

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

TUMACACORI NATIONAL MONUMENT

Arizona

This monument embraces 10 acres of land in Santa Cruz County, Arizona, about 49 miles south of Tucson and 19 miles north of Nogales. It was created September 15, 1908. Upon the tract is located an ancient Spanish ruin, the Mission San Jose de Tumacacori, founded by the Jesuit priest, missionary, and explorer, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, about 1691.

After the year 1769 priests belonging to the order of Franciscan Fathers took charge of the mission and repaired its crumbling walls, maintaining peaceable possession thereof for about 60 years. In the early part of the nineteenth century the mission was attacked by Apache Indians, who drove the priests away and disbanded the peaceable Papago Indians residing in the vicinity of the mission. When found by Americans, about the year 1850, the mission was in a condition of ruin.

The ruins as they stand consist of the walls and tower of an old church building, the walls of a mortuary chamber at the north end of the church building, and a court or churchyard, surrounded by an adobe wall  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick and 6 feet high.

The walls of the church building are 6 feet thick, built of adobe and plastered both inside and outside with lime mortar 1 inch thick. The inside walls of the main church building received two coats of this plaster, a first or inner coat being of a rather coarse character and the finishing coat being of a very fine, hard, and lasting type. The dome over the sanctuary and the belfry tower are constructed of burned brick, this being one of the characteristics of the architecture of the mission, in which respect the construction differs from many other early Spanish missions. Inside, the dimensions of the church are 18 feet wide by 75 feet in length. The part used for the altar is situated at the north end. It is 18 feet square, surmounted with a circular dome, finished on the inside with white plaster decorated or frescoed in colors. The plaster and decorations are in a good state of preservation, but the altar is entirely gone. To the east of the sanctuary there is a sacristy, 16 by 20 feet, 20 feet high, covered with a barrel-vaulted roof built of burned brick. The sanctuary and sacristy are the only parts of the mission which are now roofed over. In the south end of the church there was a choir loft carried on an arch. This loft and arch are now broken down. The outside wall of the north end of the church building is decorated with white plaster studded at regular intervals with clusters made of fragments of broken slag and broken brick.

About 25 feet north of the church building, and in the center of the churchyard, there is a circular mortuary chamber. The wall is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick by 16 feet high, built of adobe, surmounted on the top with a row of ornamental cornice brick (made of burned brick). The chamber has one entrance. The walls were originally decorated on the outside with white plaster studded with fragments of red brick.

The entrance to the church is at the south and has an arched doorway. To the east of the entrance there is a room, about 18 feet square, with a winding stairway inside leading up to the belfry. Access to the belfry is gained by means of this old stairway. This room is surmounted by the belfry tower, which is constructed of burned brick. The walls supporting the tower are adobe. Through action of the elements of the church, appurtenant buildings, and inclosing walls were in a very bad state of ruin when the monument was created. Most of the roofs had long since fallen in and portions of the main building had become undermined. Since that time as rapidly as limited funds have permitted the mission has been placed under roof and in good state of preservation by Superintendent Pinkley, of Southwestern National Monuments.

The restoration of the double doors between the sanctuary and sacristy was an especially interesting piece of work. The original doors were torn out and carried away many years ago, and it was impossible to find anyone who could describe them from personal observation. Picks and bars had been used to tear out the old frame, with resultant destruction to the surrounding plastering, and all that was left to start with was a gaping hole in the wall. The wall of this place, however, was some 6 feet thick, with an arched opening carried from the square frame of the doorway on through to the sacristy side, and the original south door of the double doors in swinging back into this arched opening, had made a small mark in the plaster. This mark was about 2 inches long and a quarter of an inch deep, and was quite clearly cut by the upper and outer corner of the original door. From this the size of the doors and width and thickness of the frames were figured out. The details of the doors, such as number and placing of panels, etc., had to be guessed at, but in this the doors of the San Xavier Mission, which had been built a little earlier than those of the Tumacacori, and probably by the same workmen, were used as a guide. The doors were made of Spanish cedar, with the aid of a Mexican carpenter. No nails were used, the stiles and rails being mortised together and held with wedges driven home in the tenons. Six hinges were needed, and these were made in a nearby blacksmith's shop from old quarter-inch wagon tires. When the doors were completed and hung in place it was found that the outer and upper corner of the south door, when swung open, fitted into the little broken place in the plaster of the arch which had been made by the original door. After the doors were in place the broken places in the wall around the door frame were filled in with mortar and the doors and frame stained with a mixture of crude oil and gasoline to take off the new look.

In the work of restoration Superintendent Pinkley has had financial assistance from the Arizona State Legislature, the Chambers of Commerce of Tucson and Nogales, and other organizations. In its present condition the mission is equally as interesting as any of the famed California missions, and is historically important to the student of the early history of the State.

The State highway between Tucson and Nogales passes the mission and is a good automobile road. Tucson is on the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Bankhead and Old Spanish Trail highways. Nogales is the terminus of the Southern Pacific, Tucson-Nogales branch. There is auto stage service between Tucson and Nogales, and the round trip to the monument can be made from either city in a day. Louis R. Caywood, the custodian, resides on the Monument.