

Pacific Methodist Advocate
W. H. Nelson, Editor
322 Ellis St.,
San Francisco, California

January 20, 1933

Mr. Herral Ayres,
President Old Spanish Trail,
301 Gunter Hotel,
San Antonio, Texas

My dear Mr. Ayres:

I trust you will pardon my delay in answering your letter, as I was in the hospital when your letter came, and I have just now returned from another trip to the hospital.

You will note in reading the account of Tucson in "Alluring Arizona" that the King of Spain granted a charter to the Pueblo del Tucson in 1552, which would place it 13 years before St. Augustine. I am well aware that this statement is questioned. However, it is based upon the fact that Charles I. of Spain, the successor of Ferdinand and Isabella, gave this charter in the year mentioned above. The contention is that the town was thereafter never abandoned. It is well known that in 1539 Fray Marcos de Niza on his way to the Seven Cities of Cibola passed through the site of Tucson, and it is said found an Indian settlement there. Roberts and Hodge, Arizona historians, believe that there was a settlement by Europeans at Tucson in 1560. It is pretty hard, however, to be very dogmatic about these first European settlements; whether it is Tucson, St. Augustine or Santa Fe. The more I study the question the more I am convinced there was in all these places a small European settlement, which was, strictly speaking, temporary. Perhaps in the case of Tucson there was a lapse of a few years, but the planting of any European settlement and the temporary abandonment would mean that the place would again be most likely be settled by Europeans. As I have said before, there is so much diversity of opinion among authorities in the case of St. Augustine and Tucson, some good men believing that St. Augustine was the first permanent settlement, and others disputing it, I think the question of Tucson hinges on whether the Spanish King did actually grant this charter to a permanent settlement, which some claim, or to a future settlement, which others contend was to be made. I quite agree with you that "a temporary settlement would not make Tucson antedate St. Augustine." The point to be settled, however, and it is a little hard to do that, is as to whether the settlement was temporary or permanent. There are pretty good men on both sides of this question. I am glad you are interested, and I am trusting that some day the question of the first permanent settlement will be conclusively settled. I would be glad of this even if it proved my contention about Tucson to be a mistake.

Cordially,


W. H. NELSON