

The End of Life in Tucson

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Over the course of four millennia, Tucson's residents have treated their deceased family members in diverse ways. In the Early Agricultural and Early Ceramic periods, bodies were placed into roughly circular pits in tightly flexed positions. Although offerings were few, the bodies were often partly coated with hematite (red ochre) pigment. Among the Hohokam, cremation, which had occurred rarely in earlier times, became the norm. Cemeteries were located on the margins of open plazas near village centers and contained individual deposits of bone, ash, and offerings that had been burned elsewhere, called secondary cremations. Later in Hohokam times, bodies were treated in a number of ways, including inhumation, cremation on a pyre built over a body-sized pit, and secondary cremation. In the Protohistoric period—that is, between about 1450 and the arrival of Father Kino in the 1690s—O'odham groups buried their dead in flexed positions in oval or circular pits. These burial patterns, greatly oversimplified in this brief review, are known from Tucson-area archaeological sites.

Two Protohistoric cemeteries have been found in Tucson. One of them, near south Ninth Avenue, contained as many as seventeen bodies that were interred in a flexed position; some were painted with hematite pigment. The other Protohistoric cemetery is located near Mission San Agustín.

With the arrival of European missionaries and establishment of a presidio, Catholic burial practices were generally followed. Deceased Spanish citizens and Native Americans were generally buried in cemeteries associated with churches. This was evident at Mission San Agustín and at the Tucson Presidio. Although the record book listing burials of presidio soldiers and civilians was lost in the 1850s, it is likely that several thousand people were interred there between 1776 and the 1860s. A 1992 archaeological excavation in a small portion of this cemetery uncovered evidence for the extensive reuse of burial plots. When a new burial pit disturbed an earlier one, the long bones and skull of the previous burial were generally placed alongside the legs of the newly interred individual. Because their clothing was too valuable to be buried with them, the dead were wrapped in shrouds. The only other possessions that were found with them were a few rosary beads, buttons, and pins.

Several isolated burials from the Historic era have been found in the downtown area. A burial dating to the 1800s, found near the downtown



Historic-era cemeteries and burials around downtown Tucson: (1) Court Street Cemetery, 1875–1909; (2A and B) Alameda-Stone Cemetery, 1862–1881; (3) Block 180 burials, 1800s; (4) Presidio Cemetery, 1776–1860s; (5) Barrio Libre burials, circa 1600–1800; (6) cowboy burial, 1800s. MAP: CATHERINE GILMAN

YMCA, contained two adult Hispanic men. One man had an arrow point embedded in his rib cage, and his arms were in unusual positions, suggesting that he had been killed and that rigor mortis had set in prior to burial. Perhaps the men were buried outside of the Presidio Cemetery because they could not be identified. Another burial, dating to the later 1800s, was found beneath a modern sidewalk next to south Seventh Avenue. The body was that of a man, perhaps a cowboy, wearing a shirt, suspenders, jeans, and cowboy boots. It is unclear why this man was not buried in a cemetery.

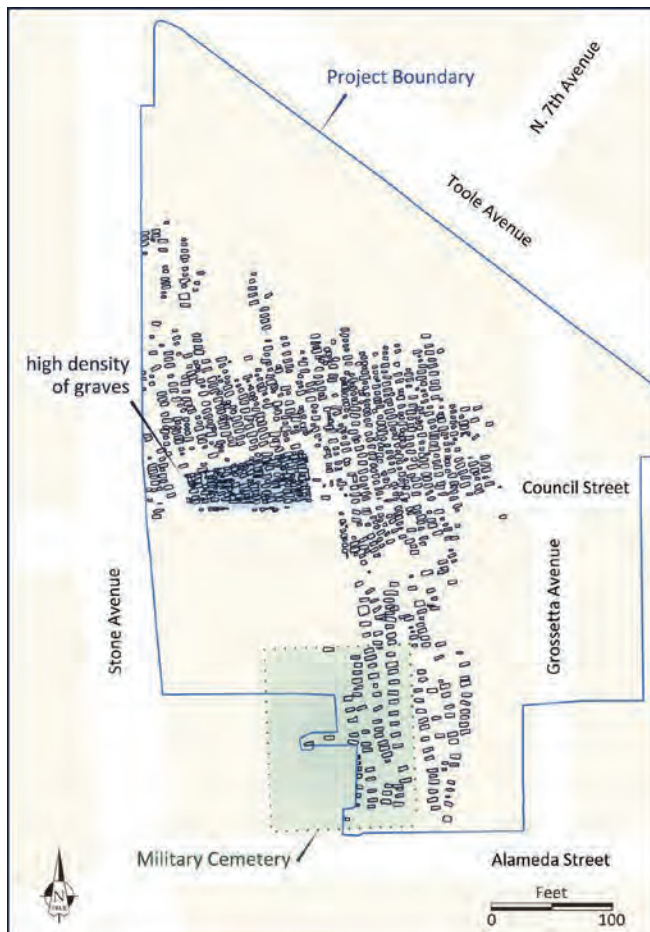
In 1872, when the Tucson townsite was laid out, it encompassed two square miles and included a large area designated for a cemetery. The Alameda-Stone Cemetery (pages 50–52),

in use by 1862, replaced the Presidio Cemetery. As Tucson grew, and the arrival of the railroad was anticipated, the Alameda-Stone Cemetery was closed, but only a small proportion of the bodies were moved to the far north edge of the Tucson townsite. This second city cemetery, the Court Street Cemetery, opened in 1875 but was soon in the path of growth and was closed in 1909 (pages 52–53).

It is clear that both economic and cultural factors played roles in the abandonment of these cemeteries. Today, there are legal requirements to treat burials with greater respect; moreover, the cost of such large-scale treatment of entire cemeteries—as shown by the Alameda-Stone example—is quite high. □

The Alameda–Stone Cemetery

MICHAEL HEILEN, STATISTICAL RESEARCH, INC.
MARLESA A. GRAY



Tucson's first cemetery from the American period had two sections: one for military personnel and one for civilians. The military section was used from 1862 to 1881. It is unclear when the first civilians were buried at the cemetery, but we do know that the civilian section was closed by the City of Tucson in 1875. About 2,000 individuals were buried in the cemetery, and about 100 of those were placed in the military section.

Beginning in 2006, Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI), was contracted by Pima County to excavate this historic cemetery prior to construction of the Pima County Consolidated Justice Court at the northeast corner of Stone Avenue and Alameda Street. Excavations in the roughly four-acre parcel also uncovered ancient archaeological features, as well as the complete remains of a post-cemetery neighborhood. Remarkably, even though the cemetery area had been disturbed by urban development over the last hundred years, a large percentage of the graves remained intact.

Who Used the Cemetery?

Because it was the only cemetery in Tucson at the time, the Alameda-Stone facility was likely used by the entire community. Although the Gadsden Purchase of 1854 made southern Arizona

Excavation map of Alameda-Stone Cemetery. The northern portion of the cemetery contained the burials of Hispanic and Native American men, women, and children, many of whom were buried according to Catholic practices. The southern portion contained a higher proportion of Euro-American adult males, including military personnel, many of whom had recently arrived in Tucson. MAP: CATHERINE GILMAN

a part of the United States, Tucson in the 1860s and early 1870s remained a largely Mexican-American Catholic community. The population did include a growing number of people from other ethnic groups and religious faiths, however.

Military personnel buried at the cemetery were exhumed in 1884 and moved to a new cemetery at Fort Lowell, northeast of downtown Tucson. They were again moved in 1891, this time from Fort Lowell to the San Francisco National Cemetery in California. The Tucson City Council gave notice in 1882 for individuals buried in the civilian section to be exhumed and reburied at the new Court Street Cemetery (pages 52–53), but how many burials were actually removed was not recorded.

What Did We Find?

Our excavations revealed that the majority of burials in the civilian section had been left in the ground. Several hundred burials were destroyed by construction of the Tucson Newspapers building in 1940 and 1953. Most burials in the military section had been removed in 1884, but their exhumation was incomplete: we recovered portions of skeletons, items of clothing, and other materials that had been left behind in military grave pits during our excavations.

We recovered the remains of 1,386 individuals. Some of the 1,083 grave pits contained no remains. Thus, evidence of 1,044 individuals came from grave pits, and remains from several hundred individuals were found in disturbed, nonburial contexts. Evidence from excavations and from photographs provides the approximate location of the wall that enclosed the military cemetery (see map on facing page). The majority of the nonmilitary burials were members of the local Hispanic Catholic community.

Also notable on this map is a very dense concentration of graves. In this area, burials frequently intruded into earlier interments, a pattern that was also noted in the Presidio Cemetery. The section immediately east of the military section appeared to contain the remains of people who had recently moved to the Tucson area, many of whom were non-Hispanic, non-Catholic Euro-American males.

Since the conclusion of SRI's excavations, human remains and associated objects have been repatriated or reburied based on a cultural affinity study. Repatriations have been made to the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and Los Descendientes del Presidio de Tucson. Those remains that were not repatriated were reburied at All Faiths Cemeteries in Tucson. Remains from the military section were reburied in a new section of the Sierra Vista military cemetery.

Why Did This Happen?

One of the questions most often asked about the abandonment of the Alameda-Stone Cemetery is "Why did people build their homes on top of the cemetery and why didn't Tucsonans complain?"

The answer is complicated. It relates to both historical events that occurred in Tucson at the end of the 1800s and contemporary religious beliefs about death. Completion of the railroad through Tucson in 1880



IMAGE: COURTESY OF THE ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NO. B89855

LOS ANGELITOS

Because of disease and unsanitary conditions, child mortality was much higher in the 1800s than it is today. When the Alameda-Stone Cemetery was in use, several epidemics swept through the Tucson area, including a smallpox epidemic in the winter of 1870 that killed many more Mexican-American children and infants than adults. Because Tucson at that time was a mostly Mexican-American town, many children who died were given Catholic burials.

One tradition among Hispanic Catholics and some Native Americans was to bury children and unmarried younger adults with floral crowns placed on the head and in clothes that evoked images of angels. According to the Hispanic Catholic tradition, which emphasized children's innocence, the souls of *Los Angelitos* ("the little angels") bypass purgatory and go directly to heaven.

And indeed, we found remnants of such crowns—made of wire wrapped with paper or ribbon, and adorned with paper or fabric flowers as well as beads—in the burials of more than 100 children and some young adults. Pins that could have been used to fasten burial garments, such as shrouds, and artifacts corresponding to other floral arrangements were also found with some of these individuals.

—Michael Heilen, *Statistical Research, Inc.*
and Kristin Sewell

brought new settlers to Tucson who had no connection with individuals buried in the cemetery. The cemetery was considered to be located on prime land for development.

Excavations confirmed that newcomers who built homes in the project area knew that they were building atop a cemetery. There appears to have been little protest from the community about development of the former cemetery.

Also complicating the situation were nineteenth-century Catholic beliefs that placed the immortality of the soul over the sanctity of physical human remains. Apparent local disinterest in physical preservation of the cemetery, combined with an influx of persons totally unconnected to the established community, led to the inevitable development of the former cemetery lands as a residential neighborhood. □

The Forgotten Court Street Cemetery

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The second City of Tucson cemetery, established in June 1875, was known as the Court Street Cemetery, and it occupied eight city blocks on the northern edge of Tucson. The east half was reserved for Catholics, and the west half for Protestants, Jews, military veterans, and members of various fraternal organizations.

From the start, residents complained about the cemetery's appearance. The *Arizona Weekly Citizen* reported that "The present cemetery is a dreary bleak desolate place and I deem it cruelty in the highest degree to compel parents, kindred and friends to entomb and take final leave of their departed ones in so drear and desolate a place."

In addition, burials were placed haphazardly and sometimes were dug so shallowly into the hard ground that coyotes burrowed into them. Conditions gradually improved, though: trees were planted, fences were erected, and the entrance featured a decorative arched gate. By the early 1900s, as many as 8,000 people had been interred in the cemetery.

In 1906, the City Council, encouraged by some prominent businessmen, decided that the cemetery should be moved farther north, away from the expanding edge of the city. They saw the need for a larger cemetery, but also thought the land could be used for other purposes. The businessmen saw an opportunity to make money in two ways: from future burials and by selling plots to people moving loved ones from the Court Street Cemetery to the new Evergreen and Holy Hope Cemeteries.

Despite the protests of citizens and fraternal groups, the Court Street Cemetery was closed in July 1909. Over the next few years, many of the bodies were moved to the new cemeteries, but those in unmarked graves or unclaimed by relatives or friends were left in place. By the late 1910s, the land was sold for housing development. Over the years, residents of the Dunbar Springs neighborhood have occasionally located graves while planting trees or doing yard work. Other burials have been encountered during city utility projects and even while replacing a mailbox.



A coffin from the Red Men plot had elaborate wood molding, white metal handles, and gutta-percha griffins on each corner. IMAGE: ROBERT B. CIACCIO



In October 2007, after heavy rainfall, a homeowner found a sinkhole that contained bones and coffin hardware. Archaeologists were called in to excavate the burial, which was of a three- to four-year-old child who had been interred in a dress. The Douglas fir casket was decorated with diamond-shaped appliqué as well as a crucifix with a lamb. Several pieces of clothing had been stuffed into the foot of the casket. A second burial found beneath the first one was that of a 25- to 35-year-old man in a casket with identical hardware and decorations. He had been buried with a coin purse and jackknife in his left pocket, and a comb and three coins (including coins dated 1877 and 1886) in his right pocket. During this time period in Tucson, it was unusual for the dead to be interred with personal effects. The presence of such items with both burials and the matching coffins suggest that the two may have been buried as rapidly as possible, perhaps because they died from a contagious disease, like smallpox.

The last plot laid out in 1898 was for the Pima Lodge No. 10, Improved Order of Red Men. This fraternal group was known for holding monthly parties and marching in parades in Native American-inspired costumes. A benefit of paying monthly dues was a dignified burial in the Red Men plot. Archival research identified 16 individuals placed in the plot. In 2011, backhoe stripping located 20 graves in two separate areas. In 2015, Desert Archaeology excavated 10 grave shafts, one of which had been abandoned when the original grave diggers hit earlier burials. The remaining nine yielded seven exhumed graves, each of which contained human remains left behind, as well as remnants of clothing and six coffins and seven wooden vaults. Two other graves had not been exhumed and contained the vault, coffins, and remains of children. Both child coffins had rose wreaths placed on their lids. We have not yet identified the children through archival sources. □

COMMUNITY PORTRAIT

Helping Us See

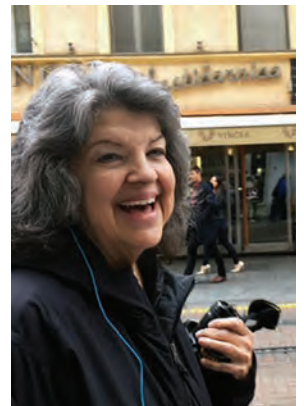
KATE SARTHER
ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTHWEST

Archaeology Southwest Magazine is incredibly fortunate to have two regular special contributors, Catherine Gilman and Robert Ciaccio. Their unique blends of skills are essential not only to this magazine and its success, but also to public interpretation of Tucson's past and the Southwest's history more generally.

Rob and Catherine are artists and archaeologists. Their archaeological field experience informs their ability to make visual sense of the past through interpretive graphics. Before moving to Arizona 30 years ago to study archaeology and cartography, Catherine was an East Coast actor, singer, and teacher. She makes maps, performs GIS (Geographic Information Systems) analyses, creates terrain relief, and does all she can to make hard data attractively intelligible. Rob is a painter, sculptor, and digital artist who lived in and around the Hopi and Navajo reservations in northern Arizona before moving to Tucson. In addition to his scientific illustrations, which are of great value to researchers, Rob has developed a proprietary approach for visually reconstructing research-based scenes of life in the past.

Catherine helps us see and understand the information better, and Rob helps us see and understand the

people who came before. Rob and Catherine's collaborations are numerous and include the time line on pages 6–8. When you visit the places of the past around Tucson, southern Arizona, and the Southwest, take a close look at the interpretive signage and exhibition panels—chances are you will see the names *Catherine Gilman* and *Robert B. Ciaccio*. □



Left: Robert B. Ciaccio. **Right:** Catherine Gilman