

## 133 GUATEMALA Antigua, Colonial architecture I.

When the country was the seat of government for all of Spain's Central American provinces (an area stretching from southern Mexico to Panama and known as the Kingdom and Captaincy-General of Guatemala) the captial city, now known as Antigua Guatemala, was by royal decree given the title of "Very Noble and Very Loyal City of Saint James of the Knights of Guatemala." It was a rich cultural center and a showplace of religious art. In 1965, the Pan American Institute of Geography and History awarded it the title of "Monument City of the Americas," at the Institute's Eighth General Assembly. (The name Antigua Guatemala is generally shortened to Antigua alone in travel literature and locally.)

However, Antigua Guatemala was an ill-fated city, and time and again it was ravaged by earthquake and flood; so the colonial capital was moved to its present location. Situated in the Panchoy Valley some twenty-five miles west of Guatemala City over a paved highway, Antigua is today a monument city of Spanish façades, patios, arcades, and magnificent ruins. The peaks of the volcanoes Agua and Fuego still tower over the city as they did at the time of the city's splendor.

- 133A Cathedral (1669-1680). The first plan was drawn by Captain Martín  
133B de Andújar. The entire structure was raised on a platform to the level of the Street of the Bells at the rear. The total length from west to east is three hundred and eighteen feet. The general plan followed the arrangement of the typical Spanish cathedral of its period, with 5 naves, 18 chapels and 68 vaults.
- 133C Palace of the Capitains General (1550). Two story arcade, 350 feet 26 bays. During nearly two hundred years was expanded and altered.
- 133D School of San Jerónimo (1757). Two stories high, heavy stone construction, was also used as the Royal Customs House, and after stables were added it also housed a company of dragoons until 1773.
- 133E The church and convent of Santa Clara date from 1717 and according  
133F with an interesting archive document, dated May 22, 1734, concerning  
133G an inspection of the convent by Diego de Porres and Antonio Gálvez  
133H the building was incomplete on that date. There were 13 cells for nuns upstairs, 10 rooms serving as sacristy downstairs, room for convalescents, prison for demented nuns, refectory, kitchen stair halls and passages to interior patios.

The church of Santa Clara, with the street wall of massive and almost forbidding appearance (decorated entrances do not overcome this effect) is faced with a veneer of cut stone which is marked off by false mortar joints; the same technique used on the City Hall and a few other buildings of the eighteenth century; beneath this veneer the usual massive walls of masonry construction -- rubble, brick and mortar-- . Since Diego de Porres was associated with the City Hall

and believed to be the architect of the Escuela de Cristo, where this stone veneer was also employed, there is a supposition that he might have been the architect of Santa Clara Church as well.

- 133I Las Capuchinas was the fifth and last convent founded in Santiago de  
133J los Caballeros de Goathemala. Its existence covered a span of only a  
little over forty-seven years, but it provided us with a splendid  
example of an eighteenth century conventual establishment.

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- 134A La Merced (1764). Note niche over the door having a sculpture figure  
 134B of Nuestra Señora de la Merced. The façade with its low and heavy proportions expresses strength, and from every angle the structure reflects the builder's consciousness of the hazard of earthquakes. The first impression of heaviness in the façade is nicely offset by the central area which has two stories of superimposed columns to give it a modest verticality. The decoration which covers this central area, however, is what gives this façade its greatest distinction. The adornment of the second story is one of the finest examples of plaster work (ataurique) in a city where this form of decoration was very popular and where there are many fine examples dating from seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The lower story Doric columns are covered with a spiral pattern of grapes that are covered with a spiral pattern of grapes that are mediocre, possibly because of unskilled repairs and frequent repainting. The second story Ionic columns, the wall surfaces, and the recessed window are entirely covered with interesting and well-executed designs. The enriched central portion is seen and appreciated by those approaching the single large entrance. The church is set back a considerable distance from the street and rests on a low platform. The twisted (Salomonic) columns are decorated, and the niche area above the broken pediment retains the character of the church façade.
- 134C Colonial fountain and buildings surrounding plaza across La Merced
- 134D Santa Catalina was begun under the direction of Cristóbal de Salazar  
 134E in 1631 and was dedicated on September 15, 1647. The arch of Santa Catalina sustained damage in 1773 but did not fall. It was repaired in the middle of the nineteenth century and still spans the street.

- 134F University of San Carlos (eighteenth century). The richness of the  
134G arcades is apparent and the Moorish (Mudéjar) influence is evident.  
The rooms of the university are built around a single large patio,  
this patio has a vibrant quality which is enhanced by the interesting  
multilinear arches on all four sides. Between the arches the pilasters  
are terminated by a cushion effect of horizontal divisions. The  
University of San Carlos Borromeo was founded in 1670.
- 134H Baroque façade of San Francisco. The architect of the Cathedral,  
José de Porres, worked also on various parts of San Francisco.  
Angulo Iñiguez, among others, has noted that the column and niche  
composition of San Francisco was used in the central part of the  
Cathedral façade. José de Porres' son, Diego, also worked  
modifying San Francisco (1687-99). It would not be unusual for  
an architect to repeat a favorite architectural arrangement, but  
that fact does not help to establish a definite date for the  
San Francisco façade. José de Porres, who died in 1703, had been  
actively engaged on many of the important buildings of the Capital  
for the preceding fifty years.
- 134I Typical Spanish colonial doorways  
134J " " "

Photographs by Lois Lenderking  
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