

Stop 12 – Chapel Arch

In remote mission areas skilled stone masons could not always follow a project from inception to completion. Improvisation was common. The arched doorway of Mission Espada's current chapel is a perfect example. Examine the finely cut stones on the chapel doorway. They were cut by master stone mason Antonio Tello in 1744. However, these stones were not cut for this doorway. The chapel that you see today was originally designed to be used as a sacristy, a room to hold the priest's ornate robes. Tello was building a larger church when he abruptly left the area. As you face the chapel, step back and look for the foundation remnants to the right and in front of today's church.

From 1745 to 1763 the doorway you see today was flat topped and probably undecorated. A choir loft, supported by stone corbels or brackets, hung inside - over the entrance door. Since the plan was to surround it with a larger church the *espadana*, or bell tower, was added later in 1790.

In 1763, master mason Joseph Palafox took the doorway stones - stored for almost 20 years - to create the entry you see today. The arched doorway stones were most likely originally cut for an opening two feet higher and much wider than this one. Historians believe that the stones now framing the arch were probably meant to form the peak of the arch in a larger doorway. Notice the right pillar is finished with red bricks. This is another example of improvising field fitting as a result of the stones originally being cut for a different opening. Palafox also added the window above the door. The bricks, or *ladrillos*, were made and fired in kilns outside the Espada walls. White plaster covered the patchwork sections of the finished stone work. Today's chapel, the center of an active Catholic parish, is the result of an evolving collaborative project.