



REPORT

QUARAI MISSION

INVESTIGATION



*Punta de Agua
New Mexico*

NM057

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



SOLVED

2002

COMPLETION
STATUS

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Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

Definition of Terms

Investigation Status: Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change has occurred that creates confounding variables.

Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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Part 1: Location Information

Quarai Mission

Punta de Agua, NM

Part 2: Location History

Like Abó and Las Humanas, red walled Quarai was a thriving pueblo when Oñate first approached it in 1598 to "accept" its oath of allegiance to Spain. Three of Quarai's Spanish priests were head of the New Mexico Inquisition during the 1600s, including Fray Estevan de Perea, Custodian of the Franciscan order in the Salinas Jurisdiction and called by one historian the "Father of the New Mexican Church." Despite the horrors associated with the word "Inquisition," records from the hearings show that the early inquisitors, in New Mexico at least, were compassionate men capable of separating gossip from what the church regarded as serious transgressions.



In one case, tensions between church and state reached a peak when Perea charged the alcalde mayor of Salinas with encouraging the native

Kachina dances. That case was dropped, but the alcalde's continued disruption at the mission prompted the Inquisition to banish him. Quarai was the base of operations for the Inquisition here in New Mexico.

Testimony recorded by Perea and others for trials at Mexico City provides a valuable picture of Spanish Indian relationships in the 1600s. Spain's sophisticated legal system was applied (when it worked as intended) to protect the Indians' civil and property rights. And perhaps the Spanish colonists learned the patience and endurance that the Pueblos had practiced for hundreds of years.

The "hills" around the ruins are actually the remains of a large masonry



Indian village or pueblo. The few scattered walls above ground are the results of limited excavations in the 1950s. There has been little archeological research in the pueblo, so we have only the barest outline of Quarai's prehistory. From ground surveys of the area, and occasional mention in Spanish records, we believe that

the population of Quarai in the 1600s was around four hundred to six hundred people. Not all of the house blocks were occupied at the same time; some were abandoned while others were thriving.

Quarai was on the southeastern fringe of the pueblo world. Tiwa-speaking Indians migrated through mountain canyons from the area around present-day Albuquerque before A.D. 1300. They established settlements along the eastern slope of the Manzano Mountains at Chilili, Tajique, and here at Quarai. They farmed, hunted, and gathered salt from saline lakes in the valley beyond. They also took advantage of their location between Rio Grande pueblos and the Plains Indians to become traders.

Today in New Mexico, the Tiwa language is still spoken at the pueblos of Taos, Picuris, Sandia, and Isleta.

Also called the church of Nuestra Senora de La Purisima Concepcion de Cuarac, enduring symbol of the early Spanish presence in this valley. Quarai is probably a later phonetic spelling of Cuarac. The red sandstone walls, once protected by adobe plaster, are forty feet high on foundations seven feet deep and six feet wide. The interior length of the church is one hundred feet. The nave is twenty-seven feet wide, and the transept fifty feet. Since we have no plans or drawings of these early Franciscan missions, we must envision how they looked by studying the physical clues which remain. The square holes above the entry are sockets for beams. They hint that a porch extended across the front of the church, although no traces of it remain. The splayed entrance held wide doors which swung inward on iron pivot hinges providing light and easy access.



Fray Juan Gutierrez de la Chica was the priest here in 1628 and he probably started construction of the church. Although Quarai was on a

frontier, remote from the hearth of the Spanish Empire and the Catholic Church, every detail of the church's conception and construction reveal careful planning and attention. These massive stone walls enclosed a vast space which contrasted sharply with the modest rooms familiar to the Indians.

From the Park service Pamphlet

You are directly beneath the choir loft. The square sockets that held the outside porch roof also held the floor joists of the choir loft. On their opposite end, the joists were supported by a large square beam which fitted into the single sockets on the side walls. The low ceiling thus formed created an antechamber. Initially, the baptistery was located here. The large opening high on your right was the choir loft entrance. Access was from a second story room with a landing outside the entry.

At your feet is part of the original flagstone floor. The walls, plastered white, had painted dados at waist height. Typically the dados were bands of stripes and patterns painted in red, black, yellow, and blue. Above them, religious paintings hung along the walls.



Continuing into the nave, the ceiling height soared to the top level of the rectangular sockets high along the side walls. Parishioners assembled here for mass. Toward the front, this space opens out into the side arms of the transept and then narrows again to form the apse. The overall shape of the church was that of a cross. In each arm of the transept there was a small altar. The main altar was centered in the apse with three steps leading up to it. The side altars were at floor level.

Look again to the top of the church walls. The long narrow sockets held corbels and vigas or roof beams. Corbels were the carved and painted supports for the long beams which spanned the width of the church and supported the ceiling. Notice that the sockets in each area of the church--nave, transept and apse--are at different heights. This difference visibly emphasized the three parts of the cruciform church.



The variance in height between the nave ceiling and the higher transept ceiling allowed for a transverse clerestory window. This window extended

across the width of the church at the point where the transept arms cross the nave. The southern exposure caused a broad swath of light to illuminate the sanctuary and altar.

The altar raised high and bathed with lights the cynosure of the church and religious services. Although supplies were difficult to get in this remote corner of the Spanish Empire, altars usually had lavish furnishings. Shipping records of the Mission Supply Service list Rouen altar linens, brass candlesticks, incense burners, chalices, and paintings of patron saints. Retablos reached almost to the ceiling behind the main and side altars.



They were decorated with richly painted carvings, bits of reflective mica, statues, and small portraits of saints. These items were probably made in Mexico, disassembled, and shipped to the mission. Against the white plastered church walls, the altars stood out in lush detail.

The kiva is a ceremonial chamber of the pueblo religion. This kiva is a shape more familiar to us than the square kiva in the patio of the convento. However, in Tiwa pueblos both square and round kivas are common. The flat roof of a kiva was supported by posts. On the floor was a fire pit, and the hatchway above served as both an entrance and an opening for smoke to escape. As warm air and smoke rose out the hatchway, cool air descended through a ventilator shaft on the east side. Thus fresh air circulated through the kiva making it a reasonably comfortable place for the various activities carried out below.

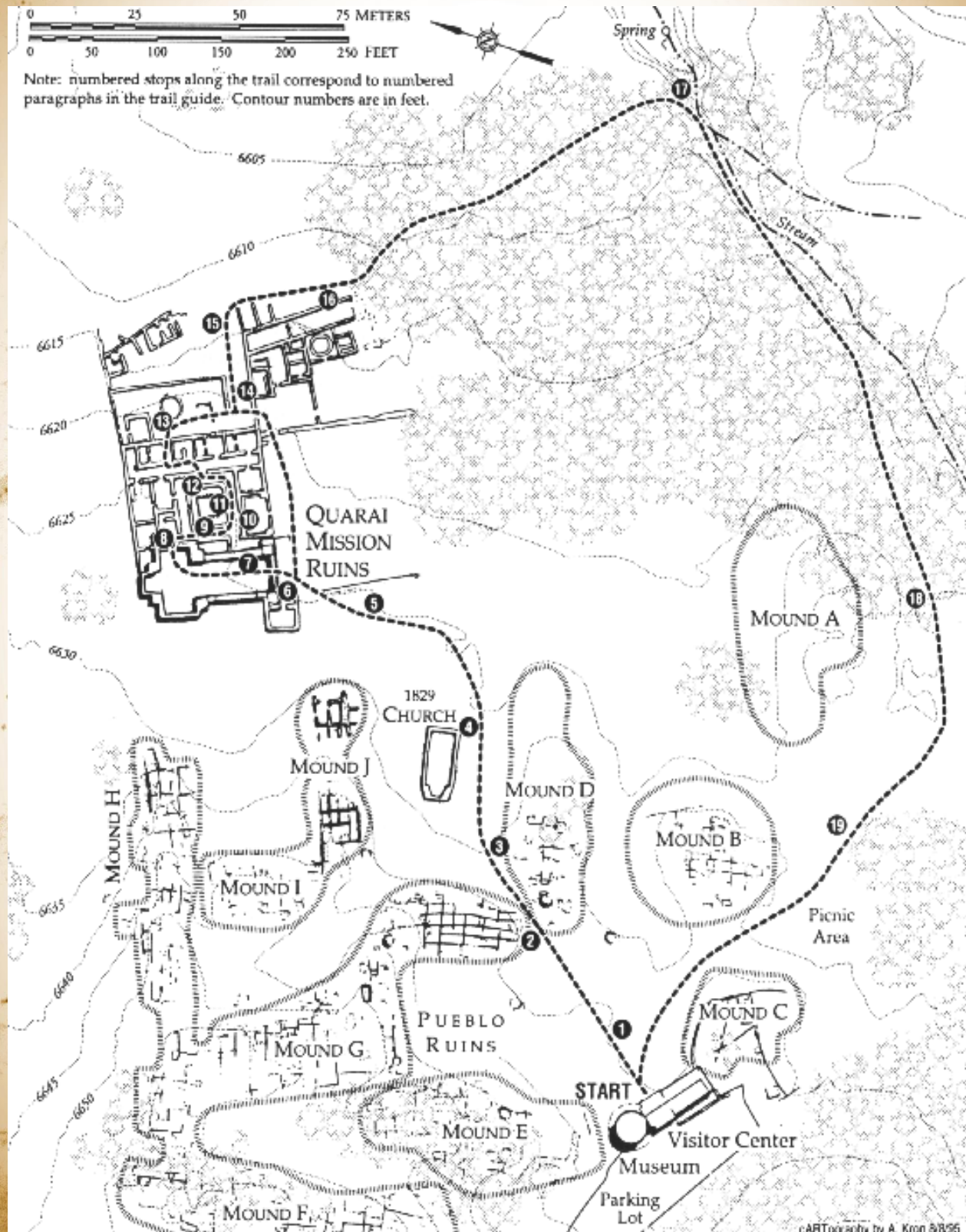
This kiva was here before the church and convento were built. It was buried by mission construction, implying that the Spanish structures were built on a mound of pueblo ruins similar to those you see along the trail today. It was never in use during the mission period.



The architectural contrast between these Tiwa and Spanish structures is clear; and it suggests an even greater gulf between the social and spiritual worlds of the cultures which created them. Oddly enough, this is where we obtained the majority of our unusual readings.

By the 1670s, the people of Quarai were suffering all the problems of drought, disease, famine, and hostile tribes that plagued the Salinas Jurisdiction as a whole. The drought and famine continue. Many are sick, some are dying. I am giving charity to the natives. Provisions stored for just this case are pitifully low. We have received more cattle and other provisions for the Spanish Soldiers and the natives. The terror and outrages continue. Some are leaving every day. Fray Francisco de Ayeta the procurator general and the custodian of the provinces of New Mexico was to bring us carts of supplies and reinforcements, but I have decided that we can wait no longer. We must leave, all two hundred families, and go north to Tajiue where there is a

mission and settlement. If that, too, is unprotected we will go on to Isleta to be with other Tiwa speakers.--Fray Diego de Parraga.



In 1677 Fray Parraga locked the mission's doors for the last time. Climbing aboard a wagon carrying the church bell, sacred vessels and vestments, and his personal effects he headed north with the Tiwa people to Tajique and shortly on to Isleta. Today these ruins yield clues to the relationships between Spaniards and the Salinas pueblos. What affect the Spanish had upon pueblo life is also hinted at by the archeological information unlocked here at Quarai. Many remnants of life in that time still survive as part of the cultural tradition that is New Mexico today.

Additional Historical Resources

The 1939 - 1940 excavation Project at Quarai Pueblo and Mission Building

Historical Photos before excavation

Part 3: Reported Phenomenon

The following entry is in the book " The Haunted Places, The National Directory" by Dennis William Hauck



Visitors to this seventeenth century Spanish mission are surprised to find the ghost of a conquistador still guarding the ruins. He enters through one of the gaps in the adobe walls and is surrounded by a blue-white light. He wears a tabard bearing the symbol of the Calatrava, a Spanish military religious group. He was first sighted in 1913, when he pointed his finger at a startled tourist and said (in Spanish) "Frequent this place, traveler on a mystic journey."

Since this location was being talked about on local television, we decided to investigate the claims and see if it is anything more than an urban legend.

Part 5: Investigation

We were unable to locate the account of the tourist that saw the specter in 1913. However it seems unlikely that tourists would be visiting the mission during that time unless they were a part of the archaeological team that was there that year. Major studies of Quarai have taken place since 1913, when the School of American Archaeology began excavations in the

southern-most mound (believed to be the oldest area of the ancient village.) It is also very questionable if the knights of Calatrava were even in New Mexico, as we could not find any definitive records of such.

With the historical account missing, we focused on interviewing the Park Rangers and staff. If anyone would have witnessed anything unusual at the site, they would be the most likely candidates.

We talked with three rangers and two former rangers that worked at Quarai. Out of these five people, only one knew about the 1913 ghost story. All five had never had anything unusual occur to them while on the site other than a rowdy tourist or two.

Part 6: Conclusion

The location fails the Gurney/Myers standard. There are no past or current witnesses to any sort of paranormal activity. Only the folklore of the 1913 account remains which appears in only one book (that we were able to locate).

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Part 7: Photographs





