

## GUEVAVI MISSION

The O'odham people had lived in settlements along the Santa Cruz River for thousands of years. Because the river was unreliable as a water source, the people were highly mobile and only built villages, or rancherias, with any semblance of permanency near perennial springs that had irrigable farmland near by. Guevavi, which was derived from the O'odham word Ge'e Vavia meaning "Big Spring", was one such village located at a spring near the Santa Cruz River.

The Guevavi Mission had its origin in January 1691 when Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, a Jesuit missionary, first visited the area. He had come from the north, having first visited Tumacacori at the request of the O'odham people living there to establish a mission. The people living in Guevavi had also requested the establishment of a mission. Father Kino stopped long enough to celebrate the Mass, leave gifts of livestock and wheat seed, and promise to return and bring a permanent missionary. He had decided to make Guevavi the headquarters where the missionary would live and visit the other neighboring rancherias, including Tumacacori.

Father Kino named the new mission San Gabriel. Its name was later changed to San Raphael and San Miguel and then changed again to Los Santos Angeles de Guevavi in honor of all three of the archangels.

Father Juan de San Martin was the first resident missionary and was in charge of construction of the first church which was completed in 1701. Guevavi proved to be a difficult mission environment. Its remoteness from other missions and the uncertainty of the O'odham as to whether they wanted a mission had a distressing effect on the mission. Father San Martin left in 1703, shortly after the completion of the church and the replacement priests came and left in rapid succession. In the 1740's, Guevavi finally began to evolve into a permanent mission community. Under the direction of Father Joseph Garrucho, a new and bigger church and mission compound was completed in the summer of 1751.



*Guevavi Mission Ruins*

The continued development of the mission was temporarily set back by the O'odham (Pima) Uprising of November 1751. Father Garrucho was implicated as one of the causes of the rebellion and was recalled to Mexico City to stand trial. He was acquitted but never returned to Guevavi. He was replaced by Father Francisco Pauer who was reassigned from San Xavier del Bac. Father Pauer gradually regained the trust of the O'odham and under his leadership, the mission thrived for several years. A ruling by Carlos III, King of Spain, started the downfall of the Guevavi Mission. On 27 February 1767, he issued a secret order to arrest all Jesuit Priests and have them returned to Spain to be imprisoned. They were to be replaced

by Franciscan priests. Guavavi's missionary, Father Custodio Ximeno was arrested on 25 July 1767. The Franciscan priest, Juana Crisostomo Gil de Bernabe did not arrive for over a year and he moved his headquarters to Tumacacori. This left Guevavi without a resident missionary. About this same time, the Seri Indian uprising was taking place in the south. Soldiers from the Presidios were called south to fight the Seri which left the missions unprotected from the Apache. Mission supplies were also being diverted to feed the soldiers. In 1773, only 9 families were living at Guevavi. The mission was totally abandoned by 1776 and was never reinhabited.

Summarized September 2004 by T. Johnson from a Southwest Parks and Monuments Association pamphlet written by Donald T. Garate. Photograph by T. Johnson. Updated August 2010

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