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Help the Texas Historical Commission preserve the past while touring this historic site. Please be mindful of fragile historic artifacts and structures. We want to ensure their preservation for the enjoyment of future generations.

## FRIENDS OF MISSION DOLORES

Join us in protecting this special place. Consider volunteering as a docent or becoming a member of the Friends of Mission Dolores State Historic Site. For more information, please contact us at 936-275-3815.

## SEE THE SITES

From western forts and adobe structures to Victorian mansions and pivotal battlegrounds, the Texas Historical Commission's state historic sites illustrate the breadth of Texas history.

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### MISSION DOLORES STATE HISTORIC SITE

Open 8am-5pm, Tuesday-Saturday  
701 South Broadway St., San Augustine, TX 75972  
936-275-3815

[visitmissiondolores.com](http://visitmissiondolores.com)



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## VISITORS GUIDE

# MISSION DOLORES

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

*San Augustine, Texas*



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

Welcome to Mission Dolores State Historic Site. Misión Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais was a Spanish mission built in 1721 along the El Camino Real de los Tejas. Visitors are invited to explore the site's rich history at the museum, which tells the history of the Spanish in East Texas. Stride along the El Camino Real walking trails and enjoy the real sights and stories of this real place in East Texas. The site also has an RV park, picnic areas, and group pavilions.

## CROSS CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Typically, one or two Spanish priests as well as a few soldiers and their families lived at the mission. The priests worked to convert the local Ais Native Americans to Roman Catholicism, while the soldiers provided protection on the frontier. During its half-century in existence, Mission Dolores was relatively unsuccessful in converting the Ais, who only lived at the mission on a temporary basis. The priests and soldiers cooperated, traded, and lived peacefully with the Ais. The Spanish missionaries also cooperated and traded with the French traders in nearby Natchitoches.

Mission Dolores was located on the El Camino Real de los Tejas, and it generally was a vibrant scene of cultural mixing, collaboration, and peaceful coexistence. While the Spanish and French empires were frequently enemies of one another on the larger geopolitical stage, the realities in the more remote areas were often much different. In the region of eastern New Spain, for example, small communities of Spanish and French residents, traders, and travelers relied upon one another—and upon local Native Americans—for goods, aid, and even simple companionship.

## ABANDONMENT

Following the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, France lost nearly all North American land claims and was no longer a geopolitical threat along New Spain's eastern frontier. As a result, within a decade of the war's end the Spanish missions in East Texas were systematically closed, including Mission Dolores in 1773. Although much is still unknown about the culture and history of the Ais, it appears they suffered a population decline around the same

time that the Spanish permanently abandoned Mission Dolores.

In the early 19th century, Anglo-American settlers began to migrate into the region and the town of San Augustine was established about a half-mile from the abandoned mission's location. The Anglo-American settlers were aware that there had been a mission nearby, but the exact site was unknown. In fact, the property was in private hands and several homes were constructed on the former mission site during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

## LEGACY

Beginning in the 1960s, professional archeological investigations sought to determine the exact location of the mission. During the 1970s-1980s, archeologists from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches led field schools in the area and confirmed the location where Mission Dolores once stood. Although construction of Highway 147 destroyed a significant portion of the site and no above-ground features remained, excavations revealed middens, wells, post holes, wall remnants, and other 18th-century features. Many artifacts including lithic, ceramic, metal, and faunal items relating to the Spanish, French, and Ais cultures were recovered. In the early 1990s, the City of San Augustine acquired the site, preserving the archeological remains and creating a museum.

In 2016, the City of San Augustine asked the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to assume ownership of the site, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is also a designated State Antiquities Landmark. The THC welcomed Mission Dolores as an official state historic site that year.





## WALKING GUIDE

### 1 VISITORS CENTER, MUSEUM, AND STORE

The visitors center at Mission Dolores provides a museum, educational space, and reception area. There are unique gift items as well as a variety of books for adults and children related to the site's history for sale in the museum store.



### 2 MISSION AREA



Archeologists confirmed the location of Mission Dolores in the late 1970s. It is one of three archeologically confirmed mission locations in East Texas and the only site open to the public.

### 3 EL CAMINO REAL SWALE

Remnants of El Camino Real de los Tejas in the form of swales can be viewed at Mission Dolores. Swales are created from repeated heavy use of animal-drawn wagons or carts associated with travel along the trail. El Camino Real would have run directly through the mission compound.



### 4 SPRING AREA

Three springs occur in the vicinity and were an important consideration in the location of the mission complex. The springs supplied fresh water to the mission complex.

### 5 EL CAMINO REAL MARKER



This pink granite marker was placed to commemorate the route of El Camino Real. The marker was placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1918.

### 6 MISSION DOLORES CENTENNIAL MARKER



In 1935, the Texas Legislature created the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Texas' independence from Mexico. The Mission Dolores Centennial Marker was erected in 1936.

### 7 RV PARK

Mission Dolores offers 32 RV sites. All sites are paved and are full hook-up (30/50 amp). Two picnic pavilions are available for rent as well. Please inquire at the visitors center for further information.

