

SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS

WORLD HERITAGE SITE 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

WORLD HERITAGE MANAGEMENT GROUP



PRIMARY PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS



EL CAMINO DE SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS



INTRODUCTION

[San Antonio Missions](#) is a unique chain of five closely spaced eighteenth century Spanish colonial mission complexes in San Antonio, Texas. Historically, they operated cooperatively and shared the same goals: to evangelize the area's Indigenous population and to develop secular, self-supporting communities of subjects loyal to the Catholic Church and the Spanish Crown who could help defend the northern frontier of Spain's empire in North America. Located along a 12-mile (19.3 km) length of the San Antonio River, the missions, with their supporting irrigation systems, workshops, farms, and ranches, grew into self-sustaining communities that became the foundation of the modern city of San Antonio. Today, they are all designated historic sites, and four of the former mission churches continue to serve as active Catholic parishes. The designated property consists of the five mission compounds, farm fields, irrigation systems, and a ranch site.

THE WORLD HERITAGE MANAGEMENT GROUP

The World Heritage Management Group (WHMG) for the San Antonio Missions consists of the landowners for the missions, including the [National Park Service](#), the [Archdiocese of San Antonio](#), [San Antonio River Authority](#), the [City of San Antonio](#), [Bexar County](#), and the [Texas General Land Office](#). In addition to the agencies represented on the WHMG, there are three primary partners dedicated to helping achieve World Heritage goals: [Mission Heritage Partners](#), [Visit San Antonio](#), and the [San Antonio Conservation Society](#).

The World Heritage Management Group is an oversight body whose purpose is to continue the high level of coordination and partnering that was established as the World Heritage nomination was under preparation. This committee will assist management of the relevant authorities in reaching the goals stated in the next page and ensure that these cultural resources are protected in perpetuity. In 2023, the group, led by the National Park Service completed its first "periodic reporting" to UNESCO since the site's inscription in 2015. The report reaffirms the integrity of the site's globally significant resources and the dedication of this group.

WORLD HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS

- A** Protect and preserve finite cultural resources using the least invasive techniques possible.
- B** In accordance with their Outstanding Universal Value interpret the entire cultural history of the missions and provide educational, spiritual and religious experiences that reflect the multiplicity of stories and continuing heritage of the missions.
- C** Ensure that visitors can maneuver between the mission sites in a way that is understandable and that has the least impact on the cultural resources.
- D** Increase visitor capacity and improve visitor experiences while erring in favor of resource protection if necessary.
- E** Explore innovative ways to fund the protection and interpretation of the missions.
- F** Encourage academic research on the missions that will shed new light on the people, structures, and landscapes.
- G** Market the missions to the local community, the country, and the world to increase awareness of their Outstanding Universal Value and the value of their continued protection. Reach out to non- traditional segments of the population for heritage tourism and preservation.

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01 PRESERVATION

*Protect and preserve finite cultural resources using the least invasive techniques possible.
(World Management Goal A)*



Alamo Preservation

In the Fall of 2023, the annual inspection of the Alamo Church was conducted by the Alamo Conservator following notes from the previous year. Multiple locations were identified and compiled in a report. The Moisture Monitoring project continues to collect data above and below grade. This information is an invaluable resource in preserving the artifact. Various conservation procedures continue daily.

In the Sacristy of the Alamo Church, a state-of-the-art installation opened to the public. The exhibit was funded by the Nancy Smith Hurd Foundation. This beautiful free-standing installation educates visitors on how the Sacristy was decoratively painted during the Mission era, what it was like to be in the space during the Battle of 1836, and how the frescoes were discovered in 2000.

The Long Barrack emergency drainage project commenced in the summer of 2023. The purpose of the project is to prevent water from entering the building.



It's Not My Litter but It's My River - Litter Pickup Challenge

In June 2023, National Rivers Month, the San Antonio River Authority started the "It's Not My Litter But It's My River" Challenge in conjunction with the River Authority's "Don't Let Litter Trash Your River" initiative. Due to so much litter floating around the city and in our waterways, this challenge

gave the community a chance to help the San Antonio River, and spread the word to keep the river clean. Participants accepted the challenge and tagged themselves on social media picking up trash. Many of these efforts recorded were along the Mission Reach.



Youth in Preservation

An Acequia Preservation effort was funded with a new Task Agreement in 2023. Crews assisted with deferred maintenance in the historic irrigation ditches (acequias) of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. This work is funded as a Maintenance Action Team project under Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) funding and valued at nearly \$400,000 carrying over into 2024 for a total of 10 months for a 10 person crew.



The Cultural Heritage Landscape Apprentice Program, in partnership with the [Texas Conservation Corps](#) and American Youthworks and supported by the National Park Foundation, includes 2,700 hours of landscape preservation labor in this the 3rd year. The park hired one member of the 2022 crew at the completion of their service into a paid National Park Service staff positions.

The park also benefited from hosting 3 [CorpsTHAT](#) Deaf and Hard or Hearing interns as part of a youth initiative to introduce deaf individuals to work experience in preservation. In addition, the park on-boarded two Traditional Trades Advancement Program masonry apprentices associated with Student Conservation Society to work with staff masons in preservation for a 5 month period.

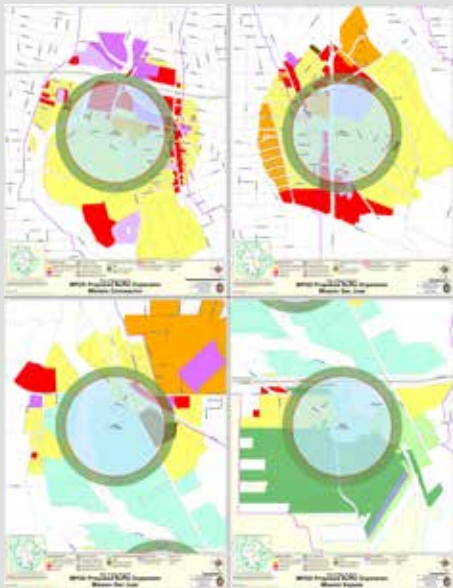


Lastly, the park is supporting three additional individual placement interns as Preservation Apprentices working both as mason apprentices and cultural landscape apprentices with an additional \$128,000 investment in youth and preservation.



Rehabilitation of Structures at Mission San José

Project scoping and condition assessment has been completed for the rehabilitation of a National Register structure at Mission San José. Funding in excess of \$1,000,000 has been secured for the exterior envelope rehabilitation work slated to be completed in Fiscal Year 24. In addition, funded in fiscal year 2026, scoping and preliminary design has begun for a comprehensive structural stabilization and rehabilitation of the walled compound at Mission San Jose. This work may include significant site drainage improvements, foundation stabilization, masonry rehabilitation to include new roofing and other accessibility and adaptive reuse improvements.



Expansion of Mission Protection Overlay District (MPOD)

In May 2023, the City of San Antonio approved an ordinance amending the zoning district boundary to apply an expanded Mission Protection Overlay District (MPOD) to existing base zoning districts: Mission Concepcion (MPOD1), Mission San Jose (MPOD2), Mission San Juan (MPOD3), and Mission Espada (MPOD4). The expanded overlay increased from 1,500 to 1,800 feet, increasing the number of properties that are subject to height restrictions near the missions.



Masonry Preservation

The National Park Service selected and completed its 2nd year of two masonry apprentices funded by the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center and park funds. Totalling 1,800 hours toward masonry preservation.



Mission San José Grist Mill's Faux Bois Railings

Through an ongoing collaboration with local artisan René Romero, the faux bois railings surrounding the gristmill at Mission San José underwent a much-needed refreshment with financial support from the McNutt Foundation through Mission Heritage Partners. The faux bois railings are now more vibrant and sturdy, enhancing the safety and appearance of the gristmill exhibit.





Tamōx Talōm Food Forest Project

The Tamox Talom food forest site is located in [Padre County Park](#), 6515 Padre Drive along the [Mission Reach section of the San Antonio River Walk](#). This 8-mile linear park has over 16 miles of trail along the river for pedestrians and bicyclists to enjoy, plus a paddling trail for canoeing and kayaking. This project is located in the buffer zone of the World Heritage San Antonio Mission of San Jose. Tamōx Talōm food forest is a community initiative, established by the Food Policy Council hoping to plant over 100 fruit and nut trees in Padre Park to reestablish the plentiful landscape that was once prevalent in the area where the missions were first established.



San Antonio River Authority Trash Pick-ups

Over 500 volunteers with the River Authority participated in a total of 16 litter pick up events throughout the Mission Reach at Acequia Park, Confluence Park, and the Mission Reach Trail at Camino Coahuilteca. These litter pick up events are conducted on both land and water. Throughout 2023, volunteers removed 15,000 pounds of trash from water and land.



285 Pounds of Trash Removed during American Rivers Clean-up Day with River Warriors and JP Morgan Chase Volunteers

The River Warrior Program led by San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) and the San Antonio River Foundation joined forces with American Rivers, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of rivers across the country, for a river cleanup initiative along the San Antonio River. The River Warriors have a longstanding partnership with American Rivers, having collaborated on multiple occasions on many cleanup initiatives. In partnership with JP Morgan Chase volunteers, this collaborative effort aims to contribute to the broader mission of American Rivers, which includes protecting 1 million miles of river, removing 30,000 harmful dams, ensuring clean water for every community, and championing a powerful river movement. This annual event included 18 JP Morgan Chase volunteers teaming up with River Warrior volunteers to clean a designated stretch of the river at the confluence of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek. The cleanup removed 285 pounds of trash in and along the river.





Mission Descendant “Ofrendas” for Día de los Muertos

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park hosted its annual ofrenda exhibit in the granary of Mission San José. Families from the mission descendant community built and displayed ofrendas honoring the lives and stories of their ancestors. The annual ofrenda exhibit is an important way the park helps to protect and preserve these important and intangible stories for future generations.



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS



WORLD HERITAGE

Mission Marquee Plaza Dia de los Muertos - Celebrando las Misiones

The World Heritage Office presented its sixth annual Dia de los Muertos (Celebrando las Misiones) event at [Mission Marquee Plaza](#) on October 28, 2023. The event included partnerships with San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Mission descendant families, the Mission San Jose Neighborhood Association, local businesses, and vendors, and other community organizations. The free event included a community altar and remembrances video presentation, spoken word performances, face painting, interactive art workshops, music and dance performances, an indigenous blessing, a procession from Mission San José Granary to Mission Marquee Plaza, and a screening of “Coco.” The program is an annual cultural event sharing the stories, legacies and memories of our World Heritage community. An estimated 2,000 individuals attended the event.



River Authority Mussel Reintroduction Project Enters Final Stages

San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) environmental scientists have been working since 2017 to bring native freshwater mussels back to the upper reaches of the San Antonio River, beginning with the recently restored Mission Reach. Native freshwater mussels are essential to have in our rivers. They provide many excellent ecosystem services, including cleaning the water and giving stability to the river's bed. There are many indicators that the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration, completed in 2013, has positively impacted the water quality and ecology of the San Antonio River, improving its ability to sustain these sensitive organisms. After mussels have been put into their new homes in the Mission Reach, scientists will need to determine if they're happy. By marking the mussels before putting them in the water, scientists can return later and find them again. The number of mussels they recapture and how far those mussels have moved since the last time they were seen help inform scientists whether that habitat is working as a suitable home. Our ability to monitor success relative to reintroduction location will be critical in a system like the Mission Reach, allowing us to easily detect offspring produced naturally within the Mission Reach in the future. While the feasibility stage of this project is concluding, the efforts involved with reintroducing freshwater mussels into the San Antonio River will continue well into the future. River Authority scientists will continue to work with partners to produce and stock juvenile mussels, refine methods, and monitor success. The past several years of research have positioned us to reincorporate this extraordinarily important group of organisms back into their rightful home. Their restored presence will have tremendous positive effects on overall stream health and will make for a cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable river. Read our [current blog](#) and stay tuned for more marvelous mussel news and updates on this important project improving the health of the San Antonio River.



Renewal Recognition for The El Camino de San Antonio Missions Campus

The El Camino de San Antonio Campus received the Excellence in Construction Award for 2023 from the Associated Builders and Contractors of South Texas in November 2023. The Archdiocese of San Antonio and Marksmen General Contractors received the award for the creative repurpose and renovation of the former St. John Seminary structures.

2023
Excellence
IN CONSTRUCTION



MARKSMEN GENERAL
CONTRACTORS



Park Secures NPS Funding for Multiple Cyclic Maintenance Projects at the Park

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park secured National Park Service project funding in 2023 in excess of \$500,000 for cyclic maintenance projects in multiple areas, including Year Two of regrading additional park access roads, roof replacement of historic Mission Concepcion Convento, and the execution of the rehabilitation of grist mill pump controls at Mission San José.



Native Arrowhead Plant Transplanted from Historic Acequia into San Antonio River

On August 16, 2023, the Texas Conservation Corps (TXCC) and the San Antonio River Authority worked together at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park to relocate Sagittaria plants from the Mission San Juan acequia to the San Antonio River for habitat restoration. Sagittaria, or the Arrowhead plant is a native plant species and is beneficial in natural river and stream ecosystems.

The TXCC members worked alongside employees of the San Antonio River Authority to remove the overgrowth of plants. The youth corps is funded by the National Park Service and the Land Restoration Fund for acequia preservation and is part of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Maintenance Action Teams (MAT). This crew began working with San Antonio Missions National Historical Park staff on the acequia preservation project on July 24th, 2023 and their work is funded for a 10-month period. Three full utility carts of plants were removed and transplanted with this effort.





Espada's Bell Rings Again

The bell at Mission San Francisco de la Espada which detached and fell at the end of 2022 was finally restored and placed back in the bell tower in November of 2023. For safety reasons, the bells at the rest of the mission churches were examined and found to be in safe and ringing condition.



San José Roof Restoration

The roof restoration of Mission San José which began in 2022 was completed in 2023. The total cost of the restoration exceeded one million dollars and was funded by the generous donors of Las Misiones and a grant from the Texas Historical Foundation. During the restoration, additional elements within the walls of Mission San José including drainpipes from the 1930's renovations were discovered and documented.



02 INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION

In accordance with their Outstanding Universal Value interpret the entire cultural history of the missions and provide educational, spiritual and religious experiences that reflect the multiplicity of stories and continuing heritage of the missions. (World Management Goal B)



Archeology Day

Leveraging a grant from Bexar County, Mission Heritage Partners funded the first non-intrusive sub-surface survey inside the Mission San José compound by geophysicists from University of Texas at San Antonio, and a small archeological excavation done by the university's Center for Archaeological Research.



National Park Expands Its Programming

In addition to its daily tours of Mission San José, the park offered expanded tours in 2023. The first Saturday of the month offered visitors an opportunity to tour Rancho de las Cabras. More than 400 visitors joined tours of the only remaining Spanish colonial ranch site in the world. In addition, the third Saturdays of the month brought hundreds of visitors to nature hikes along the mission reach to see birds, acequias, and more.



River Authority Docents

The River Authority offered two docent training courses for inspired community members to take their volunteerism to the next level. The River Authority provided 21 docent trainees with study materials to participate in educational programming, park interpretation training, and presentations given by experts from within the agency for an in-depth understanding of River Authority projects and research. Upon completion of this training, docents are offered unique opportunities to assist with park tours, watershed model demonstrations, and continued engagement with agency staff and experts.



World Heritage Open House

On April 22, 2023, the City of San Antonio World Heritage Office hosted the 8th Annual World Heritage Open House at the Mission Branch Library. The event was held in partnership with Harlandale Independent School District and the 45th Cultural Arts Fair and Parade which culminated at Mission Marquee Plaza. The Open House consisted of informational tables representing projects, programs, and organizations that have a direct impact on the community within the World Heritage Site. Participating organizations included the National Parks Service, the Harvey E. Najim YMCA, and Alamo Community Colleges. The Open House hosted almost 300 visitors throughout the duration of the event.



OWHC Student Film Contest 2023

The City of San Antonio's Department of Arts and Culture, in collaboration with the World Heritage Office, coordinated a citywide film contest called #FilmSA Competition. A filmmaker in each of the following age categories 14 – 17 years old and 18 – 21 years old was awarded \$1,000 and a public screening at an awards ceremony held at Mission Marquee Plaza on May 6, 2023. The winners of the category "Heritage and Quality Life" were entered into the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) 7th Annual International Video Production Competition, advancing to the finalist selection.





San Antonio River Authority Education Programs

The River Authority Education Team conducts field trips, tours, and presentations with a fundamental emphasis on the vital role that the river played in the founding of San Antonio and the establishment of the missions. Students in grades K-12 regularly attend field trips at River Authority parks along the Mission Reach of the San Antonio River. Adult audiences from organizations such as the Texas Children in Nature Network, Alamo Area Master Naturalists, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park Education Team, the University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary's University, and teachers from many local school districts have also enjoyed field trips along the Mission Reach with River Authority educators. Additionally, the River Authority Education Team visits public schools, universities, and various community organizations to conduct presentations on a wide variety of topics. In 2023, the Education Team served over 1,499 individuals along the Mission Reach and over 19,000 total constituents throughout the San Antonio River Basin. The River Authority's Education team also teamed up with the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park staff to share information and collaborate on a series of upcoming field trips. More collaborations are planned for 2024.



Alamo Education Programs

About 155,000 school children visited the Alamo in 2023, highlighting the emphasis the Alamo places on educating our youngest visitors about the central role the historic site and its land have played in our community. Alamo Discovery Tour field trips are guided by trained members of the Alamo's education team, most of whom have classroom experience as educators. Students are guided through historical eras and encouraged to find themselves reflected in the Alamo story, from the Spanish Mission era to the Alamo's pivotal role in the Texas Revolution and later the women-led preservation movement and the Civil Rights movement. In 2023, the Alamo's education team awarded 818 hours of professional development workshops for teachers, including the popular Teach The Alamo program. This class helps broaden the story of the Alamo through teacher-centered walking tours that cover multiple eras, including Indigenous history, the Mission period, the Texas Revolution, annexation, statehood and preservation. In November, the Alamo broke ground on the Texas Cavaliers Education Center. It's scheduled to open in 2025 and will feature an outdoor classroom, a STEAM Lab, an Early Learner Hub, and a Distance Learning Lab.





National Park Education Team

The education program at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park continues to uphold the values found in the National Park Service mission statement of “enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations,” working creatively within the community to create ties to this Texas history. Education Technicians presented in-park, in-school, and virtual programs to children. In the 2023, more than 23,000 students received education programming to connect to the importance of the park.

Our ranger led field trips guide students from all over Texas to gain an immersive experience exploring the rich Spanish colonial history and connect it to what we see and feel today. The in-school education programming has been much closer to home, with a large emphasis on after school programming within Harlandale ISD, where many students can the national park their “backyard.” After school programming invites students to not only understand San Antonio Missions in a social studies context, but also science, animals, art, math, and more. Virtually, the park reached over 4,000 students in more than 19 states.

The park’s Education Team is funded by Mission Heritage Partners.

23,000+ STUDENTS SERVED



Through the education programs, the park distributed 3,700 Every Kid Outdoors passes. Every Kid Outdoors allows U.S. fourth graders and their families free access to over 2,000 federal lands and waters to discover their wildlife, resources, and history.

OUTREACH

Market the missions to the local community, the country, and the world to increase awareness of their Outstanding Universal Value and the value of their continued protection. Reach out to non- traditional segments of the population for heritage tourism and preservation. (World Heritage Management Goal G)



One of the highest moments in the city’s tourism industry history occurred in 2023 when the world came to San Antonio for the [IPW 2023](#) conference. The city experienced a remarkably successful IPW 2023, which surpassed pre-pandemic attendance from key markets including Mexico, Canada, Brazil, and Australia. The event generated an impressive \$13.56 million in economic impact, highlighting the significance of the tourism industry in our destination. With 470 appointments conducted with buyers and media, IPW provided an invaluable platform for networking and business opportunities. The City of San Antonio’s World Heritage Office coordinated the participation of the, National Park Service, Bexar County, San Antonio River Authority, Mission Heritage

Partners, and Las Misiones. The collaboration of more than three hundred local business partners and organizations with Visit San Antonio ensured the curation of exceptional experiences highlighting our city’s most cherished assets. Immersive tours, some which highlighted San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site, were organized for 730 international media and buyers. Furthermore, buyers and media were encouraged to explore and dine on the River Walk for the Festival Del Rio pre-parade dining, promoting local businesses. All IPW 2023 events were certified gold as “Green Events” through the City of San Antonio’s Office of Sustainability, highlighting our commitment to environmental responsibility. These achievements collectively demonstrate the resounding success and positive impact of IPW 2023 on our destination. The legacy of hosting IPW is the economic impact. According to Rockport Analytics, **over the next three years San Antonio will see an estimated additional 314,000 visitors with \$614M in visitor spending, with the state seeing an estimated additional 603,000 visitors with \$1B in visitor spending.**

U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION
IPW 2023

MAY 20-24,
2023





Annular Solar Illumination

National Park Service hosted a free community event in partnership with University of Texas at San Antonio's Physics and Astronomy program and the Curtis Vaughan Jr. Observatory on Saturday, Oct 14th for the rare Annular Solar Eclipse.

Families explored the sky with solar telescopes and earned exclusive Junior Ranger Eclipse Explorer badges. The park had more than 3,500 attendees at Mission San José for the event.



San Antonio Missions Gets Veterans into Parks

San Antonio Missions National Historical is dedicated to engaging with both active duty military and their families, as well as the veteran community. The park joined many military community days on bases throughout San Antonio and participated in military appreciation days including Veteran's Day throughout the city. In 2023, the park gave out 1,400 free [national park passes](#) to local veterans and more than 800 passes to active duty military. The National Park Service thanks the men and women of our armed forces that keep our nation safe.



Drama at Mission Concepción

On March 26 Las Misiones sponsored, and Mission Concepción hosted a public reading of the play *Bound by Truth* by Sheila Rinear. Organized by Classic Theatre of San Antonio, the play focused on Margaret "Meg" More Roper, daughter of St. Thomas More, a literate woman in the age of male-dominated religious and political strife. The actors took advantage of the architecture and acoustics to provide a vibrant reading to a packed church.



San Antonio Missions
WORLD HERITAGE
FESTIVAL

ANNUAL WORLD HERITAGE FESTIVAL



WORLD HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2023

This year marked the 8th anniversary of the San Antonio Missions designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In commemoration, the World Heritage Festival was held on September 6 - 10, 2023. The festival invites partner organizations and the community to collaborate and celebrate our World Heritage Site and the designation. The five-day celebration took place throughout the five San Antonio Missions and surrounding areas.

The festival's events included:

- **Partner Breakfast**, 41 guests;
- **There's a Story Here: Descendants of Spanish Colonial Missions**, 125 participants;
 - to capture Mission Descendant Stories on StoryMap
- **Mesa at the Missions: Nopal y Tú dinner**, 125 attendees;
 - celebrate the sustainability efforts and horticultural traditions at Mission San Juan
- **Texas' Oldest Grist Mill**, 65 attendees;
 - demonstrate and interpret the Grist Mill at Mission San José
- **The Many Lives of the Alamo Long Barrack**, 78 participants;
- **River to Farm Hike**, 25 participants;
 - Park Ranger guided hike along Mission Reach
- **Music & Movie Under the Stars: Tribute to San Antonio, Military City USA**, 1,000 participants;
- **Tour de Las Misiones**: 398 participants;
 - one-of-a-kind Bike Ride, Walk, and Run
- **Junior Ranger Day: Mission Espada**, 175 participants;
- **El Camino de San Antonio: Caring for Creation Mass and Walk**, 300 participants;
- **Rancho de las Cabras Tour**, 45 participants;
 - Park Ranger guided tour of Mission Espada's ranch in Floresville, TX

The festival engaged community organizations, stakeholders, and community members. The events cultivated collaboration with multiple entities with a variety of focuses such as arts and culture, outdoor fitness, active-duty military, veteran support and outreach, and religion.

Overall estimated attendance: 2380

MISSION MARQUEE PLAZA



WORLD HERITAGE

Mission Marquee Plaza Farmers and Artisans Markets

The World Heritage Office hosted monthly Farmers & Artisans Markets every first and third Saturday from March through November 2023, totaling 18 markets. The market also hosts free community yoga and zumba fitness classes, food and nutritional resources, with health services such as fresh locally sourced foods, senior vouchers, SNAP and WIC redemptions, and interactive food demonstrations, and cultural programming representative of the community's history and traditions. Three tree adoptions were held for a total distribution of over 900 trees. The program engaged local farmers, artisans, community partners, and businesses in the World Heritage area. Estimated attendance: 10,000



Mission Marquee Plaza Viva Poesia: Palabra, Musica, y Cultura Event

Viva Poesía: Palabras, Música, y Cultura, the official kick-off event for National Poetry Month in San Antonio, was held at Mission Marquee Plaza on Saturday, April 1, 2023. The theme for the ninth annual event was "For Reels! A Poetic Tribute to the Movies", in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the historic Mission Drive-In. The event featured performances from San Antonio's poets laureate Andrea "Vocab" Sanderson, Dr. Carmen Tafolla, Jenny Brown, and Dr. Octavio Quintanilla as well as other local spoken word artists. With original pieces created specifically for this event, the poets sang in verse the cinematic magic and nostalgia of some of the films that have inspired us as human beings. Live performances included the Wonder Theatre, SA Philharmonic Brass Ensemble, and Como Las Movies. Interactive workshops included a poetry writing class, make-and-take art activities, and over 20 pop-up vendors. The program engaged local artists, community partners, and businesses in the World Heritage area. An estimated 1,500 individuals attended the event.



Mission Marquee Plaza Outdoor Family Film Series

The World Heritage Office hosted the monthly Outdoor Family Film Series movie nights at Mission Marquee Plaza. A total of 20 movies were held every first and third Saturday, and every third Thursday of each month, from May through November 2023. The film series served as a welcoming, family-friendly gathering space that offered free programming to the local community and visitors. The film series featured a variety of pre-entertainment such as live music and dance performances, costume character meets and greets, car shows, and interactive make-and-take art tables, and giveaways. The program supported local community organizations, businesses, artisans, and food vendors in the World Heritage area and is critical to serving the community and stakeholders involved. Estimated attendance: 27,000.





Mission Marquee Plaza 44th Annual Cultural Arts Festival

The World Heritage Office's Mission Marquee Plaza in partnership with Harlandale Independent School District held the 44th annual Harlandale Cultural Arts Fair, which coincided with the World Heritage Office Open House, on Saturday, April 22, 2023. The event provided the Harlandale ISD community a chance to reconnect with their culture and enjoy a day filled with activities that promoted students' education and success. The event kicked off with a Descendants ceremony at Mission San Jose, to honor the first families of the San Antonio Missions, followed by a parade that started at Harlandale Memorial Stadium and showcased the student's sports, fine arts, and school pride. The parade culminated at Mission Marquee Plaza with live student performances, fun activities, and a chance to learn more about area projects and programs at the World Heritage Open House.

An estimated 5,000 individuals attended the event.

Mission Marquee Plaza KLRN Kids Fall Festival

The World Heritage Office, in partnership with KLRN, hosted the KLRN Kids Fall Festival on Saturday, October 14, 2023. The free community event included PBS KIDS programming, a PBS KIDS costumed character meet and greet, hands-on educational activities, informational tables with over 30 community partners, and a trunk and treat. Youth fitness activities and over 200 healthy food bags, donated by the San Antonio Food Bank, were provided and distributed to the community. The program is critical to serving the community and stakeholders involved.

An estimated 2,500 individuals attended the event.



Mission Marquee Plaza Tamal Institute and Holiday Market

The World Heritage Office hosted the Tamal Institute and end-of-season Holiday Market at Mission Marquee Plaza on November 18, 2023. Activities included tamale and chili-making classes, food demonstrations, ¡Qué Sabor! San Antonio™ Lotería, and holiday arts and crafts. The event included a tree adoption with over 300 trees distributed to the community and featured a holiday market with over 35 local vendors featuring handmade goods and specialty products. The program also featured live music and dance performances by local artists. An estimated 1,500 individuals attended the event.



Visit San Antonio Marketing and Communications

Visit San Antonio's Marketing initiatives in FY23 have played a crucial role in sustaining and promoting the World Heritage Designation. A comprehensive approach was adopted, encompassing both paid and organic media strategies. Paid advertising spanned various channels such as display, video, search, email marketing, social media, TV/Connected TV, Radio/Audio and Outdoor. These efforts were strategically tailored to target specific personas on regional, national, and international scales, with a focus on key regions like Mexico, the UK, Canada, and Germany. The total media investment directed towards the designation amounted to an estimated \$1,793,300, resulting in an impressive total impressions of 443,870,242. Additionally, our support extended to Visit San Antonio's social media platforms, witnessing 278,341 engagements, 866,994 video views, and 4,471,573 in social media impressions. Furthermore, San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site was seamlessly integrated into Visit San Antonio's website and blogs. The dedicated World Heritage content garnered a total of 281,455 page views. The significance of the World Heritage Designation was emphasized in both Visit San Antonio's English and Spanish digital visitors' guides, reinforcing its prominence across diverse audiences. Visit San Antonio worked closely with the City of San Antonio, The Alamo Trust, and National Park Service to provide media tours and interviews about the World Heritage Site. Stories highlighting San Antonio's World Heritage Site included Forbes, Houstonia Magazine; the UK's Wanderlust magazine and The Daily Mail and The Independent newspapers; and Australia's Sydney Morning-Herald.





Sacred Singing at the Missions

Choirs can often be found practicing at Mission San José and Mission Concepción because of the beautiful setting and acoustics. The San Antonio Youth Chorale, Niños Cantores, and Cedar Park High School were some of the youth choirs that performed at the missions. Mariachis at the missions are an extraordinary experience and can be found celebrating Masses on Sundays at Missions Concepción and Mission San José.



Fiesta Comes to Mission San José

Las Misiones welcomed “The People’s King,” El Rey Feo Larry Kurth, and LeadershipSA 2023 to Mission San José to learn about Las Misiones’ preservation of the San Antonio Mission churches. The theme of Larry Kurth’s reign focused on the San Antonio Mission churches as depicted in his crown and robe, and their importance to San Antonio.





Double Solar Illumination at Mission Concepción

Mission Concepción hosted over two-hundred people to see the amazing double solar illumination, visible annually on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The church was intentionally constructed to honor the Virgin Mary, its namesake, in a distinct way. During sundown light travels through the ocular and dome windows to create a double illumination falling on a painting of Mary Immaculate and in front of the Altar. When constructed, the light would have illuminated a large statue of the Virgin Mary according to Franciscan records of the time. After the event, a reception was held on the El Camino de San Antonio campus.



San Antonio Missions National Historical Park Hosts Open House for Mission Descendants

In April 2023, the park hosted an open-house to engage with the park’s mission-descendant community. Park managers presented posters on upcoming projects and programs. The open house, held at the local VFW post was an opportunity to renew connections and collaboration from this unique San Antonio community. 40 mission descendant members were in attendance.



“Unheard-of-Ensemble” heard at Mission Concepción

On July 1st, Las Misiones sponsored a public concert at Mission Concepción by New York City-based contemporary music group “Unheard-of-Ensemble” consisting of clarinet, cello, violin, and keyboard. Unheard-of Ensemble tours regularly, commissions large-scale multimedia projects, and runs its own summer workshop for emerging composers. The performance was part of a festival held across San Antonio, and was sponsored by Las Misiones.



2023 Pueblos del Maiz

Four North American gastronomy cities have collaborated on a project called Pueblos del Maíz. It's a month-long, multilingual, international festival celebrating the gastronomies, histories, and food cultures of maize. Participating cities have included Tucson (USA), San Antonio (USA), Mérida (MEX), and Puebla (MEX), which are designated as UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy and/or cities in the Délice Network. San Antonio hosted events and provided opportunities

for our community to explore and learn about a variety of maiz dishes that showcased San Antonio's diverse culture. As part of the festivities, chefs from Tucson and Mérida collaborated with local chefs to provide a unique maiz dish that represented their regional cuisine. A photo exhibit and silent auction featuring traditions and cultures of Puebla was on display. Proceeds from the silent auction were provided to UTSA Libraries Special Cookbook collection. Freetail Brewery also partnered with a local chef and molino to use fresh nixtamalized masa into its brew which was named "Flor de Maiz." Sixteen local restaurants participated in highlighting 23 maiz-inspired dishes throughout the month of May.



San Antonio Food Bank Expands Activities at Mission San Juan

Thanks to the leadership of farm manager Mitch Hagney, and the partnership between the National Park Service and the San Antonio Food Bank, more historic farm lands at Mission San Juan are now under cultivation and better showcase their historic integrity. The farm now produces vegetables year-round in addition to its peaches to feed the community just as it did 300 years ago. Also 2023, the San Antonio Food Bank collected local heritage nopal pads for planting and cultivation in 2024.





Great SA Culinary Conversations

In collaboration with Texas Public Radio (TPR), the World Heritage Office successfully launched a series of culinary conversations that included topics about Tex-Mex, Black heritage focused on Juneteenth, Polish American heritage, and Native American heritage. Each of these included scholars, authors, and local experts and chefs. The events were free and open to the public.



Matachine Pilgrimage and Festival Honor the Virgin of Guadalupe

The Virgin of Guadalupe is not only a sacred figure but a cultural icon for San Antonio. Her feast day of December 12th has been celebrated at the Missions for centuries. In 1787, a mission priest recorded the tradition of Matachines dancers at Mission Concepción in December.

The Matachines dance is a form of prayer honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe. Originating in medieval Spain it was adapted in the Americas incorporating the music and dance of the Indigenous people.

On December 9th and 10th, El Camino de San Antonio Missions and Las Misiones sponsored two Matachines events. December 9th was the Annual Pilgrimage of Juan Diego which included several hundred Matachines who danced from Mission San Juan Capistrano to Mission San Francisco de la Espada. They were greeted on their arrival by the community of Mission Espada who provided lunch.

December 10th was the Matachine Festival at Mission Concepción. Several hundred Matachines danced from Mission Concepción to the San Antonio River and into the church of Mission Concepción before joining the festival on the grounds of El Camino de San Antonio where food, music, crafts and dancing celebrated and honored the Virgin of Guadalupe.





Posadas – A Journey of Faith

Posadas have been a long Christmas tradition at each of the missions. Every December each mission church commemorates the journey Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a safe place to stay. An image of the Child Jesus is processed around in the arms of Mary as she and Joseph process through adjacent neighborhoods, and finally into the safe haven of the Church. Parishioners and the public participate in the procession. This year Mission Espada followed the traditional Mexican nine posadas before Christmas from December 16 – 24. Hundreds of parish and community members participated in these events.

WORLD HERITAGE USA

World Heritage USA Symposium

San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site Management Group members joined World Heritage USA November 1-3, 2023 as World Heritage USA held a three-day symposium in San Antonio to celebrate and advocate World Heritage sites. The symposium gathered cultural heritage professionals from across the country to discuss leveraging economic and social partnerships to create community revitalization in World Heritage Cities. Symposium topics included opportunities available for cooperation between U.S. and Mexican heritage workers, advocating for the recognition of Indigenous cultural heritage and history within "Natural" U.S. World Heritage Sites, and understanding the development and nomination of World Heritage Sites. San Antonio's rich history and culture was highlighted through tours of the historic Alamo; the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park: Concepción, San José, San Juan, and Espada; historic La Villita including a discussion on Dia de los Muertos; and a culinary tour featuring San Antonio's City of Gastronomy.



WORLD HERITAGE



SAN ANTONIO
CITY OF GASTRONOMY

Taco Tour for World Heritage USA Symposium

Guided by the World Heritage Office and San Antonio's First Lady, a taco tour was organized to take World Heritage USA Symposium participants to three local restaurants. On the tour, participants learned the story of the original puffy taco and how local chefs are keeping culinary heritage alive, even while innovating and adapting to today's trends. The tour was an opportunity to showcase our UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy designation.



13th Annual Pacifico Paella Challenge at Mission County Park

As part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, San Antonio hosted Chef Luis Balda from PortoViejo (Ecuador) to participated in the 13th Annual Pacifico Paella Challenge hosted by Chef Johnny Hernandez. Chef Balda won 2nd place in the Contemporary category using traditional ingredients from Ecuador. The Paella Challenge is hosted in the Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Site of San Jose, held at Mission County Park 6030 Padre Drive. The event is a nod to the Spanish influence that began with the missions. Kitchen Campus is a project that is funded by the Paella Challenge and works to benefit local students who may not otherwise have the funds, access to resources, or the mentors necessary to help guide them to financial success through the culinary arts. In its 13th year, the Paella Challenge continues to grow and benefit the students of Bexar County.



Race the River 2023 - Mission Reach Paddling Trail

On November 4, 2023, the San Antonio River Authority together with the San Antonio River Foundation, invited the community to participate in the 4th installment of the 2023 Race the River competitive paddling race series! Competitive Canoers and Kayakers were invited to race on the Mission Reach Paddling Trail for 5-7 miles through scenic stretches of the San Antonio River. Racers, alongside adventure paddlers from all over Texas, pushed themselves to complete this challenge. The race was followed by a celebration to all participants who completed the challenge and an awards ceremony. This event was a success with over 40 kayakers registered!





RELAUNCHED ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM



2023 Artist-In-Residence

San Antonio Missions National Historical relaunched its “Artist-in-Residence” program. The Artist-in-Residence program is a national park system-wide program that hosts artists in parks to help connect visitors and tell park stories using art. It has been several years since San Antonio Missions National Historical Park has participated in the program, and thanks to the support from park partner, Mission Heritage Partners and a grant from Bexar County the program relaunched in 2023.

This year’s artist was Michelle Hernandez, a local south-side San Antonio clay artist and studio owner. Hernandez has 15 years working with clay and teaching the craft.

As part of her ten-week residency, open studio times for visitors were held weekly at Mission San Juan, and two clay-making workshops were hosted. Open Studio reached more than 800 visitors, and her clay workshops served more than 100 participants!



04 VISITOR ACCESS & EXPERIENCE

Ensure that visitors can maneuver between the mission sites in a way that is understandable and that has the least impact on the cultural resources.

Increase visitor capacity and improve visitor experiences while erring in favor of resource protection if necessary.

(World Management Goal C & D)



Alamo Tours, Living History, Collections, and Exhibitions

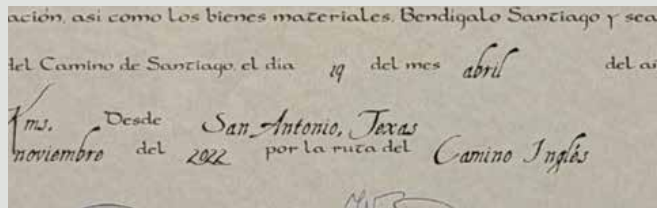
2023 witnessed the historic opening of the Ralston Family Collections Center and its 10,000 square feet of new gallery space. It's home to the Alamo Exhibit, a showcase of more than 500 artifacts from the Phil Collins Collection, the Donald and Louise Yena Spanish Colonial Collection, and the Alamo Collection. Many of these artifacts are on display for the first time. The Ralston Family Collections Center opened in March 2023. By the end of the year, 192,000 people visited the center.

The Living History department at the Alamo carried out more than 3,640 demonstrations in 2023, expanding the historical eras and perspectives represented to the Alamo's 1.6 million visitors a year, including at many of the Alamo's 76 public events. Regularly scheduled daily tours were available 364 days in 2023, including a brand-new audio tour launched in December 2023 featuring expert voices woven throughout the journey to provide listeners with the full tapestry of historic research and conservation efforts.



CorpTHAT Interns and ASL Day

San Antonio Missions National Historical hosted three interns working with us through CorpsTHAT and Texas Conservation Corps (TXCC). These Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals signed up for an internship opportunity supported by AmeriCorps, which provides living funds and end-of-term awards. These three interns planned and hosted ASL (American Sign Language) Day on August 5th, 2023 at Mission San José. The event educated park visitors on plants and animals of the area as well as led two tours of Mission San José sharing the site's history in ASL (American Sign Language). During the event ASL interpreters were provided throughout the programs making the information accessible to those that speak either ASL or English. Nearly one hundred visitors of the this often underserved audience were in attendance.



Spain's El Camino de Santiago Begins in San Antonio in 2023

2023 marked the first year a pilgrimage group started their El Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in San Antonio and finished in Spain. San Antonio is the only place in the world outside Europe where one can officially begin walking the famed El Camino de Santiago. El Camino de San Antonio Missions has a partnership with Spain's El Camino de Santiago de Compostela whereby pilgrims who obtain an El Camino de San Antonio Missions Compostela can receive 30 kilometers credit towards the El Camino de Santiago Compostela on the Camino Ingles (English route) to Santiago. The Santiago Compostela received by the San Antonio pilgrims notes that their Santiago pilgrimage began in "San Antonio, Texas."



More Pilgrims Engaging the Sacred Space of the Missions

The El Camino de San Antonio Missions encourages and supports pilgrimage to the San Antonio Missions. This year, pilgrims, young and old, from ten states and from overseas experienced the Missions not just as tourists, but as pilgrims. Pilgrims can stamp their pilgrim passport at stations on the grounds of each mission church and present their completed passport at the Padre Margil Center to receive a Compostela or Peregrino Certificate (certificates of completion). Pilgrims journeyed individually and in groups of over 100 people, traveling to each mission and the Cathedral by foot, car, bus, and bicycle.





New Grist Mill Animation inside Visitor Center

Inside the Visitor Center at Mission San José you can now learn about the Gristmill through an animated, captioned video in English and Spanish. Exhibit funded by Mission Heritage Partners. Watch this short the video on our website, nps.gov/saan.



National Park Service Hosts Equity in Transportation Workshop

With so many visitors feeling "stuck" downtown, and a lack of public transportation to both Missions San Juan and Espada, the park is dedicated to working with partners to improve access to public land throughout 2023, the National Park Service hosted multiple day-long workshops with community members and groups discussing equity in transportation. Aimed at increasing accessibility to San Antonio Missions for all, the workshop found creative solutions, to accessibility and transportation gaps. The park is working to pilot some of these solutions in 2024.



WORLD HERITAGE



World Heritage Trail Signage and Wayfinding

In June 2023, the World Heritage Trail Signage and Wayfinding project was completed. The project was a part of the City of San Antonio's 2017-2022 Bond Program and was coordinated in partnership with the World Heritage Office and the Public Works Department. In total, 84 directional and wayfinding signs were installed along the World Heritage Trail, extending 10.8 miles from the Alamo area at Caesar Chavez Street to Mission Espada. An additional 7 signs were installed in collaboration with the Texas Department of Transportation, for a collective total of 91 signs.



SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY

Mission Reach Open House

On August 23, 2023, The San Antonio River Authority and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) invited the public to an open house that highlighted the remarkable progress achieved at the Mission Reach over the past decade. The Mission Reach, an 8-mile linear park, boasts over 16 miles of scenic trails for pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, water enthusiasts can explore the paddling trail by canoe or kayak. The trails are connected to Mission Portals' works of art, serving as gateways to the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Sites. The open house offered six engaging activation stations, provided attendees with educational activities on various topics, including prescribed burns, aquatic species, and water quality. The event had a great response with over 90 people in attendance.





**EL CAMINO DE
SAN ANTONIO
MISSIONS**

El Camino de San Antonio Missions Campus Opens

On May 2nd, 2023, the El Camino de San Antonio Missions Campus opened, welcoming visitors from around the world. Located behind Mission Concepción, the Archdiocese of San Antonio repurposed the former St. John's Seminary chapel and cafeteria into the Padre Margil Pilgrimage Center, and Pope Francis Center. The Padre Margil Center, named after the founder of Mission San José - Venerable Antonio Margil, welcomes pilgrims and visitors from around the world with an interactive gallery, movie, café, and gift shop. The Pope Francis Center hosts events, conferences, and includes the parish office of Mission Concepción. Since its opening the El Camino Campus has welcomed over a thousand pilgrims, tourists, and local residents.



San Antonio Missions - Drive, Bike, and Bus Brochure Distribution

The City of San Antonio World Heritage Office produced and distributed over 75,000 San Antonio Missions - Drive, Bike, and Bus brochures at visitor centers throughout Texas. Effective brochure distribution and placement plays a crucial role in promoting the historic San Antonio Missions and encourage travelers to visit the only World Heritage Site in Texas. The brochure is also available for download on the WorldHeritageSA.com.



World Heritage Center Exhibit Design Concept Presentation

In September 2023, the World Heritage Office hosted two World Heritage Center design concept presentations for the community and partners. Consultants Gallagher & Associates shared exhibit design concepts to representatives from



The Alamo, the National Park Service, the San Antonio River Authority, Bexar County, Las Misiones, Mission Heritage Partners, Office of Historic Preservation, Arts and Culture, Visit San Antonio, San Antonio Conservation Society, South Texas Partnership, Mission San Jose Neighborhood Association, mission descendants and indigenous groups. The World Heritage Center is scheduled to open in September 2024.

05

FUNDING & RESEARCH

Explore innovative ways to fund the protection and interpretation of the missions. Encourage academic research on the missions that will shed new light on the people, structures, and landscapes. (World Management Goal E & F)



Alamo Archaeology

In 2023, Alamo Archaeology conducted two excavation projects and two survey projects. The Mission Gate and Lunette Project located in the Alamo Plaza enabled archaeologists to better understand the utilization of the space throughout history. These excavations revealed the 19th century use of the Plaza and recovered about 2,700 artifacts. The fieldwork for this project was completed in March 2023.

Fieldwork for the Long Barrack Emergency Drainage Project commenced in October 2023. This is the largest excavation project ever to occur on the Alamo site. Excavations have revealed multiple deposits that span the entire 300-year history of the site, including the Mission era, Battle era, U.S. Army era, and Commercial era. Fieldwork will continue into 2024, but to date archaeologists have recovered approximately 8,000 artifacts.

Alamo Archaeology also collaborated with San Antonio College in a STEM-based program to provide experiential learning to archaeology students.

USA/ US ICOMOS International Exchange Program



WORLD HERITAGE

Maryam Shah

Over the summer, the City of San Antonio's World Heritage Office hosted Maryam Shah, an international intern from Pakistan. Throughout the internship, Ms. Shah focused on community engagement and small business development with local motel owners. Her research provided valuable recommendations to better understand the socio-cultural dynamics of the motel community. Ms. Shah's internship with City of San Antonio was from June 18, 2023, through August 25, 2023.



WORLD HERITAGE

Fernanda Lucia Maez

In September 2023, the United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (USA/US-ICOMOS) International Exchange Program (IEP) intern (2022) Fernanda Lucia Maez, presented at the international ICOMOS 2023 General Assembly in Sydney, Australia. Ms. Maez's presented her work conducted while working with the City of San Antonio World Heritage Office on potential opportunities for roadside motels, supported by World Heritage USA and the World Heritage Office.



Vanille Vardon

Vanille successfully completed her [International Exchange Program](#) internship in the Resource Management division at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Her work focused on developing database of mission research for the park's digital archives. She also worked with the Mission Descendant community and supported the development of the "There's a Story Here" program during the World Heritage Festival.

The internship is organized and administered by World Heritage USA in support of ICOMOS-USA. The program sends participants from the United States to internship placements abroad and welcomes international participants to placements in the United States in order to expose the next generation of heritage professionals to global best practices of historic preservation and heritage conservation.



Mission Reach Intensive Nekton Survey

As part of the San Antonio River Authority's commitment to safe, clean, enjoyable creeks and rivers, in December 2023, the River Authority Environmental Sciences Department conducted the annual [Mission Reach Intensive Nekton Survey \(MRINS\)](#). This survey was designed to monitor fish diversity with the hopes of identifying and documenting new fish species returning to the restored Mission Reach of the San Antonio River Walk.

From 1998 to 2013, conservation, engineering, and ecosystem restoration efforts have dramatically improved the San Antonio River ecosystem along the Mission Reach in many ways. A robust network of native riparian vegetation along the river helps to stabilize the banks and create a more resilient watershed. In the river, man-made riffles and paddling chutes oxygenate the water and create habitats for aquatic organisms. This success story is evident when looking at the rise of fish diversity in the Mission Reach area. A variety of habitats that fish call home, such as pools, glides, runs, and riffles are sampled to ensure species inhabiting different areas within the river are collected. The River Authority's aquatic biologists utilize seine nets and electrofishing equipment to capture fish that are then identified, measured, counted, and ultimately released. This data is then compared with results from previous years.



Ongoing Research with UTSA Center for Cultural Sustainability

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is supporting the development of two Historic Structures Reports at Mission San José, one focused on the granary and the second on the Indigenous Quarters. Both projects are being completed in partnership with the [UTSA Center for Cultural Sustainability](#). San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is also part of a multi-park project focused on developing climate change vulnerability assessments for Spanish colonial cultural resources in national park units. Dr. Dupont of the UTSA Center for Cultural Sustainability is leading the effort on behalf of the park. The project is focused on the convento structure at Mission Concepción.



Successful Rose Window Gala Funds Mission Church Preservation

The Biennial Rose Window Gala was held at the Briscoe Museum of Western Art. Las Misiones is the only nonprofit in charge of the preservation of the four Mission Church structures, and the Gala is its biggest fundraiser. The Gala, chaired by Emmy Award Winning KENS 5 anchor Deborah Knapp, raised over \$630,000 for Mission preservation and annual maintenance. The funds raised in 2023 will help preserve the remaining original exterior frescoes of Mission Concepción and continue the annual maintenance of all the Mission Churches.



Invasive Plant Treatment at Rancho de Las Cabras

In September 2023 San Antonio Missions National Historical Park teamed up with the Southeast Region's Invasive Plant Management team to battle back an invasive species of grass that had a strong foothold at Rancho de Las Cabras. With the help of an herbicide application contractor, almost 24.5 acres of land was treated to knock back the invasive Guinea grass. This grass is dangerous to South Texas ecosystems and cultural landscapes in many different ways. Primarily, this grass will quickly overwhelm native species and understories to create a "monoculture," which is a landscape, or ecosystem, dominated by a single plant species that reduces plant biodiversity and reduces habitat for native terrestrial species. Additionally, Guinea Grass would not have been present during the Mission period we aim to preserve and snuffs out the cultural landscape that gives one a sense of place and time.



Mission Heritage Partners Gala

The 2023 Make it Your Mission Gala was a huge success for Mission Heritage Partners, as Mission Heritage Partners raised over \$400,000 to continue to support new and ongoing San Antonio Missions National Historical Park needs via projects, programs, and opportunities captured in an annual work plan. Leveraging funds raised at the Gala, Mission Heritage Partners supported various landscaping projects at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. These projects included a number of hazardous tree removals that were a danger to park staff and visitors, land-clearing projects along the perimeter of various sites to deter crime, and the purchase of a boom mower attachment to aid in the maintenance of the San Juan Farm. The ongoing maintenance of the park is a necessary effort to make the park accessible, safe, and enjoyable for all who visit and all who work at these sites.



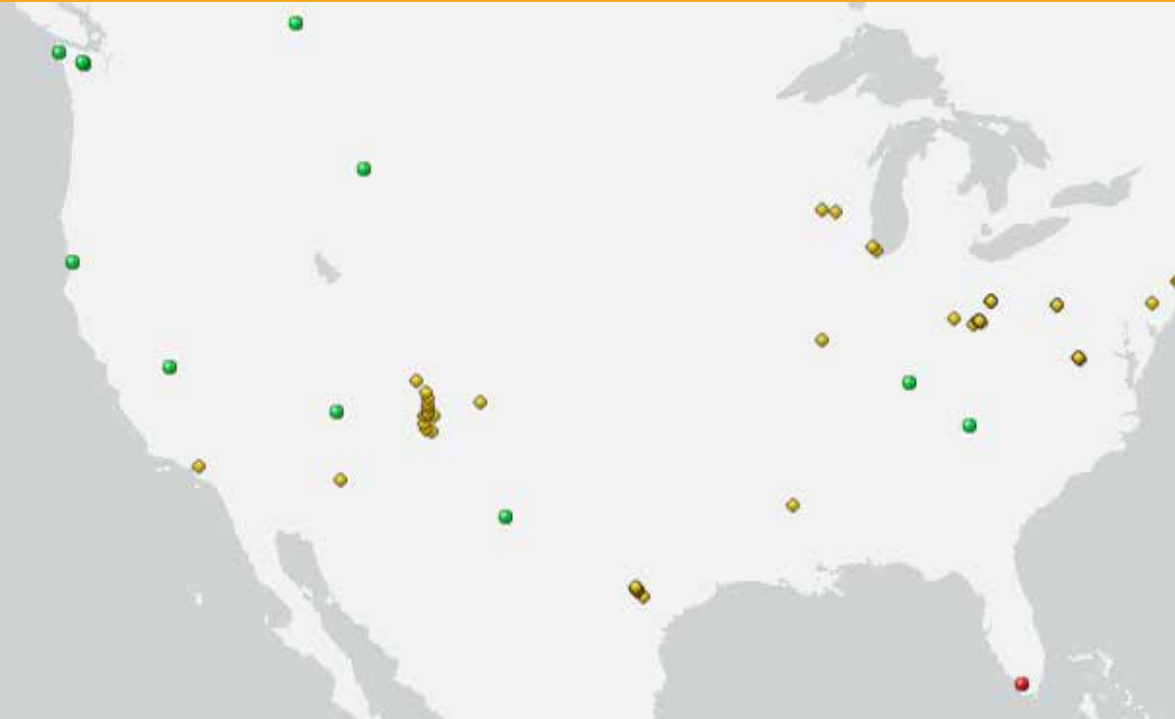
San Antonio Missions and the Network to Freedom

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park staff have uncovered a connection between Mission San José and the Network to Freedom (formerly known as the “Underground Railroad”) for freedom seekers heading south to Mexico. The park presented these findings in a symposium sponsored by the San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum called “San Antonio in the Fight and Flight for Freedom. The park is currently pursuing a formal Network to Freedom designation for Mission San José. [Read more here.](#)



**WORLD
HERITAGE
USA**

25 U.S. PROPERTIES INSCRIBED ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST



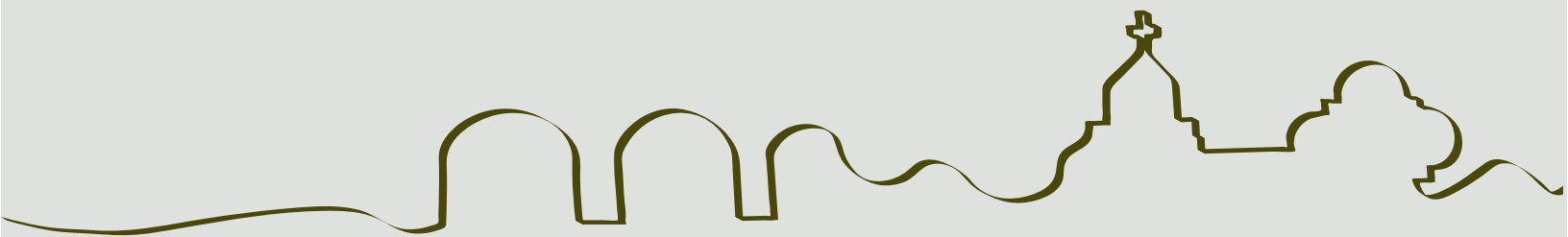
What is a World Heritage Site?

A [World Heritage Site](#) is a natural or cultural site that demonstrates influence or significance in a global context (i.e., has “Outstanding Universal Value”), and has been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee.

What is meant by the term Outstanding Universal Value?

As defined by the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, Outstanding Universal Value means that a site has cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and is of importance to present and future generations of all humanity.

Carlsbad Caverns National Park
 Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site
 Chaco Culture
 Everglades National Park
 The 20th Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright
 Glacier National Park
 Grand Canyon National Park
 Great Smoky Mountains National Park
 Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
 Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks
 Independence Hall
 Mammoth Cave
 Mesa Verde National Park
 Monticello & the University of Virginia
 Olympic National Park
 Papahānūmokuākea Marine National Monument
 Poverty Point
 Redwood National Park and State Parks
 La Fortaleza and San Juan National Historic Site
 San Antonio Missions
 The Statue of Liberty
 Taos Pueblo
 Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatsheshini-Atkasut
 Yellowstone National Park
 Yosemite National Park



SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS

**WORLD HERITAGE SITE
2023**

ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT