

ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON

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SAN AGUSTIN: THE ORIGINAL TUCSON

In 1697, when Father Kino journeyed through the Tucson area, fewer than 2000 Sobaipuri Indians inhabited the area from San Xavier del Bac on the south to the northern tip of the Tucson Mountains. Father Kino's 1695 map gave the name of San Cosme de Tucson to the area at the base of "A" Mountain. While this area was named on Kino's map, it was not specifically named in the journals that recorded the 1697 visit. Rather, San Cosme was grouped with four other small settlements that were said to have a total population of 750. In contrast, some 800 souls were reported for San Xavier del Bac. It would appear then that the first Tucson was a modest place when the Spaniards first arrived.

Throughout the Jesuit period from first contact in 1692 to the Jesuit expulsion from the New World in 1767, the missionaries of the northern frontier had only limited direct interaction with the residents of Tucson. However, diseases introduced by the Spaniards and pressures from Apache raiding resulted in dramatic population changes in Tucson. During the Franciscan period, 1768 and after, the historic records document substantial direct interaction between Spaniards and the native peoples. During the Franciscan period, the name San Agustin de Tucson was used to refer to the settlement at the base of "A" Mountain.

Father Francisco Garces reached San Xavier del Bac in late June of 1768, and a month later he described the Indians at San Agustin de Tucson as living in brush huts. They had made Garces a small hut similar to their own. Despite the constant threat of Apache raids, there was not so much as a mud wall protecting the village according to Garces. But by May of 1770, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza reported that "To strengthen the Tucson site against Apache attack, I ordered the Tucsonans to construct an extensive earthen breastwork or corral, replete with gunports, in the center of their Pima village." By 1772 a church was under construction at Tucson, and by 1773 it was complete.

In 1797, after inspecting the newly completed church at San Xavier del Bac that still stands today, Father Francisco Iturralde visited Tucson. "I visited the church whose construction is of adobe with a roof of beams. It is somewhat deteriorated, for which reason they are thinking of renovating it. It has six statues of saints on the altar. In the church itself the vestments and equipment to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are kept in three boxes with keys; they have only what is necessary to say Mass, but that is neat and clean."

Sometime between 1797 and 1810, a large two-storied structure was built just east of the church at Tucson.

The 1852 sketch by John R. Bartlett that is reproduced here shows these two buildings. This view is northeastward from "A" Mountain, with the Catalina Mountains in the background.



An 1852 sketch by John Bartlett from "A" Mountain showing the San Agustin mission complex.

The last religious services at San Agustin took place prior to 1831, and an 1843 report indicates that the church was already in poor condition, and the roof of the two-storied structure was defective. The earliest photograph of the two-storied structure dates to 1880. Both stories are still standing, but the roof is gone and the adobes are heavily eroded. Despite the grandeur of this building and the importance of this location for Tucson's heritage, the mission site was greatly abused during the 20th century. Treasure hunters, brick-making and gravel operations, erosion from the river, and finally, in 1956, a large sanitary land-fill operation sealed the fate of the church and two-storied structure. They are now gone, but portions of the mission complex still remain.

The rerouting of Mission Road that is being planned by the City of Tucson will pass just outside the west wall of the mission complex. In late April-early May the Institute for American Research will be conducting test excavations to assess possible impacts to this important site.

At the Spring *AIT* meeting on March 23, Jack Williams, doctoral candidate in Anthropology at the U of A, described his recent excavations and historic research at San Agustin. Much of his fieldwork was conducted with the assistance of volunteers. *AIT* members who are willing to help in the Institute's upcoming field studies, please see the Fieldwork Opportunity section on page 3.

EXPLORING TUCSON'S PAST

HOHOKAM RESEARCH AND EXHIBIT AT DEL WEBB'S SUN CITY VISTOSO

In late Fall of 1986 the Institute excavated three Hohokam pithouses on the property currently being developed by Del Webb Communities as Sun City Vistoso just north of Tucson. All three houses were on a single small ridge near a major wash. It seems most likely that a single family set up its summer residence in this location in order to farm along the nearby wash. They would have spent much of their time preparing fields, planting seeds after the summer rains, and then tending the crops, weeding and keeping out competitors such as birds and rabbits. Plant foods recovered by the archaeologists include corn, squash, and agave.

It is estimated that a Hohokam pithouse would have lasted from 5 to 15 years. Therefore, after a while it would have been necessary for the group living at this site to replace their first pithouse with a new one. If only one pithouse were used at a time, then the three houses at this small site could represent from 15 to 45 years of occupation. Based on the pottery sherds recovered from the excavations, we know that this site was used between A.D. 1000-1150, most likely during the latter half of this time range.

The residents of this site probably spent the rest of the year living at a larger village located just a few miles away. To understand how the Hohokam Indians succeeded in adjusting their way of life to the harsh environment of the Sonoran desert, it is important that both large and small sites be studied. The excavations at Sun City Vistoso have added significant new information about a small Hohokam settlement.

Del Webb Communities is also helping to bring a better understanding of the way the Hohokam lived to the general public. They have funded the Institute to reconstruct a portion of a Hohokam village at Sun City Vistoso. They have focused on the key structures, tools, and activities in everyday Hohokam life, and they have reconstructed a pithouse, an outdoor cooking area called a brush kitchen, and an open walled shade or ramada. The artifacts that are present in this exhibit are mostly reproductions of items actually used by the Hohokam. They allow visitors to gain a feel for what it would have been like to sleep and do craft work in a pithouse or to grind corn and cook in the minimal confines of a brush kitchen.

The Hohokam used a relatively simple technology to adapt to the desert. But their knowledge of how to best use the desert's bounty and how to minimize the effects of the desert's perils were the keys to their long survival.

EXCAVATIONS ALONG THE NORTHERN SANT A CRUZ RIVER

The Institute continues its field studies near the northern end of the Tucson Mountains, with two sites currently under excavation. The largest site, known as the Red Tail site, was studied over several years in a volunteer program directed by Bill Hohmann of the Archaeological and Historical Society. The current work increases substantially the size of area under excavation.

The Red Tail site was first occupied at least as early as A.D. 600, and it continued to be used until roughly A.D. 900. This is a time period of great importance to understanding the prehistoric Hohokam. It was during this time that many of the material traits that were unique to the Hohokam were developed. These include ballcourts, a distinctive funeral ritual involving cremation, and a unique style of painting pottery with red pigment on a light colored background. The Red Tail site does not seem to have had a ballcourt, but a large number of pithouses are present.



Cañada del Oro (left) and Rillito (right) phase pottery. Red Tail was occupied during these times.

Near the Red Tail site is a smaller site that was occupied during the interval from roughly A.D. 1100-1200, the Late Rincon subphase and early portions of the Tanque Verde phase. Many previous Institute studies have dealt with the time period just prior to this, therefore this site provides an opportunity to build on earlier studies. In particular, we will be trying to further refine our understanding of changes in the decorated pottery during this time period. We will also study changes in household and village organization.

In combination with the canal studies that were reported in the last *AIT* newsletter, the research in the northern Tucson Basin that is being sponsored by AMCOR Investments Corporation should greatly enhance our understanding of Hohokam prehistory. Fortunately, a portion of one of the largest sites in the Continental Ranch development is being preserved for the future and will be incorporated into a regional archaeological park by Pima County.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY IN TUCSON?

Archaeology in Tucson is the membership program of the Institute for American Research. Briefly summarized, the program goals are to:

- Conduct active research in and around Tucson
- Increase public awareness of local archaeology
- Interpret local archaeological resources
- Preserve important archaeological sites
- Achieve public involvement in local archaeology

MEMBERSHIP: A HALF PRICE BARGAIN!!!

Archaeology in Tucson is off to a good start, but we need your support if we are to be successful. We have intentionally kept membership rates very low. Because our membership year runs from October 1 through September 30 of each year, we are offering memberships at half price for the remainder of this year. At this bargain rate you can't afford not to join.

We will do our best to bring Tucson's archaeology to you, but we need to build our membership base in order to do this. Please mail your membership form today and feel good about helping to preserve Tucson's past. If you are already a member, then tell your friends about us.

T-SHIRTS

Archaeology in Tucson T-shirts with the *AIT* logo, a stylized design from a Hohokam pottery jar, can be purchased from the Institute. The buff colored shirts are made of 100% cotton and the *AIT* logo is a rust color. These shirts make wonderful gifts and help support and promote *Archaeology in Tucson*. They cost \$9.00 per shirt and are available in S, M, L, and XL. Please use the order blank on the membership application.



CATALINA STATE PARK SURVEY UPDATE

The Institute has been conducting archaeological survey at Catalina State Park, and over 20 new sites have been recorded. A National Register nomination for the park is being prepared. In a future *AIT* newsletter we will provide more details on the exciting archaeology contained in this beautiful State Park.

FIELDWORK OPPORTUNITIES

Many *Archaeology in Tucson* members have expressed interest in getting their hands dirty doing archaeology, therefore we will try to integrate some members into our ongoing research. Fieldwork will be planned for both Saturdays and weekdays in order to accommodate the schedules of our members. For those of you who would prefer the less physically demanding setting of the laboratory, where artifacts are washed and labeled, we will also establish a volunteer program in the lab. These opportunities are only open to members, and we will ask you to make a firm commitment to keeping the schedule that you sign up for. For more information, please call Tom Kolaz at 622-6663.

SAN AGUSTIN MISSION REPORTS AVAILABLE

Jack Williams has prepared an excellent short report on the mission community of San Agustin that is featured on our front page. It is well illustrated with maps, drawings, and black-and-white photographs. As an added bonus, there is a second paper in this same report that details the history of the presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate on the upper San Pedro River. For those of you who can stop by our offices, this report is available for only \$3.00. If you would like us to mail you a copy, we are forced to charge an additional \$1.00 for postage and handling.



ONGOING EXHIBITS

The Paleoindian exhibit in the Old Pueblo Museum at Foothills Center is open to the public. Be sure to view the multi-media presentation on the Hohokam as well.

The Hohokam pithouse at Del Webb's Sun City Vistoso is now open to the public. The official opening of this exhibit is scheduled for May, at which time there will be scheduled slide shows and guided tours for at least two weekends. Take Highway 89—Oracle Road—north past Catalina State Park, and then turn west onto Rancho Vistoso Boulevard, which takes you right to the sales office. The pithouse is located behind the sales office. A brochure describing the pithouse is enclosed.

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