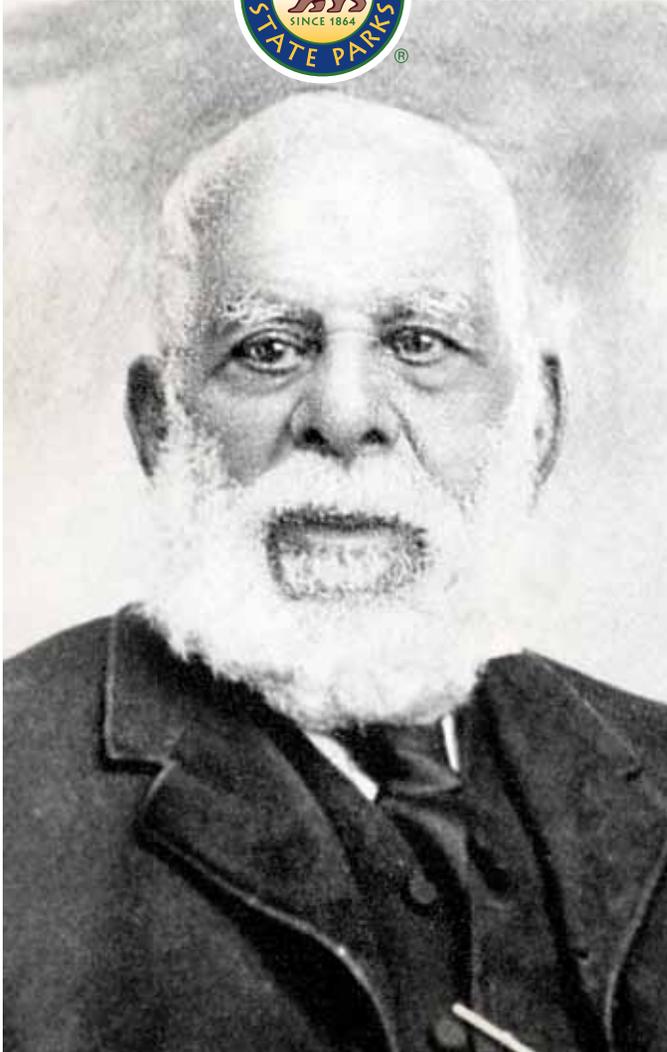


# Pío Pico

## State Historic Park



### Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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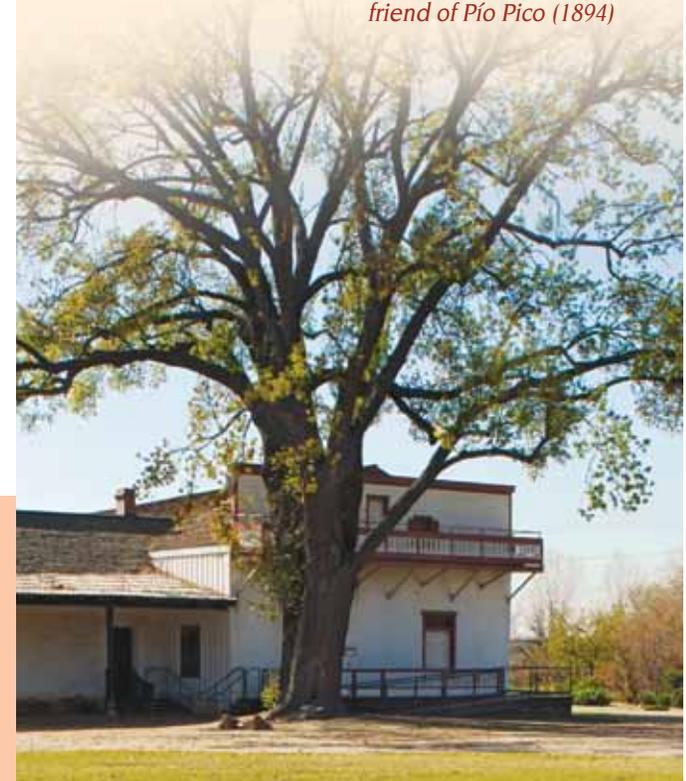
Whittier, CA 90606

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*"All who come into social  
or business relations with the  
venerable ex-Governor . . .  
bear witness to his  
kindness of heart . . .  
his uniform courtesy . . .  
his entire lack of malice  
toward any human being."*

*- Henry Barrows  
friend of Pío Pico (1894)*



## Pío Pico State Historic Park

commemorates the vibrant life and times of Pío de Jesús Pico IV. Don Pío Pico was a prominent figure in nineteenth-century California's business, civic and political life, including service as the last territorial governor under Mexican rule.

### PARK HISTORY

#### The Tongva

The Tongva people have lived and thrived in this area for at least 2,500 years. After the Spanish settled Alta California in 1769, Tongva lifestyle changed significantly. Many were taken into Spanish colonial society through the nearby Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, established in 1771. The Spanish called those Tongva associated with the mission "Gabrieleños."

Local Tongva worked for Pío Pico after he acquired 8,991 acres of mission lands for his Paso de Bartolo rancho. This park is all that remains of the acreage.

### THE DE ANZA EXPEDITION

Spain had a tenuous hold on the frontier territory of Alta California. By the time of de Anza's expedition, fewer than 200 Spaniards called Alta California home.

Juan Bautista de Anza, from Fronteras on Mexico's Sonoran frontier, organized and financed a trip in 1774 to find an overland passage to Alta California.

This crossing paved the way for another expedition in 1775-76, which would escort a mixed group of soldiers from presidios in Sonora with their wives and children—30 families in all—to settle in Alta California.

The colonists were descendants of Spaniards and other Europeans, indigenous people of Mexico, and Africans brought to work in New Spain.

### PÍO PICO

The de Anza expedition brought Pico's parents, José Maria Pico and Maria Estaquia Gutierrez, from Mexico to Alta California as children. Their families settled at Mission San Gabriel. Pío de Jesús Pico, the fourth of ten children and the second son, was born there on May 5, 1801. His mixed ancestry included the Spanish, Italian, African, and Native American blood of his forebears.

#### The Pico and Gutierrez Families

The lineage of José Maria Pico can be traced back to the early 1600s. This initial traceable ancestor was Count Mazzi of Pico (a town in central Italy).

Four generations later, the count's great, great grandson Santiago Pico lived in Sinaloa and married Maria Jacinta Vastida,



*Doña Maria and Don Pío Pico, with their nieces*

a descendant of African slaves. Among their children accompanying them on the de Anza expedition was their son, José Maria Pico. José later married Maria Estaquia Gutierrez. Their marriage would produce ten children, including the future governor of Alta California.

The family moved to San Diego in 1805. In 1819 Pío Pico's father died, leaving the 19-year-old to support the family while his older brother, José Antonio, served in the military. Pío Pico became a merchant selling liquor, groceries and dry goods.



*Detail of "El Ranchito" mural by local college students*

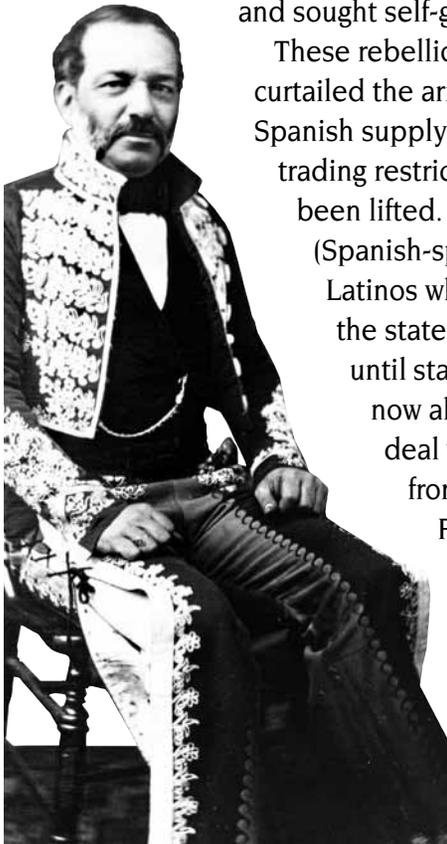
Pío Pico became a member of the territorial assembly in 1826. His political alliances brought him into the “revolutionary politics” of Mexican California. He served as interim governor for 20 days in 1832, after the ousting of Governor Manuel Victoria.

In 1834, at age 33, Pío Pico married Maria Ygnacia Alvarado. The two did not have any children together, but the Picos adopted two sons and two daughters.

### MEXICAN CALIFORNIA

Well before Mexico won its independence in 1821, Spain's other American colonies had also rebelled against the Spanish monarchy and sought self-government.

These rebellions had curtailed the arrival of Spanish supply ships, so trading restrictions had been lifted. Californios (Spanish-speaking Latinos who lived in the state from 1769 until statehood) were now allowed to deal with traders from England, France, Russia and the United States. Foreign trade, individual land



Andres Pico

grants, and secularization of the missions (turning them into pueblos with parish churches) brought major changes.

Settlers, trappers and foreign sailors who had abandoned their ships added their numbers to the Americans who arrived almost daily. By 1845, when Pío Pico replaced Manuel Micheltorena as governor, California was unofficially governing itself.

### MEXICAN LAND GRANTS

After 1821, newly independent Mexico began awarding land grants to encourage settlement, agriculture and cattle ranching. The cowhides and tallow that grantees produced on their large ranchos fostered a lively and very profitable trade with foreign merchants. By age 23, Pío Pico was successful enough to build a 10-room adobe home in San Diego to house his mother and seven siblings.

Pío Pico and his brother Andrés amassed an enormous amount of acreage between them; however, Pío found himself land-rich and cash-poor. His lifestyle included lavish spending and great generosity toward his friends and family. A taste for gambling and horse races, and the debts he incurred in their pursuit, fueled the financial troubles that would haunt his later years.

### PÍO PICO'S POLITICS

During the 1830s and 1840s, Pío Pico was actively involved in Alta California's political intrigues, which included an unsuccessful revolt against Governor Juan Alvarado in 1837. Then in 1845-46, as civil governor

of the territory, Pío Pico struggled for political control against General José Castro of Monterey.

Pico's term as governor was interrupted by the American invasion and occupation. He fled south to Mexico to avoid being captured by the American forces and to request military aid from Mexico to defend the territory. He was unable to obtain any financial or military support for Alta California from the war-strapped Mexican government.

### AMERICAN INVASION

In May 1846, the United States declared war with Mexico.

The American land and sea forces moved to occupy the territory. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded Alta California to the U.S.

Following the 1848 Gold Rush, the small Californio population was overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of new residents.



Don Pío Pico, ca. 1890



*Pico House Hotel*

By the 1850s, fewer than 15 percent of the new state's population called themselves Californios. Their previous social and political status was now gone. Many long-time rancho owners had to sell their lands for court costs to prove their own titles.

As an example, Pío and Andrés Pico had been awarded the 133,441-acre Rancho Santa Margarita y las Flores by Governor Juan

Alvarado. Now in financial trouble, Andrés gave his half to his brother Pío, who assumed Andrés's debts.

But the 1863-64 drought eventually forced a desperate Pío Pico to deed a half interest in the rancho to his brother-in-law, John Forster, who promised to pay the debts that were hanging over the Picos.

Pío Pico, unable to read or write English, did not keep copies of the deed; later, he would learn that Forster had recorded a deed for the entire acreage of Rancho Santa Margarita y las Flores instead of the agreed-upon half-interest. In court, John Forster won sole ownership of what amounted to five percent of today's San Diego County.

### **THE PRIVATE CITIZEN**

Pico returned to California, declared American citizenship, and became a California resident. He again acquired a large fortune and more land. He bought the land where this park stands, calling it Rancho Paso de Bartolo or "El Ranchito," in 1852. Active in civic affairs, Pico was elected to the Los Angeles City Council.

### **Pico House Hotel**

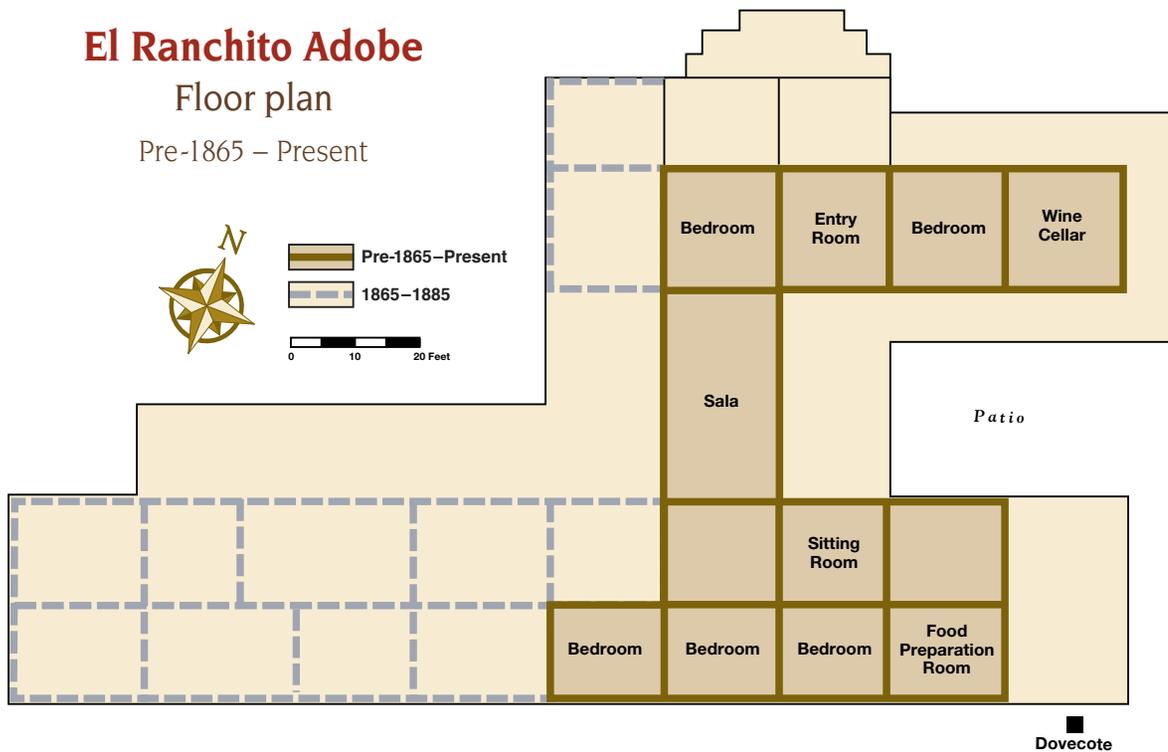
In 1869 Pico sold some property and spent \$85,000 of the proceeds to build the grand, three-story Pico House Hotel—the most modern in Los Angeles at the time.

The still-impressive, 82-bedroom Pico House Hotel stands on L.A.'s downtown central plaza, part of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument.

# El Ranchito Adobe

## Floor plan

Pre-1865 – Present



### RESIDENTS OF EL RANCHITO

Pío Pico often welcomed long-term guests into his home. Originally he had used El Ranchito as his country home. Various servants, ranch foremen, family members and guests lived or stayed at the adobe.

In 1867 Pico invited his friends, Charles Lyman and Harriet Russell Strong, to live in the casa while they were building their farmhouse across the road. During their stay, Charles also constructed a well and a brick-paved courtyard on the property. Mrs. Strong would later prove instrumental in saving the casa from an unkind fate.

### Flood Damage

Severe flooding in 1867 and 1884 damaged the Pico adobe and washed away much of Pico's arable ranch land. It also eroded much

of his wealth. In his mid-80s, Don Pío was forced to mortgage El Ranchito, the last of his properties.

Pico's advancing age, costly legal cases, and shady business partners triggered a series of financial setbacks.

In 1891 he was evicted from El Ranchito. Once known as one of California's wealthiest men, Pío Pico died penniless at age 93 in the Los Angeles home of his daughter, Joaquina Pico Moreno, in 1894.

### EL RANCHITO TODAY

The Pío Pico adobe was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. However, in 1987, the Whittier earthquake damaged the building and forced its indefinite closure.

California State Parks worked with the Pío Pico State Historic Park Coalition (the cities

of Whittier, Pico Rivera, Norwalk and Santa Fe Springs) and other local partners to repair and restore the Pico adobe and the park grounds. This effort helped reopen the adobe to the public.

Between 2000 and 2003, the home was seismically stabilized, two lost rooms reconstructed, and the grounds returned to the way it looked in the 1880s, when Don Pío Pico lived there.

Besides its current amenities, the reconstructed landscape has documented gardens, orchards and outstructures.

### The Adobe's Architecture

Pío Pico's home was unique in that it had an American-style façade or false front. In the 1860s and 1870s, Pico added covered verandas, patios, a corral, a mill, a chapel, a well and several bedrooms.

The walls of one of the rooms in Pico's adobe home are unrestored, so that visitors can see their historic composition. Hand-made adobe bricks whitewashed with limestone plaster show the craft of adobe architecture in Alta California.

Adobe building windows are often built into the several-feet-thick earthen block walls with an angled framework that allows more sunlight into the rooms.





Sala

The *sala*, where the family would have entertained a distinguished list of guests, would have been decorated in silk- and lace-covered furnishings. Personal items belonging to Don Pío and his family are on display throughout the adobe.

### EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Year-round events at Pío Pico SHP include fiestas, Living History Days, Junior Ranger/Junior Rancher programs and other interpretive events. Guided tours for K-12 school groups may be arranged.

For tour and event information and a calendar, please call the park at (562) 695-1217 or visit the Friends of Pío Pico website at [www.piopico.org](http://www.piopico.org).

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The adobe and its exhibits, a picnic table, restrooms and paths of travel are accessible. Accessibility is continually improving. For updated details, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Except for service animals, pets are not allowed in the historic building.
- All park features are protected by law and may not be disturbed, collected or removed.
- Alcohol is prohibited on the premises.

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Los Angeles State Historic Park  
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- Chino Hills State Park  
4721 Sapphire Road  
Chino Hills 91709  
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- Watts Towers of Simon Rodia  
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Los Angeles 90002  
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- Rio de Los Angeles  
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1900 San Fernando Road  
Los Angeles 90065  
(323) 276-3015

\*Operated by the  
City of Los Angeles



Junior Rancher making an adobe brick

This park receives support from the  
Friends of Pío Pico, Inc.  
P.O. Box 5798, Whittier, CA 90607  
(562) 567-7651 · [www.piopico.org](http://www.piopico.org)  
and from the City of Whittier



### SAVING THE "PICO MANSION"

In 1906 the abandoned and deteriorated Pío Pico adobe was in danger of being demolished for use as road fill.

Pico's former houseguest, water conservationist and inventor Mrs. Harriet Russell Strong, spearheaded an effort by the Whittier Women's Club and other civic groups to save it from that fate, raising the money needed to fund its 1909 restoration.

In 1917 the City of Whittier deeded the adobe to the State of California. Ten years later, the property became part of the new California State Park System. The adobe has been restored three times since then: the building reopened as a museum after its 1946 restoration; its old floors were replaced in 1968; and the 2000 restoration reconstructed its historic landscape.



*Dovecote and Pico Adobe,  
southwest side*



*Rose of Castile*

## EL RANCHITO'S GARDENS

Pío Pico's view from El Ranchito was of a largely undeveloped landscape. At one time he could watch cattle grazing. Later years saw orchards, grapevines and a beautiful garden, often described in writing by those who stopped to visit El Ranchito on their way to other destinations. The muted cooing of doves in their dovecote underscored the sounds of the outdoors.

Among other agricultural enterprises, Pico cultivated an orange orchard and grew barley, wheat, oats and grapes.

Much of what the family ate was grown on the grounds of El Ranchito, including pomegranates, lemons and other citrus, peaches and peppers. Prickly pear cactus provided the popular *nopales*, used in a variety of Mexican recipes, and the sweet quince was the base for a delicious jam.

Willow trees lined the river's banks. The trees served many purposes, but Pío Pico's main reason for planting willows was to stabilize the riverbanks and stave off the flooding brought about by erosion.

Pío Pico's favorite flower by far—the ethereal, delicate-looking Rose of Castile—came from Spain. The shape of this flower also decorates the wallpaper of the *sala* (living room).

Rosemary, lavender and other herbs grew near the house for convenience—not to mention inspiration—in creating the family's favorite dishes.

The garden area has been restored to show what it might have been like and how it might have been used during Pico's residence at El Ranchito.



*From left to right: Lemons, pomegranate, quince and prickly pear cactus*

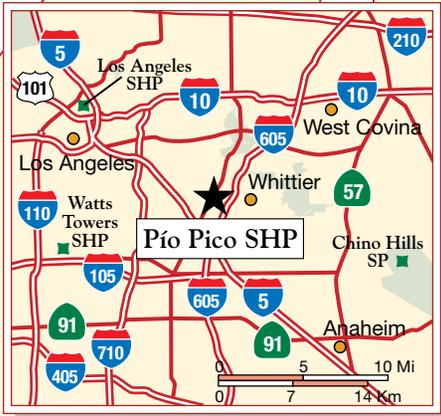
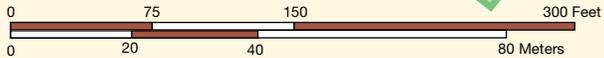
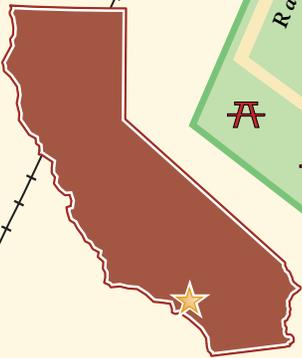
# Pío Pico State Historic Park



## PÍO PICO STATE HISTORIC PARK

### Legend

- Streets
- Railroad
- Accessible Pedestrian Path
- Fence
- Park Building
- Gate
- Parking
- Picnic
- Restrooms



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to 5, Norwalk