

PÉREZ, EULALIA (179?–?)

Born in the last third of the eighteenth century, Pérez lived and worked at the San Gabriel Mission in Alta California performing a wide array of tasks necessary to the functioning of the mission. She originally settled in San Diego with her husband and children. A widow with six children by 1821, she was hired as the mission's chief cook, overseeing facilities and supervising neophyte Indian labor. She became the housekeeper, administrator, nurse and midwife, and was responsible for training others to assume responsibilities. She tended also to the instruction and acculturation of young Indian men and women. Pérez worked closely with the missionaries in overseeing daily production; soap making, mills, farming, leather works, livestock, and was in charge of securing provisions for the military outpost, the presidio. Her position as *llavera*, the key keeper or administrative director of the mission, wielded a great deal of influence with respect to settler women as well as Indian neophytes. In 1833 Pérez remarried a Catalan soldier assigned to the presidio. Eulalia Pérez' life story is included in the Bancroft Library as a Californio testimonial. She exemplifies the broad range of activities and operational levels that women occupied on the frontiers, including tasks traditionally reserved for men.