

HISTORY AT HOME

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Hispanic Heritage



Governor's Palace, Showing Patio and Fountain,
San Antonio, Texas

FAST FACTS

The Spanish Governor's Palace, built in the 1730s, is the only example of Spanish Colonial residential architecture remaining in Texas.

Before it was known as the Spanish Governor's Palace, the structure on the west side of Plaza de Armas had been called the *Casa del Capitan* (house of the captain).

Presidio Captain José de Urruti built a one-room office with adobe brick on his own property between San Pedro Creek and Plaza de Armas.

Toribio de Urrutian, Urrutia's son, took over his father's military post in 1740 and, over time, added a three rooms to the south side.

Now over 1,800 square feet, the house had few rivals for proportion, extravagance, or craftsmanship.

Fourteen-foot ceilings that helped cool the summer heat, along with a hard-packed dirt floor set below the plaza.

Three-foot-thick walls moderated interior temperatures in summer and winter.

Outside, *canales* (channels) cut through the exterior walls and extend out from the roof to disperse rainwater.

The keystone above the main entry is carved with the inscription, *año 1749 se acabó* (completed in 1749), with the royal coat-of-arms of the Hapsburg Dynasty to honor Spain's King Ferdinand VI.

The residence was a military headquarters, company store, and host to high society celebrations.

Over the next thirty years, the residence was increased with the addition of a *sala* (parlor), the *recamara* (bedroom), two *zaguans*, (halls), the *cocina* (kitchen), and a room that served as the office and company store.

Juan Ignacio Perez, who served as interim governor of Texas July 1816 to March 1817, bought the home in 1804.

In 1819, the San Antonio River flooded the structure, which was flooded four more times in the next one hundred years.

The neighborhood became more commercial and the building housed a saloon, a boarding house, a pawn shop, a used clothing store, and more as it decayed into an eyesore.

The city of San Antonio bought the building in 1929, after a bond issue was passed in May 1928 for the purchase.

Adina De Zavala and the Texas Historical and Landmarks Association worked with San Antonio architect Harvey P. Smith to rebuild the residence, which became one of the city's earliest preservation projects.

On July 7, 1930, the Spanish Governor's Palace opened as San Antonio's first city-owned museum.

The Spanish Governor's Palace was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

These fast facts were pulled from tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/spanish-governors-palace-comandancia.



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