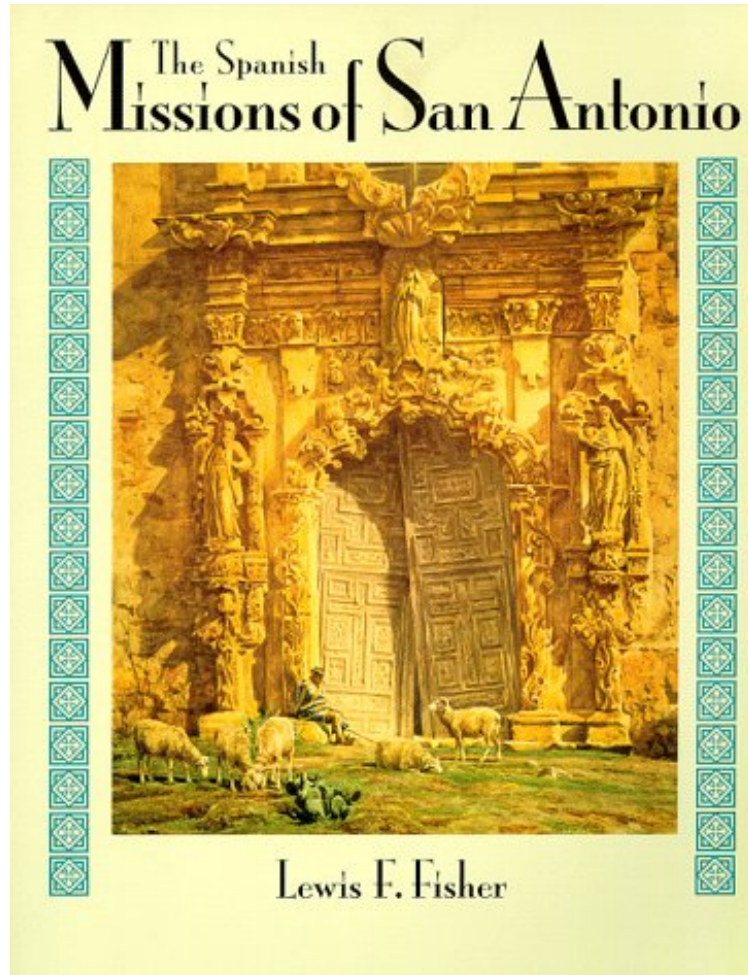


(Free) The Spanish Missions of San Antonio

## The Spanish Missions of San Antonio

*Lewis F. Fisher*

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**Lewis F. Fisher : The Spanish Missions of San Antonio** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Spanish Missions of San Antonio:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thank you to Mr. Fisher for such a thorough research enlightening story of Texas treasures. By JodieAn excellent story of the early days of Texas; easy reading; answered all the questions I have always had as to the size of the mission properties and what happened to that land when the missions closed. I never knew there were so many Indian tribes living in the Texas area. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has ever visited the missions and held them in such wonder. Thank you, Texas Parks Dept., Bexar County, and the City of San Antonio for maintaining such a golden history for us to visit and appreciate. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Kathryn Mullen Wonderful historic book. Highly recommended. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Alyce Wilkison Excellent service, and a great book.

This is a concisely written, lavishly illustrated account of the founding, growth, decline and restoration of San Antonio's five Spanish colonial missions, a national treasure. Built by Franciscan friars and their Native American charges on the far frontier of New Spain, they stand today as the largest cluster of Spanish missions in the United States. One is preserved as the Alamo. The others form San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

Lewis Fisher, journalist, author and chronicler of San Antonio's history as preserved in its buildings, gives the reader a fresh approach to a theme that has been visited often but not always this well. . . . Spanning the centuries from the missions establishment along the San Antonio River to the creation of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Fisher relates in outline fashion the rise and demise of the mission communities, with special focus on the structures left as a reminder of their heyday. The book is lavishly illustrated with historical photographs and images, some of which have not been published before, as well as original drawings of the mission compounds based on recent archaeological findings. What sets this book apart from others in this genre are the interesting sidelights that Fisher interjects that are so familiar to readers of his earlier works. . . . What also sets this book apart from the usual coffee table book is the tracing of attempts to preserve the four remaining missions in a national park. Fisher's book is not designed to give extensive detail and analysis of the evolution of historic preservation with regard to the missions nor to the creation of the national park. The extent to which these subjects are presented and dealt with, however, gives the general reader a taste for what may be found in greater detail in more scholarly works. The history narrative is in a simple, straightforward style reminiscent of Fisher's training as a reporter. . . . It is a fine book, with high quality color illustrations. The effort to contract with a prominent historical illustrator to provide birds-eye views of the mission compounds in the eighteenth century is reflective of the author/publisher's high standards in producing quality work. This book is well worth the getting for those interested in mission history and for the general reader and visitor to the area. --Southwestern Historical Quarterly

This book, with its rich photographs and informative text, is just the kind of book that an intelligent traveler craves at historic sites. --David J. Weber, author of *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (Yale University Press), *New York Times Book Notable Book of the Year 1992*

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About the Author

Lewis F. Fisher is a longtime San Antonio journalist, suburban newspaper publisher and author. His other books include *San Antonio: Outpost of Empires*, ;*Saving San Antonio: The Precarious Preservation of a Heritage*; and *River Walk: The Epic Story of San Antonio's River*, winner of the national Benjamin Franklin Award for Best Regional Book.

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From the Introduction: Some mission buildings are majestic in their settings, with delicate baroque carvings in native limestone and still-bright frescoes, one daring to portray the face of God. Others are more rough-hewn testimonies to the faith which built the missions and sustained them on a vast and hostile frontier. The first, Mission San Antonio de Valero, was established in 1718, giving birth to what became the city of San Antonio. More than a century later, priests and Indian converts long departed, its embattled ruins achieved immortality as the Alamo. The second, San Jos y San Miguel de Aguayo, "Queen of the Missions of New Spain," founded two years later, was the most successful Spanish mission in Texas. San Jos's baroque sacristy window is considered by many to be the finest example of Spanish colonial sculpture in Spanish North America. The three other missions moved in 1731 from the troubled Spanish East Texas frontier with French Louisiana to the relative safety of San Antonio-Nuestra Seora de la Pursima Concepcin de Acua, San Juan Capistrano and San Francisco de la Espada. Concepcin's twin-towered church remains the nation's best-preserved Spanish colonial structure. Three-belled espadaas are distinctive signatures of San Juan and of Espada, whose stone aqueduct is the nation's oldest in

continuous use. From Chapter 4: After a quick start the mission [Concepcin] suffered two years without supplies from Mexico, then a drought and a famine that reduced inhabitants to hunting crows. "True, the color, flavor and toughness of this meat were quite repugnant," wrote Father Espinosa of the birds. "But hunger made it so appetizing that for the greater part of the year crow's meat was one of our most delicious dishes." From Chapter 2: Even before the last missionary departed San Antonio's aging Spanish missions, the walled compounds punctuating the open plain were being appropriated by military units, as the slings and feathered arrows of warring native tribes were replaced by the smoking muskets and cannon of their quarreling successors. Before this chaotic era ended, four of San Antonio's five mission compounds would be used for military purposes. From Chapter 2: Concep-EXCERPT: From Chapter 2: Following this newfound respect for Spanish America's architectural legacy came an appreciation of the surviving Spanish missions themselves. This awareness gained momentum in 1894, as several of California's crumbling missions were leased from the Catholic Church and independently restored by ;Charles F. Lummis's Landmarks Club of California. Within eight years San Antonio's redoubtable pioneer preservationist Adina De Zavala set out on the same course as the leader of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas's local chapter, which she sometimes referred to as "the landmarks club of Texas." In the spring of 1902 Miss De Zavala's organization began San Antonio's first community effort to restore the missions by raising funds and scrounging materials from local businessmen to make temporary repairs at San Jos. That fall the Catholic diocese gave the group a five-year lease to repair Mission San Juan under terms similar to those the Landmarks Club negotiated in California. But the "landmarks club of Texas" was soon sidetracked to the Alamo to save San Antonio de Valero's old convento.