



*The missions are California's cultural treasures. Working together we can ensure their future.*



## California Missions Foundation

June 24, 2015

### CALIFORNIA MISSION PRESERVATION AND STUDIES ADVOCATE PASSES

It is with great sadness that both the CMSA and CMF families announce the passing this morning of long-time dedicated Missions supporter Helen Nelson. An early board member of CMF and a long-time member as well as board member of CMSA, Helen fought for mission preservation not only at her beloved Mission San Gabriel but also throughout the California Mission chain. She was active in both organizations, and a tireless individual who was honored with the prestigious CMSA Edna Kimbro Award in 2011 for her many years of dedication to the Missions.

Helen Nelson had been employed at San Gabriel Mission for more than 43 years, and recently still continued her involvement there as a volunteer. After the 1987 Earthquake, she was appointed Restoration Director at the Mission and soon organized a committee that raised more than \$11 million dollars to restore the historic building, as well as to seismic strengthen the Mission Church, Adobe House, Bell Tower, Museum, and other buildings in the Mission complex.

Helen was also the Mission's Grant Writer and monitored all construction projects until the restoration completion in 1999.

An active member of CMSA, she was elected to the Board of Directors in 1999 and, for many years, handled registration as the friendly personality many first came across Friday evening after often long treks to arrive at the Mission Conference site. She chaired the CMSA conference held at recently-restored San Gabriel Mission in 2000, and in 2005 chaired, on behalf of Msgr. Francis Weber, the CMSA conference at the San Fernando Mission.

Appointed to the California Missions Foundation Board of Directors in 2001, Helen played a key role in helping to secure funding for a wide-variety of Mission preservation projects as well as the Foundation's popular "All Aboard the Bus Program" which sends 4th graders on field trips to their local mission.

"Helen was a great lady, a huge mission presence and the best friend anyone could ask for...," said her long-time friend Janet Bartel who served on both the CMSA and CMF

Boards alongside Helen.

Helen Nelson touched many and did so much for the California Missions. She will be dearly missed.

Funeral arrangements are pending.



## About California Missions Foundation

Nothing defines California's heritage as significantly or emotionally as do the 21 missions that were founded along the coast from San Diego to Sonoma. Their beauty, stature, and character underlie the formation of California. All 21 missions are California Historical Landmarks; many have also been designated National Historic Landmarks. The missions are among the most popular tourist destinations in the state, attracting millions of visitors each year.

Founded in 1998, the California Missions Foundation was established with the objective of preserving and protecting the missions. The Foundation is the only statewide organization dedicated to the long-term preservation and restoration needs of all California missions and their associated historic and cultural resources for public benefit.

Visit us online at [www.californiamissionsfoundation.org](http://www.californiamissionsfoundation.org).

