

VICTOR ROSE STONER — 1893-1957

On August 20, 1957, the Southwest lost one of its minor prophets, and a large company of people in many walks of life lost a cherished friend, through the death of the Reverend Victor Rose Stoner.

Born in 1893, at Victoria, Texas, Victor Stoner was the son of Overton Stoner and Zilpa Rose Stoner, both also natives of Texas. He graduated from the University of Dallas in 1914 and was teacher and principal in schools at Miami, Arizona, from 1917 to 1921. He was a Fellow in English at the University of Arizona in 1921-22 and received an M.A. there in 1937, in archaeology.

Stoner studied at St. Mary's Seminary at La Porte, Texas, in 1923, and in 1925 was ordained as a priest. He was first appointed to All Saints' Parish in Tucson, and during the years that followed served in many capacities, principally in parishes and schools in Arizona. From 1951 until his death he was pastor of St. Dennis' Church on his family's ranch at Victoria, and at the same time was Professor of History at Loretto College in San Antonio.

One of the most colorful episodes in Father Stoner's career was his celebration of Mass at the altar of the ruined Church of San Bernardo de Aguatubi in the Hopi country of northern Arizona. San Bernardo, a mission church built by the Franciscans about 1630, flourished until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, but was never thereafter occupied. During the 1930's the church and village of Awatovi were excavated by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, and Father Stoner was a frequent visitor there in the course of his travels as a chaplain of the C.C.C. He carried with him an altar stone, vestments, and other necessary items, and on September 5, 1937, celebrated the first and only Mass at that spot since mid-August, 1680.

Father Stoner was a dynamic member of the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, a co-founder of the *The Kiva* and its first editor, and the society's president in 1938-39 and from 1943 to 1948. As he said afterwards, one of the ulterior motives in founding *The Kiva* was to provide a vehicle in which Byron S. Cummings might publish his voluminous archaeological material — an objective at least partly realized.

A careful historian and a severe, though usually just, critic of others, he was an acknowledged authority on the Spanish missions of the Pimería Alta and an avid collector of archaeological specimens and historical documents. His valuable library of rare books and manuscripts he left to the Arizona State Museum, where it will have great usefulness to the institution and the public.

Father Stoner's life has marked, in his beloved Arizona, a broad and enduring pathway which will not be obliterated by his untimely death.

WATSON SMITH

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