

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Tumacacori Mission

The mission of San Jose de Tumacacori was a northern outpost of the Sonora mission chain, founded by Jesuit priests in the 17th century.

We visited this mission on our way to Nogales, Mex., and were greatly impressed with what the National Park Service had accomplished there since, our previous visit. Tumacacori is a national monument, illustrating a typical mission church of Spanish colonial endeavor and commemorating the introduction of Christianity into Southern Arizona.

One of the greatest missionaries was the Jesuit, Rev. Eusebio Francisco Kino, who introduced European culture to this part of Arizona. He founded the first Sonora mission in 1687 and explored and mapped the upper Pima Indian country in what is Northern Sonora in Mexico and Southern Arizona. It was Father Kino who introduced ranching on this frontier, providing cattle and other livestock and to this early beginning several of the thriving towns in this part of the United States owe their existence.

Father Kino came first to Arizona in 1691, when he visited the small Sobaipuri Indian village at Tumacacori. That day he said mass under a brush shelter built for that purpose by the Indians. By 1698 he noted that Tumacacori had an "earth-roofed house of adobe." there were fields of wheat, herds of cattle and sheep.

After the Pima Rebellion of 1751, a presidio was established at Tubac, three miles from the mission. This community, once a thriving village and famous for the gathering place of the De Anza and other expedition into California, now consists of a dozen or so small houses and a small church.

After the expelling of the Jesuits in 1767, the Franciscan order took over. Tumacacori mission activity was at its height from 1790 until the end of the Spanish rule in the West. The church was probably started about 1800, according to the data provided by the National Park Service to the visitor.

Tumacacori was established as a national monument by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. It is no longer connected with any religious order. The monument contains 10 acres of land. There is only one other in the National Park Service. Gran Quivira National Monument

in New Mexico, which deals primarily with the Spanish mission history.

The free museum is self-guiding. Each building and historic site is numbered, and a booklet is given each visitor which by reading as you go explains the detailed story. To begin the story of Tumacacori you read: "We ask you to observe the following rules:

"Examine the crumbly walls and plaster of the mission church only with your eyes.

"Write names and initials only in the register book in the lobby.

"Let pleasant memories and pictures be the only souvenirs you collect."

Of special interest within the museum building are the beautiful dioramas which were made in Berkeley, Calif. The one to be longest remembered probably by most visitors is the famed diorama showing the church interior at high mass, with the Indian worshippers kneeling upon the dirt floor. By pushing a small button at the right of this realistic scene, the organ music of the mass is heard.

Other dioramas show the defense of Tubutama Mission, Sonora, in the Pima Rebellion of 1751: and still another the impressive picture of Father Kino on one of his horseback trips, accompanied by an Indian, pausing at a water hole to overlook the cactus and brush covered desert of Arizona.