

Parish History

Native Americans lived in and around the present-day city of Santa Rosa, and along the creek that runs past St. Eugene's parish, before the Europeans settled in the area. The Spanish arrived in the early 1800's and established a mission on land next to where St. Eugene's Cathedral now stands. Around 1829 they built an adobe mission building on site, which was considered the first building in the valley. A legend handed down by generations tells the story of a visiting Spanish priest, Father Juan Amorosa, baptizing a young Native American girl in the adjacent creek. It was customary for Spanish priests to name rivers and creeks for Catholic saints. This baptism took place on the day of the Feast of Santa Rosa de Lima and Fr. Amorosa named the creek and the young girl *Santa Rosa*. *(This baptism was not registered in official church records and, unfortunately, cannot be verified.)*



Sometime in the late 1830's Spanish authorities deeded land to Señora Maria Ignacia Lopez de Carrillo and it included this same area of land and the mission, which had since been abandoned. It was the first deeded land in the local area. Señora Carrillo was the mother-in-law of General Vallejo, who was the commander of the Mexican forces north of the Presidio of San Francisco. She converted the adobe into her home.

As more people moved into California, many settled in the Santa Rosa area. Commercial enterprises began to spring up in the area. In the early 1850's a section of the adobe was used as a store. At the same time further west of the adobe, a pony express post was established and the town of Santa Rosa was laid out. The city of Santa Rosa was incorporated in 1868.

St. Eugene's parish was established on July 1, 1950 by the Most Reverend Archbishop John J. Mitty, Archbishop of San Francisco. It was named after Eugene I, a Roman priest who served as Pope from 654 to his death in 657. The parish was organized and founded by the Rev. Erwin J. Becker. The dedication of the new church was held on November 25, 1951. At that time there were few homes or businesses within the parish area and the church was near the eastern outskirts of Santa Rosa. The parish school was opened in 1953. St. Eugene's was designated a Cathedral on February 20, 1962 when the Diocese of Santa Rosa was split off from the Archdiocese of San Francisco.



Today the parish is located within a more central part of Santa Rosa, the city's eastern boundaries having been expanded over the years. It is in an area that is zoned commercial and residential. There are numerous businesses within the parish boundaries, including a major shopping center. Most of the residential areas within the parish area were built more than thirty years ago and many new outlying subdivisions have sprung up in recent years.

The baptism of Saint Rose in 1829 is depicted in a stained-glass window located in the Cathedral's baptistry vestibule *(shown on the Home Page)*. The Carrillo adobe ruins are still standing adjacent to the parish and are slated to become a city park. Santa Rosa has grown steadily since its inception to its current population of over 153,000 *(2000 census)*. St. Eugene's parish is currently home to more than 4,300 registered members.

Historical Sources: City of Santa Rosa, Library of Congress, church records