



## **The History of Knott's Berry Farm's California Mission Models**

In the mid-1950's Walter Knott, the founder of Knott's Berry Farm, discovered he had a problem. Guests to his Ghost Town roadside attraction were wandering across the Stagecoach Trail. This was dangerous to pedestrians, passengers and the horses that pulled the authentic coaches. Mr. Knott knew he needed to build some type of fence along the trail for safety purposes. However, he wanted something that was not only functional, but also educational and entertaining.

An Italian artist, by the name of Leon Bayard de Volo (1884-1962), was commissioned to build a model of each of the 21 California Missions. Mr. Knott had an adobe wall built and re-created the El Camino Real in miniature using the mission models.

In July 1956, the first 7 of the mission models were put on display and eventually all 21 models lined Knott's El Camino Real, or Royal Road.

After approximately 30 years of being on display, the models began to show signs of wear and the Park slowly removed the models. By 2003 all of the mission models had been removed from Knott's Berry Farm.

In 2013, Bob Weir, the Knott's Berry Farm's Woodcarving Demonstration Craftsman, was commissioned to restore the models. In December of 2016, after about 3 years of work, 15 of the 21 models were put back on display around the lake area under the Silver Bullet rollercoaster. Eventually, Knott's Berry Farm will welcome back all 21 mission models once again.