



## Carriage of Pío Pico

### Date

19th Century

### Primary Maker

Don Pío de Jesus Pico

### Medium

Metal, wood and leather

### Description

The value of an object is often linked to its historical context or to the significance of those who possessed it. That is certainly the case with respect to this two-wheeled carriage that once belonged to Pío Pico. Not only was it owned by an important historical figure, but it was made and used during one of the most significant periods in California's history, the Mexican-American War. Pío Pico, who began his adult life as a shop operator in San Diego, was to become the first native-born Governor of what was then called Alta California, and the last of the Mexican

Governors to rule there. It was Pío Pico who ordered the sale of the California missions in compliance with the controversial 1833 order from Mexico to secularize them. When American settlers seized control of Alta California in 1846, they declared it the new "Bear Flag Republic". Pico responded by ordering an ill-fated counter offensive and was forced to flee far into the south of Mexico. After the dust cleared, Pico returned to California and reclaimed title to his 22,000 acres of ranch lands. No stranger to the habits of those with superfluous wealth, he developed a habit of gambling, which proved disastrous to his personal fortunes. In 1890, his debtors foreclosed on his adobe house in what is now Whittier, Orange County. After a long and eventful life that spanned ninety-three years, Pío Pico died in Los Angeles on September 11th, 1893. This two-wheeled carriage was donated to the museum by Mrs. Thomas L. McFadden, née Luciana Forster, daughter of Marco Forster. Pico's sister, Dona Ysidora Pico de Forster, was the grandmother of Mrs. McFadden. With its black leather upholstered bench and cushion fall, it is an appropriate vehicle for the comings and goings of an elite Los Angeles family. Pío Pico's carriage was probably used as everyday conveyance for the Pico family. Ideal for short distance rides, it is lightweight and has no hood to protect passengers from the elements. Carriages like this one could accommodate a few passengers as well as luggage, which made them the preferred method of transportation in the 19th century. Identifying the maker of this cart is difficult as it has no markings. Beginning in the 1870s, the production of specialized

carriage parts such as ball sockets, iron hardware, paints, and varnishes moved away from individual workshops into factories, making carriages built during this time period difficult to attribute to a specific workshop as most of them were using the same manufactured parts.

**Dimensions**

57 3/4 × 57 1/2 × 132 in. (146.7 × 146.1 × 335.3 cm)