

Paintings' discovery serendipitous

Trousset paintings at San Luis Rey Mission to be restored

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OCEANSIDE — Manuel Trousset of Vista has always known that his grandfather was an acclaimed painter, but it was only late this week he discovered that for at least the past 60 years, two paintings of his forefather have hung in the church where two of his daughters were married.

The serendipitous discovery came Friday, as the El Camino Real Chapter of Questers, an organization that preserves historic artifacts, launched the restoration of "The Assumption of Our Lady and the Apostles," an 1876 painting by Léon Trousset.

In 2001, the group paid for a report to determine the condition and cost of repair for the painting, along with a second painting by the artist, "The Resurrection of Christ," which sits on the wall directly across from the first.

Manuel Trousset, who has lived in North County since 1943, says he did not know he had the paintings by his grandfather — who has one painting in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. — so close for so long.

"These things are so big and so



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Workers from Mission San Luis Rey Church remove a large painting titled "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The painting is being removed for restoration.

high and the signature is always on the lower side of the painting," the 80-year-old said. "It's so small that we couldn't spot it."

The 7-by-10-foot painting was above an arch in the Mission San Luis Rey Church in Oceanside

until Friday, when workers at the mission gently lowered and prepared it for the trip to the Balboa Art Conservation Center in San Diego, where it will be restored. The Questers hope to raise money to restore

the second painting, this time with support from the Trousset family, which wants to assist the group in its effort.

The restoration will cost between \$17,000 and \$19,000 and will take about three to

four months to complete. The Questers received a \$5,000 donation from their state organization and held fund-raising raffles, a garage sale, trips and

Restoration A2 >

Restoration

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an antique fair to pay for the rest of the restoration.

Both structural and aesthetic work is needed to save the painting, which would otherwise be destroyed.

"It has cuts in it, it has tears in it, it has places where the paint has come off," said Carol Moon of the Questers, who noted that when it comes back to the mission, the painting will have a backing and a stretcher and the colors — dulled by time — will look brighter.

Bradford Claybourne, the mission's curator, said he has not found a record of how the church obtained the painting. The earliest account of the painting available is from an inventory check conducted in 1944-1945 that listed the painting and said it was hanging in the nave.

More information about the painting may be forthcoming now that Trousset's descendants know about the work of art.

According to Manuel Trousset, an uncle of his was a Franciscan priest at the mission, a

connection he speculates could elucidate how the painting got to Oceanside.

"Maybe my uncle in some way was instrumental in how my grandfather's painting got there," Trousset said.

The Vista resident said that Léon Trousset was a "bohemian painter" who started in Monterey and went from one mission to another painting to earn room and board.

Manuel Trousset said he has traveled to various locations to see the paintings of his grandfather. He also plans to visit Juarez, Mexico to find the artist's grave, which he remembers visiting as a child.

Tracy Trousset acts as family historian. She said the painting — a reproduction of a 17th century painting — is not like most of the landscape paintings she has discovered. The Hemet resident notes, however, that keeping track of Trousset's paintings is often difficult.

"I'm on a quest to find every painting that Léon ever did," she said. "I find one or two new ones every year."

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