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SAN ANTONIO

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SAN ANTONIO

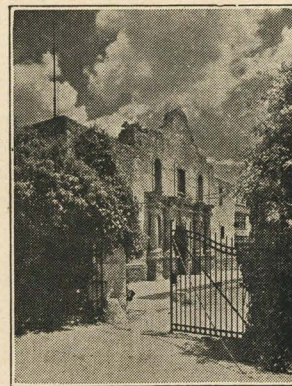
of the

17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries

A Chronology of Her Romantic Past

By

FREDERICK C. CHABOT



The Alamo

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

1929

PUBLISHERS NOTE

THE contents of this small book is reduced from data which represents years of thorough research work in Europe, Mexico, and Texas. The author is now completing a manuscript of the history of early San Antonio which it is hoped will be published in two volumes, profusely illustrated, within the near future. The archives of Seville, those of Mexico, and the rich collection of documents in the University of Texas Library, the Bexar County land records, and the San Fernando Cathedral records, have all been carefully studied in the preparation of this authoritative work.

There is much of interest in the colorful background of this romantic old city and as its population ever increases and its visitors continue to come, it is felt that this short account of its romantic past will bring her still more into prominence as a special resort, and happy home for those seeking a beautiful climate and scenery, as well as a progressive community.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

C. M. CHAMBERS,

MAYOR OF THE CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

SAN ANTONIO

Of the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries



Back in the century of the Conquest, the Spaniards were not long in exploring the vast territory lying between the Rio Grande and the eastern boundaries of our present state of Texas. The Aztec Empire, at the beginning of the 16th century, had its highways far beyond the boundaries of the empire, and it is not unlikely that the victorious armies returned to the capital of Mexico with treasures and prisoners, and with tales of adventure. This was all one small part of the great struggle between Spain, France and England for possession of America.

The famous *Relacion* of Cabeza de Vaca, published in 1542, after his six years captivity among the Texas Indians, is one of the earliest documents giving us details of those bygone days and tribes. Later in the century, the Venerable Mother Maria de Agreda wrote from her convent regarding the kingdom of the *Ticlas* or *Theas*, which she stated was eastward from the *Gran Quivira*. From these tribes, the province took its name: *Theas* being the Spanish spelling of the Indian word, which probably meant friends, and through the customary interchange of letters, became *Tejas* and then *Texas*.

The first formal expedition was under Alonzo de Leon, and took place in 1689. A second, under the same leader, in 1690, established the mission and village of *San Francisco de los Tejas*, in the presence of the Chief of all the Texas nations. A third, under Domingo de Teran, in 1691, reached the Cadodachos River, and established a Royal *Almacen* (Warehouse) at San Pedro de Texas, where many Indians were baptized. During this expedition Joseph de Urrutia visited the site of present San Antonio, which was then an Indian village.

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FREDERICK C. CHABOT

San Antonio, Texas

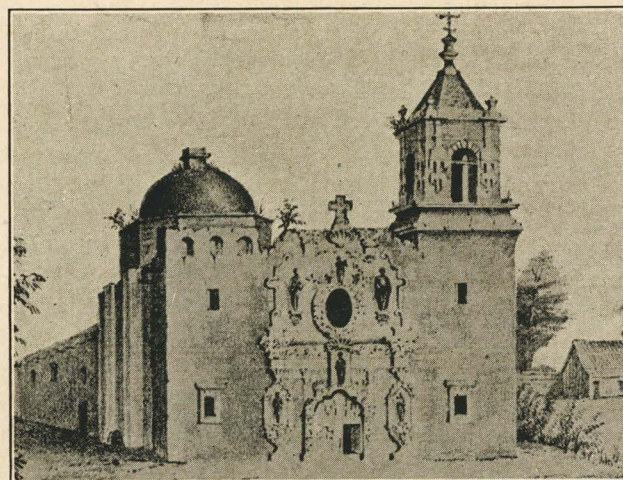
Printed in San Antonio

By Naylor Printing Co.

These 17th century expeditions were not long lasting, for toward the end of 1692, a contagious disease spread among the natives, the seasons were severe, with the loss of crops and cattle, and the Spanish soldiers outraged the Indian women, which caused open rebellion. Then came news of French attacks. So the missions were abandoned and the padres returned to Mexico. Urrutia however, with three companions, preferred to remain among his friends the Indians. Then followed a relatively inactive period of preparation, which resulted in permanent Spanish settlements in Texas. The following chronological arrangements of events should facilitate the reader in grasping a general conception of the beginning and growth of San Antonio, whose history is so rich in color and romance.

- 1714** St. Denis, a Frenchman from Louisiana, establishing trade relations with Mexico, approved the site as suitable to a city.
- 1715** Spanish families were already permanently settled here.
- 1716** The Domingo Ramon Expedition, accompanied by St. Denis, established a *presidio* or military post here. At the same time, the Queretaran Father Olivares began his missionary activities here, in a *jacal* or thatched hut, with three or four converted Indians, calling the establishment the mission of *San Antonio de Padua*.
- 1718** The Alarcon Expedition reenforced the presidio, and ten soldiers with their families were recognized as the beginning of a *villa*, or settlement. The San Antonio de Padua mission was officially founded under the name of San Antonio de Valero, in honor of the viceroy of the time, the Marquis of Valero, when the San Francisco Solano mission was transferred from the Rio Grande and merged with it.
- 1720** San Jose mission was founded by Father Margil de Jesus.

- 1722** The Marquis of Aguayo, governor of the province, and leader of an expedition (1719-1722) after driving the French from Texas, and reestablishing the missions in east Texas, removed the primitive presidio to the better protected location, the site of the present Military Plaza, at the entrance to the loop in the river, where fortifications and permanent stone buildings were constructed, and where the irrigation system was improved.



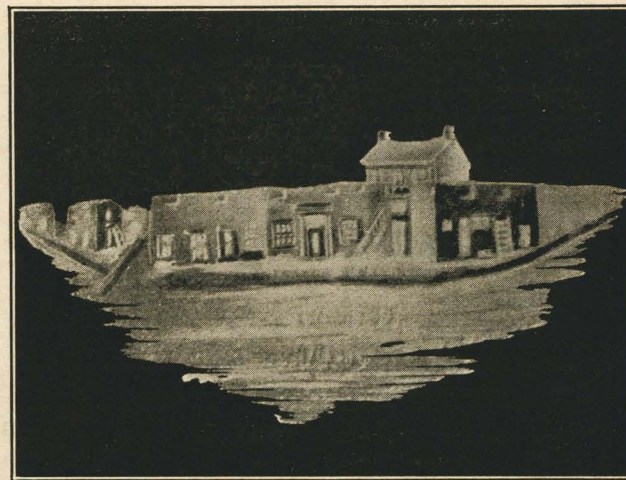
SAN JOSE MISSION

- 1726** The population of San Antonio totaled 200, including forty-five military and four civilian settlers, with their families.
- 1727** The garrisons of Texas were reduced in spite of the new peril, the Apaches. New plans for colonization with families were under consideration.
- 1731** The three Queretaran missions of east Texas, (Conception, San Juan and the Espada) were removed to the San Antonio. Sixteen families, with eleven distinct family

names, including 52 persons, arrived from the Canary Islands, by way of Mexico, and founded the villa of San Fernando, around the site of the present Main Plaza, which was the capital of the province.

- 1734** During the Sandoval regime, the Governor's residence was established in San Antonio, and many troops came with him from the Spanish settlement of the Adaes of east Texas and were stationed here. The *Comandancia* of the presidio, where the governor resided, became known as the Governor's Palace. The corner stone of the San Fernando parish church (the present cathedral) was laid during this year.
- 1743** The first intelligence of the Comanches was now received. The total Indian population of the five missions on the San Antonio was about 814.
- 1758** A political and military *junta* was held in San Antonio, subsequent to the discovery of the Almagre mines, for the purpose of organizing a campaign against the Indian Nations of the North.
- 1759** The Bishop of Guadalajara visited San Antonio and confirmed many of the inhabitants.
- 1760** The first text book for Mission Espada, in the Spanish and Indian dialect, was published in Mexico.
- 1761** Laws of reform were passed, prohibiting loitering, carrying arms, drinking and gambling, *fandangos*, the public grazing of animals, and the manufacture of aguardiente. Fences were ordered put up, and the farmers were warned against disposing of their means to the extent of leaving families in want.
- 1762** San Antonio had 103 inhabitants ready for military service. The *Cuerpo de Guardia* or military guard was now composed of 20 regular salaried men.

- 1768** English traders had penetrated as far as the Texas border.
- 1770** Demecier reported danger from the English. The population of San Fernando, the capital of the province, and only formal settlement in it, numbered 870 souls, as many had been killed and others expelled by the incessant hostilities of the savages.
- 1774** Military forces were concentrated at Bexar under the command of Governor Ripperda. They numbered 500.



PADRE'S HOUSE BETWEEN THE PLAZAS, THE FIRST TWO-STORY HOUSE, BUILT IN SAN ANTONIO, 1780.

- 1778** A bando (edict) proclaimed all unbranded cattle property of the king.
- 1779** A monthly mail service was established for Texas.
- 1789** A school was founded in San Antonio by De La Mata.
- 1790** The "republicans" of San Antonio had the audacity of holding a junta without permis-

sion from the authorities. The hangers-on of the deserted presidio of the Adaes arrived in San Antonio and settled here.

- 1793** It was necessary to obtain a special permit to go fishing, to gather nuts, to hunt bears and to kill unbranded cattle.
- 1794** Philip Nolan visited in San Antonio. There were 3,417 inhabitants in the capital and three towns of the province.
- 1803** The Company of the Alamo of Parras was stationed here, at the old San Antonio de Valero Mission or "Alamo".
- 1813** San Antonio surrendered to the Americans under Kemper, as a result of the defeat of the Spaniards on the Rocillo. The Royalists under Elisondo were defeated, and the Americans returned to San Antonio. Toledo was elected commander-in-chief. The Americans or Army of the North were defeated on the Medina, and only 93 Americans were able to escape to Natchitoches. Arredondo marched triumphantly into San Antonio and sought revenge on the Republicans.
- 1814** San Antonio had become a desolate place, suffering from the heel of a ruthless tyrant within, and surrounded by ferocious Indians without. Prices became prohibitive and food very scarce.
- 1816** By this time San Antonio was almost abandoned.
- 1819** A serious flood took place on July 5th, and many removed to the settlement around the Alamo, on the east side of the river, which was called *La Villita* (the little town).
- 1820** Moses Austin petitioned the Governor in San Antonio for a permit to settle families in Texas. The whole population of the province, not including the Indians, was not more than 4,000.

- 1823** Subsequent to the defeat of the Royalists in Mexico, and the end of their campaigns, the old inhabitants of San Antonio returned, and with a large number of troops and new immigrants, the town recovered its importance. The population of San Antonio had now increased to about 5,000.
- 1824** Texas and Coahuila were united, and San Antonio lost her importance as a state capital. She was reduced to the capital of a department.



EAST SIDE OF MILITARY PLAZA

- 1825** This is called the year of American immigration into Texas.
- 1828** The first American school was established in San Antonio, in consequence of the increase of her English speaking population.
- 1829** McGloin and McMullen were among the first to inaugurate a four years Irish immigration.
- 1830** Though a federal decree forbade immigration from the states, Americans con-

tinued to come into Texas, and Texas lands were recklessly granted by Mexican authorities to their favorites. Veramendi, whose daughter Ursula married James Bowie, was elected vice-governor, which was favorable toward the American colonists. A custom house was now established in the district of Bexar. Owing to the increase of colonists, the department of Texas was divided into two districts, San Antonio remaining the capital of Bexar, and Nacogdoches becoming the seat of the political chief of the eastern district.

- 1831** James and Resin Bowie, the latter the inventor of the "Bowie Knife", were now active in San Antonio and vicinity.
- 1834** The first strictly revolutionary meeting to discuss Texas independence from Mexico was held in San Antonio.
- 1835** An attempt to disarm the Americans at Gonzales was the inauguration of actual warfare. General Cos was driven from San Antonio by the "Western Army" (Americans) under Old Ben Milam. Samuel A. Maverick arrived in San Antonio. Johnson assumed command of the Alamo, with a sufficient force to defend it. Bexar, no longer the Mexican stronghold, now became the "key to the situation in Texas."
- 1836** The Mexican forces concentrated on San Antonio, and Travis and the few Americans in the place retreated to the Alamo which was stormed by the entire Mexican forces, under Santa Anna; and then followed the Battle of San Jacinto and Texas Independence. During the Republic, San Antonio was the capital of Bexar County. Her first mayor of the period was John W. Smith.
- 1838** The General Land Office opened in San Antonio which attracted a very undesirable element to the place.

1839 Samuel A. Maverick was mayor of San Antonio.

1840 "The Court House Fight" or "Break of '40" which was an attempt of the Americans to hold the Indians in hostage for American prisoners in their possession, resulted in deliberate and organized Indian depredations. This old Court House was the *Casa Real*, which was located on the northeast corner of Main Plaza, and Market Street of today.

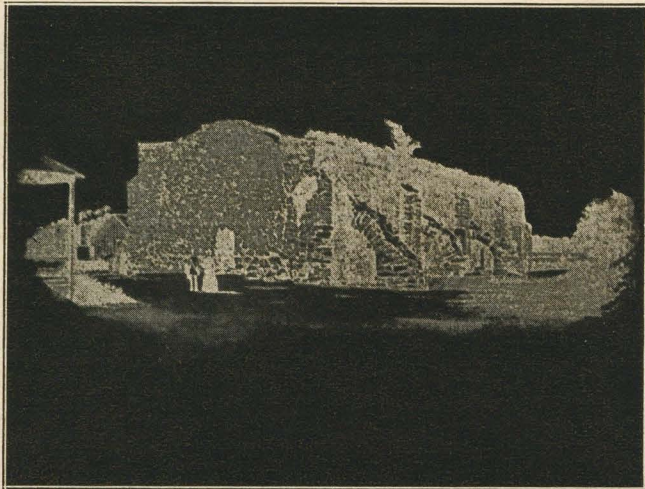
1842 General Vasquez dashed into San Antonio and departed with the "treasures" and Mexican sympathizers. Upon the approach of General Woll and the regular Mexican army, the Americans fortified the Maverick home, which overlooked Main Plaza, (north-east corner of present Commerce St. and the Plaza) and attempted to defend the town. They were all imprisoned and taken to Mexico where they were placed in the famous Perote Castle.

Texas was annexed to the Union in 1845, but the government of the Republic continued until 1846. American troops were temporarily quartered in Military Plaza, until Major Babitt occupied the Alamo as a Quartermaster's depot, where this branch of the service continued until 1878, excepting the Civil War period. In 1849 General Worth resided in the old John James home on the northwest corner of Commerce and Presa Streets, while the troops were in temporary barracks in the Conception Mission, and at the head of the river, at the springs which became known as Worth Springs.

In the 50's John and William Vance had officers quarters and barracks built at the site of the present corner of Houston and St. Mary's Streets, which was conveniently located for water supply from the river. These buildings were first occupied in 1856. They were also occupied as Confederate Headquarters. The French Building during the

Civil War, was known as the "Confederate Aid Store." In 1865 it was Federal Headquarters. In 1868 it was used as an annex to the Court House.

The old Maverick Hotel on Houston St., was originally constructed for Federal Headquarters and occupied by General Ord in June of 1875. During the same month the Quartermaster's Depot on the Hill was completed. The headquarters building of Fort Sam Houston was commenced at the orders of Major Belknap on May 6, 1875.



THE GRANARY AT MISSION SAN JOSE

The United States arsenal was removed from a building near the Veramendi House on Soledad Street after the war, to the present site on South Flores St. where building had commenced November 1, 1859.

The first newspaper published in English in San Antonio, was *The West Texas* or *The Western Texan*. It was printed in the old Mill north east of the Mill Bridge on Navarro St. This first weekly made its appearance in 1848. It was succeeded by *The Ledger* in 1859, established by Jacob Walker and subsequently owned by Van Derlip and Hewitt, who sold it to Michael Burks, who converted it into

a daily in 1856. Shortly after it was owned by William Maverick and located in the old Veramendi house.

The *Purrissima Concepcion*, known as "the first mission" was originally founded for the Asinai Indians by the Domingo Ramon Expedition in 1716 in east Texas, beyond the Angelina River, and under the protection of an adjacent presidio or military post. It was removed to the San Antonio in 1731.

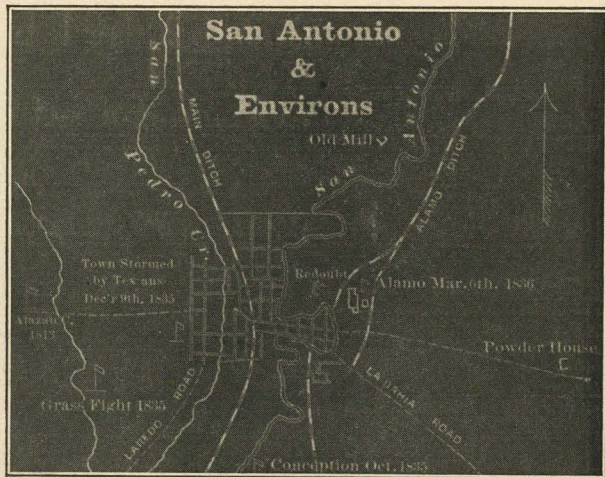
The *San Jose*, commonly called "the second mission" because of its relative location in the vicinity of San Antonio, was founded by Father Margil de Jesus in 1720, while he was a refugee in San Antonio, awaiting the Aguayo Expedition, which was to drive out the French and reestablish the missions in east Texas. It was named *San Joseph de San Miguel de Aguayo* in honor of the governor, the Marquis of Aguayo. There is a local tradition that the beautiful south window of the baptistry was carved by Pedro Huizar, whose ancestor is said to have worked on the Alcazar of Seville. Wealth, beauty and art strove to make this kingly mission the wonder of its day.

The *San Juan Capistrano*, commonly known as "the third mission" was founded in 1716 for the Nazones Indians, when it was called *San Joseph de los Nazones*. But when it was removed to the San Antonio in 1731, where there was already a mission by the name of San Jose, it was called San Juan Capistrano, in honor of the Franciscan, Santo Giovanni, native of Capistrano, in the Abruzzi in Italy. The frescoes on this mission gave satisfaction to the Indians' love of color. Nearby are the ruins of an old aqueduct, a series of low, massive arches.

The *San Francisco de la Espada*, known as "the fourth mission" was originally the San Francisco de los Neches, and dates back to the very beginning of Texas history. In San Antonio it was named in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the great order of Franciscans; and according to tradition, the old tower being built in the form of the hilt of a sword, it was called *de la Espada* (of

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the sword). It is also said that the mortar was mixed with asses' milk. This mission has the distinction of having used the first text book in the province of Texas; written by Father Bartholome Garcia of the mission, in Spanish and in the most common Indian dialect of the vicinity, and published in Mexico in 1760.



The rapid growth of San Antonio dates from 1876, when the first railway (Sunset Route) entered the city. From 1879-1880 to 1887, the population increased from 14,894 to 42,570; from 1900 to 1910, the population increased from 53,321 to 96,614. Today the population of San Antonio exceeds two hundred thousand.



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