

## CARNACION TELLS HER TALE

(By FR. BONAVENTURE OBLASSER, Topawa Mission.)

The old traditions, let us gather them before they are lost. That is why I called on the aged Carnacion at San Xavier. I wanted her story of the ancient days. She must be very old. The last of the old Franciscans left not later than 1828, and she knew them. Here is her story :

“My father was Miguel Anton ; my mother, Maria Juana. The Apaches killed my father and he lies buried in the shadow of the old mission. The Apaches were a terrible people. I can still hear their drums beating, filling all of us with terror. I had brothers and sisters, too, but now all are gone. I am alone with my young husband (he is about sixty years old).

“My mother came from Santan, where the Padre baptized her (Santan is an ancient Papago village, just east of the Santa Rosa Mountain). On one occasion, while I was still a girl, my mother took me to her home village on a visit. The people were at work building a mission. They had finished the foundations. Some were digging a well, looking for water. But they never reached water. That is why the people deserted Santan. The mission was never completed. The Santan people now live at Pipiet (the place of the Morning Glories), a few miles south.

“My grandfather and my grandmother on my father’s side both worked on the old mission while it was being built. The man who did all of the interior decorating was Vishak Namkam (The One Who Meets the Chicken Hawk). He was a Mexican. He alone did all that work. The Indians would help to bring him things. He would stay way up the wall, standing on the cornice, and work for hours. The church looked very beautiful at that time. On one occasion this artist left for Caborca and never returned. That is why some of the work in the church is unfinished.

“We called the padre in charge of the old mission, Komak Pald, because his habit was a whitish grey. I recollect another padre who made a few visits. He wore a reddish habit and sandals. (No doubt, she refers to Padre Nonato who came to Tucson around 1860, labored there three years and laid the foundations of the old St. Augustine on the Plaza.)

“There was a mission at Tucson also. The Indians who settled there were, for the greater part, Kwahates. (The home of the Kwahate Branch of the Pima Nation is south of the present Casa Grande.)

“North of the mission, on the river banks (the river had but low banks), was a place called Bit Shon Kuk, where there were some adobe ruins. The ground was rather swampy, and when the Apaches would not annoy us we would cultivate our fields at that place. The river has since cut a deep barranca. The erosions have unearthed many human bones showing that there must have been a cemetery around there.

“Tumacacori belongs to us, too. It happened this way. The Apaches drove our kin folks from that mission. These wild people were going to burn the statue of St. Cajetano. The flames had already commenced to consume the image, when a shower extinguished the fire. This statue and many others were brought here by the women, who carried them in their Kiahats (burden baskets). The statue of Maria Santisima, however, was brought tied on a horse. I missed seeing the cavalcade arrive at the old mission, but I did hear the ringing of the mission bells as they reached this place. One of the statues, the one of the Blessed Virgin with child, was taken to Tucson.

“Something that brought great sadness to my people was an awful epidemic, many years ago. Most of my kin folks died from it. That is why but two of us are left of the old people. All the rest here are Papagos, who have come from the desert. I do not tell them what I know, for they do not believe me; they just make fun of me. Well, this epidemic was terrible. We would have three funerals a day. The church bells seemed never to stop tolling. One thing made me feel especially sad. We buried a woman and her child together. I, too, contracted the disease, but was given some medicine to drink, which cured me. But the year after I had a relapse, and was close to death that time.”

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This is the story of Carnacion. The poor old lady is blind, but this does not affect her memory. I am glad I spoke to her, for soon she, too, will be called to the land from which there is no answer.