

Padre Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta

During his journeys through the San Joaquin Valley in 1805, it is widely believed that Spanish [Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga](#) led his Spanish Calvary from the Presidio of San Francisco, through the Pacheco Pass, and into the valley floor near what is present day Los Banos. Moraga brought back with him tales of heathen native indians that, in the opinion of the Spanish Army, were slowing down exploration of the valley. This led the Spanish Governor of California to order missionaries into the valley to convert the indians.

One of those missionaries was Padre Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta who was born in Old Castile and came to California in 1807. Padre Felipe was a Franciscan monk who resided at the Mission San Juan Bautista between 1808 and 1833. He was a frail man who was never in good health, yet he labored with conviction in converting many of the native indians. He had exceptional linguistic skills and mastered the Indian dialects better than any other missionary, often preaching in one of the thirteen Indian dialects he mastered.

Padre Felipe would frequently make missionary visits into the valley to preach the word of Christianity to the native indians he encountered. Often, the Padre brought with him a music box loaded on the back of a mule. He would gather round the native indians and then crank the music boxes handle. Upon hearing the sounds emanating from the box, the indians would fall to the ground in fear. After several minutes they would realize that the box was harmless and gather around to listen to its sweet sounds. The Padre would then lead the indians back to the mission with the music box playing in the open air, like the pied piper of Hamelin.

It was on one of his many treks that he discovered pools of water in the rocks at the summit of the mountains in a small creek bed that flowed into the San Joaquin Valley. At these pools, or baths, he would camp with his party.

Stories of the baths reached local ranchers who named the creek "El Arroyo de Los Banos del Padre Arroyo", which means "Padre Arroyo's Ravine of the Baths". Over time, the name became gradually shorter until it was commonly referred to as "Los Banos Crick". In 1873, a local resident named Gus Kreyenhagen had a trading post. The U.S. Post Office Department opened a post office at the post and named it Los Banos.

About 1824, the government of New Spain (which ruled Mexico) was overthrown by the Government of the Republic of Mexico. Facilities were secularized (religion was removed as the primary focus). Padre Felipe was very ill when the Secularization decree was proclaimed. It threatened the mission's holdings. Allowances were made for the missions which prevented the government from taking buildings that were specifically used for holding religious services.

The Padre, with help from the Zacatecan Friars, was able to maintain control of the mission's church building and the southeast wing. The government took over the two remaining convento wings as well as most of the mission's ranch land.

Padre Felipe Arroyo del la Cuesta died at Mission Santa Inés in 1840.