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## FATHER GOTTFRIED BERNHARDT MIDDENDORFF, S.J., PIONEER OF TUCSON

By THEODORE E. TREUTLEIN\*

THE region about Tucson, Arizona, has seen many pioneers, both in number and in kind. Most vivid in contemporary memory, aided and abetted by motion pictures and television, is the concept of stockman's and miner's country, replete with gun duels and famous frontier marshals. This, or something vaguely like it, was the Anglo-American frontier of the post-Civil War period, the second cycle in the development of that region.

There had been an earlier cycle of another sort, different from the later one not only because the people were of different stock but also mainly because of the different philosophies of government which lay behind the two groups of pioneers. The Anglo-American frontier of the nineteenth century was individualistic and competitive; part of an expanding republic. The earlier frontier had been the fringe of an authoritarian empire, designed in Europe, and held as near to this design as was humanly possible by a subject people—soldiers, missionaries and their Indian wards, and secular colonists.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The word *subject* is used in a very specific and literal sense to describe people who thought of themselves as subjects of the King of Spain, and who frequently so referred to themselves in their correspondence. Moreover, they sought to bring the Indians into their system as subjects of the same king.

It is notable that the success or failure of consolidating a region within the empire depended to a considerable extent upon the degree of subjugation attained over the natives—this being borne out in the early history of the Tucson area—the more so since the number of Spaniards in remoter frontier regions was never large. In Sonora the poison-arrow shooting Seri, possibly exceeded in their rugged individualism only by the stock-thieving Apache, successfully resisted subjugation. One of the Jesuit missionaries, Father Johann Nentwig, onetime minister at San Xavier del Bac, wrote vehemently on the subject of what should be done about these Indians. The final section of his *Description of Sonora* is entitled, "Thoughts on Modes of Chastizing the Enemies, and of Preventing the Final Ruin of Sonora." Father Nentwig counsels "recourse to God our Lord with true repentance and fervent prayers" but also well-planned warfare. In the words of the proverb, he says, "Ask for God's help and hammer away."

The *Description* referred to above is familiarly known as the *Rudo Ensayo*. An English version of it was published in 1951, Tucson, by Arizona Silhouettes. In 1952 Alberto Francisco Pradeau of Los Angeles documented the authorship of the work, though this had been known for some years by students in the field of southwest history. See AGN, Hacienda, Leg 17 (I and II) for additional proof of Nentwig's authorship.

Subject or not, the people in both these periods of the Arizona frontier strove mightily to master their environment, and members of each group expressed great individuality in the process. Among the earliest pioneers in southern Arizona were missionaries of the Society of Jesus, and they have left their mark on the area to this day. In their time the name Arizona had but limited meaning;<sup>2</sup> the region including Tucson was part of Pimería Alta or, speaking more generally, of Sonora, one of the *Provincias Internas* of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

To the earliest bona fide pioneer of Tucson the southern part of today's Arizona was the "Limit of Christendom" or, in the German words, *Ende der Christenheit*.<sup>3</sup> The pioneer who used these words was a German, born in Vechte in Westphalia, in the Bishopric of Münster, February 14, 1723. His name was Father Gottfried Bernhardt Middendorff of the Society of Jesus. He was thirty-three years old when he arrived in Tucson to become its first missionary.<sup>4</sup>

2. Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn in his *Description of Sonora* (T. E. Treutlein, trans. and ed., Albuquerque, 1949), pp. 236-38, includes a glossary of Sonora place names. The following names with their meanings may be noted:

Arisona (sand dune)—Indian village; Tucson (heath)—Indian village; San Xavier del Vac—Indian village. It gets its name from Cuema Vac, a Spanish place in New Spain where a picture of St. Francis Xavier is greatly venerated; Terenate (thorn-bush)—location of a Spanish garrison; Tubaca (soap-berry tree; place where it grows in abundance)—location of a Spanish garrison; Tumiacacori (pepper bush; place where the little round pepper is found in abundance)—Indian village; Guebavi (large river)—Indian village. Cf. William C. Barnes, *Arizona Place Names* (Tucson, 1935), for other commentaries on some of these place names.

3. Herbert E. Bolton used the expression, "Rim of Christendom" as the title of his great work on Father Kino, which is sub-titled, *A Biography of Eusebio Francisco Kino, Pacific Coast Pioneer* (N. Y., 1936). Bolton does not say where he picked up this phrase. One may surmise that he had read himself into a feeling for the times to the extent that he coined an expression which accurately described the remoteness of the northwest country from the Spanish centers of civilization farther to the south.

The German words, "Ende der Christenheit" (also "Grenzen der neuen Christenheit"), appear in the excerpts made from the diary of Father Middendorff, published under the title, "Aus dem Tagebuche des mexikanischen Missionarius Gottf. Bernh. Middendorff aus der Gesellschaft Jesu, geb. zu Vechte im stifte Münster. A. 1754-1776 n. Ch.," Parts I, II, and III, *Katholischen magazin für Wissenschaft und Leben* (Münster, 1845). Literally translated the word *End* should be rendered end or limit; and *Grenze* as boundary. Unfortunately, the editor of the Middendorff *Tagebuch* does not explain whether he translated the diary from Latin into German or merely reproduced German manuscript into the printed form.

It should be noted, however, that Arthur Gardiner, who translated a letter written by Middendorff on 3 March 1757, dated at S. Augustin de Tucsson [sic], found that Middendorff wrote about himself, in Latin, as being on the rim of Christendom. (see note 4, below, for further reference to this letter of 3 March 1757.)

4. Tucson had been a *visita* of Mission San Xavier del Bac since at least 1737.

How did it happen that a German priest should have been a pioneer in Arizona during the days when it was a part of the far-flung Empire of Spain? The answer is very prosaic. Spain, despite her closed, monopolistic mercantile philosophy of government, had to use "foreign" or "non-Spanish" missionaries because she had too few potential or actual missionaries among her own nationals.<sup>5</sup>

Father Middendorff received word in May 26, 1754, from the Jesuit General, Ignatius Visconti, that he might go to the "Indies," the term used for the overseas American missions.<sup>6</sup> The General's communication was not an order; rather, it was a permission. Middendorff could choose to go or to remain. The Father Provincial, Johann Schreiber, tried to dissuade Middendorff from accepting the opportunity ow-

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Cf. Gerard Decorme, S.J., *La Obra de los Jesuitas Mexicanos durante la Epoca Colonial, 1572-1767* (Mexico, 1941), II, p. 428, note 9, where mention is made of the *visita* of the Bishop Elizacoachea to San Ignacio, where the missionaries provided him with the records of baptisms, marriages, and burials. In that year, 1737, Bac had six *visitas*, one of them being Tucson.

However, at the time of Middendorff's arrival in Sonora it was decided to change the status of Tucson from that of *visita* to mission. The question then arises, when was Mission San Augustin de Tucson founded?

Decorme, *ibid.*, 443, thinks that the endowment for the abandoned Mission of Sonóita was used to establish a mission at Tucson; Father Middendorff was sent there to begin the work and, adds Decorme, "conservamos su carta original de entrada y fundación de 3 Marzo 1757." Peter M. Dunne, S.J., *Jacobo Sedelmayr, Missionary, Frontiersman, Explorer, in Arizona and Sonora. Four Original Manuscript Narratives, 1744-1751* (Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, 1955), p. 12, evidently following Decorme, writes: ". . . Tucson in Arizona was founded on March 3, 1757, by Father Bernard Middendorff and his original letter of its establishment lies in the Mexican Jesuit Archives."

There is a copy of the letter in question in the University of San Francisco archives. Through the efforts of George B. Eckhart, a copy was secured and translated by Arthur Gardiner, as noted above (note 3), and the translation of the letter as well as a brief article about it appeared in the *Tucson Daily Citizen*, November 20, 1956. The letter concerns mainly Middendorff's experiences as field chaplain with Governor Mendoza prior to the time that Middendorff became missionary at Tucson, although he was its missionary at the time he penned the letter. The letter mentions that times are hard at Tucson and that there is a shortage of beef, which Father Caspar [Stieger] of San Ignacio had been supplying him. Middendorff says he would have written sooner [to the procurator in Mexico] had there been someone available to deliver a letter. The point is, nothing is said about the founding of Mission Tucson in this letter of 3 March 1757.

In the *Tagebuch* (note 3, above) Middendorff tells us that he arrived at Tucson the day before Epiphany, 1757. Hence, the founding of Mission Tucson must have taken place sometime in January, probably at the time the first Mass was celebrated. See below, p. 316 for Middendorff's own description of his short tour of duty in Tucson.

5. Cf. T. E. Treutlein, "Non-Spanish Jesuits in Spain's American Colonies" in *Greater America: Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton* (Berkeley, 1945).

6. The material which follows, pp. 312-17, is derived mainly from Middendorff's *Tagebuch*.

ing to the latter's frail health; he had suffered several times from hematemesis. However, Middendorff elected to go.

On Easter Day in 1755 he found himself in Spain, and on that day was informed that his mission area was to be in the Kingdom of New Spain. It was not until he had arrived in Sonora and was temporarily at Mission San Ignacio that he learned about his future assignment to be the missionary at a new mission, Tucson. This was in the year 1757, perhaps in the month of January.<sup>7</sup>

Father Middendorff's journey from central Europe to northwest Mexico had been a travel experience both lengthy and arduous; but it was also for him a time of preparation for the work he would have to do as a missionary. Certain details of the journey, now to be examined, bear out the latter conclusion. The beginning of the journey was a renunciation of a part of Middendorff's life — a farewell to relatives and friends and, one may say, even to Western civilization.

"On 29 May [1754] I took leave of the Jesuit house [near Münster]," says Middendorff, "and bade farewell to the Father Provincial [J. Schreiber], and to the Father Rector Distendorff, and to the rest of the fathers there. Then I proceeded via Warendorf to Vechte where I arrived on the first day of June and said goodbye to my dear father, my sisters, relatives and friends." From Vechte Middendorff went to Cologne where he was provided by the procurator of the province with travel money sufficient to reach Genoa and also the monies for necessary books, linen, and clothing.

In Siegburg he was joined by Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn, and in Würzburg by Fathers Michael Gerstner and Joseph

7. San Ignacio is situated slightly west of the Nogales-to-Hermosillo highway, about thirty miles south of Nogales.

The subject of establishing new missions was being mooted in December, 1756. Decorme, *ibid.*, p. 443, note 29, states that the original letter at Ysleta of P. Jacobo Sedelmayer, minister of Tecoripa, dated at Mátape where Sedelmayer was on a visita, addressed to the Father Procurator, Anton Johann Balthasar, 6 December 1756, speaks of there having arrived at Mátape Fathers Middendorff and Hlava and of the later arrival of three others, Getzner [sic], Kurtzel, and Paver. At the time the letter was written these five were at San Ignacio. The governor had restored San Javier Bac [sic] to P. Espinosa who had taken refuge in Tubac, and Middendorff had gone with the troops as far as the Gila River. "It is difficult to designate a mission for the new missionaries," writes Sedelmayer, "and a garrison is necessary on the Rio Gila." In this same letter, though Father Decorme does not quote the item, there is evidently reference to the plan of occupying "the advanced places of Tucson and Quiburi."

Och. These men now composed a quartette of traveling companions who went together all the way to Sonora missions with the exception of one leg of the journey.<sup>8</sup>

In Augsburg these future missionaries went shopping. They purchased, says Middendorff, knives, rings, mirrors, scissors, Jews' harps, needles, rosaries, beads, and other trinkets. Such articles were said to interest the American native; according to the reports of overseas missionaries whose letters had been read and discussed at table in the various Jesuit establishments of Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when they had reached Spain, Middendorff and the others lived for a year in the Jesuit hospice in Puerto de Santa María, the port of Cádiz. Here they mingled with fellow-workers in the field; here they studied the Spanish language.<sup>10</sup> One would wish for a record of some of the conversations that were had in this travel lodge about the voyage to New Spain, the land journey to Pimería Alta, the life in the missions. Such oral history is lacking, but we know that by accident or by design a year was spent in Puerto de Santa María — with some opportunities to travel elsewhere in the country — which could be counted as an apprentice year in travel and mission lore.

After a long sea voyage which had begun on December 24, 1755, and had ended with the securing of the ships on the great bronze rings of Fortress San Juan de Ullóa at Vera

8. On a single page of the *Libro de Bautizmos de la Mision de San Ygnacio*, Manuscript, Bancroft Library, appear the names of Bernardo Middendorff, 31 October 1756, Pfefferkorn, 4 December, Och, 5 December, and Gerstner, 8 December, as well as those of Francisco Hlawa and Gaspar Stiger. Father Stiger had hispanicized his to the extent shown (it was Caspar Stieger). Middendorff and Hlawa had hispanicized their first names. Middendorff in later years frequently dropped one *f* in his name. The members of the "quartette" all worked in Sonora missions. All were unhappy participants in the Jesuit expulsion; and all survived not only the journey back to Spain but also house arrest for a number of years in Spain (with the exception of Och who was sent directly home). All finally reached home after their release from Spain.

9. The letters of Jesuits to relatives, friends, and to their colleagues in the colleges of Europe form a very important body of travel literature. Some of these letters have been collected and published. One such collection is the work known as *Der neue Welt-Bott*. For example, three of Middendorff's own letters are to be found in this collection; namely, numbers 755, 756, and 757.

10. To the Latin-trained Jesuits, Spanish posed no difficulties. Father Joseph Och, *Reports* (p. 9 of typescript being prepared for publication), says of the Spanish language: "It is easy to learn, because the pronunciation differs very little from the written form. He who knows Latin can in twenty-four days learn to understand spoken Spanish and can read the necessary books. In four months he can speak the language."

Cruz on March 19, 1756, Middendorff and his companions enjoyed a rest stop. One of the officials who bade them welcome in Vera Cruz was Señor Tienda de Cuervo, Governor of Vera Cruz, who later followed them to Sonora to become the governor of that province.<sup>11</sup>

From Vera Cruz Middendorff rode to Mexico via Jalapa and Puebla de los Angeles. The subsequent journey he made from Mexico to Sonora took him via Guadalajara, Tepic, Mazatlán, and coastal points north, whereas the other members of the original "quartette," who had been temporarily delayed in Puebla, went to Sonora over the plateau, moving west through the mountains just south of Chihuahua.

Father Middendorff now tells in his own words about his assignment to the Tucson mission:

We spent four months in going from Mexico to Sonora. The distance, however, from Mexico to Pimería Alta, or to the limit of Christendom, is six hundred or more leagues. After overcoming many dangers from raging rivers, rough roads, precipitous mountains, and poisonous animals, from frequent changes in the air and excessive heat, we arrived in September 1756 in Mátape, a mission in Sonora among the Lower Pimas where Father David Borio, a native of Turin in Savoy, received us with all conceivable affection.

Diarrhoea had spread among us, causing blisters or vesicles which burn the whole body with pain, and we were forced to halt for several days. After a stop of three weeks we continued our journey to Ures (among the Lower Pimas) where Father Philippus Segesser, from Lucerne in Switzerland, welcomed us with equal tokens of affection. From Ures we continued under heavy guard of loyal Indians and Spaniards, because of the attacks of Seris which had occurred, to Pimería Alta and Father Caspar Stieger, former minister in Switzerland and now missionary in the mission of San Ignacio, so as to procede from there to those places which our superiors would designate.

In November the Spanish soldiers took the field against

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11. Middendorff, *Tagebuch*, refers to this man as Tienda de Cuervos; he was a Hollander by birth, had studied at Mecheln, and had served the Spanish king for fifteen years. His name in German was Krähenwinkel — crow's nook — and the Spanish form was a translation of this.

The Spanish Governors of Sonora during Middendorff's time there were Juan de Mendoza, 1755-60, José Tienda de Cuervo, 1761-63, and Juan de Pineda, 1763-1770.

the savages and barbarians and I was named army chaplain.<sup>12</sup> After a campaign of three months Tucson (in Pimeria Alta) was named as my future mission. This place is situated five leagues north of Mission San Xavier del Bac.<sup>13</sup> Some few Indians who had been baptized by Father Alonso Espinosa at San Xavier lived at Tucson among the heathen and the unconverted. It had been decided to found a new mission at Tucson to support and instruct those who were already Christians and to bring others who were not into the Christian belief. I went among them the day before Epiphany in 1757<sup>14</sup> with ten soldiers for my security. I gave them gifts of dried meat to win their good-will and in this way attracted about seventy families which were scattered in the brush and hills.

I had neither house nor church and in the first days had to sleep under the open sky until I was able to erect a brush and willow hut for a lodging, five ells long, three wide, and two and a half high. I celebrated Mass under a matting or cover of rushes and reeds which had been raised on four poles in the field. Because I had not yet learned their language I had at first to instruct [the natives] through an interpreter.

I was fond of my catechumens and they reciprocated my affection with gifts of birds eggs and wild fruits. But our mutual contentment did not last long because in the following May [1757] we were attacked in the night by about five hundred savage heathen and had to withdraw as best we could. I with my soldiers and various families fled to Mission San Xavier del Bac where we arrived at daybreak.

So ended abruptly the Mission of San Agustín de Tucson, and so departed precipitously Tucson's first pioneer after a

12. That is, in the expedition led by the Governor, Juan de Mendoza, described in the letter of 3 March 1757 (notes 3 and 4, above). The governor later participated in another expedition, was wounded by a Seri arrow, and died of the poison inflicted in the wound.

13. In general, one should be warned to avoid taking statements about distances too literally. A Spanish league equals roughly four kilometers (i.e., 4,190 meters). Nicolás de LaFora who visited southern Arizona in 1767 made the following observation: ". . . el pueblo de Tucson, que dista veintitún leguas al norte de Tubac y cinco de San Javier del Bac que le precede, ambos habitados por indios pimas altos, administrados por un misionero que era de la Compañía y los más avanzados de toda la frontera, por los que se mantiene en ellos un pequeño destacamento de soldados y un cabo de la compañía de Tubac . . ." He also stated that the distance from Tucson to the Gila River was fifty leagues. See Nicolás de LaFora, *Relacion del Viaje que hizo a los Presidios Internos situados en la frontera de la America Septentrional. Perteneciente al Rey de España*. Vito Alessio Robles, ed. (Mexico, P. Robredo, 1939), p. 155. Father J. Nentwig, *Description*, considered the distance between Tucson and Bac to be three leagues, and located Tucson at 34°N. lat., 263°W. long.

14. Thus, on 5 January 1757.

short residence of some four months. We consider in brief what now became of Father Middendorff.

Next [he writes] I was overcome by hematemesis along with a persistent fever, wherefore my superiors sent me to Saric (among the Upper Pimas) where I met with Christians, though to be sure they were rebellious and treacherous. I was among them for fourteen months and had to look after four villages in a distance of seven to eight hours. Because I was constantly vexed with the fever and my strength failed to the point that my life was endangered I was sent to Batuco more than one hundred hours to the south, so that a change of air and a better way of living among the Indians would restore my health. And I did now encounter a healthy air and pious and gentle Indians of the Eudeve nation.

Father Alexander Rapicani was detached from this mission because of illness and sent to Matape; he had begun the building of a beautiful church, which I completed. After three years Father Rapicani was again in good health. Thereupon, he returned to his Batuco mission and I went to Mobas in Pimería Baja, about seventy hours south of Batuco, because the missionary there, Father Franziskus Franko, had died. And in this mission I remained until the year 1767 when on St. James' Day the decree of banishment of the Jesuits descended upon us and all had to leave.

The missionaries of Pimería Alta and Baja California, fifty-one in all, were assembled at Mátape, marched to Guaymas, and taken by ship from there to San Blas. Leaving San Blas they crossed Mexico to Vera Cruz, and then sailed via Havana to Spain. The entire journey from Sonora to Spain, including all stops because of illness or for resting, occupied about twenty-three months. They had left Mátape on August 25, 1767, and had sailed into the Port of Cádiz on July 10, 1769. Middendorff, along with many of his colleagues, now remained in Spain under house arrest for a number of years, but eventually his release was effected through intercession for him by no less a personage than Empress Maria Theresa.

It may be that a letter which the sisters of Middendorff wrote to the King of Spain also had something to do with his release. They begged that their beloved brother be returned to them and expressed their readiness to pay his travel costs.

Concerning the happy reunion of the missionary with members of his family we have no record; his diary closes with the words: "The 29th of October [1776] I arrived in Bayonne. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Tucson's first pioneer was on his way home.

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15. Part III of the Middendorff diary is an excellent account, at times very moving, of the Jesuit expulsion. The information about the appeal made by Middendorff's sisters for their brother's release is found in J. B. Mundwiler, S.J., "Deutsche Jesuiten in spanischen Gefängnissen im 18. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* (Innsbruck, 1902).