

1808  
1809

# Los Sitios de Zaragoza

## San Carlos seminary

On 27 June 1808 during the first siege by the French against the city of Zaragoza, there was a huge explosion in the city's gunpowder depot located in this building, now called the Seminary of San Carlos.



Grabado de Gálvez y Brambila. Ruinas del Seminario. Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza, 4-1\_01523.

## THE CITY'S GUNPOWDER DEPOT IN THE SIEGES OF ZARAGOZA

A wagon driver who supplied ammunition to the nearby sectors accidentally let a spark fall from his cigarette causing the explosion.

The huge amount of gunpowder which was stored there had devastating consequences; the blast destroyed part of the Magdalena neighbourhood. The collapse of the building and the adjacent houses, the horror due to the numerous victims and the assault by the French troops, who taking advantage of the confusion, pushed the city to the brink of defeat.

Consequently as a protective measure, in the preparations for the second siege, one of the first precautions of the Command was to diversify the ammunition in small warehouses distributed in different points of the city.

“On 27 June at 3 pm in the afternoon, all the buildings trembled and the inhabitants believed that they were going to be buried in the ruins. Not even the loudest thunder or the noise from a hundred cannons firing at the same time is comparable to what they perceived. There was a universal tremor; everything was filled with a dense smoke that darkened the atmosphere; people fled from their houses in fear, unable to cry, pale and confused, they did not know where to go”.



Fachada posterior del Seminario de San Carlos.



Defensa heroica de Zaragoza. Ilustración de Arturo Mérida, para la edición *Episodio nacional*, Zaragoza de Pérez Galdós, publicado en 1882.



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The complex of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos began to be built by order from the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), with the church name of La Inmaculada and El Padre Eterno, in the 16th century on the lands of the former Synagogue of the Jewish Neighbourhood.



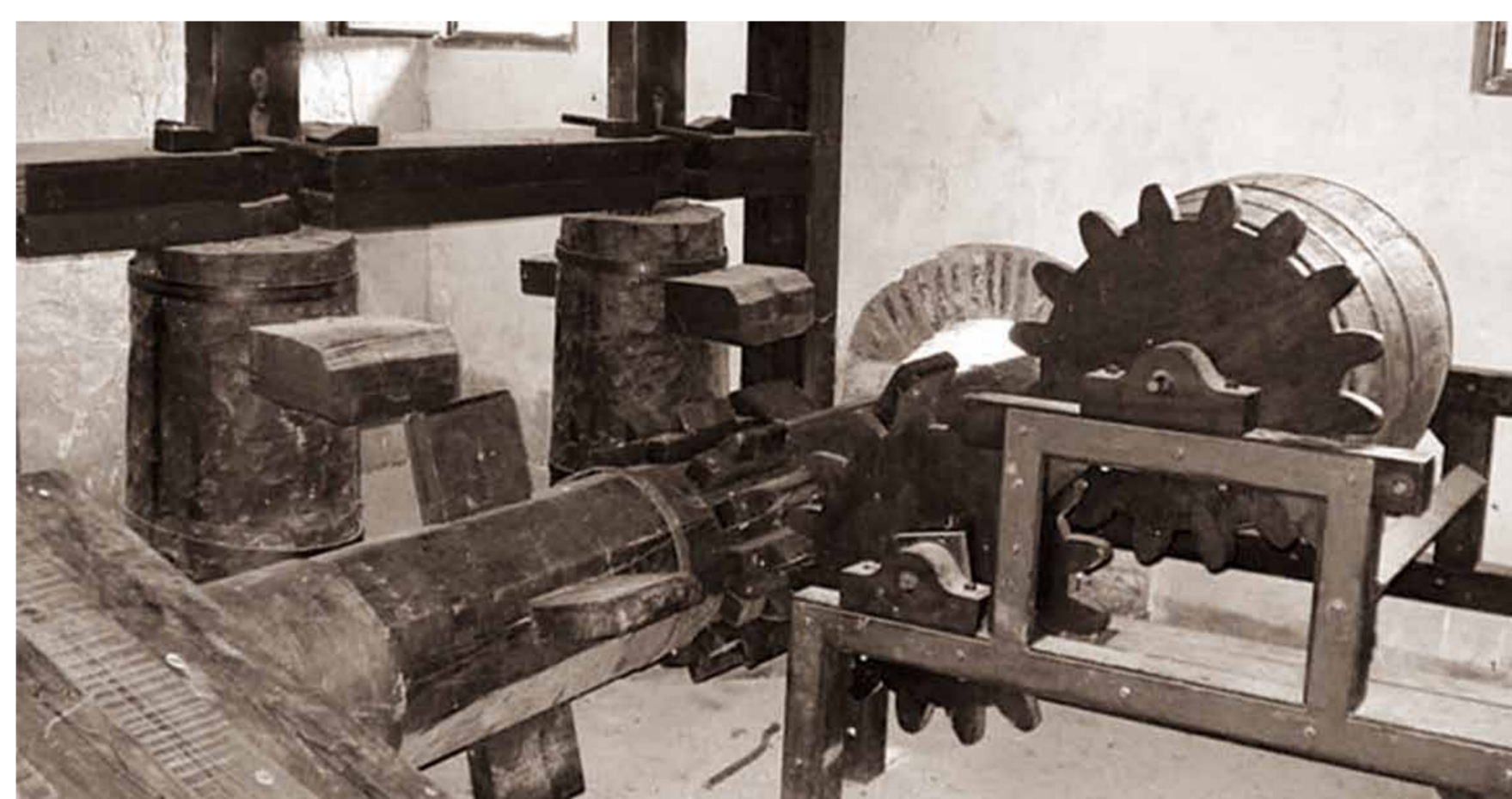
Engraving by Gálvez y Brambila. View of the ruins of the San Carlos seminary after the explosion on 27 June 1808.

In the mid-18th century, after the expulsion of the Jesuits, the church adopted its current name in tribute to King Carlos III. Famous Jesuits lived here such as Baltasar Gracián, one of the most important writers of the Spanish Baroque age, who taught in its classrooms and wrote several of works here; or San José de Pignatelli, who was one of the main architects of the restoration of the Jesuits after their disappearance.

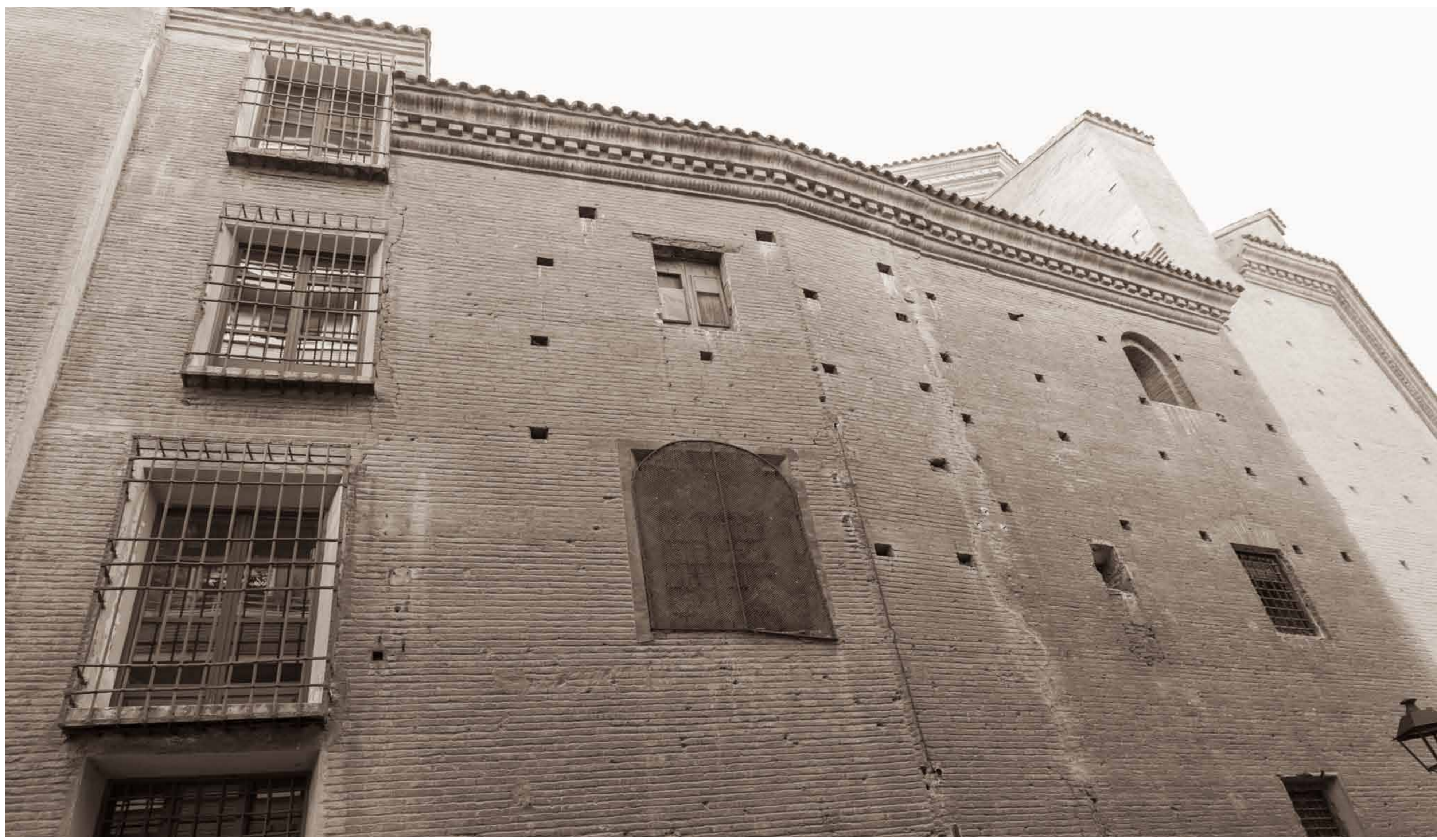
In the early 18th century, the church was redecorated with a Baroque aesthetic which is very close to the Rococo style. Surprisingly in spite of the gunpowder explosion in June 1808, which destroyed part of the building, the decoration has been completely conserved.

## THE GUNPOWDER FROM VILLAFELICHE

The town of Villafeliche, on the lower bank of the Jiloca River, around 90 km from Zaragoza, played a major role in the city's defence. The gunpowder production from its mills made it possible to maintain the supply to the defenders, even with the blasting of the main gunpowder depot.



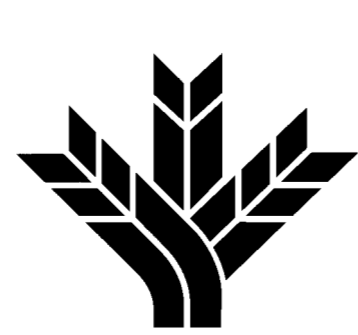
Molino de Villafeliche, donde se producía la pólvora.



One of the lateral façades of the San Carlos church, which shows the bullet holes from the Sieges period.



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