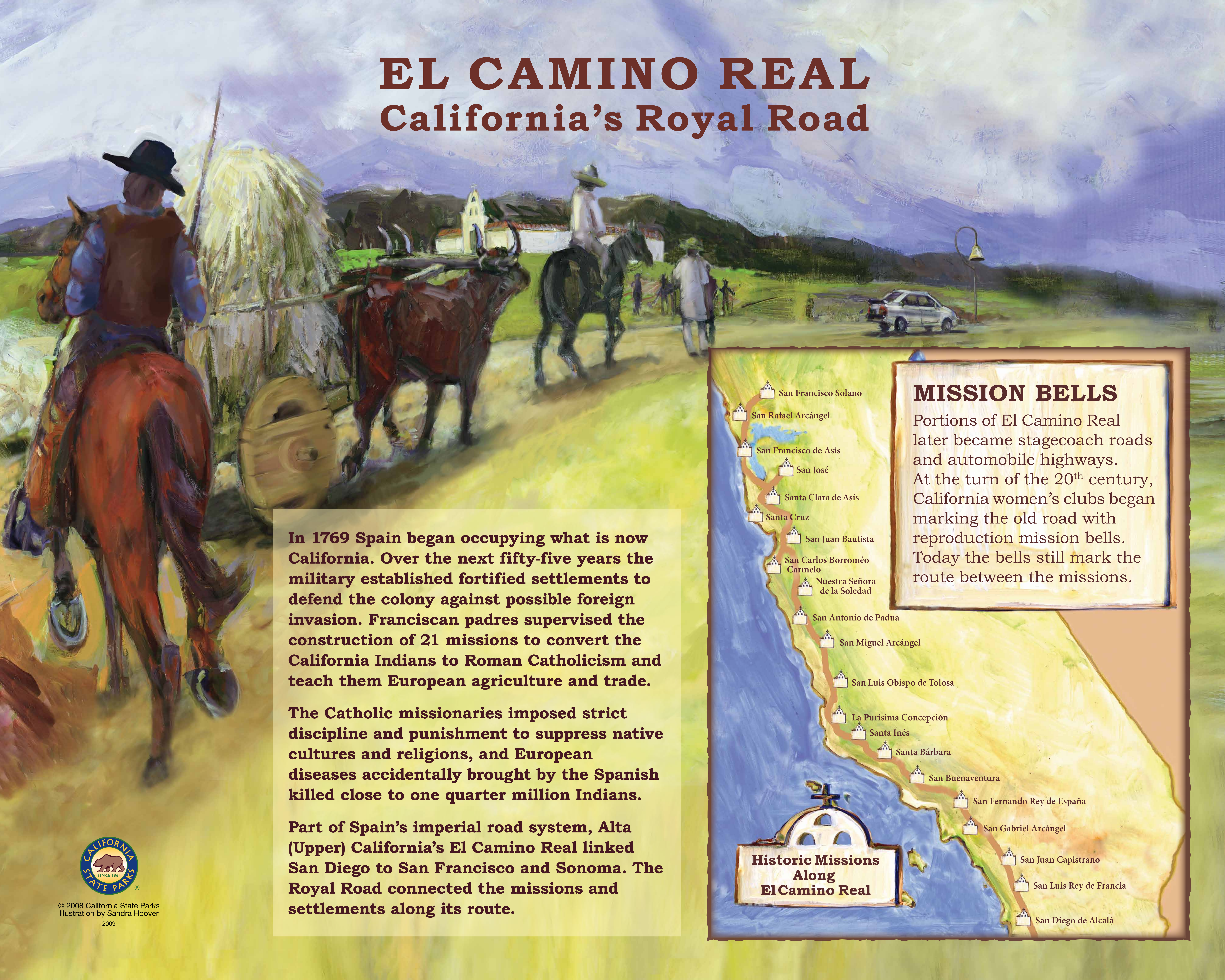


# EL CAMINO REAL

## California's Royal Road



**In 1769 Spain began occupying what is now California. Over the next fifty-five years the military established fortified settlements to defend the colony against possible foreign invasion. Franciscan padres supervised the construction of 21 missions to convert the California Indians to Roman Catholicism and teach them European agriculture and trade.**

**The Catholic missionaries imposed strict discipline and punishment to suppress native cultures and religions, and European diseases accidentally brought by the Spanish killed close to one quarter million Indians.**

**Part of Spain's imperial road system, Alta (Upper) California's El Camino Real linked San Diego to San Francisco and Sonoma. The Royal Road connected the missions and settlements along its route.**

### MISSION BELLS

Portions of El Camino Real later became stagecoach roads and automobile highways. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, California women's clubs began marking the old road with reproduction mission bells. Today the bells still mark the route between the missions.

