

PRESIDIO SANTA CRUZ de TERRENATE

The Spanish began its colonization of the Americas after Columbus's voyage of 1492. After conquistador Hernan Cortes defeated the Aztec empire in 1521 he named the territory New Spain with Mexico City (formerly the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan) as its capitol. The Viceroyalty (or Kingdom) of New Spain was established in 1535 as an outgrowth of this colonization effort and was an integral territorial entity of the Spanish Empire. The territory of New Spain as claimed by the Spanish was vast and included a small portion of northern South America, all of Central America and all of the Southwestern United States from Louisiana to California.

Establishing administrative control over this vast territory was a major problem for the Spanish. In general they used a multi-pronged approach to get the indigenous population to submit to Spanish authority. One way was to occupy the territory by encouraging immigration and by establishing settlements and towns like Tubac and Tucson. Another was to get the indigenous population to accept Christianity and become members of the Catholic Church. The Jesuits, and later Franciscan Padres established and operated missions among the indigenous population. Probably the most well-known of these padres to Arizonans was Father Eusebio Kino who established 21 missions starting in 1687 in what was then Sonora, Mexico. Guavavi, Tumacacori and San Xavier Del Bac were established by Father Kino.

Another approach was by military force. For example, the Seri culture of Sonora was fiercely independent and resisted all efforts by the Spanish to control them. As a result, the military virtually decimated their population. The Apache, who migrated into the southwest during the 16th and 17th centuries had a culture that included the raiding of indigenous and colonial settlements along the frontier of New Spain. This brought them into direct conflict with the military. Another aspect of the military was the establishment of presidios. Presidios were frontier military settlements intended to secure and defend the territorial claims of the Spanish Government and to provide protection to the settlements of the colonists. One of these presidios was Presidio San Felipe de Gracia Real de Terrenate that was constructed in 1742 along the banks of the San Pedro River about 15 miles south of the current international border near a rancho referred to as Terrenate. Presidio San Ignacio de Tubac was built in 1753. A study conducted by the Marquis de Rubi in 1766 recommended that there should be at least 15 presidios along the northern frontier and that they should be located at approximately 120 mile intervals. This realignment of the presidios was implemented by The Regulation of 1772.

Although it might seem to have been unusual, it was an Irishman that had a significant impact on the development of New Spain. Hugh O'Connor (Hugo OConor) was born in Ireland in 1732, a descendent of the High King of Ireland. Because of all the restrictions imposed on Irish Catholics he moved to Spain as a youth and eventually became a member of the Spanish military. O'Connor's military service was exemplary and he had many different assignments including Governor of Texas in 1767. He became Commander of the Chihuahua frontier in 1771

and Commander-Inspector of Military Forces in January 1773. In that capacity he relocated 12 presidios and activated 2 others. He closed the Tubac Presidio in 1772 and replaced it with the establishment of a new presidio (Presidio San Augustin del Tucson). This action resulted in the founding of the town of Tucson. The Presidio San Felipe de Gracia Real de Terrenate came under scrutiny in June of 1774 when it was inspected by Adjutant Inspector Boniolla, an aid to O'Connor. The previous year the presidio's commandant, Captain Vildosola had been charged with mishandling the presidio's financial accounts and had been arrested. No one had been chosen to replace him. In short order, Captain Francisco de Tovar who had previously served under O'Connor in Texas was selected as the new commandant of the Terrenate Presidio.

O'Connor came to the conclusion that the best way to stabilize the northern portion of Sonora was to remove the warlike Apaches from the area by military force. He began a war against the Apache and a part of that effort was to close the Terrenate Presidio and in August of 1775 reestablish it as the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate on the banks of the San Pedro Rivera a considerable distance to the north of the original location. This location was once the site of a Hohokam settlement. It became Captain Tovar's task to move the garrison with its 57 soldiers to its new location which was just north of the current Ghost Town of Fairbanks. A review of the progress in the development of the presidio was made in December of 1775 which ended up with Capt. Tovar being charged with malfeasance in the handling of the presidio's finances. O'Connor issued orders stripping him of his command in February 1776 but due to the bureaucracy of the system Captain Tovar was still on duty in July.

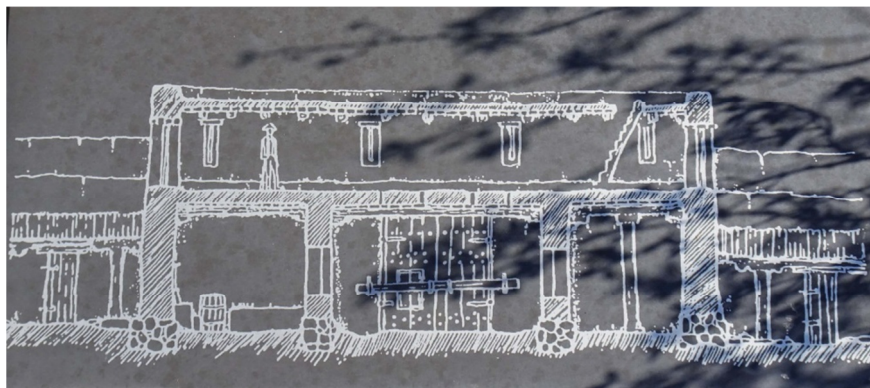
This delay solved Colonel O'Connor's problem with Captain Francisco Tovar who was killed on July 7, 1776 along with 29 of his men during a battle with the Apache. Captain Tovar had left the presidio on July 5th in pursuit of a band of Apaches and finally caught up with them as they were fording the San Pedro. It is believed that the defeat by the Apaches in the ensuing engagement was the result of a series of tactical errors made by Captain Tovar. His replacement, Captain Francisco Ignacio de Trespacios, took command of the presidio on November 11, 1776 and took over the task of completing the construction of the presidio and conducting excursions to control the Apaches. The presidio was isolated from other Spanish outposts and very difficult to supply. Supply trains and the presidio itself were subjected to frequent attacks by the Apache. This made construction of the presidio extremely difficult. The exterior walls were never completed. They were supposed to be 12 to 15 feet high depending on their location but when the presidio was abandoned in 1780 the walls still only varied from 7 to 12 feet. Only about ¼ of the barracks rooms for the soldiers were ever completed. On September 22, 1778 a raiding party of Apaches attempted to drive off a herd of horses that were being guarded by a small squad under the command of Cavo (Corporal) Joaquin Leyba. The Apaches were driven off but still managed to capture some of the horses. Captain Trespacios immediately gathered a group of 34 men (soldiers, Indian scouts and vecinos) and set out in pursuit of the Apaches and soon

caught up with them. The Apaches moved into terrain favorable to them and set up an ambush. The end result was that Captain Trespacios and twenty of his men were killed.

With the combination of desertion, death and retirement, it was difficult to keep a full complement of soldiers at Terrenate. By early 1780 the Commander of New Spain's northern frontier came to the conclusion that maintaining Presidio Terrenate was a losing proposition and ordered it to be abandoned. The military forces were evacuated to Las Nutrias in Sonora and by March 1780 no one remained at Terrenate.

After its abandonment the presidio gradually deteriorated. The US Army briefly occupied the site in 1878 and deterioration continued after they left. Today, very little of the adobe walls and structures still exist. The Bureau of Land Management has done an excellent job in identifying the key features of the presidio ruins and identifying their locations with placards.

Summary prepared by T. Johnson in January 2023 from a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) brochure, the article *Presidios of the Line* by Michael R. Hardwick, the Journal of Arizona History article *Two Captains and Two Defeats* by Mark Santiago and various web site articles including Wikipedia articles on the Viceroyalty of New Spain, the Terrenate Presidio and on Hugh O'Connor. Following are photos derived from BLM placards at the presidio ruins which depict various elements of the presidio. Also shown are pictures of some of the ruins as they exist in December 2022. All photos by T. Johnson.



Presidio Gate House and Main Gate

The main gate was surrounded by a two story gatehouse that also provided lodging for some of the soldiers. The soldiers were readily available to control access to the presidio.

The Chapel (La Capilla)

The chapel was the heart of spiritual and social life at Terrenate. This simple building featured a raised central altar between aisles of short, rough-hewn seats. Given the hardships of the presidio, the Franciscan priest must have shared more comfort and grief with his parishioners than celebrations.

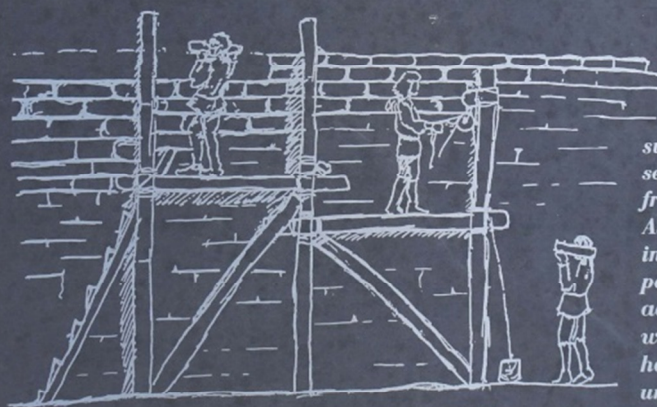


Chapel Ruins – December 2022



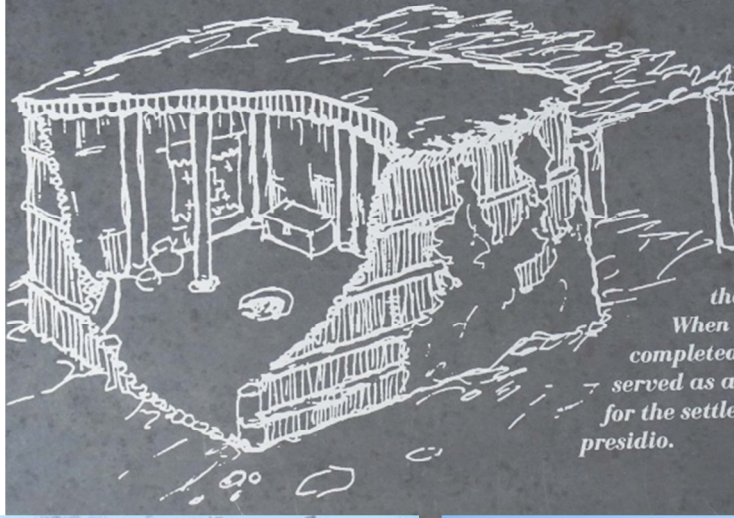
Adobe Perimeter Wall Ruin

Adobe Walls (Paredes de Adobe)



Built on stone foundations, thick adobe walls were well suited to provide security and relief from the elements. All building materials including dirt, pebbles, and water for adobe, plus stone and wood had to be hauled to the site under constant threat of Indian attack.

Jacal Structures



These mud and stick structures, called jacals, were built as temporary quarters for craftsmen, laborers, and their families.

When barracks were completed, these structures served as additional refuge for the settlers inside the presidio.



Jacal Foundation Ruins



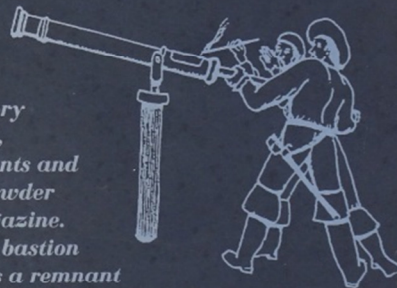
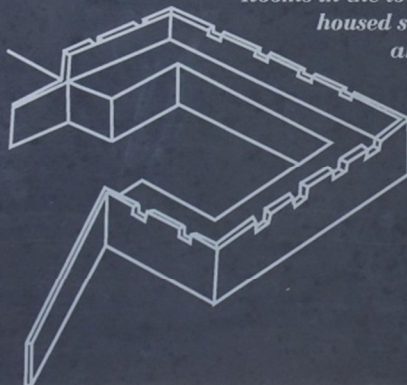
Bastion Ruins

Bastion

This high, corner structure was intended to protect two sides of the presidio with cannons mounted on its upper story.

Rooms in the lower story housed soldiers, armaments and a powder magazine.

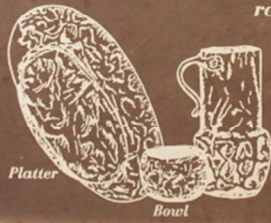
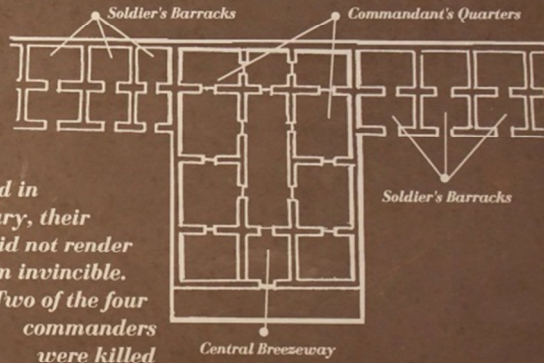
The bastion was a remnant of European design that proved useless against the Apache warfare of New Spain's northern frontier.



Commandant's Quarters (Cuarto de Commandante)

Designed with a central breezeway, the commandant's quarters were much more spacious than the soldiers barracks.

Although the commanders lived in comparative luxury, their rank did not render them invincible. Two of the four commanders were killed in battle.



Platter

Bowl

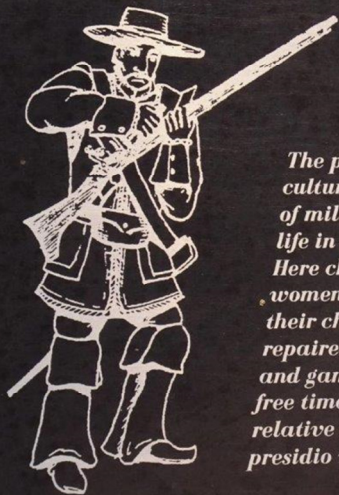
Jarro
Chocolatero



Ruins of Commandant's Quarters



The Plaza in December 2022



The Plaza

The plaza would have been alive with the mixture of cultures represented by the sights, sounds, and smells of military and domestic life in the presidio. Here children played, women gathered for their chores, and men repaired armaments and gambled in their free time within the relative safety of the presidio walls.





The above figure is a model of the Presidio that is on display in the library section of the Fairbank Ghost Town Schoolhouse. The schoolhouse is open to the public on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

To put the photo in proper perspective the Main Gate is located at the bottom center, the Chapel is located at the left center, the Bastion at the top left corner and the Commandant's Quarters at the top center.