

AYER Y HOY en Taos

**Yesterday and Today in Taos County and
Northern New Mexico**



**The History of Ranchos de Taos Plaza,
by Van Dorn Hooker**



Fall 1991 \$3.00

A publication of the Taos County Historical Society

EDITOR'S PAGE

by *Judy Romero-Oak*

This issue has been a labor of love by many people. We owe a heartfelt thanks to Corina Stantistevan, who worked many hours with Van Dorn Hooker on the Ranchos de Taos Plaza article. She is also the one who tracked down an old copy of the *Symphony In Mud* article, and spent time with me, poring over the obscure type. We made a few corrections, but for the most part we left it intact, in Rev. Garcia's colorful prose.

I want to thank Jane Lecht for her expert copy editing of Van Dorn Hooker's and Larry Torres' articles. She's a real professional, and I'm thankful to have her on the publications committee. The people on our publications committee are already working with people who will contribute articles to future issues.

Our thanks also to Larry Torres for his excellent article on Christmas traditions, and his photos of Los Abuelos and Los Matachines.

You will notice that we weren't able to get any book reviews into AYER Y HOY this time, because of the length of the articles. We will insert a separate page when we distribute the journal, with a book list and at least some of the book reviews that have already been done, if possible, for those of you who like to give books as Christmas gifts. If you are interested in doing book reviews for AYER Y HOY, please tell Mildred Buchanan or Corina Santistevan.

AYER Y HOY has expanded to sixteen pages with this issue, and we have an excellent list of writers and articles lined up for future issues. Board members are discussing the possibility of reviving the Historical Society newsletter for news and notes, so that the space in the journal will be reserved for articles, and to get news to members more often than twice a year.

PHOTOS:

The cover photos of the Ranchos de Taos Plaza, and the photo on page 3 are treasures from archives of the Kit Carson Museums. No dates are available for the photos.

The photo on page 3 is of the southwest side of the Plaza. **Note** at top left, the standing wall is thought to be the remains of Gusdorf's mill. The two-story building at top right is now the Bonnie Lovato home. Oral history asserts that the Lovato home was a site for masses and for visiting priests.

Photos of the San Francisco de Asis Church on pages 9 and 12 are by photographer John Brooks of Dallas, Texas. He very graciously allowed us to use his beautiful photos free of charge.

Larry Torres also allowed us to use his photo of Los Abuelos and Los Matachines dancers without charge.

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The Taos County Historical Society's publication, *AYER Y HOY en Taos County and Northern New Mexico*, is published semi-annually by the Historical Society.

We invite articles of a scholarly nature, as well as book reviews of recent historical publications pertinent to the Taos-Northern New Mexico area. We are open to publishing occasional reminiscences, folklore, oral history, and poetry that are of lasting historical interest.

The Taos County Historical Society endeavors to maintain high standards of quality in AYER Y HOY, and we seek to make improvements as we go along. Readers' comments and suggestions are welcome.

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AYER Y HOY is mailed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Memberships are \$10 individual, \$15 family, and \$25 sustaining.

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THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a New Mexico non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and Northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

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RANCHOS DE TAOS PLAZA

By Van Dorn Hooker



Kit Carson Museums

The origin of the name Taos is uncertain. The many versions of its meaning, include one Dr. T.M. Pearce gives in "New Mexico Place Names"—that it's a Spanish approximation of the Tiwa Indian words, tu-o-to, "red willow place," or tua-tah, "down at the village."¹ Some contemporary residents of the pueblo disagree. Historically, Taos Pueblo was referred to in Tiwa, their language, as "the place at Red Willow Canyon."² The present community of Ranchos de Taos was also called by different names, but the most commonly used was Las Trampas de Taos. In the 1765 will of Francisco Xavier Romero it is called "este paraje de San Francisco de las Trampas en la Jurisdiccion del Valle de San Geronimo de Thaos" (this place of San Francisco de las Trampas in the jurisdiction of the Valley of San Geronimo de Taos). Later on, the 18th century settlement received the appellation "El Rancho": (El Rancho de Nuestro Padre San Francisco del Rio de las Trampas). After the plaza was completed in 1779, the term "el puesto" (the outpost) was often added to the name: "El Puesto de Nuestro Padre Seráfico Francisco del Ranchos de las Trampas," indicating the quasimilitary

function of the plaza.³

For hundreds of years before the Spanish arrived, since around 900 AD, the Taos Indians had inhabited Taos Valley. They established their pueblo in its present location some time after that and have occupied the present buildings since around 1400 AD. They farmed the fertile valley formed by the Rio de las Trampas and the Rio Chiquito, which flow from the Sangre de Cristo mountains to the west into the Rio de Pueblo de Taos. Archaeological and documentary evidence indicate that Indian settlements along the Rio de las Trampas continued until the middle eighteenth century.⁴

Strained relations sometimes arose between the Spaniards and the Taos Indians. Part of the difficulty arose with land problems, from religious authorities' attempt to crush native rites and from civil authorities' demands for tribute. In 1613, after an open revolt against the payment of tribute, Governor Pedro de Peralta sent troops to the pueblo. Fray Alonso de Benavides, in his visit of 1627, noted that the resident priest, Tomas Carrasco, was building a church in spite of great difficulties.⁵

Most of the first Spanish

settlements in Taos Valley were along the streams. By the middle of the seventeenth century, some friendly Apaches, Plains Indians, and mixed-blood Indians were living together with the Spanish in the valley. The area that became Ranchos de Taos is on the Cristobal de la Serna land grant, originally granted to Fernando Duran y Chaves before the pueblo revolt. Although the grantee, his son Cristobal and Sebastian de Herrera were the only Spaniards to escape from Taos Valley during the revolt, they did not return after the reconquest by Don Diego de Vargas in 1696 and thereby lost title to their grant.³

In April, 1710, the Duran y Chaves grant was awarded to Captain Cristobal de la Serna, a soldier stationed in Taos. There is no evidence that he settled the land, but he may have used it for grazing livestock. In 1720 Serna was killed in the ill-fated Villasur Expedition to the Platte River to look for suspected French invaders. The troops were decimated in an attack by a band of Pawnees and French.⁶ His sons, Juan and Sebastian de la Serna, sold the land on August 5, 1724, to Diego Romero, and Acting Governor Juan Paez Hurtado

revalidated the grant to Romero on November 24, 1724. Diego Romero was the son of Alonso Cadimo and Maria de Tapia, servants on the hacienda of Felipe Romero at Sevilletas, south of Albuquerque.⁷ Romero was known as "El Coyote" because of his mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry.

The large Romero family were the first non-Indian settlers on the Serna Grant. Romero himself settled on the northern boundary of the grant, the Rio de Don Fernando, closer to the pueblo. His son, Francisco Xavier Romero, alias El Talache (the mattock), appears to have been the first settler along the Rio de las Trampas, establishing his hacienda, known as "Talachia," there in the 1730s.

FORTIFICATIONS AND FAIRS

He was not alone in the valley, for the area was the ancestral home of certain clans of the Taos Indians, and continued to be used by the Indians in the colonial era. Archaeological remains and documentary evidence indicate Indian settlements on the river near the present site of Ranchos de Taos well into the eighteenth century.

The settlers' ranches were spread along the waterways close to arable land rather than clustered into defensible plazas. Each hacienda, located on a sizable acreage, tried to provide for its own defense through fortifications such as walls and towers. In 1760, however, a severe Comanche attack and succeeding raids forced the settlers by 1770 to abandon their homes and reside within the security of the pueblo.³

In 1760, Dr. Pedro Tamaron y Romeral, sixteenth Bishop of Durango, was making an episcopal visitation to the New Mexico part of his vast diocese. Of all the places he visited, none was more interesting than Taos. He recounted his experience with the Comanches at the annual fair and his meeting with the Utes.

Through long experience, the Spaniards had worked out a sequence of steps for dealing with the Indians: first the peaceful missionary approach, then if that failed a resort to war. As a last resort, the royal government was not above bribing or buying off the

Indians. The great annual Taos trade fair gave them a chance to pursue the latter method. The fair, which they called *rescates* (barter, trade), brought all the tribes, Comanches, Utes, Apaches, and occasionally Navajos, friendly and hostile, to Taos to exchange their buffalo hides, buckskins, and horses for Spanish goods and Pueblo foodstuffs.⁷ The Comanches also sold good guns, pistols, powder, balls, tobacco, hatchets, and vessels made of tin. They obtained these items from other Indians who had direct communication with French traders.⁸

During the fair a universal truce prevailed, even among the most savage warriors. Besides the business of trading, there was an exchange of captives and a great deal of boisterous revelry. Sometimes the governor came from Santa Fe with his retinue to provide a little order.⁸ The fair is described as a brilliant, noisy pageant that lasted day and night and was rivaled only by the trading rendezvous of the mountain men in the nineteenth century. Dominguez, writing in 1776, said "...the trading day resembles a second-hand market in Mexico, the way the people mill about."⁷ But after the fair was over, the Comanches and other Indians began planning to resume the raiding and plundering, sometimes waiting only a few days.⁷

PROTECTION

When Fray Francisco Dominguez visited New Mexico in 1776, he found everyone from the valley, Indian and non-Indian, living in Taos Pueblo until the plaza at Ranchos de las Trampas was to be completed in 1779.⁹ It had become apparent that the settlers could not continue to live in scattered farm houses and survive the continuing raids by the Comanches, Utes and Apaches. The Comanche raid in 1760, described by Bishop Tamaron, was probably why the people banded together to plan and build the plaza.

Because of these fairs, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza, like Governor Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta before him, called attention to the way the new pueblos were to be built: two and three-story houses joined together,

forming plazas, and with portable ladders that could be pulled up in case of attack. He also noted the upper roofs with their embrasures in the parapets for defensive purposes. Dominguez wrote, "This [the plaza at Ranchos de Taos] is being erected by order of the aforesaid governor, so that when they live together in this way, even though they are at a distance from the pueblo, they may be able to resist the attack the enemy may make."⁹

THE CHURCH

The plaza was nearing completion in 1779, when the Franciscan chronicler Juan Agustín de Morfi, in 1782, reporting what he had heard, said, "At three leagues (south) from the pueblo is a ranch with abundance of arable lands even more fertile than those of the pueblo...the settlement forms a very spacious quadrilateral plaza whose houses were almost finished in 1779, with several towers at regular distances for its defense." Neither Dominguez nor Morfi said anything about a church in the plaza.⁹ The present St. Francis of Assisi church wasn't occupied until 1815, so for about thirty-six years the largest settlement in the area, outside of the pueblo itself, may have been without a place of worship.

The pueblo was three leagues, roughly eight miles, away, a good two-hour trip by wagon or carriage, longer through winter snow and over muddy roads after summer downpours. The aged and infirm must have had a hard time getting to San Geronimo church in the pueblo for services. During the long tenure of Fray Jose de Vera (1794-1810) the population of Ranchos de Taos grew rapidly, judged by the entries in the baptismal, marriage and burial books in the mission church of San Geronimo. Father Vera performed all these services in the church at Taos Pueblo. If there was a private chapel somewhere in the Ranchos area before 1815, no record of it has yet come to light.⁹

The plaza was built in the form of a long rectangle with the long axis running roughly northwest to southeast. It was about eight-hundred

feet long and four-hundred feet wide. Two- and three-story dwellings on the perimeter formed the fortress-like exterior walls. Some of them probably did not abut their neighboring houses, but were connected by high, thick adobe walls. There were no windows or doors in the exterior walls, so all coming and going had to be through two heavy wood gates located in the southeast and northwest plaza walls. The roofs were flat, supported by vigas and constructed in the customary way of the time. If the builders followed the governor's instructions, there were embrasures in the connecting parapet walls that formed battlements between the towers Forfi mentioned. The defensive towers were made of adobe and were probably located at the four corners of the plaza and at the gates, with one or two in the middle of the long northeast and southwest walls.

The plaza gate, or *puerton*, consisted of two leaves that closed the plaza and were heavy enough to withstand an armed attack. Each leaf was three and a half to four feet wide and at least eight feet high. Unfortunately, no eighteenth century examples appear to have survived. It is likely they turned on printles, as did the church doors, but whether they had a paneled construction or were built up of two layers of wood, as were gates of later date, is not known.¹⁰ No doubt they were secured with a heavy wood crossbar on the inside.

SPREADING OUT

The Comanche depredations decreased during the last years of Spanish rule, but the Utes and Apaches continued to harrass. Governor de Anza won a historic victory over the Comanche chief, Cuerno Verde, in 1779 and made a treaty with the Comanches that lasted until the occupation by United States troops in 1846. More Spaniards began to settle in Ranchos de Taos, and it soon became a typical New Mexican village with the Spanish element dominant in both cultural and economic affairs. The sparsely populated but fertile Taos valley was now safe for settlers to live in, and

soon attracted both Spaniards and mixed-bloods from other more crowded places. The village grew beyond the walls of the plaza.³

During the last decades of the 1700s and early in the 1800s, as the Comanche threat diminished, the settlers once again spread out along the waterways of the valley, but this time, instead of building a series of dispersed haciendas, they built a defense system establishing several plazas that formed the center of the new villages.³

To combat the Apaches, who were still a problem for the settlers, Jose Maria de Irigoyen, governor of Chihuahua, in the late 1830s established an organization known as La Sociedad de Guerra Contra los Barbaros to administer a 100,000-peso bounty fund. He hired James Kirker, an experienced Indian fighter, to enlist a brigade of privateers to combat the Apaches. After Kirker had recruited his men in the north, he heard that the Apaches were terrorizing the Taos area. To stop this, he turned out a herd of untended horses near Ranchos de Taos. A band of 120 Indians picked up the herd and headed it toward a narrow defile in the nearby mountains. Kirker and his men ambushed them and inflicted heavy losses. The Apaches retreated toward the village with the idea of seeking refuge in the church. However, the plaza proved to be a trap; they lost forty men and all the stolen horses before making their escape.⁴

VILLAGE LIFE

In the early days after the plaza was built, it contained only residential buildings and was the center of village life. Constructing the church from 1813 to 1815 provided a strong focal point, and village activities revolved around it. Saint Francis Day, October 4, continues today to be a fiesta day, and on January 1 and 25 villagers used to join with their neighbors from Llano Quemado to perform the folk drama, "Los Comanches." Presented on horseback with costumes similar to the traditional Comanche war garb, the pageant reenacted the rescue of two children captured by the Indians. The

performance concludes with a procession into the church for a service of thanksgiving.⁴

TROOPS AND CASH

After the United States occupation of New Mexico and the abortive Taos Rebellion of January, 1847, troops were stationed in Taos Valley to protect against Apache and Ute raids and discourage further dissent by the pueblo. Troops were first garrisoned in the village of Don Fernando de Taos and later at Cantonment Burgwin, built in 1852, six miles south of Ranchos de Taos on the Rito de la Olla. It was named for Captain John Burgwin, who was killed at the pueblo during the rebellion.³

Provisioning for men and horses helped the cash-short farmers of the valley. Naturally prices went up—and corn, wheat and fodder became harder to secure. Lt. J.H. Whittlesey, though, blamed high flour prices on the large amount of wheat used to make whiskey, "...of the most deleterious nature" (the famous Taos Lightning), and hoped legislation would be enacted "...to stop the pernicious traffic."⁴

During the nineteenth century, wheat production and flour milling were the life-blood of the Ranchos de Taos economy. In 1871, Alexander Gusdorf, immigrant to New Mexico from Germany, moved from Peñasco to the village to manage a mill and general-merchandise store owned by his uncle Zadoc Staab, an affluent Santa Fe merchant. Gusdorf quickly established himself as a community leader and is credited with introducing threshing machines and self-tying binders to the valley, as well as planting the first fruit orchard there. In 1879 he bought out his uncle and constructed a three-story steam-powered flour mill, the first of its kind in New Mexico. It was located on the corner of the plaza, just south of the church. The mill burned to the ground in 1895, and Gusdorf moved his headquarters to Don Fernando de Taos. It was a very serious blow to the village economy.⁴ Gusdorf later became the president and chairman of the board of the First State Bank of Taos. When he died in 1923 he was

succeeded by his German-born wife, Bertis (Bertha).¹¹

Other businesses were located around the plaza at different times. In the early 1900s Tomas Rivera had a general merchandise store on the south corner opposite the church. He and his family lived in the house next door to the store. From a photograph of the interior of the store, it appears that he did, in fact, carry almost anything a family could need: foodstuff, cloth, clothing, farm tools and many other items. According to this daughter, Eva Rivera Martinez, who still lives in the family home on the plaza, Tomas Rivera owned the first automobile in Ranchos de Taos.¹²

A group of buildings on the northwest side of the plaza are now separated from it by the highway. In the 1890s this area was occupied by the residence and general store of "Squire" Hartt.⁴ Today the Ranchos de Taos post office and some other stores are there. The motion picture theater closed down several years ago. Martinez Hall, next to the post office, was the scene of many Saturday night dances, and is still used for receptions and other gatherings.¹³

PLAZA VIEJA

Behind the post office and the stores is an area the local people call "Plaza Vieja" (old plaza). There is an open space with some houses sited around it, with the remains of a stone wall on the northwest side. Possibly, as the main plaza became filled to capacity, an extension was made to the northwest side to accommodate more settlers. I have found no written description of Plaza Vieja.¹³

Father Jose A. Garcia had not been long at his assignment as first pastor of St. Francis church before he began planning to build a new parish house. He wrote Archbishop R.E. Gerken on June 1, 1937, that he was in the process of acquiring land for the new building and was going to have the parishioners make the adobes. He sent the Archbishop a copy of the plan for the house, and after some correspondence back and forth, Gerken approved it. Work proceeded slowly,

but it was finished early the next year. It is located on the northeast side of the church across the street.¹⁴

HIGHWAY SQUABBLE

On April 17, 1939, Father Garcia wrote Archbishop Gerken that he had heard there was a danger the highway from Santa Fe to Taos, which was being proposed at that time, would avoid Ranchos de Taos and go to the north through Cordillera because of a local squabble. The squabble was between opposing groups, each favoring one of two routes proposed by the State Highway Department. The department had surveyed a route that would take the new road through the Ranchos de Taos plaza just south of the church, and the other would be where it was finally placed, north of the church in its present alignment. Garcia said that he had not taken sides on the issue, although importuned by both parties. He was more concerned that if the road did not go through the Ranchos de Taos Plaza the church would lose money from the tourists, the people would be greatly inconvenienced and the visitors would miss the most interesting sights on the road to Taos.¹⁵

Other citizens of the Taos area were not as noncommittal as Father Garcia and strongly challenged the routing of the road to the south across the front of Saint Francis Church. On July sixth the Taos Artists Association, composed of forty-six members, sent a telegram to the Archbishop asking him to intercede with Governor Miles "...to prevent the immediate destruction of the Ranchos de Taos plaza by the contemplated routing of the Santa Fe-Taos highway." The telegram continued, "The beauty, historic value and actual use of the church will be virtually ruined should this road pass directly in front of it. Stop." They indicated that this routing was proposed by a single person interested in improving his business. They also pointed out the responsibility of the Catholic Church to stop such "vandalism." They felt the road would endanger people entering and leaving the church.¹⁶

Some Taos citizens, mostly from

the artists' community, formed the "Save the Ranchos Plaza Committee" and began a campaign to put the highway to the north of the church, where the road was then located. The old road to Santa Fe is south of the present state highway about a third of a mile and parallel to it. It came up to the plaza at the southwest corner, turned left and went north behind the buildings that form the southwest wall of the plaza. It turned northeast in front of the buildings that form the northwest end.

Mrs. Mary Wister (Andrew) Dasburg wrote the Archbishop on July 5, 1939. She said the committee felt great damage would be done to the church and the plaza if the route to the south of the church was chosen. She also said that the route south of church was being pushed by the one businessman who was a resident of Talpa, not Ranchos de Taos. She said the same proposal had come up a few years earlier and had been defeated because of a petition signed by hundreds of people in opposition to it. She asked the Archbishop to write to Governor Miles to influence him to stop the rerouting.¹⁷ Albuquerque attorney W.A. Keleher also wrote the Archbishop enclosing a letter from his client, Mrs. Oscar E. Berninghaus, wife of the well-known Taos artist, asking the Archbishop to intercede.¹⁸

Archbishop Gerken did contact Governor John Miles and according to the newspaper account, placed before him the protests from the artists' association against the highway being in front of the church. Miles said that the decision was up to the Taos County Commissioners. He said, "Personally I'm not favoring one route or the other." Highway engineer Burton G. Dwyre said, "The Highway Department desires to do what the people want. It is not insistent upon any given location, in front or in back of the church, provided it is one that the Bureau of Public Roads will approve. It must be remembered it will pay two-thirds of the cost."¹⁹ The governor replied to Gerken with a letter reiterating what he had said when they met.²⁰

Mrs. Dasburg wrote the Arch-

bishop on the twelfth, citing a story in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* that said the highway was to go north of the church. The article she referred to was the one noted above, which quoted Dwyre because no decision had been made. Mrs. Dasburg said that in the meantime she had been obtaining signatures on a petition opposing the southern route through the plaza. She wrote in her letter to the Archbishop, "It (the petition) includes virtually every merchant and other commercial interests in Taos...these men know how great an asset the Ranchos de Taos church and plaza are to Taos itself. We had only two refusals."²¹

Local residents tell the story that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, Secretary of the Interior, and Mabel Dodge Luhan and others were contacted to use their influence to have the road located north of the church and that they did indeed intervene through contacts with the state officials.²²

On July 14 Ben F. Harbert, Secretary of the Taos Chamber of Commerce, sent Archbishop Gerken a copy of a resolution from the Chamber, which said in part, "The action of the Chamber of Commerce only reflects the general sentiment of the whole Taos Valley touching the location of the highway through the Plaza of Ranchos."²³

On the fifteenth a letter from Mrs. Dasburg to the *New Mexican* was printed. She said she had sent copies of the petition to all parties involved, including the Bureau of Public Roads in Denver.²⁴ On the eighteenth, in the "Capitol" column in the *New Mexican*, Dwyre was quoted as saying that the Bureau of Public Roads prefers the route north of the church. He said they will survey it and if it is workable the Highway Department will recommend it to the County Commission, since they will furnish the right-of-way. It now appears to be the route the people want, he said.²⁵

The *Taosño* newspaper came out with a headline on November 15, 1939, reading "Road Crew Moves In to Start on Ranchos Road." The subhead said, "Brown Brothers of Albuquerque

Locate Camp South of Town to Start on Bridge Structures." The story told that Brown had been the low bidder on the four miles of highway from Taos to Ranchos de Taos, having bid a little over \$128,000. This was the beginning of the construction that would replace the old road and link Santa Fe to Taos with a new paved highway located, at least in Ranchos de Taos, where the people wanted it.²⁶ So the highway was built across the northwest part of the plaza where the old road was located, but as it left the plaza heading southwest it followed a new route north of the old road, the route it follows today. The documents in the archives of the Archdiocese do not say who made the final decision on routing, but it must have been the County Commission following the recommendations of the Highway Department and the Bureau of Public Roads. Obviously the Archbishop's influence and the sentiments of the people of Taos Valley, and perhaps even Mrs. Roosevelt, had a strong impact on the decision makers. This threat to the integrity of the plaza brought forth a great outpouring of feeling for the plaza and the church as had never occurred before. The artists and the business people realized the importance of the plaza and church to the whole Taos Valley and wanted to protect them from the degradation they felt the highway alignment to the south of the church would cause. Not until 1967 when the church was threatened with the application of cement stucco instead of mud plaster was there another citizen movement to protect it. It was pointed out to Archbishop Gerken that the Catholic Church should have a strong interest in the church and it does seem that in succeeding years there was more assistance and interest on the part of the Archdiocese in the maintenance of the building, which is a national treasure.

TOURISM

During the last thirty or so years, tourism has become a much more important source of income to the local economy and to the church. Fewer people live on the plaza now.

Many shops and boutiques cater to the tourist trade, including a shop on the northeast side next to the rectory that is operated by the church. The tavern still sits in the south corner, and the site to the west of it where Alexander Gusdorf's flour mill was located is a lawn. The ruins of some of the original buildings lie neglected on the northeast wall of the old plaza, and a sign on the building that was once the local pool hall says, "Will Build to Suit," so they are endangered. In the summer of 1991, part of one of the surviving ruins was torn down and the vigas and some original adobes were salvaged. It won't be long before all that now remains of the original buildings forming the plaza will be gone.

Automobile traffic on the Santa Fe road has increased enormously in the last several years, creating a greater physical separation of the buildings on the northwest side of the plaza from the rest of it. On any given day during the tourist season the plaza area northwest of the church is filled with parked cars, as is the area in front of the church, with their motors running, filling the air with noise and fumes while their passengers visit the church. The streets around the church have been crudely paved and have many speed bumps built in to slow down the automobile traffic. As time goes by and the interest in St. Francis of Assisi Church increases, taking care of the tourist traffic, particularly the parking, is going to become a more severe problem that must be dealt with or the visual aspect of the church will suffer.

I have not found any record of archaeological studies made in or around the church or plaza. It would have been an excellent time to do some archaeological work in the church before the concrete floor was installed around 1960, or when the extensive repairs were done in 1966-67. George Wright, the architect for the latter work, lamented that this was not done because of the time constraints.²⁷ Before it is too late, a study should be made of the church and the buildings forming the plaza that are still in use and those now in ruin.

FOOTNOTES

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21. Letter, Mrs. Dasburg to Archbishop Gerken, Ranchos de Taos, July 12, 1939. AASF.
22. Conversation with Eva Rivera Martinez and Corina Santistevan, Ranchos de Taos, 1990.
23. Letter, Ben F. Harbert to Archbishop Gerken, Taos, July 14, 1939. AASF.
24. *The New Mexican*, Santa Fe, July 15, 1939.
25. *The New Mexican*, Santa Fe, July 18, 1939.
26. *The Taoseño*, Taos, Nov. 15, 1939.
27. Notes of George S. Wright, Architect, 1967.



Block print by Helen G. Blumenschein

Symphony in Mud

by Rev. Jose Garcia

There are still tourists who are inclined to ridicule what they call our "mud" houses, and once in a while they still stop to gape and exclaim: "How quaint it must be to live in one of those dumpy huts! Tell me, are they clean inside?" One can only hold oneself in check and explain patiently that there is no more comfortable house than an adobe house, modern inventions to the contrary notwithstanding.

The "rediscovery" of adobe cannot be dated with accuracy. In spite of the fact that no other material was in use in New Mexico at the time of the American occupation, and that it seemed to serve pretty well, our first Eastern settlers insisted on the frame and brick houses they were familiar with. The Santa Fe of my youth gloried in beautiful brick houses, colonial style porches, cupolas, lawns enclosed by wrought iron fences, with iron statuary groups, or tolerated ugly frame houses, hideously weatherbeaten, or stickily, freshly-painted, and those of our people who could afford it followed the style. But for some trick of fate, or the grim invincibility of adobe, Santa Fe might have been a pretty little hamlet out of a mold, with Grant and Palace Avenues and upper Don Gaspar the special show-places. But adobe came into its own, and the Spanish style was "discovered", and no other is now tolerated; its praises often sung in strange surroundings.

A century and a half before the invention of the Model T or the appearance of "Hot Dogs", the Spanish settlers who were brave enough to move away from the populated section around Taos Pueblo to the stream, called **De Las Trampas**, built a wall around the chosen spot and then bethought themselves of a Church. With sentinels at the four corners and weapons not too far away, they waded into the mud, and beating it with infinite care, made the thousands of

adobes that were to enter into their temple—and what adobes in those days! The work progressed slowly, with decent intervals for Apache and Comanche forays, and some farming on the side. They weren't building for **beauty**—and could not have had in mind the thousands that would later admire their edifice and call it the most beautiful Mission Church in the Southwest—and they weren't building for age—and I believe they would have been insulted if a couple of centuries later they would have heard people calling their Church an "antique". They just wanted a good serviceable Temple, the best they could have, adorned as a fit house for the Lord, and they did want it to last a while, a few centuries anyway—they were not bothered by the philosophical question, "How old is old?" Five and a half-foot-thick walls seemed about right, and massive vigas that wouldn't crack or bend under the weight of smaller limbs and willow branches and packed mud. And, of course, a nice strong framework, for a *retablo*, for some oil paintings that they

got from Spain, and a couple of local artists decided they could do two other "*calaterajes*" [sic: *colaterales* are *retablos*] for the *cruceros*. The conventional corbels was a concession to beauty, and any number of *bultos* made on the spot. A big bell in strong towers. For light the usual skylight, made by raising the walls of the *cruceros*, and leaving an open space where the roof of the nave met the *Cruceros*; the ingenious opening without letting in rain admits light and air, the light shining directly on the Sanctuary, which is where light belongs.

When the walls were up, came the time of the plastering, for adobe insists on being covered, and will just waste away left raw. We do not have any description of the original plastering job, but it must not have been much different from the one we had last year. About this time two years ago we were starting the ninth plastering since the old pioneers, with their lookouts on the watch for wandering Comanches, took off their

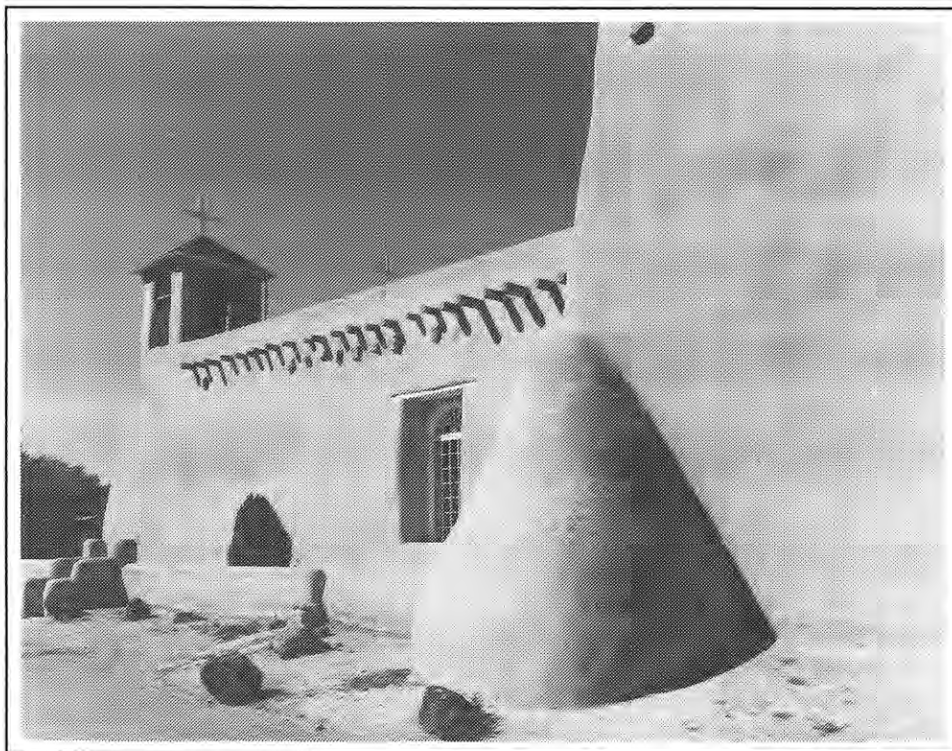


Photo by John Brooks

boots, and started mixing the mud for their Señoras and señoritas, performing on the scaffolds. It has been a traditional labor of love ever since, and last time in its turn, it took the combined efforts of many men, women and children to give old St. Francis Church its facial treatment with Ranchos mud. Close to 400 persons worked at the plastering in the nine days that the job was going on, some in the most menial and humble tasks, some in the dangerous and interesting work on the high scaffolds, smearing and smoothing the mud-straw-and-water mixture that surfaces the venerable walls. And the high and brave work was done, not by men, but by women. Not our Holy Name or St. Francis men's Society, nor the Hermanos de Nuestro Padre Jesus, peopled the "romantic" (a tourists' [stet] adjective), scaffolds, but our Altar Society and Ladies of the Sacred Heart and Young Ladies' Sodality and Children of Mary. For plastering, in the Ranchos tradition, is women's work; it is the rule and naught can change it—and it is correct. Let the men defend the homesite, and plow the ground and get the wood, lay adobes, trade, freight, and watch the stock—plastering along with all home duties belongs to the ladies. The actual plastering is the end that crowns the work. Talk about woman's emancipation and equal rights—here is a sphere where woman rules, for plastering is her right and duty. Men could assist in menial roles; theirs the heavy work, putting up the high scaffolds, getting the earth, *tierra bayita*, helping the women in going up and down, standing by for safety's sake. But the real job, the final act—the master's touch—was by the ladies. Hundreds of preparatory acts had to precede each handful of mud with which the venerable pile was caressed; the acequia water was brought into the mound of whitish dirt, straw scattered on top, the whole went through a long mixing process by the men, then each handful was kneaded by expert hands, after which children took the mud and water in pailfulls to the hoists, whereby it all went to the plasterers on top,

who must be absolutely satisfied with the quality of the mixture or the whole thing came tumbling down. Their calls for mud and water had to be quickly answered and their directions of "less straw", or "not so watery", or "more mixing needed", had to be obeyed. The scaffolds had to be put up to their entire satisfaction, and of course, they were tried out by the men before they ever set their foot on them.

And the infinite pains thus taken by their many satellites were rewarded, for it came out a work of art. Mud, plain gumbo, the kind that your wheels spin in on a nice wet day, the kind that tracks the house to the disgust of every housekeeper, and sends your suit to the cleaner's after a nice splash at the curb by a car, that forms the beauty treatment of our Church. But even if you abuse it as it daubs your Sunday best from a puddle; every handful of it is patted and smoothed and caressed as if it were a handful of the most precious mixture, gold leaf or rare paint.

And the effect is worth it; witness the schools of artists that surround the Church on a summer day to take it down on canvas; every amateur hoping to immortalize it. A lesson on the greatness of humble and mean actions—every pat and every kneading, and every wisp of straw, make up what you see of our beauteous Ranchos Church. No great heroic action did it, no magic wand waved over the pile, nor alchemist's solution poured on the walls, but simply hundreds of men, women and children mixing mud. Every action an integral and important part of the whole, and the *artistas* up on the scaffolds would have failed except for children running to and fro with mud buckets and water buckets. Moral: Don't scold your child for making mud pies; he might be practicing for our next plastering job. Secondary moral, for Lulac Ladies' Councils where the ladies don't have the privilege of doing the plastering; Stand up for your rights. Properly done, it is dignified, healthful and good for the complexion.

All this by way of introduction to the prima donna of the works—*la*

Iglesia de San Francisco de las Trampas (now Ranchos de Taos), acclaimed the most beautiful Spanish Mission Church in the Southwest; and it brings us to the question: How old is old? In a country where antiquity is an asset, this is important. The State Tourist books give the birthdate as 1772; our local tradition is 1732. When for support we ask the old edifice itself, it tries to appear as a "sweet young thing", and it certainly is well preserved, no matter what its age. "After all, what is age as reckoned in years?" it seems to say, "a Church is as old as it feels"—and its bright cheerful interior can still thrill to a Solemn Mass, a shouted *alabado*, or a colorful procession. Buttresses were to prevent some cracks from widening, but she rather disdains these crutches, and is apparently as eager as ever to live to a really ripe old age. ...[line missing]... taken well to the modern trimmings, and with no violent renovations, has adapted to herself gradually the changes made throughout the years; the new Sacristy, the twisted posts on the staircase, the fanlike decoration on the door, supporting joists at the transept, two great windows on the sides, to help out the old skylight, glass panes, renewed vigas, tar paper roofing, cement coping, pine flooring, new Altars, frame encased towers, all these things have now grown into the Church and appear as an original part of it.

We have no documents on hand on its early existence; but some going back to 1800, and preserved at the Chancery Archives in Santa Fe, give descriptions that would hold good for decades back, and the inventories are complete. The *Libro de Patentes*, or book of Episcopal authorizations for Ranchos Church shows us that the Church's rights were declared and documented under seal by the following Bishops or Administrators, since 1800, at the time of their visits, or by direct letters from Durango, Mexico; "Doctor Don Francisco Fernandez Valentín, *Canonigo doctoral de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Durango, Provincia de la Nueva Vizcaya, Examinador Sinodal del Obispado, Juez Provincial, Vicario Capitular en sede*

vacante, por el M. Ilustre Dean y Cabildo, Gobernador, etc., etc. in 1813; Dr. Don Juan Bautista Ladron del Niño de Guevara; also Administrator *sede vacante*, in 1818, Francisco Perez Serrano being the Notario nombrado. (The Notaries were always priests). Dr. Don Avenicio Fernandez San Vicente, Vicar General, in 1826, Notaries being Fray Jose Luis Rodríguez on one occasion and Fr. Teodosio Junca y Janquera on another. Vicar General, later Bishop, Don Juan Rafael Rascon, in 1829, with Fr. Guadalupe Miranda as Notary, and in 1830, on a Pastoral visit, with Fr. Melquiades Antonio Ortega. Bishop Jose Antonio Laureano de Zubiria in 1833, with Fr. Ramon de Héres as notary. In 1845, Fr. Jose Francisco Ferrara, Notary, signed for Bishop Zubiria, and again in 1850.

The last authorization in the old Patents was given by the first Bishop under the American administration, Don Juan Bautista Lamy, after which the mode of authorization was changed. The latest chapter in the history of the old Church was written when His Excellency Archbishop Rudolph Gerken, D.D., canonically erected the parish of Ranchos of Taos, on May 2, 1937, the writer of this article being appointed the first Pastor of the old historic Church as such. Until then, the Church had always been administered as an "Ayuda de Parroquia", or ancillary Chapel, from Taos.

The old *Libro de Cordillera* forms interesting reading, for it depicts, not a static existence, but a living, struggling, dynamic community, such as Ranchos has ever been. The recent turmoil about the location of the highway through Ranchos—whether it should go in front of or behind the Church—is nothing to the petitions and counterpetitions that have marked the history of the Church. A participant in the recent controversy wrote that Ranchos was a "peaceful pastoral community", and that "the serenity of the plaza around the Church should not be disturbed"—without personally commenting on it, I wonder what ancient Rancheros would have thought of that. Knowing that Our Lord had by

choice walked the highways and crowded streets, and his Apostles had preached in the market-places—St. John in particular as we see by the Apocalypse was rather a connoisseur of the gems sold in the street bazaars of Asia Minor—the ancient Rancheros must have had no scruples of making the square around the Church anything but peaceful. On the Lord's Day, waiting for the priest to ride in from the Pueblo for the second Mass, they must have gathered together for the news and to discuss the politics of the day. And after the Mass, who could begrudge the young fellows a little recreation in the form of a *gallo* race, or a *chueco* game? And the *caballeros* in their *juntas de comunidad*, decided they had certain rights, in spite of the King's or *Comandante's* decree. There was the matter of burials—Spain and later Mexico demanded they be made in a *campo santo ventilado*, and the only *Campo Santo* at the time was the one near the Pueblo. But the Rancheros thought that was too far to take a body in a *carreta* on a winter's day and freeze while the grave was dug; so they wanted to bury in the Church yard and in the Church itself. Hence the protests and the letters to the *Padre Ministro* and to the *Custodio* and to the *Mitra* (Bishop or Vicar), and hence the denials back from those sources. It was all legal and formal enough, but they would not take "No" for an answer, and they argued that, as to danger of pestilence, there was more danger of that in burying outside of the Church, at the old Pueblo cemetery, due to the shallow graves that had to be dug in winter, when the ground, naturally hard, was frozen. The controversy, with the clergy upholding the civil law and the *vecindad* opposed, lasted well into the years. At the time of Fr. Antonio Jose Martinez, the controversy was going full force and ...[missing]... one of the numerous denials, in July 1833. As late as Feb. 5, 1876, Fr. Gabriel Ussel forbade such burials, citing the law of the legislature of the Territory, and from then on there is no more word of the controversy.

The Inventories form

interesting reading; they are not dry unimaginative lists, but vital facts affecting flesh and blood; but they have to be read in full to catch the full flavor of the ancient terminology, measurements, materials and utensils, the quaint disregard of spelling, grammar, and at times good manners. *Caballeros* they were at all times, but directness was a greater virtue than formal civility at times. In 1817, for example: Don Ygnacio Lujan received, as *fabricero*, the Church goods and inventories. He listed the Sacred Vessels and Altar Service, vestments and paraphernalia very carefully, and in his turn handed over the list to Don Juan Lovato. Don Juan Lovato scratched out items listed by Don Ygnacio, or put in the words, "*no existe*", "*es falso*". Don Ygnacio proudly states that he and Reverendo Padre Pereyo "*fabricaron a su cuenta el corateral [sic] y lo pintaron pie de gallo*" [Ed: they built the retablo at their own expense and painted it on scaffolds]. With unconscious humor, Don Juan adds, "*y el vecindario*" [Ed: and the whole neighborhood], to show the whole community had cooperated. Elsewhere he states that he gave certain items and not Don Ygnacio. But a more intriguing byplay is found in the list of "*Aumentos*" made by Jose Domingo Duran, a later *Fabricero*, who had helped Don Juan Lovato correct the list of ...[line missing]... Don Ignacio Lujan Duran made his list on July 16, 1818, and it was in turn corrected by "*el Maestro Juan de Jesus Vigil*". Where Duran lists "*una docena de candeleros de palo*", Vigil corrects, "*no existen por estar ya rotos*". "*Un posuelo*", listed by Duran is marked by Vigil, "*no existe*". Duran puts down "*Una colcha que sirve de cubierto del Altar Mayor*," and Vigil retorts, "*vieja*". "*Una cortina de velillo*" is called by Vigil, "*bastante usada*". "*Una cuchara de metal para el Incienso*" is stated to be "*de hierro*", not "metal". The corrections backfired on Vigil too. Duran listed "*Una mesa grande quebrade*". Vigil corrected it, "*Ya esta compuesta*", and a later revisor objected "*No está compuesta*."

It would take too long to

enumerate the various interesting details of the inventories and letters of the Church, which are to be found in the Archive Vault of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. An hour spent with them is a crowded, intriguing hour, if one can attune himself to the ways of thinking of those times. Our generation's flashy streamlined technique would have to be parked at the door to enter into the serious stately ways of our ancestors. One of the most interesting and complete descriptions of the Church—it is good for our day yet,—is the one of the Inventory of June 1, 1856, based on that of Oct. 29, 1817. Inch by inch it describes the Temple and outside of the old, now non-existing *Colateral de San Jose*—it could be used today.

The lists of the grand old men who in their day loved and labored for the old Church is more interesting yet, both priests and laymen. Besides the Bishops, Vicars and Notaries mentioned in the Patents, the old Church of Ranchos was hostess to many of the great figures in New Mexico Ecclesiastical History. The famous Father Antonio Caballero, one-time *Custodio* of New Mexico, came up from the parish of San Buenaventura at Cochiti, where he was

the *Ministro Párroco*, to investigate and report that Ranchos was deserving of a second Mass on Sundays. Fr. Jose Benito Pereyro labored mightily for the Temple, and Father Andres Correa, assistant to Fr. Mariano Sanchez Vengana [sic: Vergara], Fr. Antonio Jose Martinez wrote in the old *libro de Cordilleras* the fact that he had been named as the resident Pastor of Taos, July 23, 1826, the witnesses being Fr. Vengana, who turned over the parish, and Fr. Juan Felipe Ortiz of San Juan.

I would like but am not able to write about the lay people who figured in the various documents. Many names appear and great men all, the roots of the family trees of our present population, I like to think of them as of those noble, cultured *varones* that I knew in my youth—able to whip up a prancing team or a stolid yoke of oxen, as well as to "*festejar*" with pomp and ceremony or to discuss philosophy, politics, or the vagaries of the weather with equal finesse and authority, to give a send-off to a deceased neighbor wherein the chanted *alabados* laid siege to the very Court of Heaven, and to take them, good or bad, and build the lot that the Good Lord gave [to] a life, [so] that, whether highlighted by fame, radiant joy or gargantuan laughter, or

whether soberly toned by suffering, sadness and pain, was always **life**, interesting, throbbing, of the earth, earthy, in its matter, and with the Christian spirit, represented by the majestic Temple, as its form. They would not want the old Church to be called their monument; though it certainly is their untarnished memorial; and though they thought it a most desirable privilege to be buried within its walls, in the spirit of the Royal Psalmist, "Blessed are they who reside in Thy House, O Lord, forever and ever they shall praise Thee," (Ps. 83:5), and were pretty pugnacious in trying to get that privilege, yet their feeling of its consecrated character was also as that of King David, Ps. 92:7: "Holiness becomes Thy House, O Lord, throughout the length of days." That feeling still predominates in the old Church, for though one may admire its architecture or fall in love with its ancient grace, poet and peasant alike first feel its Sanctity.

Reprint from the *Taos Review* and the *Taos Valley News*, July 18, 1940, Courtesy of Mary Ryland, great niece of Monsignor Garcia

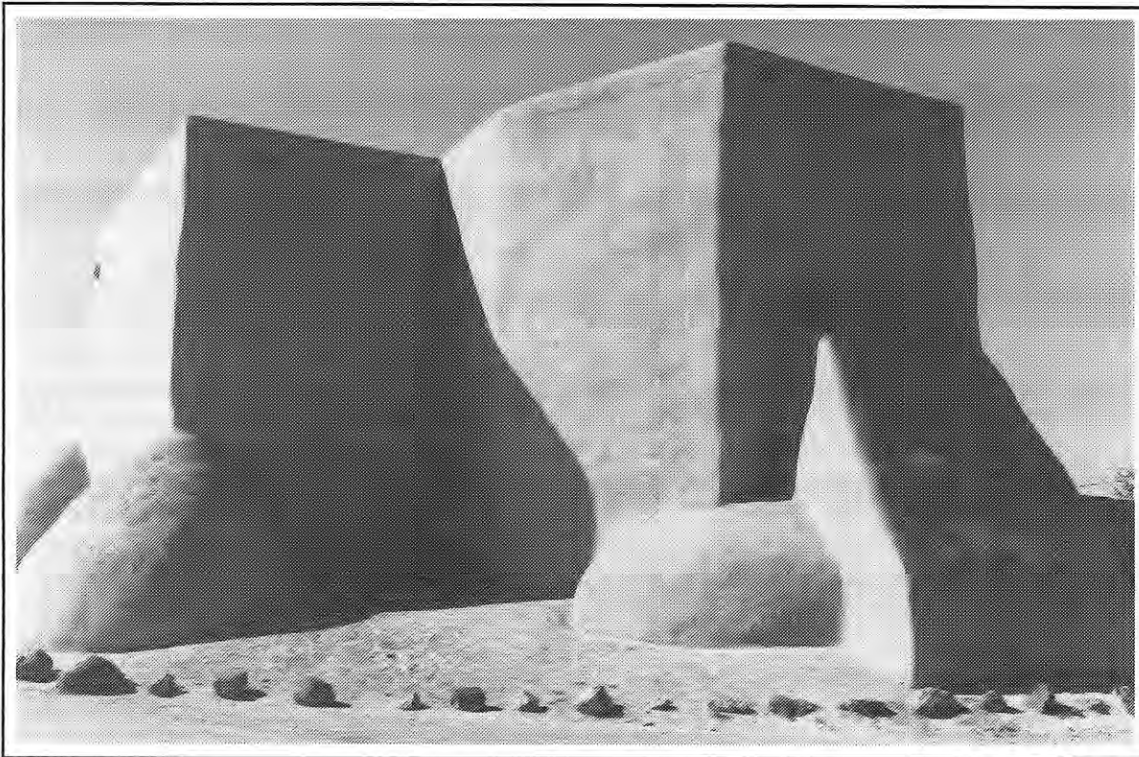


Photo by John Brooks



El monarca y la Malinche, Bobby Monsivaiz and Maria Telles, with Matachines dancers. Photo by Larry Torres.

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANTS OF HOLY TRINITY PARISH

By Larry Torres

Christmas in New Mexico has always been a time of age-old traditions reaching back into European history. In the major cities of New Mexico, the familiar bell-ringing Santa Clauses on street intersections appear the day after Thanksgiving. In remote mountain hamlets, however, less familiar but just as traditional characters appear.

On cold nights, beginning December 11, ancient ancestral figures called *Abuelos* wake up from their year-long sleep. They pull the cobwebs out of their beards and slowly wend their way down from the mountains, cracking their whips and loudly asking if the people of the valleys still remember the ancient ways.

"Do you still know your prayers?"

"Do you still know how to dance a *cuña*?"

"Do you still know how to sing a *decima*?"

Upon sighting the *Abuelos*, unsuspecting villagers might at first be scared by their outdated clothing and strange, long beards. Upon closer scrutiny, however, one recognizes in them the Spanish counterparts of bell-ringing city Santa Clauses. Yes, the *Abuelos* have returned to check on New Mexicans' knowledge of their past. Have they forgotten the lessons that the first settlers brought to this land? Do they still have the medieval morality plays?

In the northern hamlets of Taos County, the answer is still a resounding YES! Of ten known morality plays whose performances have been recorded in the Southwest

throughout the centuries, five are still alive and well at Holy Trinity Parish.

Villagers from the communities of Arroyo Seco, Arroyo Hondo, Las Colonias, Valdez and Desmontes select roles during the Christmas season and act out ancient metered verses that tell of the Holy Season. They perform not only in their villages, but also in Costilla, Mora, Las Vegas and Peñasco as well.

The first of the morality plays is "*Las Cuatro Apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*" (The Four Appearances of the Virgin of Guadalupe). It reaches back to Mexico City in 1531. An Indian lad, Juan Diego, sees a radiant Virgin atop a ruined Aztec temple. She bids him deliver a message to the great Archbishop of Zumarraga. She would have him build a temple in her honor. The Archbishop is at first skeptical, but the Lady sends him a mighty sign: some roses that have miraculously bloomed in the dead of winter are placed in the Indian's *tilma* (shawl). As he carries them back to the Archbishop, the colors of the roses are absorbed into the cloth and the image of the Lady of Guadalupe is miraculously imprinted upon it. This miracle sets the scene for the mass-scale conversion of the Mexican Indians to Christianity and "*Las Cuatro Apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*" is now performed every December 12 as the official launching of the Christmas season.

The second of the *auto sacramentales* (acts of faith) is the comic drama "*Los Pastores*," the Second Shepherd's Play. In this piece, shepherds out tending their flocks at night see a mighty sign in the heavens announcing the birth of the Messiah. Unfortunately, they're not the only ones to see the sign. The Prince of Darkness, Lucifer, has also seen it and schemes to confound the shepherds so that they will not go off to worship the babe in the manger. However, as in all morality plays, Good finally triumphs. The Angel Michael defeats Lucifer in a sword fight and chains him up for a thousand years.

The characters in the play personify various village folk; the industrious leader, the beautiful maidservant, the corrupt monk, the lazy man. The audience is quick to identify with them, which makes *Los Pastores* a favorite piece from the Christmas drama cycle. It is usually performed on December 24 at midnight, before *La Misa del Gallo* (Midnight Mass).

The first day of the New Year is launched with a Latin high mass, followed by a winter procession. The old *bulto* saints of the five valley communities are paraded outdoors. A rustic altar is set up for them in the church yard, and *Los Matachines* dance is performed in their honor.

Los Matachines of Arroyo Seco are unique—it is the only troupe that features female as well as male dancers. By definition and tradition, *los matachines* has always been performed by male dancers. But here the troupe is comprised of six male and six female dancers.

Los Matachines is based on an old play penned in Spain in 1501 called *La batalla de los moros y los cristianos*. A Moorish prince named Selín captures some Christians and tortures them in an effort to shake their faith. The Christians, however, hold fast and the Moors are so impressed they convert to Christianity. *Los Matachines* was first performed in 1533 in Mexico. It was hoped that the Meshica Indians (Aztecs) would take a lesson from the Moors and also convert to Christianity. The message failed, since the Indians did not yet understand Spanish. They did like the costumes, however, and for centuries the dance was kept alive, though its significance was lost.

Before its revival in 1985, the dance of *Los Matachines* was last performed in Arroyo Seco in 1938. Some of the original dancers were still able to perform it fifty years later!

In Europe, Christmas is still celebrated on January 6, the Day of the Three Kings. And so it still is in the valley of Arroyo Hondo. The morality play "*Los Tres Reyes Magos*" (The Three Wise Men) was penned by the late Reyes N. Martinez of that valley. He memorized it from his father, who memorized it from his father . . .

In the play, the Magi scan the skies and spot a star that foretells the birth of the King of Kings. They follow the star to the kingdom of the evil tyrant Herod, who is

disturbed by the news. Tempted by Lucifer, he plots to kill the Messiah by ordering the death of countless innocent children. An angel warns the Magi, however. When they find the baby they do him homage. The massacred children are miraculously resurrected by a look from the Holy Child and the play ends on an up note.

This, of course, sets the mood for the last play in the Christmas cycle called *El Niño Perdido*. Wishing to escape the wiles of Herod, Joseph and Mary take the infant to far-off Egypt. The years pass. The child is eleven years old when the play begins and Joseph and Mary return to Jerusalem. There, the Holy Child, who can see into the future, foresees the painful death He must endure at the age of thirty-three. Distracted, He wanders away from His parents and makes His way to the temple of Jerusalem, where He questions the Doctors of the Church.

His frantic mother, now with hair streaked in white, bemoans the loss of her son. The woeful lament of this play makes this one of the most moving of the Spanish folk operas. The Virgin Mary takes on the aspect of *La Llorona*, thus linking her in the New World to *La Malinche*, mother of the Mestizo race. When at last the family is reunited, the Holy Child blesses the world.

These dramas are unique because ordinary farmers, housewives and school children from the various communities put them on. They're not trained actors, but their performances are very real. Their theater is not an art form; it is a way of life. Collectively, these scores of people call themselves *La Compañía de la Santísima Trinidad* (The Holy Trinity Company), in honor of the parish that comprises their five communities.

A new play is added to their repertoire every year, so that by the turn of the century all ten morality plays will be back and the traditions fully restored. The new addition planned for next year is *El Coloquio de San Jose* (The Betrothal of Joseph), featuring the betrothal of Joseph to Mary and the mysterious manner in which St. Joachim is given a sign from the heavens. The only four that remain to be added in sequences are *Adan y Eva*, *Cain y Abel*, *Los Comanches* and *Los Tejanos*.

As the Holy Season draws to a close, *Los Abuelos* perform a ritual bonfire dance in front of the village church. They then return to their mountain sleep, secure in the knowledge that they are not forgotten. The villagers watch them disappear into the smoky night air, sigh in relief and return to their fields and households. They have appeased the Christmas Ogres for another year.

*Courtesy of Larry Torres to Taos Historical Society, 1991
Larry Torres is a gifted language teacher, an artist and actor,
and a leader in the Arroyo Seco parish.*



Taos

Anidado al pie de las montañas
Descansas, radiante de hermosura
Abrigando en tus íntimas entrañas
Un triple tejido de cultura

¡Cuántas páginas son tuyas en la historia!
Te conquistas el querer del que te mira
Del turismo eres grande vana gloria
Y del músico eres cuerda de su lira

Tus inditos, tus ingleses, tus hispanos
Te contemplan igualmente emocionados
Y armoniosos te contemplan
Como hermanos

Nestled at the foot of the mountains
You repose in radiant beauty
Holding in an intimate embrace
A tapestry upon which three cultures
Are woven

How countless are your pages in our history!
How captivating you are to the beholder
For the tourist you are a vision of glory.
And for the musician you are the strings of his lyre.

Your inditos, your ingleses, your hispanos
Are equally moved by your beauty
And in harmony they contemplate you
As brothers.

Written by Raymundo Romero of Vadito, New Mexico. He worked for the Forest Service at the lookout on Picuris Peak and says no matter when he looked toward Taos he never failed to be moved by its beauty.

ABOUT THE WRITERS:

VAN DORN HOOKER

Van Dorn Hooker came to New Mexico in 1951 after completing his graduate studies at the University of California in Berkeley.

He worked in Albuquerque and Santa Fe with John Gaw Meem until 1955, when he entered into partnership with John McHugh, Bradley P. Kidder and Associates. In 1963 he became university architect at the University of New Mexico, where he was responsible for campus planning and construction on the campuses in Albuquerque, Los Alamos, Gallup and Valencia. In 1971 he became associate professor of architecture at UNM and taught Professional Practice, History of Architecture in the Southwest and Institutional Planning, until he retired in 1987.

His projects in private practice and as university architect are so numerous that it is not possible for us to name all of them here. We'll mention those with which we would be most familiar: in Taos, St. James Episcopal Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and changes in the

Harwood Foundation; in Santa Fe, the Santa Fe Opera, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary and remodeling of the Museum of New Mexico. He was consulted on restorations of the Ranchos Church since the early days of Monsignor Reinberg. He continues his deep interest in its upkeep and survival.

The Western Mountain Region of the American Institute of Architects awarded him the silver medal, their highest award. He is a Fellow Emeritus of the ATA, as well as of AUW, the Association of University Architects. He is included in both *Who's Who in the West* and *Who's Who in America*.

One of his writing projects is a book on the restorations of the Ranchos Church throughout the years. We are privileged to publish the first chapter of that book in this issue of *AYER Y HOY*.

REV. JOSÉ GARCIA

Rev. José Garcia was the first priest appointed pastor of the parish of San Francisco de Asis in Ranchos April 22, 1936. He designed the

rectory, and it was built under his direction.

He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Daeger in his home parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Santa Fe June 29, 1929. He was assistant pastor in Las Vegas and Albuquerque, and was pastor in Chaparrito and Clayton. In 1935 he was appointed assistant chancellor and secretary to the bishop. When he died Nov. 16, 1959, he had become a Monseignor and was the Right Reverend Vicar General, as well as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Albuquerque.

When he came to Ranchos he was tireless in his commitment to serve the people of this area. He wanted to be a missionary most of all, and almost immediately asked to minister to the Pueblo of Taos in the north, to the people of Pilar to the south and a year later to the mission of Black Lake. He was dearly beloved by his people and is still lovingly remembered. His "Symphony in Mud" speaks of his love for the beautiful church of St. Francis, and gives us an idea of the kind of person he was.

Corina Santistevan



Summer program review

At the October meeting of the board of directors of the Taos County Historical Society, the consensus was that the summer trips had been very successful. The first trip June 1 was to Mt. Capulin and the Early Folsom Man sites, with Ernest Lyckman and Alex Fletcher as guides.

In July the San Luis Historical Society were our guests for a tour of three major historical sites in Taos: Pot Creek Pueblo at Fort Burgwin, the historical Ranchos Church and the Los Cordovas ridge petroglyphs. Corina Santistevan led the tour.

Aug. 3 our tour traced El Camino Real from Velarde to Embudo, the Apodaca trail, Ojo Sarco, Vadito, and back to Taos. Alex Fletcher and Ernest Lyckman were tour guides.

Charlotte Graebner led a tour to Bent's and Boggsville, home of the Carson family, with a side trip to a museum in Las Animas in September.

Tom Bruce organized a trip on the Cumbres and Toltec train for Oct. 5. The autumn colors were at their best, as was also the food at Osier.

Winter program — lectures

The program committee has prepared a schedule of lectures for the winter season at the Masonic Hall, on the first Saturday of each month, at 2 p.m.

The November lecture featured R.C. Gordon McCutchan on the return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo. McCutchan wrote the book of that title and did extensive research on the subject. His lecture was entertaining and educational.

Dec. 7 is the date for our Christmas luncheon in the Kachina Lodge Cabaret Room. Guadalupe Tafoya, chief curator at the Millicent Rogers Museum, will talk about folk theater of Northern New Mexico, with special emphasis on Los Moros y Cristianos and Los Pastores. Jenny Wells will entertain with folk songs. Lunch will be served at 12 noon.

Jan. 4 Lou Pond will share her memories of the establishment and growth of Holy Cross Hospital. Photographs and other memorabilia collected by Ruth Fish and others will be on display.

We will have our general business meeting Feb. 1. Rowena Meyers will be our guest speaker, sharing her treasure chest of memories of historic figures in Taos.

Change in by-laws

You will receive a notice of the need for a change in one of our by-laws. The board would like to involve more people in the decision-making of the organization. The members therefore propose that chairpersons of the standing committees become members of the board. We anticipate that this will improve communication between the board and society members. We will have an election at the February meeting.

Preservation notes

In the winter issue of 1988 you will find a note on the proposed restoration of the Peña Negras Cemetery in Los Cordovas. It has taken all this time to bring the plan to fruition. Summer work was begun in June with a grant under the auspices of the Millicent Rogers Foundation. With the generous help of the people of Los Cordovas, Cordillera and others, the project was completed by the end of August. Research is underway to have it listed as a historic site. The board honored a former commitment to support the project by helping to maintain it for the next five years. They will donate \$100 each year for the five years.

Board members have also voted to add \$100 each year to the preservation fund, to support projects of this nature. Since this money must come from our membership fees, we hope to receive donations from private individuals or businesses also.

Gifts

James Griffin has donated 101 slides he took of "Descansos" to the Taos County Historical Society. Board members viewed them at the November meeting. It is a very precious gift; we know of no other collection of these special crosses that dot our roadsides in memory of someone who has died.

Thanks again, Mr. Griffin.

Book reviews

Because of the length of the articles in this issue, we didn't have room for book reviews. They will be inserted on an extra sheet. If the sheet is missing in your copy of AYER Y HOY, call editor Judy Romero-Oak, 758-3153, and we'll see that you get one.

MERRY CHRISTMAS





TURNING LEAVES—The Photograph Collection of Two Japanese-American Families

Richard Chalfen

University of New Mexico Press

Paperback, 268 pages, photos

These delightful, very personal histories of two Japanese-American Families are based upon family scrapbooks that go back to just after World War I, when the families immigrated to Canada and then to the United States. Each family's story is different, but in both cases the stories are culturally the same. The focus on passing the Japanese cultural traits, honoring one's ancestors and noting pictorially the important moments in the family life, is a cultural way of denoting the passage of time.

"Photographs often indicate a culturally different way of conceptualizing death and remembering the funerals of family members." The photograph albums are fascinating, in that they contain non-professional snapshots and other mementos that pertain to the families' geneology.

The albums serve as a link to the past and also include the extended families of the Nagano and the Uyeda/Miyamura family. If you had the generally assumed idea that all Nisei had settled in California or Washington state prior to World War II, you'll be surprised to read of the Uyeda/Miyamura family of Galiup, NM. For 70 years in New Mexico there was quite a colony of Japanese-Americans in Gallup, and many still reside there, although they are now blended with families with names like Ortiz.

This is a real nostalgia piece and also very personal. It is a peek into the past of one of New Mexico's many cultures.

Fayne Lutz
Taos

THE MODERN MAYA: A CULTURE IN TRANSITION

Macduff Everton, 259 pp.

University of New Mexico Press, 1991

Cloth \$45, paper \$29.95

The Modern Maya is a photographic report growing out of the author's experience in living with and photographing the Yucatecan transition. The Maya adapted to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. They kept the Mayan language and merged their traditional religion with the Catholicism imposed by their conquerors. More recently, in the 1980's, the Mayan way of life is again in transition with the impetus to change this time growing out of the tourist economy represented by Cancun.

Everton's way of immersing himself in his subject was to befriend Mayan families and become accepted by them and allowed to photograph freely. The result is a text that reads well and close to 200 photographs beautifully done in black and white. The author follows the experience of the

families he has befriended from the early 1970's to as recently as 1988.

Everton's families, until recently, lived in what was essentially a subsistence economy based on the cultivation of corn. Living conditions were crude. Houses were characterized by dirt beds. There was no electricity. Clothes were homemade. The author identifies emotionally with the Mayan traditional way of life, a lifestyle largely divorced from the outside world.

The Cancun beach resort development came along in the late 1970's. It offered the Maya regular jobs paying wages and fringe benefits. It was difficult to find the time, energy, and attitudes needed to combine the jobs with cultivation of the corn *milpas*. With the shift to wage labor, many other aspects of Mayan village life also changed. Houses with cement floors and synthetic roofs took the place of the more primitive huts. Doctors provided through job-related health benefits replaced the village healers. Roads replaced jungle paths. Television ownership became common. Clothing was now largely store-bought. Those who did not wish to accommodate to the new order were forced to relocate further away in a rapidly shrinking jungle. The Maya were again impelled to adapt their culture if they wished it to survive.

Everton's approach is that of a sympathetic participant-observer rather than an objective anthropologist. Some may question if the families he selected to describe were representative of the Mayan culture, or if his emotions colored his reporting. Allowing for these possibilities, the text is interesting, the pictures are great, and his story rings true.

Leonard A. Lecht
Taos

PROMISE THE LAND—ESSAYS ON RURAL WOMEN

Joan M. Jensen

University of New Mexico Press, 1991

Hardback \$27.59

If you are expecting to read a well-rounded history of rural women in the United States, do not consider this book as a resource. By the author's own admission "it is autobiographical, and biographical". To me, the book seems to be more sociology than history, and it is deeply colored throughout by her own "eastern, urban, and lower-middle-class values".

Joan M. Jensen, Professor of history and director of the Women's Studies program at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, includes in her "Essays On Rural Women" her own lifestory, which includes life on a commune in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, and later as a migratory worker in agriculture in California. She also presents the geneological study of her grandmother in rural Wisconsin, hop-picking by women in upstate New York, and then by the PIAUTES in Washington State, butter-making in the mid-Atlantic states, Pueblo women in the Salinas Valley of New Mexico (which comes closest to being prehistory), plantation women in Maryland and their slaves just prior to the Civil War, and New Mexico farm women 1900-1940.

The varied stories are interesting and well written, but only the product of their labors are explored. Strangely she devotes only one chapter and a limited amount of research and span of years to the Agricultural Extension Educational experience 1914-1940 "Crossing Ethnic Barriers."

The author largely ignores Fabiola Cabeza de Baca of Las Vegas, NM, one of the early advocates and best writers of the Agricultural Extension Experience in Northern New Mexico. Why did the author stop at 1940?

Ms. Jensen writes with astonishment her perceived lack of laws protecting women and children prior to 1930. She wonders why there was no welfare for rural women and fails to see, or even mention the changes for rural women with the advent of the automobile, electricity, radio, the vote and better roads.

She insists that her stories of family deprivation, poverty and hard work by women in a rural setting have not been previously published, and that since women have been urbanized (dare she really think rural women no longer exist?) they can no longer enjoy the "privileges of rural living".

A very disappointing offering

Fayne Lutz
Taos

ALCATRAZ FROM INSIDE; THE HARD YEARS, 1942-1952

by Jim Quillen

The Golden Gate National Park Association
San Francisco, CA
Paperback, 164 pages, with photos

This is a story of the triumph of the human spirit, with some of the history of the notorious Alcatraz prison woven in. I found it an inspiring book.

Suffering from a childhood of neglect by an alcoholic mother and a father who left him alone while he worked, Quillen made friends on the street while still a child and learned the "easy" way to get money: theft. This began Quillen's trek through reform schools and jails, all of which were based on the belief that punishment reforms human souls. Quillen progressed from brutal treatment in reform schools to more serious crimes and increasingly brutal treatment in prisons.

He was eventually sentenced to 45 years and was delivered to the fearsome embrace of a prison he couldn't run away from: Alcatraz. Death was the only way out.

After the horror of the 1946 break-out attempt and the deaths of men around him, he decided either he would escape or commit suicide. Instead, a priest befriended him, located his family and helped him find an incentive to live and to get out of prison.

Quillen gives some of the early history of Alcatraz with his story. The U.S. Army built a lighthouse there in the mid 1800s and later built the first military fortifications on the rocky cliffs in the bay near the Golden Gate Bridge. When it became a prison, it was considered escape-proof, and

successions of wardens were bent on protecting that reputation, which resulted in some of the worst prison conditions in history.

The writing is simple, the overall story is inspiring. This first-person experience is significant to anyone interested in the effectiveness of America's prison system.

Judy Romero-Oak
Taos

EARTH HORIZON

by Mary Austin

University of New Mexico Press, 1991
Paperback, 403 pages, with photos,
afterword and index

This is a reprinting of Mary Austin's autobiography, first published in 1932, with an afterword by Melody Graulich, associate professor of English at the University of New Hampshire.

Once you get past Austin's flowery 19th Century writing and her irritating way of speaking of herself in the third person, this is an excellent book. Austin, like many women of her age, struggled against fundamental religion and the stultifying rules of society that kept women "in their place." She fought to find her freedom and to free her writing talent. Along with her life's story, Austin records an immense amount of history: of the feminist movement, of the part her family had in settling Illinois, and of the settling of the West.

One of the most fascinating parts of the book to me was Austin's account of the Women's Temperance movement, and her claim that it really started as a rebellion of American women, who claimed their right NOT to have children by a "drunkard".

She was one of the first to recognize Native American poetry as a high literary form and to record it for American society. She had to fight critics, who couldn't believe Native Americans wrote beautiful poetry (it didn't fit the "savage Indian" propaganda of the day), and accused her of writing the poetry.

In spite of her advanced ideas, Austin stuck with a bad marriage for years, trying to make a go of it. Her one child eventually had to be institutionalized, and all her life she struggled with the heartache of being rejected by her mother, who claimed that Mary's child's illness was a punishment of God.

To all who love literature and the West, this is an inspiring book of discovery.

Judy Romero-Oak
Taos

ALSO RECOMMENDED:

MARY DONOHO, NEW FIRST LADY OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

By Marian Meyer, foreword by Marc Simmons
Ancient City Press of Santa Fe, paper \$9.95, cloth \$19.95