

## Stop 15 – Security Threats

Of the five San Antonio missions, Espada was the most vulnerable to attack. Even today, its isolation and remoteness is striking. At the entrance of the parish parking lot, near today's chapel, look for a diamond shaped foundation. It represents one of three *baluartes* or bastions incorporated into Espada's walls. From inside this 17 foot high fortification, mission natives trained as soldiers, used flintlock muskets and small cannons to keep the mission secure. Another circular style bastion -now part of Espada's museum -was added after the mission period and used by the Texian army.

Hunter gatherer bands of Indians called Pacaos, Borrados, and others came to Mission Espada to escape the marauding Lipan Apache. The Lipan often lived by the force of their arms and the swiftness of their horses. The horse, introduced to the Americas in the 1500s by the Spanish, gave the Lipan a great advantage over the pedestrian bands of the river valley. The mission provided sanctuary. Several armed sentries patrolled the walls. When natives ventured outside the walls to gather seeds, berries, or prickly pear, they were often attacked.

Human foe may not have been the greatest threat to mission life. The introduction of European diseases such as cholera, small pox, buboes, and measles took a heavy toll on the Indian population. A smallpox and measles epidemic plagued all of *San Antonio de Bejar* in 1739. Many mission Indians died, others fled. By the end of the epidemic, Espada's 120 residents had dwindled to 50. Even the mission priest Fr. Pedro Yasmendi perished in the 1739 epidemic. He died while ministering to some of the same mission Indians who threatened his life just three years earlier amid disputes over mission policies.