

# *Old Mission San Juan Capistrano*

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Old Mission  
San Juan  
Capistrano

CALIFORNIA

# Mission San Juan Capistrano, California

The founding of the Spanish Missions in California furnished an epic of history. These historical monuments are reminders of the great Franciscan adventure; twenty-one vast establishments—the ruins of which still stand in wonder and beauty, at various points along these 600 miles of glorious golden coast region.

Spain had established several Missions in Lower (Baja) California, when the need of offsetting the activities of strange trades of Upper (Alta) California led to the plan of colonization that was to have a profound effect. The cross, the sword and the hoe were the symbols of this movement, to carry civilization into the wilderness.

Command was given by the Spanish Crown to settle California. Four expeditions set out from points in Baja California, Mexico, two by land and two by sea. The two sea divisions preceded the land parties, planning to arrive in San Diego at about the same time.

The first expedition by land was headed by Fray Crespi and Capitan Fernando Rivera. The second division by land was in charge of Gaspar de Portola, who bore the title of both Commandante and Governor of Alta California. Father Junipera Serra, President of the Franciscans of Baja California, who was the guiding spirit of this great undertaking, was unable to start with the second division because of an injury, but weeks later was able to join up with Portola before the party arrived in San Diego.

With the establishment of the first Mission at San Diego on July 16th, 1769, California history and civilization had its beginning. From this base during the next thirty years, a score of Missions and several branches were established at points a day's journey apart by horseback. The last of the Missions was established at a point about fifty miles north of San Francisco. Missions were not established progressively, but first at strategic points, others in between to be built at later dates.

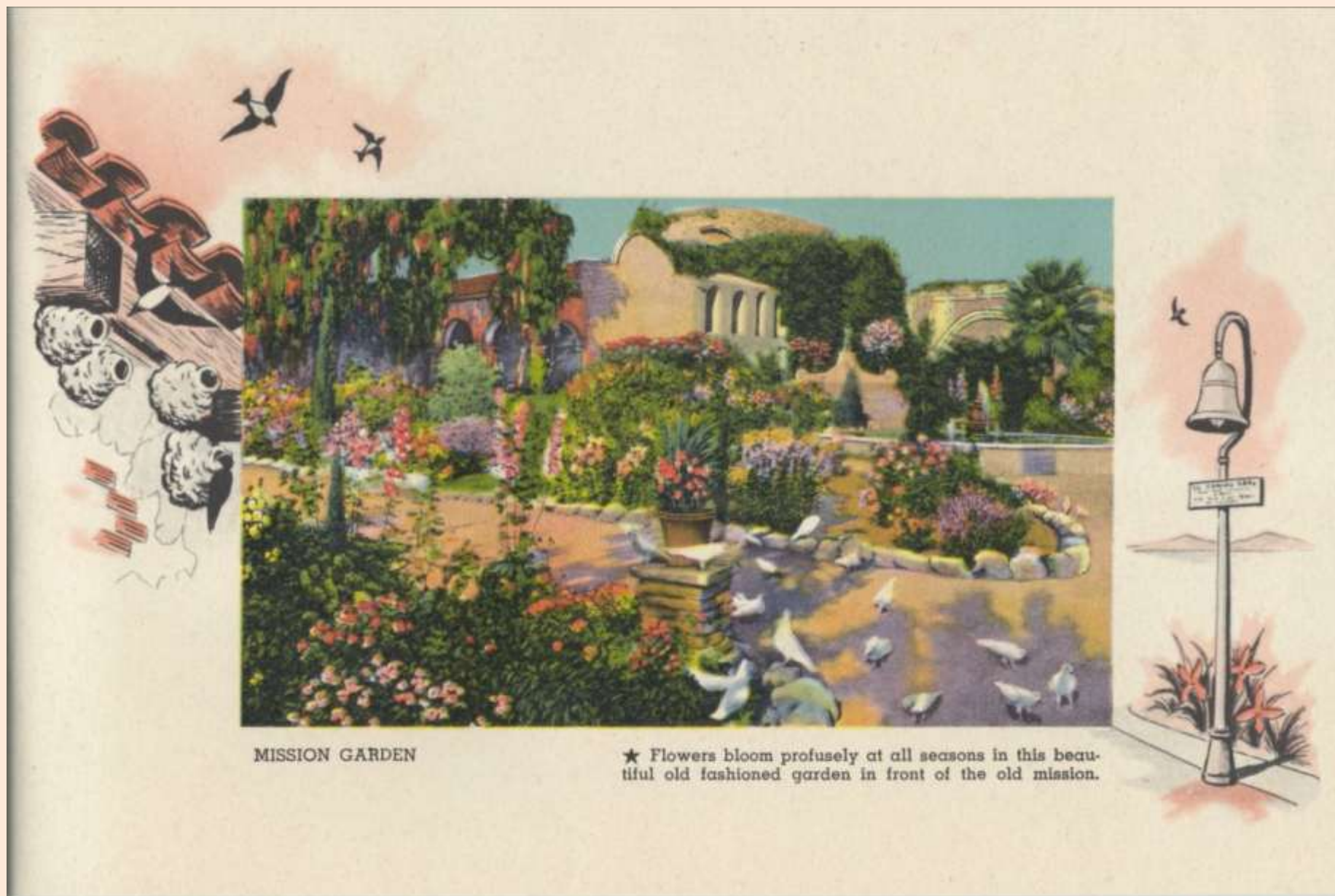
The trail connecting the Missions was known as the El Camino Real (The Royal Road). The name is still preserved for the Coast Highway of California, U. S. Highway 101.

**THE MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO**, with the little town bearing the same name, is situated in Orange County, California, fifty-eight miles south from Los Angeles, on the State Highway leading to San Diego.

The first attempt to found this Mission took place October 30th, 1775, the octave of the feast of San Juan Capistrano, when Mass was celebrated in a shelter of boughs by Fray Fermin Francisco de Laseum, but amidst the rejoicing over the happy beginning, it was halted by the startling news of an Indian uprising at the Mission in San Diego, to which point the entire party returned to restore peace and order at that establishment.

A year passed before work was resumed. This time it was Father Serra himself who officiated at the ceremonies. Arriving at the spot that had been chosen the year before, he found the cross still standing. Digging up the bells that had been buried, and repairing the ramadas or rudely built huts, he proceeded with all solemnity possible to found this, the seventh Mission, on November 1st 1776.

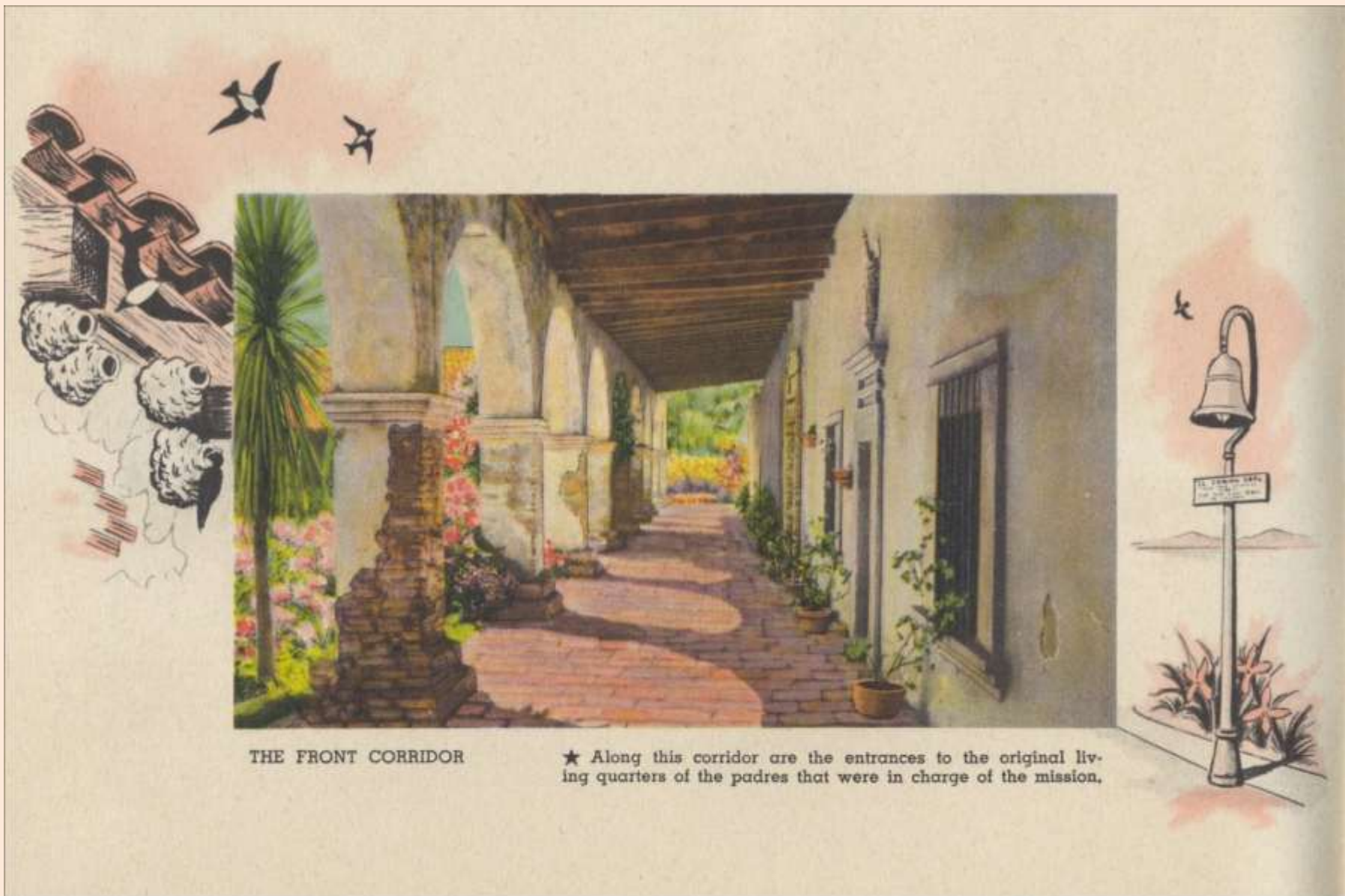
The establishment was not as many suppose, a monastery; it was the headquarters for the Indians in the work of civilizing them, teaching them the Christian religion and useful industries. A glance over the place will show how admirably it was planned for its purpose. Besides the church for instruction and worship, and the living rooms for the Padres and the guests' rooms, there were store houses for provisions and shops for the various craftsmen.



MISSION GARDEN

★ Flowers bloom profusely at all seasons in this beautiful old fashioned garden in front of the old mission.

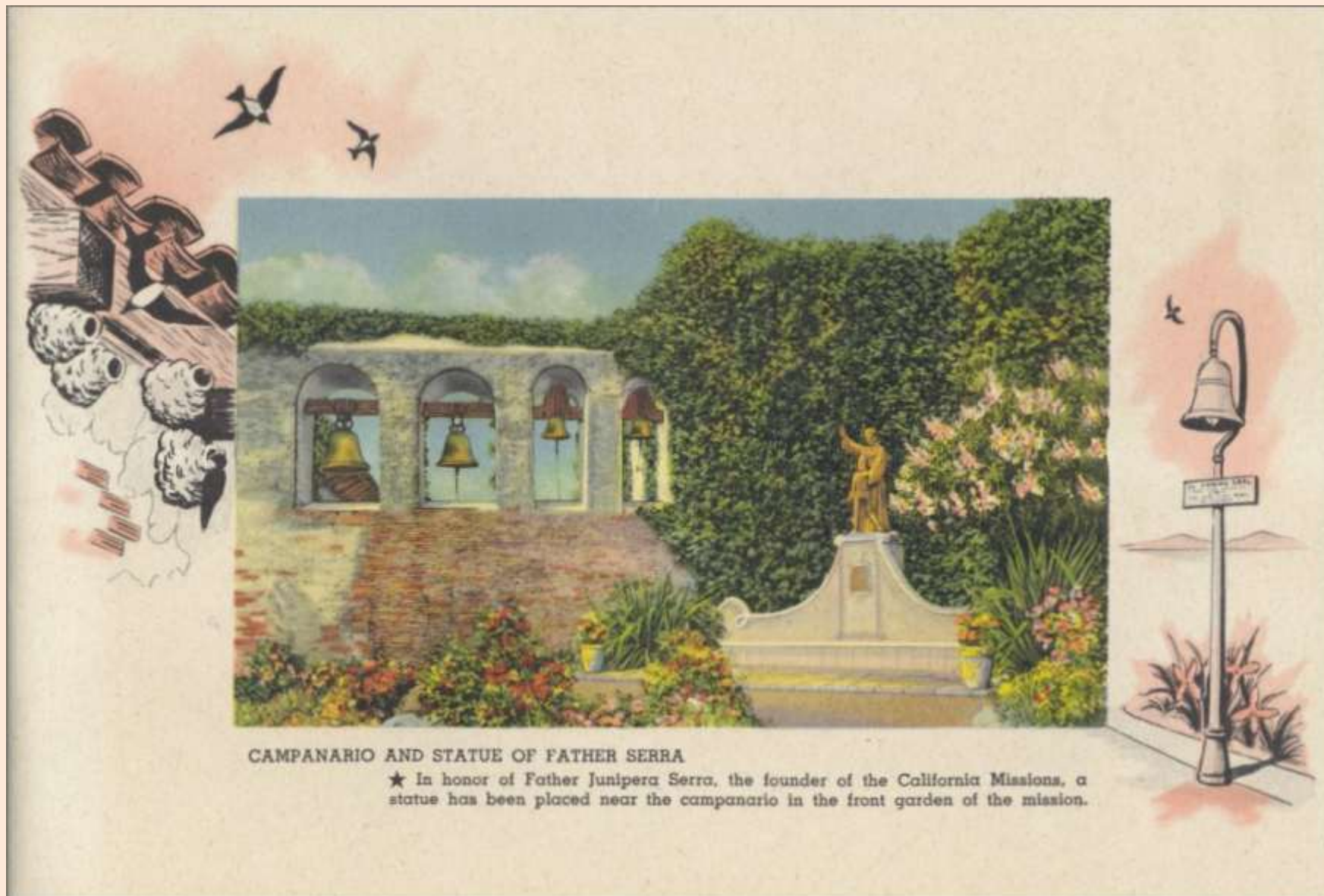
San Juan Capistrano Mission Garden



THE FRONT CORRIDOR

★ Along this corridor are the entrances to the original living quarters of the padres that were in charge of the mission.

San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Front Corridor



**CAMPANARIO AND STATUE OF FATHER SERRA**

★ In honor of Father Junipera Serra, the founder of the California Missions, a statue has been placed near the campanario in the front garden of the mission.

San Juan Capistrano Mission – Campanario and Statue of Father Serra



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Front Mission Garden



FOUNTAIN AND POOL

★ Situated in the center of the beautiful front garden reflecting the colorful and romantic surroundings of the old mission.



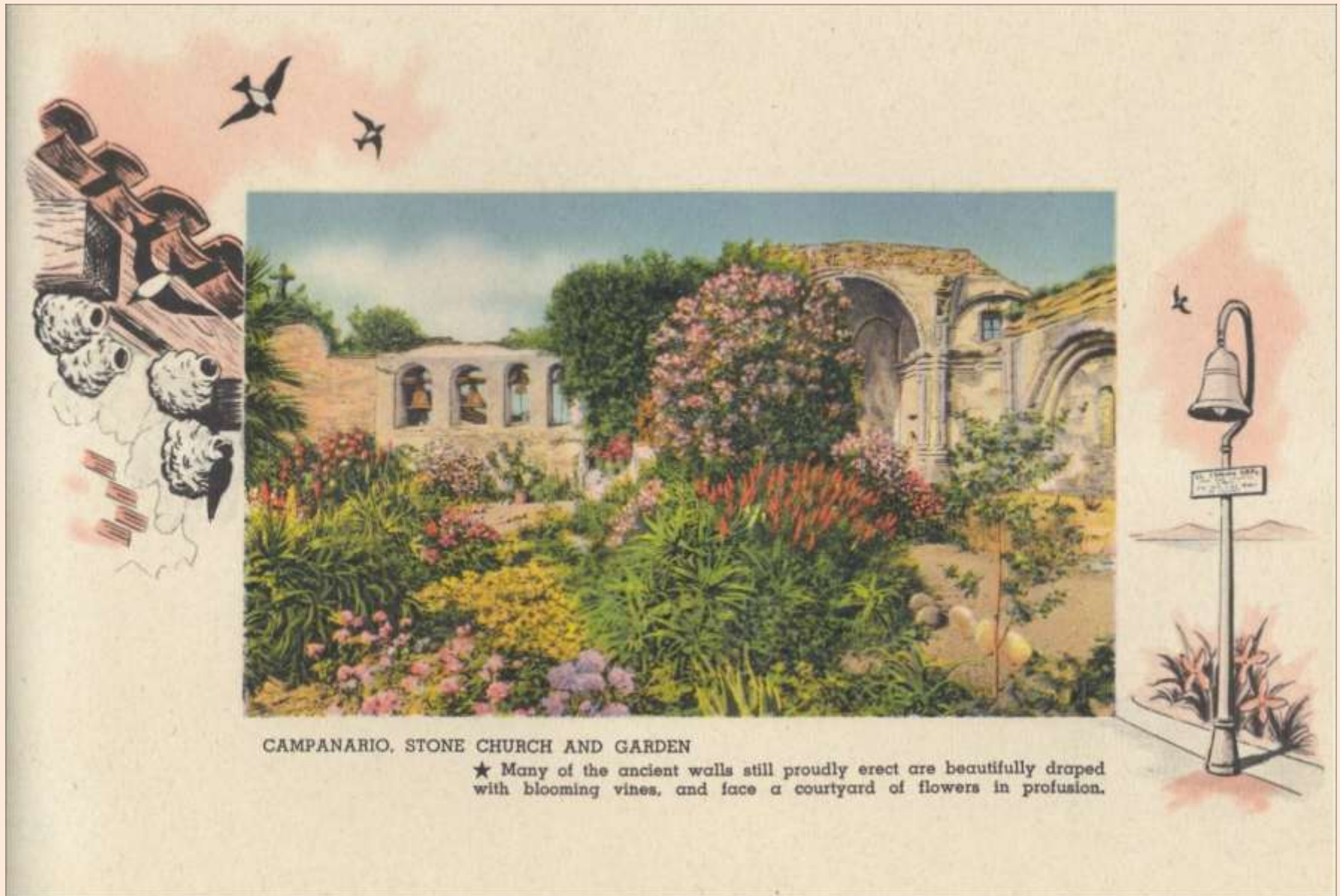
San Juan Capistrano Mission Fountain and Pool



MAIN WALK IN FRONT GARDEN

★ The garden presents a picture of fascinating beauty. Flowers of many colors, beautiful shrubs and shady trees line the many walks.

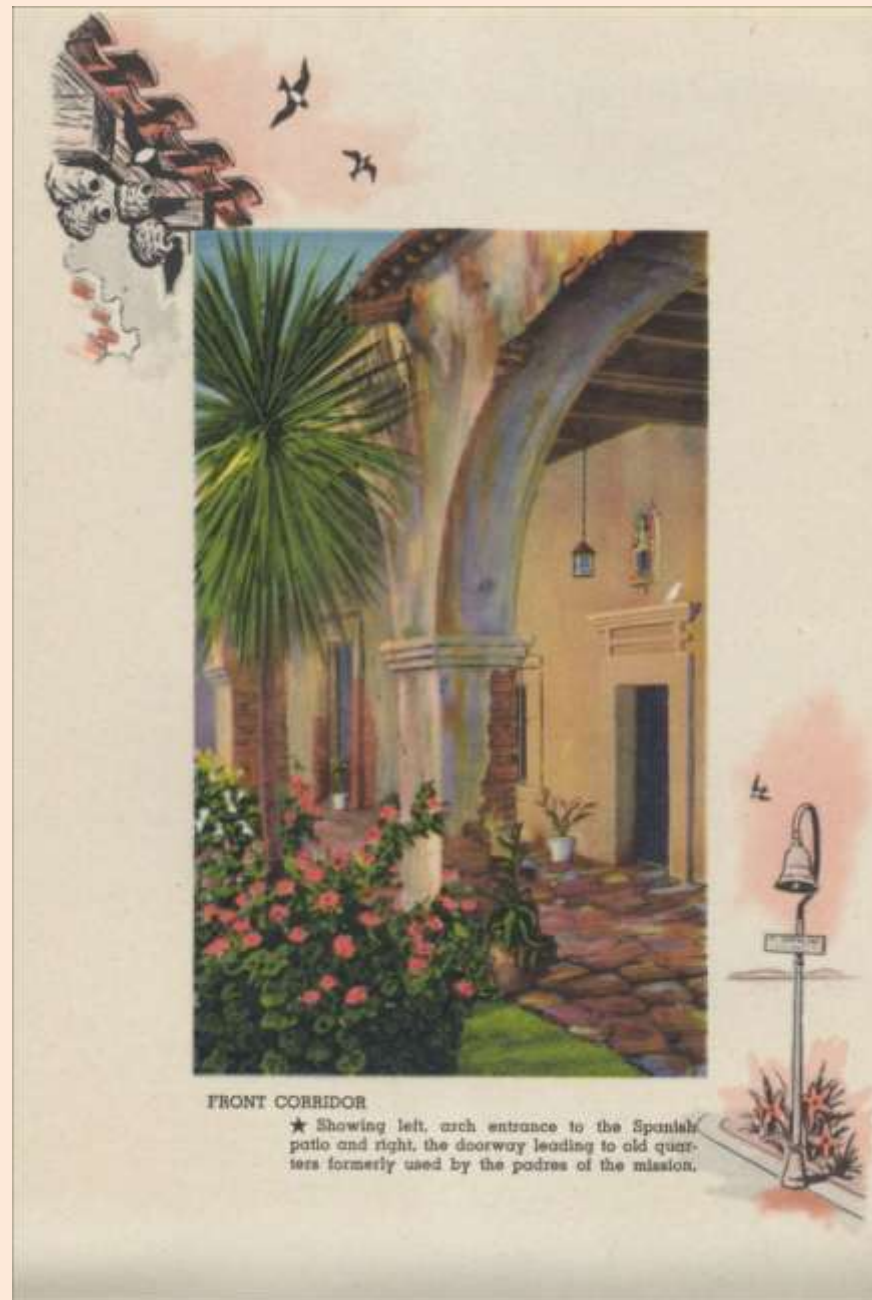
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Main Walk in Front Garden



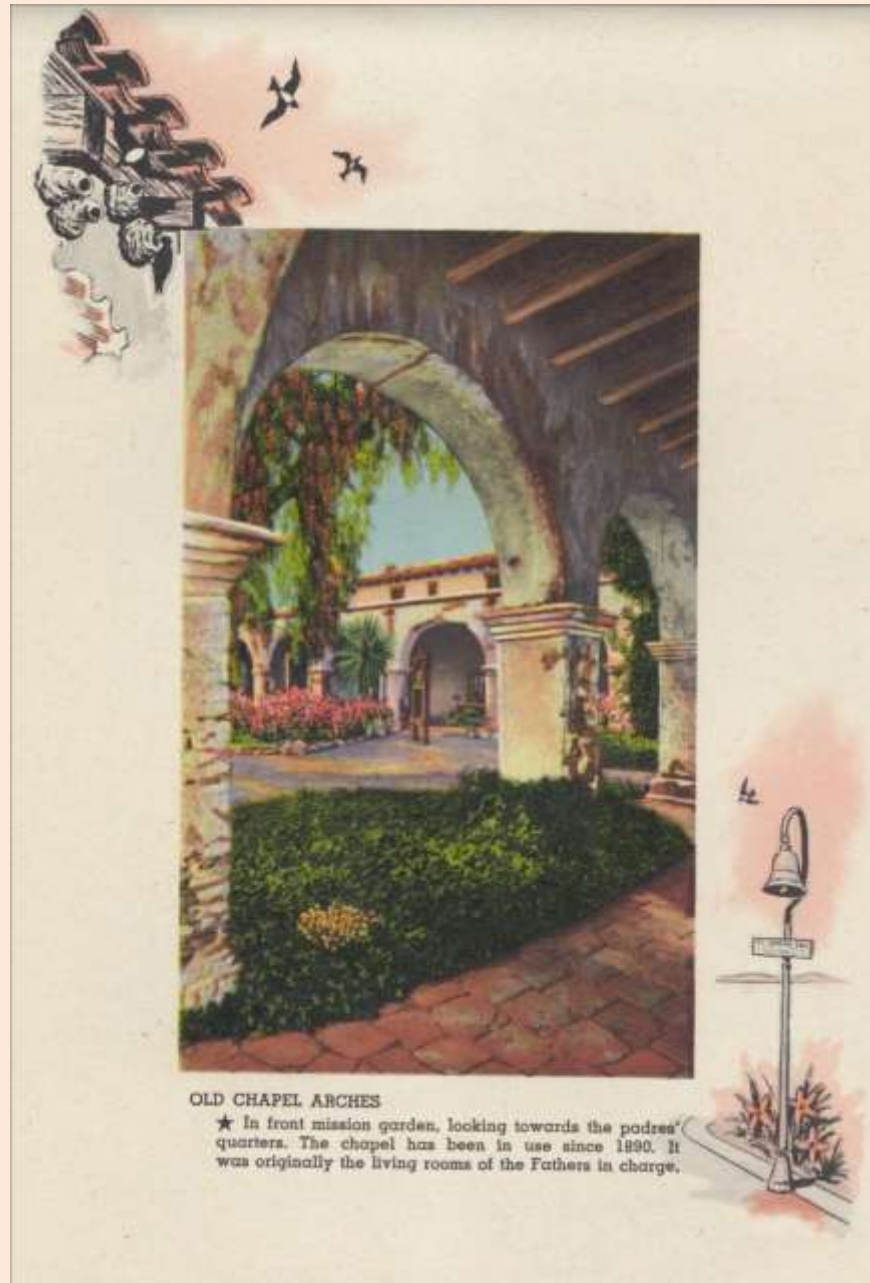
CAMPANARIO, STONE CHURCH AND GARDEN

★ Many of the ancient walls still proudly erect are beautifully draped with blooming vines, and face a courtyard of flowers in profusion.

San Juan Capistrano Mission – Campanario, Stone Church and Garden



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Front Corridor



OLD CHAPEL ARCHES

★ In front mission garden, looking towards the padre's quarters. The chapel has been in use since 1890. It was originally the living rooms of the Fathers in charge.

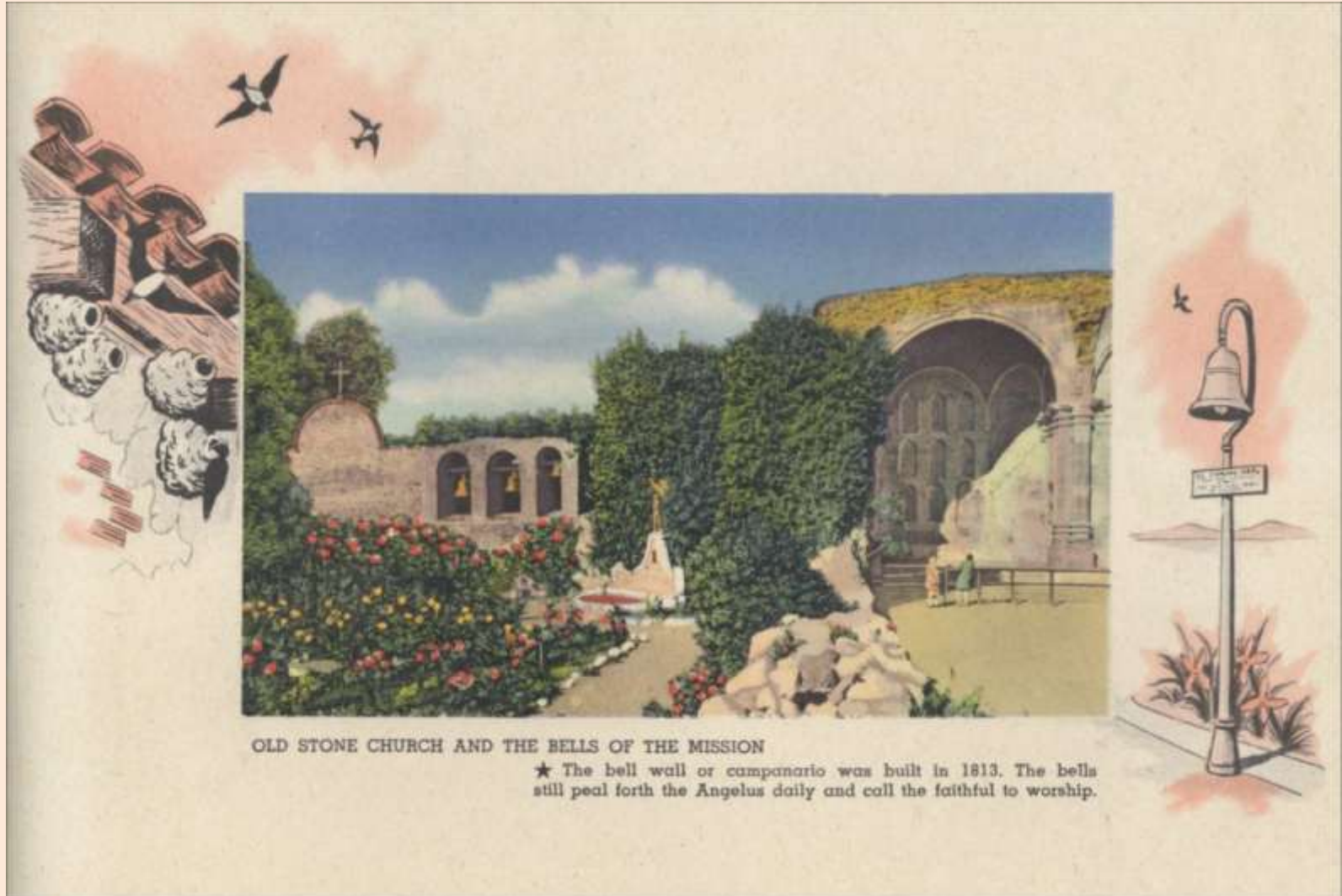
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Old Chapel Arches



FLOWER BORDERED WALK

★ One of the many inviting trails thru the mission gardens, which are a mass of bloom every month of the year.

San Juan Capistrano Mission – Flower Bordered Walk



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Old Stone Church and the Bells of the Mission



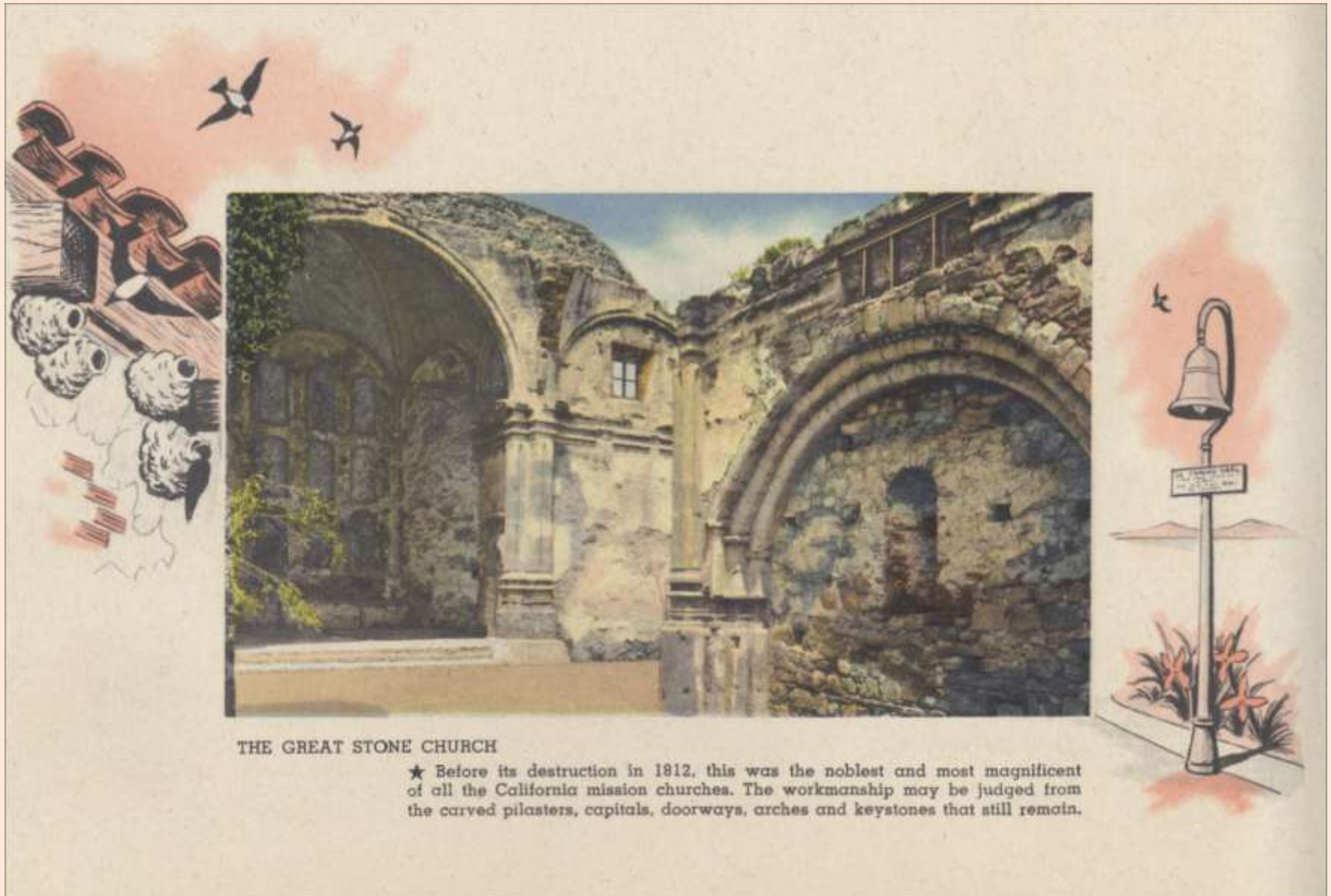
IN THE FRONT GARDEN

★ Where hundreds of beautiful snow white pigeons flock together and greet the visitors, often alighting on one's shoulder and beg to be fed from the hand.

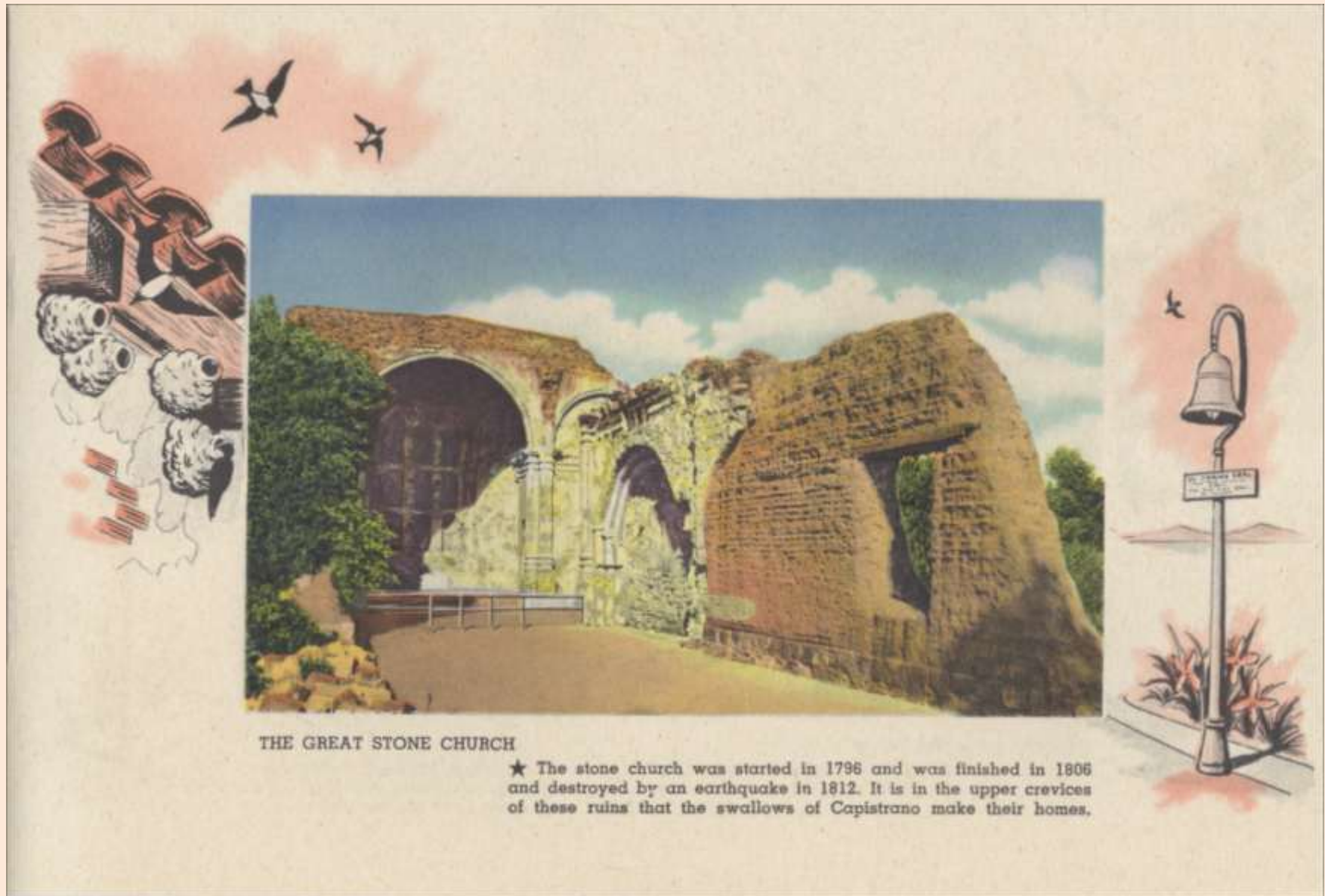
San Juan Capistrano Mission – In the Front Garden



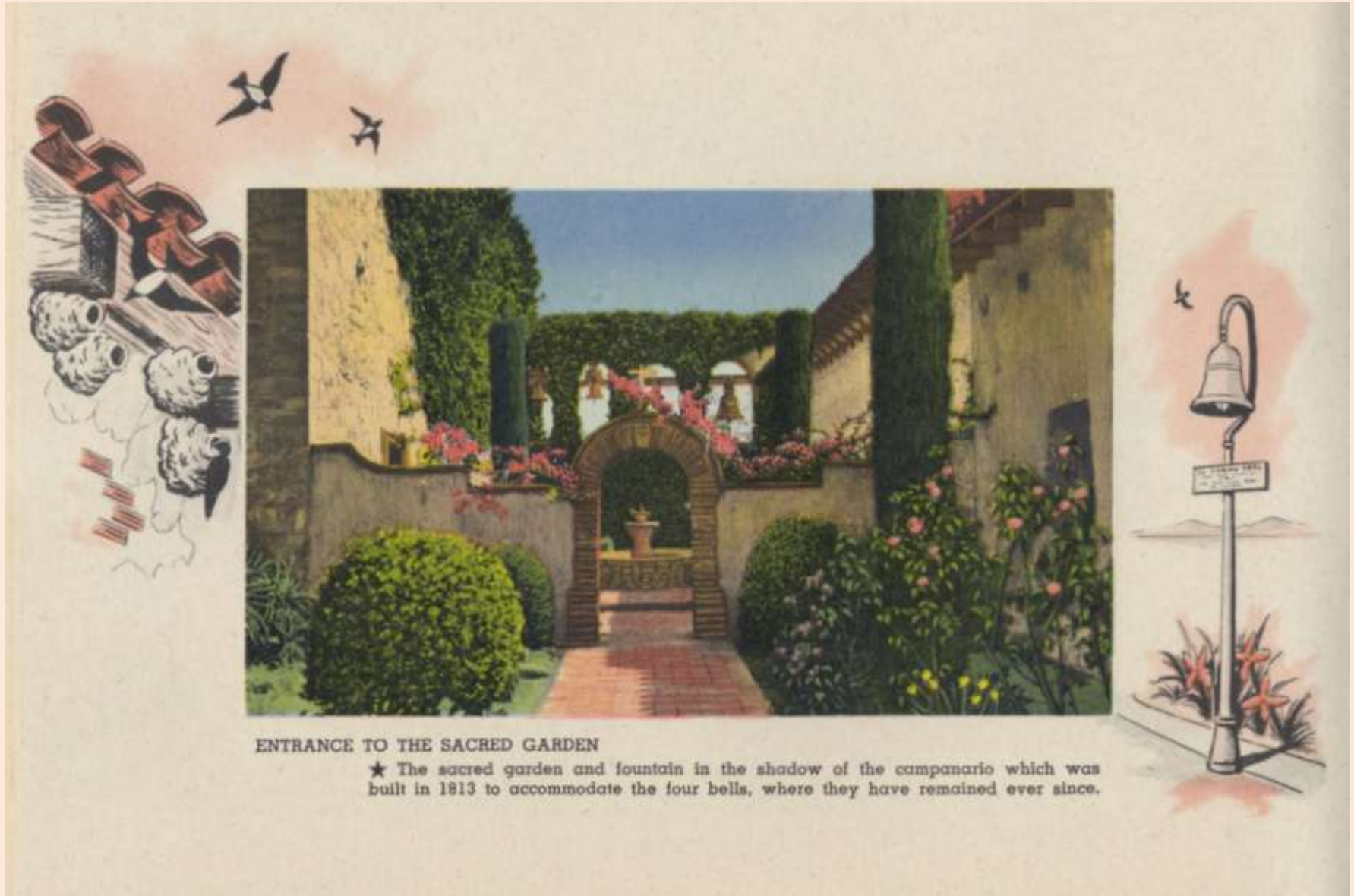
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Old Pepper Tree in Mission Garden



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Great Stone Church



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Great Stone Church



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Entrance to the Sacred Garden



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Sacred Garden



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Thru the Arches, looking towards the Padres' Quarters



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Looking towards the old Barracks



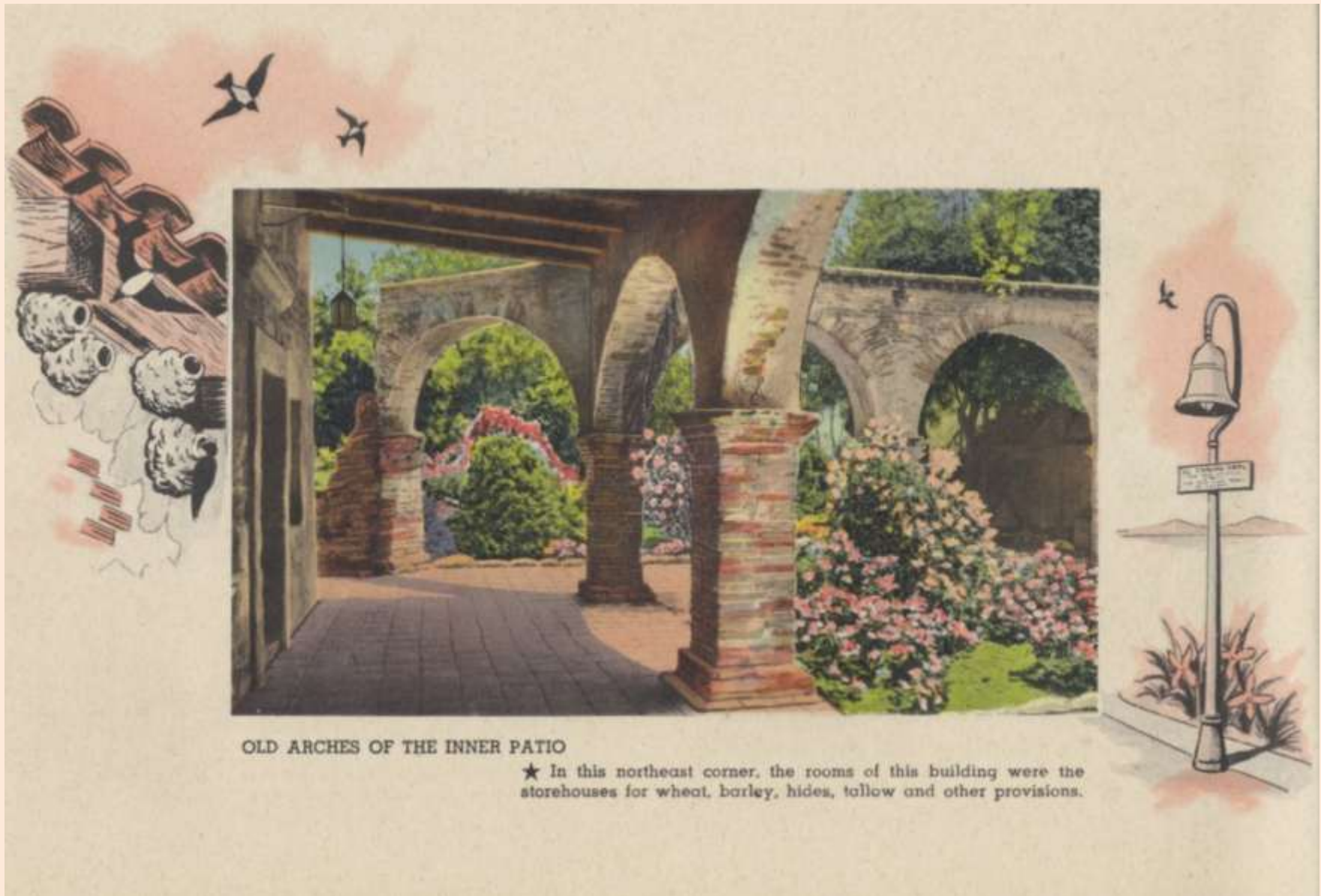
SERRA CHURCH CORRIDOR

★ The corridor leads along the adobe building on the east side of the quadrangle known as Father Serra's church. This is not only the oldest part of the mission, but is also the oldest building in the state.

San Juan Capistrano Mission – Serra Church Corridor



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Fountain of the Four Evangelists



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Old Arches of the Inner Patio



San Juan Capistrano Mission – South Corridor of Inner Patio



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Inner Patio



A WALK IN THE PATIO GARDEN

★ The flowers, trees and shrubs that border the walks of the arched quadrangle of the inner patio are typical of the early mission days.

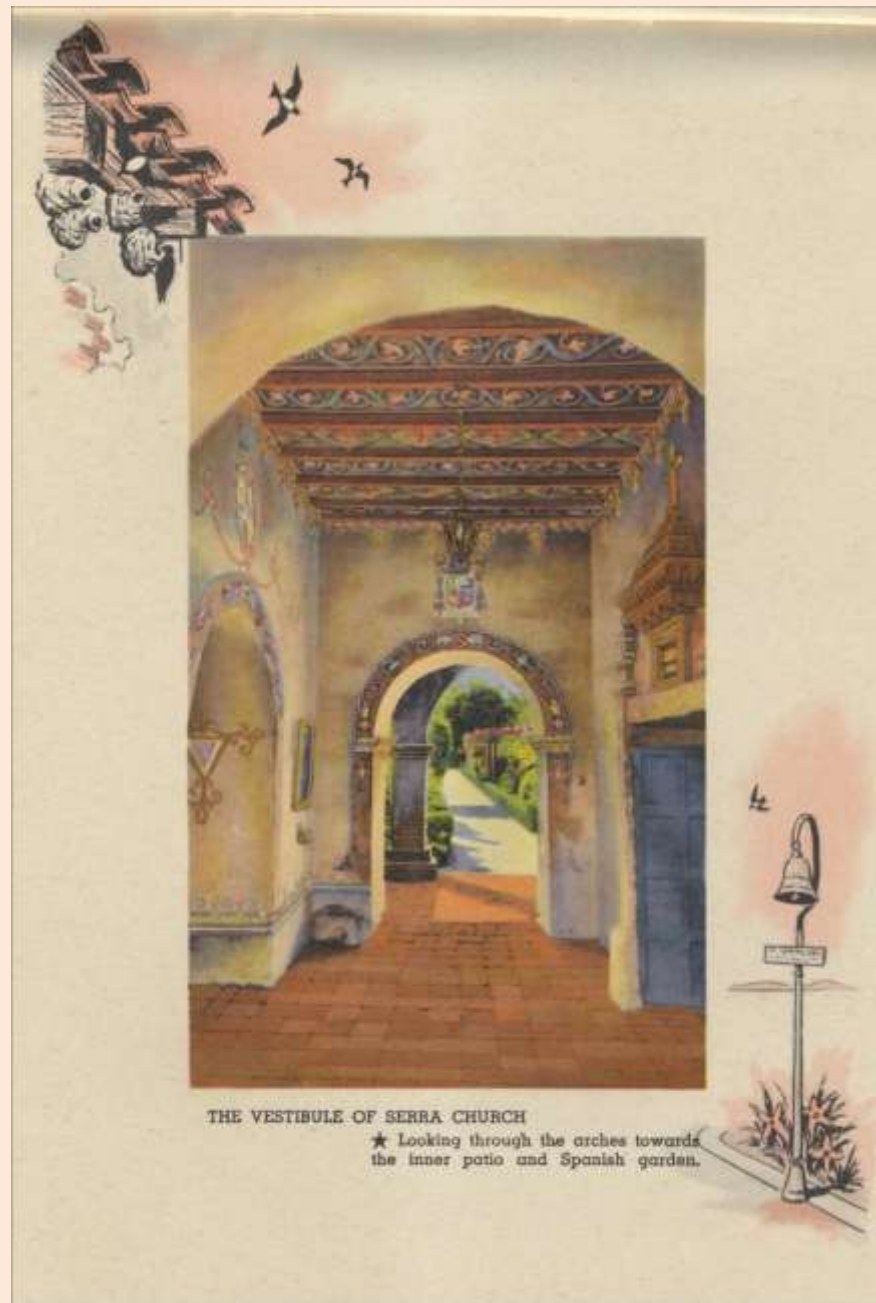
San Juan Capistrano Mission – A Walk in the Patio Garden



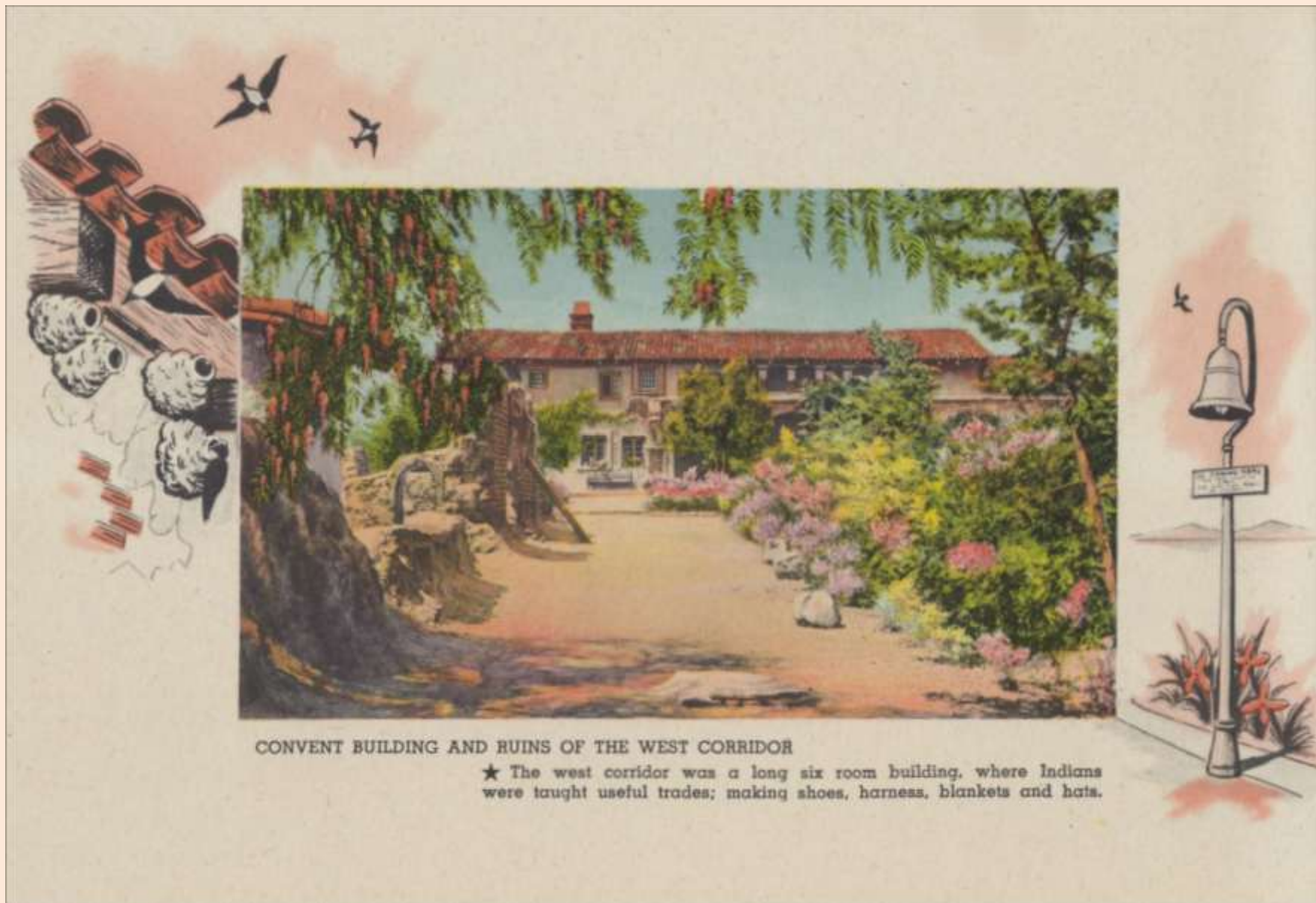
ALTAR IN SERRA CHAPEL

★ This is the only chapel left in which Father Serra actually officiated, and it is also the oldest building in the state.

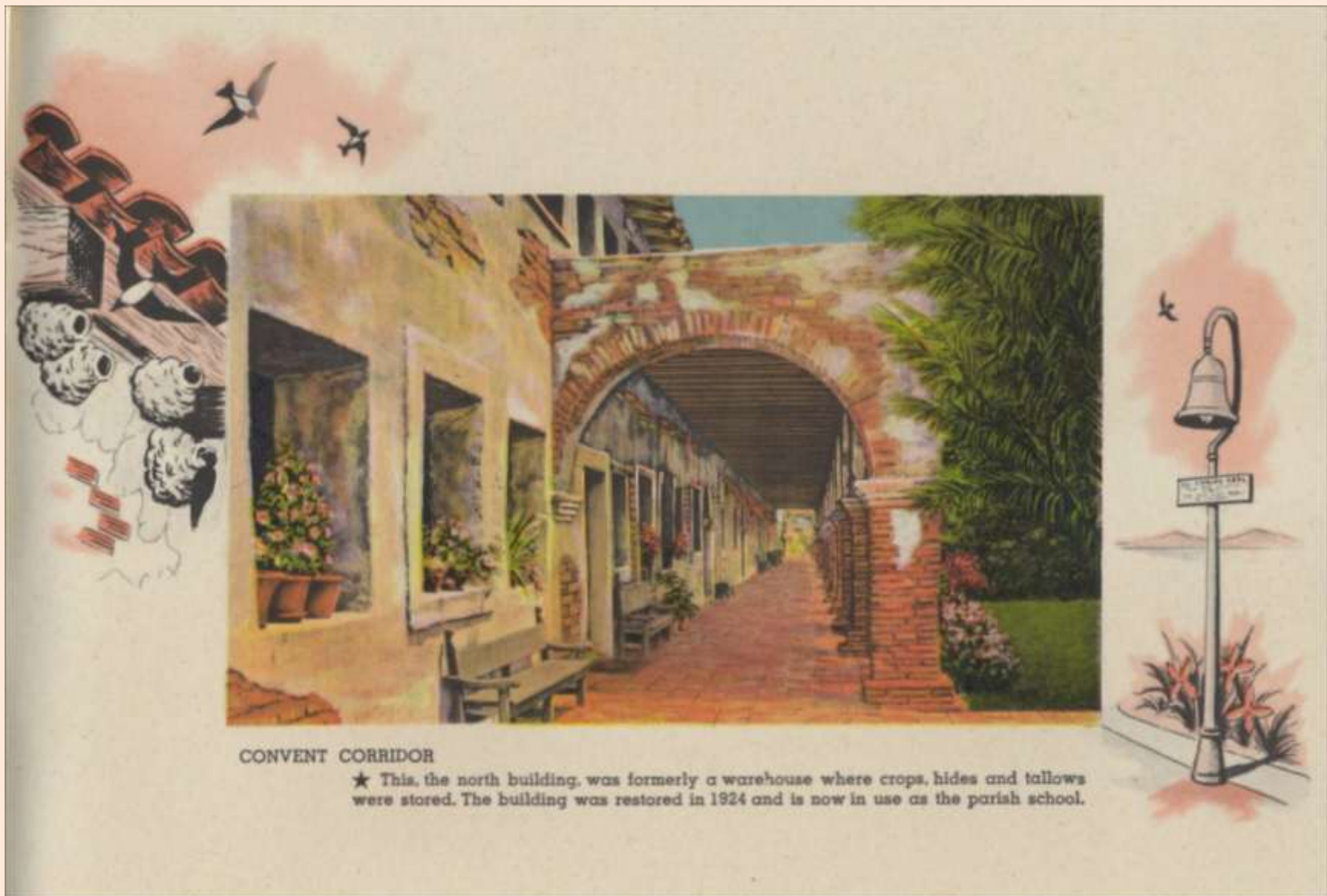
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Altar in Serra Church



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Vestibule of Serra Church



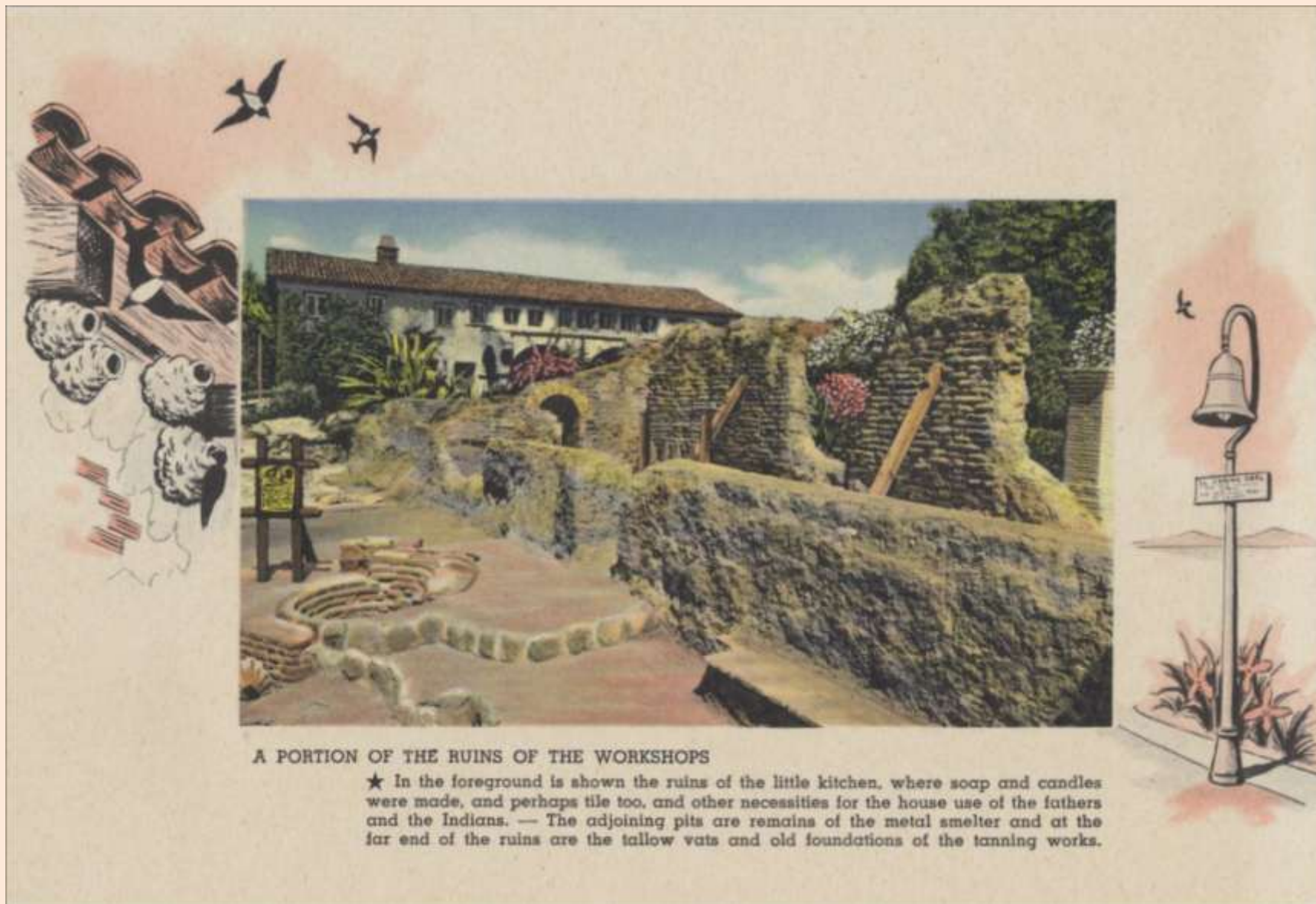
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Convent Building and Ruins of the West Corridor



CONVENT CORRIDOR

★ This, the north building, was formerly a warehouse where crops, hides and tallow were stored. The building was restored in 1924 and is now in use as the parish school.

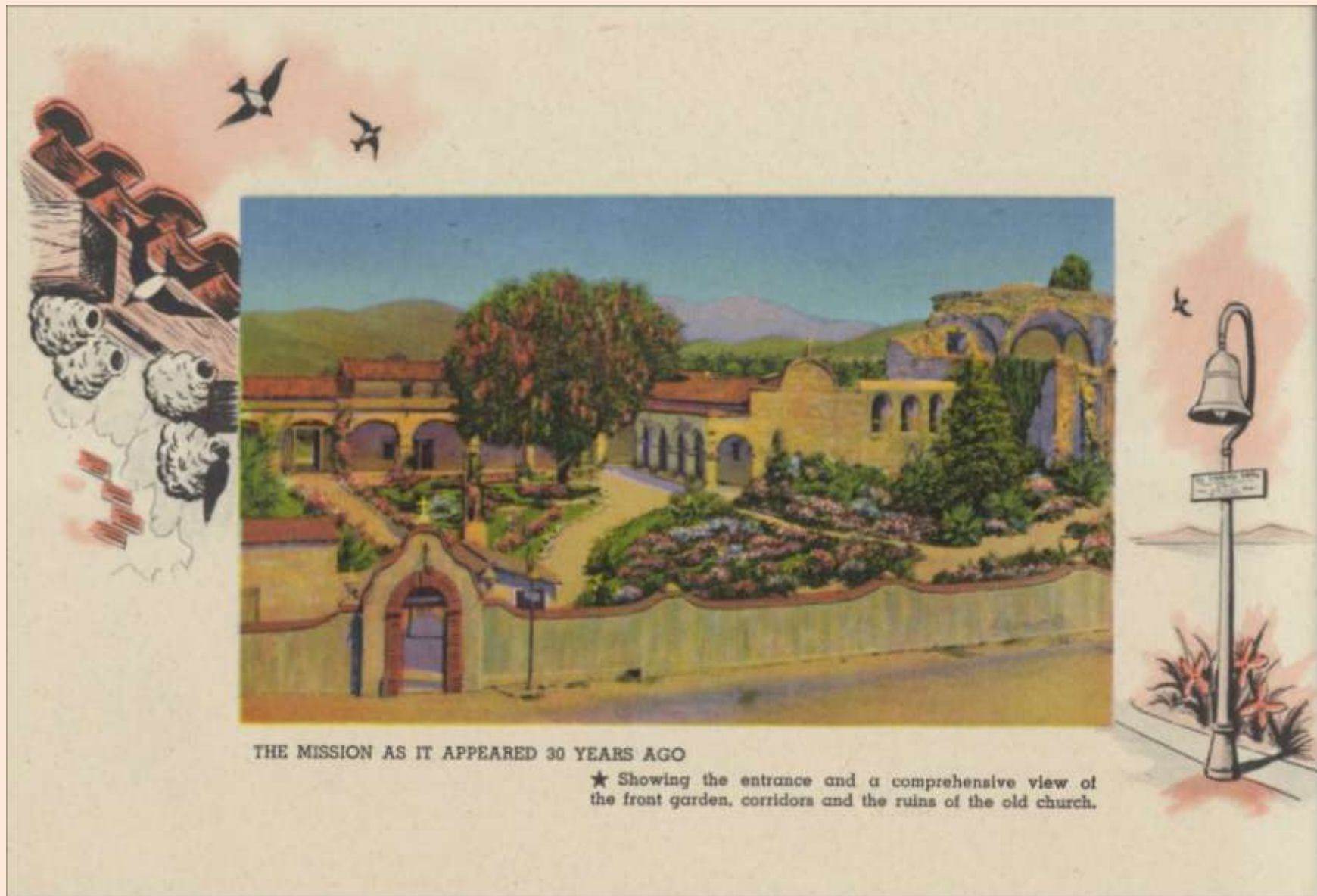
San Juan Capistrano Mission – Convent Corridor



San Juan Capistrano Mission – A Portion of the Ruins of the Workshops



San Juan Capistrano Mission – Corridor of the old Barracks Building



San Juan Capistrano Mission – The Mission as it appeared 30 years ago

The arch lined quadrangle around which the Mission buildings are clustered, is commonly called the "patio". The area of the patio is about one acre, each side measuring approximately two hundred feet. In Mission days, one of its uses was that of an outdoor workshop.

The large room at the north side of the Patio, in the northeast corner, were the store-houses for wheat, barley, hides and other provisions. In the northwest corner were located the shops in which soap, candles, blankets, hats, harness and shoes were made.

In the front building was the kitchen of the Padres and other occupants of the Mission building. Next to the kitchen, to the east was the pantry, where the old hand-hewn shelves made of hardwood, and the gallery still stand. The passage way next to the pantry is called the zaguan, which is now the principal entrance to the patio within. The rooms to the east of the zaguan were the living quarters of the Padres.

The adobe building, 162 feet long which forms part of the east side of the quadrangle, is known as Father Serra's church. This is not only the oldest part of the Mission, but also the oldest building in the state, and the only one that goes back to the day of the renowned Apostle of California.

The old stone church of the Mission before its destruction by an earthquake in 1812, was the most magnificent of all the Mission churches in California. The workmanship may be judged from the carved pilasters, capitals, doorways, arches and keystones that still remain.

The Mission Bells which now hang in the bell wall or Campanario between the present chapel and the ruins of the old church, at one time swung high up in the tower which was part of the great church.

Less than sixty years after the establishment of this magnificent mission, the ruin of San Juan Capistrano and the other Missions of California was accomplished by native California officials of the Mexican government, who under the hypocritical pretense of alleviating the condition of the Mission Indians, brought about the confiscation of the Indian lands and Mission property by the territorial government. In 1845 the buildings were sold at public auction by Governor Pio Pico; the buildings, furniture, three plots of land, the garden, orchard and vineyards for \$710, paid for in cash, hides and tallow.

When the United States acquired California, a land commission was appointed in 1851 to investigate private claims of property. The commission found the sale to be illegal. On March 18th, 1865, just a month before his death, President Abraham Lincoln signed a patent conveying the Mission buildings and land back to the Bishop of the Diocese, as representative of the Catholic Church.

The Mission today is in an excellent state of preservation. The repair work necessary to preserve it has been done with unusual taste and judgment so that it has retained all the charm of an ancient structure. Its ivy draped corridors, its fragrant and colorful gardens and fountained courts enchant the many visitors with the full beauty of this romantic spot whose history has been so full of stirring adventure and whose present loveliness is so great.

Perhaps one of the strangest and most interesting sights at the Mission are the busy little cliff swallows,—“Las Golandrinos” that build their little mud nests in the ledges and arches of the old Church. With the coming of spring, each year, on St. Joseph's Day, March nineteenth, the return of the swallows is celebrated. For many years, the swallows stayed on after raising their families until St. John's Day, October twenty-third. Of recent years, ranchers have had to resort to scientific destruction of insects, which is the principal food of the little birds, and has caused them to depart as soon as their second family is strong enough to fly, and by early September the swallows have vanished, and their little mud nests deserted.

## History of the San Juan Capistrano Mission



# Old Mission San Juan Capistrano CALIFORNIA



FROM

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE