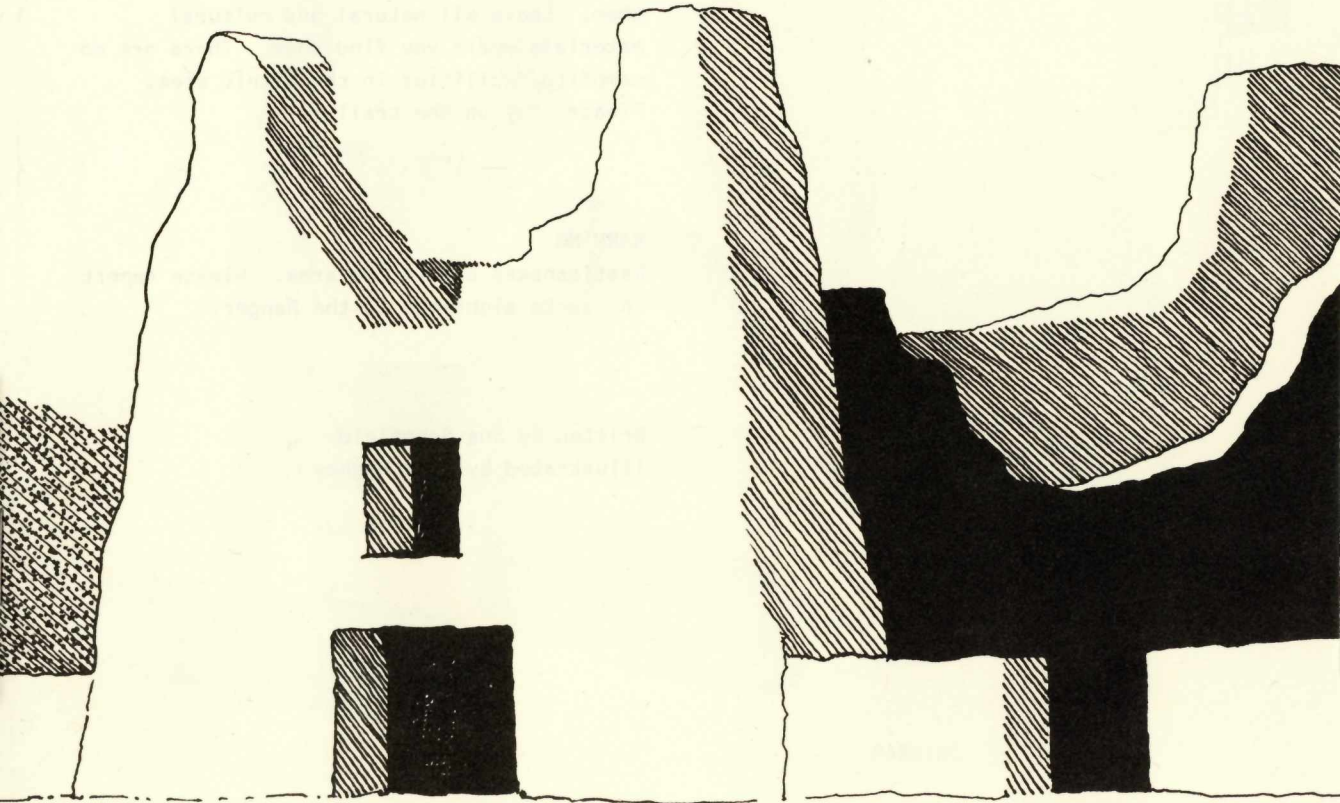


Salinas Pueblo Missions

Quarai Trail Guide



INTRODUCTION

Quarai is one of three sites that are part of Salinas National Monument. Nearby are Abó and Gran Quivira, also ruins of Indian village/Mission complexes. Quarai became a part of the National Park System in 1981 and covers 15 acres. The site contains nine Indian housemounds and the Spanish structures associated with the 17th century Franciscan mission program. The trail will take you past the unexcavated Indian ruins and through the stabilized church and convento.

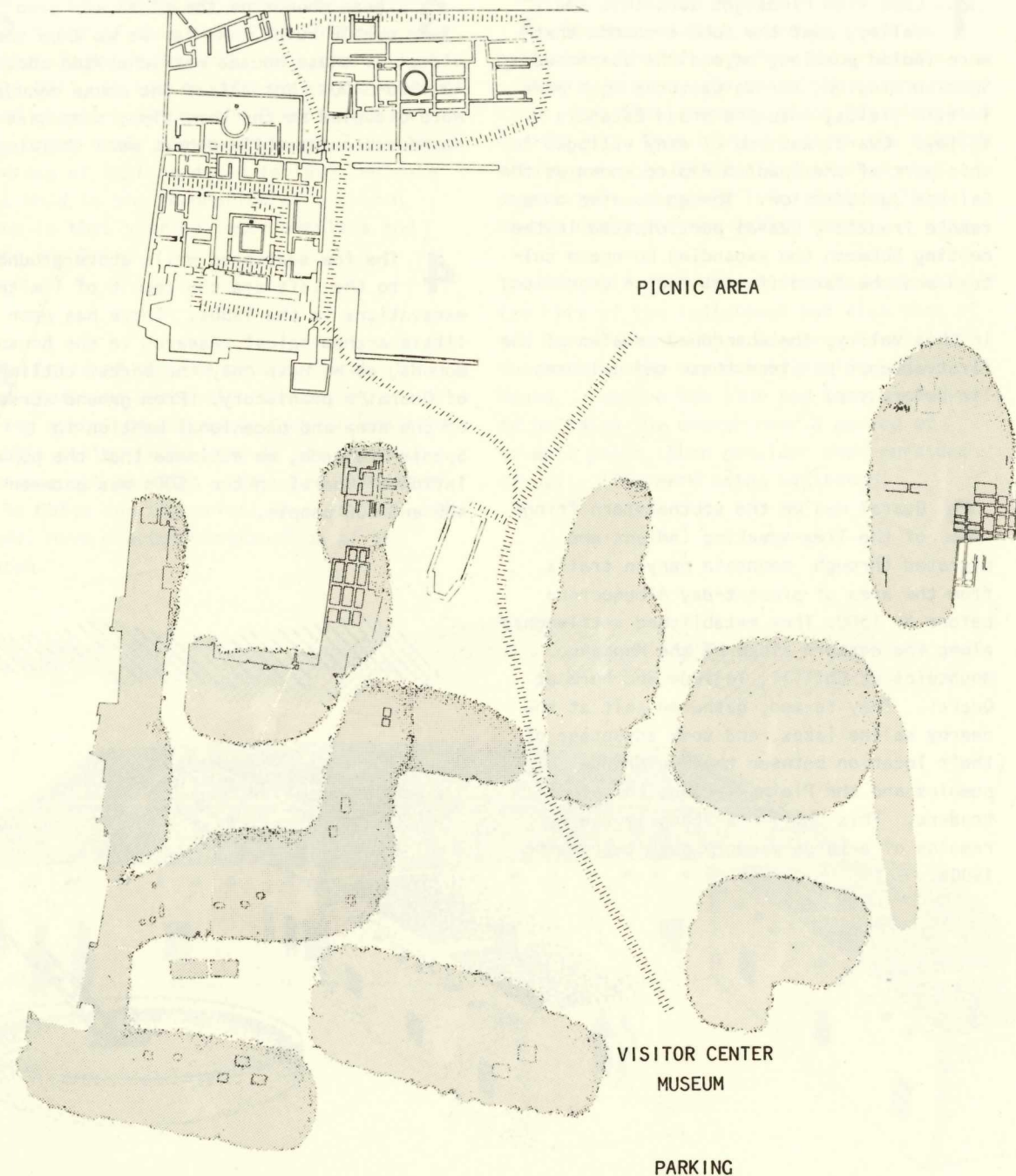
RULES

The walls are fragile. Do not climb on them. Leave all natural and cultural materials where you find them. There are no campfire facilities in the picnic area. Please stay on the trail.

WARNING

Rattlesnakes are in the area. Please report any snake sightings to the Ranger.

Written by Sue Schofield
Illustrated by Kirk Hughey



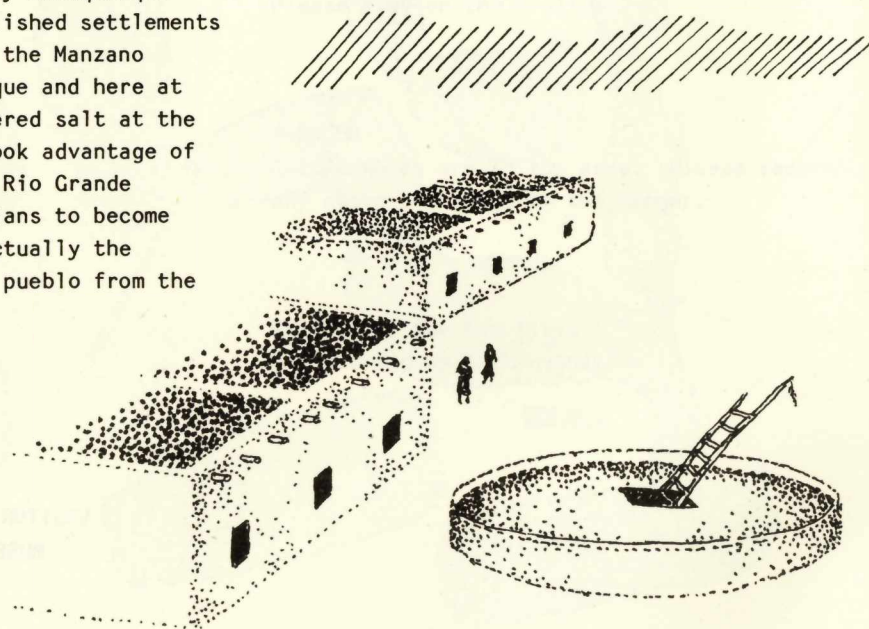
Numbered stops along the trail correspond to
numbered paragraphs in the trail guide.

Length: 1/3 mile
Time: 30 minutes
Terrain: Slightly graded

1 Look with hindsight down this small valley, past the rubble mounds that were Indian pueblos, beyond the abandoned Spanish mission, across pastures that were fertile fields, into the broad Estancia Valley. Quarai was one of many villages in this part of the Spanish Empire known as the Salinas Jurisdiction. Though located on a remote frontier, Quarai participated in the meeting between the expanding European culture and the far different Indian tradition.

In this valley, the abandoned remains of the first attempt to blend those two cultures lie before you.

2 Quarai was on the southeastern fringe of the Tiwa-speaking Indians who migrated through mountain canyon trails from the area of present-day Albuquerque before AD 1300. They established settlements along the eastern slope of the Manzano Mountains at Chilili, Tajique and here at Quarai. They farmed, gathered salt at the nearby saline lakes, and took advantage of their location between the Rio Grande pueblos and the Plains Indians to become traders. This "hill" is actually the remains of a large masonry pueblo from the 1600s.

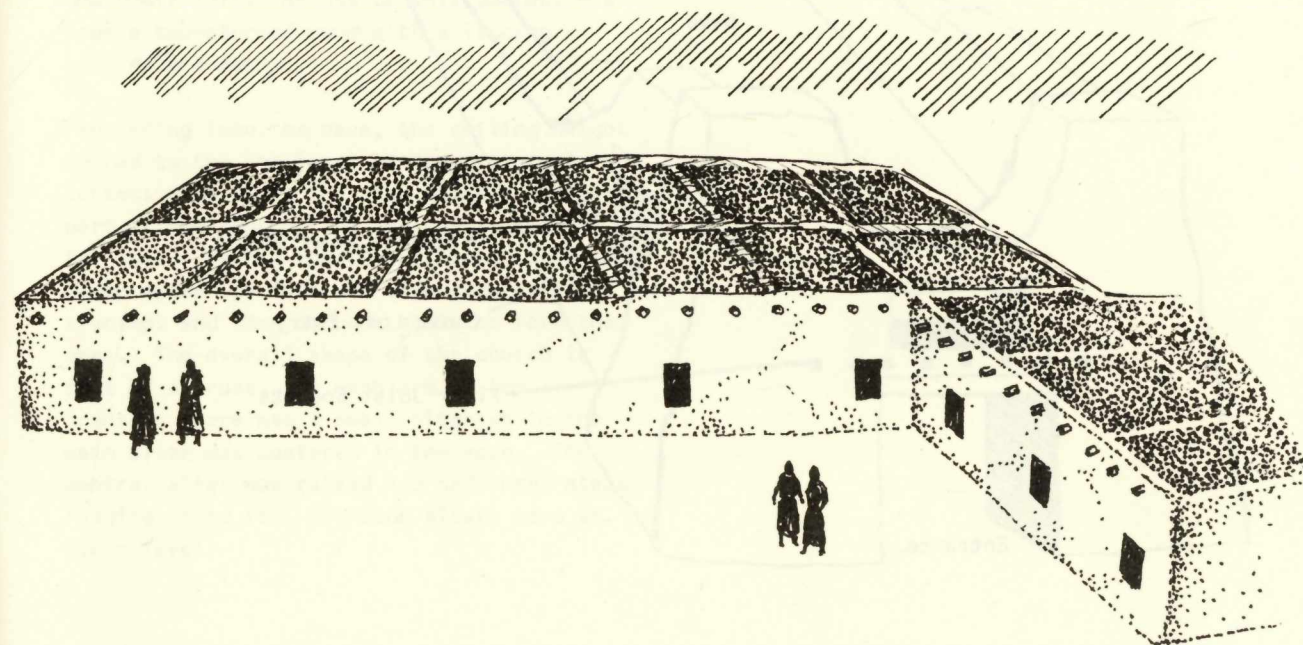


3 These mounds on the right are also pueblo ruins. As far as we know the oldest of these houses was inhabited about AD 1300-1350. Not all of the house mounds were occupied at the same time; some were abandoned ruins while others were thriving.

4 The few scattered walls above-ground to the left are the result of limited excavations in the 1950s. There has been little archeological research in the house mounds, so we have only the barest outline of Quarai's prehistory. From ground surveys of the area and occasional mention in Spanish records, we estimate that the population of Quarai in the 1600s was between 400 and 600 people.

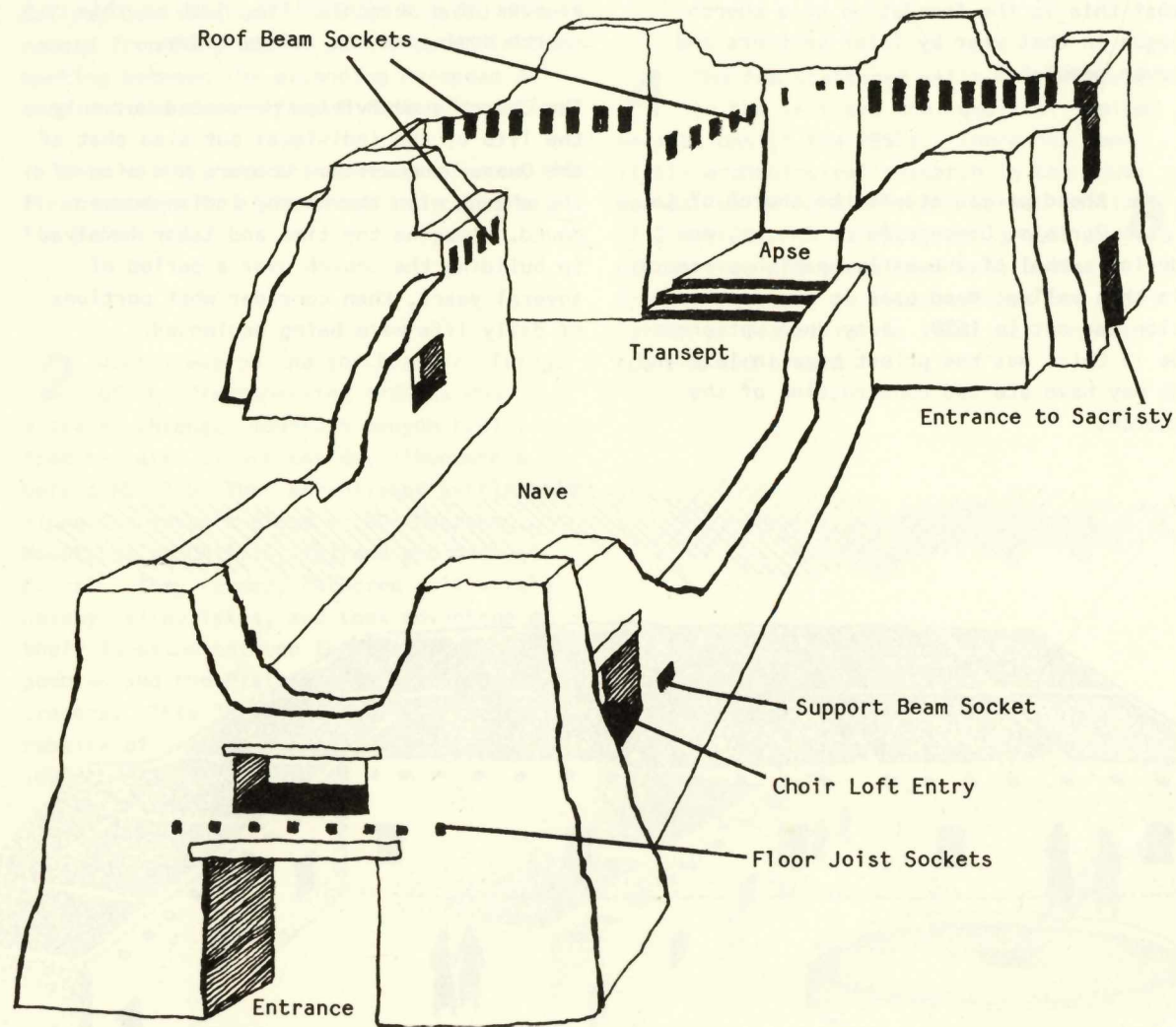
5 Archeologists uncovered the foundations of this chapel in 1959. Because of the simple design and small size (20'x 50'), it was thought to have been the first chapel built by the Franciscans as they began their missionary work. However, a series of letters dated in 1829 indicate that this is the foundation of a church begun in that year by later settlers and never completed.

6 Ahead of you stands the church of La Purísima Concepción de Cuarac, enduring symbol of the early Spanish presence in this valley. Wood used in its construction was cut in 1630. Fray Juan Gutierrez de la Chica was the priest here in 1628 and he may have started construction of the church.



7 The room on the left is the baptistry, located so that a person could be baptized a Christian before entering the sanctuary proper. To the right is the campo santo, the final resting place for exemplary Christians. From birth to death the Spanish missions in the New World dominated most aspects of a person's life, just as this church dominates the valley today.

The Church's activities permeated not only the life of the individual but also that of the Quarai community. Compare the size of the church with the nearby Indian house-mound. Imagine the time and labor involved in building the church over a period of several years, then consider what portions of daily life were being neglected.



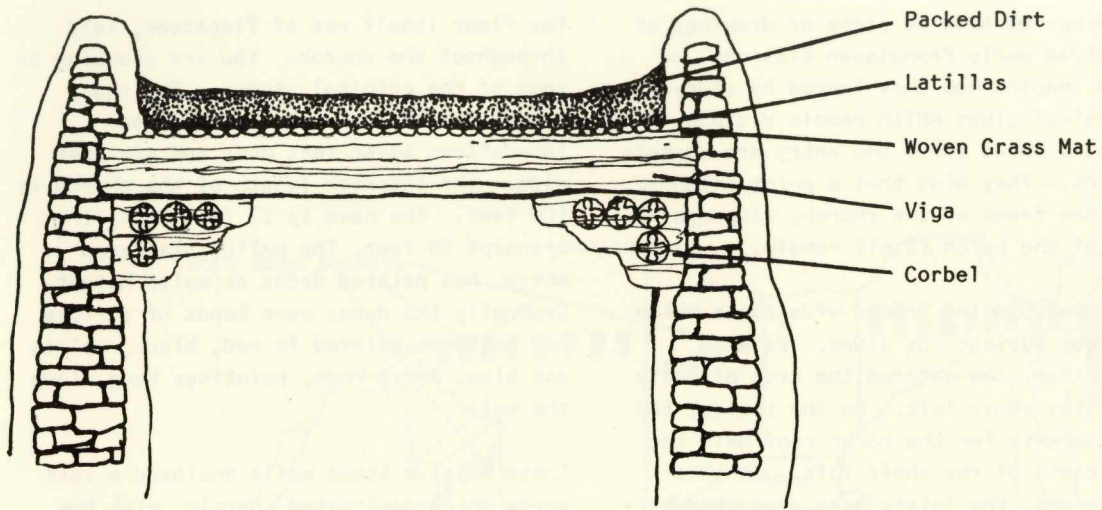
8 Since we have no plans or drawings of these early Franciscan missions, we have to imagine how they looked by studying the physical clues which remain visible. The square holes above the entry are sockets for beams. They hint that a porch extended across the front of the church, although no traces of the porch itself remain.

The splayed opening framed wide doors which swung back against its sides. Walking through them, one entered the area directly beneath the choir loft. On the inside, the square sockets for the porch roof held the floor joists of the choir loft. On their opposite end, the joists were supported by a large square beam which fitted into the single sockets on the side walls. The low ceiling thus formed created an antechamber to the church proper. The large opening high on your right was the door leading into the choir loft. Access to this doorway was from a two-storied room with a landing outside the entry.

Proceeding into the nave, the ceiling height soared to the top level of the rectangular sockets high along the side walls. In this part of the church, the Indians assembled for mass. Facing toward the front, this space opens out into the side arms of the transept and then narrows again to form the apse. The overall shape of the church is that of a cross. In each arm of the transept there was a small altar while the main altar was centered in the apse. The central altar was raised and had three steps leading up to it. The side altars were at floor level.

The floor itself was of flagstone, laid throughout the church. You are standing on some of the original stones. The red sandstone walls are 40 feet high on foundations seven feet deep and six feet wide. The interior length of the church is 100 feet. The nave is 27 feet wide, the transept 50 feet. The walls, plastered white, had painted dados at waist height. Generally the dados were bands of stripes and patterns painted in red, black, yellow and blue. Above them, paintings hung along the wall.

These massive stone walls enclosed a vast space which contrasted sharply with the small rooms familiar to the Indians. If architecture is an expression of cultural values, the differences between Indian and Spanish structures offer clues to understanding the differences in their cultures.



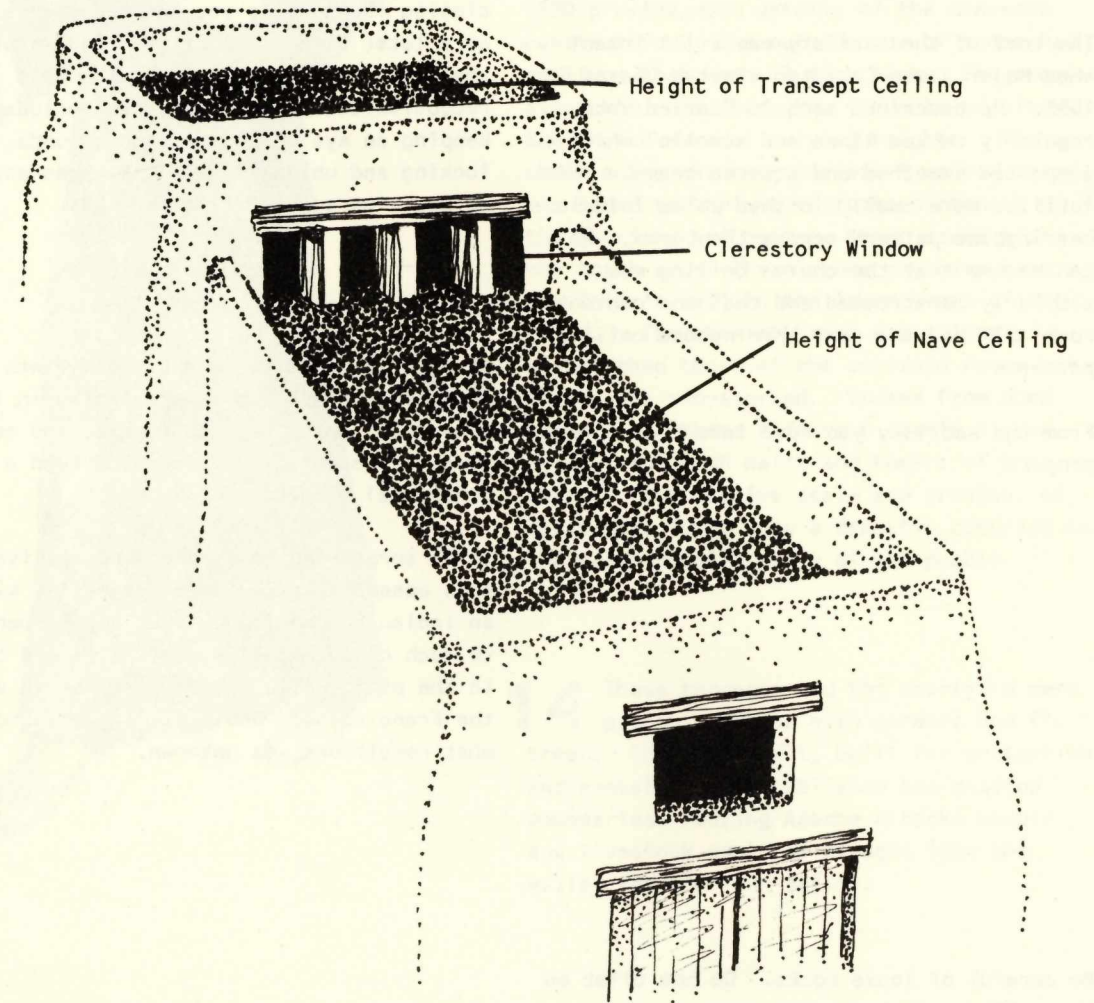
Look again to the tops of the church walls. The long narrow sockets held corbels and roof beams. Corbels were the carved and painted supports for the long beams which spanned the width of the church and supported the ceiling. You can see that the sockets in each area of the church - nave, transept and apse - are at different heights. This difference visibly emphasized the three parts of the cruciform church.

The difference in height between the nave ceiling and the higher transept ceiling also allowed for a transverse clerestory window. This window extended across the width of the church at the point where the transept arms cross the nave. The southern exposure allowed a broad swath of light to illuminate the sanctuary and altar.

The altar - raised high and flooded with light - was the focal point of the church and the religious services in it. Though it was difficult to bring supplies to this remote corner of the Spanish Empire, altars usually had rich furnishings. Shipping records of the Mission Supply Service list Rouen altar linens, brass candlesticks, incense burners and chalices as well as paintings of patron saints. Retablos behind the main and side altars reached almost to the ceiling. They were decorated with carvings painted in many colors, bits of

reflective mica, small saints' portraits and statues. These decorations were probably made in Mexico, disassembled, and shipped to the mission. Against the white plastered walls of the church, the altars would have stood out in rich detail.

Quarai was on a frontier, remote from the hearth of the Spanish Empire and the heart of the Church; yet every detail of the church's conception and construction reveal careful planning and attention.



9 You are now in the sacristy. Here the priest prepared for mass, using a small altar for prayers. There were storage chests here for the altar furnishings and the priests' vestments. A sacristy inventory for the conventos of Tajique and Chilili lists variously colored robes of silk damask, linen and wool. Many of the robes had decorations of embroidery, drawn work and lace. Often there were matching altar linens to use during specific church celebrations. After mass, the Indian sacristan removed these items from the church and put them away until the next service.

The roof of the sacristy was still intact when Major James Carleton visited Quarai in 1853. He described corbels "carved into regularly curved lines and scrolls" which supported smoothed and squared beams. The latillas were small finished poles laid in a herringbone pattern across the beams. We can assume that the church ceiling was similarly constructed and that the convento rooms all had the same herringbone ceiling pattern.

From the sacristy you move into the convento proper.

10 This passageway is the ambulatorio. It had a roof, but the walls surrounding the interior patio had large windows which allowed light and fresh air into the hallway. The ambulatorio was a covered walkway giving access to the other rooms of the convento and space for contemplative walks in wet weather.

11 The portería, an entry and waiting room, had benches along the walls for people waiting to see the priest. During the mission period, this was probably a roofed porch open to the south. The enclosing front walls you see today were added at a later time. A Christian Indian held the position of portero, similar to a receptionist. His duties also included keeping an eye on the mission grounds, locking and unlocking all entrances and maintaining quiet during services.

12 This private, open air patio was for the priest and others living in the convento. Here they could relax and meditate in the sunshine or perhaps tend a small ornamental garden.

It is surprising to find an Indian kiva in this essentially Christian place. A kiva is an Indian ceremonial chamber and is central to much of pueblo life. This kiva was built in the patio while the mission was in use by the Franciscans. Who built it, and under what conditions, is unknown.



13 Entering this hallway you move from the public to the private areas of the convento. Here were the sleeping quarters for mission workers, the kitchen and refectory, and various storage rooms. In addition to the usual convento rooms, Quarai had some space set aside for the use of the Inquisition. Three of the priests who served Quarai were provincial heads of the Inquisition. They would have conducted these investigations separately from routine mission affairs.

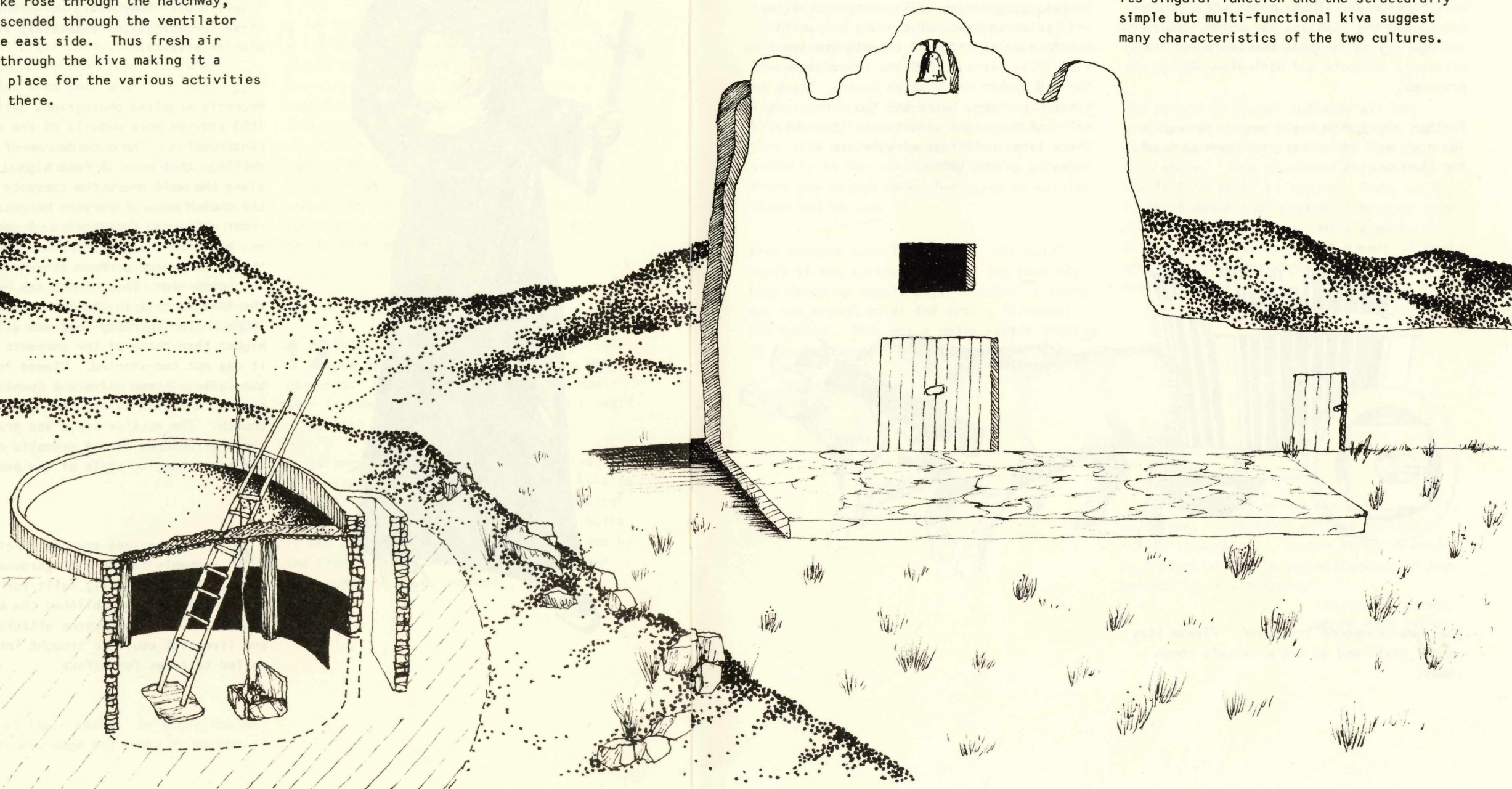
Recently acquired photographs dating back to 1890 provide more details of the convento construction. The outside row of rooms had ceilings that were 13 feet high. The rooms along the wall where the convento adjoined the church were of varying heights. The choir entry was two-storied. A second story was added to the set of rooms northwest of the sacristy and perhaps other rooms along the north side. These rooms may have been the friar's cell in the later years of the 1600s. The sacristy roof was slightly higher than those of the convento rooms but it was not two-storied. Viewed from down the valley, these different levels played against the high walls and towers of the church. The massive scale and grandeur of these structures were a dramatic contrast to the earth-hugging style of the pueblo.

14 These terraces and the courtyard were probably filled with gardens and fruit trees. The outer wall, built for protection and containment, established the mission boundaries. During Apache attacks people and livestock could be brought into the walled terraces for safety.

15 We referred earlier to the kiva as the ceremonial chamber of the pueblo religion. This round kiva is a shape more familiar to us than the square kiva in the patio. The kiva's flat roof was supported by posts. There was a firepit on the floor with a hatchway above it in the roof. The hatchway was both an entrance and an opening through which smoke could escape. As warm air and smoke rose through the hatchway, cool air descended through the ventilator shaft on the east side. Thus fresh air circulated through the kiva making it a comfortable place for the various activities carried out there.

This kiva was here before the construction of the church and convento. It shows that the Spanish structures were built on a mound of pueblo ruins similar to those you see along the trail today.

The ways in which people structure space and the uses to which they put their structures can tell us much about their society. The obvious comparison here is between the two religious buildings, the church and the kiva, and the way in which each functions. The comparisons and contrasts between the buildings and their uses are many. The architectural complexity of the church with its singular function and the structurally simple but multi-functional kiva suggest many characteristics of the two cultures.



16 You may either go through the modern gate in the terrace wall and back to the main trail, or go on to your left and follow the trail around the lower compound.

17 The excavated rooms toward the far corner of the walled courtyard are part of a large mound extending beyond the park boundaries. These rooms are Spanish and housed the stables, hay sheds, equipment storage and animal pens necessary for the mission's economic and agricultural programs.

Further along, the trail passes through a low rock wall which may have been part of the stables.

18 This complex of rooms has four construction phases dating to different periods. The long thick walls were part of the utilitarian courtyard of the convento. The remaining walls, including the round foundation of the torreon, or watchtower, were built during the 1800s.

Less than a century after the abandonment of Quarai, people were again using the valley and its structures. There was a Spanish garrison stationed near the old mission from 1751-1754. Around 1800 the reoccupation of the old pueblo and mission began. These new Spanish settlers used the foundations and walls of the older structures. Some of these later buildings were in use as recently as the 1880s.



The lower compound is closed. Please stay on the trail and do not walk into these rooms.

19 The cottonwood trees up and down the valley mark the course of the spring-fed arroyo. The multiple springs played an important part in the valley's settlement and use.

Nearby remains of two acequia or irrigation systems date back at least to the 1800s. (The spring under the stone structure near the picnic area was part of that system until recent times.) One of the acequia systems may date as far back as the 1600s or even earlier.

Along with corn, beans and squash we know that the Indians at Quarai grew cotton. They also pastured Spanish livestock, probably in the surrounding hills, because there was enough water for herds of cattle, sheep and horses.

When drought came in the 1660s the water level of the springs dropped, and possibly they dried up completely. Eventually there was not enough water for crops, livestock and humans. This was a major factor leading to the abandonment of Quarai in the 1670s.

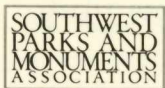
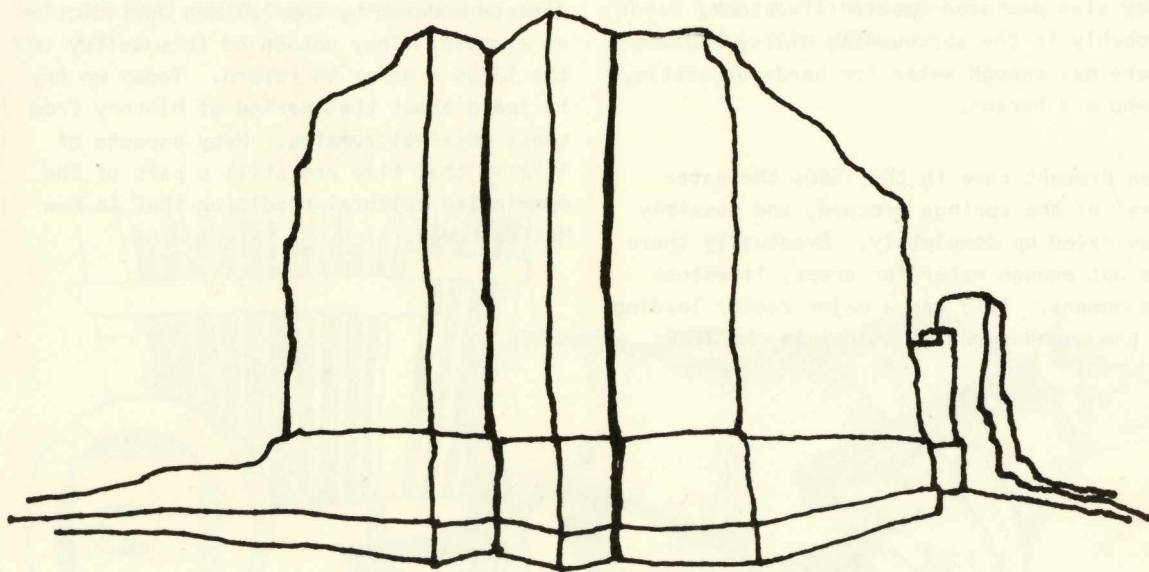
20 You are in the second of two patios which separate the lower mission buildings and later additions from the campo santo. The entire mission was located east of the pueblo and was contained within its own walls. Many people have described these early missions as "fortress churches" and standing here the reasons are obvious. Additionally, from a European point of view, there is a defensive character to the placement of the complex between the pueblo to the west and the eastern plains, home of the Apache.

The people of Quarai suffered all the problems of Apache attacks, drought and disease endured by the Salinas Jurisdiction as a whole. They abandoned this valley in the 1670s - never to return. Today we try to learn about that period of history from these physical remains. Many aspects of life in that time are still a part of the commingled cultural tradition that is New Mexico today.

"An edifice in ruins ... but so tall, so solemn, so dominant of that strange lonely landscape.... On the Rhine it would be a superlative; in the wilderness of the Manzano it is a miracle."

Charles F. Lummis
LAND OF POCO TIEMPO

National Monument
National Park Service
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