

Camarillo Library
Wednesday Morning Group



Miracles + Mysteries & Murders



?? POP QUIZ ??

Which settlement is older ??

1. Jamestown Virginia
2. Santa Fe New Mexico

TIMELINE

- 1607 New Mexico's second Spanish governor, Don Pedro de Peralta, however, founded a new city at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in 1607, which he called *La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asís*, the Royal Town of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis of Assisi.
- 1607 Jamestown Virginia Established 14 May 1607
- 1610 Palace of the Governors built. Oldest continuously occupied government building in US

TIMELINE

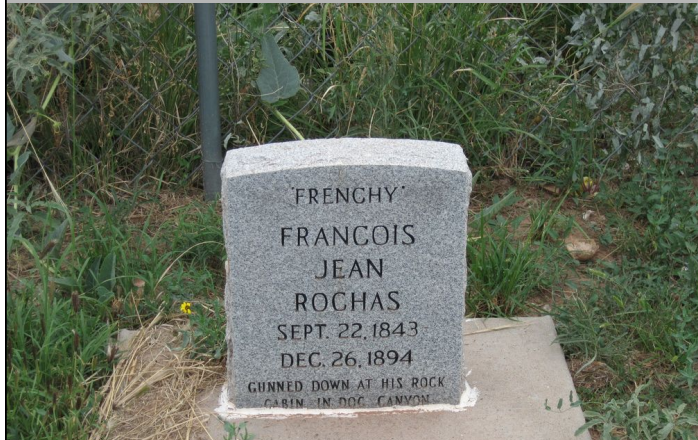
- St. Augustine Florida is the oldest continually populated settlement in what is now the United States.
- It was first organized on September 8, 1565, by Spanish explorer Pedro Menendez de Aviles.



Miracles + Mysteries & Murders



Grave of Francois Jean Rochas



Santa Fe Trail
1792-1880



Fort Union on Santa Fe Trail



Wagon Trail Ruts
Fort Union National Monument



Santa Fe 1882



Santa Fe



Chapel Architect Murdered 1879

- Chapel French architect was Charles Francois Philippe Mallet
- Mallet was shot dead in 1879 by a nephew of Archbishop Lamy. Construction of chapel was not fully completed yet
- Shooting involved wife of Archbishop's nephew
- Nephew was tried and acquitted of murder by reason of insanity

Unfinished access to choir loft



Unfinished choir loft access

- Chapel construction was nearly completed when the architect was killed.
- Choir loft access was still needed
- From 1879 to 1880 the Nuns used a vertical ladder to climb up to choir loft.
- Access was difficult and not very safe
- The Nuns prayed a novena for a solution

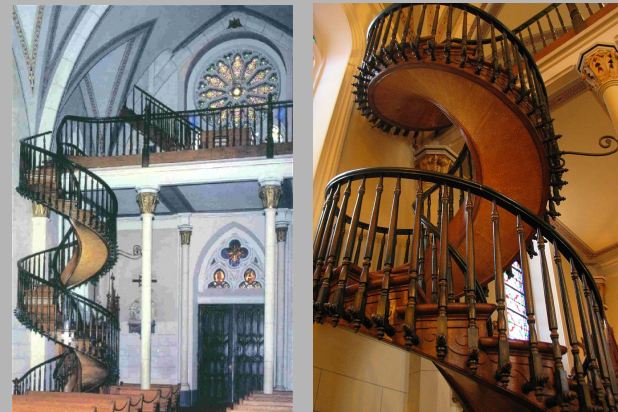
Legend of Spiral Stairway

- Sisters prayed a novena to Saint Joseph patron saint of carpenters on need for stairs
- Last day of novena a man on donkey with tool case appeared seeking work
- Stranger was employed and started to work
- When completed he disappeared without being paid
- Sisters believed the unknown and unpaid man was Saint Joseph the carpenter

Miracle + Mystery



Miracle + Mystery



Miracle + Mystery



Spiral Stairway

- Construction self supporting
- No nails or glue used
- Wood used not native trees to New Mexico
- Two 360 degree turns
- 33 steps in stairway symbology for each year of Christ's life
- Originally no banister or handrails attached
- Nuns declared the stairway a "Miracle"
- Who was the Mystery man that built it??

100 Year History TIMELINE

- 1846-1848 Mexican American War
- 1852 Catholic Nuns arrive in Santa Fe by Santa Fe Trail
- 1853 Sisters open school for girls in Santa Fe
- 1857 Sisters purchase land for chapel
- 1859-1881 Billy the Kid
- 1867 Nov Apache Raid Dona Ana
- 1873 Construction of chapel starts
- 1878 Feb 28 Tunstall murdered starts Lincoln County War
- 1878 Chapel completed
- 1878 Aug 5 Dog Canyon Conflict
- 1880 Spiral staircase started
- 1880 16 April Mescalero Agency conflict
- 1881 Spiral staircase completed
- 1885 Franciso Jean Rochas homestead established Dog Canyon
- 1887 Handrail for staircase added
- 1894 Dec 26 Franciso Jean Rochas murdered Dog Canyon
- 1912 Jan 6 New Mexico admitted to US as 47th State
- 1921-1923 Teapot Dome Scandal - Albert B Fall Secretary of Interior / rancher
- 1945 Jul 9 White Sands Missile Range Established to test German V2s
- 1945 Jul 16 First Atomic Bomb Test

History Detective Work

- Santa Fe resident Mary J. Straw Cook a researcher
- History of the chapel was researched 7 years
- 1984 still unknown who built stairway
- 1993 trip to Bardstown Kentucky to search archive church records
 - Obtained duplicates of 28 microfilm rolls of records
- Later traveled to France for more church records
- Eventually uncovered probable identity of builder

1850 Santa Fe Background

- 1850 population around 6000 all Catholic except for 400 Americans
- Support for establishing a school
- Vicar Lamy wrote local churches were like “stables of Bethlehem”
 - Adobe mud and straw brick walls and ceilings
 - Could not vision an adobe cathedral

The Beginnings

- 1812 Father Charles Nerinckx fled French Revolution and established in Kentucky first American community of Catholic sisters dedicated to teaching
- 1851 Vicar Jean Baptiste Lamy arrives in Santa Fe. Lamy writes to Kentucky requesting
 - A few Sisters to establish a good school
 - Priests from Lyon France
 - Money from Paris

The Beginnings

- 1852 Vicar Jean Baptiste Lamy brings first Sisters of Loretto to New Mexico
 - Six Sisters begin the journey to foreign mission in Santa Fe
 - Only four finished the trip
 - One died of cholera on steamer Kansas between St Louis and Independence Missouri
 - Two more sisters developed cholera along the 780 mile trip. One returned to Kentucky
 - The sisters spoke French had to learn Spanish in route writing in a journal of the trip

The Santa Fe Trail

- One day on trail 400 Indians surrounded the caravan so they continued to travel all night as Indians did not attack at night
- Sisters suffered along way from storms with rain, thunder, and lightning
- At Ft Barclay they slept indoors for first time in 2 months
- Arrival in Santa Fe was a quite an event with boisterous crowds to greet them with music and bells ringing

The Beginnings

- Cultural shock to new accommodations
- Houses were adobe walls and ceilings
- Door openings were covered with blankets
- Ceilings leaked when it rained
- Water had to be boiled to prevent diseases
- Sisters frugal efforts generated income from students and other interests
- 1859 Sisters buy larger housing for \$3000 and pay off loan in one year with their activities
- By 1865 Sisters had acquired the whole block

The Beginnings

- 1853 Sisters open Academy of Our Lady of Light in Santa Fe with 10 boarders and 3 day students
- Next year school grew to 30 boarder and 30 day students
- One student was Eva Hilton sister of Conrad Hilton. Conrad Hilton befriended the Sisters throughout his life.
- 1857 Sisters purchased land for Chapel of Our Lady of Light
- 1939 Spiral staircase appears in Ripley's Believe it or Not

Kit Carson Quote

"Them nuns do a heap sight of good in this god-forsaken country?"

Civil War Period

- All military and civil official abandoned Santa Fe and go to Ft Union.
- Confederate Texans come up the Rio Grande
- Union forces defeat the Confederates at Glorieta Pass 18 miles to the east
- The Texans return to Santa Fe to take shelter and burn and pillage
- Confederates left Sisters areas alone
- No school held for three weeks during occupation

Post Civil War

- Schools were opened all across the territory
- Foundations established in Colorado and Texas also
- With education foundation in place attention shifted to building the chapel
- French and Italian stonemasons and French architects that worked on cathedral worked on the chapel.

Loretta Chapel

- 1873 construction on the small chapel began
- 1874 first stones from quarry were cut
- 1878 chapel generally complete was blessed
- 1878 first funeral in chapel was for Sister Bridge Armijo
- 1880 construction of academy school building begins
- 1880 spiral staircase construction begins

Loretta Chapel

- 1881 Spiral Staircase finished
- 1887 Handrails for staircase added
- 1888 Archbishop Lamy died
- 1898 Electricity installed in chapel
- 1939 Spiral Staircase appears in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" column
- 1970 False claim of identity of staircase carpenter published in newspapers

Identity Discovered

- Mary Straw Cook research connected various documents leading to identity of staircase carpenter in 1995
 - Nuns ledgers and journals
 - Timelines
 - Obituaries of others claiming the construction
 - Letters of a murdered man
 - Newspaper item 1895

Identity Revealed

- To Be Continued

QUESTIONS?

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