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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE
IN SAN ANTONIO

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of Master of Arts

Department of History

By

Jean Jones Shelton

1948

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IN SAN ANTONIO

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PREFACE

As a critic of social architecture, Louis Sullivan said, "What the people are within, the buildings are without; and inversely, what the buildings are objectively is a sure index of what the people are subjectively." With the belief that architecture is the expression of the community, the purpose of this paper is to trace the building from the earliest available records to the present in the city of San Antonio. The modern town is singularly rich among the towns and cities of the United States in the number of buildings which have survived to tell the story of the peoples that have lived there. Covering two centuries and two basically different cultures, the subject of building has interested many different people in different generations, and there is a wealth of material, much of which is contradictory in nature. Without becoming involved in questions of historical disagreement or becoming too detailed in the analysis of the architecture this paper is intended to bridge the gap between the popular interest in the subject and the technical material by careful selection and presentation.

The architect today considers not just the individual building, but the building as it relates to the community.

Parks, the planned community, the growth of community functions and buildings, sanitation, health recreation-- each of these ideas has found expression at least once during the two hundred years of the town's history, yet are too much forgotten in the total building program. In the face of a wealth of specialized studies, it is hoped that this paper can indicate the need of an understanding of the overall program, for out of the study of the whole should come a sense of the direction and needs of the town.

THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE IN SAN ANTONIO

CHAPTER I

PRE-COLUMBIAN PERIOD

Influencing the architecture at San Antonio only indirectly, the Pre-Columbian Period nevertheless sets the stage for our story. During the ninth century A.D. the Toltec nation established the first Empire in the vicinity of Mexico City, and the force of their civilization was felt to some extent as far as the country north of the Rio Grande. Developing probably independently in the country west of El Paso was the Indian civilization known as the Pueblo. Their characteristic houses built of adobe in groups or tiers, often in five-family units, have many features which are today associated with the typical Mexican hacienda.¹ In the tenth century the Chichimecas overthrew the Toltec and in the ensuing Middle Ages of Indian cultures, the influence on the northern states declined.² The Pueblos, due to a long drought in the thirteenth century, were forced from

¹Paé Keleman, Medieval American Art, II, Plate 6.

²Ibid., I, p. 14.

Distribution of Indian Cultures

PUEBLO TAOS, NEW MEXICO

BRUSH AND MUD HUTS, SOUTHERN TEXAS AND NORTHERN MEXICO

their homes, many of which were never again occupied.³ Four centuries later (1540) the cliff houses were to excite the imagination of the Spaniards and be the starting point of the search for "Gran Quivera," the most ambitious of the many treasure hunts which brought the Conquistadores into this country.⁴ Where these homeless ones went is lost in time; perhaps they became absorbed in the strong nations of the south, or perhaps they continued as wanderers in the plains to the east, to be classed with the mound builders, but with a tradition of settled life which made some groups more inclined toward mission life than others. The accompanying map shows the distribution of Indian cultures.⁵

By the early fourteenth century, the Aztecs had arisen and begun the subjection of neighboring states. Unlike the earlier Toltecs, the Aztecs did not emphasize the development of a state but strove to subject as many nations as possible to their sovereignty and to exact tribute. Again during the height of Aztec power, the force of the Indian nation at Mexico was felt in the country north of the Rio Grande. The semi-permanent rancherios

³ Ibid., I, p. 27.

⁴ Robert Sturmberg, Historic San Antonio, p. 12.

⁵ Paé Keleman, op. cit., I, Frontispiece.

of the Indians and the trails used by them formed a fairly definite trail. The system of villages and connecting trails formed a tenuous line extending from the vicinity of Mexico City through San Antonio to New Orleans, and is the line along which the settlement of the Spaniards took place. In colonial days, known as the Camino Real, it was the axis along which royal grants were given and a most important line for communication, supplies, and military transportations.⁶ Robert Sturmberg, writing a history of San Antonio in 1919, declares that this road was used for exacting a tribute during the Aztec rule, and probably was one of a network of roads used for war and peace by the masters of Mexico as early as the Toltec rule.⁷ Description of the early establishment of a definite road other than the trails above mentioned has not been established, but new material on the Toltec and Aztec nations now being brought to light may establish this fact. Sturmberg states:

. . . the highway was surveyed by Major V. N. Zively and he has prepared a topographical map of the road in fourteen sections . . . noted all outlines, mounds, trees and missions of later date. His map proves that the road originated in the very earliest times; that its

⁶ Mrs. Lipscomb Norvell, King's Highway, p. 202.

⁷ Robert Sturmberg, op. cit., p. 15.

T ypes of Indian Houses

Caddo Indian House

(detail)

"Lacing the ribs basket-like with other branches made a skeleton which was covered with leaves, twigs, anything available and plastered with mud."

Jacal--Mexican Version of the Brush and Mud House

"The grass house (Indian) was a direct ancestor of the Jacales first houses built by Europeans in Texas, and a foster parent of many houses of the poor as late as 1900 in Texas and still found in Mexico today."

from 1895 photograph
by L.F. Meyers in
"San Antonio at a Glance"

turns mark the locations of villages, settlements, forts, missions . . .⁸

At any rate, as long as there has been communication across the state, San Antonio has been in a strategic location.⁹

Where the Edwards Plateau meets the Gulf Plains and the underground water issues to the surface in springs an oasis was made in the prairie. Leaving from Mexico City going northward there is a series of high plateaus, but a few miles out of Monterrey, (seven hundred fifty miles north of Mexico City), the land drops abruptly to an arid and desert country. Sand and cactus to the Rio Grande and north only flat grasslands as bleak as a desert, except during the seasons of rain, make the trees and arable land of San Antonio a welcome sight. Along the route of the lower level river was the place for a village, and from the earliest times Indians had settled here. Constructing dwellings from the materials at hand, branches

⁸Ibid., p. 16.

⁹J. D. Fauntleroy, state highway engineer in 1920, stated: "It is probable that the Camino Real has been used as a road or trail for centuries. The fact that its location throughout the eastern portion of the route largely follows the watershed between the rivers, that on the western portion the points of crossing many of the large streams of the state appear to have been well selected, and that throughout the length of its course these streams above tidewater would lead us to believe that this old road was an Indian trail long before the Chevalier St. Dennis came over it in 1715. Mrs. Lipscomb Norvell, op. cit., p. 276.

of mesquite were stuck in the ground and bent until they could be tied together at the top.¹⁰ Lacing the ribs basket like with other branches made a skeleton which was covered with leaves, bark, twigs, or anything available, and plastered with mud.¹¹ The black dirt along the river bottom is gluey when wet and so hard when dry it must have added sand for cultivation. The dried mud can be carved or sliced, but will not crumble off the surface to which it has dried. It must be soaked long hours to be removed, and with the exception of its property of eventually melting, greatly resembles plastic wood, due to its high clay content. A house thus constructed of laced vertical strips and plastered with mud was not intended for a permanent building, but houses of this type have been known to be used for twenty years.¹² Larger and more elaborate structures had systems of arches supporting the main ribs.¹³ Using materials at hand, the

¹⁰Frederick C. Chabot, Indian Excerpts from Morfi's History of Texas, p. 41.

¹¹An interesting description of the houses of a Tejas village is contained in the "Carta de Don Damian Manzanet á Don Carlos de Sequenza sobre el Descubrimiento de la Bahía del Espiritu Santo," Facsimile, pp. 253-279. Translation by Lilia M. Casis, pp. 281, 312, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 287.

¹²M. J. Atkinson, The Texas Indians, p. 12.

¹³P. E. Goddard, Indians of the Southwest, p. 149.

DEVELOPMENT OF RANCH STYLE

" - the plain adobe building (used by the Pueblos) stood, a model for the conquerors."

"... a pattern developed which is called typically Mexican."

Verimendi palace, San Antonio,
built about 1760.

"... The Germans were a large and influential group and it is at this time that the flat-roofed houses received their slanting roofs." (1830)

Porches were added particularly in the Irish flats and on the ranches.
"...The Ranch style, only native development, occurs during this period (1830-50) but disappears from the town scene for nearly a hundred years."

The modern house rambles to reach the breeze and a favorite pattern is a variation on the ranch house style.

houses built by these Indians in South Texas were kin to those of the Mexican Indians. The grass house was a direct ancestor of the Jacales, first houses built by Europeans in Texas, and a foster parent of many houses of the poor as late as 1900 in Texas, and is still found in Mexico today.¹⁴

When the Spaniards came to Mexico their pattern of conquest was to tear down, stone by stone, the temples and buildings of the Indians, using the stone to build plateresque and Renaissance churches. The architecture, construction and design used by the Indian in his greatest buildings have therefore influenced succeeding generations very little; but the stick-and-mud house and the plain adobe building used by the mass of the people stood, a model for the conquerors. The leaders and rulers built great buildings in the prevailing European style, but the groups lower in the class system--the mestizos, professional soldiers, etc.--adapted the housing of the country. A pattern developed which is called typically Mexican by the tourist, a style which is rather uniform in the smaller villages and which is described in more detail as it developed in San Antonio's civil settlement, San Fernando.

¹⁴L. F. Meyers, San Antonio at A Glance, p. 14.

CHAPTER II

SPANISH-COLONIAL PERIOD

In the years following the fall of Mexico, the Spaniards pushed out from the city and extended the dominion of Spain in all directions. Stimulated by the hope of finding and working mineral deposits, the original discovery and later growth took place. During the two centuries between the invasion of Mexico (1519) and the founding of the first permanent settlement in Texas, many "entradas" were made through the country of the North in search of gold, but having no success, the country that is now Texas was pretty much ignored. In the early eighteenth century there was a renewal of interest in the country, and explorations and plans for a settlement which became permanent were the result.¹ The move toward colonization was defensive on the part of the Spanish government, and in this manner differed from all previous settlements. At the northern boundary between

¹A summary of the Texas situation made by the Fiscal, Dr. Velasco, in Mexico City on November 30, 1716, states: ". . . in addition to the primary purpose for establishment of missions which is the conversion and civilization of the Tejas Indians, there exists . . . the need for friendship and good will . . . in order that with their aid the extent of French conquest may be ascertained." E. C. Castaneda, Our Catholic Heritage, Vol. II, p. 24.

French and Spanish territories Fort Nacogdoches on the Red River had been established to mark the Spanish claim to Texas, and within the territory colonies were needed. The indifference or support by the government of the struggling colonist during the century of Spanish occupation in Texas was determined by the status of Spanish-French relations.

The Franciscan priests had previously petitioned for a mission field in Texas, but first received adequate support in the early years of the eighteenth century. In the identity of Church and State which continued in Spain, the Church was a direct instrument of foreign policy.² The evils attending the system and their tragic effects in Mexico should not prevent our recognition of their contribution. The frontier condition of Texas throughout the entire period of Spanish occupation prevented the perversion which took place in Mexico, and we can recognize the excellence of the objectives and many of the rules governing the missionary movement. In the desert the missionary would create a garden. To the nomads he would teach a routine of civilized life, and as the Indian learned

² Castañeda points out that " . . . since the missions were supported by the state they were expected likewise to serve the state's purpose." Ibid., III, p. 28. In a sense the Church was more than an agent. From the time of the Patronato Real, the Church and State were inseparably mixed, both in the formation and execution of State policy.

weaving, agriculture, self-government and community living, he would receive government lands and take his place in the social and economic system of the country. The missionary was instructed to teach the Indian in his native language and was not to enslave him. In Texas the multiplicity of unknown languages prevented full compliance with the first provision but records show that in a generation when large fortunes were being made in slave trade, and much was being written concerning the necessity of slaves in the creation of wealth, the missionaries stood against enslavement.

When a nation expands it has three alternatives: to destroy or drive out the subject people; to control them through their own leaders; or to attempt to incorporate them into the state. The last was the objective of the Spanish colonial system and the Church was the agency charged with instilling the habits of the invading nation into the subject peoples. The Mission would exchange the Indian's freedom for security, would require every person to work and study systematically, and, if the routine was hard to adjust to, still relative safety from enemy tribes and a year round supply of food was a fair bargain. In the country near Mexico City, where the Indians were a basically agricultural people, the normal cycle from the first establishing of the mission church to its becoming

a parish church for the community was ten years.³ With the Tejas Indians, this cycle would not operate. Missions first established in East Texas in 1690 had to be moved to the San Antonio area where the Indians were more disposed toward a settled life.⁴ Even under these more favorable conditions many individuals and groups would run away.⁵ As much as twenty years would elapse before the community would develop the skills necessary to erect the mission's crowning building, its church. In some missions, the church, replacing the chapel, would never be completed.

The building and work of the mission was done in order of greatest need. First was constructed temporary structures of brush and mud, then an adobe all purpose building for services and defense. When the planting of crops and the development of an irrigation system had been attended to, the first rock building was started, and was located as part of the defense wall of the mission fort. The essential buildings, granary, weaving rooms, priests' cells and offices, adobe or rock buildings for the "reducibles," were built forming an integral part of the mission defense system. Then with the completion of a permanent

³ Ibid., III, p. 30.

⁴ Ibid., III, p. 31.

⁵ Ibid., III, p. 69.

irrigation system and the chapel giving promise of the church to come in daily use, the mission would have become a community. Although each family group had its own cell, most of the living was done in the plaza. Here meals were cooked, and in the evenings after the long day in the open field, groups gathered to sing and talk. No element is more typical of Spanish culture than the wish to have a patio as a center for the family group and the plaza as a center for the community.

The mission was a frontier institution and an essential part of its successful operation was the presidio, which was the fort manned by the professional soldiers who secured the frontier.⁶ In the San Antonio area, the presidio was separate from the missions and served both the missions and the civil community. The customary team of mission and presidio had not been successful in Texas, and Father Massanet as early as 1716 urged that a civil community⁷ which could be a pattern for the Indians be established. In the map on the following page may be seen the complete plan for the winning of the Tejas and securing the country of the north: the missions, the presidio, and the

⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷ I. T. Cox, "Founding of First Texas Municipality," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, p. 217.

civil community, San Fernando.⁸ For a century the missions and presidio were Spain's claim and hold on Texas. Even when a new civilization and a different culture submerges the Spanish in a tide of expansion, it will not be obliterated, but will subtly influence succeeding generations. Periodically the Spanish background erupts into the conscious life of the predominantly Anglo-Saxon community now in Texas, and perhaps some day this fusion of two cultures will produce a new and creative force. During the last two decades there has been another renaissance of interest in the Spanish heritage of the community and now authenticated source material has laid the basis for restoration movements and histories. In the following section the buildings of the period are described in some detail together with portions of their history that can help in evaluating and understanding the period.

Mission San Antonio de Valera

The selection of the present site of San Antonio for a mission was first suggested by Father Damian Mansanet in 1690,⁹ but it was not until 1716 that a missionary

⁸Aguayo Map, 1730, from F. C. Chabot, The Alamo, Frontispiece.

⁹Carta de Don Damian Mansanet á Don Carlos de Sequenza sobre el Descubrimiento de la Bahía del Espiritu Santo; Facsimile, pp. 253-279, Translation by Lilia M. Casis, pp. 281, 312, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 4, (April, 1899), pp. 281-312.

Mission San Antonio de Valera

Mission San Antonio de Valera

actually located in the area. Father Antonio de San Buenaventura Y Olivares served as a lone missionary and wrote to the Marquis de Valero, who in 1716 became the Viceroy of New Spain, and whose name the mission honors. Olivares urged that he send out families as settlers for a pueblo, who would serve as an object lesson to the Indians.¹⁰ Two years after the penning of this letter, there is record of formal "erecting" of the mission when Don Martin de Alarcon gave to Father Olivares possession "of the mission site at the Indian village on the bank of the San Antonio River."¹¹ The seventy-two persons who accompanied Alarcon included the priests, the soldiers and their wives, and the mule drivers and their families.¹² The dissatisfaction of Olivares with the way his recommendations were carried out is not a part of this history, but it is important to note that families from Mexico volunteering to colonize at this time were not accepted due to the distance and expense. Instead all were recruited by

¹⁰Informe de Fray Antonio Olivares sobre las naciones y lo que hay en tierras de la Provincias de Texas, "San Francisco el Grande Archive, VIII, pp. 117-120. Also Provincias Internas, Vol. 181, pp. 127-130. Translation in E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 73.

¹¹Diario y derrotero of Alarcon's Expedition, 6 (Allesco Robles Transcripts). Ibid., p. 92.

¹²Ibid., p. 91.

Don Alarcon in the province of Coahuila and the difficulty of securing volunteers caused him to give amnesty to prisoners who would undertake this job.¹³ Certainly it is true that the first buildings in San Antonio represented the meanest possible type of habitation. In 1720, two years later, the Marquis de Aguayo, succeeding Alarcon as Governor of Texas and Coahuila, made an extensive journey to San Antonio and to the missions and presidios of the north. While at San Antonio he reorganized and relocated the presidio which was completely exposed to attack, and instructed the community to start buildings of adobe.¹⁴ On his return in January from Los Adaes several thousands of adobe blocks had been made for the erection of a suitable church and fort, but progress had been halted and many bricks destroyed by the rainy season, postponing the building to a later date.

The efficient governor mapped the area and this map shows the picture of the Spanish colonial system with a mission for the conversion of the Indians and presidio for

¹³Escrita por el Padre J. Melchor y Talamantes, Archivo General de Mexico, Seccion de Historico, Tomo 43, summarized by I. T. Cox, op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁴E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 147.

the protection of the frontier.¹⁵ One of the great handicaps to the system seems to have been the frequent shift in administration, and the work that seemed so well established by Aguayo suffered under later governors, of whom there was a change about every three years. Inasmuch as the trip from the outlying forts to the capital at Saltillo took nearly half a year, major innovations had to be approved by the Fiscal in Mexico, and financial assistance had to be secured through the Council of the Indies in Spain, it took nearly a year for a policy to be put into effect. It occasionally happened that an order would not be received before a contrary order had been passed. Had the colonial system allowed more individual initiative and freedom of action this delay in communication would not have been such a serious handicap, but the paternalistic idea of all direction and decision coming from the authoritative government allowed only the semblance of home rule.

In the decade between the establishing of Missions San Antonio de Valera (1718) and San José' (1720), and the later settlements which took place in 1730, there was relative peace and opportunity for the missions to consolidate

¹⁵ Aguayo map, reproduced in Frederick C. Chabot's The Alamo, dated 1730, but apparently incorrect since there is no other record of Aguayo's presence in Texas.

their position. By 1730, the Apaches who were being pushed out of their homes in the north began to raid the San Antonio area and hostilities between settlers and Indians flared intermittently for more than a hundred years.¹⁶ Not until after 1850 could the community ignore the necessity of watchfulness and defense. Due to the relative quiet, the two missions with no effective support were able to establish themselves and afford a certain amount of aid to the later groups, none of which had the same opportunity.

When the settlers immigrating from the Canary Islands arrived, the presidio afforded some shelter, being built of adobe and rock. The irrigation system of the Mission San Antonio de Valera was in operation and the houses of the religious had been built. The settlers on the same side of the river as the presidio saw the mission on the opposite bank grow intermittently. The fortunes of the missions varied with the governorship, the frequency of Indian raids, and the outbreak of epidemics, and the mission would in one year be a flourishing community of several hundred souls and in another year have only a handful of neophytes to receive the instruction of the Fathers and tend the

¹⁶ E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., p. 37.

fields. In 1744, the cornerstone of the mission church was laid, and though complete sometime within the decade, did not long serve the community.¹⁷ About fifteen years of services during the most prosperous era of the mission were concluded in the church before the roof fell in 1762.¹⁸ In all the missions, the decade between 1750 and 1760 was the most productive, and it is this period that is described when the typical operation of a mission is told. The official record shows that in 1761 there were seventy-six families in Mission San Antonio de Valera, a total of two hundred seventy-five persons in all.¹⁹ The looms were weaving into cloth the wool secured from the sheep which, with cattle, populated the grazing lands of the mission. The granary was kept filled with the food produced on the irrigated lands of the mission, while marriages and homes showed the development of a community versed in the religion of the Catholic church and accustomed to the routine of the self-sustaining community. Some of the Indians married into the little community of soldiers' families which inhabited La Villita, a small village about a half mile from the mission on the same

¹⁷Ibid., IV, p. 4.

¹⁸Ibid., III, p. 111.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 94.

side of the river, and slowly the objectives of the mission were being realized.

During the visit of Father Morfi in 1778, the new church which had been started to replace the church mentioned above, was only in its initial stages, with only the sacristy complete. Described as "simple, roomy and well planned,"²⁰ the building with only about fifteen feet erected was never completed. A decree for the secularization of the missions had been issued in 1776 which, though not put into effect at this time, marks the end of mission building in the San Antonio area.

In the unfinished church the style of decoration around the door, although free in treatment, is completely symmetrical and indications are that the building would have been similar in design to the twin-towered Mission Concepcion. The door is the fulcrum which is the balance point for weights of the two sides. No building of the Spanish period has the weak end-treatment found in the familiar picture of the Alamo, and the smoothing of the unfinished wall and changing of line occurred sometime between 1836 and 1850.

The visit of Father Morfi to Texas in 1778 and his *Historia*, which is the invaluable record of the history of

²⁰J. A. Morfi, History of Texas, Translated by E. C. Castañeda, p. 93.

history of the time, was the result of an important order issued in 1777 providing for the reorganization of the frontier.²¹ The frontier provinces including Arizona, the Californias, and Texas were placed under one head, responsible directly to the King. The job of unifying and expediting colonial administration was given to the Marquis de la Croix by royal appointment, and he left Mexico City on August 4, 1777, traveling on an inspection trip through the Californias and on December 14 crossed the Rio Grande into Texas.²² Accompanied by Father Juan Morfi, who carefully recorded information concerning the country and the establishments, he spent several days in San Antonio and in visiting the missions. The history written by Morfi from the notes and diary of this trip is the first history of Texas and is an authoritative source of information for the period. His observations are reliable and his description most effective. Of the Alamo in 1778 he writes:

On the east bank of the San Antonio, about two gunshots distance from the villa, is Mission San Antonio de Valera. It consists of a small convent five varas square with an arched gallery around the court on the first and second floors, around which are built the necessary rooms for

²¹ Ibid., p. viii.

²² Ibid., p. ix.

the missionaries with the corresponding porter's lodge, refectory, offices and kitchen. On the second patio there is a large room with four looms and the necessary spinning wheels to weave coarse cloth for the Indians. Two other rooms in which raw materials and tools are kept adjoin the workshop.

The Indian quarters form a square about the mission with attractive porticos, the whole being watered by a beautiful irrigation ditch bordered by various kinds of trees. Beside this a well was dug to forestall lack of water in case of being besieged by the enemy. To safeguard it the door is fortified. At the entrance to the convent a small watch tower was built with loop holes for three swivel guns, which with other firearms and corresponding ammunitions are carefully guarded.²³

In the missions it was customary for the quarters containing the cells of the Fathers to be a two-story building with offices on first and cells on second floor. Only the lower half of this building remains, though earliest pictures show it as two stories adapted as a store. In both Missions San José and Concepción there is a similar state of ruin. In Mission Espada only an altered version remains, so there is in all the five missions no real example of the nucleus of the mission: offices and cells and attached arcade of the missionaries, which received building priority over the church and was

²³
Ibid., p. 93.

Sketch of the "Alamo"

ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF ORIGINAL MISSION REPRODUCED
FROM ADINA DE ZAVALA'S, ALAMO AND OTHER MISSIONS, p. 19

SKETCHED FROM THE
BORDER OF AN EN-
GRAVING BY LUNKOWITZ
DATED 1850
NOTICE PARAPET

Alamo Plaza - San Antonio, Texas

6-11-3

singularly characteristic of the mission plan.²⁴ In the accompanying sketch may be seen the building as an artist had reconstructed it from old records.²⁵ The view is from directly across the street on present Alamo Plaza. The church is to the right, south of the arcade. The perspective in the sketch makes the apparent size of the convent greater in relation to the church than it is as can be seen by comparison with the modern photograph. (Also note the finish of the wall over the entrance of the church.) The mission compound was partially in front of the church and the wall enclosed a large portion of present Alamo Plaza. The comparatively elaborate community plan cannot be guessed today, for when visiting the mission it appears that the compound was wholly behind the cells and church. Although study of Mission San Antonio de Valera is of special interest to Texans it presents extra difficulty in getting a very complete picture of the mission system. Comparison

²⁴It is ironical that the two-story building of the Alamo, best complete example of its type, should survive two centuries of war and weather to be torn down to its present height in 1913 to clear the land for a "fine hotel." Due to the fact that the church was roofless and exposed, it is also true that the two-story building was the real stronghold of the heroes of the Alamo instead of the chapel as popularly supposed, and Texans as well as historians suffer a great loss in its destruction. Some interesting material on the subject is presented by Adina de Zavala in History and Legends of the Alamo.

²⁵Ibid., p. 19.

of the plans of the five missions will show them similar; therefore another mission can serve to gain a better understanding of the mission system and the architecture it produced.

The mission was officially secularized in August, 1793.²⁶ Secularization is the term employed to show that the direction of the community was handed over to its secular leaders, and that the church functioned as a parish church. At various times, the buildings of the mission, especially the rooms that had been offices and cells of the religious, housed troops stationed in the town. The "Compañía volante del Alamo de Parros" was quartered here in 1788, and remained during the entire last years of Spanish rule.²⁷ Several writers attribute to their long residence the adoption of the familiar title "Alamo."²⁸ Other historians state that the name was attached because of the grove of cottonwood, which is "álamo" in Spanish.²⁹ In any event the name "Alamo" was in general use by the first years of the nineteenth century and, following custom, will be referred to in these pages as such instead

²⁶E. W. Heusinger, Early Explorations and Mission Establishments in Texas, p. 82.

²⁷Ibid., p. 81.

²⁸Adina de Zavala, op. cit., p. 16.

²⁹Frederick C. Chabot, op. cit., p. 5.

Mission San José y Miguel de Aguayo

of the official title, Mission San Antonio de Valera.

Alternately a stronghold for both Mexican and Texan troops in the war for independence, the buildings of the mission fort were the first home of United States troops stationed in San Antonio after annexation in 1845, and, except during the Civil War, San Antonio has been home for the Army during the succeeding hundred years. With the building of a pitched roof and the completion of the parapet of the front wall in its present form by the United States troops, the chapel gained its familiar appearance. Having a less varied history, the second of the early missions became the most famous and is the example always quoted in architectural books; therefore the next study is that of Mission San José.

San José y Miguel de Aguayo

The second mission to locate in the San Antonio area was San José y Miguel de Aguayo in 1720. The founder of this mission, Father Márgil de Jesus, had been founder and first president of the Colegio de Zacatecas in 1706.³⁰ When the Zacatecans first requested permission to establish a mission near the Presidio San Antonio, Father

³⁰Father Margil was an outstandingly successful missionary and had as *Presidente en cognite* of the new Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Zacatecas. E. C. Castaneda, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 2; 24.

Olivares, founder of Mission San Antonio and a missionary from the Colegio de Quetaro, objected saying that it would be unwise to have two so close together. He further pointed out that their fields would overlap and that the Law of the Indies provided a minimum separation of three leagues.³¹ On the basis that the proposed mission would serve different tribes, unfriendly to those occupying Mission San Antonio de Valera, the new mission was authorized, but great care was taken to record that the strict letter of the law had been complied with. In 1720, during the inspection trip of the new governor, the Marquis de Aguayo, whose name the mission bears, formal possession of the mission lands was given to Father Margil.³² In considerable detail Aguayo records the testimony of several witnesses that the proposed site was more than three leagues from San Antonio, and then the chief of the tribes to be gathered in the mission was asked if they wished the mission established for them. After being told their responsibilities to the mission, deed to the land was given to

³¹"Oposición a la fundación de la Misión de San José del Río de San Antonio." In Archivo del Colegio de la Santa Cruz, 1716-1749. Summarized by E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 127.

³²"Auto de Posesión, In Testimonio de Posesión y Misión." Archivo General de Indios Sevilla, Audiencia de Guadalajara, pp. 673-711. Dunn Transcripts, 1710. Quoted in part in E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 129.

Granary, Mission San José

Father Margil. Mass was held, and at the conclusion of the ceremonies, the mission lands were more completely surveyed, and position for each building determined.³³

From the time of its establishment in 1720 and the visit of Father Ciprian in 1749, there is no report of the progress of the mission, but by the time of his report all the buildings later described were complete except the mill and present church.³⁴ The granary had been completed in 1726, and is therefore the oldest building still standing in Texas, and one of the oldest in the United States. Important in the study of this building are the flying buttresses that were constructed to carry the weight of the roof. This is contrary to the manner of other building in which attached buttresses are used, and also contrary to the trend of the whole first period of church architecture in Mexico. The roof is rounded, curving in from the walls, giving the interior of the building a certain resemblance to modern reinforced concrete structures although the type of arch is, of course, not parabolic. The rounded ceiling makes an inverted "U" with the walls and is the characteristic solution to the building of a

³³Ibid., p. 130.

³⁴"Fray Ignacio Antonio Ciprian to Fray Juan Antonio Abasolo," October 27, 1749, San Francisco el Grande Archivo, Vol. 5, pp. 41-46, from E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 127.

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masonry or adobe roof.

The first building erected along the protective wall and placed first to the main entrance is the granary. In succession around the mission wall were the carpenter shop, the weaving rooms, and other needed buildings. Although the present church had not been built in 1749, an adequate church was being used. Father Ciprian writes:

The Mission has a friary of stone with arched corridors and a very interesting church capable of accommodating two thousand persons.³⁶

The church, although not as large as the later church, was probably about the size of Mission Concepcion and only a prosperous community looking to the establishment of a parish would have undertaken the imposing edifice of the later church. Governor Barrios, during an inspection trip in 1758, four years before the corner stone of the new church was laid, describes a church of stone and mortar with a single tower.³⁷ The cathedral of San Fernando was built in a similar manner, but in this case the entrance was not at the center of the building.³⁸ There seems to have been

³⁵E. W. Harris, San José, Queen of Missions, p. 11.

³⁶E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., II, p. 124.

³⁷"Informe del Gobernador sobre la Misión de San José," May 23, 1758, San Francisco el Grande Archivos, Vol. 12, pp. 59-61, quoted in E. C. Castaneda, op. cit., IV, p. 13.

³⁸Pearson Newcomb, Alamo City, p. 6.

several different solutions to the problem of building a frontier church, but certain elements group themselves together. If the church has twin towers, it is in the Renaissance tradition, the entrance is centered in the building, and the decoration is symmetrically arranged around the door. When the building has one tower, the opening is off center to balance the weight, or, as in the case of the second church of San José, the design of the door indicates the use of assymetrical balance.

At the same time as the beginning of the present church, the mill was begun. The mill is located outside the wall of the mission and is of the type called the Norse Mill. It has a horizontal water wheel and a vertical axis on which the mill stones are mounted directly, thus eliminating gears or other intermediate mechanism.

The present church was begun in 1768,³⁹ and is one of the few examples of good baroque found in the United States. Other missions belong to other periods and architectural traditions, but the ornament as well as the mass effect of the church at San José is a thoroughly pleasing assymetrical design. Pedro Huizar, artist who carved the facade, probably supervised the entire building, since the technical knowledge required for its construction and the

³⁹E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., p. 96.

Rose Window, Mission San José

manner of execution differ from earlier buildings at the same mission. Huizar located here, receiving lands for his service, and his descendants were owners of the land and were occupying the granary at the time it was purchased by the Conservation Society for restoration in 1930.⁴⁰

Many legends have been told about the artist, Pedro Huizar, and with respect to the very lovely "Rose Window" in the sacristy. Romantic versions of the reason for the name of the window ignore the fact that it is an architectural term applied to a large circular window divided into design by tracery. There are, of course, certain discrepancies. The window is oval instead of circular, it is placed in the sacristy when usually found in the main building of the church, and "rejas" replace the leaded glass panes.⁴¹ It seems probable, however, that the name arose from the architectural term rather than as a result of an unfortunate love affair as told in popular legend. In the picture of the Rose Window, the construction of the church of stone (tufa, but not the volcanic type) and mortar can be noted, and the contrasting limestone used when a carved ornamental accent was used.⁴²

⁴⁰E. W. Harris, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴¹A window of this shape but in conventional position is found in a cathedral in Mexico City, Church of el Salto del Agua. Alfred C. Bosson, An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico, Charles Scribner and Sons, New York, 1924.

⁴²Refer to illustrations in this paper.

Entrance, Mission San José

Souvenir hunters have destroyed much of the work so carefully carved around the door. The Franciscan Fathers in a statement for the guidebook to the missions say that the three upper figures from left to right are San Dominick, St. Joseph, and St. Francis. The figures on the lower level are St. Joachim, Virgin of Guadalupe, and St. Anne. Although mutilated, the figures and carving around the door form a pleasing assymetrical balance of natural and decorative elements. The freedom in design around the Moorish style opening has produced a lovely and unique example of baroque in the United States. No other mission attained the wealth and had the artist to construct such a building.

The single bell tower assymetrically balanced with the left tower is a part of the unity of the structure and the stone steps leading to the belfry cut and placed with no jointing are a witness to the excellence of the technical skill as well as the artistic ability of the architect. The cause for the falling down of the buildings, according to Ernest Schuhardt, has not been due to poor building but to poor material.⁴³ The tufa with which the Padres built was not the hard volcanic tufa of Mexico with which they confused it, but a stone formed by the seepage

⁴³The unpublished studies of Ernest Schuhardt, who did the interior of the granary at San José, have been made available for this paper.

Spiral Stairway, Mission San José

of underground water into the limestone strata below. Some of the stone is light, porous, of stalagmite origin, while other is heavy, a mortarlike joining of small pebbles and rubble.

One hundred years after the cornerstone was laid in 1768, the roof, dome, cupola and a large portion of the wall fell in.⁴⁴ Grateful thanks for today's church with its authentically restored dome and tower can be given in part to the interest in the town which prompted artists immigrating to town to paint pictures of the missions, and the choice of the producers of stereoptican views of the town which included the missions. Several families have complete sets of these views, and in the restoring of the Mission San José they were used to show that the proposed dome was four feet too high and that the bell tower was incorrect.⁴⁵ Particularly in view of the essential function of the dome in unifying and emphasizing the design of

⁴⁴E. W. Harris, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁵Ernest Schuhardt, who checked the error between the original pictures and the restoration, points out that the bell tower is identical in early and present pictures, but during period of first restoration, pictures of the mission show a much flattened tower. The only difference between the picture of the mission today and when first photographed in 1850 is the window in the bell tower which was not symmetrical in shape and position with the window in the left tower. In view of the assymetrical balance throughout the slightly longer, narrower, window placed a little higher in position is a better solution, but the discrepancy is scarcely noticed today.

the mission, it is well that these pictures were available, and that careful checking of the restoration against the older pictures was made. A dome designed by a master can bring meaning and dignity to even a poor building, while a work of art can be made ridiculous by an incongruous dome.

The Indian quarters (restored) show how the cells of the neophytes were built a part of the mission wall. In Mission de la Espada, several units remain intact from the mission period and are in use today. These, whose authenticity is unquestioned, prove the restored version true in size and design. Walls are two to three feet thick, and the quarters consist of one- or two-room "apartments" which are about twelve feet wide, and fifteen to eighteen feet long. They usually contain only one window, and often, on the wall side, have an opening for shooting of the enemy in case of attack. In the corner of the room is a fireplace which could be used for cooking, although the outdoor oven was probably preferred.

The air view of the mission compound shows portions of buildings not yet reconstructed.⁴⁶ It is possible that one or more rows of Indian houses were within the wall,

⁴⁶E. W. Harris, op. cit., p. 24.

such as those described at Mission San Antonio de Valera, although the report in 1762 seems to preclude the idea. The report of Father Mariano Francisco de los Dolores was translated as follows:

A good stone and mortar church had been built with its tower, transept, nave and vaulted roof. . . . Next to the church stood a friary well built of stone and mortar, with ample room and a graceful archway. On the ground floor were offices, kitchens, refectory, and several cells, while on the second floor only one cell had been built at this time.

There were four other buildings of stone and mortar: The soldiers' quarters designed for the Mission guards were opposite the church. Then there was a carpenter shop, granary, and a spinning and weaving room. Each of these was adequately supplied with tools and equipment necessary for work done by the Indians. There was also a place where sugarcane was made into brown sugar and molasses. The whole area was surrounded by a well constructed wall in the shape of a square. Arranged along the wall which formed the back were eighty-four stone houses where the neophytes lived. The houses had flat roofs and loopholes from which to fire on the enemy when attacked. . . . There was an alberca (swimming pool) for the neophytes. The water was brought by means of a gravity canal that flowed along the houses hence into a pool and out into the adjoining fields. Near the buildings which served as military quarters, there was another swimming pool for the soldiers.⁴⁷

With all the material available on the missions, which is great due to the fascination they have held for many generations that have lived and visited in the town, none

⁴⁷ E. C. Castaneda, op. cit., III, p. 14.

SAN JOSE - EXTERIOR DECORATION

SAN JOSÉ - INTERIOR DECORATION

1. FOUND AT BASE OF SECOND FLOOR LINE OF CHURCH
2. DETAIL (MADE WITH COMPASS)
5. 6. 7. WALL EDGES AND PAINTED NICHE IN GRANARY
11. SCRATCHED "FISH TAIL" DESIGN

is more interesting than the unpublished research of Ernest Schuhardt, whose interest in the decoration of the missions has led him to a painstaking examination of the buildings and old photographs and to the conclusions presented here. His work has been concerned with Missions San José and Concepción, and each portion of the design shown on the accompanying illustration has been definitely discovered. Peeling off the layers of added stucco or whitewash has revealed that the design was scratched on with a compass and the lines then filled in with color. The color seems to have been applied as true frescoes; i. e., painted on the fresh plaster and in that way became part of it. In attempting to date the frescoes, Ernest Schuhardt said that the position of one of the paintings behind an essential beam in San José which had existed from the time of its erection in 1775 indicated that all decoration that was done was completed before the secularization of the missions in 1794. Morfi does not mention the decoration except in general terms to state that the front is heavily decorated.⁴⁸ There is a lack of description of this exterior decoration which makes dating of it difficult; however, its presence and the diagrams here presented are proven facts. The colors are found locally except the

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 97.

blue which in exhaustive tests was proved to be of vegetable origin and is presumed to be indigo since this is a product of Mexico mentioned in books of the period.

Many of the designs identified in the San Antonio buildings exist in a better preserved state in the California missions which were built in the nineteenth century. In analyzing the material used Schuhardt states:

. . . to understand why these missions were so brightly painted one need only to go into old Mexico. . . . From the finest cathedrals and state buildings to the smallest house you will find examples of these wall decorations and paintings. . . . The whole building is usually not painted; only one or two walls are decorated.⁴⁹

On Mission San José¹ there seems to have been only a small portion of the side wall considered for design, and this was not colored but is scratched in fish tail design. More permanent, due to better care, and showing greater variety in design, the Mission Concepción is considered in the next section.

A visit to the Mission San José¹ affords many "firsts." The granary built about 1726 is the oldest building remaining from the mission period and one of the oldest in the country. The mill was the first in the West. Wealthiest of the Texas missions, the church building in design and

⁴⁹Ernest Schuhardt, "Decoration of San José," Unpublished work on the study of missions.

Mission Concepción

Shaded areas are ruins.
The rest of the building
remains intact from Spanish
period and has not been
"restored."

decoration is unique in the United States. Restored in part, the mission represents not only a church building but also a way of life. Here, under the direction of the Padres, the inhabitants dug irrigation ditches, tilled the soil, raised herds of cattle and sheep, wove cloth, and dried and preserved food for the winter. Having built securely for defense, a community prospered in the wilderness.

Mission Concepción

Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, a Quetarean mission, was "erected" in 1716 in East Texas and was transferred to San Antonio by order of the Marquis de Casa Fuerte together with Mission de la Espada and Mission San Juan in 1731.⁵⁰ The Law of the Indies providing a minimum separation of three leagues between mission establishments had been carefully adhered to during the locating of Mission San José due to the objections raised by Father Olivares at Mission San Antonio de Valero. No protest is recorded on the establishing of Concepción and the other two missions; therefore it is to be presumed that, practically speaking, the additional groups did not

⁵⁰ E. C. Castañeda, op. cit., III, p. 35.

overlap the earlier establishments. Tribes of like language and custom were grouped together, and thus incompatible groups were in separated missions.

The location of Concepción was ideally close to the San Antonio River and in the construction of the church limestone rock was found and quarried. It is the rock quarry of this mission that supplied the beautiful church of San Jose and has the quality of being soft enough to plane when first quarried, and then turning so hard it can be polished like marble in a few days. Of all the missions in this area it is the most enjoyed by the casual tourist. No longer used as a church and unrestored, yet in good condition, it has a convincing quality not found at San Jose or the Alamo. Of all the buildings it is the only one whose roof has survived intact from the mission period.

The church is about twenty-five by one hundred feet in the preferred cruciform pattern.⁵¹ The roof, like all others so far as records of the period describe, was of the barrel-vault type, and as previously noted is the only one to be preserved intact to the present day. There is the conventional transept, cupola, and two belfries which indicate the probable plan of Mission San Antonio de Valera.

⁵¹ Refer to scale drawing from Adina de Zavala, op. cit., p. 115.

CONCEPCIÓN - EXTERIOR DESIGN

CONCEPCIÓN - INTERIOR DECORATION

1. BAPISTRY RAIL

2. "ALL SEEING EYE" ON
LIBRARY CEILING

3. OVER ALTAR IN BAPISTRY

4. OVER FONT IN BAPISTRY

5. RAIL OR BASE $3\frac{1}{2}'$ HIGH
AROUND ENTIRE BELFRY

6. BELFRY

7.

8. CEILING OF BELFRY, DESIGN
AROUND HOPE THROUGH WHICH
BELL CORD PASSED

9.-10.-11.-12 FOUND IN LIBRARY

13. OVER ARCHED DOOR IN LIBRARY

14.-15. FOUND ONLY ON NORTH
ARCH OF ARCADE

The sacristy has a vaulted roof, and Morfi records that so also did the "living room of the religious."⁵² Indian quarters were on either side of the convent and formed the north and south side of the mission square. The side opposite the convent and church was the granary, "thus forming a closed rectangle with only two doors that are well defended."

The rectangular plan, with two-story building for offices and cells of the Fathers, and arcade, the church, the houses for the neophytes, and room for storage, weaving etc. is the basic pattern. With a unity of plan stemming from a common purpose and origin, the missions differ mainly with the respect to the degree of completion at the time abandoned.⁵³

In contrast to the baroque design of San José, Mission Concepción has bilateral symmetry of the facade with the door as axis and the equal weight of twin towers on either side affording conventional balance. The doorway and the windows remaining from the original church of the Alamo, although freer in treatment, are also carefully executed in the tradition of bilateral symmetry; and this would indicate that, if completed, the church would have had

⁵²J. A. Morfi, op. cit., p. 94.

⁵³Loc. cit.

twin towers.

Sometime after the construction of the church and long since faded, the front of Concepcion was apparently frescoed with quatrefoil crosses. The decoration is not mentioned by Father Morfi in his careful report in 1778, yet enough remained in 1890 that the historian and close observer, William Corner, was able to describe them in some detail:

The front of the Mission Concepcion must have been very gorgeous with color for it was frescoed all over with red and blue quatrefoil crosses of different pattern and with large yellow and orange squares to simulate great dressed stones. This frescoing is rapidly disappearing, and from but a little distance the front looks to be merely grey and undecorated stone.⁵⁴

Oil paintings by artist Lunkowitz and artist Gentiliz in 1860 do not show this overall pattern, but do make it appear that the towers are constructed of great stones such as Corner describes, and might therefore be the painting of these that he mentions.

The work of Schuhardt in peeling off layers of white-wash and using a magnifying lens on old pictures is particularly rewarding in the Mission Concepcion and in the number and type of designs discovered. About two-thirds of the facade has been determined, and a large proportion

⁵⁴William Corner, Historic San Antonio, p. 16.

of the interior decoration of the library has been identified. Much yet remains to be done, for a portion of a picture in the baptistery which appears to be a large painted drapery over five feet in height and width has been partially uncovered. Many other of the designs which were fresh with color and identifiable twenty years ago have been obscured or faded, but the amount included in the diagrams of Schuhardt is most indicative of the general plan. The ray design on the facade is apparently the all-seeing eye motif which is found in the chapel and which has been used occasionally in the California missions.

The attached buttresses to resist the thrust of the roof are found in all buildings of this period, with the exception of the granary of San Jose, as they are also characteristic of the first period of church architecture in Mexico.⁵⁵ The pyramidal tops are disturbing because unnecessary, and mostly unrelated to the building. Lunkowitz must also have been disturbed by the harshness of the stone pyramids and in the interest of design rounded them off. Again in his picture of San Juan he "improves" the design of the church to make a good picture.⁵⁶ Nevertheless the stone pyramids do serve to emphasize the

⁵⁵Trent E. Sanford, History of Architecture in Mexico, p. 38.

⁵⁶Hermann Lunkowitz' painting of Mission San Juan hangs in Main Library, Reference Room, San Antonio.

Mission, San Juan
(CHAPEL)

fortress aspect of the mission. Had not a recent boltering of the side pyramids with stucco in conflicting pattern been made, their ugliness would not have so greatly detracted from the side view of the mission. The original tops were probably of the same pattern as those on the towers shown in the front view.

During the eighteenth century the church was a strong fortress mission. In 1836 it was the scene of the first victory of Texas independence when Ben Milam and his troops gained it in battle, and evidences of the fight in the chipped wall are numerous. Exposed to attack by weather and men it has stood for over two hundred years, a monument to its builders.

Mission San Juan

Mission San Juan Capistrano never prospered to the extent of the other missions. Located in San Antonio after removal from East Texas in 1731, the chapel was being used for services and the Indians still inhabited Jacales at the time of its abandonment. Although today used and surrounded by descendants of original Indian residents, it is not as interesting in this respect as San Francisco de la Espada, the fourth mission. Two facts, however, challenge our attention. First is the puzzle presented by the exterior of the chapel. The plan of the mission shows the chapel as

a part of the fortress wall so necessary in its exposed position, but does not account for the flattened arches lining the outside wall on the plaza side. The elongation of the wall to contain the arched openings for the bells is a simple but effective solution to the establishing of a temporary church. But no early description or plan or later study has explained the masonry filled arches. Pending later discovery of additional information this will have to remain a puzzle second only to the question of the church of the Alamo. Lunkowitz, also disturbed by the lack of harmony in the building as he found it in 1860 and as it remains today, painted an interesting picture, heightening and shortening the building in such a way that the arches did not destroy the rhythm of the building.⁵⁷ This interpretative quality in his paintings makes them unreliable as photographic models, but by comparison with the photograph unerringly points to discrepancies in the design of the building at the time he saw it.

The second puzzle is that of visualizing the interior of the chapel. Apparently the vaulted roof was never built, and the narrow rectangular room with flat grass roof had not the beauty of the other mission churches, but its plain darkness was relieved by imaginative painting.

⁵⁷Picture painted in 1858 is hanging in San Antonio Public Library.

The description given by Corner is challenging:

The chapel is roofless except for one small room at the south end which is walled off by an adobe wall and which is used as a sacristy, vestry . . . The frescoes are obliterated by exposure to weather and the wonder is that they have not long since been washed entirely off by rains. They are a curious mixture of Old and New World ideas. Details of Moorish design, a Roman arch, Indian figures and pigments . . . a painted rail about four feet high is running around the chapel first attracts the eye, then the elaborately painted Roman arch in red and orange over the doorway. The design of the decoration is decidedly of Moorish caste, zigzag strips and blocks of color with corkscrew and tile work, and pillars of red and orange blocks. These pillars are about twelve feet high and support another line or rail of color and upon this upper line are a series of musicians each playing a different instrument. The figures for some reason are much more indistinct than their instruments, the latter being accurately drawn and easy to distinguish. Over the frescoed arch of the door is a mandolin player. The player is indistinct. Portions of his chair and instrument are plainer; the latter can be made out to be of dark brown color with finger board and keys red. To the right of him is a violin player, the best preserved sample of all. . . . The violin and bow are quite distinct; so are the features of the face of the figure; his hair is black, lips red, face and legs orange, feet black. The body of the violin player is orange; the rest of him and the bow red. To the right of him again is a guitar player, dressed in bluish greenish color, sitting in a red chair; the instrument is quite distinct. Directly opposite this figure vis a vis is a viol player; the instrument being held by the player finger board up, from the left shoulder across the body; head and hands, instrument and bow being distinct, but the body of him is "played out." To the right of this ghostly looking viol player is a harp and a chair but the player has vanished. The lower rail which is the much more elaborate of the two supports here and there a flower pot and flowers in incongruous colors of bluish green

Mission San Francisco de la Espada

and dull red . . . carnations and roses being the prime favorites with an occasional cross or painted pedestal or dado.⁵⁸

Mission San Francisco de la Espada

Mission San Juan and Mission de la Espada are on opposite sides of the river and a very short distance from each other, far less than the prescribed three leagues. But so great was their distance from the protection of the presidio, and so exposed was their position, that they remained less developed than the other missions. In addition, Mission Espada was the farthestest from the river of any of the missions, and the first and most important concern after shelter and a protective building was constructed was to build an irrigation system. The aqueduct bringing the water from the river to the mission and its lands over a distance of more than three miles is still standing, and water still flows along its channel. Picturesquely winding its way, it can occasionally be seen from the road, and often in summer, children, part Mexican, part Indian, whose families were the "reducios" of the mission, are found playing in the slowly flowing water. Bridging the valley with rounded rock arches, and making use of the high land to dig and line with rock a sort of sloping canal,

⁵⁸William Corner, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

the aqueduct is the only example of Spanish construction perpetuating the Roman tradition to be found intact within the limits of the United States. Much more elaborate examples are of course standing in Mexico, but the country to the north was always much less advanced than Mexico.

Within the enclosure of the mission wall, the chapel is still used for services, (the church was never completed), and several families live in the cell built during the mission period. Living much as did their fathers and grandfathers before them after the secularization of the mission in about 1800, remote from San Antonio and relatively unvisited by the tourist, the mission is the most interesting to visit. Carefully cultivated flowers around each house are a perpetuation of the Spanish period. Today, three centuries after the Mexican first settled, the lawns and flowers in the desert section of Texas are the work of the Mexican, who, according to the Anglo-Americans, has green fingers. Neatness and song are the contributions of the German immigrants, but the Mexicans contribute flowers and color.

In the corner of the wall shown in the lower right hand corner of the mission plan⁵⁹ is the bastion which was built at the corner and other strategic intervals

⁵⁹Reproduced from Adina de Zavala, op. cit., plan opposite p. 123.

along the fortress wall of the mission, but of which only traces remain in this and other missions except for this one complete and perfect example. It is round with a dirt floor and no windows. There are two levels of holes commanding the surrounding country. The lower set of these are about four inches in diameter, and the upper seven are about two inches. They were formed by taking a square rock probably cut limestone and chipping a funnel shaped hole. The larger hole was made in a rock about six inches square, and the smaller in a rock about twelve inches square. These are placed in the wall which was made of stone and mortar as are all the remaining buildings of the mission. The modern gateway and entrance used by cars is by the church and visitors do not go "back" of the mission which is labeled entrance in the diagram. In this area are homes and a school, but the part of the mission shown in the diagram to be still standing is occupied, and the road which enters by the church is lined with houses.

In study and visiting of the missions, the Fathers whose names are largely forgotten begin to assume a personality. At Mission San Antonio de Valera, there is a

⁶⁰In a full page feature story with San Antonio Evening News entitled "Mission Espada dreams of Past," Tom McGowan gives a vivid description of the life of the great grandchildren of the "originales," mission converts that live on the mission and along the road. San Antonio Evening News, June 27, 1947.

La Villita

history of energetic pioneering, and a weakness in the technical aspects of building. At San Jose there was much administrative ability, and an interest in and sound construction of engineering projects such as the mill and the granary, and later the monumental church. Espada, too poorly supported, and too exposed to be other than a frontier mission, nevertheless served well and faithfully, and built carefully. Here it was that the first printing was done and the Bible translated into the Indian language.⁶¹ Never staffed by more than two priests, it made a small but enduring mark in the wild country of South Texas. The chapel is typical of the accomplishments of this mission. The simplest possible form, careful construction, and the trace of Moorish design over the doorway form an aesthetically pleasing building.

Secular Communities: La Villita

As early as 1716, Father Olivares at the Alamo urged the settling of Spanish families in a community nearby to serve as an example for the Indians to whom it was so difficult to demonstrate the routine and advantages of

⁶¹Father Fray Bartolome Garcia published in 1760 "Manuel para administrar los Sacramentos," the first textbook printed in Texas. E. C. Castaneda, op. cit., III, p. 33.

civilized living because their background was so different as to preclude understanding except through example.⁶²

In 1720, Father Espinosa at the Alamo asked that married men and their families should form guards for the mission; that they should enjoy the pay of the soldiers for two years, meanwhile cultivating the land assigned to them, and at the end of that time receive title to the lands they were cultivating. Some poor families of Mexico City volunteered for this service, but great distance made it impossible to use them. For the Entrada of 1721, headed by Don Alarcon, levies were made in the cities nearer Texas and among the drafted colonists were many released from prisons. The community of soldiers' families, both those brought from Mexico and those that were the result of inter-marriage with the mission Indians, formed a small rude village called "La Villita," the little village.⁶³

Like the first buildings at the Alamo, these houses were built by putting vertical pieces in the ground with spaces filled up with branches interlaced and thatched. Nearly a hundred years later only about half of the community enjoyed the comfort of an adobe house, and these

⁶²See page 16, this paper.

⁶³I. T. Cox, op. cit., p. 217.

were meanly furnished, without the flowering patios usual in the Spanish house. Many of the houses were still of "temporary" construction.⁶⁴

Originally a poor community of soldiers and their wives, mestizos many of them, eking out a miserable existence, it was the "wrong side of the railroad tracks" or, more literally, the river. The citizens of San Fernando received the title of "hidalgo" when settling the new community, and though their struggle was long and largely unprofitable, they could still with reason look down on the little village whose start had been the drafting of unwilling men, many of whom were in jail. In 1819, a change occurred almost overnight when the little village became the fashionable center of the town. A flood, forcing the inhabitants of the village of San Fernando to flee to higher ground, caused them to wish to live in the higher section. Prices were offered for the houses in La Villita which their owners could not afford to refuse.

With the transformation of La Villita into the residence section of the social and political leaders of the community and the villages unified under one name and administration the stage was set for the next act of the drama. In one of these houses, probably the one called

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 218.

"Cos House," the Mexican General was prisoner during the first of the war which resulted in independence, and signed terms of surrender. During the siege of the Texas troops which occupied the Alamo, this was the headquarters and the fortified position of Santa Anna's forces. The homes of "Deaf" Smith and other persons prominent in the history of Texas were located in this historic section, which saw another change in appearance with the coming of the wave of German immigration. Sloping roofs, not characteristic of the earlier period, are found today, and the patios have become gardens for vegetables. The first music clubs were formed, and the first community social hall built. Details of the period of statehood are considered in more detail later.

The houses of La Villita, although in many respects the town's most unique possession, are largely destroyed as an architectural study due to the manner of restoration and use made of them. In attempting a functional restoration of this community which was the earliest San Antonio and the town's most historic spot, and in developing it as a useful civic center, a dance floor, barbecue pit, large craft house and the enclosing wall were built. In the interest of the Good Neighbor Policy "friendship" names of Latin and South American leaders were given to the houses. It is impossible for any but the careful

Villa San Fernando

(Plano de Población)

Perfil

De esta manera y con este fachado quedará
la población que se manifestaba en el pto
no que esta ciéniero abajo, cuya letras
y números corresponden segun el lugar
donde estan. Colocados. Respondien =
dase el uno, al otro o:-

Fabrisado

student to unravel the tangled strains and to gain a picture of life as it was lived there.

Secular Communities: San Fernando

In 1722, the King gave orders for the transportation of four hundred families from the Canary Islands to the province of Texas. Little attention seems to have been paid to this order, but a later cedula (February 14, 1729) instructed every vessel clearing for Havana to carry ten or twelve families destined for Texas.⁶⁵ This was a somewhat more successful order, for the following year there is record of a small band of Canary Islanders at the little pueblo of Guantitlan, near Mexico, ready to start for San Antonio. In a long and carefully written letter detailing the process for selecting the site for colonization, the manner of land allocation, and the assigning of responsibility for the procedure to the Governor of Saltillo and Texas, the Marquis de Casa Fuerte on November 28, 1730, attempted to give the colonists protection and provide for their needs.⁶⁶ His complete plans for the settlement and the map referred to are among the earliest examples of

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 218.

⁶⁶ Decree de Casa Fuerte, September 9, 1730, p. 118.

town planning in the country west of the Mississippi and in the United States:

After selecting the spot, the governor and his associates shall proceed to lay out the streets, square, plaza, and sites for the church, house of the curate, the public or royal house, and the remaining houses which appear on the accompanying map.⁶⁷

He further stated that territory of the new municipality was to be divided as follows: residence portion with church as center is to be a square of 1093 varas. The square is to be divided into 144 blocks, each 240 feet square, and separated from its neighbors by a street forty feet wide. Each family is given a block for a residence lot. Each has to line the borders of its building lot with trees and to erect as commodious house as possible with a patio, corral, and all necessary buildings. Care should be taken to provide for the cleanliness of the premises, and that directions of houses and streets should coincide. Outside of the township were to be the grazing lands. Each family was to have one labor, about 1000 varas square for cultivation.

Of the fifty-six persons (fifteen families) which set out, only one died enroute. The group arrived on March 9, 1731, and on the thirteenth put in a crop which

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 224.

they harvested the first of July.⁶⁸ July 2 is the date given for the completion of this task and the survey and apportionment of land was begun. A "cabildo" and "alcalde" were chosen, the protection and full cooperation of the presidio insured, and the little community seemed well started. That ten years later there was still no church or other public buildings, and that a hundred years later the town was still very small, the buildings poor, was the product of many factors, not least the restrictions against trade imposed by the Spanish Government. Without such restrictions, the colony could have grown, and the long series of hostile Indian raids, keeping the town from becoming settled and prosperous could have been more successfully and more quickly ended. Until the end of the Spanish period, the villages of Bexar (La Villita, San Fernando, and the villa of the Alamo) were poor, and even for many years after the establishing of the republic were frontier communities.

In San Fernando there were few Jacales and quite a few residences of several rooms. The plan so carefully detailed by the Marquis de Aguayo was abandoned. The flat roofed adobe houses around a plaza whose main building was

⁶⁸E. C. Castaneda, op. cit., II, p. 303.

a church were as much of the plan as was followed, for succeeding houses followed the ditches in irregular pattern and no real public buildings were ever constructed.

In 1778, Morfi describes the town:

On the West bank of the San Antonio River about a league from its source, above the point where the San Pedro creek joins the river is situated the villa of San Fernando and Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar, with no other division between them than the parochial church. To the west of the Presidio is San Pedro creek in such a manner that the villa and the presidio are both situated within the angle formed by the junction of the two streams. The church building is spacious and has a vaulted roof but the whole is so poorly constructed that it promises but a short life. The town consists of fifty-nine houses of stone and mud and seventy-nine of wood, but all poorly built without preconceived plan so that the whole resembles a poor village more than a villa, capital of so pleasing a province . . .

The establishment of the villa independently of presidio, has cost the king more than 80,000 pesos. The streets are tortuous and filled with mud the minute it rains . . . the presidio is surrounded by a poor stockade on which are mounted a few swivel guns, without shelter or defense that can only be used for firing a salvo.⁶⁹

This description of the town in 1778 does not materially differ from Castro's in 1845. The modern tourist, getting only a little off the beaten path in Northern Mexico, particularly the states of Coahuila and Nueva Leon, would give much the same picture. There is in the

⁶⁹J. A. Morfi, op. cit., p. 93.

San Fernando Church

Mexican population little of the desire for constant change and the restlessness which impels the Anglo group. And thus it is that a usable form is repeated for generations and the towns have a timeless quality.

Poverty was an important limiting factor in the erecting of a church which had not been begun for twenty years after the settlement was made. Although described as poorly constructed, it was in use until the cathedral was built in 1887 adjacent to the old building, and a part of the old building including the dome can be seen today behind the new cathedral. Photographs of the 1850's show the church as it had existed for a hundred years. Of simplest possible design, it had a single tower on the left whose vertical weight was in assymetrical balance with the horizontal mass of the building accented by the door far on the right. One picture, a painting by Allen, hanging in the museum, shows the building to be pink, and it was apparently painted during the nineteenth century. It is still a custom in some parts of Mexico to change the color of the church with each renewing of the surface. The oxide of iron which produces the color is found here in abundance, the limestone in places containing almost pure pigment which is ground and added to the paint.

After the secularization of the missions and the turn of the nineteenth century, the three villages, La Villita,

THE VILLAGES OF BEXAR : VILLA SAN FERNANDO
(1800) VILLA DEL ALAMO
LA VILLITA

the villa of the Alamo, and San Fernando, came to be known as the villages of Bexar. The villa of the Alamo, the quarters of the troops, called "la voluante del Alamo," and La Villita were on one side of the river, and the presidio and San Fernando on the other. Although politically under one head, the difficulty of crossing the river and the incompatibility of the various groups prevented any social unity. Throughout the Spanish period, groups are relatively isolated. Although capital of the province, the whole country of Texas was a wild and unknown country, and the town was still a struggling village when rumblings of revolution were heard.

The flood was an effective force in scattering the inhabitants of Spain's Texas colony, but the Indian raids, plagues, and political differences had all helped to prevent the growth of the town, and there is some truth to the statement that the period of the Republic in Mexico found its northern capital almost a ghost town. In 1820, the town contained less than a thousand people of European descent and only a few Indian families, about the same as it had had seventy-five years earlier.

The accompanying map shows the town in the last years of Spanish rule. Within the rectangular area from the Plaza of the Isleños (Islanders) to the river and for several blocks north along the San Pedro Creek there was

Spanish Governor's Palace

a system of blocks and a fairly continuous settlement. Only a small area around La Villita was similarly developed. In spite of wars and floods, some of these houses are still standing. One of the better known homes of the Villa San Fernando, the Garza House, was torn down in 1906.⁷⁰ Another place which housed the governor for a while has been restored with sufficient respect to its original appearance and function to make one of San Antonio's most interesting monuments. The "Governor's Palace" has the characteristic plain exterior broken by a simple carved door, several windows, and the jutting of the timbers used in the construction of the roof. On the inside are the rooms for entertaining, business, dining, cooking, and sleeping. Most of the rooms open onto the patio, and the kitchen has the characteristic indoor, outdoor oven. Beside the kitchen, and acting as sort of a hallway to the patio, is a small room containing a stairway. The ceiling here is quite low, and above, reached by the stairs, is the "pantry." Dried meat, masa, dried peppers, the staples of the Mexican family then and now, were kept here.

The large patio containing an abundance of flowering shrubs and several banana trees is probably not too great

⁷⁰Pearson Newcomb, op. cit., p. 121.

an exaggeration of that found in the home of the moderately well to do family of the Spanish period. The grounds extend to the river, which at present is hidden by a high fence. A curious note is the will of one of the later owners to his three children. Roughly the house plan is three rooms across the front, and is two rooms deep. Drawing a line from the front to the river, the dining and kitchen section with patio in back was left to one boy, the entrance and entertaining section back to the river to another, and the bedrooms to the third.⁷¹

The Governor's House and the Cos House in characteristic flat roofed style summarize the building of the secular community. The mission churches, workrooms, and Indian quarters tell the church story. Characteristic of both the church and the secular communities were the irrigation ditches and the amazing engineering skill of the early settlers which constructed the network of ditches throughout the area. The five ditches served for over a hundred years, and two of the systems are still in service: acequia de la Espada, and the San Juan acequia. Much of the building of the Spanish has gone, but much yet remains, a vital factor in the Anglo-American town of 1948.

⁷¹Federal Writers Project, Guidebook to San Antonio.

CHAPTER III

TRANSITION PERIOD 1800-1850

During the eighteenth century the first plans and explorations of the Spanish had resulted in the establishing of missions, presidios, and villages. The presidios were invaluable in the guarding of the land and the villages were to endure to the present day, but it is the mission that is the symbol of the period.

The first missionary serving alone in San Antonio in 1716 was the pioneer of five missions whose power and influence grew until the 1760's, at which time they served over two hundred Indians each. At this time most of the building was completed; the farms, pastures, looms, and mill were in full operation. The missions were more than self supporting with respect to foodstuffs, and the Indians were largely self governing under the guidance of the missionary. Coinciding with the cession of Louisiana to Spain by France in 1763 there begins the gradual decline of the power of the missions until their complete secularization in 1794. One century saw the growth, flower, and abandoning of the missions.

The villages of Bexar, San Fernando, and La Villita, and the villas of the missions Alamo, Concepción, San José,

San Juan, and Espada were permanent settlements but lacked the vigor which impelled the mission growth. Still menaced by hostile Indians, and hampered by strict trade regulations, there was little incentive for the individual and the interest of Spain in the welfare of the colonies had been purely nominal since the acquiring of Louisiana. For forty years the threat of another power coming from the North to lay claim to Texas had been removed, but Philip Nolan's dream of an empire in 1799 and the sale of Louisiana to the United States in 1803 reestablished the danger. Spain recognized the danger and tried various means of meeting the situation. Under certain conditions of swearing allegiance to Spain and joining the Catholic Church, immigration was allowed. Measures of the type used in the eighteenth century calling for a revitalization of the mission-presidio team were not employed because the monarchy found itself in a greatly weakened position. The exhausted treasury and the growing power and ambitions of the wealthy class in New Spain in an era of revolution and nationalism were working to dissolve the colonial system. The revolt led by idealistic Father Hidalgo and his Indian followers to overthrow the Spanish regime was short lived but was evidence of the precarious position of Spanish authority. Meanwhile, in Texas, two other military threats to Spanish authority were made.

In 1812, Augustus Magee and Bernardo Gutierrez with a mixed group of Anglo-Americans and Mexicans formed the Army of the North and captured San Antonio in 1813. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed; families were separated, homes were abandoned, and with a greatly decimated population and lacking military protection the town was at the mercy of the country. Surrounded by Indians, cut off from supplies, privation was acute and at planting time there was not a horse in the town.¹

The Republic of Mexico

With the number of Spanish residents below the three thousand mark, the events of 1820-1821 closed the chapter of Spanish dominance: the invasion of James Long, which, though stopped, was evidence of the force of the Anglo-Americans now in Louisiana; the flood forcing the residents of San Fernando to flee, many permanently; and the establishing of the independent Mexican state.

Of the "Norte Americanos" filtering into Texas, a few were involved in the highly lucrative business of slave smuggling; others were plying a brisk though illegal trade with Indians and Spanish settlers. In addition to the

¹Pearson Newcomb, op. cit., p. 9.

illegal entries which were increasing, the colonization movements under government charter were begun. It was in the last days of Spanish allegiance that Austin received permission to bring a large group of settlers into Texas. Under the Republic of Texas this permission was eventually regiven, and several large groups as well as individuals came into Texas from the North.

Although the Spanish influence ceased to spread and in the country north of San Antonio had already been engulfed by the Anglo-Americans, San Antonio showed little change. The town during the days of the Mexican republic was a typical Mexican village nearly a hundred years old and its location at the outer ripple of both Spanish and Anglo influence caused forces to be neutralized.² The tropical climate and lack of trees caused the "Norte Americanos" to make use of available buildings or reproduce established types.

The Republic of Texas

The Mexican government, seeing the land Anglicized and ideas of local government beginning to take root, stopped immigration in 1830. With the demand for states rights growing within the Spanish speaking population as well as the Anglo group, San Antonio became the seat of

²Ibid., p. 22.

rebellion. The training of Texas troops, consisting of both Mexicans and North Americans took place at Mission de Espada, and early victories were scored when these forces won the battle at Concepcion Mission, and later occupied San Antonio and the Alamo. The hopeless defense of the Alamo rallied the scattered forces of Texans and at the Battle of San Jacinto Santa Anna surrendered and promised to work for recognition of the Texas republic by the Mexican government. The period of the republic dates from this time (1846) although recognition was never secured from Mexico. The ensuing decade was marked by strife and insecurity, during which San Antonio was twice occupied by Mexican forces. Entering the Union in 1845 the republic witnessed a period of comparative quiet, although the United States-Mexican War and the conflict with the Indians prevented monotony.

Significant of the period of the Republic was the encouragement of immigration, and foreign colonization. After 1830 there were groups of Irish which came to San Antonio and settled along the "acequia" of the Alamo. Adopting and building the adobe of the country in a manner reminiscent of their homeland, the settlement had, by 1850, acquired a distinctive characteristic known as Irish flats.³

³L. M. Hagner, Alluring San Antonio, p. 32.

German, French and Polish settlers came in organized colonization moves in the 40's. Count Solms-Braunfel founding New Braunfels and Henri Castro founding Castroville within thirty miles of San Antonio were indicative of the change within the town.⁴ The Germans were a particularly large and influential group in the town and it is at this time that the flat-roofed houses of La Villita acquired their slanting roofs, and that the flowering patios introduced by the San Fernando group in 1820 became neat vegetable gardens.⁵

The evolution of the community from a Mexican village to an American town did not begin until after the beginning of statehood. The last year of the Texas Republic, 1844, found the town of San Antonio suspended between two civilizations. Castro describes the town:

The city of San Antonio had at that time 1000 inhabitants, nine-tenths of whom were Mexican and the Spanish language was universally spoken . . . city ordinances were published in two languages.⁶

He continues with a brief description of Commerce Street and the houses there:

On it were about twenty Mexican houses, that is to say buildings of rock and adobe with flat

⁴L. C. Johnston, San Antonio, St. Anthony's Town, p. 42.

⁵Ibid., p. 31.

⁶J. N. Waugh, Castroville and Henri Castro, Empresario, p. 91.

roofs of mortar and gravel. They were one storied and usually had only one door and two windows with iron grills.⁷

Annexation

In the fifteen years between statehood and the Civil War, Irish, German, French and American influences were at work to change the Mexican village. After the interruption caused by another decade of war the evolution continues, but after 1870, the story of San Antonio merges with the story of the average American town due to the continual increase in Anglo residents and the political and economic unity of the community with the North American tradition.

In the 1850's, a century after the Spanish artist Pedro Huizar located at San Jose and executed the decorative work on the mission, four artists from widely scattered places found the missions and the strangeness of the country inspiration for their work. Richard Petri's brief career was devoted to portraits, but the other artists, Gentiliz, Lunkowitz, and Eastman, painted pictures which are an invaluable description of the missions and the town. Hermann Lunkowitz of Halle, Saxony, and a student at Dresden Academy, together with Petri, participated in the insurrection of

⁷Loc. cit.

Dresden.⁸ Afterward, the two with their families fled to America, settling in Fredericksburg. When Petri died in 1857, Lunkowitz moved to San Antonio, giving art lessons and maintaining a photographic studio.⁹ His mission paintings are hanging in the reference room of the Public Library and it is only these to which the general public has access. Theodore Gentiliz, an Alsatian, came to Texas with the first Castro settlers in 1844 and after two years in Castroville moved to San Antonio in 1846.¹⁰ His studio was located at 318 North Flores Street and in the first few years he painted a score of the most accurate and charming pictures we have. Many of his paintings are in the Alamo Museum. The third of the trio was Seth Eastman, an army captain stationed in San Antonio during 1848-1849 on an official survey, who found time to fill a book with about a hundred sketches of the scenes around San Antonio. Later famous for his Indian sketches, he is considered one of the earliest recorders of the young American town.¹¹ Eastman's book is privately owned, but reproductions of

⁸"Petri and Lunkowitz," American German Review, (October, 1942), p. 4.

⁹Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰"Texas in Pictures," Antiques, Vol. LIII, No. 6, p. 457.

¹¹Ibid., p. 453.

View of Laredo Street

FROM A
PHOTOGRAPH IN
PEARSON NEWCOMB'S
"ALAMO CITY", DATED
1845

OLD MARKET HOUSE
FROM PHOTOGRAPH IN
PEARSON NEWCOMB'S
ALAMO CITY, p. 122

several sketches have been recently made and are reproduced in Antiques for June, 1948.

In the pictures of early artists can be seen the transitional character of the town. Eighty per cent of the people and buildings were Mexican. A slum section of jacales was the scene of lively fandangos and lusty "night life." In the business section of the town about half of the buildings were one-room flat roofed adobe or stucco covered with adobe and rock. Gentiliz' painting "Laredo Street" shows the stucco on a building flaked off to reveal the adobe blocks underneath.¹² Some of the rectangular adobe or rock houses had the pointed roofs introduced in the forties, while the North American influence is detected in an occasional two-story frame building with larger windows and a pyramidal roof. The sloping roof of an adobe house extended for a porch roof and was supported by four or six timbers in the one significant development of the period.¹³ It is an easily built, comfortable, flexible house, and as "ranch style" is the great favorite of Texans.

The town was bleak, sunscorched, without plan. When the rains came, the muddy streets were impassable. San Antonio was the center of surrounding settlements:

¹²Reproduced in Antiques, (June, 1948), LIII, p. 457.

¹³Sketch of this type house printed in L. M. Hagner, op. cit., p. 79, and is a fair example, although generally the house roofs did not have quite the amount of slope shown in this picture.

Castroville, New Braunfels, Fredericksburg, and the now forgotten Mexican Avoca. In a gateway position for the immigration and development of the Southwest, the town was outgrowing its Mexican attire, but was still trying to mend and patch. A town government was in operation by 1850, and in that year were built a jail and court house.¹⁴ There was, however, no provision for a town water supply, sanitation facilities, or public schools. In 1848 the first municipal market was built and was probably the first style conscious building to be erected in San Antonio. In the period of neo-classicism its Greek revival style had a pleasant unity with its purpose.¹⁵ The market house was torn down in 1925, but its appearance from the front was copied in the San Pedro Playhouse, and is not displeasing. In the period of expansion after the Civil War many residences were neo-classic in form, while a late spawning occurred in the cottages of the 1920's. The cycle has been repeated several times. Paris, Berlin, or Washington will initiate an idea. Public building and homes of the wealthy soon imitate or reflect the trend. Sometimes the result is good, sometimes not, but usually

¹⁴ Pearson Newcomb, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

the buildings have a dignity due in part to size alone. When, however, the end of the cycle is reached, and a square cottage is self-consciously adorned with a miniature Greek temple porch, or a Gothic tower, the result is wholly distasteful.¹⁶

Although the market house is evidence of the town government and a witness to its good taste and to the direction of the main stream of building to be done in succeeding years, the neglect of other municipal functions exacted a grim penalty. Cholera broke out in 1849, and in the six weeks in which it ran its course more than five hundred people died. The disease broke out in April and for two weeks was confined to the portion of the Mexican population residing in low, damp places. Once started it would not, however, remain confined, or even controlled, until it had run its course, striking in every family in the community. A large proportion of the population of San Antonio has always been of low economic status. In a tropical climate such as is found here, the importance of adequate sanitation and housing for the depressed groups in the interest of all groups cannot be overestimated.

Two well known residences surviving from the period before the Civil War are the Twohig and the Vance houses.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

Twohig house, a two-story stone building, was moved from its original location to the grounds of the Witte Museum. The rectangular structure shows how the building was expanded when the family and finances increased and the small buildings of like construction placed around the house demonstrate the plan of building separate houses for guest houses and for servants' quarters. The guest house idea is as old as the Tejas chiefs who first built lodges to house visiting chieftains and continues throughout the growth of ranches, and is today found in the planning of expensive homes. The idea, like the lure of a ranch, has taken the fancy of the people until any little garage room newly papered to rent to the greatly swollen population is referred to as a guest house.

The Vance house, built in 1847, is one of the most charming in San Antonio. As the offices of the Texas State Employment Service, it stands uncrowded by other large buildings and is a picture of quiet dignity in contrast to the nearby county and city offices. Full height Greek type columns supporting two levels of porches with iron grill railings along the north and south sides of the building place the building in the period of Greek revivalism yet distinct from any conscious style copying. The addition of the south porch, similar in style and size to the front porch, insured the comfort of the large house.

TOWHIG HOUSE

"...The rectangular structure shows how the building was expanded when the family and finances increased and the small buildings of like construction placed around the house demonstrate the plan of building separate houses for guest houses and for servants' quarters."

VANCE HOUSE

"...Full height Greek type columns supporting two levels of porches with iron grill railings along the north and south sides of the building place the building in the period of Greek revivalism yet distinct from any conscious style copying."

Facing south, the porch afforded protection from the sun, an idea of paramount importance frequently overlooked in modern building. No single element contributes so much to the comfort of a home and is so uniquely demanded by the climate of the country as the porch. Because the house, though built in the spirit of Greek Revivalism, never subordinated the use and function of the house to the elements of design but rather freely adapted the form to the country it is one of the town's real contributions to the history of architecture.

The period of transition closes with the Civil War, and three important ideas have emerged: (1) San Antonio will hereafter join the mainstream of architecture in the United States. The market house has introduced the neo-classic style and revivalist styles will dominate the last portion of the century; (2) the necessity for town planning and the growth of community functions can no longer be denied; and (3) the "ranch style," the only native development, occurs in this period but disappears from the town scene for nearly a century.

CHAPTER IV

THE GROWTH OF THE TOWN 1850-1900

The protection afforded San Antonio by the establishing of a regular army base after Texas' entrance into the United States had made possible the phenomenal growth which took place in the decade preceding the Civil War. The impetus afforded to building by the two hundred fifty per cent increase in population during those years was reflected on every hand but was cut short by the Civil War.¹ The St. Marks Episcopal Church, half completed at the beginning of the war, remained unfinished for the next fifteen years during which time visitors to the town mistook it for mission ruins.² With the conclusion of the war and the reestablishing of the Army in San Antonio a period of expansion was initiated that greatly exceeded the boom of the 50's. Population had continued to increase and the amount of increase doubled every ten years until 1900.³ There was great activity in every phase of building: public buildings, government, churches, and schools.

¹Population statistics from 1850 to 1940 as quoted in L. C. Johnston, op. cit., p. 43.

²L. M. Hagner, op. cit., p. 96.

³L. C. Johnston, op. cit., p. 43.

The Court House

Businesses were established or expanded; hotels, banks, stores, amusement houses, private building, homes and residential developments, and parks were set up. Also important to the future of the town was the establishing of transportation, streets, and water systems. In contrast to the chaotic growth of the town, the architecture changed in a rather definite pattern. In the 70's buildings of all types, except churches which were built Gothic in style, continued to show the classical influence which had been evidenced in the 50's. To the lusty pioneer, with a large amount of newly created wealth and a bit of the fiesta feeling of the country, the classical style was too restrained. With enthusiasm they welcomed the introduction of styles which allowed great freedom in design. The French chateau and the medieval castle were prime favorites. The public buildings such as the courthouse, postoffice, First National Bank building, and the Travis Park Methodist Church witness the medieval revival. The most expensive homes ballooned in all directions with bays, cupolas, towers, and attached colonnades accenting the round line. Most of the buildings mentioned were three stories high and were built of rock or brick, but the large frame residences of well to do people also showed the trend. On a considerably less expensive level, yet not of the low income group, smaller one and two story frame houses, square

First National Bank

built because of cost, nevertheless participated in the romantic revival. Tracery and scroll work, like paper lace, accented the roof line or other division. The decorative iron found so extensively in New Orleans and to a lesser extent in other towns of the South never gained any great prevalence in San Antonio although there are a few fences such as the one at the First National Bank. But the mill cut wooden scroll work was available to all and even the ranch type adobes built twenty years earlier found it pleasing to modernize and decorate by having a band placed at the porch edge. Great variety was achieved, each house having a design drawn for it, which was then cut, usually at Kampmann's Mill.⁴

Although the courthouse was built of red Pecos sandstone and red granite, and today is called "casa colorado," there is comparatively little of the inclination for dull-colored buildings which caused Lewis Mumford to call this period of architecture the "Brown Decade."⁵ In San Antonio it is sort of light tan period. There were a few buildings painted yellow; there were some buildings of red brick and colored rock, but the materials used, the spread between buildings, and the bleaching action of the sun combine to

⁴L. M. Hagner, op. cit., p. 63.

⁵Ibid., p. 100.

erase the faint impact of the idea on the town. Nor was there much of the Victorian attitude of outward gentility which in other sections accompanied the erecting of the brown buildings. Of the 20,000 people in San Antonio in 1880, the Anglo-American and Irish groups were thirty per cent. The German group had only a few hundred less and also formed thirty per cent of the town. The group third in size was the Mexican, about twenty per cent.⁶ The latter group with its fiestas and enjoyment of simple pleasures formed a guitar strumming base for the life of the town. To this the German group brought the opera house, and the establishing by Duerler of a park, zoo, and recreational grounds in connection with a beer garden in San Pedro Park several miles north of town.⁷ Sidney Lanier especially describes this first park in San Antonio and the families that would go there to spend the day. The remaining group, the Anglo-Americans, were first or second generation adventurous pioneers and not, therefore, inclined to stamp on the town the mark of Victorianism found in the East. This description is, of course, greatly incomplete, and leaves out the hardships, drabness, and comparative cultural isolation of the town. These last, like the

⁶L. C. Johnston, op. cit., p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 86.

nondescript four wall house, were the general order of the time, but a decorative interest, not in the Victorian tradition, was prevalent enough that the town early began to gain a romantic reputation.

Not alone the Spanish and American history in the making of the town, but also its manner of expansion mark it curiously. The story of the usual North American town is the development of the business district with the adjacent homes of the wealthy becoming a slum area as the town developed outward. The circles are not uniform as drawn about the industrial center, one side of town usually taking the lead in development, but the general analogy is to the waves radiating outward from a pebble thrown in the water. In all towns there is the development of suburbs of various economic levels, yet homogeneous within itself which the growing town sometimes incorporates, or surrounds. In San Antonio, the general laws governing the growth of the town operate, but, due to factors of history, racial composition and rugged individualism of the pioneer peoples cause a more chaotic result.

A hundred years of Spanish rule had developed the automatic rule of establishing a different community for each new group. The Indians of Mission San José were a different tribe than those in the Alamo, so had a different mission. At the height of the missions, when a group

of Indians were brought into San Antonio, they would be assigned to one of the five missions according to the group closest to their type. When settlers were brought from Canary Islands to establish San Fernando, they were carefully placed across the wide river from the civil settlement of La Villita. Thus in the San Antonio area there were several areas which lent themselves to community building due to the system of ditches and irrigated lands. Along the ditches and in the irrigated sections the town grew.

Meanwhile in the country east and south of Texas in the late mission era, the Spanish established isolated ranchiendas. Americans, after 1820, quickly adopted this idea, and great ranches were established in the land. The town dweller, although engaged in business or trade, nevertheless talked and thought ranches, and established his home in the country closely surrounding the town. There was one requirement for the establishing of a home, and that was the presence of water. Reference to the map of the rivers and irrigation ditches of the Spanish period called "acequias" shows the irregular pattern formed by them. A house or community could be built in the vicinity of any of these and have access to water which was used for drinking and household purposes as well as for irrigation. During the period between 1830 and 1870, with the

exception of the Irish and Polish which settled as groups, most of the expansion of individual dwellings was along the water routes. The Germans expanded individually, yet a large group tended to settle within the same vicinity and the neighborhood of King William Street was one such German group. To complete the picture, the river San Antonio must be seen as a broad river more than twice its present size, with one fording place and two bridges. The development would not only have to be in an erratic geometric pattern, due to the ditches, but communications were difficult between different sections and groups would tend to form about different centers. When the San Antonian started to establish a new home or community of homes along the water routes, there were settlers whose claims to the land were over a hundred years old. With the secularization of the mission in 1794, the mission lands were given to the Indians of the missions. A choice building spot was possibly the property of one of the Mexican-Indian descendants of the missions, or was near property which was the home of a Mexican-Indian peon. From the first expansion to the present day, great homes have been built within a stone's throw of the wretched homes of the economically depressed groups of the population of which most are Mexican or Negro. In 1880 these two underprivileged groups represented nearly a third of the population, yet due to the curious development

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of the town there was not then, or now, a very clearly defined Mexican section, or Negro belt. It is true that the Anglo-Americans have tended to expand to the north and south, while the Mexican of the peon class has tended to settle to the west, and the Negroes to the east; still, the most obvious characteristic of the modern town as well as the old town is the lack of homogeneity in any considerable section of the town.

Suburban development in the 90's was like the popping of corn. A development in the vicinity of Woodlawn Lake was initiated and within a few years more than a score of large, three-story, typically gay ninety buildings had been erected. The location, however, failed to live up to its bright promise. The mosquitoes in five years had won the victory and no more families moved into the neighborhood. The extravagant advertising of the development of a new town offering every advantage to be started in the following year is found in the advertising appendix of Corner's book published in 1890.⁸ This community to be known as Alamo Heights was a more successful enterprise, and is today a proudly independent and flourishing town which the city is building around. The mushrooming of communities can be gathered from reference to any city map.

⁸W. C. Corner, op. cit., p. 166.

San Antonians relish the sound of names, imbuing them with some sort of special significance, and so each time a builder selects a few acres and starts building some houses, the first step is to give the place a name. It would be undreamed of merely to state that a group of houses are being built on the north side. It is more successfully stated that the group will be called Tobin Hill, Laurel Heights, Government Hill, Alamo Heights, Bluebonnet Hills, Shearer Hills, and so on ad infinitum. In the same way, each section will name its own streets, and if the street happens to occur as the continuation of a straight line drawn through a previously made street the distinctive quality of the new name is not foregone. Having its origin in the wilddcatting of communities, along five of the key roads out from the center of town for a considerable distance, crossing streets will have different names on opposite sides of the main artery. Add to this the town's casual or falsely economical habit of placing street signs on only one of the four corners of an intersection except in the business area and a picture of the town as it successfully confuses the native as well as the visitor can be gained.

The first town plan in the West was the plan both pictorial and descriptive given to the Canary Islanders when they settled in the San Antonio area in 1730.⁹ Only

⁹H. E. Bolton, op. cit., p. 6.

the nucleus of that plan was developed. The houses were built around the plaza and the church held central position as planned. In the later buildings of the Spanish period, the plan was departed from partly because of ignorance of the plan, and partly because the direction of building had to follow along the "acequias." Military Plaza typifies the plan along its southern and western exposures.

The expedient nature of the growth of the Anglo-American town has been noted. It is therefore historically interesting to note the emergence of the second example of town planning in San Antonio. Described in the advertisement for the development of the Alamo Heights, main points emphasized are the construction of roads according to the contour of the land, affording natural drainage for all lots, and that parks have been planned as a part of the development. Corner gives the following description:

. . . the property in the neighborhood of the headwaters of the San Antonio River has always held an undisputed reputation of being the garden spot of Texas . . . the land is luxuriant to a degree . . . and while enjoying all the attractions of a well timbered river bottom, it yet stands high and above the low lands. . . . Giant Pecans, Live Oaks, Hackberry, Elm, Box Elder and many other noble trees are here in profusion. . . . and up to the date of the publication of this work not a lot has been placed on the market but, under the management of Mr. W. B. Patterson the designs of Mr. R. R. Salter, C. E. of Denver have been assiduously

carried out. For a year or more a large force of men has been busily employed to make this place a most desirable residence property of our attractive and historic city. Landscape engineering as a science has been brought to tone a naturally beautiful locality. Wide streets, 80-100 feet with twelve foot sidewalks have been graded and graveled. Drives and roads have been constructed upon the contour lines of the land, insuring a natural drainage of all lots. Parks have been laid off and trimmed, and here the picturesque arroyos which dip down to the Olmos Creek have been put to very effective purpose. The creek runs in an unbroken stretch of nearly a mile on the west side of this property and empties itself into the river just below.¹⁰

A most important development in the growth of the town took place with the organization of the water company in 1877.¹¹ Epidemics, notably the devastating cholera of 1850 and 1866, had underlined the growing town's need of a new system and the developments in the ensuing years made a great change in the growth of the town. Before operation of the water company, houses had been built along the ditches and grounds were one or two acres of land irrigated by the ditch. With the development of a water system, the growth of an urban community of closely placed houses within the area served by the water system was established. Homes or communities away from the central

¹⁰William Corner, op. cit., p. 166.

¹¹Pearson Newcomb, op. cit., p. 98.

water system developed the same type of system, sinking deep wells and drawing the water into high storage tanks. In addition to affecting the growth pattern of the town, the wells changed the appearance of the town in another way. The water which had come to the surface in surrounding springs and flowed together to form the San Antonio River were drawn to the wells and the water issuing to the surface disappeared or was greatly reduced in volume. When, fifty years later, the town took stock of its river, there was a demand to fill up the dirty stream as was done with Acequia Madre and others. Another group successfully advocated beautifying the small stream in its lazy course through the town. Within the memory of many citizens today has been the change of the historic river from a broad river virtually impassable to the present day when it is less than half its former size and finds its way quietly below the street level of the city.

CHAPTER V

MODERN PERIOD 1900 - 1950

The turn of the century marks the development of the city. In the six years before the World War I, the accent was on bigger and taller buildings. The building of the new Gunter Hotel, the St. Anthony Hotel, the Gunter office building, the Bedell Building, the Rand Building, the Calcasieu, the Brady Building, Incarnate Word College, the Y. W. C. A., and the MKT station were notable examples of the trend. It was an era of progress spelled in capital letters and as buildings went higher the old villa was uprooted. Still retaining the name of Military Plaza and Main Plaza, their appearance quickly changed to that of the town square. The Garza House and Verimendi Palace, historic houses dating from the middle of the eighteenth century, were in bad repair and were torn down.¹ The priests' quarters of the Alamo which had been used as a store in the nineteenth century were considered an eyesore and the attempt was made to raze the building.² Stopped halfway, the building is seen today as a "ruins" of the mission. The town

¹Ibid., pp. 119-121.

²Adina de Zavala, op. cit., p. 219.

grew like a weed choking out previous plantings. But developing simultaneously was a growing reverence for the tradition of the town. Individuals and groups intent on retaining historical markers of the town were growing. The Katy (Missouri-Kansas-Texas) railroad station erected in the mission style was modern enough to satisfy the most progressive, yet perpetuated a familiar and romantic pattern in the town. The small beginnings flowered after the World War, but throughout the twenties are only small indications of the next phase of the town.

With no clearly defined center of the town, the tall buildings were scattered. It was anybody's guess whether Main Plaza and the Courthouse would continue to be the town's center. Most of the early progress had been along Commerce Street, but Houston Street was favored by some of the new buildings, while the strategic position of Alamo Plaza tempted other business men. In earlier times, the river had presented a barrier and there were in effect several separate communities with two main centers at the Alamo and at San Fernando. With the building of bridges, it was uncertain which of the two former centers or a new one would be the valuable position. A handful of pennies dropped on a map would give the picture of the placement of the new tall buildings, the 1910 "skyscrapers." The result is pleasing to the architect, who has come to

First "Skyscrapers"

RAND BUILDING
CONSTRUCTED 1912
(NOW WOLFS MARKS)

BEDELL BUILDING
OPENED 1911

regard with dislike the development of skyscraper canyons that keep the majority of people and offices always in semi-darkness. Averaging about eight stories in height and about a block apart, the tall buildings were a break with the medieval styles of the courthouse and the post office, built in the 1890's. The buildings contained three sections: a base which was a ground floor taller than the others and occasionally included a balcony or second story in a unified section, the middle section of uniform pattern of window openings, and the capitol which might be a floor of different design or simply a cornice. Giving a honeycomb appearance, little decoration was applied and the simplicity of the facade, with a somewhat monotonous feeling of repetition accenting three building length horizontal lines together with a succession of short verticals, gave an effect of sharp planes in contrast to the curving, swelling masses of the previous period.

Residential building also reflected the trend away from the neo-Gothic. The gracious style of southern colonial houses was adopted, and large comfortable looking houses with wide verandas were the rule. The best houses did not copy the typical rectangular dwelling with wide porches and full length columns associated with southern colonial in an estate setting, but did adopt many of its features. Decoration and style fall into no one

class, yet there is a distinct unity in the building. The plan is rectangular, there are no round rooms nor engaged towers, and the entrance is usually in the center, although the house does not necessarily have a center hallway but might be open into the living room. There are porches which run the length of the house and the second floor porch can be used for sleeping. The material may be brick, stucco covered stone, or cut stone.

Even greater uniformity is found in the house of less expensive construction. Whole blocks consist of large three-story frame buildings with center third of the structure or more organized as porches, with full length columns engaged or free standing across the front. Tall wooden Grecian columns must have been manufactured wholesale. Some are plain or even square, but most are round, tapering toward the top and crowned with elaborate Corinthian capitals. Because of the number of dwellings of this type built like row houses there must have been a contractor putting up mass housing for the middle income bracket. Size and size alone gives some dignity to these houses that are today rooming houses.

The housing for this group after the World War I had the same lack of appropriate style and the monotony of plan, but also had an additional drabness because of the one-story cottage appearance. Here is the real challenge

to the architect: to develop an appropriate set of plans and style for the mass housing of the bulk of the population in the middle income bracket. There is little doubt that until the present, builders have been the only group of professionals to turn their attention to the large middle segment of the population.

Although most building stopped during the war, the Big Business of San Antonio, which is the army, greatly increased its facilities, some of which became permanent additions. Kelly Field for the training of airmen was enlarged, and the facilities of the Arsenal and Fort Sam Houston were greatly expanded. Perhaps for the very reason that the two main sources of revenue for the town are the army and tourist, the disarmament years following the war found San Antonio for the first time taking a secondary position in the state. Houston, the key port town and oil center, Dallas, the banking center, and Fort Worth, the cattleman's town, began to challenge San Antonio and surpass her in population and in aggressive leadership within the state. Very vividly the buildings of the town show the people and the times. Approximately twenty-five per cent of the population lived in shacks with outdoor privies. The bulk of the new building was five- and six-room cottages costing \$2500 to \$3500. The cottages are almost identical: living room and kitchen down one side and two or three

bedrooms and bath forming the second half of the square. The prevailing southeast breeze was acknowledged by placing the bedrooms on the south or east side. The garage was two-car, the added space, because the families had only one car, serving as laundry, workshop, and general catchall. The classic revival had caught up with the lower income group, which had become somewhat style conscious, so each of the cottages has for a porch the wooden architrave and four Doric columns of a Greek temple. Their tent-top shape, gently sloping roof, and wide eaves give the houses a nestling appearance, and make them deceptively small in comparison to the modern house. In the \$50,000 to \$100,000 house the chateau, castle, and southern colonial made their reappearance, with more distinct plans and more planned landscaping than during the 90's and were placed on city sized lots of about two hundred feet frontage. Stucco and Spanish Renaissance accounted for several of the most attractive buildings of the time. The Spanish-Moorish influence was not derived from a re-examination of San Antonio's cultural heritage, but like every style movement since the middle nineteenth century was a following of a general trend in the United States. Of the housing which developed with the Spaniards in the new world, there are two distinct strains. The use of omega shaped red tiles forming a textured crown to a building are used on a pitched

Transit Tower and Telephone Building

New Telephone Building, 1929

Highly decorated, "FROSTED",
CORNICE, ALSO ELABORATE ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE TO BUILDING →

roof developed in middle Mexico and California. In the northern Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas area the house was an adaptation of the pueblo Indian house, and during the period from 1840 to 1940 was relatively forgotten.

Amount of building is the surest index to prosperity, and the 20's were notable for the extensive building activities which were undertaken. The big buildings, however, the modern skyscrapers which form San Antonio's familiar skyline, were just completed or still in the process of building when the stock market crash came in 1929. The following buildings are of the 1929-1930 date: Smith-Young Tower (now called Transit Tower), Milam, Telephone building, Express Publishing Company building, M. and S. Hospital, and Nix Professional building. In the three tallest, the Nix, Telephone, and Transit buildings, there is an interpretation of the tall building as a shaft which thrusts upward. Vertical lines are enhanced and windows grouped to lead the eye upward. The bricks and stones are light yellow, with decorative contrasts of white. Both the color and design of the buildings give a certain lightness of feeling which is, oddly enough, supplemented by the decoration which in the case of the telephone building is especially lavish. Like the decorative accents to candy and cake applied with a pastry tube, the decoration has a

peculiarly light and fitting quality even when most ornate. And as the fillup given a modern painting by the use of a hand carved frame, complements its modernism and shows its baroque inclinations, the pastel decorative tiles and carved stone work used as accents on these buildings are especially suitable to the spirit of San Antonio. The criticism of the modern architect is that, instead of allowing use to determine form, the Transit, for instance, was planned for its decorative appearance before thought of use was an especially shrewd commentary on the prevailing attitude. The people by nature and training instinctively lean to the baroque, the decorative, and the romantic.

In the depression years of the 1930's, a building paralysis gripped the country. There was virtually no erection of office buildings or other large constructions. Well developed in depression years, the advent of the WPA and Federal Arts project caused San Antonio's interest in historical traditions and background to become the motive of primary importance in the building program. With the help of government money the restoring and beautifying of the town's most historic spots took place. La Villita, the Cos House, the Governor's Palace, and the beautification of the San Antonio River were major projects. Under the sponsorship of the Conservation Society, work was begun on restoring and making a monument of Mission San

Housing Units

ALAZAN - APACHE, VICTORIA, LINCOLN

ONE STORY BUILDINGS
ON CORNERS, TWO
STORY IN REST OF
BLOCK GIVE FEELING
OF OPENESS.

CENTRAL RECREA
TIONAL FACILITIES
ARE AN ESSENTIAL
FEATURE

Jose, the preserving of old houses including the Twohig House, the beautifying of the river and similar projects.

When private building resumed, due to the FHA and HOLC, some effect of the revival of interest in local backgrounds could be detected. Too often, the result was a pint-sized adaptation of Seville, California, 1920 Spanish. Characteristic interior change was the widening of the doorway between the living room and the dining room, which in the Spanish house took the form of arches with twisted columns. Already noted in the fine homes of the 1920's, the floor plan tended to become somewhat irregular, with bedrooms jutting to have a south and east exposure, and the kitchen, bath, and vanishing dining room retiring to the north and west sides of the house.

The low-cost housing projects promoted by the federal government are represented in San Antonio by Victoria Courts for Anglo-Americans, Alazan and Apache Courts for Latin-Americans, and Wheatley and Lincoln Courts for Negroes. Slums were cleared and the resulting mass housing units form an attractive solution to the problems of adequate housing for the low income group of the population. Their limitations are a part of the general criticism of the whole program. The lowest group of the population, whose inadequate housing is a serious health menace for

the town, is only partially reached by the program. Particularly in a "cheap labor" town such as San Antonio in which in 1940 eight thousand wage earners made less than ninety dollars a year, a rental unit listed even as low as nine dollars a month does not solve the problem.³ In any case the amount of low-cost housing providing 2,500 units was insufficient in 1940 and much more inadequate now.⁴ Although wage levels have nearly doubled, the same generalizations hold true. San Antonio is a town that has a large proportion of its population in the low income bracket and decent housing can only be provided by a socially conscious citizenry and government. Particularly is the entrance of government sponsorship necessary since building costs have spiraled so much faster than even the greatly increased wage level. The five-room house that cost \$3,500 in 1940 now costs \$10,500 and has one-fourth less floor space. This is an increase of about three hundred per cent in contrast to the wage boost of about two hundred per cent. Since even during the period of closer correspondence of wage and housing in 1940 nearly half of the population was inadequately housed, the present

³L. E. Truesdale, 16th Census, Vol. III, Part 5, p. 521.

⁴In 1940 there were 75,677 families in the San Antonio area and 39,515 were living in substandard housing. This is 52% of the population. "Report of Housing Authority for San Antonio," 1940, p. 14.

outlook is not favorable. True, slums never seem so grim in a hot climate where ten months a year overcrowding is relieved by expansion into the open, and in San Antonio there is an abundance of stretching room even in the most wretched sections. And, since the peoples who largely constitute the low income group, Mexican and Negro, are a rather cheerful people, there are very few grey days and gray looks, to excite sympathy. Yet the sanitary and health problem is urgent. Within the first seven months of the year 1948 there have been over a hundred fifty infant deaths from diarrhea, and the total from all filth borne diseases is even higher. Twice, in a referendum to voters, the town has vetoed bond issues for sewers. In permits for new housing, city "OK" is given to the building of groups of five houses with one common toilet.⁵

The World War II brought great increase to all urban communities and San Antonio's population more than doubled. Whereas priority for housing materials in defense areas made possible a war-time housing program, relatively few buildings were constructed in the San Antonio area, for there were no large defense works and the fabulous growth of army personnel and their families did not receive encouragement to relocate through housing. There were a

⁵San Antonio Light, August 12, 1946.

great many army barracks and other temporary buildings for the army, but building was discouraged and only a few private companies were able to get materials and erect houses. As a result, small cottages became duplexes and even three and four family units. One room servants' quarters and junk rooms received a coat of paint and rented as guest houses. Makeshift expansion created thousands of essentially useless, badly arranged, poorly planned dwellings. The squalor did not matter too much during the war time, because there was an ever present picture of an after the war Utopia. But it is now three years after the war and there is a dawning conviction that inconvenience, mediocrity, and poor taste are not transitory, but a permanent fixture in the San Antonio scene, and are bought at a high price.

Today, in the middle of a building program that in relative scope is equaled only by the swift expansion of the town in the years after annexation, there is an unparalleled opportunity and need for the genius of the architect and the support of the people in the creating of a beautiful San Antonio. Morfi described the young Spanish colonial villa of the middle eighteenth century; Newcomb described the frontier American town of the middle nineteenth century; and today's city also needs a voice, not alone for the sake of history, but that the builders

of the town can evaluate the program of the town.

The first impression of San Antonio is one of brightness. Buildings a hundred years old have only a weathered, not a blackened look, for here there is no large industry or use of soft coal fuel to throw black dirt into the air. There is no crowding of tall buildings in the downtown area, and the community has developed with some open space near all dwellings. Thus the obvious handicaps of an old town, the inheritance of drab, dirty crowded buildings do not apply. There are tall buildings, but no skyscraper canyons. There are brick and stone buildings, but no brown look. The glare of the sun throughout the year and the hot summer with three months of temperatures in the 90's and often over 100 degrees is partially compensated for by the prevailing southeast breeze, which moves in off the gulf and accounts for a drop of twenty to thirty degrees in temperature at night during the hot months. Early homes coped with the limitations of material and the sun by building thick walls and small windows. O'Neil Ford, San Antonio architect, selected to design the Texas home, defines the problem of this section:

In this locality glare is a serious problem, and the porch will go far to relieve it in the living-dining area. You will understand why Texans take the brightness of their sun so seriously

when you realize that Texas is in the latitude of the North Sahara Desert.⁶

Although as noted in the development of homes during the 30's houses are carefully designed to take advantage of the breeze, and the average house will have one or more jutting rooms so that several rooms may have the coveted south and east exposure, the analysis of Ford has not been made too carefully by the average builder and is not understood by the average home owner. The main problem is not access to breeze, but protection from the sun. A one-room tin-roofed apartment attached to a garage proved cooler than the main house, a \$19,000 home carefully planned for maximum access to the southeast breeze. The difference in the two structures was a lean-to porch attached to the garage room. Protection from the sun, most easily secured through the addition of a porch which creates a draw and provides shade, is necessary on the east and west sides of the building. Extended eaves are a help, but a porch is the most successful solution. With the old adobe and rock structure, the thickness of the walls and the small windows prevented heating of the interior. But the modern house has gotten on the large window band wagon, and coupled to the prevailing wood construction, the proud

⁶O'Neil Ford, San Antonio architect, had his Texas house design included in Your Solar House, Edited by M. J. Simon, p. 103.

announcement of the builder that the house has three rooms with south and east exposure is a futile gesture. The houses need, and universally are constructed without, porches.

Wood for construction in San Antonio has to be shipped long distances, and is at present unreliable in quality. Brick and cement are local products, while cut stone of good quality can be shipped from Austin, which is only ninety miles away. The cost of brick and stone construction as far as material is concerned does not differ materially from frame and asbestos shingles which are in great vogue. Some houses of the brick and rock are being erected, but they are veneer type, generally poorly designed, and high in cost, apparently due to the scarcity of skilled labor. The natural materials of San Antonio, brick, cement, and adobe, are not in general use due to two important deficiencies. Skilled architects have not developed a usable library of good plans suitable for this section using the materials of the country, and therefore there has not been developed among the builders the skills to construct the houses. Concrete building blocks have caught the fancy of laymen, and have also been successfully used by the architects and builders. Here again is a need for good information. Openings need to be spaced in multiple of the length of the building block. The

problem of plumbing and electrical wiring in the block or solid-type house needs careful plans, developed by trained specialists. At the present, good architects are concerned with the individual house, or building, but the solution to San Antonio's problem will be in the consideration of the groups of houses which, because of simplicity in design, can be constructed by relatively unskilled labor, or which can greatly reduce construction costs through better use of available materials. The use of the natural clay soil in the construction of an adobe house is out of the question because the professional will not work with this type, and today's house needs wiring and plumbing. Yet adobe houses have outlasted the wood homes built at later dates, and are among the best designed that have been developed by the country.⁷ The successor to the adobe block, the concrete block, as a building material is developing with the passive tolerance of the architect, but not with his intelligent help. The possibilities introduced by the building of the first cement home in 1880 have so far not been realized.⁸ Experiments with featherweight concrete

⁷In Paul Aller and Doris Aller, Build Your Own Adobe, p. 26, the authors stated that the structural limitations of adobe rigidly prescribing ratio of width, height, openings, etc. automatically produced a building whose proportions were pleasing.

⁸L. M. Hagner, op. cit., p. 71.

construction such as those tried in California, or an impetus to thinking of concrete as a construction material such as was given by publicity and contests by the Tolteca Cement Company in Mexico City have not been tried here.⁹

Historically, the best designs in the building of the town have come under the challenge of limitations of material and money. It is to be hoped that the present conditions have a similar beneficial effect.

The average house today has five rooms, bath, and one car garage or carport. Although good architectural conversation, the carport is not practical with the type of small rooms, no basement house that is being constructed. Having to compress themselves in homes where every inch of unnecessary space has been eliminated, the modern family finds no place for such essential accompaniments of his daily life as washing machine, lawnmower, bicycles, lawn chairs, and toys and hobby equipment. These must take over the garage while the six-year-old car stands patiently outside. In the absence of a garage the carport affords a partial cover from the occasional rain, and also manages to acquire the look of a Flores Street junk shop.

The attached garage of one house is adjacent to the bedrooms of the neighboring house, insuring maximum privacy

⁹Trent E. Sanford, Story of Architecture in Mexico, p. 316.

The Carport

IN THE LOW COST HOME, THE
CARPORT BECOMES A CATCHALL FOR
GARDEN EQUIPMENT, OUT OF SEASON
STORAGE, CHILDRENS TOYS, LAUNDRY
EQUIPMENT " AND RESEMBLES
A FLORES STREET JUNK SHOP. "

on a fifty-foot lot. The dining room has completely vanished, or remains as a small "L" of the living room. There is cupboard space in the kitchen, linen closet in the bath, clothes closets in each bedroom and usually one other closet in the house. There is no storage space for out of season clothes and quilts, and no pantry for the provident to fill with home canned goods, or, in the modern tradition, to place a deep freeze. There is no porch and no fireplace. The roof is the most characteristic development, having a slope less than fifteen degrees in contrast to the pre-war house whose roof had a pitch of more than twenty degrees. The roof is pebble on tar paper, an attractive and practical material, easily patched after severe hail damage which is not uncommon. The foundation is concrete or cedar posts set in concrete, and though curiously insecure looking to easterners used to excavated foundations, serves very satisfactorily. The siding is asbestos shingles and decorative motifs of various colored sham shutters, and entrance portals or porches supported by four by fours in contrasting color are the rule. The house is built for the middle income bracket, and sells for ten to twelve thousand dollars. Compared to the housing for the same income bracket before the first world war and the second, the houses have greatly dwindled in size, from three to two to one story in height, and the rooms have gotten much smaller, partially

compensated for by the more inclusive planning which has no waste space and provides an increasing number of built-ins. Most nearly comparable to the small cottages of the 20's, the little stylistic details promise to become a distinguishing, dating feature which will be as outmoded as the self-conscious Greek revivalism of the twenties. In many cases the addition of a screened in porch establishing a functional unconfused line across the front may improve the general appearance, but in most, the hope is that well tended lawns and neat planting can cause the house to retreat into the landscape.

Most significant of the San Antonio picture are the neat, well tended lawns. They are not the outdoor living space that would be expected further north, but are mainly decorative settings and breathing spaces for the houses. There is no shade, because of the absence of broad leafed trees, and the exceeding brightness of the sun. There is the tropical abundance of insects: numerous flies, mosquitoes, grasshoppers, scorpions, and ants, particularly the vicious large red ant. In the summer afternoon, favorite garden hours of the north, the town, except the downtown, air-conditioned business section, is deserted. Night, pleasantly cool out-of-doors, finds everyone able to do so sitting on the screened in porch. Probably the most successful house built today is the long rambling, ranch style

with screened in south porch.

The skyscraper which bloomed with the early days of the twentieth century and culminated in the ornately adorned shaft type buildings of the late twenties will probably have few developments. Additions are being made to present buildings by the addition of another story or the expansion into an adjacent area. The growth of local community centers has found favor with the family buyer, the wife who often has a problem of baby tending and transportation when going into the city and who therefore tends to do as much shopping as possible in the neighborhood. Expansion of some business will undoubtedly be to branches in these outlying "centers" while office buildings for business and professional men are also often finding it advantageous to move out from the center of town as the congestion, traffic and parking problems add to the disadvantage of high rent. One interesting building built during 1930, the Nix professional building, used the seven floors above the entrance floor for garage space; the next ten floors were office space made valuable especially to doctors by its convenience to parking and to the hospital which occupies the top five floors of the building. The only disadvantage to the entire plan which makes it possible for persons wanting to come into the city for medical or dental care to park, see their doctor, and be treated

in the same building, is the now inadequate elevator service.

San Antonio is greatly enriched by the many charming vistas which reward the sightseer. The river, beautiful and restful beyond description in the very center of the town is the town's richest treasure. The well preserved old homes and the improving care and presentations of the historical homes and missions of San Antonio catch the imagination of the visitor and secure the proud loyalty of the citizenry. All of these advantages, however, may be nullified by the town's greatest fault: the lack of town planning. With Morfi in 1778, and Castro in 1844, we can affirm, the town has grown without plan and presents a motley appearance. It is not a picturesque type of contrast. It is two and three story buildings shadowing small one story cottages. It is ragged development, with the ever present uncleared vacant lot. To give an adequate setting to the historic charm of San Antonio, to provide an agreeable development of the town so that the whole town may take pride, and the polka-dotting of areas and restrictions might acquire order, it may be unqualifiedly stated that San Antonio's greatest need is an Area Development Plan.¹⁰ There should be an association which shall have

¹⁰The Louisville Area Development Association might serve as a model since it seems to be successfully attacking a similar problem.

sufficient prestige to secure popular support of an orderly development of the whole town to preserve its historic past and to provide maximum assurance to the community that its future development contribute to its charm.¹¹

As a part of the development plan of the town, provision for housing of the low income bracket must be made, as well as improving the provision for the middle bracket. Two veterans' projects, one for Anglo- and Latin-American veterans, and the other for Negro veterans have been developed by the Housing Authority. Like the low-cost housing projects of 1940, these were initiated and financed by federally insured funds. There is a local board of administrators, and money for construction is locally spent, but the local community, although anxious to benefit, has never accepted the responsibility of initiating any plan to cope with the problem of sub-standard housing. One of the contradictions of local thought is exemplified in the irritations against government control, the insistence on the privileges of home rule, yet the continued evasion of the responsibilities of that power.

¹¹The work of Carlos Contreras, who authored the master plan for the Federal district illustrates the possibilities for San Antonio. This plan provided for preservation of historic areas, limiting heights of buildings in the historic area, and plans for the area development. Although often ignored or evaded, a plan is the beginning of order. E. C. Norton, op. cit., p. 324.

The backward look, the imitative habit, the gay surface are a real factor in the spirit of the town. The characteristics of the fiesta in many ways describe the town. The traditions are old and solid, but the buildings on thin posts have a temporary look. The decorative interest which has followed various fashions, particularly the Mediterranean, gives the paperlace feeling. Even the reconstruction of "La Villita," a group of sturdy houses standing for two hundred years, was done in a way to make it seem like a set for a light opera. People invariably have time for courtesy and the discussion of any topic under the sun, and a rare inability to get very perturbed about anything. Since, after all, it is only a make believe town, there are no real problems. Sewerage, sanitation, and housing are someone else's headache. Government is not thought of as a function of the people, but rather as a somewhat abstract creation that works for its own whim and is corrupt and therefore not to be bothered about. Inevitably the town reflects the casual approach. The placing of street signs, and requiring owners to clear vacant lots could immediately improve the appearance of the town, but have so far been neglected. The single agency whereby the latent interest and intelligence of the community could be marshalled to consider the welfare of the

entire community has so far defeated every issue it tried to promote. The newspapers, the voice and conscience of a democracy, in San Antonio announce their policy of existing for their advertisers. Perhaps the basic economy of community planning will eventually persuade enough individuals that the growth of a movement, such as the drive for preservation and restoration of historic monuments, is necessary in the field of community planning.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

When, in 1720, a house was built on the land now called San Pedro Park, it was no different from the semi-permanent brush and mud hut built by the Indian for centuries, but the builder was the first that fixed the seal of Spain on the land. Missions, villa, and presidio were the plan, with adobe, rock and mortar the material. Individual initiative did not thrive, and there were only two kinds of houses: jacales, an adaption of the brush and mud hut; and the adobe or rock and mortar flat roofed adaptation of the house of the cliff dwellers. Several hundred such houses were built and in 1820 another was added, differing not at all from those of the previous century, but the builder, an Anglo-American, was the first who soon changed the villa to a town, and who exchanged the house pattern for pitched roof styles of many materials, mostly frame. Another hundred years saw the change from town to city. In the 1940's, not yet realizing the fullness of change that has accompanied the latter evolution, San Antonio is making piecemeal inventory of her heritage. The community is a museum for the study of

cultures and styles, and value can be derived from the study when the scientist's interest in phenomena is supplemented by an appreciation of the reason and direction of the whole. Forms or ideas which survive major changes or tend to recur are instruments for determining direction, and it is these which are summarized.

The mission buildings have been the most enduring of all construction and some part of each of the five missions remain from the eighteenth century to find twentieth century imitators in gas station, church, and railroad terminals. Yet the real significance of the mission building is not in their easily copied details of style but in the social objectives of the plan. Perhaps because of the relative failure of the Texas missions to equal the political and religious accomplishments of the Mexican missions their social experiment becomes clearer: essentially they proposed to instill the habits of a higher standard of living on a group which never achieved it for itself. The method of achieving the result was uniform: the erection of model communities with work, worship, and recreational facilities in common. It depended for its success on government subsidy, well defined objectives creating unity in plan and administration, and a consciousness of the benefit to the individual to be gained from participating in the plan. The rugged individualism of the Anglo-Americans

which impelled the growth of the town could see only disadvantages in controlled economy and socialized living; yet the twentieth century finds the social idea gaining acceptance and concrete expression in the erection of low cost housing units. The housing of 1940 and the veterans' housing of 1947 were initiated by federal plan and money, and have been accompanied by slow acceptance and general misunderstanding. On a modern scale, the housing is the attempt to provide a higher standard of living for a group unable to achieve it for itself. With a social objective similar to the missions it is natural there should be other points of similarity in the programs: the houses like those of the mission gain beauty from the strict adherence to utility while community facilities are essential to the unit. There seems to be the same requirement for success: government subsidy, consciousness of individual benefit, and administrative direction and control.

The third century of history in San Antonio finds the pendulum swinging again to the idea of paternalism. As yet, San Antonio lags behind other groups, municipal, state, and federal, in exploring the field although both opportunity and history encourage leadership. There is great need; over fifty per cent of the people live in substandard housing, a danger and disgrace to the town.

There is precedent--the Spanish experiment might aid understanding and solution.

Town planning has made two brief appearances in San Antonio. The town started with a plan which was abandoned through expediency, indifference, and ignorance. Toward the close of the nineteenth century a suburban community started with a plan sufficiently comprehensive to be distinguished from a builder's development. Somewhat more successful, due to the oversight of the planning group for several years, it, too, has been lost. The twentieth century finds a patchwork town gradually forced to consider the development of the whole town. In 1927, the state legislature tardily gave permission for cities to exercise some supervision through zoning, but San Antonio has been unprepared to make constructive use of the right. There is need of a plan both for improvement and expansion of the town. The plan should be the work of qualified architects and receive wide publicity because town planning succeeds not in relation to the worth of the plan but in the measure that it is generally understood and accepted.

Of the two types of house found in the century of Spanish rule, the jacales have disappeared except in the spirit of the builder, but the adobe house has proved itself a hardy plant. Protection from the sun, availability

of materials, and flexibility in construction were its advantages, and establish a standard for evaluating later housing. The challenge to the modern town found both in its history and in the needs of its predominantly low income population is the development of a non-technical house in accordance with the above criteria whose cost can be successfully reduced by owner construction and use of local materials. The five hundred dollar house, not the five thousand dollar house is San Antonio's problem.

The mission churches, whether organized along the principle of bilateral symmetry or frankly assymetrical both in plan and decoration are the most conspicuous examples of the decorative interest of the Spanish period. Using the criteria for baroque established by Heinrich Wolfflin, the small houses as well as the two types of churches demonstrate the romantic called baroque. The dramatic interplay of light and shade as well as adaptability of form, fit the whole into one consistent movement. The addition of surface decoration in the latter part of the century is another expression springing from the same attitude. To some extent decorative interest is a national characteristic of the Spanish, yet in Spain and Mexico there are intervals of classic use not found in San Antonio. With the evolution of the town, periods of classic revivalism have been short lived and tempered

by the prevailing painterly-decorative-romantic interest of the people. From the carved Rose Window to the paper-lace trim on the adobe, the bulging chateau, the tiled and frosted "skyscraper" and the beautifying of the winding river there has been a decided preference for the baroque as against the classic. In a century of new flowering of baroque attitudes, the natural interest of San Antonio can find full expression. The picturesque is the dominant motif.

Through six changes in allegiance, the settlement on the San Antonio River has survived and grown to a city of 450,000. From the first and through all changes it has been an army town and has a permanent population of about 50,000 soldiers on regular duty. Although there has been much building, the importance to the town is not the houses erected, but the growth of "army economy"--the dependence on army as San Antonio's big business and the fact that it is the town where retired soldiers chose to live. Although indirect, this is of importance in the cost and type of housing constructed as well as the failure of San Antonio to develop progressive and creative ideas. To use the presence of the army as a springboard instead of a crutch needs much careful study; yet the advantage should not be overlooked.

The history of San Antonio's architecture is the history of people who have dreamed, worked for, or ignored the welfare of the town. The record is written in stone and cannot be altered by a sympathetic pen. To the builders of the town, its citizens, is the challenge to build soundly and with intelligence that the city and its buildings may become a proud monument.

PATIO OF GOVERNOR'S PALACE

HOUSES IN "IRISH FLATS"

(RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS)

ADAPTATION OF SPANISH STYLE

1920-30

SOME OF SAN ANTONIO'S
FINEST HOMES RESULTED
FROM AN ADAPTION OF
SPANISH STYLE. NOTICE
HOW THE HOUSE SPREADS
TO FACE THE SOUTHEAST
BREEZE, THE NEAT, WELL-
TENDED LAWN. ALSO THE
EVER PRESENT UNEMPT
VACANT LOT! (FOREGROUND)

SAN ANTONIO RIVER

SKYLINE, CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

APPENDIX

The following is a partial list of buildings to be found in the city today and which were considered in the compiling of this history. Pictures and descriptions of buildings now destroyed can be found in books listed in the bibliography. Approximate date when exact time of completion is not fully determined is denoted by "c".

Date	Building
c1726.....	Granary, San Jose
c1740.....	San Juan Chapel
c1740.....	Espada Chapel
c1745.....	Concepcion Church
c1749.....	Govenor's Palace
c1765.....	Church of the Alamo
1768.....	San Jose Church
c1768.....	Mill at San Jose
c1780.....	Cos House (La Villita)
c1800.....	Ruiz House
1813.....	Chapel of Miracles
1830.....	Irish Flats
1840.....	Twohig House
1840.....	German conversion of La Villita
c1847.....	Vance House
1849.....	Pyron House
1851.....	Ursuline Academy
1860.....	German-English School (now Junior College)
1868.....	Ursuline Academy clock tower
1869.....	Degan House
1870.....	Wulf House
1870.....	St. Mark's Episcopal
1873.....	Kearny Home
1874.....	Steves home on King William
1877.....	Robards(now school of childhood)
1886.....	Dullnig home
1886.....	First National Bank Building
c1886.....	Chapel of Travis Park M.E. Church
1890.....	Courthouse
1892.....	Mackey Building
1900.....	Incarnate Word College
1904.....	Frederick Home
1910.....	Gunter Office building
1911.....	Bedell Building
1912.....	Rand Building (now Wolf-Marks)
1913.....	Y.W.C.A.
1914.....	Calcasieu building
1914.....	Brady building

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

Date	Building
1916.....	Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad terminal
1924.....	Medical Arts building
1924.....	Temple Beth-el
1924.....	Scottish Rite
1926.....	Aztec Theatre
1929.....	Telephone building
1930.....	Nix Professional Building
1930.....	Smith-Young Tower (now Transit Tower)
1939.....	Alazan-Apache Courts
1940.....	Victoria Courts
1940.....	Lincoln Courts

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