

**SPANISH MISSION  
CHURCHES OF NEW  
MEXICO, PP. 1-372**

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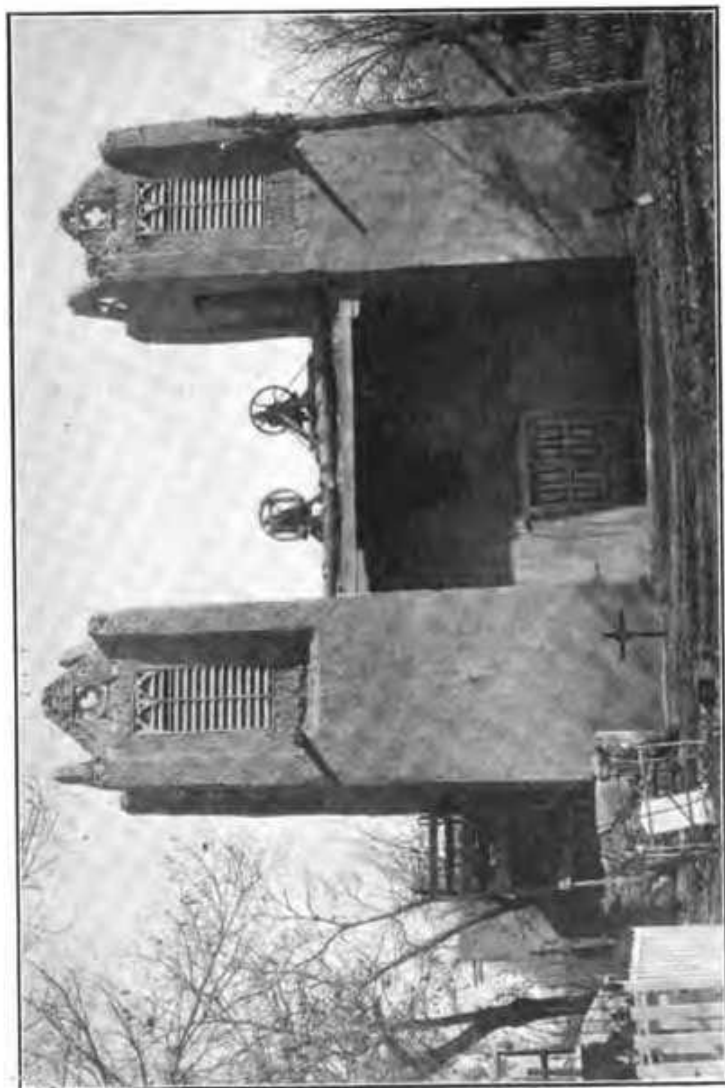
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CHURCH OF TOMÉ

## CHAPTER I

### *California and New Mexico*

#### CALIFORNIA

There is no series of structures in the United States that possesses such interest as the old Missions of California. Whether intact, or partially restored, or in ruins, they have an attraction and a charm that are unequalled.

There are various reasons for this. In the first place our country is so comparatively new, that anything that has a flavor of antiquity is attractive in itself. Especially is this so, if in its architecture and general arrangement it differs widely from that to which the average American is accustomed in his home. The fact that there is a chain of these structures, various in size and form and style, yet all parts of one comprehensive plan, multiplies the interest. The story of their inception, of the noble plan and the vigorous realization of his ideal by the untiring and self sacrificing Serra; of their almost miraculous success and prosperity, and then of their equally rapid fall and destruction, all these things appeal to everyone who has human sympathies and aspirations and enthusiasm. They make our quieter life seem tame and uneventful, and they have presented a field to poet and novelist and painter which

has brought forth some of our choicest productions in literature and art.

So these old Missions have become the Mecca of thousands and tens of thousands of tourists, and there can be no doubt that their very existence, standing as monuments to zeal and self-sacrifice, and preaching a never ending sermon of love and devotion and consecration to God and humanity, has been a continual influence for good, and helped to weaken the widespread spirit of selfishness and commercialism.

The whole story is inspiring, and God forbid that anyone should even by comparison detract from its beauty and influence.

We see a vast country favored above all others by nature in climate and resources, thinly settled by wandering tribes, who lived as their fathers had lived generations before. Though on the coast of Earth's greatest ocean, its people knew nothing of the world beyond the limitations of their frail canoes, and the world knew as little of them.

The white man had come from afar, almost three centuries before, and the Spaniard had settled to the south and the Russian to the north; but this fairest spot in the New Continent had only been glanced at by the venturesome navigator and explorer. For generations the light of the Gospel had been brought to Lower California and Sonora on the south by the Jesuit fathers, and to New Mexico on the east by the zealous Franciscans, but Alta California, far richer than either, was ignored.

The Russian had journeyed southward from

Alaska to the Bay of San Francisco, and held the services of the Greek Church there, but he had not remained. Even before that, Sir Francis Drake had anchored by the shore and set up an English standard, and his chaplain read the first service of the English Church on the Pacific Coast under its shadow; but he sailed away and was forgotten.

Years passed, until in 1767 the Jesuits were expelled from the Spanish possessions, and the Franciscans were placed in charge of all their missions in California and northern Mexico. They were full of missionary zeal, and to lead their work came Father Junipero Serra, who was not satisfied simply to continue the old work on the lower peninsula, but looked beyond to the region on the north, to Alta California, and determined to christianize its people. At last the hour and the man had come!

This is no place to tell of his efforts and his success. With the strong will and practical ability of Galvez, the visitador general of New Spain, to aid the marvelous zeal and enthusiasm of Father Junipero, the latter performed the work of a century in a few short years.

The plan projected was to establish a line of missions all the way from San Diego in the south to Monterey and San Francisco in the north, each near to the sea, yet out of gunshot from national enemies or the buccaneers of the day; near enough to each other to be a support and a solace, but not so near as to cause over-lapping of activities, or the little jealousies and troubles of too close neighborhood.

The missionaries came by sea and land. King



Charles the Third was interested in the work, and sufficient troops were sent to offer protection. Three ships were sent from different ports of western Mexico, and two safely anchored in the beautiful Bay of San Diego, where the soldiers after a march of two months were rejoiced to find them. The second division of the little army, with the royal governor of California and Serra himself, arrived on July 1st, and on the 16th, with a full ceremonial both of Church and State, a great cross was erected, and the royal standard was planted and its banner unfurled, mass was celebrated and firearms discharged, and the Mission of San Diego was established.

The work went bravely on in spite of innumerable trials and obstacles. The next year the Mission of San Carlos Borromeo was founded, and two more in 1771. Before the end of the century there were eighteen in all, of which San Luis Rey was last. In the first ten years the Franciscans claimed 3,000 native Indians as converts, and in 1800, this number had increased to 10,000, under about forty priests of the Seraphic Order.

Father Junipero did not live to see all this accomplished, but succumbed to his untiring labors in 1784, and was buried, as he desired, in his beloved mission of San Carlos. But his spirit survived and controlled and vivified the work.

The list of the whole chain of missions, including the three established after the year 1800, with their dates, is as follows:

San Diego, July 16, 1769.

- San Carlos Borromeo, June 3, 1770.  
San Antonio de Padua, July 14, 1771.  
San Gabriel Arcangel, September 8, 1771.  
San Luis Obispo, September 1, 1772.  
San Francisco de Asis, October 9, 1776.  
San Juan Capistrano, November 1, 1776.  
Santa Clara, January 12, 1777.  
San Buenaventura, March 29, 1783.  
Santa Barbara, December 15, 1786.  
La Purisima Concepcion, December 8, 1787.  
Santa Cruz, August 28, 1791.  
La Soledad, October 9, 1791.  
San Jose, June 11, 1797.  
San Juan Bautista, June 24, 1797.  
San Miguel Arcangel, July 25, 1797.  
San Fernando Rey, September 8, 1797.  
San Luis Rey, June 13, 1798.  
Santa Inez, September 17, 1804.  
San Rafael Arcangel, December 17, 1817.  
San Francisco Solano, July 4, 1823.

The last was established just as the days of prosperity of all, were to end. As long as Spanish authority continued, the missions were protected and fostered. With Mexican independence this was reversed, and decay and disintegration followed.

Some of the structures are in ruins, others have been most carefully repaired and preserved, others have been "restored" or "modernized" almost beyond recognition, but all have an undying interest as monuments to the zeal and energy of their founders and builders.

## NEW MEXICO

We have dwelt thus long on the Missions of California because in a comparison between them and those of New Mexico, we wished to detract in no way from the great interest that attaches to that remarkable chain of structures, or from the glory and admiration which are so justly due to their builders. Fortunately there can be no rivalry between the achievements of the early missionaries in the two fields, for all were of the same order of St. Francis, and displayed the same heroic self-sacrifice, and each field has its list of martyrs who gave their lives for their Christian faith.

But we are dealing simply with the material structures which they built, many of which remain today, some intact and some in ruins, as their monuments; and with the interest which the ordinary traveler or tourist finds in what is still to be seen of their work.

The claim of New Mexico to superiority in this view of the subject is based firstly on the far greater antiquity of its Mission Churches, and secondly on the greater variety in the history which they have experienced.

The first Mission Church in California was built in 1769 — while nearly all of the original missions in New Mexico were established a century and a half before that time, and several of them one hundred and seventy years before. One whole chain of churches, those in the Salinas Valley, whose ruins are today the most interesting of any in New Mexico, had been built and had done their Christian service