroll toward the center of town, taking in the **Fox Arlington Theater**, the **Santa Barbara County Courthouse**, **El Paseo** and the **Presidio**, before continuing to the crescent-shaped beach and the harbor.

Nearby Montecito is home to most of the large estates, and two of the best of them are open to the public. **Casa del Herrero**, completed in 1925, was designed by George Washington Smith. **Lotusland**, designed by Reginald Johnson, is known for its remarkable gardens created by Ganna Walska.

EATS

After retiring in Santa Barbara, the great chef and food writer Julia Child declared **La Super Rica Taqueria** the “best Mexican food in the Americas.” The relatively new **Santa Barbara Public Market**, behind the Arlington Theater, has an ever-changing selection of food counters and pop-up restaurants, of which the **Empty Bowl**, specializing in Thai noodles, is a personal favorite.

Casa del Herrero

by Stephen Harby
graphite and watercolor on paper, 18x25

