



COMMEMORATING
the
SOLEMN REDEDICATION
of
OLD SAN MIGUEL MISSION
SOCORRO, NEW MEXICO
MAY 19, 1974

DEDICATED TO:
Most Reverend Robert Fortune Sanchez
Tenth Archbishop of Santa Fe
Native Son of Old San Miguel Mission
Socorro, New Mexico
Ordained Archbishop: July 25, 1974

In Principio . . .

The magnetic and cultural force of the Rio Grande became the drawing power for explorers, seekers of fortune, traders and hunters very early in the life of these UNITED STATES. Long before Columbus discovered America and long before the West was opened to travelers, already the wealth and influence of this easy flowing river was an actual fact. The Rio Grande wound its way through forest areas, through mountainous regions, along sandy shores, verdant fields, flowing by small clusters of populations of varied life and cultures. The people in these communities lived and worked to develop for themselves a unique and simple way of life imbued with a culture that reverberated down through the centuries and gathering influential momentum under the greatest teacher of them all, nature.

It is no wonder then that in the latter part of the 16th century one would find another contingent bent on exploration compelled to stop in order to make an estimate of its almost precarious situation. The provisions were running low. It was on the east side of the Rio Grande the expedition had stopped. Apprehension gave way to pauses of surprises and joy when help and assistance came forthly and unexpectedly. Such was the case of Don Juan de Onate the leader of this expedition. He had in his company two Franciscan Padres, Fray Salazar and Fray Martinez. This was all in the year of 1598 in month of May.

Leaving the two Padres behind, Don Juan de Onate and his forces proceeded northward to continue exploring the area. On the East bank of the Rio Grande where the expedition had stopped was a small settlement of Piro Indians called Toypana. The Padres learned that on the West bank was a larger settlement of Piro Indians called Pilabo. This was as well the Tribal Headquarters. Pilabo then was the place to get to and remain there as missionaries. Don Juan de Onate had given the name Socorro to the place where he stopped out of gratitude for favors received from the Indians who had given assistance in time of need.

The two Padres with the help of guides proceeded to cross the river to Pilabo to become the first white men to take residence and pursue the work

of evangelization in what is known today as the city of Socorro. History informs us that Socorro is built over the settlement of Pilabo. Buried ruins have attested to this historical assessment.

The Padres were anxious to impress the Indians with the ceremony of the Mass and so obtained the use of a small adobe hut with very thick walls. They fell in favor with the Indian Chief who gave them permission to use the small adobe hut for divine services at the site of their burial grounds . . . a sacred area for the Indians. It was to serve their purpose for spiritual services and exercises so common to missionaries. One of the walls of this hut, the South wall is part of the very same wall forming that part of the present church edifice that is existing today. Father Stanley in his book "Socorro the Oasis" attests to this particular thus: "This makes Socorro Mission the oldest in the United States since the hut was already there for the use of the Friars and was turned over to them by the Head chief, and thus became the original little chapel."

We must note in passing that the element of fortune, as far as the two Padres were concerned in their work of evangelization, was the simple fact that out of fear of the enemy Tribes to the north, the Piro Indians found safety by living close together plus the additional factor of the possible Spanish influence. This deterrent element was far the time being somewhat overwhelming to the Apaches at least. The regnum of peace then was advantageous to the Padres in the persuasion of their task to preach and teach and gain souls for God.

The second era in the establishment of Christianity in Pilabo finds its inception with Padre Alfonso Benavides. His work became renowned enough to merit for him the title of APOSTLE OF SOCORRO. He renamed the settlement of Pilabo "Nuestra Senora de Perpetua Socorro, our Lady of Perpetual Help". George Kubler in his work "Religious Architecture of New Mexico" wherein he is very explicit in his recordings states: "The possibility exists that the present church at Socorro, now dedicated to San Miguel, is substantially the same as that noted by Benavides in 1630 at the pueblo of Pilabo, under the advocacy of Nuestra Senora del Socorro, which Hodge claims was built by Garcia de San Francisco y Zuniga". In his period the construction of a new church was iritated; but with this difference, the old was retained where it was not necessary to redo. He rather enlarged upon what was already there. He trained his laborers and the In-

dians gave of all they had, for the adobe walls were of extraordinary thickness and the high vigas and their corbel supports demanded much labor and skill. An idea of the thickness of the walls may be seen near the entrance to the present Sacristy. It was all to be very demanding work and certainly the accomplished mission did test the ability of the workers.

The Indians showed an eagerness to learn how to make adobes that were strong and lasting, for thick walls that would stand anything. Their extraordinary skill was well attested to in the making and shaping of the large vigas and supporting corbels. One may see as he enters the nave of the present church and over the sanctuary how the open coiling gave credence to the work of building education in the time of Padre Benavides and thereafter no doubt by Padre Zuniga. Under such leadership and the astute craftsmanship of the Indians was built a church in the honor of God of no mean significance. Not only were they solicitous about the exterior but began to labor and plan to adorn the interior to compare with the beautiful churches of Spain and Mexico. The interior portion relating to the sanctuary, the altar rail, the Tabernacle, the Altar of Sacrifice, should be of special richness and beauty commensurate with the dignity due our Redeeming God. It was to be an altar rail of pure silver, then the Tabernacle and sacred vessels of no lesser beauty and design. The mines close by were producing this silver and therefore all they needed was the tireless efforts and labor and craftsmanship of the workers. The Indians proved themselves capable of the tasks demanded of them. Noted from the New Mexico Geological Society, 14th Field Conference, the following interesting bit: "The attention of the Spaniards was on the more heavily populated and better watered upper Rio Grande Valley. With the extension of the Franciscan mission program, however, it was not long until the Piro groups received Padres and churches. Fray Benavides, the greatest of the early leaders of the Franciscan order in New Mexico, says of the mission established in what is now Socorro County:

"Though this (Piro) is the first province in the kingdom, it was the last in its conversion. God pleased that its hour should come; and in the year one thousand six hundred and twenty six, being custodian of these missions, I dedicated myself to the Lord in the conversion of these souls, dedicating their chief pueblo to the most Holy Virgin of Socorro. And so in

this first year, our Lord was pleased to favor me in such wise that all became baptised and are very good Christians. And I have found in this province three monasteries and churches; the one in the Pueblo of Senecu dedicated to San Antonio de Padua; another in the Pueblo of Pilabo dedicated to the Virgin of Socorro; the other in the Pueblo of Sevilleta dedicated to San Luis, Obispo, of my Order."

The rebellion of 1680 suddenly ended the tremendous progress made by the missionaries when the Piro Indians joined the Spaniards in their retreat southwards. The Piro Indians did not join up with the rebellious tribes because they did not trust them due to the trouble they had had with them in the past. Immediately before this retreat the missionaries busied themselves dismantling the communion rails which they buried along with other valuables they could not take away with them. A map was supposed to have been made by the Pastor, who hoped the revolt would be shortlived, dig up the buried treasure according to the map, and continue where they had left off. It was not to be. These treasures have never been found.

George Kubler in his book, "RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE OF NEW MEXICO" states: "In 1692, General de Vargas entered Socorro on December 9th. His detailed description of the church once again allows the possible identification of an extant structure with pre-Rebellion fabric. According to the General, the walls of the church had fallen but enough of them were still standing for him to determine that they had been originally two and one half yards, seven and one half feet in thickness. This account is complemented by that of Escalante, also in 1692, "walls were still standing, except the roof, which had been burned." Bishop Tameron, who visited New Mexico in 1760 gives evidence to prove that the site remained desolate for many years—

Tameron knew that the pueblo had been destroyed in the Revolt of the preceding century, and he could see only the walls of the church and some peach trees. The Spaniards and the Piro Indians fled to a place below El Paso to build a new Socorro, a new church for Socorro del Sur (Socorro of the South).

After about one hundred years new settlers arrived in Socorro del Norte from Spain and Mexico and with much arduous labor a new spiritual center was erected by rebuilding the parts of the walls

which had fallen, adding a new roof; not at all destroying the historical aspect of the old church. They added to what had remained. There were seekers of fortune who ventured Socorro way to find the hidden or buried treasures but these were never found.

Father Miguel Zepeda is recorded as the first resident Pastor in 1803. There had been another short period of trouble for the church prior to his arrival but this trouble was not so destructive as to erase any essential factors regarding the original aspect of the Mission itself. It was Padre Zepeda who had requested the name of the Church to be changed to San Miguel. This request was to the Bishop of Durango in Mexico. The reason was an incident which is supposed to have happened. During a raid by the Apache Indians on the settlement and approaching the Mission Church they suddenly stopped and retreated. One of the captured Indians was questioned as to why they had stopped. The answer was simple, although legendary like: they saw just above the Mission Church a man standing large, with wings and heavy sword of silvery brightness. Fiction or not the Mission was not burned during the attack. From that time on the Patron Saint of the Mission Church has been San Miguel. The nave of the Church which was dedicated in 1626 presently seats from two hundred to two hundred and fifty. No doubt many more could have been accommodated in the early days for there was just a dirt floor and no pews. The people attending services either stood or knelt.

A few important facts are necessary relating to the side Chapel, as it has always been known as such. It has nothing to do with the original church.

The ceiling was a flat wooden board ceiling and not ornate at all. A part of the North wall had to be knocked down in order to build this chapel and make it part of the main church. This nostalgic bit of information should be passed on. There was an organization known as Los Caballeros de San Miguel founded and formed in the 1860's which exercised abundant influence in the activities of San Miguel Mission until its demise in 1930. "A society known as Los Caballeros de San Miguel existed between the years 1880 and 1930. Two of its leaders Don Juan Jose Baca and Rafael Lopez y Luna asked permission of the Pastor to construct a chapel. (Permission was granted as the reasons were plausible). To do this, part of the North wall had to be demolished. They wanted the space to sit in body (each Sunday), the first Sunday of the month especially and as well on Feast Days of the

year. At one time the organization could boast of one hundred members. They had a band that would play during the Mass. The musicians were all members of the organization. Their headquarters was in a large room located at the corner of Bernard and Calle de San Miguel just across the parking lot on the South side and East of the Church. Rafael Lopez y Luna was the president of Los Caballeros for many years and when Los Caballeros were dissolved they deeded the property to the church. The entrance of the side chapel was on the East side. So, we owe it to Los Caballeros de San Miguel for the construction of the side chapel you see today! A few other memorable notes which I think need mentioning here. Father Benedict Bernard was responsible for bringing the Loretta Sister to Socorro to conduct a school. He also built a two story house for the purpose of housing Brothers. He died before his total mission was accomplished. Father Philbert Martin became Pastor and worked for more than 20 years. Father Peter Pelzer was named Pastor in 1921. He renovated the towers. He added a second bell to the towers. He organized the first Catholic Ladies Aid Society. Ruth Chumbar was its first president and Guadalupe Lopez its first secretary. Father John Doid became Pastor in 1941. He replaced the old floor, beneath the main Altar. He renewed the ceiling above the main Altar (dirt was falling down from the roof). In removing the old floor of the Sanctuary, wooden carved posts were discovered and were out on display for sometime; gavelts were made from some of these for the past Grand Knights of the Knights of Columbus. Msgr. Joseph Mueller as Pastor from 1944 to 1949 put in the stained glass windows. The Crucifixion Group on the back wall of the Sanctuary, the Stations of the Cross along the wall of the side chapel were installed in memory of the servicemen of the Parish in World War II during the Pastorate of Msgr. James I. McNiff, 1954-1968.

Written by
Fr. Bernard Boudreau
in Residence at San Miguel—1973

The Mission of San Marcial.

THE MISSION OF SAN MARCIAL: Emilio Chavez, who was born in 1897 remembers this Mission as well as its Pastor, Father Peter Pelzer. Pablo Gomez is supposed to have given from eight to ten acres on which was built the Mission and Rectory. Father Pelzer had his niece come from Germany to live with him for more than ten years. She took care of things while he would be out on the long visitations that would keep him away for sometime. For many miles around the home Mission would be many places to visit. Here are some of these: Val Verde, Contadera and Paraje which had small churches, La Mesa, where a schoolroom was used for Mass, San Alvaro, Carthage, Bosquecito and Puelblitos. On the East bank he served Canto Recio and Puelblitos. On the West bank he served Ante Recio, San Antonio, San Antonito, San Geronimo, Elizario, Fort Craig, Bosque Bonito and San Jose. Fiesta time and the religious devotions which the people were attending periodically in all these Missions gives proof that the obligation to perform their spiritual duties added to the joy and satisfaction of getting together with friends and relatives often quite separated.

Distance lent enchantment for all occasions. When flood waters had ravaged the country side of San Acacio and Polvadera, these same waters continued southward towards San Marcial and so August 20, 1929 proved a sad and disastrous day, the memory of which day would linger for years in the lives of the victims. Father Emile Barrat was in charge of the Mission of San Marcial at the time for Father Peter Pelzer had been transferred to Socorro. As in ever so many places all over the world of missionary labors, San Marcial had its moments of mystery and love, consolation and comfort in the midst of disaster, the Sorrowful Mother ever present to comfort the afflicted. The Virgin Mary so long the center in the hearts of the faithful leading them to her Divine Son, her statue, a center of lighted joy and flowery joy came floating out of church as the roof and walls came crumbling down. All other Santos were either buried in the mud or destroyed. Father Barrat lived and celebrated Mass in the school house after the flood. He was later transferred to Magdalena.



Photo:
Courtesy of
Emilio Chavez

NEW SAN MARCIAL MISSION—Valentina Chavez donated some land for the building of a new church and Higinio Trujillo brought a new statue of San Marcial from the town of Juarez in Mexico. It resembles St. Patrick holding a mitre in his hand. The 10th of May 1937 was dedication day for the new church. The Priests from Socorro and surrounding places came with Father Pelzer but the festivities were again overshadowed by gloom as the weather produced a severe snow storm. The Jose Gonzales family and the mayordomos received all the Priests in their homes and a gala time

was had by all in spite of the very inclement weather. This church was also destroyed by flood waters because it had been built on ground yet not high enough. This was just about the end of San Marcial and the Mission as well. The cemetery known as El Campo Santo de los Gonzales on the hill still remains. This and the regular cemetery where many beautiful headstones and monuments stand in silent tribute to the faithful people of San Marcial. There are still cemeteries in La Mesa, Val Verde and Contadero.

San Antonio Church, also at one time a mission of San Marcial was built sometime between 1904 and 1906. It was blessed in 1906. For the building of this church a commission of five was chosen to raise money and supervise the building of this church. This was a very small community. Those who were financially capable helped with money and those were not able furnished the labor. Needless to say all who were capable helped towards the gathering of materials and the building. The bell came from the mission of Paraje.



Photo: Courtesy of Mrs. Abigail Bianchi

SAN ANTONIO MISSION takes us back again to 1598 when the settlement of San Antonio was known as Senecu. The Mission of San Antonio seems to have been established by Fray Antonio de Artega. The first church was built in the section of the town then called La Plaza Vieja. The original structure was small with a flat roof and bell tower. It had dirt floors without pews. The Santos which were originally in this church were later removed and taken to El Paso del Sur and put in other missions there. What remains of the original San Antonio de Senecu Church are small mounded ruins covered with mesquite bushes. Another church was built on the site where the present now stands. General Estanislado Montoya and his wife Francisquita imported a statue of San Antonio de Padua from France to be put in the church. During the



The floods of 1929 destroyed the church. Efforts were made after the flood to rebuild. A committee of five was again chosen for the project. It was not long before they ran out of funds and the people were asked to donate adobes and other necessary materials. The church was finally completed. The property where the church was built was donated by Sorababel Chavez. The mission was sold some years later during the Pastorate of Msgr. James I. McNiff.



Photo: Courtesy of Grace Lucero

years of depression, the building went into disrepair until it could not be used as a church anymore. It was decided to rebuild on the same site. The present church in San Antonio is this church.

Constancio Miera and the Mayordomas Mauricio Chavez and the late Seledon Jaramilla were the supervisors of this project. The organizations and the various societies worked together to make the project a success. The times were hard but the strenuous efforts of all Catholics of the parish reached the desired objective. Even after witnessing the fruits of their labor and sacrifices, they never stopped working and planning to find ways and means to make the spiritual life of the mission more pleasing to God. Mr. Conrad Hilton, the famed Hotel entrepreneur was called upon to assist as a former parishioner of the Mission of San Antonio where he was born. Things have changed down thru the years and memories are surpassing the growth of San Antonio. At present plans are being drawn to improve the interior and exterior of this mission.

SAN JOSE MISSION in Luis Lopez seems to have been in existence somewhere between 1840 and 1886. The first church was destroyed by a flood. A new church was built on higher ground. The statue of the Patron Saint was again placed in its niche, it had been saved out of the flood waters. The work of constructing this substantially beautiful chapel was done by all the people around this little community, old and young, men and women alike. They made their own adobes, mixed their own materials for garnishing and plastering both the outside and inside. Much of this material was accumulated at often tremendous sacrifice. The stations of the cross were made by Abran Garcia. They were later replaced with stations from the church of Tokay, New Mexico which was being discontinued. Several Fathers were responsible for this Mission. The Padres Lestra, Juan Brun and



San Jose Mission

SAGRADA FAMILIA MISSION in Lemitar according to Fray Angelica Chavez was built in 1831 and the land was donated by Juan Platera. Here the church building has a resemblance to San Miguel in Socorro. Don Pablo Sanchez and his wife Leonor are buried underneath the present Altar. They were a prominent family in the Catholic Community. In front of the church are buried other notables of the town who were bearers of responsi-

Agustin who would come from Socorro for Mass and all other important religious functions.

All the statues were gifts from various families. As in all the other missions, the thing to be pointed out here is the concerted efforts of all the Catholics to donate their time, efforts, materials, money over and over again. Their spirit never diminished in the face of disaster. Here too, the many devotions, especially to Our Lady were well attended and remained the one factor which kept the people together in the absence of their Priest. Two extremely valuable Santos from this mission are kept in the safety of San Miguel Rectory. The one of San Jose with the Infant Jesus is said to be over 275 years old. Another of Maria Santissima de los Dolores is not as old.



Sagrada Familia Mission

bility known for their work in the church.

One of Sanchez' Indian servants is buried in front of the church, her name was Magdalena. There was never a pastor assigned to this church. All religious services were directed from Socorro. In the olden days the Priest would come every four months and stay for three days. With advanced communications the Priest would come more often.

SAN ACACIO MISSION in San Acacio an old church built in the 1800's was much larger than the present one, "three times as large" says Seferino Gonzales, "an adobe church with large vigas." The land the church was built on was donated by Enrique Gonzales. It was later destroyed by swift waters of the Rio Grande which was ravaging the countryside in the flood of August 1929. The mayordomas with the help of all the people salvaged what they could. It was an arduous and discouraging task. The Santos were saved and brought to the home of Flavio Sanchez. This was also the home Father Pelzer was saying Mass in after the flood had subsided. When the walls of the church collapsed the pews and furniture were buried in the mud. The rug, pews, and cabinets were salvaged.



San Acacio Mission

Photo: Courtesy of Edward E. Torres

San Pedro Mission

SAN PEDRO MISSION: San Pedro has a story in itself. Again we have the words of old timers, Mrs. Jesusita Padilla and Mrs. Marianna de Baca. The property had belonged to Juan and Lupe Miera. The building used for a church was an old dance hall. Mrs. Marianna Baca remembers moving from Bosquecito in 1891, at the age of eight, to San Pedro and the church was already there. Father Justino Brun tended this mission from Socorro and Father Pelzer as well from San Marcial. The life of the community was accentuated around the Fiestas de San Pedro. This Fiesta was celebrated in November and June. The stations of the cross do

A new church was built by the people, although much smaller, with the entrance facing the North. There was a tower built and a large bell put up that could be heard to Alamilla. Today this mission is not being used and the church is somewhat dilapidated. The land and building still belong to the Catholic Church. There was another small chapel in La Jallita, East of San Acacio Dam, but only ruins remain; part of the walls are still standing and a cemetery close by where the crosses can still be seen in the midst of mesquite bushes. Bolling Green near San Acacio was used by the Penitentes in the performance of their rites. However, this was a farming community and no church was built there. Some of their crude crosses may still be found.



noted by Mrs. Padilla and Camillo Saavedra, the mayordomas, are presently in La Joya. The hand-carved statue of San Pedro, a statue carved from driftwood out of the Rio Grande in 1897, is now in the church of Lemitar along with the statue of Maria Santissima de los Dolores. It seems the deed for the property was handed down from mayordomas to mayordomas. The chain of this event was broken when the last mayordomas recorded the deed in his name and sold the church. When San Pedro was discontinued, the owners took back their pews.

SAN LORENZO, Polvadera: There seems to be very little to record as to foundation of this mission and as to its name. It is possible that the name San Lorenzo for the mission itself was taken from historical bit pertaining to a land grant, viz "San Lorenzo de Polvadera. Father Stanley, in his book: "Socorro the Oasis" has but an illusion to this area. The older statue which was in the mission church we are told was taken back to Mexico. The present one is chained to its pedestal. The people of this area were leaving in numbers much to the regret of the remaining residents.

The Old Town was being abandoned, so this gave rise to the New Mission being the focal point of re-



San Lorenzo

ligious activity. This is a very fine church and well kept. There is a large wooden plaque at the rear of the church: YGLERIA DE SAN LORENZO MARTIR. COMISIONADOS: EDUARDO CHAVEZ PRESDT., ANTONIO JOSE LUNA, SRIO, GERONIMO PADILLA, TESRO., CONCLUIDA Y CONTRUIR A.D. 1902, MAYORDOMOS FRUTOSO BARRERAS, AGOSTO 10 de 1902. The first Mass was celebrated on the feast day of San Lorenzo by Father Filiberto Martin 10 Aug. 1902. Mayordomos have been responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the church ever since. Much recent new work has been done on it. The land of the present church was deeded to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Luciano Luna.

Our Lady of Fatima



OUR LADY OF FATIMA, a small church in the area of Florida which is part of the parish of San Miguel within the City of Socorro is a shrine built in Honor of Our Lady of Fatima in thanksgiving to God for many favors received, but since there already was a church within the parish of San Miguel dedicated to the Holy Family in Lemitar, it was finally decided after much consultation that the new church be in honor of our Lady of Fatima. This shrine was built with permission of the Pastor, Father John Majewski.

It was blessed by Archbishop Byrne the 16th of December 1951. An outside shrine was built near the north entrance of the church in memory of Mrs. Teresita Gonzales, Mrs. Christine Nunez, Mrs. Maria Barela. The statue of Our Lady of Fatima is enclosed in her niche. This Shrine Church was completely built by the people of Florida with the help and assistance of the nearby communities. It is a tribute to the whole congregation for a masterful work well done and most pleasing to God.

SANTA RITA ... RILEY

In 1882, Pedro Aragon and his family were the first to move to Riley. Shortly after other families from Polvadera began to move in. They lived in cave-like homes which were built on mountain sides while they constructed their homes. Upon completion of their homes, Pedro Aragon united the people and together they built the church. The walls were built from boxes filled with mud which made the adobe, the walls are about 18 to 24 inches thick. Yesso was used to paint the walls. A family by the name of Armijo passed through Riley with a statue of Santa Rita. They donated it to the church and it was thus that the church was named. This Armijo couple were mutes. Father Martinez came every first Tuesday from Socorro to offer Mass. In 1926, the original dirt floor was covered with a wood floor. The Riley Fiesta held each May, continues to be very well attended even though only three of four families still reside in Riley proper.



SAN ANTONIO

SAN ANTONIO in Alamillo, a very fine small church in a small community of fine people, who have shown in the past like ever so many of the earlier missions the willingness of the people to share their faith and their love by unselfish action and indomitable courage for the greater honor and glory of God. When the church in San Acacio was severely damaged by flood waters of the Rio Grande in August 1929, Mrs. Seferino (Carolina Chavez) Gonzales, with the help of God, wanted a church in Alamillo, to be built for the Pueblo of Alamillo on a parcel of land given to her by her father Estanislado Chavez. Father Pelzer wished for the adobe house on the land to be retained as he had visions of living there someday.

The present church was built in the 1930's. Guadalupe Garcia and Manuel Chavez built the adobe walls and Macedonio Gonzales the floors and roof. The necessary funds were raised by a local committee in town and out of town. They solicited funds as the need arose. The response was generous. The original Altar was of pine and made by the local flock. The new Altar, the present one is a gift from the Catholic Church Extension Society of the USA. The lighted Cathedral over the Tabernacle was donated by Pete Zamora. The furniture in the sacristy and the rug before the Altar were salvaged from the San Acacio Church. The Sacristy was added to the church by Macedonio Gonzales and Gregorio Apodaca in 1932. Over the door as you leave one notices the wooden sign reading: Construida por Guadalupe Garcia y Hijos Comaniados—Pedro Garcia, Presidente; Alfonsor Peralta, Tesorero; Macedonio Gonzales, 2nd Tesorero, 1930.



SAINT MARY MAGDALEN

Years before Magdalena became a village, a small building across the tracks was used as a Church. Prior to 1916, St. Mary Magdalen Church was along with its missions of Santa Rita in Riley and San Juan Bautista in Kelly a mission of San Miguel. The present Church was built about 1920 as a basement for a beautifully planned edifice. As the mines began to close funds became more and more scarce and what funds remained were used to make the basement church the structure for worship of Catholics in Magdalena. The name of the Patroness of both the Catholic Church and the Community came from the "face on the mountain that resembled a young woman" thought to be Mary Magdalen. On March 5, 1973 the transfer of Father Emmanuel DeBoenst to Carrizozo, the Archbishop of Santa Fe returned the Parish of St. Mary Magdalen to a Mission of San Miguel.



SAN JUAN BAUTISTA ... KELLY

With more and more catholic families moving into Kelly, Adolfo Tarres saw a need for a church and called a meeting of the community to discuss plans. The first church was an old saloon that was purchased and used for some time. Later it was sold and became a dance hall. During this period no patron saint had been given to this church edifice. In that his son was named Juan, Adolfo Tarres asked the people of Kelly to name the Church after San Juan Bautista and it was approved. A statue of San Juan de Bautista and Blessed Mother were purchased. In 1948, the original building was torn down and in 1949, using the same materials, Adolfo Tafuya, Manuel Baca, Dominico Zamora, Jr., Pete Mantano, Mac Nunez, Juan Ortega, Jose Montano and Miguel Zamora built the present structure. The first Mayordomas were Mr. and Mrs. Dominico Zamora, Sr. This church was served by Father Salvatore di Giovanni Pastor in Magdalena.



Reminisces of A Pastor During Renovation

Months and months of planning followed 4½ years of dreaming of the Restoration of Old San Miguel Mission. Finally the long awaited day arrived it was on January 15, 1973 that the first pick-ax began the bringing to fore what many had spoken of in writing and verse for years as the layers upon layers of plaster were removed. Join with me as a Pastor wanders through the six months of tearing down and building up. We'll start our roaming eye as the foundation of the new foyer replaced the lovely rose garden alongside the west side of the side chapel. The back-up hoe operator dumps his shovel and from 4½ feet down we find pieces of burnt wood with cloth matted to it along with burnt adobes. Is it part of an old casket? Is it part of our church destroyed by fire in the 1680's? We remove the Sanctuary floor to find old decorated pieces of lumber, hand painted and roughly carved but previously disturbed as they have "saw" marks. Nearby in an area about 3 feet in diameter at the North East corner of the Apse and Sanctuary we find many pieces of burnt wood charcoal.

In the apse about 6-8 inches above the present step or about 20 inches above the floor level we find 2 holes of exact dimension horizontally across the apse from each other, very likely where the old altar rail was embedded in the wall. Just below the statue of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, yeso outlines a burial place. Some say it was the burial place of a former Pastor, others say it was the site of the first "Santa Entierro".

Looking up about 15' to 18' we see on both sides of the wall adjoining the apse adobes very different in structure and size indicating another fill-in. Searching around for an explanation we discover in a photograph taken on the day of burial of Fr. Benito Bernard that there was an arch over the opening of the apse and the adobes of different structure carry over the niches of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Moving to our left toward the Sacristy, the ax of a laborer chops away when suddenly he notes color. He stops but it is too late. Under the Sacred Heart painted on yeso we find some artist's work with red and green paints. The adobes are stuck to the yeso and attempts to remove continue destroying a painting. As in other discoveries, time and lack of money here prevents a further study. However plasterers lath has been put around the painting so the cement plaster will not adhere to our discovery. Generations to come may choose to try to salvage this artist's work.

The irregular door to the sacristy is too short so we raise it in height carefully concealing in the corner conduit for our new electrical system.

On the south wall above the stained glass window we find our first lintel beneath layers of plaster. We continue on this wall and directly below the window about 8' below, another larger lintel is uncovered. Outlines of yeso around adobes of a different structure indicate an opening of some sort down to ground level. Orders are given to remove carefully 2' to 3' of adobes and we find lintels charred and badly burnt with walls of yeso. It's obviously a doorway. It's the South wall always claimed to be part of the 1598 convento. Is our discovery a proof of the original Church being made part of the 1615-1521 structure? It appears so!

At the corner of the Sanctuary below Our Lady of Lourdes statue we are informed by a parishioner that Father J.B. Brun is buried. A severe structural crack is uncovered high in the same corner but our structural engineer informs us it has been years since there was any movement and advises we do not disturb it but fill it with concrete. Repeatedly as plaster falls chunks of adobe fastened to the plaster fall and we begin finding evidence of pieces of pottery mixed into Adobes. Our Archeologist dates these pieces gathered to the 12th, 13th, 14th and 17th centuries. One of the workers, a parishioner Tom Herran finds up close to the roof embedded in an Adobe on old deer horn and carnhusks. Removal of the plaque at Guadalupe Baca's burial place shows rumors of burial in wall are not so and contacts with family members of the Baca's verify burial is in nave floor beneath site of plaque as that of Don Pedro Baca on the opposite side of main nave. To the left of this plaque site we find below the South West window old flooring covering over an opening 26' x 6' x 30' which many parishioners tell us was the site of 'El Santo Entierro.' It promotes us to want to search for the rumored 'old wooden Santo'.

On this South wall we uncover over all windows and doors, lintels which are now visible—5 and 6 lintels deep. Another severe crack near the choir loft is matched with a similar crack on the opposite wall. Our Structural engineer tells us the towers are so heavy they are pulling away from the nave which causes us to build a buttress on either side to reinforce the towers. Digging a foundation for these buttresses we find many infant graves right along side the front facade of the church.

The old foyer is removed at the main entrance and as plaster falls we find two huge lintels about 15' to 18' in length and about 20" in width and about 10" to 12" in depth. A most obvious adobe difference shows the original door must have been straight walls rather than the present slanted or oblique walls. Up in the choir loft the old door from

outside reached by ladder only is uncovered. The last viga in the nave is seen to be quite different in structure from the others. A scroll design is found painted on this viga but study shows this painting is over varnish which indicates it was of a recent origin.

A decision is made that structurally a new staircase will be needed to the choir area so the old staircase is removed along with the covering of the choir loft done we are told by Mr. Juan Sorute Sr. in the 1930's Mr. Sorute had died about two months prior to this uncovering. We find to our dismay that axes have been applied to the lovely corbels and vigas and pilasters of the choir lofts. A huge bee hive with much wax was burnt away on the corbel near the present museum case. Parishioners tell that the doorway in the right tower was part of a room used in the 1920's by Fr. Peter Pelzer as an office. This seems to explain what the lintel in the right buttress was for.

Throughout the walls pieces of wood are found at various levels and the archeologist explains how the scaffold was made by placing logs in adobe and when firm, other logs were placed on these fitting pieces as a type of scaffold later to be cut off as the men descend for the last time. Near the North East window a large log and several small ones are found. Examining again the picture of Father Benito Bernard's funeral we see it was here the old pulpit was attached to the wall. Beneath this window we find yeso and it shows an opening of a sort. Some say the alc windows were constructed in this fashion, narrow at the bottom and wider at the top.

In our desire to locate the old Santos we decided to remove a portion of the floor near the old staircase, where we were told they were buried. The 3 wooden floors were removed late one afternoon. The next morning one of the workers stepped off onto the adobe floor and sunk in about 3 feet, obviously a gravel pit is here we invite Mr. David Snow, Curator of Archeology—Museum in Santa Fe, to spend a few weeks. In the course of his tedious sifting of soil, in addition to pottery we found 5 skeletons, 2 adults and 3 infants. We uncovered only a tiny piece of cloth about 1" square and no wood which indicates no coffin used; convincing us due to the large amount of debris that this is an Indian burial ground for areas of dumping were considered sacred by the Indians. Further excavation uncovers the presently exposed rock foundation. It is much different from the foundation of the main nave, which leads us to believe it is part of the Old Indian Temple on which some historians

say our Old Mission was first constructed. Mr. Snow paints out several old adobe floor levels and how some were burnt.

The North wall also showed an area of about 3½ to 4 feet high burnt adobes all along the nave. Burnt adobes being reddish in color and the other adobes, a brownish adobe color but all adobes of the same design and size.

Mr. David Jones, a retired Forest Ranger, comes and takes about 15 to 20 carings of the old lumber uncovered and of the vigas. At the time of this writing we have not gotten any reports as to age or date of death of trees used in construction of our old Mission.

Another point of interest was the determining that the niche below the stained glass window of San Miguel over the main entrance was the site of an old bell. Worn lumber, from chains or ropes, is visible in pitched roof areas.

All students of early Southwest history know that Churches were faced East and the Sanctuary area where early morning Mass was offered daily was illuminated by a clerestory window which let in the early morning sunlight. Our clerestory shows that one viga failed and another was put alongside to strengthen it. At a later date this one also failed and it was at this time the arch was put in and apparently solved the problem. These 2 front vigas like the last one in the main nave were much more irregular in structure. Where the side Chapel meets the main structure, we removed the flooring and found 3 wooden floors and a compact adobe floor, a cross-section of which may be seen in our museum case. In this area we are told was buried another former Pastor, Father Filiberto Martin. Beneath the present Presidential chair is the site of Father Benito Bernard's burial.

The only wall that did not receive a total new plastering is the back wall of the apse where in 1945, a framed wall was constructed over the existing adobe wall for the reception of the crucifixion scene donated in memory of our parishioners who made the supreme sacrifice.

In the tower a wax reproduction of the inscription on the bell was made, it reads:

Cast by J. G. Struckstede & Brothers
Rev. Benito Bernard
1869

The tolling bell in the opposite tower has no date or inscription.

The side chapel built by Los Caballeros de San Miguel over 100 years ago underwent a drastic renovation in 1973. In addition to the new pitched cement floor that was poured, the West windows were removed and opened to the new foyer built to house new heating and air conditioning units in the attic space. The lower part of this foyer saw the construction of the new type of face to face confessional or as some call it Counseling-Confessional and the building of a traditional type confessional with an electronic system for those having hearing problems installed. The remainder of the foyer serves as an area for bulletin board and magazine racks. The Way of The Cross was set up here and the back wall the site of lovely statues donated years before.

The major change was the construction of



El Santo Entierro!

matching vigas and corbels, an entire new ceiling made by Larry Van Landingham with the majority of the vigas coming from Truth or Consequences area weighing about 600 pounds each and the remainder, the front 6 from Colorado weighing 800 pounds or more each.

The entire structure externally received a new coat of adobe color stucco. The towers were fixed screened in and all wood work was given 2 coats of Navajo red. The new electrical, heating, air conditioned plant makes a very pleasant place to worship as we have new Colonial Style pews making our visit with our Heavenly Father one of joy and comfort. A sand colored carpet was installed to give the effect of a dirt floor and the sanctuary was made ornate by a

Thickness of walls 5 feet plus

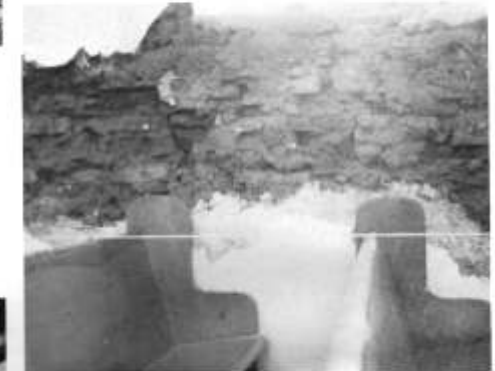


RESTORATION BEGINS

Moving out of the Church



Setting up temporary Chapel in The Hilton-Mt. Carmel Lunchroom



It was badly needed, the walls were crumbling!



View from Choir Loft of Sanctuary

View from Sanctuary of Main church.



View of Side Chapel and Confessionals



The stained ceiling the extent of lighting!



Charred lintels in 1598 door perhaps from 1680 uprising when church was burnt.



Clerestory window source of original lighting in Sanctuary area.



Main Entrance with plaster removed. Note different types of adobes, uncovered lintels, and Choir floor.



1598 wall before restoration



The Apse ceiling is uncovered! (over Altar of Repose)



Choir area dating 1925, 1930



1598 door partially opened showing filled in adobe and yeso.



The old staircase

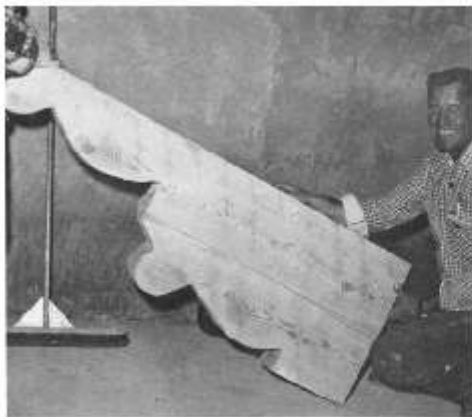
Finished product



Larry Van Landingham and Vincent Peralta putting vigas in place.



Up they go!



Finished Corbel!

A CAVE IN PROMPTS ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



A cave-in



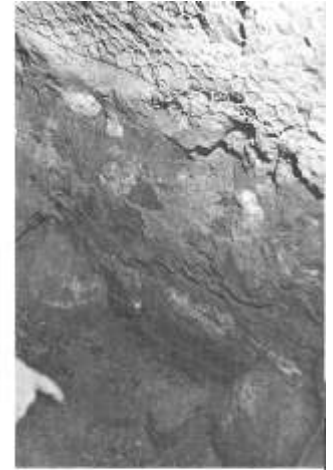
David Snow, Curator of Archaeology at the Museum of New Mexico and assistant, Bennie Romero.



One of five Human Skeletons found!



Father Labreche, Pastor, examines a portion of a human skull and a tibia!



This old foundation could be that of the ancient Indian Temple on which some historians say the old Mission was constructed. Other historians could claim it as the foundation of the original Mission.

THE ARCHEOLOGIST DISCOVERS AN OLD FOUNDATION



Curator, David Snow points out various adobe floor levels to Father Laurier A. Labreche, Pastor



Don Pedro A. Baca plaque



1598 wall after Restoration