**Timeline of Pio Pico’s Life**

1801: Pio de Jesus Pico is born on May 5th at Mission San Gabriel to Jose Maria Pico and Maria Estaquia Gutierrez.

1826: Pio Pico is elected to the advisory assembly of the governor.

1832: Pio Pico becomes interim governor of Alta California for 20 days.

1834: Pio Pico marries Maria Ygnacia Alvarado, niece to Alta California Governor Alvarado.

1845: Pio Pico becomes governor of Alta California.

1846: Pio Pico flees his home and escapes to Mexico when Americans invade Alta California.

1847: The Capitulation of Cahuenga is signed. Alta California is surrendered to the Americans, and Pio Pico returns home.

1848: Pio Pico purchases Rancho Paso de Bartolo. Pico called it “El Ranchito”.

1853: Pio Pico builds his adobe mansion on the “El Ranchito”.

1854: Pio Pico is elected to the Los Angeles Common Council and serves one term.

1853: Pio Pico’s wife dies on February 21st in Santa Barbara.

1869: Pio Pico begins construction of The Pico House, a luxurious hotel in Los Angeles.


1880: Due to bad business decisions Pio Pico loses The Pico House to loan sharks.

1892: Pio Pico is evicted from his home “El Ranchito”.

1894: Pio Pico dies a pauper at his daughter’s home on September 11, 1894.

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“We find ourselves threatened by hordes of Yankee immigrants who have already begun to flock into our country and whose progress we cannot arrest. Already have wagons of that perfidious people scaled the most inaccessible summits of the Sierra Nevada, crossed the entire continent and penetrated the fruitful valley of Sacramento.”

Pio Pico, Last Mexican Governor of Alta California

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**California’s Last Mexican Governor**

May 5, 1801—September 11, 1894
Pio de Jesus Pico IV was one of California’s most remarkable historical figures. Born on May 5, 1801 at Mission San Gabriel, he witnessed and help shape nearly a century of California history before his death in Los Angeles in 1894.

Pio Pico’s ancestry reveals a mixture of ethnic backgrounds; African, Native Indian, European and Spanish. One of his 17th century ancestors was an Italian count. His grandmother was mulatto. His parents, Jose Maria Pico and Maria Estaquilla Lopez, were mestizos and were born in Mexico (New Spain). They moved to El Pueblo de Los Angeles from Sinaloa with 240 other colonists on the famous Anza expedition of 1775. Pico was the fourth of 10 children, three boys and seven girls.

During his long and active life, he rose from poverty to become one of the richest men in California, and for a time held the highest political office in Mexican California. He was known and respected by almost all his fellow Californios and by prominent American settlers as well. Always loyal to California’s interests, he played an important role in the political and economic life of this state throughout most of his life.

Pico was part of the Mexican government from 1828 to 1848, until California became part of the United States. He dedicated his time to changing the departmental government to meet the revolutionary changes and desire of many Californios that wanted republican rule. This meant many clashes from representatives from the Mexican government during 1830 to 1840, Pico’s involvement led him to becoming Governor in 1832 and in 1845. Throughout his tenure he accomplished many things, including the relocation of California’s capital from Monterey to Los Angeles and the secularization of California’s missions. During the American Invasion of 1846 Pico fled to Mexico to prevent the conquering American forces from capturing him. Pio Pico’s brother, Gen. Andrés Pico, was one of the signatories of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in 1848 formally ceding all of Mexico’s Alta California territory to the United States. Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Pico returned to California, becoming a private citizen and business man. He embarked on several capitalistic ventures to develop education, banking and municipalities and was elected onto the Los Angeles Common Council.

He purchased the Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo and named the site El Ranchito (little ranch). He used it as a country house to get away from the pressures of business in Los Angeles. He is said to have had thirty-three rooms and it became a gathering place for neighbors and business acquaintances that traveled long distances.

Southern California became greatly impacted by the Gold Rush. Tens of thousands of immigrants needed to be fed and the price of cattle rose up quickly. Cattle from Pio Pico’s ranch were herded north and his fortunes soared for a time, making him one of the wealthiest men in Alta California. Soon the rush began to die down. Unluckily with bad weather, and unethical actions of other businessmen who wanted to take his assets, Pico lost everything but his home, El Ranchito. El Ranchito is said to have had thirty-three rooms and it became a gathering place for neighbors and business acquaintances that traveled long distances.

In 1892 Pio Pico was evicted from his home. Deprived of his home he stayed with family and friends, dying in Los Angeles at the home of his daughter Joaquina Moreno on September 11, 1894.

Changes brought by modern progress threatened to tear down El Ranchito. It had been neglected for some time, but thankfully was rescued by Harriett Russell Strong, owner of a nearby ranch. It was saved by her protests and the support of community members and local organizations. Through their efforts Strong was able to care for, restore and deed the house to the State of California in 1917.

The property became one of the earliest state historic parks in 1927. In 1970, the Whittier Historical Society organized a Docent Committee at the Pio Pico Mansion. The committee gave tours, researched and published their findings, and gradually fixed up the property. The docents made sure the house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Through seasonally held festivities, the public was invited to enjoy and help keep alive California’s Mexican heritage.

In 1987, public access was limited due to the Whittier Narrows earthquake that damaged some of the structure. It suffered further damage as a result of the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Beginning in 2000, a three year major renovation project embarked to restore “El Ranchito” and its grounds back to their authentic condition during the time of Pio Pico’s ownership. It was restored to enhance the historic integrity of the structure. Additionally, there has been extensive historic landscape reconstruction. A great deal of effort was placed into re-creating fruit orchards and colorful gardens as they would have been during the time Pio Pico lived there.