

AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and
Northern New Mexico

Winter 1997

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La Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad de Arroyo Seco, New Mexico, circa 1900s.
Photograph courtesy the Larry Torres Archives.

THE LEGACY OF HISTORY

La Santísima Trinidad Parish: A Grand History, by Larry Torres

The Life Story of Teresina Bent Scheurich, by Ruth Fish

A Tradition of Use: Taos Furniture, by Guadalupe Tafoya

The Lost and Found Painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, by Melody Romancito



A PUBLICATION OF THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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 publications pertinent to the Taos and 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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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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EDITOR'S PAGE

Yes, it's late. My apologies for the delays, but they couldn't be helped.

In this issue are several wonderful stories documenting history in Taos County. Larry Torres wrote the first story, "La Santísima Trinidad Parish: A Grand History," which documents the early development of the villages of Arroyo Seco, Arroyo Hondo, Valdez, Las Colonias and San Cristóbal.

Also included in the story is the legend of the founding of Holy Trinity Parish, by Fr. Vincent Paul Chavez. He said he actually became aware of the legend through Larry Torres, and wrote down the story very informally, and that it was hastily written. Nevertheless, it makes for fascinating reading for the Taos County history buff.

Corina Santistevan gave me some articles written by Ruth Fish, and published in *The Taos Valley News* several decades hence. Though the writing style seems terribly formal compared to modern-day newspaper writing, the essence of the stories, the lives of prominent Taos women in history, remains fascinating. Included this month is "The Life Story of Teresina Bent Scheurich." Her memoir account of the death of her father, Governor Charles Bent, is absolutely harrowing.

Guadalupe Tafoya has written an article about the tradition of furniture making and wood work in Taos. "A tradition of use: Taos Furniture," touches on a subject near and dear to many of us here, our beautiful and functional furniture style.

Last year, while I was researching items for the Time Capsule section of *Ayer y Hoy*, I came across an article about a returned painting. Researching what happened to that painting inspired me to write "Persistence of Vision: The miraculous lost and found painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe."

My thanks to all the writers for this issue, and the uses of their photographs and slides. Thanks also to Vicente Martinez who supplied the excellent photograph on page 13, and for sending me in new directions for my article, and for all the history he keeps in his head.

Many thanks to Corina Santistevan for encouragement and helping me come up with material when my proposed story for this issue fell through.

Thanks also to the folks at Enchanted Business Solutions (EBS), and especially Rick Aragón for all his hardware and software help. I would also like to thank Susan Mihalic for her passionate and dispassionate proofreading abilities. I would also like to thank the spirit that haunts the EBS building (the old Yellow Front), for not messing with the electrical equipment on the days I was there.





Arroyo Seco Plaza at the turn of the century. All photos courtesy of the Larry Torres Archives.

La Santísima Trinidad Parish: A Grand History

by Larry Torres

Nestled among the crags of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northern New Mexico is the parish of The Most Holy Trinity. Even before its incorporation as a full parish in 1946, *La Parroquia de La Santísima Trinidad*, as it is known in the church rosters, was a place of great spirituality and tradition.

Local custom points to an oral tradition which recounts a beautiful story in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit themselves chose the site in the wilds of Arroyo Seco to be their own home in the early 1800s.

Natives will proudly say this is the reason that in all of the archdiocese, there is only one parish that bears so grand a name. Today, the parish encompasses the communities of Arroyo Seco, Arroyo Hondo, Valdez, San Cristóbal and Las Colonias.

ARROYO SECO

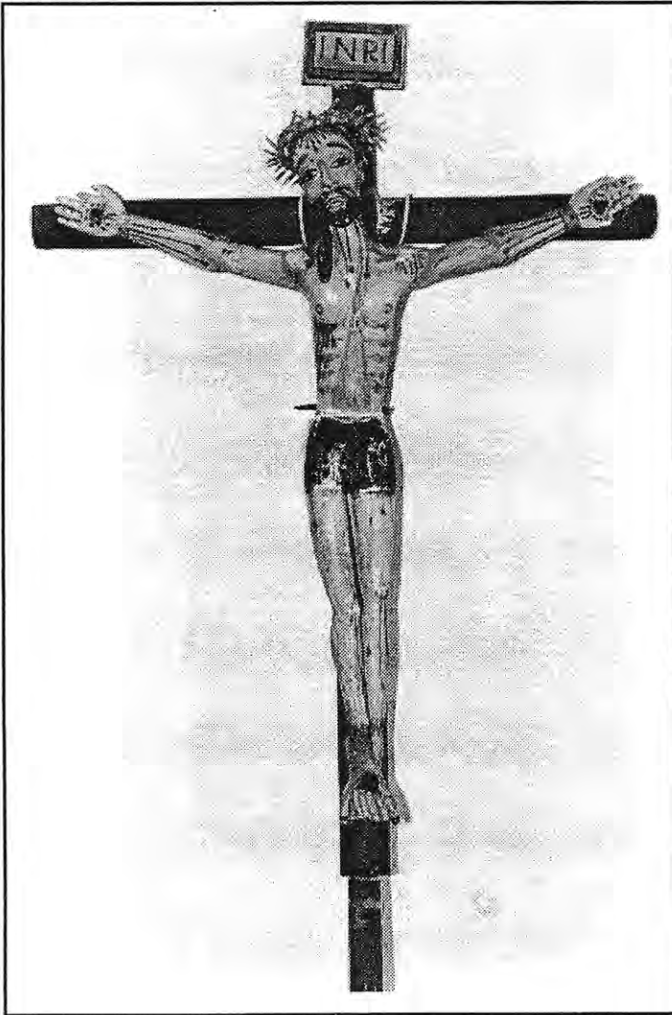
The village of Arroyo Seco, seven miles north of Taos, was begun when its people acquired rights to the

lands under a grant made by Joaquín Codallos y Rabal, dated October 7, 1745. As a site, it was first known to be recorded in a chronical dated 1716. It was deeded to General Lucero de Godoy, who never bothered to settle on the land.

The valley lands are nourished by the Río Lucero. For many years, the subsequent settlers of the valley thought the river was named for the general himself. Folk poets of the region, though, offer a different perspective.

In Spanish, the word *lucero* means "morning star." And indeed, the Río Lucero, which flows down from the mountains of Blue Lake, takes its source from the same location where the morning star (the sun) first peeps over the mountain ranges.

Settlement of the area began in 1804 when Cristóbal Martínez and José Gregorio Martínez, from Río Arriba County, planted crops there for the years before building their houses in 1807. According to the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, general land use began in 1815 when more people began to cultivate their lands, which they



Rafael Aragón crucifix now hanging in the new Arroyo Seco church.

irrigated from the Arroyo Seco and Río Lucero. By 1824 there was already Hispanic community established there.

Archdiocesan records show that the church building was already erected by 1834. The construction work was done by the families of *Los Hermanos Penitentes de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*. The altar screen, which dates to 1861, was the masterpiece painted by José de García Gonzales, who also executed the altar screens in Trampas, Rodarte, Llano San Juan, and Llano Largo.

The church property was officially transferred to the archdiocese and received by Archbishop Placide Louis Chapelle on November 15, 1894. The deed of transfer was signed by commissioners Seferino Martínez, Juan de Dios Martínez, and Jose Prudencio Cruz. The church building itself was renovated only once in 1915, under the guidance of Fr. Giraud, at which time it lost its flat roof and corner buttresses in favor of a steep gabled roof of corrugated tin and soffits. It was renovated in 1996.

VALDEZ

The valley of Valdez was originally known as San Antonio, named for the popular saint who was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195. The valley feast day of June 13 is marked by processions and Holy Mass. The church building had already been erected by 1833. There was, however, no bell to call the faithful to worship. Divine Providence sent help in the persons of Don Pedrito Domingez and his brother, Severino, from Embudo, who were skilled in the art of foundry. The people of the valley donated their jewelry and metal for the casting. The process was to fail three times. People thought the *brujas* of the valley had put a spell on the mold. On the eve of the fourth try at casting, a lady named Jesusita Valdes died and everyone went to the wake. On that night, a marvel of a church bell was finally cast quietly by the brothers. The bell was rung for the first time to announce the death of Jesusita and the bell was named in her honor.

In 1894, Don Antonio Valdes and Don Francisco García applied to the federal government for the establishment of a post office in that valley and the name was changed from San Antonio to Valdez because the post master general thought the name "San Antonio" was too long.

ARROYO HONDO

Seven miles to the northwest of Taos lies the village of Arroyo Hondo. Its founding dates back to 1815 when a land grant was made to 43 settlers. The town originally had three plazas: Arroyo Hondo de Abajo, Arroyo Hondo del Medio, and Arroyo Hondo de Arriba.

The chapel, located in the central plaza, was completed by 1833. It was the home church of the Arroyo Hondo *santero*, who executed the altar screen that is now preserved at the Taylor Museum of Colorado Springs. A replica of the original has been constructed for the church.

Another treasure of the chapel is a small *retablo* of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, who is the patron saint of the valley. *Nuestra Señora* bears many names across New Mexico, including *Maria*, *Concepción*, *Pilar*, *Guadalupe*, *Socorro* and *Dolores*. To the faithful who worship there, *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* is also known as *La Persingula*, in honor of the alms, called *persingulas* (*porción congrua*), which were given out at her feast day. Restoration on the chapel began in 1994, and once again, a mud tapia graces the courtyard.

LAS COLONIAS

Equidistant from the villages of Taos, Arroyo Seco and Arroyo Hondo, Las Colonias sits like a jewel in the middle of a vast triangle. As the name indicates, the tiny village was a colony settled outside the reaches of the older towns. It was entrusted to the protection of *El Santo Niño*. The Holy Child is honored in the images of both *El Santo Niño de Atocha* and *El Santo Niño de Praga*, which grace the sanctuary.

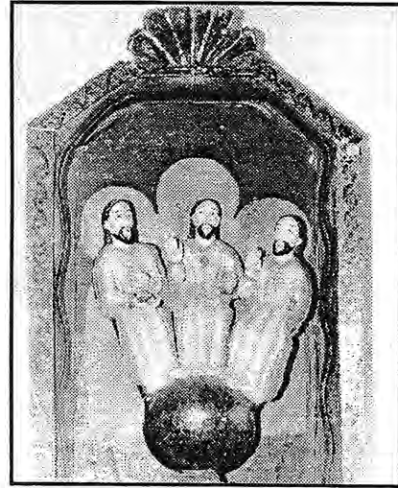
The bell that hangs in the tiny chapel once hung in the village school house (District 32) and before that, it belonged to the train which used to run near Taos from Santa Fe to Antonito, Colorado.

SAN CRISTÓBAL

Located some twelve miles due north of Taos is the valley of San Cristóbal. Originally settled by a family of immigrants who came in a covered wagon, the valley used to be known as Van De Veer. With the establishment of the chapel by the local Hispanic populace, though, the valley assumed the name of its new patron saint.

The apocryphal story of San Cristóbal makes him out to be a giant of a man who carried the Christ Child across a swollen river. He is believed to have said, "I feel like I've carried the weight of the whole world on my shoulders." To this, the Christ Child is said to have answered, "Not only did you carry the world, but also he who created it." In the springtime, when local *acequias* are replete with water, this legend is often quoted by parents to their children.

The late Father Elmer Niemeyer was the first parish priest who served the five valleys that comprise *La Santísima Trinidad* between 1946 and 1952. Fr. Vincent Chavez, the current priest in residence, continues to work among the faithful in the valleys of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.



Ancient statue of La Santísima Trinidad, for whom the parish is named.

The Legend of the Founding of Holy Trinity Parish

by Fr. Vincent Paul Chavez

There exists a legend here in the village as to why the parish is named *La Santísima Trinidad*. The original Arroyo Seco settlement was not in the area of the current plaza. It was much higher up, toward the foot of the mountain called *El Salto de las Aguas*, where the five waterfalls stream down the mountain.

Two families from Abiquiu were the original settlers in this part of the Taos Valley, which was a dangerous crossroads because of the Navajos and Utes who attacked the Taos Pueblo and Spanish settlements. The families lived in a large fortified complex at the foot of El Salto. The remains of three *torreones* can still be seen. The parents would leave the fortified compound during the day to clear the lower fields for cultivation with firm parental instructions to their children to stay within the safety of the walled *hacienda* and not go wandering off. The children, being children, left the protection of their home and wandered down the Río Lucero (Arroyo Seco Creek) where one day they encountered two strange men. Surprised to see men who appeared to be Spanish settlers, the children asked where the men lived, for they thought they were the only Spanish settlers in this part of the valley. The men responded that they lived further on down the river. When the children asked if the men got frightened, living so exposed in the open of the

- Continued on page 6

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lower valley, they responded that they were not frightened. And besides, the men said, a white dove lived in the tall trees near them and made loud cooing noises whenever anyone approached, thereby serving as a warning of approaching danger.

Departing, the children returned home and told their parents of their encounter with the two new neighbors. The parents, knowing they were the only Spanish settlers in this part of the valley, decided to investigate for themselves. The two families walked downriver. Soon, the children spotted the white dove in a tree top. They immediately recognized the bird the two men had told them about. As the bird flew from tree to tree the two families followed it. At last the bird landed in an open area on a large rock and then flew off. The people noticed the rock was somehow different — luminescent. They turned the rock over and discovered an ancient *bulto*, or wood carving, of *La Santísima Trinidad*. When the children spotted the *bulto* they immediately cried out, "Those are the two men we saw!"

The families immediately recognized that it was the actual Trinity, God the Father, Son and Spirit (the dove), who had appeared to the children. The current church is built over the site of the rock. The Arroyo Seco Plaza was built around the church, and the ancient *bulto* is enshrined in a side altar.



The present day Arroyo Seco Church.
Photo by Rick Romancito

The Life Story of Teresina Bent Scheurich, Daughter of Governor Charles Bent

by Ruth Fish

Teresina Street is the shortest thoroughfare in Taos. It is named for one of the town's most gracious ladies and leads from the northwest corner of the Taos Plaza gateway of the patio of the home where she lived for many years.

Teresina Bent Scheurich was the daughter of the first American governor of New Mexico, Charles Bent, and Maria Ignacia Jaramillo, a member of one of the state's oldest and most respected families. She was born in 1842 in the house now known as the Governor Bent House, where the tragedy that occurred on the morning of January 19, 1847, is the first episode of her life of which we have a record.

Her granddaughter, Teresa Berry, treasures a journal in which Teresina wrote the story, and since it belongs to the community, it may be of interest to quote the gruesome tale:

"I was only five years old at the time, but I remember every circumstance as if it were yesterday. It was early in the morning as we were all in bed. We were awakened by the noise of many people crowding into the *placita*. My father was at home from Santa Fe on a short visit and had refused a military escort. The night before he had been warned of danger and urged to fly, but though there were several horses in the corrals, he had declined. He had always treated everybody fairly and honestly, and he felt that all were friends and he would not believe that they would turn against him.

"Hearing the noise, he went to the door and tried to pacify the crowd yelling outside. In the adjoining room my mother, Mrs. Carson and Mrs. Boggs, who were with us, and we children, were trembling with fear, all except my brother, Alfredo. He was only ten years old, but had been reared on the frontier and he took down the shotgun and going to my father's side said, 'Papa, let us fight them.'

"While my father was parlaying with the mob, Mrs. Carson and Mrs. Boggs, aided by an Indian who was a

slave (*peon*), dug a hole through the adobe wall which separated our house from the next. They did it with only a poker and an old iron spoon; I still have the poker they used. We children were first pushed through the hole and then the women crawled through after us. My mother kept calling to my father to come also, but for quite a while he would not. When he did try to escape he had already been wounded and had been scalped alive. He crawled through the hole, holding his hand on top of his bleeding head. But it was too late. Some of the men came after him through the hole and others came over the roof of the house and down into the yard. They broke down the doors and rushed upon my father. He was shot many times and fell dead at our feet. The pleading and tears of my mother and the sobbing of us children had no power to soften the hearts of the enraged Indians and Mexicans.

"At first they were going to take the rest of us away as prisoners, but finally decided to leave us where we were. They ordered that no one should feed us and then left us alone in our great sorrow. We were without food and had no covering but our night clothing all that day and the next night. The body of our father remained on the floor in a pool of blood. We were naturally frightened, as we did not know how soon the miscreants might return to do us violence. At about three o'clock the next morning some of our Mexican friends stole up to the house and gave us food and clothing. That day, also, they took my father to bury him. A few days later we were allowed to go to their house. Mrs. Carson and Mrs. Boggs were sheltered by a friendly old Mexican, who took them to his home disguising them as squaws and set them to grinding corn on *metates* in his kitchen."

A reign of terror prevailed in northern New Mexico after the governor's assassination. At Turley's Mill, a few miles north of Taos, seven men were killed and one wounded. There was a riot in Mora. A train of freight wagons bound for Kansas City was waylaid and several traders were murdered.

Ceran St. Vrain, who was a business partner of Governor Bent, organized a band of volunteers, and under the command of Colonel Sterling Price, they rushed from Fort Marcy in Santa Fe and stormed the Pueblo church where the revolutionists had entrenched themselves, killing one hundred fifty, and losing seven of their own men. The rebel leaders who survived were tried in the March term of court and sentenced to death by Judge Carlos Baubien. There were no further uprisings, and the settling of territorial problems shifted to Santa Fe and other parts of the state. Of these years and the ones that preceded Teresina's birth, Captain Albert Pike, Josiah Gregg, Lieutenant George Ruxton and Dick Wooten, Taos County's intrepid sheriff, all friends of the Bent family, have written, as R. E. Twitchell and Blanche



Teresina Bent Scheurich

Grant have done in later years.

After the governor's death, Kit Carson, who was the husband of Teresina's favorite aunt, Josefita, and Captain St. Vrain assumed the guardianship of the three Bent children, Alfredo, Estefana and Teresina. The Taos holdings in the partnership in the Vermejo Ranch and the Colorado trading post had made Charles Bent a wealthy man, and his family was able to live in comfort, maintain their home and keep their servants, who were Indian slaves. Their chief concern was in the insecurity they felt because of the hatred of the relatives and friends of the slain revolutionists, who had sworn vengeance upon the family. For many years, when the children left home, they were accompanied by Kit Carson, Captain St. Vrain or an escort provided by them.

The Carson door was always open to neighbors—Indian, Spanish and Anglo—and to it also came practically every representative of the Catholic clergy, including

A tradition of use: Taos Furniture

by Guadalupe Tafoya

From the early Spanish colonial period to the present, furniture making and woodworking in Taos County have experienced many phases in style, popularity and usage.

Since the early colonization of New Mexico, skilled woodworkers were active in manufacturing household furniture and architectural elements. Although archival evidence is practically nonexistent, archaeological evidence confirms that there were skilled carpenters in the pre-revolt period (1598-1680).

Carpenters and other skilled persons and equipment were so highly valued that they were listed in post-revolt censuses and inventories of the Spanish government of the new colony. Sixteenth century carpentry equipment was imported to northern New Mexico by way of boat and the Camino Real all the way from Spain.

Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, tools were made locally. Carpenters used hand-forged iron tools such as the *seruche* (saw), *capillo* (plane), *barena* (auger), *azueta* (adze), *escoplas* (chisels) and *navajas* (carving knives). As trade routes developed between the eastern and western United States, so did the use of new and different equipment, like table saws, routers, sanders, planers, and so on, but the carving knife is still the heart of this traditional art form.

Contrary to reports that New Mexican homes were not furnished, these homes had specific articles of furniture that were utilitarian and specific to the time, space and material. Important home furnishings included *repisas*, chests, *bancos*, *armarios*, *trasteros*, chairs, stools, tables, and in the latter part of the 19th century, day beds (the precursors of the Taos day bed, which became important later, in the middle of this century). Although many scholars have researched the history of Taos Furniture and have written their findings in scholarly and popular books, my experience with woodworking and woodworkers in Taos County is life-long. A large portion of this research is based on the oral history given by the woodworkers themselves, and on documents they were generous enough to share with me.

From the beginning, ponderosa pine, or native pine, was the choice for the carpenters because it was basically the only wood available. It was soft and easy to carve, but it was also not a strong wood to use, so the carpenters made heavy furniture pieces with thick frames to compensate for the weakness of the wood.

In Taos County, the early Spanish settlers and the Pueblo people adapted and developed an interesting type

of furniture that reflected the styles brought from Spain, modified in character and design by the native craftsmen.

The design elements common to Spanish colonial furniture were based on the pieces imported from Spain and Mexico. Motifs included Spanish, Moresque, Mozarabe and Mexican baroque. These furniture pieces were transported by wagon train from Mexico City and from St. Louis. Tables with roped legs and wrought iron decorations became models for reproduction, as did the chairs with their hide seats and ornamentation. Native Pueblo craftsmen added geometric and step designs that resembled or represented elements from their culture.

During this time, Taos County furniture making, architectural construction and woodworking reflected the act of survival, not economics. They were functional crafts, supplying only the necessary pieces needed for home furnishings, house building, protection and finally, coffins, which could only be made as crude or as fine as the talent of the craftsman permitted.

Economics in this area was cashless in the past. This was not necessarily a problem because a bartering system was in place and it worked fairly well. Things changed dramatically when New Mexico became a state in 1912. Taos County had to accept many changes, especially economic — problems we are still grappling with today.

Among the changes were use of land, language, water and money. There wasn't any money. This was especially true during the early part of the 20th century. In fact, the United States was facing the Great Depression, and it had new states and new citizens to contend with.

In 1940 George I. Sanchez wrote a book titled *Forgotten People*. It is easy, as a native New Mexican, to be saddened by the status and plight of the *Nuevo Mexicano*. Even today, the situation Sanchez described flourishes:

Maybe somehow, the forgotten people of my homeland would be remembered and redeemed. Maybe as the nation grew more affluent, and wiser, it would roll back the pages of history and pay the long overdue debt it incurred when it forced itself on my people. I had hopes, though very slim ones, that at the very least, a repentant nation would help us lift ourselves by our bootstraps. Instead, it took away our boots! The Spanish-American of New Mexico was left at the mercy of waves of exploiters: merchants, cattle barons, land grabbers, venal politicians . . . We were not given schools, so we remained ignorant of the new way of life that had been ruthlessly thrust upon us. Some of us did obtain an education, no thanks to the federal government. Of them, only a few had genuine concern for the poor *paisano* . . .



Taos day bed by Martinez y Salazar, 1940.

The New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt sort of raised people's hopes in that there were projects instituted to help the economically depressed across the United States. The National Youth Administration (NYA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), federal arts projects and other related federal agencies were designed to help the poor and we were the poorest of the poor. But the New Deal did not last long enough. Washington turned its eyes to foreign parts. To wheedle and cajole allies into our struggles in Europe and Asia. For many of us, things are better than they once were. We eat better, we dress better, and we speak English. This is a good life, but mine are still forgotten people. *Paso por aqui.*

Taosenos were hardy survivors able to marginally live off what little fat the land produced. In place was production in tin crafts, weaving, blacksmithing, leather work, pottery making, and woodworking, which included crafting architectural elements, *santos* and furniture.

The NYA, CCC and WPA set up training workshops to teach local craftsmen how to tinsmith, woodwork, weave, and create different types of artwork. These programs were also instrumental in the construction of build-

ings, dams, roads and numerous other works. These federal agencies set up vocational workshops in El Rito, Española and Taos. The first wave of Taos County furniture was marketed to the outside world.

The New Deal did not last. Washington turned to Europe as it entered the Second World War. Resources were pulled and young New Mexicans, Native Americans and Hispanics were drafted by the hundreds into the armed forces. As a result, although wood working did not die out, the craft went into hibernation. Some of the older, more skilled craftsmen stayed in Taos, but many left to work in the big production areas near the military bases to support the war effort.

When these men returned after the end of World War II the WPA and other federal agencies helped veterans make the transition from military to civilian life. The original vocational schools became revitalized by their return. A combination of Native American, Hispanic and Anglo instructors were hired to train the homecoming veterans in vocational skills like auto mechanics and engineering. Cabinet making was now a viable skill to have. Woodworking took on a new and important role in the New Mexican's lifestyle. It was still a craft, a utilitarian art form in which style and design reflected the native esthetic. The linear style was still colonial, as was the joinery, but the carved designs had changed to something totally



Carved chest by Pete Tafoya, 1955.

New Mexican, totally Taos.

Shell designs, rosettes, bullets, gauges, steps, rampant and retrograde lions, lightning and scallops could now be traced to a specific instructor, geographical area or woodworking school. New pieces of furniture were also making appearances. Bookcases, coffee tables, beds, the ever popular Taos day bed, buffets, typewriter desks, filing cabinets, bedroom sets, dining room sets, living room sets, office furniture for home and public buildings – a second wave of marketable woodwork was introduced to the world.

The Korean Conflict again took a huge number of young New Mexicans from Taos. Once again, the Taos craft world took a rest while people were forced to deal with the world at large.

During the mid-1950s, veterans returned – and a new culture was checking out quaint little Taos. The famous Taos ambiance purported by the original Taos Society of Artists was a drawing card. Once again, civilian training and jobs were needed. Under the G.I. Bill, training continued. This time the returning young men

and women were more experienced with woodworking, as they had taken vocational training at the secondary school level, with nearly the same instructors. Names like Max Luna, Arsenio Romo, Emilio Martinez, Bryce Sewell, A. D. Williams, Arturo Martinez, and Ted Egri are repeated again and again as great numbers of students, today successful woodworkers, credit their teachers. Over three hundred people became classified woodworkers. To many, it was a business that supplemented the family income. These people continued working, furnishing their churches and homes. The outside world recognized the quality and style by purchasing Taos pieces. Thus, many believed that this was a period of revival.

But to us, the tradition of woodworking never died out. The craft was just changing to fit the demands of the outside world.

In 1970, the Community Acts Program, a federally funded project headed by David Chavez, started El Mercado. Besides training people in various arts and crafts, El Mercado trained artisans to market their work. This was difficult because a marketing philosophy had never been developed or taught along with the basic skills. Marketing was also difficult because the artists were more interested in creating than in the business of selling. Marketing was not usually part of the artistic nature. It was a whole new ball game. El Mercado was an outlet that made and sold woodwork and weaving pieces. Men and women involved with El Mercado traveled to other areas and marketed their products.

With this project, another level of wood crafting and design began to take place. The colonial style and its versions from the early part of the century maintained their popularity, but the time for new ideas and designs was at hand. The artisans began to experiment, and a whole new range of ideas began to emerge.

Furniture making is still a viable way to help Taos artisans. Muebles de Taos was an organization that helped men released from the penitentiary make the transition from incarceration to civilian life. Some of these men continued to show their work at the Spanish Market in Santa Fe and to be exhibited in museums after the program was over.

Today many men who started careers in the 1940s and 1950s are still actively crafting furniture. They have shown at the Spanish Market and in many cases, in galleries and museums. Many are recognized for their contribution to the craft and its history. The woodworking craftsman has grown into an artist, able to manipulate wood to conform to any style, shape and design. From its humble beginning, Taos furniture has come a long way. It is no longer a standard utilitarian piece of furniture in a home. It has become a luxurious artwork designed to enhance Southwestern American homes.

Persistence of vision

THE MIRACULOUS

LOST AND FOUND PAINTING OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

by Melody Romancito

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Taos, on Camino de la Placitas, one block from the plaza, is a relatively new structure, built in 1962. In the *reredo*, or altar screen, there is a painting of the church's namesake, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, which dates back to an earlier time. Despite being disregarded and given away, surviving a fire and being shut away in a dark storeroom, the radiant image of the Virgin has managed to return time and again.

The image is typical of most depictions of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. As it is documented in great detail by the church, an image of the Virgin was miraculously imprinted on Juan Diego's *tilma*, a rough cloak woven of *ayate*, a cactus fiber, in 1531. The cloak is "enthroned above the main altar in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City."¹

Measuring approximately six feet by three and a half feet, the painting shows the radiant figure of the Virgin, much as she is described to have appeared before the Indian Juan Diego on a hilltop near Mexico City. Robed in rose with a blue mantle sprinkled with stars, the figure is surrounded by a halo of flames.

In the corners of the canvas, the four-part narrative of Juan Diego's vision is depicted in four oval vignettes, surrounding the fifth appearance, also in an oval. The Virgin wears a red gown and a blue cloak sprinkled with stars, and she is surrounded by the characteristic radiance of flames. At her feet are an angel and a crescent moon. All this is perched on an orb surrounded by a serpent with an egg in its mouth. The painting is signed by José Santiago, "in the studio of Cayentano Barela," and dated 1887.²

According to Guadalupe Tafoya, former curator at the Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos, the painting probably came from Mexico during the heyday of Mexican master painter studios. The canvas was most likely rolled up and carried by donkey or oxen-drawn wagon up the old Camino Real, where it finally arrived in Taos. It was then unrolled and restretched before being presented to the church.

Religious images in the Spanish New World are imbued with special significance for many reasons.

"In New Mexico, art was religious in purpose and not



The painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe,
by José Santiago, 1887.

aesthetic, so the *santero's* goal was to create an instrument of holiness and power rather than an artifact for detached contemplation. Consequently, the connection between the image and the actual saint was a matter of utmost importance. The artifact is intrinsically holy both because of what may be done with it (prayer) and because it was made by a holy *santero* working within a holy tradition."³

Judging by the list of pastors for the parish, the painting was most likely given to the church while Rev. José

Valezky was pastor.⁴ It was hung in the place of honor, high on the wall behind the altar until the old church was torn down in 1911 by the Right Reverend Joseph Giraud and a new church was built in the French style to replace the old structure.

With Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy and Fr. Giraud came the influence of the French to northern New Mexico. To these men, educated in European seminaries where the age of the rational Enlightenment was fully realized, the mind-set of the New Mexican Catholic, especially the Penitente Brotherhood, must have seemed like a reversion to the Dark Ages.⁵

The French clergy sought to abolish much of what had been a part of religious life in northern New Mexico since early Spanish colonial days. This included the *Penitente* Brotherhood, which Bishop Lamy tried unsuccessfully to excommunicate. Along with this climate of reproof for all things local came a disregard for *santos*, vernacular architecture and long-cherished traditions.

At the time of the razing of the old church in 1911, the workmen contracted to pull it down voiced concern for the sacred paintings in the nave. Fr. Giraud gave Savino Espinosa, one of the workmen, and incidentally, a *mayordomo* of the church, permission to scale the wall and attempt to save it. When the rescue was a success, Fr. Giraud gave Espinosa the painting.

The painting then was passed on to Savino Espinosa's daughter, Emilia Espinosa, who eventually became church sacristen. She returned it to the church in winter of 1952. In an article about the painting's return in *The Taos News*, she said that several times she had been offered large sums of money for the painting, but she had refused to sell.

After the painting's return, Father Raymond Patrick Quinn, pastor from 1950 to 1954, consulted with Bishop Edward Vincent Byrne of Santa Fe and made arrangements to hang the painting over the main altar.⁶

In an action that may have seemed like disregard at the time, it was removed from the nave sometime before the devastating fire in June of 1961. According to the church's museum curator, Dolly Mondragon, the painting was not located again until sometime in the mid-1970s, where it was found in an old storeroom in the nearby convent.

Although the painting escaped being burned in the fire, little else escaped the flames. A portion of the newspaper story from the June 29, 1961 issue follows:

The church fire was noticed at 11 a.m. Saturday with smoke pouring out of the bell tower. Within minutes, flames had appeared in the smoke.

Firemen played their water on the bell tower and no one thought the blaze serious enough to remove articles within the church.

Within a half hour every one realized how treacherous the fire was.

It was moving north on the inside of the roof. Attempts to halt the advancing flames failed because of the thick, large sheets of metal covering on the roof.

Firemen and church members managed to rescue vestments, the Blessed Sacrament, some pews and other articles. A canvas was placed over the new church organ and it went though the fire apparently undamaged, except for some scorched places.

The fire burned for nearly two hours before firemen brought it under control.

The same tin roof that hid the fire apparently reduced the danger to adjoining business buildings, although the roofs of those structures were kept wet.

A stiff wind was blowing out of the west, carrying smoke across the Plaza, but few, if any sparks could escape the tin roof.

Firemen poured tons of water on the structure but it had little effect on the burning roof. About an hour and a half after the fire started, the roof began to cave in and nearly all had fallen into the church by the time the fire was put out.⁷

Dedicated December 12, 1962, during the *Fiesta De Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, the new church regained the grace and style of its people through the design by architects McHugh, Hooker, Kidder and Associates of Santa Fe. Eduardo Ortiz of Santa Fe, employed by the contractors, was in charge of the building program, under the supervision of Hugh Holland.

Architect John McHugh wrote:

After the basic scheme was decided upon, there remained the problem of making this non-traditional building fit into the landscape and the town scape of the world-famous community of Taos. Here economics came to our help. The council decided to build the church of adobe, and the parishioners said they would donate the adobes. Then, the Taos Pueblo Indians agreed to donate the trees for vigas and the saplings for latillas. We hoped thus to have a modern church of vigorous and fresh design using traditional materials in new ways — not for the purpose of being "different" but for the purpose of restoring the church building to its ancient liturgical expression and integrity.⁸

In the spirit of reclamation that followed, in 1981, Roberto Lavadie was commissioned by the church to create a new reredo. Lavadie said the painting was in good condition, having been to a fine art restorationist in Santa Fe. He was able to incorporate the old painting, frame and all, into the screen. He said that it was a spiritual experience to be part of the process that brought



Top row, from left: Enrique Gonzales, Justin McCarthy, Rev. Joseph Giraud, Peter M. Dolan, Savino Espinosa. Bottom row, from left: José Montaner y Grive, Mercedes (Scheurich) Ellis, Lena Scheurich, Mary Liebert Dolan, Mariquita Martinez Montaner. Photograph taken early 1900. Courtesy of Vicente Martinez.

the painting back to its place of honor.

What is miraculous about this story is that somehow, time and circumstances threatened to remove the painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and somehow, she persisted.

FOOTNOTES:

1. *Souvenir Brochure, Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, Taos, New Mexico*, (Taos, New Mexico, 1962), p. 34.

2. "Old Painting Returned to Church," *El Crepusculo*,

(February 12, 1953), p. 1.

3. Thomas J. Steele, S.J., *Santos and Saints, The Religious Folk Art of Hispanic New Mexico*, 3rd ed. (Santa Fe, New Mexico, Ancient City Press, 1994).

4. *Our Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Taos, New Mexico*, (New York, 1976), p. 26.

5. Steele, p. 93.

6. "Old Painting . . ."

7. "Two Boys Blamed for Church Fire," *The Taos News*, June 29, 1961, p. 1.

8. *Souvenir Brochure*, p. 7.

OTHER SOURCES:

Beach, Rev. Robert M. *Ayer y Hoy — Taos, New Mexico* (Saint Clement's Church, Las Lunas, New Mexico, 1976).

E. Boyd, *New Mexico Santos, Religious Images in the Spanish New World*, 2nd ed. (Santa Fe, New Mexico, Museum of New Mexico Press, 1995).

— Continued from page 8

Bishop Lamy, a family friend, every renowned writer and traveler and army officer who came to New Mexico. Here little Teresina met people from every walk of life. Having inherited her father's courtesy and understanding, she liked to meet them, even as a child, and possessed poise and sagacity far beyond her years. The problem of her education was beginning to trouble her elders when Bishop Lamy established the Academy of the Sisters of Loretto in Santa Fe in 1852 and Teresina and Estefana were enrolled as pupils.

They rode their own horses back and forth to Santa Fe, going over the old road, which wound over U.S. Hill and through Peñasco, with Kit Carson or St. Vrain always with them. They could seldom come home for Christmas vacation because of the cold, and they spent only summers in Taos until they were graduated. Teresina was especially interested in music and was an accomplished pianist when she left the academy. She also liked literature and excelled in penmanship and needlework.

When she was sixteen she was considered one of the beauties of the territory. She was petite and slender; her hair was auburn, her eyes brown, her skin smooth and fair. Her bearing was stately, and as a result *beaux* were never lacking in Santa Fe, at home or in Las Animas or the Greenhorn Mountain country in Colorado, where the sisters often went (riding on horseback) to visit friends. Although she lived in an adobe house far from the accredited centers of social activity, her social life reads like a Victorian novel. She liked to dance and was always asked to play the piano and sing at the parties she attended. Teresina was always beautifully dressed. Her son, Charles, recalling old times in a recent letter, says, "Placida used to love to sit and tell us children about the parties mother attended and how beautiful her dear Aristocrata looked. I can still see the heavy silk dresses she wore. They could nearly stand alone they were so thick, and had yards and yards enough in them to make several modern dresses."

When she was about seventeen she met Aloys Scheurich.

Mr. Scheurich had been born in Germany and came to America in his early youth, bringing only a treasured Stradivarius violin to remind him of his Homeland. He remained in New York only a short time before going to St. Louis, where he became intrigued by the tales of traders who drove their lumbering ox-wagons back and forth over the Santa Fe Trail. He bought himself a freight outfit and came to Santa Fe and on to Taos. When he met Teresina Bent, he made his headquarters here. Their mutual interest in music and their piano and violin duets soon developed into a romantic attachment, and in 1860 they were married.

He continued his trading, and they prospered well. In 1865 they bought the home on Teresina Street, the second oldest house in Taos which is still filled with mementos of their happy life together. Ultimately, the house expanded to twenty-nine rooms to house the family and their servants. In the patio Teresina planted trees, and she sent to St. Louis for packaged flower seeds, the first packaged seeds ever seen in Taos. She loved the Varas de San Jose (hollyhocks) and sent for gorgeous double ones in every shade to share with her friends. In this way, she brought to the village the lovely flowers that grace all Taos gardens and add bright splotches of color to the summer landscape.

In the construction of the house, the comfort and convenience of the family were considered and there was one large apartment set aside for music. In 1868 a rosewood grand piano was brought from St. Louis in one of Mr. Scheurich's ox wagons. There was a special cabinet for the precious violin, and in later years there was a harp for their daughter, Lena. Many a leisure hour was spent playing duets and trios. Mr. Scheurich composed and Teresina and her daughter delighted to perform his pieces.

The shops of St. Louis yielded marble-topped black walnut bedroom suites, Brussels carpets, lace curtains, portieres of Baghdad tapestry, horsehair sofas and marquetry tables, and all the ornate bric-a-brac of the period. Many of these objects are owned by Tessie Berry and are still in the old house. Among them are the violin and the piano, Teresina's dowry chest which had been Governor Bent's, and the rawhide-covered trunk he brought from the east, together with Kit Carson's desk and mirror. The old chest holds her wedding dress of stiff white satin, delicately brocaded.

The thrills and anxieties of the old days were gone, and Teresina, free of the fear and anxiety that had followed her before, was able to enjoy the domestic pleasures of her home; take her place in the society as one of its cultural leaders; give to the church all she possessed.

She had nine children. They were all born in Taos, except Lena who arrived on the plains of Colorado in a covered wagon on a bed of buffalo skins, with only her mother's Indian servant for an attendant, while the Scheurichs were making a trip to Las Animas.

— Continued on page 16



TAOS TIME CAPSULE



In January 1934, a winter suit sold for \$12 and up at Perez Tailor Shop.

At the movie theater was John Wayne in "The Big Stampede," and Wallace Beery in "Viva Villa."

A dime could buy you a toothbrush from the Taos Variety Store.

THANK YOU

The four parking meters that were recently installed in front of the Taos Post Office building on Armory Place have disappeared.

— Spud Johnson, *The Horse Fly*, November 19, 1959

THE NEW KACHINA LODGE IS NOW OPEN

The new Kachina Lodge and Motel has opened for business with units being rented and the Zuni cocktail lounge and bar is now open. The dining room is scheduled for an opening Dec. 5.

— *The Taos News*, Dec. 1, 1960

"VAYA CON DIOS" is the name chosen for our PARISH VOICE. Let this publication be more than just a bulletin, let it be a real part of our parish life everyday. When you leave from church to your home on Sunday, "Go with God." . . . Permit VAYA CON DIOS to tell you and remind you everyday just where you are to GO WITH GOD . . .

— January, 1968, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church bulletin

TAOS SIDEWALKS WILL MEANDER

Mayor Phil Lovato has appointed a special committee, approved by the Town Council . . . to spearhead a drive to construct sidewalks on Taos' main downtown streets. Merle "Butch" Packard, Rumaldo Garcia and Kurt Ziebarth were appointed to the committee last week and will begin working with Tierra Engineering Consultants, Inc., planners for the project. . . .

"It will be a real Taos sidewalk," Lovato said. The plan is to allow the walkway to wander a bit, going around trees, for example, and following the contour of the land as much as possible.

"It won't be your typical city sidewalk," he added.

— *The Taos News*, Jan. 3, 1980

PSYCHEDELIC PIONEER ON SPEAKER'S CURCUIT

LSD advocate and former Harvard professor Timothy Leary is due in Taos today to psyche the town out of its winter doldrums.

He will speak at 8 p.m. tonight (Feb. 7) at Taos Community Auditorium.

— *The Taos News*, Feb. 7, 1980

TURN ON JUICE

The growth of Taos was heralded symbolically last week when the town turned on traffic lights at Placitas and Armory Streets, where they meet State Highway 68.

— *The Taos News*, Dec. 15, 1983

FIRE LEVELS SHEEPSKIN SHOWROOM

Federal investigators started sifting through the ashes this week at Overland Sheepskin Company, the scene of one of the biggest fires in Taos County history. . . .

A raging fire swept through the showroom late Sunday night and early Monday morning causing an estimated \$1.5 million in damage.

— *The Taos News*, Dec 13, 1984

Banner headlines:

SCHOOL COOKS THREATEN TO STRIKE

Cafeteria workers at Taos Junior High have threatened to strike if broken kitchen equipment is not fixed over the weekend.

Officials say they will be fired if they walk out.

— *The Taos News*, Dec. 27, 1984

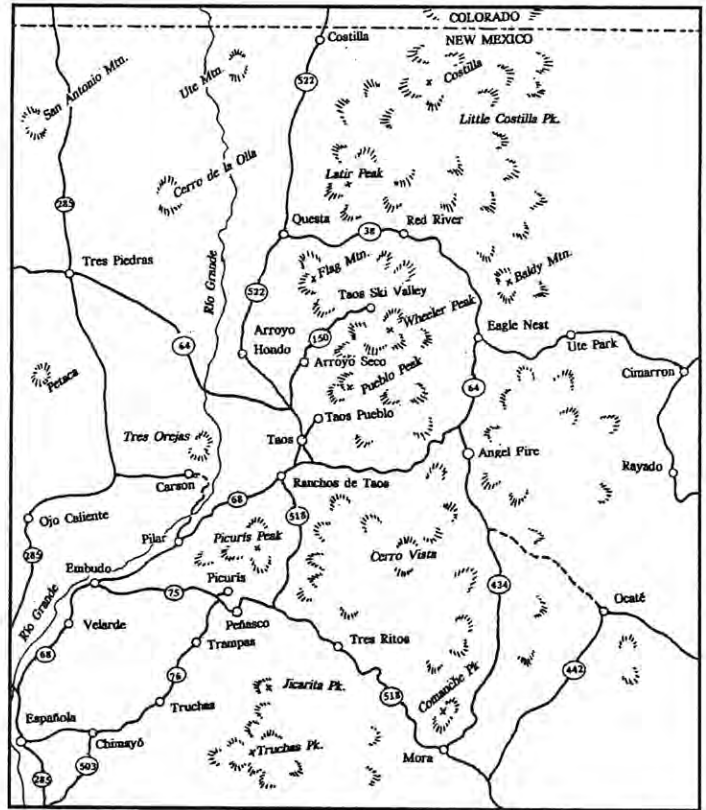
THE CHECK'S IN THE MAIL

— 79.3 million in checks to be exact.

The Federal Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) on Friday (Nov. 30) closed the Santa Fe-based First American Savings and Loan, including its Taos branch, after failing to find a buyer for the ailing financial institution, according to Joanie Christenson, a spokesperson for RTC.

— *The Taos News*, Dec. 6, 1990

The last years of Teresina's life were peaceful and happy. With her husband, she traveled to various parts of the United States and made a trip to Mexico City. One of the souvenirs of the Mexican trip is the *bulto* of St. Anthony that now belongs to the Loma chapel. St. Anthony was the patron saint of the family and Teresina had the crude wooden figure, which was already very old, packed out of Mexico on a burro, as a gift for the little church that had been a favorite sanctum of both her families. Mr. Scheurich died in 1908 and Teresina in 1920, leaving the brilliant heritage of a fine character and an unusually interesting personality to her children and her children's children.



Map of Taos County by Andy Lindquist



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TO: