

Aguaverde: A Forgotten Presidio of the Line, 1773-1781

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Abstract

A preliminary survey of the ruins of Presidio Santa Rosa Maria del Sacramento de Aguaverde (1773-1781) and later Colonia Militar San Vicente (1851-1853) produced a map of the perimeter walls, exposed the outlines of one bastion store room and an isolated structure, and listed artifacts visible on the surface and in treasure hunter holes. Archival records provide a history of the founding and abandonment of three incarnations of the presidio. Construction of the first Presidio Sacramento began on the San Diego River in 1737 but ceased in 1739 when the garrison was moved to the Santa Rosa valley. In 1773, orders to restructure the presidial line resulted in the founding of a presidio at the spring called Aguaverde, a tributary to the San Diego River. The fort was abandoned in 1781, only to be recommissioned as a Colonia Militar by the Mexican government for a brief two years between 1851 and 1853. Subsequently, the site was plundered for building material and damaged by treasure hunters and construction of a transmission line through its main compound.

Introduction

Presidio Santa Rosa María del Sacramento de Aguaverde (1773-1781) is one of the forgotten presidios of the line established in 1773 in a vain attempt to protect the communities and ranches of northern New Spain (Figure 1). For well over a century, northward expansion of the Spanish empire was thwarted by the hostility of the native people and the inhospitable land that was their refuge. By the early 18th century, the routes north had bifurcated, the eastern prong passing through fortified San Juan Bautista en route to San Antonio and the western leading to Santa Fe through El Paso del Norte. In between lay the arid Bolsón de Mapimí, the stern and unforgiving northern ranges of the Sierra Madres, and the agonizingly steep canyons of the Río Grande. Although unfit for European colonization, the *despoblado*, or unpopulated zone, was both a haven and a highway for the native insurgents who penetrated Spanish defenses in search of plunder and revenge.

Just as the Spanish colonial movement detoured around the harsh and intractable terrain of northern Coahuila, so has archeological and historical research circled around the lonely short-lived presidios of the line that once guarded the northern frontier of New Spain from the southern banks of the Rio Grande. Rex Gerald's (1968) *Spanish Presidios of the Late Eighteenth Century in Northern New Spain* examined presidial architecture and artifacts from

California to Chihuahua, ending with San Vicente¹, which he called San Sabás [sic]. On the eastern flank, San Juan Bautista de Rio Grande (Presidio del Norte),² the oldest of Coahuila's defenses along the Rio Grande, was extensively researched by Weddle (1968; see also Adams 1977). The gap between the two was occupied by three presidios built in 1773 and abandoned in 1781 – Monclova Viejo, La Babia and the subject of this preliminary report – Santa Rosa María del Sacramento de Aguaverde and later Colonia Militar San Vicente.

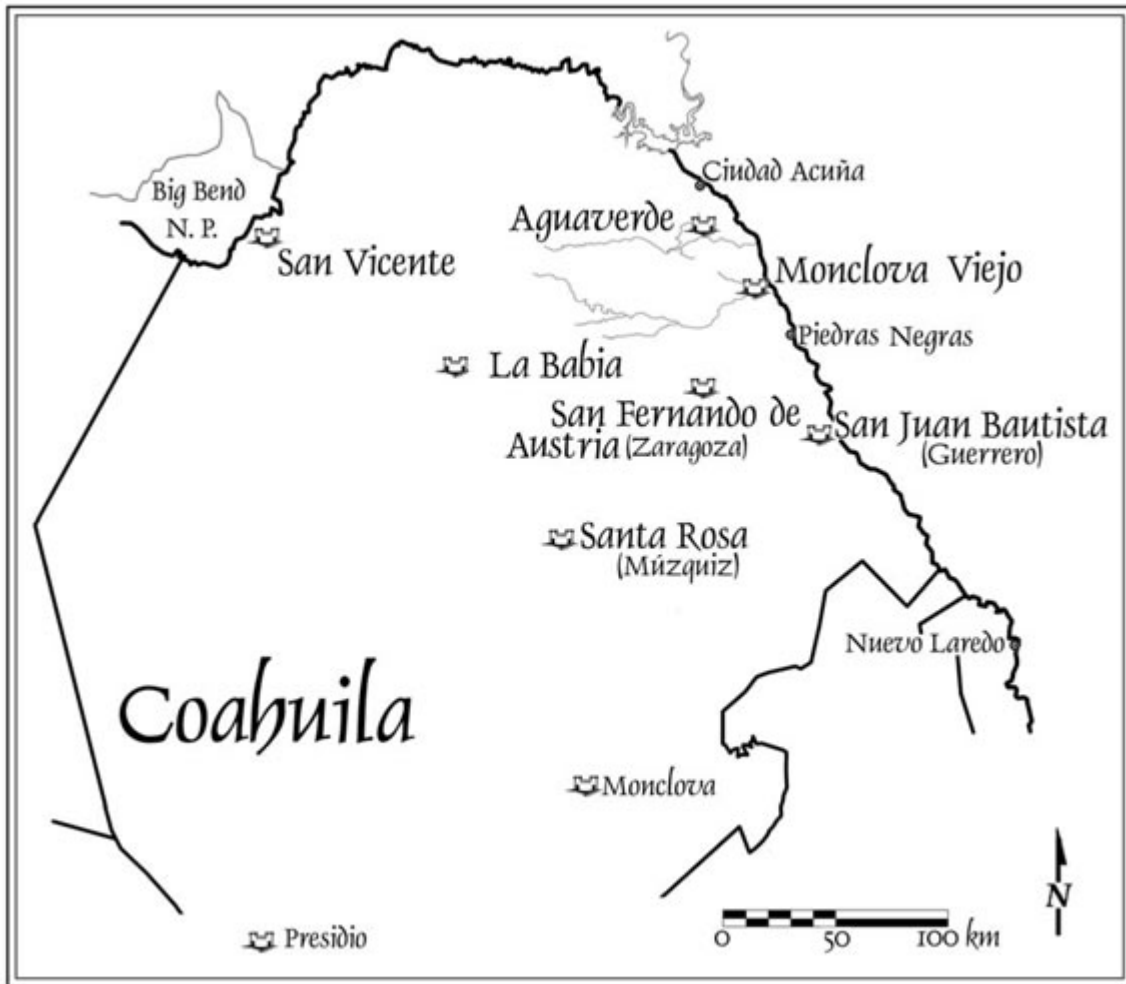


Figure 1. General location map.

¹ San Vicente was then in Nueva Vizcaya but is now within the modern boundaries of Coahuila, near the Chihuahua state line.

² Mission San Juan Bautista was founded in 1700; the military presence began in 1701 when the Compañía Volante del Río Grande del Norte, later to become Presidio del Norte, was commissioned. In 1773, San Juan Bautista was transferred from the jurisdiction of Coahuila to that of Texas as part of the readjustment of the presidial line. The presidio and the missions it protected are also referred to as Guerrero in later times. (see Weddle 1968).

How This Project Came About

In 1999, a preliminary investigation of the ruins of the old Spanish presidio of Aguaverde, south of the modern twin cities of Ciudad Acuña/Del Rio, was carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia (INAH-Coahuila) to ascertain the extent of damage incurred by construction of a transmission line through the site and potential for disturbance from the expansion of the neighboring *ejido* (cooperative community). Although the presidio site is on private property, the *ejido* irrigates its fields with water drawn from the eponymous spring, now dammed (Figures 2, 3), and treasure hunters still pursue the myth of buried Spanish gold despite all evidence to the contrary. The perimeter walls, long since reduced to intermittent stone blocks, were mapped by the archeologists and further examined by INAH architects (Figures 4, 5).



Figure 2. The dammed waters of Aguaverde. The presidio is on a low hill right of frame.

The exterior walls of one room were cleared of eolian silt and sand to determine construction methods and depth of intact features. A metal detector survey was used to augment the range of artifacts noted on the surface, in treasure hunters' discard piles, and in bulldozer swathes left by the transmission line construction crew. A most knowledgeable informant from the *ejido*, Juan

Watanabe Ortiz, who was born in 1922, was interviewed at length, since his memory extended back to 1936 when the walls were still standing. Archival research surveyed published and unpublished documents in the Archivo General del Estado de Coahuila and the Nettie Lee Benson Collection at The University of Texas at Austin. The military and administrative history of the Spanish northern frontier and the leaders who were responsible for implementing policy and action are the subject of innumerable books and essays. Here, our concern is with official reports and eyewitness accounts of the construction and operation of the three incarnations of the presidio, to help plan the future of the site and to serve as an aid to understanding the visible archeological remains.



Figure 3. Looking across the dammed stream from the base of the presidio.

General Historical Context

The expansion of the northern frontier in search of precious minerals, agricultural land, and souls to convert brought the Spanish empire into conflict with innumerable indigenous groups, many of whom perished without record. The native people who were enslaved, expelled or exterminated did not accept their fate gladly, retaliating with a vengeance that threatened to halt the spread of empire. Eventually, however, the surviving native people of Coahuila were driven into the more inhospitable reaches of the Bolsón de Mapimí, a waterless expanse

that straddles the border of modern Coahuila and Chihuahua. From that desert refuge, raiding parties sallied forth to harass the settled communities and ranches, evading retaliation by retreating where the Spanish were loathe to follow.

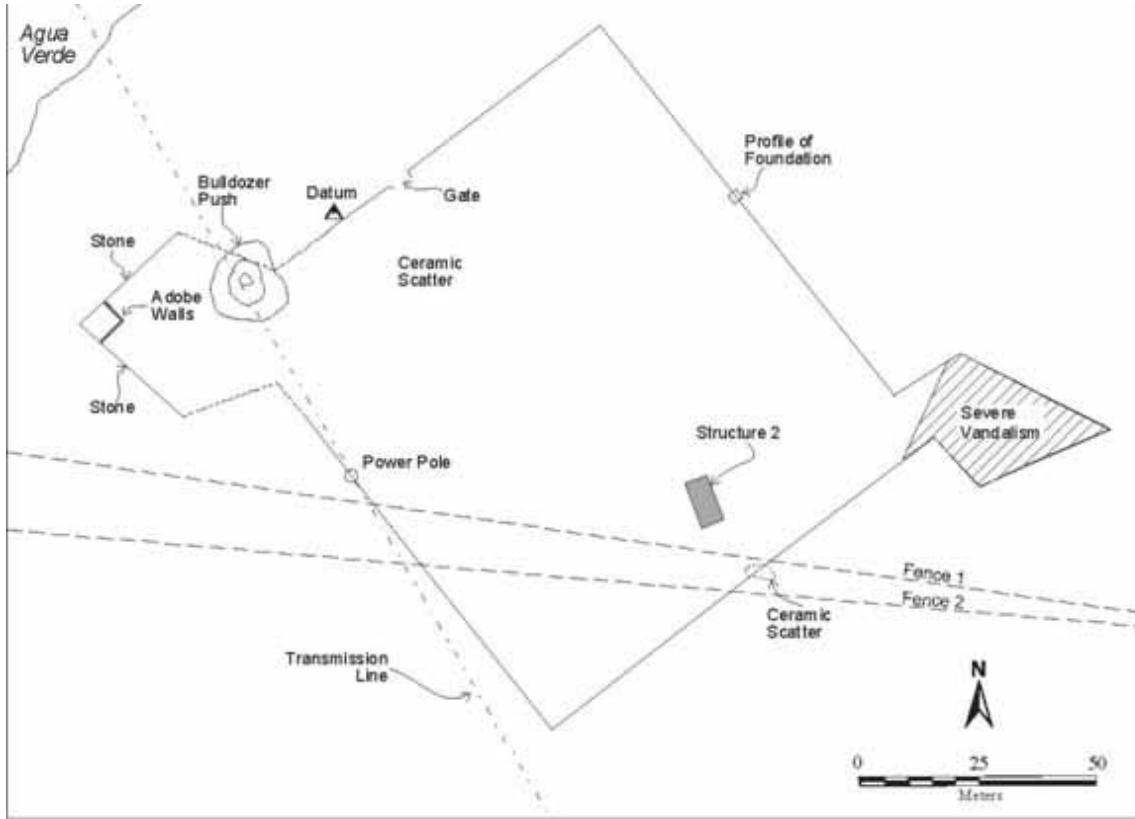


Figure 4. Plan map of presidio walls and interior features.

Near the end of the 17th century, a new and more formidable enemy appeared in the form of mounted Plains Indians whose lightning raids in search of slaves and livestock presented an even greater threat to colonial settlements. The Spanish response to both local and intrusive rebellion was grounded in misconceptions about guerilla warfare that led to the construction of a series of fortifications (presidios) that were doomed to failure by the great distances and inhospitable terrain of the northern frontier. Presidio Aguaverde was one of these failed experiments whose history began decades before the construction of the ruins visible today.

The First Presidio –Sacramento (1737-1739)

As part of a general fiscal assessment of the presidial system, the viceroy of New Spain, the marqués de Casa Fuerte, sent Brigadier Pedro de Rivera, then governor of Tlaxcala, on a tour of inspection that began in 1724 and lasted for over three years (Alessio Robles 1946, 1978:476, Jackson 1995, Rivera 1728). In

response to one of Rivera's more urgent recommendations, in 1729 presidial captain José de Berroterán was sent to explore the Rio Grande from San Juan Bautista de Rio Grande to the confluence of the Conchos River, known as la Junta de los Ríos. The mission had two goals - to punish marauding Indians and to find a location for a new presidio to serve as a deterrent to the harassment of the colonists of northern Mexico (Castañeda 1936:336-345). The presidio, which was to be named Sacramento, was destined for a site ten river leagues below the confluence of the Conchos and the Río Grande within the jurisdiction of Coahuila, but staffed by soldiers taken from several extant garrisons (Alessio Robles 1978:545; Morfi 1935:382fn; Naylor and Polzer 1988:146-156). Having penetrated perhaps as far as modern-day Dryden, Texas, Berroterán turned back, defeated by lack of water and the harsh terrain (Berroterán 1729; see Alessio Robles 1978: 479-487). Plans for the presidio were put on temporary hold for financial reasons and the soldiers who were to build and man the fort were remanded to their original companies (Naylor and Polzer 1988:147).

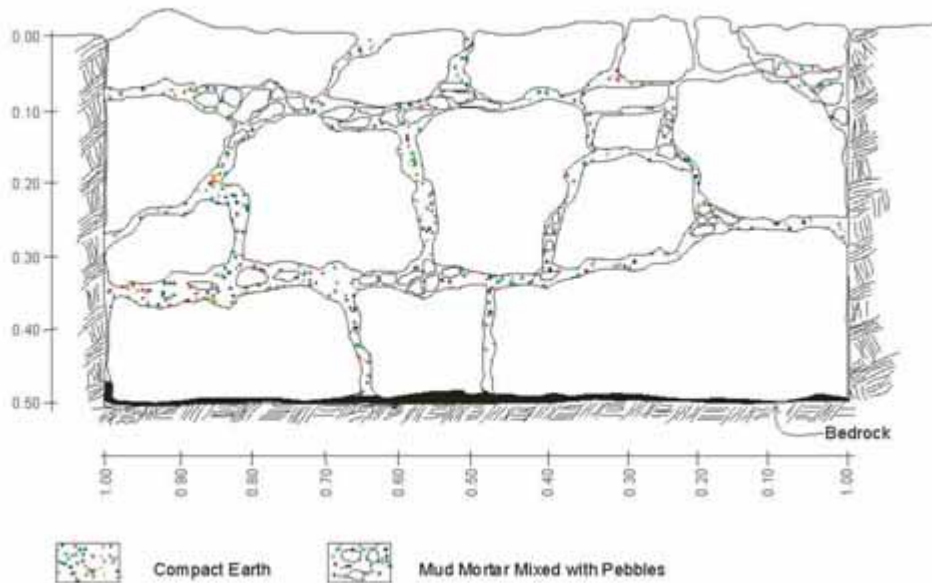


Figure 5. Profile of embedded wall section; stone mortared with mud and pebbles.

Raids and depredations continued unabated until citizen complaints to the authorities stirred them to action. Unimpressed by Berroterán's report, the viceroy ordered Governor Blas de la Garza Falcón and Captain Joséph de Eca y Múzquiz to complete the mission in 1735 (Alessio Robles 1978:546; Castañeda 1938:204-208). Their main objective, to find a suitable location for the new

presidio, was fulfilled on the San Diego River, south of the modern border cities of Ciudad Acuña/Del Rio. Garza Falcón noted in his log that three leagues³ from the source of the San Diego were two places where water could be drawn, one south and one north of the river. The south side had more arable land but the north side had wood, stone, earth for adobes and other materials, as well as good terrain for the new presidio (Alessio Robles 1978:547). A contingent under the command of Miguel de la Garza Falcón, the Governor's son, was sent to explore the Rio Grande and beyond to determine the accuracy of Berroterán's initial report. Governor de la Garza Falcón and Captain de Eca y Múzquiz remained on the San Diego, reconnoitering the area and going so far as to begin cutting trees to build a stockade for the new presidio. By the time Miguel returned from a frigid 8-day trek across rugged hills and deep canyons, 120 logs had been cut and a large wooden cross erected atop a nearby hill (Castañeda 1938:206-207). The reunited column returned to San Juan Bautista on January 15, 1736 where the ailing Governor immediately wrote to the Viceroy recommending that the presidio be erected on the San Diego site, but he would not live to see his plans come to fruition. Upon his father's death in February, Miguel petitioned and was granted an appointment as captain-for-life of the new presidio, but construction was not approved until December and then with the proviso that the location was not to be considered permanent (Castañeda 1938:208).

The new captain was allocated 26,625 pesos advance pay for himself and his garrison and another 6,000 pesos for erection of the presidio (Alessio Robles 1978:548; Daniel 1955:178). Considering that a regular soldier was paid 400 pesos a year and the captain 600 pesos, this was a considerable sum. Construction began later that year when, in October, the captain and 50 soldiers and officers that had been recruited for the presidio arrived at their destination, 200 varas⁴ from the San Diego River. With them were 16 families that would settle in the shelter of the presidio. Land and water were distributed to the soldiers in support of their people, but attempts to tap the river to irrigate the fields were unsuccessful. Apparently, after a thousand varas of ditch had been dug, the river fell below the level of the intake. A second attempt in a different place was frustrated by the sandy soils that consumed the water. Nevertheless, work on the presidio proceeded:

....por octubre del año de 1737, llegó dicho capitán don Miguel de la Garza Falcón con los cincuenta soldados reclutados para dicho nuevo presidio, incluso los oficiales, al paraje destinado, 200 varas distante del río de San diego, donde se comenzó dicho nuevo presidio, concurriendo allí dieciséis familias que iban a avecindarse al abrigo de dicho presidio, y a los soldados se les habían de repartir tierras y aguas para su población, pero ajustada la saca de las del río de San diego para el regadío de las tierras, en

³ Throughout, a league or legua is assumed to be 4.2 km long (Rowlett 2003).

⁴ Throughout, a vara is presumed to be approximately 85 cm long (Rowlett 2003).

seiscientos pesos, con Lázaro Flores, después de haber éste hecho mil varas de zanja, se reconoció haberse bajado el río y no poderse lograr por allí la zanja, y aunque se intentó otra en distinto paraje, se frustró asimismo, por lo arenoso del terreno que consumía el agua (Alessio Robles 1978:548).

The most detailed account of this first incarnation is the fortuitous result of the loss of a mule loaded with valuables belonging to the governor of Nuevo León, Antonio Fernández de Jáuregui y Urrutia, who was returning from Texas to Monterrey. The promise of a reward brought out searchers from Lampazos who were in turn attacked by Apaches at the Río Sabinas. The troops from Candela and the “gestating” Sacramento responded, apprehending one of the members of the raiding party (Alessio Robles 1978:548). This attack prompted the new Governor, Clemente de la Garza Falcón (1738), to make a tour of the presidios in his jurisdiction. Arriving at Sacramento, he attested that all was in order. Fray Giraldo de Terreros, then a missionary at San Bernardo (San Juan Bautista) but later to be martyred at Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá, certified the extent of construction (Alessio Robles 1978:549; Castañeda 1938:404; Weddle 1988). The captain, Miguel, who was Clemente’s brother, asked for and was given possession of the land and water.

Fenecido ya semejante acto, se principió la fábrica de la estacada, y con efecto, conducidos los materiales con cuarenta indios que se llevaron de las misiones y los soldados que estaban de pronto, se formaron tres vientos, fortificándolos con madero adecuada, fabricando dos baluartes de dicha especie, con un cañón cada uno, y ambos cargados y prontos (Clemente Garza Falcón 1738; Alessio Robles 1978:549).

That deed being done, the construction of the stockade was begun, and effectively, the materials were brought by 40 Indians that were taken from the missions and the soldiers that were on hand. Walls were built in three directions (sides), fortified with adequate lumber, two ramparts were made of the same species, each with a cannon, both loaded and ready.

The governor urged the completion of the two remaining bastions and the emplacement of their cannons. Construction inside the walls reportedly consisted of 22 jacals. Six, including the chapel, were adobe and the rest were wood, all were roofed with straw. In the middle of the quadrangle was a wooden strong room built to guard the powder and avoid accidents (Alessio Robles 1978:550). The presidio did not have a priest so permission was granted for Fray Francisco de Céliz, best known as the diarist of the 1718 Alarcón expedition to Texas (Céliz 1935), to administer the sacraments but after some accidents attributable to his age, he retired to his monastery (Alessio Robles 1978:548).

Despite the evident progress being made at the time of the governor's report, the presidio was never completed. The authorities cited the need to protect the riches of the Santa Rosa valley and mountains, noting that the San Diego location only impeded the ingress of the hostile Indians from the north and was too distant to combat the rebellious local tribes. Another factor was the frustrated attempt to build an acequia and the consequent lack of water for irrigation. So, in 1739, the presidial company was ordered to move to the Santa Rosa valley and begin anew, constructing their stronghold in what is now the plaza of the modern city of Múzquiz. That presidio, Santa Rosa María del Sacramento, was usually referred to as Santa Rosa, as was the town that grew up around it.

In a description of Coahuila prepared in 1767 for the Marques de Rubí, Castillo y Terán mentions that the first location of the Presidio del Sacramento was on the San Diego River but he mistakenly places the river north of the Rio Grande, with the springs of Las Moras (Brackettville) and San Felipe (Del Rio) in Texas. He commented that "today they are all dwellings of the Apache Indians, although they do not remain in them" (Jackson 1995:164). His more complete description is reserved for the Presidio del Sacramento at Santa Rosa. Rubí however knew the correct location was 3 leagues above the confluence of the San Diego and Rio Grande, in modern Coahuila (Jackson 1995:109).

Writing some 84 years later, Colonel Emilio Langberg,⁵ a transplanted Danish officer who had recently been appointed subinspector for Chihuahua, reported that:

Se continuó la marcha para la colonia militar de San Vicente, distante de Monclova (viejo) once leguas, situada en el antigua presidio Aguaverde en la margen derecha del arroyo del mismo nombre y a distancia de 700 varas de su nacimiento y a 800 de donde se junta con el río de San Diego. A dos y media leguas se hallan los escombros de algunas fábricas, con una saca de agua que se conoce con el nombre de Sacramento, en cuyo punto se estableció en su primer origen el Valle de Santa Rosa, hoy Villa de Múzquiz (Alessio Robles 1978:576; Alessio Robles in 1935:385fn; Langberg ms.)

The march continued to the military colony of San Vicente, eleven leagues from Monclova Viejo, situated in the ancient presidio Aguaverde on the right bank of the arroyo of the same name and a distance of 700 varas from its inception and 800 from its juncture with the San Diego river. Two and a half leagues away are the ruins of some buildings, with a place where water can be drawn, that is known by the name Sacramento, at which point was first established the original Valle de Santa Rosa, now Villa de Múzquiz.

⁵ See Cunningham and Hewitt (1995) for Langberg's biography.

Langberg thus clarifies the locations of all three incarnations of the presidio. First, he places the 1737 presidio – the original site of Sacramento - two and a half leagues from the later Aguaverde. He then clearly states that the Colonia Militar San Vicente was stationed at the second presidio, Aguaverde, in 1851. The latter comment served to confuse some historians who thought he was referring to the Presidio San Vicente (1773-1781), far to the west (Weddle1968:305).

The Second Presidio – Aguaverde (1773-1781)

Throughout the next decades, the situation along the Rio Grande worsened as attacks increased in number and ferocity. Attempts to establish permanent fortifications along the Rio Grande were abandoned in favor of circumventing the great waterless Bolsón de Mapimí and the dissected terrain of northern Coahuila and Chihuahua, following the route to Santa Fe through La Junta or El Paso and to San Antonio via San Juan Bautista. In 1748, the veteran frontier captain José Berroterán in fact reported that - in his opinion - there was not a suitable place for a presidio on the banks of the Rio Grande east of La Junta and, even if built 12 leagues apart, the forts could not stop the flow of Indians into the Bolsón de Mapimí (Berroterán 1748). Since this was based on decades of field experience, he was of course correct but, as might be expected, the bureaucrats preferred the version they concocted from the safety of their administrative offices.

By the middle of the 18th century, the Spanish throne began doggedly sending orders to New Spain to reform the military and devise means of protecting the colonists. The viceroyalty was successful in ignoring the edicts of the Crown for decades until the Crown sent the marqués de Rubí on a tour of inspection that was intended to detect the flaws that had rendered the military ineffectual against the native insurgents. For two years, from 1766 to 1768, the marqués and his engineer, Nicolas de Lafora, traveled the presidial line, inspecting 23 outposts and making detailed maps of the region (Alessio Robles 1939; Lafora 1967; White 1953). The expedition crossed the Rio Grande near the mouth of the San Diego, in an area that Rubí thought was a superb location for a presidio (Jackson 1995:109).

In general, Rubí found the northern line of defense in deplorable condition – in terms of facilities, soldiers, and their commanders. His authority was such that he could take immediate temporary measures but a more permanent solution required a total revamping of the system. His recommendations resulted in the *Reglamento* of 1772 which provided detailed instructions for the implementation of reforms intended to improve both the condition of the military personnel and their fortifications (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965). The line of defense was to consist of 15 presidios, established at 40-league intervals stretching from the Gulf of California to Texas. Three presidial companies in Coahuila were to be reassigned, leaving San Juan Bautista in its original location but transferring it to

the jurisdiction of Texas. The Reglamento specifically ordered the governor of Coahuila, Jacobo de Ugarte y Loyola (Moorhead 1968), to unite the companies from Santa Rosa and Monclova to explore the terrain between San Juan Bautista and the confluence of the San Diego and the Rio Grande in search of level and fertile sites for two new presidios (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965:57). One was to guard the back of San Fernando de Austria and the other the mouth of the San Diego River.

In 1772, Hugo O'Connor, commander of the company of San Sabá, then stationed at San Fernando de Austria⁶, was appointed Commandante Inspector of the Provincias Internas, with orders to implement the provisions of the Reglamento (Vigness 1967). After inspecting most of the presidios, he realized that the line was spread too thin on the eastern end, so he added two sites to the recommended 15, bringing the total to 17. To the three locations he had selected in what is now Coahuila - Aguaverde, Monclova Viejo (El Moral)⁷, and San Vicente – he added San Antonio Bucareli de la Babia. Although La Babia was built some 40 leagues from the Rio Grande, the presidio was intended to stop the gap between Aguaverde and San Vicente. San Vicente was then in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, but in essence these four presidios formed a geographic and temporal cluster further united by their short lives and later anonymity.

All four of the new fortifications were manned by garrisons moved from other locations, so each of them could be referenced by the name of the location or the name of the company assigned to it, thus introducing one of the sources of confusion that have plagued discussions of the presidios in the modern literature. The garrison from the abandoned San Sabá presidio,⁸ since moved to San Fernando de Austria, was reassigned to San Vicente, on the eastern flank of the Big Bend, near a ford of the Rio Grande. The men stationed at Monclova were ordered to build Monclova Viejo atop the hill of El Moral near the San Rodrigo River. The troops of Santa Rosa del Sacramento were sent to erect their fort at the spring of Aguaverde, near the San Diego River. The fourth new presidio, San Antonio Bucareli de la Babia, was garrisoned by the company formerly stationed at the recently deactivated Orcoquisac presidio, San Agustín de Ahumada, formerly on the Trinity River in east Texas (Moorhead 1975:70; Tunnell and Ambler 1967).

The Reglamento specified that “the exterior walls are to be built first of adobes, with two small bastions in the angles; afterward on the interior will be built the chapel, the guardhouse, residences for the captains, officers, and the chaplain, and quarters for the soldiers and Indians, sheltering everyone during the

⁶ San Fernando de Austria is now the modern city of Zaragosa.

⁷ The presidio was called Monclova Viejo but it was built on a hill known as El Moral so the names are sometimes interchanged.

⁸ Although generally referred to as San Sabá, Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas was established in 1757 to protect Mission Santa Cruz de la San Sabá and was formally abandoned in 1771 (see Weddle 1968).

construction in campaign tents and temporary barracks” (Brinkerhoff and Faulk 1965:63). Although this plan proved to be too ambitious, construction on the new presidio Aguaverde must have begun shortly after O’Conor assumed his command since, although not complete, it was the first of the four ready for occupancy by April 24, 1773 (Moorhead 1975:70, fn). San Vicente was garrisoned in the summer of 1773 but Monclova Viejo lagged behind due to a severe drought and the lack of laborers in 1772 (Moorhead 1975:168). It too was ready for its garrison sometime between October 4, 1773 and June, 1774. Officials responsible for the construction excused the delays, blaming short-falls in the funds allocated and explaining that the rock walls of Aguaverde and Monclova were so time-consuming that they were finished with adobe bricks to speed up construction (Moorhead 1968: 37). However, the walls of Monclova Viejo are still standing and they are constructed completely of stone (Figure 6). La Babia, the last of the four to be commissioned, was activated by January, 1774. Officially, each of the presidios had 56 or 57 officers and soldiers, as well as 10 Indian scouts (Moorhead 1975:73; O’Conor 1994:97).



Figure 6. Standing walls at Monclova Viejo (courtesy of John Stockley).

Each of the presidios was charged in general with the defense of certain areas but each was also to contribute soldiers to special campaigns (O’Conor 1994: 77). Troops from Santa Rosa (Aguaverde) were to patrol the banks of the Rio Grande to the ford of Santa Theresa, to that of San Antonio, to the junction of

the Río Grande and the Río San Diego, as far as the presidio Monclova and back. San Sabá (San Vicente) was responsible for the territory between it and La Babia whose troops in turn were to fill the gap between it and Aguaverde. During its short 8-year tenure, Aguaverde saw battles fought within the shadow of its walls, suffered direct attack, launched campaigns and served as a rendezvous point for campaigners in the field (O'Connor 1994:83; Thomas 1941:89, 91; Weddle 1968:327, 333, 335). Spanish captives recovered after a bloody battle north of the Río Grande in 1773 reported that the Lipans and Mescaleros planned to unite to destroy Aguaverde and Monclova Viejo, as well as Santa Rosa and San Fernando (Weddle 1968:327). After a disastrous ambush of a small party of soldiers in the La Babia valley later the same year, the Spanish survivors found safety in Aguaverde (Weddle 1968:331) and pursuit of the offending Apaches was launched from that presidio. In 1775, men from Aguaverde participated in O'Connor's ambitious campaign to clear the region and drive the Apaches north of the Río Grande and Aguaverde served as a base for the launch and return of the eastern contingent of that expedition. One soldier was lost during an assault on the fort on March 24, 1777 although the Mescaleros were forced to retreat from the gates by a cannonade (Croix to Ugarte y Loyola May, 1777; Morfi 1935:386). The threat of attack was so constant that the garrison could not grow crops (Morfi 1935:385) and their horse herd was at constant risk.

In 1776, in response to deteriorating conditions along the northern frontier, the Crown created a new military command and appointed Teodoro de la Croix Commander-General of the Provincias Internas, replacing Hugo O'Connor and expanding the powers of the office (Thomas 1941). Hugo O'Connor's final report to Croix in 1777 stated that Santa Rosa (Aguaverde) was manned by 40 privates, 10 Indian scouts, 2 corporals, 1 sergeant, Ensign Vicente Pebrete, Chaplain Lorenzo Cantú, Lieutenant Juan Bap. Elguezabal, and Captain Don Juan Antonio Serrano, who had been the commander since the presidio was built. The remuda consisted of 252 horses and 51 mules. He footnotes his account, stating that the physical buildings of the 17 presidios of the line were finished except for some interior work at Monclova and Santa Rosa, among others. Furthermore, Santa Rosa was one of three presidios whose accounts were in default because the captain had not complied with instructions regarding fiscal matters (O'Connor 1994:98).

Croix was faced with trying to stem increasingly aggressive hostilities with a rapidly deteriorating line of defense while hindered by bureaucratic wrangling and interference. After reviewing military reports, consulting with experienced officials, convening councils of war and inspecting the presidios, Croix settled upon a number of reforms, including the reorganization of the presidial line (Thomas 1941:47). He concluded that three of the Coahuila presidios were useless – San Vicente (San Sabá), La Babia and Aguaverde – the latter because the Mescaleros there were peaceful but the Santa Rosa Valley was left open to attack by Apaches coming in from the west (Thomas 1941:50). He reported that the Lipans not only threatened a general invasion but, in their arrogance, had attacked the presidio of Aguaverde (Thomas 1941:89). In addition, the isolation

of these posts allowed the enemy to circumvent their defenses and penetrate the interior towns and valleys. Governor Juan de Ugalde supported the decision to dismantle the presidios, at first suggesting that they should be manned by skeleton forces. A terse account of his visit to Aguaverde in July, 1778, provides no details beyond his conclusion that the presidio was of little utility since no people lived in the area.

Fortunately, Croix was accompanied on his inspection tour of the presidios by his chaplain, Fray Juan Agustín Morfi (1935), who wrote copiously about his travels. Approaching Aguaverde, where they were met by a contingent with fresh horses from the presidio, Morfi (1935:381) extols the San Diego River as crystal clear and abounding in fish, its banks lined with mesquites, cottonwoods, oaks, walnuts and vines. Upon their arrival at the fort, Morfi's party paraded the troops and went to the captain's quarters since the chapel was not fit to receive them ("la capilla no estaba en disposición de visitarse").

El presidio de Agua Verde está situado en la cumbre de una loma tendida y a orillas del hermosa río de San Diego, que le rodea por poniente y sur; el sitio precisamente donde está el río no permite sacas, aunque es fácil hacerlas más arriba o más abajo, con las que se puede fecundar una porción considerable de terreno. A su norte revienta el abundante manantial, que por las muchas lamas que cría, lo llaman Agua Verde y que dio nombre al presidio. Abunda este manantial en pescado, y, según me pareció, pudiera sin mucho trabajo, conducirse su agua hasta el mismo cuerpo de guardia. Al noreste y a tres y media leguas de distancia, corre el río Grande del Norte; su construcción, como la de todos los presidios de la frontera, es conforme al plan que para este efector dio don Nicolás de Lafora. Las paredes del cuadro y baluarte están concluidas, siendo el primer tercio de piedra y lodo y el resto, de adobes. Los baluartes están E.O.; en el primero se formaron algunas piezas donde se guardan los bastimentos y demás géneros de la habitación, y es la única habitación que se ha hecho. El capitán, oficiales, capellán y tropa viven todos amontonados en jacales o chozas tan infelices que todas ellos ocupan sólo una cuarta parte de la plaza del presidio, que así por esto como por su material, que todo es palo y carrizo, están expuestas a quemarse en un mismo tiempo. La capilla con cuatro paredes mal formadas, sin techo alguno, y sólo sobre el altar se pusieron unas ramas, el ornamento es único, de tafetán sencillo, pintado y muy viejo, y el misal lo prestó la iglesia de la villa de San Fernando. Nada se cultiva en sus inmediaciones, tanto por lo mal recibidos que han sido aquí los vecinos agregados... (Morfi 1935:384; Alessio Robles 1978:576)

The presidio of Agua Verde is situated on the summit of a low-lying hill on the banks of the beautiful San Diego River which wraps

around it on the west and south; water cannot be drawn from the river precisely at this site but it is easy to do so above or below, making it possible to fertilize a considerable portion of land. To the north, foams an abundant spring that, for the copious slime it produces, is called Agua Verde and gives its name to the presidio. Fish abound in this spring and, it seems to me that without much work, the water could be conducted to the guard house. To the northeast three and a half leagues flows the Río Grande del Norte. Its construction, like that of all the frontier presidios, is according to the plan made by Don Nicolás de Lafora. The walls of the square and ramparts are finished, the first third of stone and mud and the rest of adobes. The bastions are E.O. (east-west); in the first one, they have built a room where they keep the supplies and other equipment, and it is the only room that has been made. The captain, official, chaplain and troop all live thrown together in jacales or miserable shacks so that in all they occupy only a fourth part of the presidio plaza; because everything is built of sticks and reeds, they are very exposed to burning at the same time. The chapel has four ill-formed walls, without any roof, and on the altar they put only some branches, the single ornament [vestment] is of simple taffeta, painted and very old, and the missal one lent by the church of the village of San Fernando. Nothing is cultivated nearby because of the hostility of the enemies....

An incident that illustrates the ineffectuality of the presidio took place on February 1st after mass had been said in the piteously ill-furnished chapel. Morfi again complained about the condition of the chapel, stating that he said mass with some difficulty given the poverty and the unsuitability of the accoutrements. When the company sallied forth for target practice in front of the visiting officials, the ammunition would not fit in the cannons, much to the mortification of the commanding officer. Morfi (1935:384) apparently found it amusing, but did not fail to denigrate the troops, perhaps forgetting that they had repelled an Apache attack on the walls the year before.

When time came to suppress the presidios in 1781, Croix considered conserving them but not finishing the quarters. However, he decided that a small number of troops would not be sufficient to defend them and to repair the ruins of the buildings, so abandonment was the more expedient solution (Thomas 1941: 103). After some discussion with Governor Juan Ugalde, Croix moved the Santa Rosa garrison to San Fernando de Austria where it continued under the name Aguaverde. The troops at La Babia were transferred to Santa Rosa, the company at Monclova Viejo returned to the capital Monclova, and the San Sabá detail was disbanded, its officers and able men scattered amongst the other presidial units.

After the removal of the garrison to San Fernando de Austria, the presidial company was still called Aguaverde, receiving considerable mention for the activities of its troops under the command of Capt. José Menchaca (Turpin 2002).

However, all further references to Aguaverde during the remainder of the Spanish Colonial period are to the company stationed at San Fernando. Although its walls undoubtedly sheltered many diverse people during the chaotic birth of the new nation and the later war with the United States, the presidio played no official role in either.

Aguaverde in the 19th Century: the Colonia Militar San Vicente

The site of Aguaverde does not surface again until the middle of the 19th century when the Mexican government turned its attention to the protection of the territory along their new border with the United States, established by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. One consequence of the U.S. invasion was the diversion of military and civil authorities from their role in protecting the rural folk. As a result, Indian depredations reached far into southern Coahuila, sorely trying the inhabitants through loss of life and property (Rodríguez 1998; Villarello 1989). In response, *Colonias Militares*, modeled on the old presidial system, were established by presidential decree, July 19, 1848 (Villarello 1989:139). Don Antonio María Jáuregui was named chief inspector of Tamaulipas and Coahuila where seven colonies were to be established. Lt. Colonel Juan Manuel Maldonado, the subinspector for Coahuila, was charged with actually implementing the decree.

In Coahuila, three of the old presidios – Aguaverde, Monclova Viejo, and Presidio del Norte (San Juan Bautista, Guerrero) - were reactivated and a fourth site, the Hacienda el Pan, was added between Guerrero and Laredo. Fifteen years earlier, Berlandier (1980:580), passing through the abandoned Hacienda el Pan, remarked on its defensive potential and advocated the assignment of a garrison to patrol the road. The other sites also apparently retained some of their original fortifications and buildings. Since each was to be garrisoned by complements of 100 to 150 infantry and cavalry men, augmented by local volunteers who would be rewarded with land, the first task was to assess the conditions under which these forces would live and labor.

Maldonado (1850) described the difficulties in controlling the wilderness between Monclova Viejo, La Babia and San Vicente. He stated that the Rio Grande between Aguaverde and San Vicente was practically unknown and that none of the old presidial soldiers could give an accurate description of it. He recommended that a well-provisioned and well-escorted commission be sent to reconnoiter the area in general and specifically in terms of sites for the *Colonias Militares*. Despite the numerous expeditions and forays conducted over the past century, the northern Coahuilan desert remained *terra incognita* up until the 1880s (Flores 1881). Every few decades, officialdom would recommend exploration, implement reconnaissance, and then lose all knowledge of what was seen and reported.

According to Maldonado (1851), the Ministerio de Guerra y Marina authorized Colonia de San Vicente to occupy the abandoned presidio Aguaverde on February 11, 1851, so yet another name became attached to Santa Rosa

María del Sacramento de Aguaverde. The ministry provided 10 *sitios de ganado mayor* (over 7,400 hectares) to support the garrison. In January 1852, Lt. Colonel Maldonado advised his superiors that the Colonias Militares were all in place. He reported that on January 23, 1851, the San Vicente colonia measured and took possession of eight *sitios de ganado mayor* at Aguaverde, but lacked clear title to the two others that they had been granted. The officers and troops occupied the fort on May 4, establishing their quarters within the walls. The fortifications (walls) of Aguaverde were 140 varas square, with no two angles of equal size, and constructed of stone for two varas, the rest of adobe. Two flat-roofed rooms served as barracks and a supply room; a small granary was being built. The spiritual needs of the garrisons of Aguaverde, Monclova Viejo and Guerrero were served by priests from Rosas⁹ and Nava since none of them had chaplains or vestments.

Col. Emilio Langberg passed through Aguaverde on a tour of inspection in 1851 during which he attempted to ascertain exact distances between various points, including Monclova Viejo and Aguaverde (Langberg, ms). According to his itinerary, the colonia had been founded January 11, 1851 and occupied by the company from Santa Rosa on May 4.¹⁰ The compound was, he said, equal to Monclova Viejo in size, but only the bottom half of the walls were stone so that time had destroyed most of the upper adobe part. The presidio was described as four leagues from the mouth of the San Diego and three leagues from its source but fed by an abundant spring flowing 1500 *pasos* (paces) from the walls. He thought the area held great promise for settlers given the abundance of water, good land and wood – walnut, oak, elm, some cottonwood and mulberry trees - and emphasized that this location should be reinforced since it was close to the principal fords of the Rio Grande. At that time, only 58 soldiers and 3 civilians manned the post; the local population was 250 persons of both sexes and all ages, but Langberg hoped that families would move there from Santa Rosa.

Discord between the military and local authorities and the inflexibility of formal military tactics proved the undoing of the Colonias Militares and they were suppressed in 1853. Nevertheless, the brief two years of Aguaverde's renaissance, as described in official communiqués, explain in part the presence of

⁹ Rosas is the former San Fernando de Austria whose name was changed in 1827 to San Fernando de Rosas and then to Zaragoza, the name it has today.

¹⁰ El espresado río de San Diego tiene bastante agua y se junta con el Bravo del Norte, a distancia de cuatro leguas de la Colonia, de donde igualmente dista su nacimiento otras tres. Junto el río como el arroyo tienen abundantes maderas de nogal, encino y olmo y alguna de álamo y mora, como igualmente presentan facilidad para varias sacas de agua. El antiguo Presidio es igual de Monclova Viejo en su tamaño, y su muralla diferencia únicamente, en que tiene una mitad de piedra, siendo la otra de adobe, que el tiempo ha destruido en su mayor parte. A mil quinientos pasos de la muralla, nace una fuente abundante de donde se susten de agua. La porción de este lugar, sus buenos terrenos, la abundancia de agua y de madera, de la esperanza de que será una muy buena Colonia, tanto mas importante por estar inmediato a los vados principales por donde los Yndios hacen sus entradas.... (Langberg ms.:n.p.).

19th century artifacts and anomalous features on what was originally thought to be a purely 18th century site. The site itself rapidly faded into obscurity so that less than 30 years later, the chronicler of the last major military expedition against the Apaches, Blas Flores (1881), referred only vaguely to the ruins as those of an ancient colony founded by the Spanish in the last third of the past century.

ARCHEOLOGICAL REMAINS OF PRESIDIO AGUVERDE

The archeological remains at Presidio Aguaverde gain some importance in light of the fate of two of the four unstudied presidios of the line in the gap between San Carlos and San Juan Bautista. The westernmost, San Vicente, has been leveled by locals who erected farm buildings on the site and La Babia was overbuilt by the headquarters of the military commander of the north, General Gerónimo Treviño, in the late 19th century. The walls of Monclova Viejo still stand under the protection of the landowners who recognize them for the monument that they are and protect them with vigilance. Aguaverde was the least known of the four and vanished into obscurity when its walls were plundered in the 20th century for ready-cut building materials and undermined by treasure hunters eternally in search of fabled Spanish treasure. Technically, the presidio was not lost since the locals named their ejido Las Murallas after the walls that once stood there and the spring still bears the name of Aguaverde on topographic maps, but the site slipped from governmental oversight to the extent that a transmission line was constructed across it without any prior knowledge of the damage it would inflict on a national monument.

FEATURES

Perimeter Wall

The outlines of the fortified perimeter wall can still be traced by the foundation blocks that were too difficult to plunder for adaptive reuse by local builders (see Figure 4, Figure 7). The presidio was obviously built to the plan advocated by Lafora (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965:63), as noted by Morfi (1935:384). Like four of the nine presidios mapped by Gerald (1968:14), the enclosure was rectangular – almost square - with rhomboid bastions on opposing corners. The walls were mapped three times because of puzzling disconformities that rendered the quadrangle uneven and the bastions off-kilter but the inconsistencies were confirmed by Maldonado's (1851) observation that the fortification was 140 varas (actually 125 meters) on a side but that no two angles were the same. Langberg (ms.) commented that Aguaverde was the same size as Monclova Viejo but that the walls differed in being half of stone and half of adobe, the latter much deteriorated over time.



Figure 7. Remnant wall blocks still mark the perimeter of the wall.

Watanabe remembered that much of the perimeter wall still stood in 1936 but the cut stones were such an attractive ready-made source of building material that over 60 years of attrition reduced them to the bare traces left today. The walls as he recalled them were built of two blocks of cut limestone on either side of a mud core, as can be seen in two locations where vertical blocks remain hidden by dense brush and trees (see Figure 7). He pointed out the location of the only entrance in the middle of the northwest perimeter wall, a remembrance that is reinforced by a series of foundation blocks inside the wall that probably were the bases of a guardhouse (see Gerald 1968:14). If so, the entry was about 4.5 meters (6 varas) wide. Watanabe also recalled that the square pillars on either side of the gate bore the black-painted images of Indian warriors, identified by the feathers in their hair, but he did not know who drew them or when they were drawn other than before his father's arrival as a Japanese worker on the

railroad ca. 1905. Weddle's (1968:305) mistaken assumption that "Monclova Viejo was built of stone, and its outer walls still stand....Aguaverde, made of adobe, has melted away" suggests that the lower stone courses of the wall had been removed before his visit in 1965.

To clarify the nature of the perimeter foundations, soil was cleared from a small area where the blocks were still in their original setting. The base of the wall had been dug down and sat upon bedrock now 50 cm below the surface (see Figure 5). Quarried blocks of limestone were mortared with a mixture of clay mud and pebbles. Conglomerate, which is harder to form into square blocks, took the place of limestone in the far eastern corner (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Wall blocks of conglomerate on the far eastern corner of the perimeter wall.

Western Bastion

The western bastion is the closest point to the water and was the most visible feature left due to exposed mounds of earth and adobe cut by bulldozer swaths and roads. Here, a small rectangular section of adobe wall was still visible crosscutting the bastion perpendicular to the perimeter (Figure 9). The

sterile eolian silts were cleared from around the exposed section to see how far the wall extended and how deeply the floor was buried. This Herculean task took several days but eventually the outer surfaces of two of the interior walls, two corner pillars (Figure 10) and their intersections with two sections of the exterior stone wall were defined. The walls created a room that was in essence the point of the bastion. The exterior wall was the perimeter of the bastion and was constructed of cut stone mortared with “cal y arena” (lime and sand) The small section of exposed wall proved to be but part of the longer interior wall which measured 5.4 meters, including pillar bases at each corner, and was 2.3 meters tall at its highest point. The intersecting interior wall was of similar construction but the section near its terminus had collapsed, leaving only the lower courses of adobe.



Figure 9. Eroded section of adobe wall.

The interior walls were made of large adobes that measured 50 by 30 cm and were uniformly mortared with 4 cm of mud tempered by pebbles. At the corners, the adobes were laid in alternating rows with two placed the long way capped by two at right angles to form what may have been square supports for the roof or a parapet. Adobes protruding at the base of the northern end where the interior wall intersected the stone perimeter wall may have been the threshold or base of a stairway that led to the roof or top of the bastion. No door was found in either of the two interior walls but a slab of adobe at ground level on the

shortest wall remnant may have been a threshold. Portions of the wall had collapsed so tumbled melted adobes created a dome-like cap over the inside of the room. Most of the adobes were dark grey alluvial clays, probably obtained from the nearby stream. A dart point with shallow side notches was embedded in one of the adobe blocks still set firmly in the wall, furthering the impression that the raw material had come from the immediate vicinity since the presidio was apparently built atop an Indian camp. A very few light-colored adobes indicated some other source material had also been exploited.



Figure 10. Cleared section of wall, the corner pillar.

Watanabe insisted that there had been a tunnel in this bastion which he thought provided access to the spring in case of siege. The tunnel turned out to be a relic hunter's burrow that, unfortunately for him, hit the wall at an angle, intersecting over a meter of dense adobe that he failed to penetrate (Figure 11).

Eastern Bastion

The eastern bastion has been so violated by relic hunters that it was difficult to trace the perimeter wall. Mounds of back dirt alternating with deep pits created an undulating surface with artifacts strewn at random. Big blocks of cut stone remain in place on either side of the bastion but others have tumbled down slope from the angular rampart. Here, many of the blocks are conglomerate rather than limestone, suggesting that this may have been the last section of the

perimeter wall to be completed. Notably, there was no evidence of adobe interior walls such as those found in the Western Bastion, indicating lesser domestic activity on this end of the compound. The few sherds noted on the surface were majolica or green-glazed wear that would belong to the earlier occupation of the presidio



Figure 11. Looking down from unexcavated fill into trench in front of adobe wall. The opening at base of the wall is a relic hunter's tunnel that dead-ended in the thick adobe. The staggered section in center of the frame may be the remains of steps that led up to the top of the bastion.

A 10-by-10 meter grid was laid out and a metal detector survey was used to help determine the activities that took place in and around this bastion. Given the extent of prior disturbance, exact provenience was not critical but all locations were flagged to see if any pattern could be detected. The presence of six lead musket balls reflects the defensive function of the bastion (Figure 12).

Structure 2

Limestone blocks outline the foundation of a rectangular structure 5.5 meters wide and 14 meters long (see Figure 4). Roughly oriented north-south, the long axis of this building was slightly out of line with the presidio perimeter wall and some 18 meters from the intersection of the modern fence with the remnants of the wall foundation. Two large treasure hunter pits give the impression that the structure was divided into two rooms but a gap in the middle

of the eastern wall, presumably the entranceway, suggests the enclosed space was either undivided or divided unequally. The metal detector survey identified rows of discarded nails that follow the rectangular shape of the building but so much dirt has been thrown up by the relic hunters that only careful excavation will determine the actual interior layout of the building.



Figure 12. Lead balls and dross. Balls range in diameter from 10.5 to 15.5 mm exclusive of sprues.

The off-kilter position of the structure and the late date of ceramics discarded south of the perimeter wall suggest that this building was not part of the original presidio construction. The possibility that this structure is one or both of the two flat-roofed rooms that served as barracks and a supply room, as described by Maldonado in 1851, should be further explored although logically any number of people could have used the walls of Aguaverde for shelter and built within their confines over the centuries.

ARTIFACTS

Metal Artifacts

Eastern Bastion

Miscellaneous small pieces of metal included 2 hooks, a folded piece of brass sheeting, a triangular metal “projectile point”, two square nails, a buckle, and a knife blade. Six lead balls exhibited considerable variability. One with an irregular mold mark and a nearby splatter of lead that was probably dross indicate that ammunition was being cast here. Another of the balls is flattened from contact with a hard object and a third is larger and more pointed.

Structure 2

The metal detector survey identified seven square hand-forged nails or nail fragments at intervals along what would have been the exterior walls of Structure 2. Apparently nails had been salvaged when the building was razed since only two of the specimens were intact and even they were bent. Outside the structure, a 10-meter-wide swath along all four walls detected 34 metal items. Structural or household items included nails, pieces of barrel hoop, washers, a perforated spoon, a spoon handle sharpened to a point, and many miscellaneous pieces of iron, lead and even brass. Three lead balls - one 10 mm in diameter (.50 caliber), another 12.5 mm and the third 15.5 mm - and a lump of lead left from the casting process are the earliest ammunition. The smaller ball is flattened from impact and the residue of casting suggests that musket shot was being manufactured in or near the structure.

More recent ammunition is represented by rifle cartridges and a shotgun shell. Two center fire cartridges with headstamps UMC 44-40 (1873-1902), three rim fire cartridges of the same caliber stamped only H (1850s-?), a .22 cartridge also stamped H, a Winchester .25-20 single shot centerfire cartridge (1882-1930), a 16-gauge Winchester Leader shotgun shell (1901-?) all postdate the time of active military operations (Barnes 1972; Logan 1959).

CERAMIC ARTIFACTS

Ceramic fragments of various types were scattered across the mounds and rills left by the bulldozer and the relic hunters. Therefore, only a general provenience was noted for the various types. Thick and thin crude brown pottery was common in every area of the site and some of it may be of native manufacture. Most of it however was wheel-thrown and glazed.

One of the most common ceramic types noted is San Elizario Polychrome majolica, which was defined by Gerald (1968) in his study of the western presidios. Subsequently, the type has been recognized as one of the dominant types found at missions, presidios, and towns of this era. This white earthen ware is decorated with blue designs outlined or emphasized with brown-black lines. The sherds from Aguaverde are identical to those illustrated by Gerald (1968:44), including the horizontally banded rims with pendant petals (Figure 13a). Gerald dated this type to the period between 1750 and 1800, a range that is still accepted. Two other small rim sherds bore identical patterns but the colors used were green and brown. Fox (2002:210-212) called similar fragments Orange Band Polychrome, and likened it to San Elizario Polychrome. Thus, these two types belong to the 1773-1781 incarnation of presidio Aguaverde. They were concentrated in the vicinity of the Western Bastion but specimens were seen at the Eastern Bastion and in Structure 2.

Another identifiable early type belongs to the Aranama tradition (Figure 13b). Two sherds of glazed brown pottery with black and cream curvilinear designs can be classified as Aranama Polychrome, but the time period associated with that type extends well before and beyond the short period of

presidio occupation. Nevertheless, these fragments are discards from the 18th century use of the site.

A number of other majolica sherds were noted including simple white rims decorated with a single border, small blue-on-white patterned pieces too miniscule to type, a variegated emerald green rim crossed by a jagged brown line, a variegated blue rim; and a polychrome red and yellow banded basal fragment. A few thick green-glazed ridged olive jar fragments were noted near the Western Bastion.

Four pieces of blue feather-edged molded pearlware plates were found near the Eastern Bastion (Figure 13c). Despite their overall similarity, they are from different pieces, but perhaps from the same set. Noel-Hume (1969:23) dates this ceramic type to the range from 1770 to the mid-19th century, spanning both periods of Aguaverde's active operation. However, Tunnell illustrates an identical sherd from the ill-fated Mission San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz which was destroyed in 1771 (Tunnell and Newcomb 1969:Fig. 40) and it might be presumed that both sites received their supplies from the same or similar sources.

A large piece of a flawn blue plate or platter is decorated with dark blue flowers on a lighter blue background on the upper side; the bottom retains a portion of the base and is solid blue. Another sherd had part of a diffuse dark blue circle on a white ware of undetermined vessel form. A third interior fragment is light blue, dark blue and white, with much more distinct patterning than is the case on the larger piece described above. These pieces generally post-date 1820 and are thus probably residue from the second incarnation of the fort.

Several small fragments of transferware were scattered in the bulldozer swath and contained in the dump that may have been associated with Structure 2. Brown, red, blue and mulberry designs are represented (Figure 13d-g), but the pieces are so small that it is difficult to extrapolate to any specific patterns. When discernible, the scene is Oriental with towers rising in the background. Although transfer printing began ca. the middle of the 18th century, the tentative correlation of many of these sherds with Structure 2 may indicate they were deposited during the 1851-1853 resurrection when Aguaverde was garrisoned by the San Vicente Colonia Militar. One of the more highly visible ceramic types has blue and red flowers or fruit with vivid green leaves hand-painted on a white background (Figure 13h). This English import is also most likely a 19th-century discard as are three pieces of blue sponge-ware from at least two different dishes. Only one maker's mark was recorded (Figure 13i). A small fragment of white ironstone bears three rows of black letters, none of which make a complete word. The upper line retains part of an L followed by PRE and part of an M, the middle line BOO., and the bottom line E and part of an N. The most logical fit is Waterloo Potteries Royal Premium semi-porcelain, T.& R. Boote, England which was first manufactured in 1850 (Kowalsky and Kowalsky 1999:115).



Figure 13. Examples of ceramic types: a) San Elizario Polychrome; b) Aranama Polychrome; c) blue feather-edge pearlware; d-g) various transferwares in mulberry, red, and blue; h) blue flowers with green leaves and red centers; i) sherd with maker's mark.

None of the ceramics – in fact not a single artifact – was found during the clearing of the wall in the Western Bastion, the only place that might have produced anything subsurface other than shallowly buried metal objects that registered on the detector sweeps. Since all of the ceramics noted are on the surface and in disturbed areas of the site, typological niceties are of little use in separating components, but the potential does exist for cross-dating rooms or features if excavation is ever undertaken.

Native American Material Culture

Burned rock, chert flakes, flaked stone implements and expedient tools are scattered along the edge of the incline leading down to the water and north along its banks. Only two of the tools are time-specific but it is logical to assume that Native American people camped beside the spring and river for millennia. A chert dart point protruding from one of the large adobes that make up the crosswall in

the Western Bastion has shallow side notches and a straight base, typical of styles attributable to the Late Archaic Period (ca. 0 to A.D. 900) based on suites of radiocarbon dates associated with similar artifacts. The second temporal marker is a steeply-beveled end scraper of a type used primarily in the Late Prehistoric or proto-historic period, after A.D. 1450 and up into historic times. A more intensive search of the outlying areas would probably produce much more evidence of native exploitation of this once-abundant resource zone.

Discussion

Presidio Aguaverde has remained an obscure chapter in frontier history, in part because of its short life and in part due to the paucity of research on Coahuilan presidios outside of San Juan Bautista (Weddle 1968). This obscurity may be the reason that most of the secondary sources consulted to reconstruct the history of the site err in some fashion and to some degree. The standard reference to the Reglamento of 1772, Brinkerhoff and Faulk's (1965: Map, 94) *Lancers for the King*, assigns the peripatetic garrison of San Sabá to Aguaverde when in fact they were first relocated to San Fernando de Austria, then sent to man the new presidio of San Vicente, and finally dissolved due to insolvency with the suppression of San Vicente (Thomas 1941:104). Weddle (1964:182; 1968:305) called attention to this error, apparently unaware that Aguaverde was later garrisoned by the Colonia Militar San Vicente. La Babia and San Vicente are omitted from Brinkerhoff and Faulk's list of presidios of the line and the city of Monclova is confused with the presidio of the same name (Monclova Viejo) at El Moral. Thomas (1941) consistently refers to San Vicente as San Sabá after the garrison but always calls Aguaverde and La Babia after their geographic locations, not their companies. Thomas (1941:54) then has the garrison of Aguaverde transferred to "San Fernando de Monclova, the capital of the province" when in fact they were sent to San Fernando de Austria. Monclova was the capital but its patron saint was Santiago.

The map of 17th and 18th century Spanish Missions, Presidios and Roads on the University of Texas web page also places San Sabá (after 1772) in the general location of Aguaverde but locates San Vicente in the area occupied by Monclova Viejo (El Moral) which is downstream instead of upstream on the Rio Grande. The latter could refer to the post-1850 distribution of Mexican garrisons but this San Vicente bears the map symbol for mission instead of presidio or colonia militar, despite the fact that no mission was ever established in this part of Coahuila y Tejas. This map, copyrighted by the Regents of the University (1976), totally omits La Babia and Monclova Viejo as well. Christensen's (1974: Map II) map of the frontier presidio line in 1776, places both Santa Rosa and Monclova at the so-named settlements and not at their sites near the Rio Grande. A map intended to show the missions and presidios in the 1700s mistakenly uses the symbol for presidio in place of that for modern town for both Las Vacas and Del Rio and erroneously places a mission at Santa Rosa while omitting Monclova Viejo (Turpin 1989: Fig. 18-1).

Weddle (1988:182fn) thought Alessio Robles (1978:575; 576) confused the location of the Presidio San Vicente by citing Colonel Emilio Langberg's visit to San Vicente, the 1851 Colonia Militar at Aguaverde. Apparently unaware of the sequence of events that led to Langberg's tour of inspection, and of the assignment of the Colonia Militar San Vicente to Aguaverde, Weddle went on to prove the presidio was in fact where Alessio Robles said it was. The intransigent nature of mapping is manifested in Bartlett's (1965) map of the Mexican Boundary Survey 1850-1852 which shows Aguaverde and Bavía [sic] but neither San Vicente or Monclova Viejo. Blas Flores' 1881 map shows all four of the ancient presidios but his text pays scant attention to them, dismissing Aguaverde as some ruins of an old Spanish settlement. The map most commonly cited by historians as Abbott (1905) replaces the name of Aguaverde with San Vicente, suggesting he followed Langberg's usage wherein the most recent attribution was to the Colonia Militar.

A mildly humorous note is added by Moorhead (1975:70) who places Aguaverde between present-day Jiménez and Ciudad Vicuña instead of Ciudad Acuña. In an earlier work, Moorhead (1968:33) states that before 1772 Aguaverde was established at San Fernando with the former garrison of San Sabá, a supposition that is the inverse of the sequence since the presidio was named for the spring, not vice-versa. It was not until presidio Aguaverde was suppressed in 1781 that its garrison, originally that of Santa Rosa, moved to San Fernando and the San Sabá company was dispersed. The same error may be reflected in a map entitled *Linea de Presidios Internas 1772* and published in a compendium overview of the geography and history of northern Mexico (Piñero 1987:63). Here also San Sabá is subtitled Aguaverde when, at that time, the company from San Sabá was at San Fernando and Aguaverde was still in the future. A later map in the same volume purports to show the presidios of 1773 (Piñero 1987:279). San Sabas [sic] is now shown at Presidio Cerro Gordo, in Chihuahua, La Babia is once again La Bahía, Monclova Viejo is labeled Santiago de Monclova which is the city, not the presidio, but Presidio Sta. Rosa de Aguaverde is positioned correctly.

Gerald's (1968) study of *Spanish Presidios of the Late Eighteenth Century in Northern New Spain* concentrates on survey and description of the ruins and structures west of Texas and Coahuila. He clearly states that he did not visit or could not locate those east of San Sabás [sic] by which he means the presidio San Vicente on the Rio Grande (Gerald 1968:8). However, he consistently refers to San Antonio Bucareli de la Babia as La Bahía, which is in East Texas. Nevertheless, his plan maps of nine western presidios provide clues indicating where various rooms – such as the chapel, captain's quarters, and guardhouse – should be sought inside the foundations of Aguaverde. These errors are perfectly understandable given the short life of the presidio, the conflicting names attached to it, and its rapid descent into obscurity, and are only cited here to underscore the lack of attention paid to these sites by historians and archeologists alike.

Explaining the Archeological Remnants

Mapping of the perimeter walls demonstrates that the basic plan of presidio Aguaverde clearly followed that laid down in the Reglamento of 1772 (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965; Morfi 1935:384, Gerald 1968:14) although the walls are not perfectly square (Maldonado 1851). One deviation from the Reglamento is the partial stone construction of the exterior walls, mentioned by archival sources, described by local informants, and confirmed by the sparse remnants. The guardhouse presumably stood inside the entrance where some foundation stones remain in place.

The thick adobe walls of the room in the western bastion are probably those of the storeroom mentioned by Morfi (1935:384) although his cardinal directions are reversed. The comparative thickness of the walls, with the dense adobe on the interior and the thinner rock wall on the exterior would make sense if the storeroom was the armory or powder magazine. If blown, the force of the blast would be directed outwards, destroying the perimeter wall but protecting the interior of the presidio. The Reglamento specified that each presidio was to have in reserve 8 lbs of powder per regular soldier. Since powder was chronically in short supply, Brinckerhoff and Faulk (1965:27) doubted that this provision was fulfilled but, when O'Connor relinquished his command, he attested that each presidio had their requisite reserve (O'Connor 1994:47, 64). Since Aguaverde supposedly had a full complement of 7 officers, 40 privates and 10 Indian auxiliaries (O'Connor 1994:97), their reserve should have been at least 320 lbs. That the military authorities were well aware of the vulnerability of their powder supply is expressed in the Reglamento which specifies exactly how much is to be issued to veteran soldiers, recruits and Indian auxiliaries, as well as dictating that it be kept under lock and key. Recall also that one of the first actions at the first Presidio Sacramento was the construction of a stout wooden structure to store the powder and avoid accidents (Alessio Robles 1978:550)

Structure 2 is probably one or both of the flat-roofed rooms used as barracks and storerooms by the 1851 Colonia Militar San Vicente. That assumption leaves unknown the location of the granary that was under construction when Col. Langberg inspected the site.

The archival accounts show that most of the structures planned for the interior of the original presidio were never completed. However, the outlines of some rooms or structures can still be detected in scattered mounds of adobe inside the rectangle. Based on Gerald's (1968) summary of the western presidios, it should be possible to predict the location of the rudimentary chapel but since all of the habitations were still temporary buildings, their remains will be ephemeral and exposed only by careful excavation. Although it can be presumed that the stout walls of the presidio offered shelter to many varied people over time, the two military occupations, 1773-1781 and 1851-1853, are well documented and should be discernible in the archeological record.

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The ruins of presidio Aguaverde are now obscured by a dense thicket of mesquite trees and prickly pears, traversable only along a few narrow animal trails that lead to the water. The metal detector survey undertaken a mere four years ago would now be impossible without massive clearing. Structure 2 can barely be discerned; most of the larger pot holes in and near both bastions are now completely filled with huge clumps of cacti. The transmission line corridor is still relatively open but the perimeter walls can only be followed with difficulty. This proliferation of thorny vegetation masks the historic structural remnants and artifacts but also serves to deter treasure hunters, so Aguaverde may slumber under a blanket of prickly pear for decades to come.

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Figure 14. Juan Watanabe Ortíz

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