

St. Ann's Church – Tubac

St. Ann's Church, which stands on Calle Iglesia near Placita de Anza in Tubac, is a relatively modern reminder of the presence of the Catholic Church in the area for most of 250 years.

With its steeply sloped roof and bell tower, the architecture might seem to some more alpine than its southwestern surroundings, but it stands on foundations which were laid in 1767.

The modern church, which was built in 1929 and completely remodeled at least once, stands on the actual foundation and site of the original Church of Santa Gertrudis de Tubac. That church, built in 1767 by Franciscan priests, took the place of an even earlier church that was destroyed by rebellious Pima Indians, according to local archives. Between then and now, the church underwent a series of destruction and renaissance.

The history of activity of the Catholic Church in Southern Arizona, and specifically Tubac, goes back to Padre Augustine Campos, who visited the area from 1726 to 1751, and established a series of missions.

Campos, who followed the earlier Jesuit missionary, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, who traveled the area from 1691 to 1711, recorded in a diary that he had baptized one Miguel Ignacio in Tubac in the year 1741.

In 1751, following an Indian rebellion in which Tubac was razed and most of its inhabitants killed, the Tubac Presidio was founded. Subsequently, the presidio came under the command of Captain Juan Bautista De Anza, who reportedly constructed a cruciform structure that was to become a church named for Santa Gertrudis, completed in 1767. That church fell into disuse and eventual ruin after the Jesuits were expelled and for a time, Catholics in Tubac journeyed to Magdalena in the state of Sonora, Mexico.

A new church was completed by Franciscan missionaries in Tubac in 1796 according to church records, and in 1843, the parish was made a part of the Magdalena parish.



St. Ann's Church – 2015



St. Ann's Church Interior - 2015

In 1848, a missionary reported the walls of the Tubac church were standing, but there was no roof, and in 1858, a Father Machelbeas visited Tubac and reported the structure was “beyond repair.”

In 1877, the area became a vicarate apostolic under Bishop Salpointe, and in ensuing years, a Father Jouvenceau visited the parish periodically, reportedly conducting services in a ramada.

From 1900 to 1905, a Father Muerer from Nogales visited Tubac periodically, conducting mass in the schoolhouse, a visitation that was assumed for some years by Father Duval, pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Nogales, Arizona.

Construction of a new church on the site of the original churches was begun in 1910 after parishioners mounted a fund drive, and St. Ann’s Church was completed in 1912.

In 1920, according to parish records, the walls fell in, reportedly as a result of faulty construction plus a couple of years of severe rainfall. The current adobe walls were constructed and stuccoed in 1929, and the present St. Ann’s Church was completed in 1930.

Article by Robert Will in the *Santa Cruz Valley Sun*, January 1996. Photographs by Tom Johnson

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