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## Marist College

Marist College is multi-story adobe building constructed in Italian Renaissance and Spanish Colonial Revival style. The Catholic boys' school was erected in 1915 on the Tucson Cathedral Campus and part of a three-building compound built by Manuel Flores as designed by Tucson Bishop Henry Regis Granjon: Marist College (1915), Our Lady Chapel (1916) and Cathedral Hall (1916).

The Marist College is a landmark building in Tucson, Arizona and American Southwest. Its completion just three years after Arizona statehood (1912) represents the apex of mud adobe construction. Adobe is found throughout the world in regions where climate and the availability of base materials blend in a vernacular tradition. This approach to building was utilized in pre-statehood Tucson and throughout Arizona Territory, and persisted until the influx of imported materials and lumber brought by the newly constructed railroad.

Early photographs of Tucson provide evidence for the mud adobe tradition of tall one-story residential and commercial buildings. The adobe walls of these Sonoran Row Houses rose twelve to fifteen feet high with interior heights often reaching thirteen feet; the limited span of the roof beams (vigas) meant that these buildings were long and narrow. Greater heights were possible but required increased wall thickness to support the load. The massiveness of each adobe block brought into question the practicality of taller buildings. The few multi-story mud adobe buildings throughout the southwest were limited to mansions, boarding houses, and institutional buildings such as churches and schools.

New arrivals to Arizona translated foreign building traditions into long-established desert construction techniques. Adobe was tailored to "Old World" architectural styles, including aspects of the Roman atrium house and later Spanish and classical traditions. The Italian Renaissance and Spanish Colonial Revival influences seen in the architectural design of Marist

College are a direct result of the cultural background of Tucson Bishop Henry Regis Granjon who adapted European design traditions to local materials, current vernacular architecture, and the arid Arizona climate. The completion of the three Granjon/Flores buildings was a major event in Arizona that marked a milestone in Tucson's development. The significance of Marist College is heightened by its relationship to the other buildings on the Cathedral campus, including the second Tucson Cathedral.

The legacy of Roman Catholic missionary settlements was ubiquitous throughout the American Southwest during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Catholic-based educational centers were established near existing churches. The Marist Brothers, a Catholic religious order, was founded in France by Saint Marcellin Champagnat in the early 1817s to focus on educational work throughout the world. In 1914, Granjon invited Brothers Gosbertus, Gregorius, Louis Casimir, and Henri Fumeaux, four Marist Brothers from Mexico and Texas, to come to Tucson to learn English and study the American educational system

The Marist College was first established as a boys' school, originally accepting boarding and day students from elementary to the high school sophomores. The building continued to operate as a school until the late 1960s.

In 1968, the Marist College building was converted into office space for the Diocese. In 2002 the building was vacated. It had been structurally compromised with the failing of two corners and subsequent deterioration of the other two, caused by water penetration from the obstruction of the scupper and downspout drainage system. The building was further compromised by the cracking of composite stucco plaster, which allowed water to penetrate without being able to dry.

In 2004, the Arizona State History Preservation Office (SHPO) determined the building eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Emergency bracing was installed in 2004 with \$10,000 provided by the Tucson Diocese. Additional temporary stabilization was carried out later that year with funding from a \$59,000 Arizona Heritage Fund grant matched by a \$40,000 grant from the Diocese. In 2006, City Tucson's Ward I Council Office funded a \$24,000 structural analysis to determine the scope and cost of long-term stabilization and rehabilitation.

- In 2007, Marist College was listed on Arizona's Most Endangered Places.
- In 2010, the Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation nominated the three Granjon/Flores buildings to the National Register of Historic Places at the State Level of Significance. The Nomination was reviewed by the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and the State Historic Sites Review Committee in March 2010 before being forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington DC.
- On October 25, 2011 the Marist College Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

*Credits: Photo – Courtesy of Arizona Public Media,*

*Historical Background – Courtesy of Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation*