

A Visual Catalog of Jesuit Missions in Spanish America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This visual catalog examines the history and architectural heritage of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in Spanish America up to their expulsion in 1767. As the title suggests, it is also a book with images and photographs of examples of the existing Jesuit architectural heritage. This volume focuses on selective but representative frontier missions that the Jesuits administered in North and South America, but also includes photographs of urban institutions such as *colegios*, and representative agro-industrial complexes. This introduction also provides a brief overview to the Jesuit organization in Spanish America.

In 1534, the former Spanish soldier Iñigo Lopez de Loyola (Ignacio de Loyola) and eight other men met in Rome and established the Society of Jesus. Six years later Pope Paulus III formally authorized the Society. The Protestant Reformation began in 1517, and religious division led to wars of religion as Catholic monarchs sought to stop the spread of Protestantism and Protestants protected their beliefs. The Jesuits came to play an important role in the Counter-Reformation, the effort by the Catholic Church to bring Protestants back to the fold and to eliminate doctrinal error and heresy. It was also an age of overseas expansion. Portugal and Spain were at the forefront of global expansion, and they brought missionaries to spread what they believed to be the true faith to non-Christian peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The Jesuits came to Spanish America in the later sixteenth century. They first arrived in the Viceroyalty of Peru in 1568, and came to Mexico four years later in 1572.

Members of the Society of Jesus took a vow of obedience to the Pope, and to the General of the order sometimes referred to as the “Black Pope” by critics. The other religious orders in Spanish America such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians, had separate national-level administrative units from which members sent to the Americas were recruited. The Society of Jesus, on the other hand, recruited its members internationally. The international composition of its membership can be seen in several examples from the Baja California missions in northern Mexico. Missionaries there included the Scotsman William Gordon, the

Croat Fernando (Fernan) Konsag, and the Bohemian Wenceslao Linck. Ignaz Tirsch and Florian Pauck, the first also stationed on the Baja California missions and the second named sent to the Chaco missions in southern South America, were artists who left a visual record of what they saw in the Americas.

The regional administrative unit was the province headed by a provincial. The Jesuits developed their different activities in a variety of institutions. This included the urban institutions. The Jesuits played an important role in colonial Spanish American cities. Their churches catered to city-folk, they educated the children of wealthy citizens and of the indigenous elites, and organized urban missions generally known as “popular” missions to correct doctrinal error. One institution was the *colegio mayor* which was a university that focused on the teaching of theology and philosophy. There would also have been a *convictorio* (*domus convictorum*) or residence for the university students who did not have a place to live. An example of this institution was the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo located in Mexico City. A second institution was the *colegio menor* that generally taught grammar. There were also *casas profesas* or a place of residence for the Jesuit priests who had not taken the fourth vow of obedience to the Pope. An example was the *casa profesa* in Mexico City of which only the church survives. During the Jesuit tenure the church was named San José El Real, but following the Jesuit expulsion royal officials reassigned the church and adjoining complex and it was renamed the Oratorio de San Felipe Neri. It is popularly known today as “La Profesa.” Other Jesuit institutions included the *casa de ejercicios* that were devotional centers for lay people segregated by gender. There would be one for men and a second for women. Finally, there were *Noviciados* (*domus probationis, noviciatus*) or novitiates for the training of young men who wished to join the order. An example of a novitiate is that of San Francisco Xavier located in Tepotzotlán (Estado de México, México).¹

¹ Carlos Page, “Los planos de los colegios jesuiticos de Lima, Ayacucho, y Sucre de la Biblioteca Nacional de Francia,” *ALTERITAS, Revista de Estudios Socioculturales Andino Amazónicos* 8 no. 9 (2019): 247-262.

Selected Spanish American Jesuit Urban Colegios.

Mexico City

Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo



Figure 1: A painting of a Jesuit church by the missionary Ignacio (Ignaz) Tirsch who was stationed on the missions in Baja California. It is a representation of the church of San Pedro y San Pablo in Mexico City attached to the Colegio Máximo.



Figure 2: Detail of a 1793 map of Mexico City showing the ex-Jesuit complex: Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo, the Colegio of San Ildefonso, and the Colegio de San Gregorio.



Figure 3: The church now houses a museum.



Figure 4: The church façade.



Figure 5: A historic image of the church.

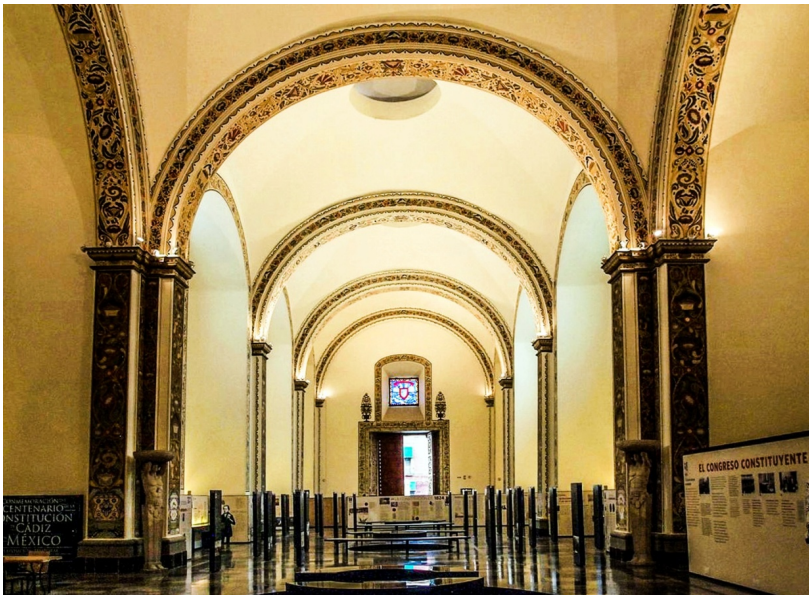


Figure 6: The church interior.

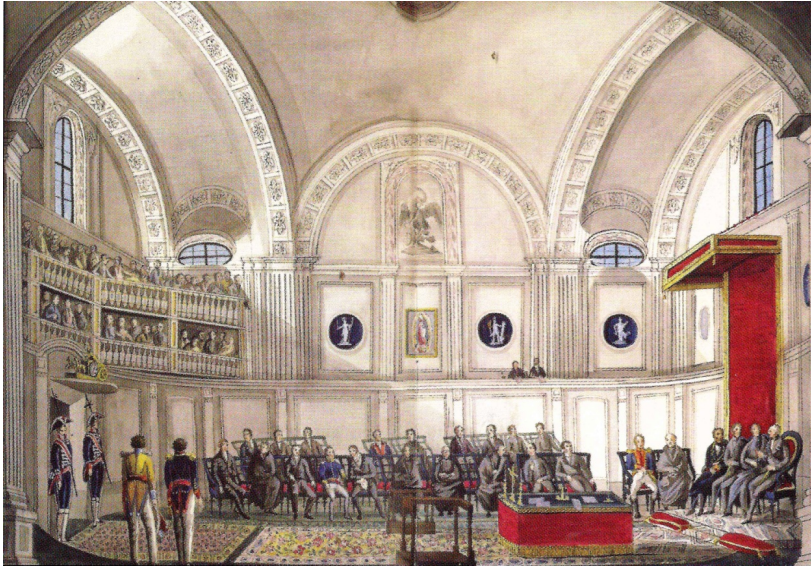


Figure 7: A lithograph of the Mexican Constituent Congress meeting in the church of San Pedro y San Pablo in 1822.

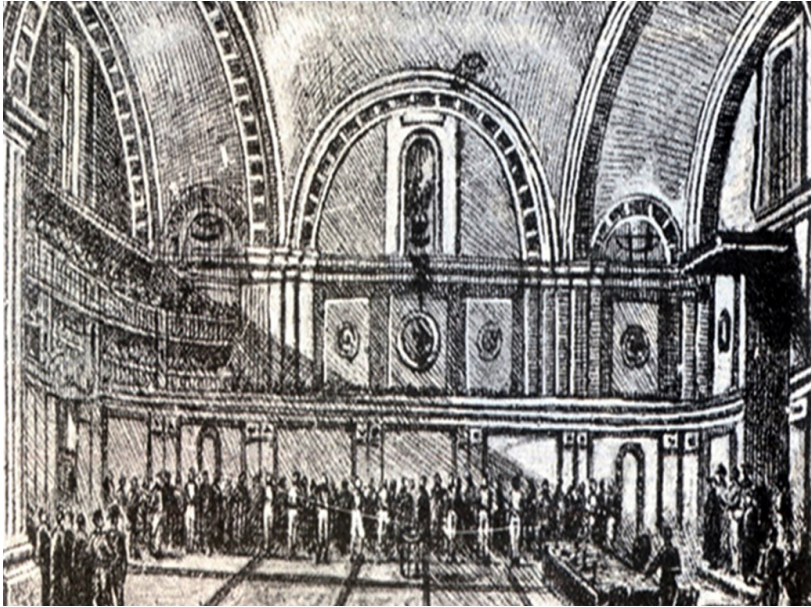


Figure 8: An engraving of the 1822 proclamation in the ex-Jesuit church of Agustín Iturbide as Emperor of Mexico.



Figure 9: The entrance to the main cloister.



Figure 10: The main cloister of the Colegio Máximo.



Figure 11: The main cloister.



Figure 12: The second cloister.

Colegio de San Ildefonso



Figure 13: The exterior façade.



Figure 14: The main cloister.

Colegio de San Gregorio



Figure 15: Detail of an eighteenth century map showing the Colegio de San Gregorio with its church that no longer exists, the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo, and the Colegio de San Ildefonso.



Figure 16: The exterior façade.



Figure 17: The cloister.



Figure 18: A cloister occupied by the Universidad Obrera de Mexico.

San José El Real (Oratorio de San Felipe de Neri “La Profesa”)

Figure 19: The church and church interior. It was built by the Jesuits for the Casa Profesa. Following the Jesuit expulsion it was rededicated as the Oratorio of San Felipe de Neri.



Figure 21: A historic photograph from 1861 of the cloister before its demolition. The cloister was similar to that of the Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo.

The Colegio and Novitiate of San Francisco Xavier Tepotzotlán



Figure 22: The façade of San Francisco Xavier church.



Figure 23: The main altar created in the 1760s by Miguel Maldonado y Cabrera.

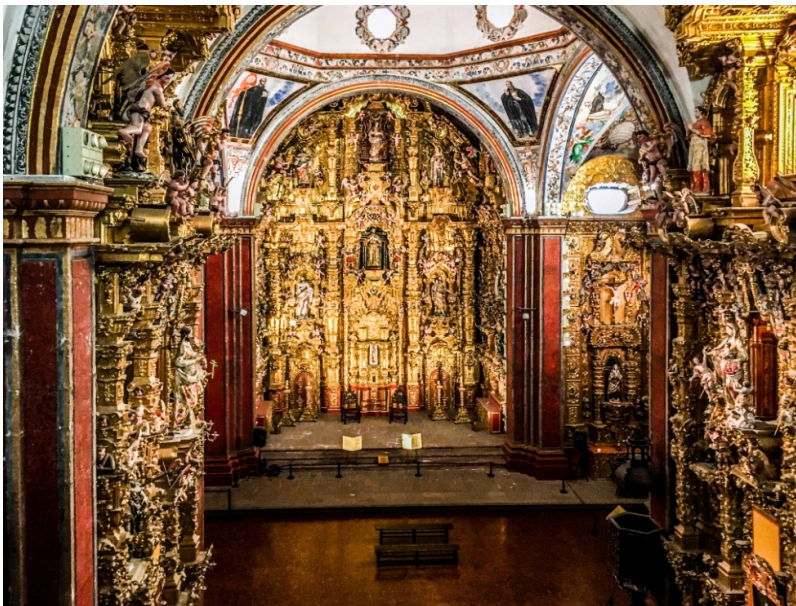


Figure 24: A second view of the church and main altar from the choir loft.



Figure 25: The camarín of the Virgin of Loreto.



Figure 26: The domestic chapel.

San Ildefonso (Puebla de los Ángeles)

Figure 27: Espiritu Santo Church.