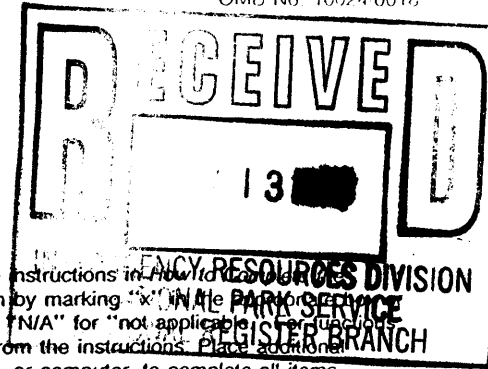


1952

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nuestra Señora de Luz Church and Cemetery

other names/site number Our Lady of Light Catholic Church; Cañoncito Church; SR 1256

2. Location

street & number 13 mi SE of Santa Fe, N of I-25 frontage rd N/A not for publication

city or town Cañoncito N/A vicinity

state New Mexico code NM county Santa Fe code 049 zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 10/20/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

New Mexico OHPO
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

[Signature]
Edson R. Beall
Entered in the
National Register

Date of Action

12.14.95

Nuestra Señora de Luz Church and Cemetery
Name of Property

Santa Fe County, NM
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Religious Properties of New Mexico

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Territorial

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Cement stucco over adobe

roof Metal

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Architecture

Period of Significance

1880 - 1945

Significant Dates

1880 - 1891

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Nuestra Señora de Luz, a Roman Catholic mission church within St. Anthony's Parish at Pecos, is a small, one-story, adobe chapel with a metal, front-gable roof. It lies on a hillside in Cañoncito at the entrance to the Apache Canyon and faces south directly onto the frontage road of I-25 which here follows the approximate route of the historic Santa Fe Trail. The L-shaped plan includes a rectangular single-aisle nave and sanctuary built between 1880 and 1891 and a sacristy added west of the sanctuary before 1925. On the slopes on either side and across the back of the church is a cemetery containing a variety of modest markers. The cemetery and church are enclosed by a rock wall along the south (front) and east perimeters and by a wire fence across the north and west. This property, which has not been significantly altered, well represents its historical associations, despite the need of some exterior and interior rehabilitation. It meets the criteria for listing in the National Register under the description section of the property type, "Church Buildings Associated with the Practice of Christian Religions," subtype, "Catholic Churches," in the Multiple Property nomination, "Religious Properties of New Mexico."

Description

The chapel is built on rising ground a few feet from the frontage road, which ends shortly thereafter. Interstate 25 runs just to the south approximating the route of the Santa Fe Trail as it descended from the summit of Glorieta Pass and proceeded into Santa Fe. The church grounds are entered via a wooden gate in the rock wall that lies along the road. A short section of concrete walkway leads from the gate to the church doors. A large wooden cross on a concrete base stands in center of the walkway in line with the entrance.

Because the back end of the building is built into the hillside, from the exterior an illusion is created that the church itself slopes up the hill. On the interior changes in grade are somewhat compensated for by a step up into the church and another into the sanctuary; nevertheless, the north end of the church including the sanctuary is considerably below the ground level and the approximately 16-foot ceiling is much higher than it appears from the outside dimensions.

The nave and sanctuary are enclosed in a simple rectangular building measuring on the exterior approximately 22 by 50 feet and covered with an orange, standing-seam, metal gable roof. The adobe walls are covered with concrete stucco on the exterior and plaster on the interior. They are about 22 inches thick and rest on a 3 to 4 foot wide foundation of native stone and mud mortar.

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Continuation SheetSection 7 Page 2

The sacristy is a small, nearly square room which is covered with an orange metal, shed roof and measures approximately 16 by 17 feet on the exterior. The adobe walls are 18 inches thick and rest on stone footings approximately 2 feet wide. *Viga* (peeled-log ceiling beam) ends protrude beyond the front and rear walls. There is an entrance door, covered by a canopy, in the south (main) facade and a window on the west.

The main facade of the church is unbroken but for the centered double doors of the main entrance, a small, fixed-pane window in the top of the gable, and a rock buttress, 22 inches wide and 10 feet high at the southwest corner. At the crest of the gable is a bell canopy topped by a weathered wooden cross. There are two windows on each of the side walls of the nave. On the rear (north) elevation there is only one small opening in the gable end that provides access to the attic for roof maintenance.

Both the main and the sacristy doors are solid wood and paneled. The four nave windows and one in the sacristy are wooden and double hung with 6/6 lights. All doors and windows have wooden surrounds and shallow pedimented lintels on both the interior and exterior. The wooden trim around the openings on the main facades, the bell canopy, and the large wooden cross in front of the church are painted bright reddish orange. Elsewhere the wooden trim is heavily weathered.

The main entrance leads directly into the nave. The sanctuary opposite the entrance is a continuation of the rectangle of the nave and separated from it by a wooden, spindled altar rail and a step up. The floor of the nave is covered with plywood placed over wide wooden planking of irregular width; in the sanctuary this wooden planking is still visible. The continuous ceiling of the nave and sanctuary is constructed of exposed, square, pine beams and planks of regular width without distinction between the two areas. The nave windows are deeply inset in the thick side walls and are wood lined as are the doorways. In the nave there are rows of pews on either side of a wide aisle.

A door from the west side of the sanctuary leads into the sacristy. The ceiling of this small room is composed of exposed *vigas* and planks. The plank floor has boards of regular widths. Both the church and sacristy were heated by stoves in the past; the stove in the church has been removed, although the stovepipe can be seen above the west side of the roof, near the front of the building.

The cemetery which surrounds the church on three sides contains several types of markers, including many simple wooden crosses, the most common means of marking graves in Hispanic New Mexico; small metal crosses with nameplates; and concrete markers, some evidently homemade with irregular, hand-produced inscriptions and designs and others more skillfully produced. There are also a substantial number of sandstone and modern granite

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tombstones. The earliest now visible and legible appear to date from the 1890s. A few plots are outlined in bricks or low wire fencing, and in a few cases earth is mounded high over the grave.

Major alterations to the church during the Period of Significance include the addition of a pitched metal roof around the turn of the century and the addition of the sacristy. About 1900 a metal roof on 2 x 6 wooden rafters was placed over the original flat roof that would have been drained by wooden *canales*.¹ The four feet of dirt which comprised this original roof are still visible in the attic. The sacristy was apparently added before 1925.² The present pews replaced backless benches around 1914. The front two rows were built by Sabino Gonzales.³

Several alterations took place at unknown dates within the Period of Significance. Before 1937, presumably to stabilize the structure - perhaps to keep the front wall from pushing out and separating from the side walls - stone buttresses were added at each front corner of the church.⁴ The east buttress has since been removed. Wooden plank flooring was added over the original dirt floors and both the interior walls (originally been mud plastered and whitewashed) and the exterior walls (originally mud plastered) were hard plastered. The beam ends that had protruded through the exterior side walls were plastered over but are still discernable.⁵

According to historic photographs dating from about 1915, what appears to have been a smaller churchyard was originally surrounded on all four sides by a low stone wall like that in place on the south and east sides today.⁶ At an unknown date more than fifty years ago, the cemetery was apparently expanded to the north and west, the wall removed, and the wire fence installed on two sides.⁷ The photos also show around some graves a rectangular wooden

1. The approximate date is given by Mr. and Mrs. Sabino Gonzales, "History of the Cañoncito Church," interview notes, 25 October 1984 (Files of the Historic Preservation Division).

2. The sacristy appears in an undated photograph in the Twitchell Collection, Museum of New Mexico 56641, presumably taken before Ralph Emerson Twitchell's death in 1925. The State Register nomination states, without citing a source, that it was added in the 1920s.

3. Mr. and Mrs. Sabino Gonzales, "History of the Cañoncito Church," interview notes, 25 October 1984 (Files of the Historic Preservation Division).

4. Both buttresses are shown in a historic photo dated 1937. Museum of New Mexico photo 120135.

5. A photograph taken about 1915 shows the square beam ends sawn nearly flush with the exterior wall but not completely covered with plaster. Museum of New Mexico photo 13747.

6. Museum of New Mexico photos 8830 and 13747.

7. Nick Varela, interview, 25 August 1995.

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Continuation SheetSection 7 Page 4

fences called a *cunas* (cradles) or *cerquitos* (little fences) - a Hispanic custom believed to have been brought to New Mexico along with the use of grave markers by nineteenth century Anglo-American influence.⁸

Since the Period of Significance plywood was put on top of the plank floor in the nave. In 1985 the church's orange metal roof was replaced with duplicate materials. The interior walls of the church were replastered and painted. An added acoustical-tile dropped ceiling was removed and the re-exposed historic wood beams and planking were refinished.⁹

Today the interior of the church appears to be well maintained and in good condition except for some water damage at the floor level of the nave walls and considerably more water damage in the interior of the sacristy. The exterior stucco of the church and sacristy is in very poor condition with large cracks especially above and below windows and deterioration at the ground level. The paint of the exterior trim, except on the main facade, is severely weathered.

8. Dorothy Benrimo, *Camposantos* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1966). Nancy Hunter Warren, "New Mexico Village Camposantos," *Markers 4* (1987): 116. This assumption is questioned, not entirely convincingly, by Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) 70.

9. Nick and Nora Varela, interview, 18 August 1995.

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National Park Service

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Section 8 Page 5

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

This church is significant under Criterion A for historical and cultural significance as defined in the significance section of the property type, "Church Buildings Associated with the Practice of Christian Religions," subtype, Catholic Churches, in the Multiple Property nomination, "Religious Properties of New Mexico." It is significant under Criterion C for architectural significance as defined in paragraph 4 of the same section.

History of the Church

Nuestra Señora de Luz was built at Cañoncito between 1880 and 1891 on land donated by Maria de la Luz Borrego for the purposes of its construction. According to the records of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, as late as the first half of 1880 christenings, weddings, and burials of people from Cañoncito were still being performed by the parish priest at the parish church in Pecos. Beginning in mid 1880 a new priest ceased to record the location of his various activities so that it is not possible to know from this source when the Cañoncito church came into use. It is, however, mentioned as having been built in the deed dated November 7, 1891 by which Maria de la Luz et al. transferred the property to Archbishop Salpointe.¹⁰

Little is known of the circumstances surrounding the building of the church in the 1880s. At a strategic location about 10 miles southeast of Santa Fe, Cañoncito had earlier been a trading point and the last stop for travelers along the Santa Fe Trail before reaching their destination in Santa Fe. Noted historical events had taken place in the vicinity. At Apache Canyon in 1846 General (and Governor) Manuel Armijo had gathered his Mexican troops to defend New Mexico against the occupying American Army. Sixteen years later (1862) at the nearby Johnson Ranch, Union forces destroyed an enemy supply train thereby effectively halting the Confederate threat to the Southwest. By 1880 the railroad had superseded the Santa Fe Trail ending Cañoncito's importance in relation to transportation. Nevertheless, for a short period in 1879-1880 Cañoncito had a post office and in the 1880s a church was built. What other developments, if any, prompted the granting of a post office or the building of the church is not known.

Since its construction the rituals of the church have been performed by the parish priest traveling periodically from Pecos to celebrate Mass and other religious observances. In the absence of a resident priest, the church has traditionally been cared for physically by a local person, known as a *mayordomo* and appointed by the priest.

10. Santa Fe County Deeds, B-1: 382-384.

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Today Mass is celebrated the third Saturday of each month by the parish priest, who comes from Pecos. First Holy Communions, baptisms, and weddings are also celebrated at the church when the occasions arise. Burials are still taking place from time to time in the churchyard, although there is little room left in the cemetery. The Saint's day of the church is celebrated with services and food in June although the official date is in May. At Christmastime the traditional *Las Posadas* is reenacted by the community under the leadership of the *mayordomo*. Maintenance of the church continues to be the responsibility of the *mayordomo* and is a community effort which brings together people from the vicinity.

Historical and Architectural Significance

This church is eligible under the special standards set forth under Criteria Consideration A. Although it is a church-owned property used for religious purposes, its significance is derived from its historical and architectural importance.

Historically it represents a late nineteenth-century mission church built by members of a small outlying primarily Hispanic settlement at a time when it was still difficult for parishioners to travel for services to the parish church. It was and remains the focus of cultural and religious life in this tiny community.

Architecturally it represents the continuance into the late Territorial Period of a tradition of church building that began with the seventeenth-century Spanish Colonial missions to the Pueblo Indians.¹¹ Modest rectangular churches had been built in the countryside during the Colonial and Mexican periods as Spanish settlement spread. This church illustrates the continuing influence of the Territorial style with pedimented lintels inside and out, paneled doors, and wood-lined door and window openings, at a time when this style was already being replaced by the influence of the French clergy and the eastern styles brought by the railroad after 1879. The addition of a pitched metal roof over the traditional flat, dirt roof late in the century is consistent with the vernacular adaptation of new materials to old forms in the late Territorial period.

Although Nuestra Señora de Luz Church and Cemetery appear to be located within the boundaries of the Glorieta Pass Battlefield National Historic Landmark, their period and areas of significance do not coincide with those for which the battlefield is significant. The church and cemetery were listed individually in the State Register of Cultural Properties on May 9, 1986, as SR 1256.

11. Corinne P. Sze, "Religious Properties of New Mexico," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1995, 70-74.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 7

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Office of Historic-Artistic Patrimony and Archives. Nuestra Señora de Luz, Cañoncito, New Mexico, file.

Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Pecos Parish. Records of Baptisms (1862-1899), Marriages (1862-1899), and Burials (1870-1899). Microfilm reel 43A, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.

Benrimo, Dorothy. *Camposantos*. Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1966.

Borrego, Maria de la Luz, et al. to Juan Bautista Salpointe. 7 November 1891. Santa Fe County Deeds, Book B-1: 382-384.

Gonzales, Mr. and Mrs. Sabino. "History of the Cañoncito Church." Interview notes, 25 October 1984. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Jordan, Terry G. *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Museum of New Mexico Photo Archives.

"Nuestra Señora de Luz Church, Cañoncito, New Mexico." Survey plat, measured drawings and elevations [1984?]. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Varela, Nick. "Cañoncito Parish Church," Application for Registration New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, 1984.

Warren, Nancy Hunter. "New Mexico Village *Camposantos*." *Markers* 4 (1987): 115-129.

Interviews

Varela, Nick and Nora. 18 August 1995.

Varela, Nick. 25 August 1995.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 8

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the church property as defined by rock walls on the south and east perimeters and by wire fencing on the west and north perimeters, as shown on the appended Plat of Survey prepared by Morris A. Apodaca, November 28, 1984.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encloses the historic building and the cemetery that surrounds it.

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National Park Service

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Section Photos Page 9

INFORMATION COMMON TO ALL PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Nuestra Señora de Luz Church and Cemetery
2. Santa Fe County, New Mexico
3. Corinne P. Sze
5. New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

INFORMATION PERTAINING TO INDIVIDUAL PHOTOGRAPHS

4. 18 August 1995
6. South and partial east facades. Camera facing north.
7. Photo #1

4. 18 August 1995
6. East and partial north facades. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #2

4. 18 August 1995
6. North and partial west facades. Camera facing southeast.
7. Photo #3

4. 18 August 1995
6. Partial west facade including sacristy, partial cemetery and rock wall. Camera facing northeast.
7. Photo #4

4. 18 August 1995
6. Partial cemetery and partial west facade (sacristy). Camera facing northeast.
7. Photo #5

4. 18 August 1995
6. Cemetery detail and partial stone wall at northeast corner. Wooden cross and hand-lettered concrete marker.
Camera facing north.
7. Photo #6

4. 18 August 1995
6. Cemetery detail. Concrete marker. Camera facing north.
7. Photo #7

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

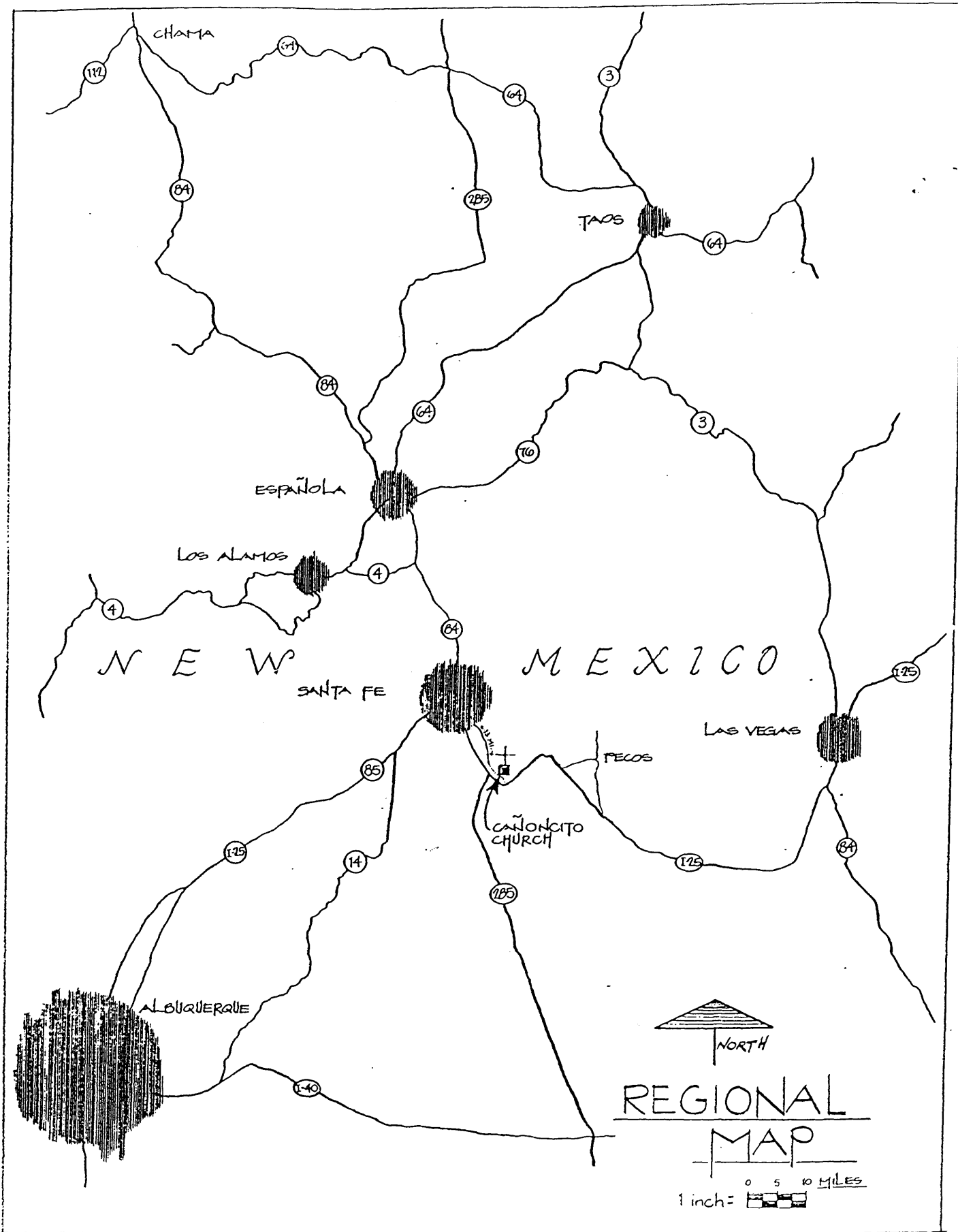
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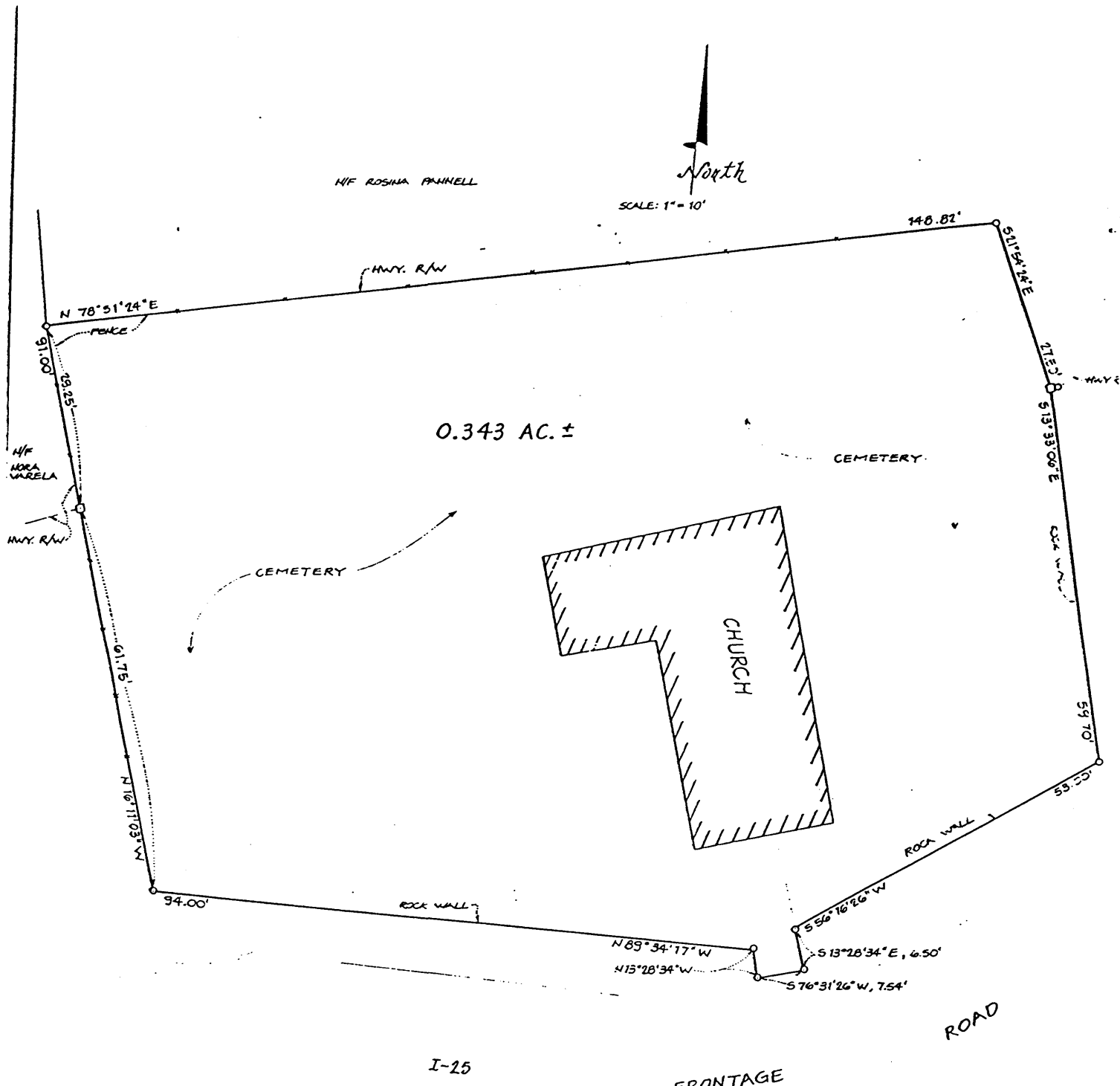
United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 10

4. 19 August 1995
6. Interior. Partial nave looking toward sanctuary.
Camera facing north.
7. Photo #8



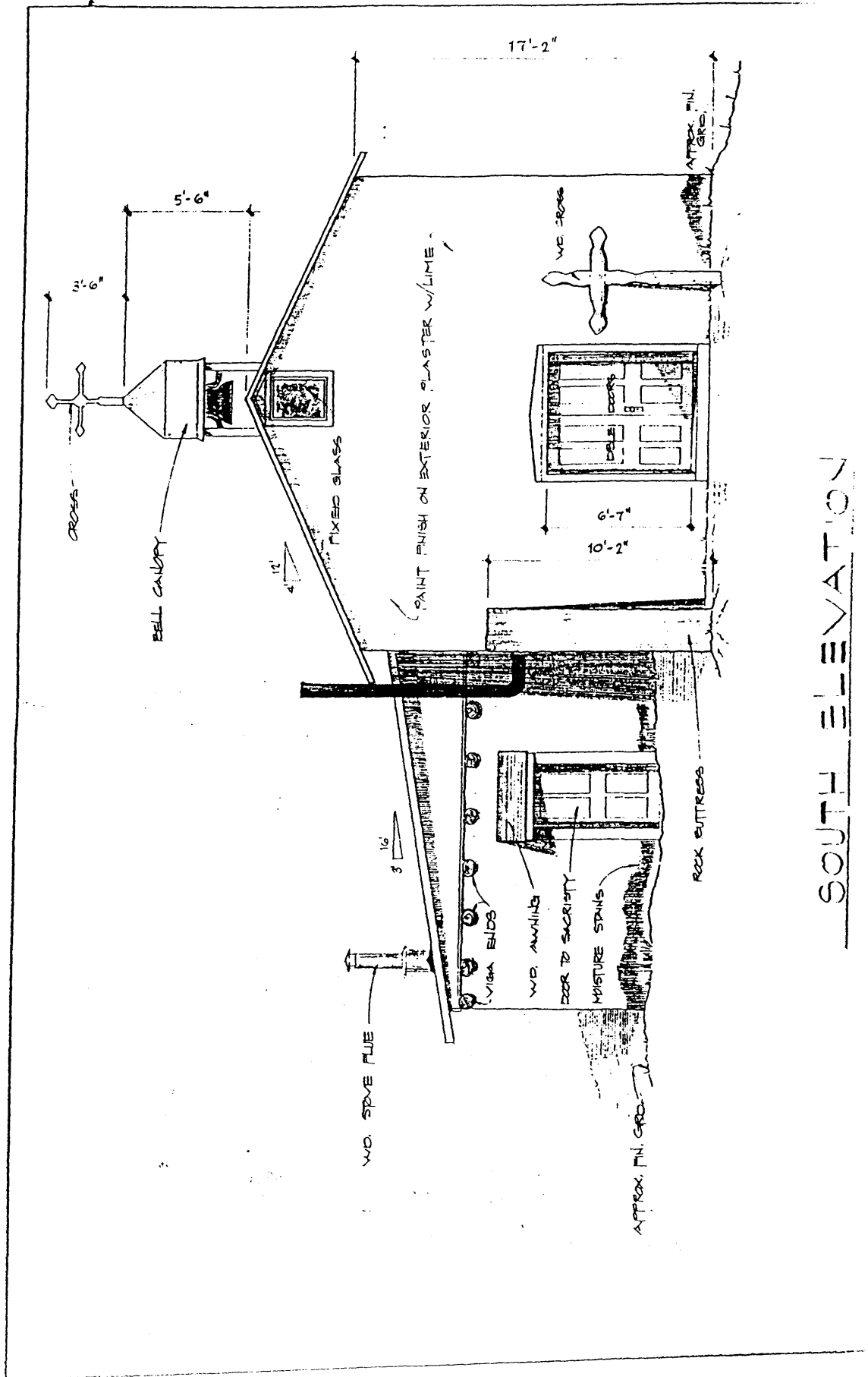


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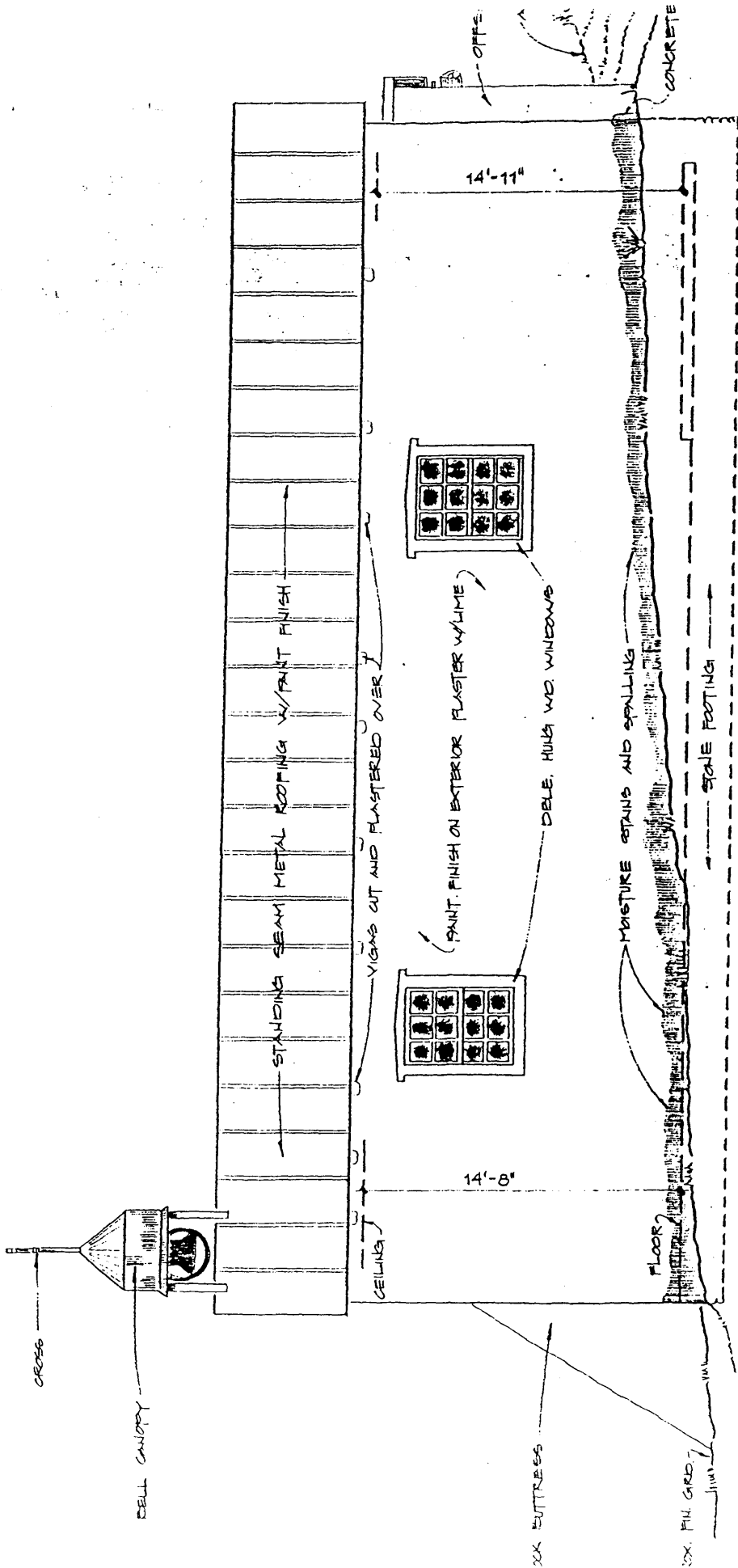
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 CAÑONCITO, NEW MEXICO

NUESTRA SEÑORA de LUZ Church CAÑONCITO, NEW MEXICO



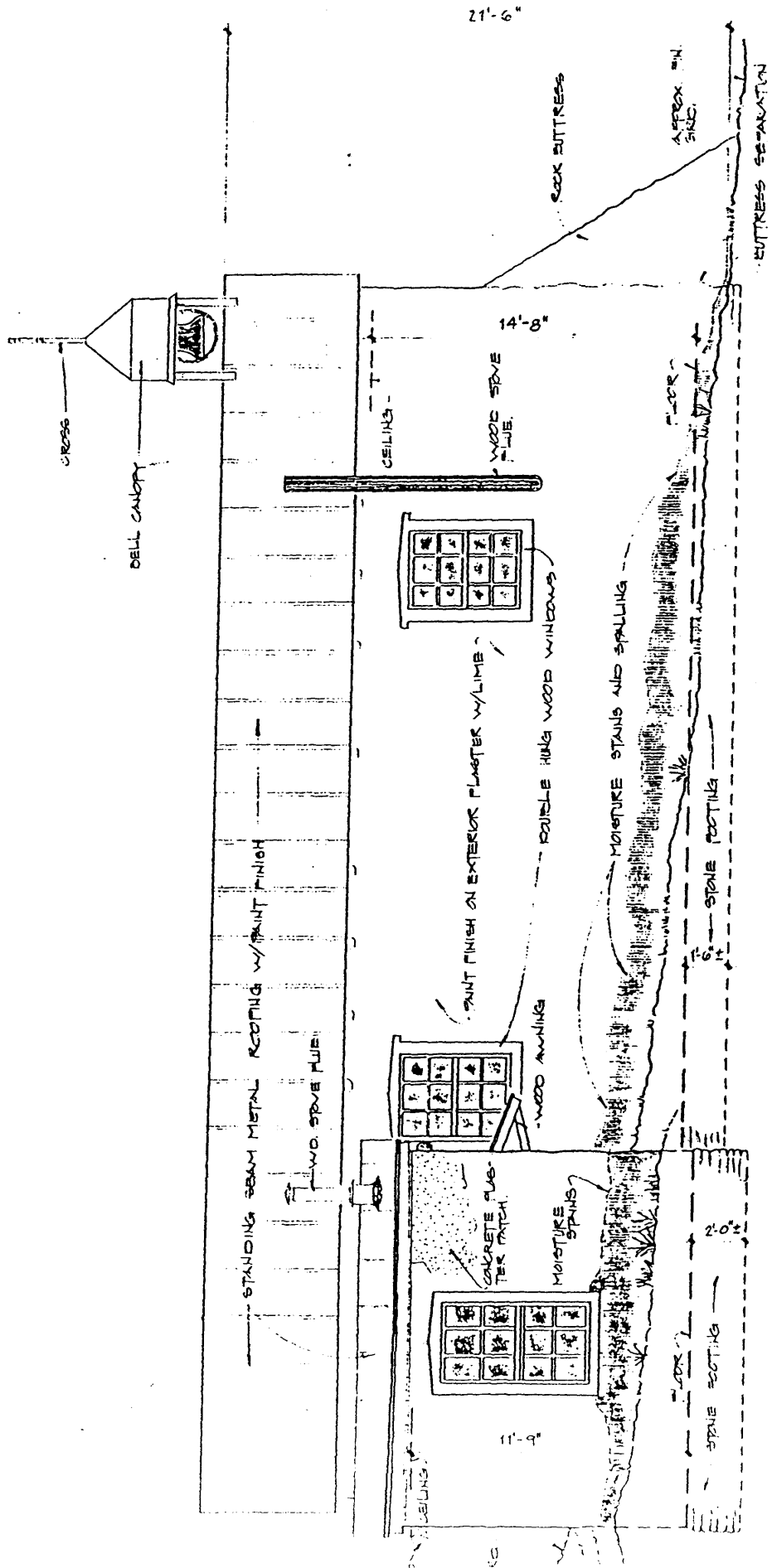
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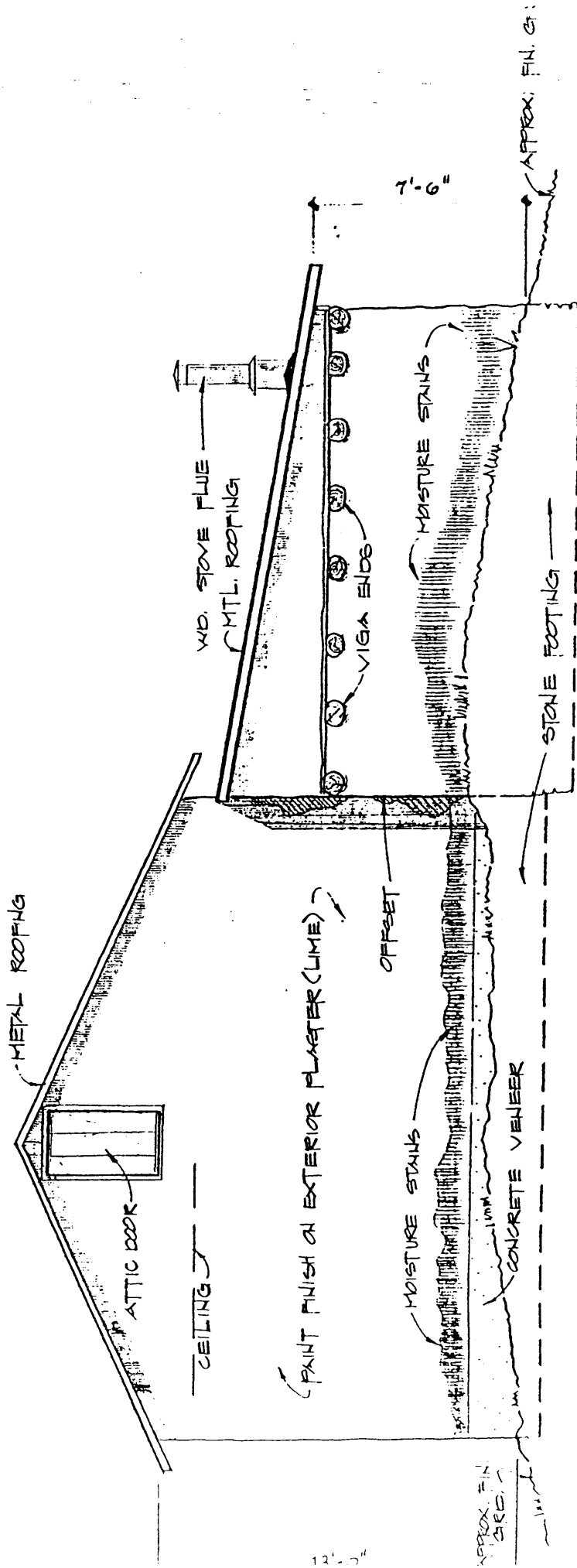
EAST ELEVATION

NUESTRA SEÑORA de LUZ Church
 CAÑONCITO, NEW MEXICO

NUESTRA SEÑORA de LUZ Church CAÑONCITO, NEW MEXICO



WEST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

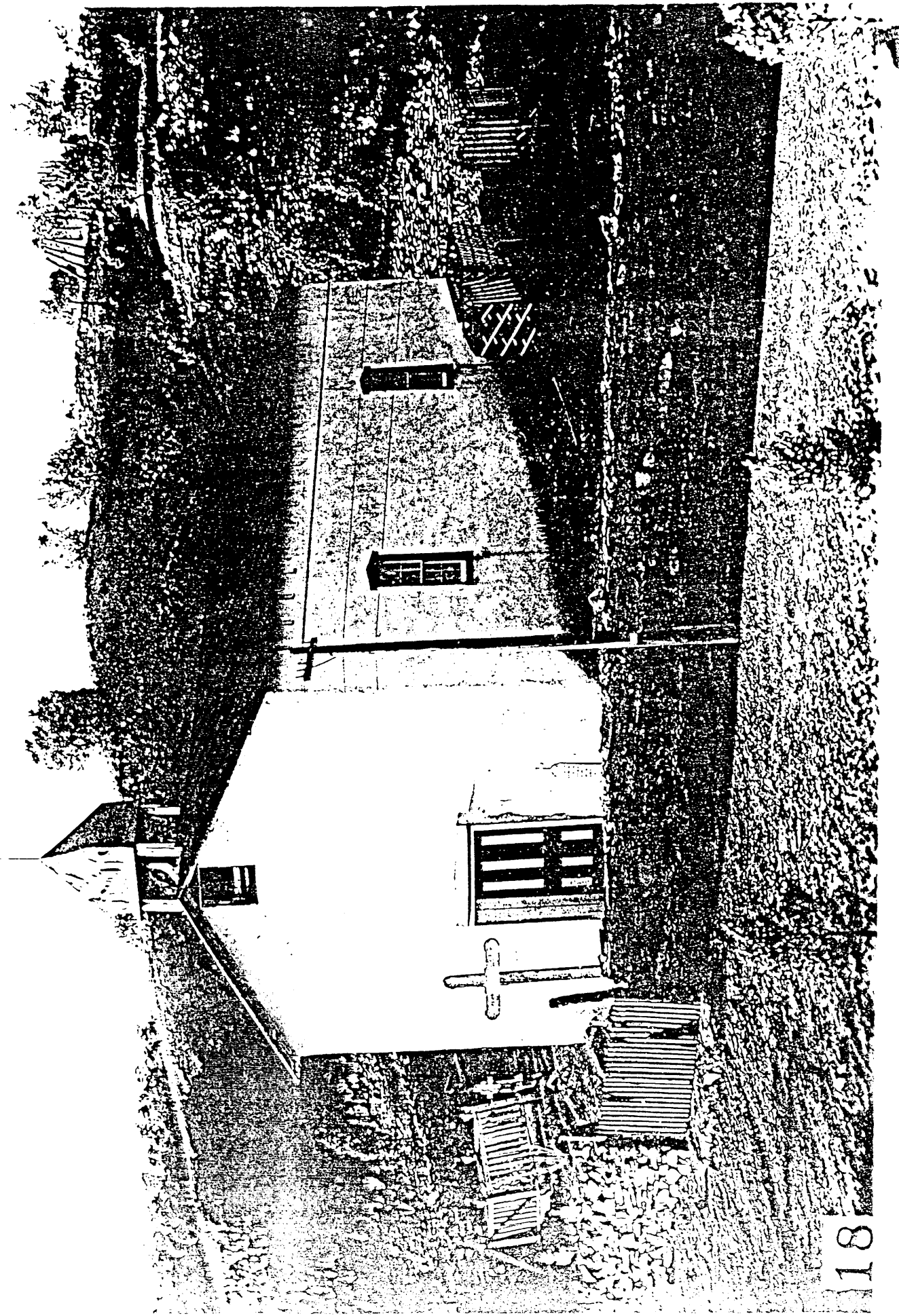
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CAÑONCITO, NEW MEXICO



Nuestra Señora de Luz
Cañoncito, NM
1914

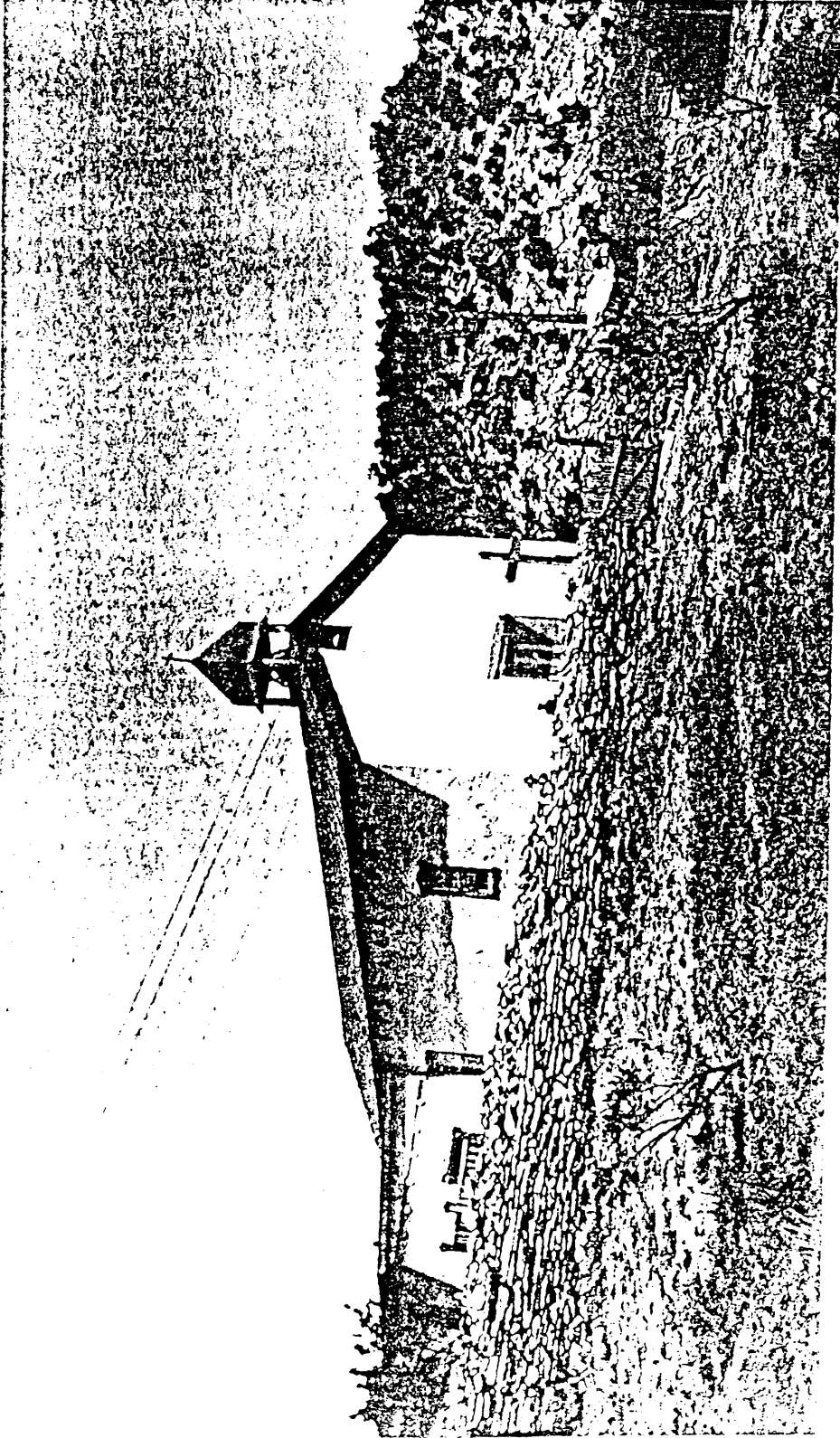
Museum of New Mexico 8830
Waldo Twitchell, photographer

1914 5/8



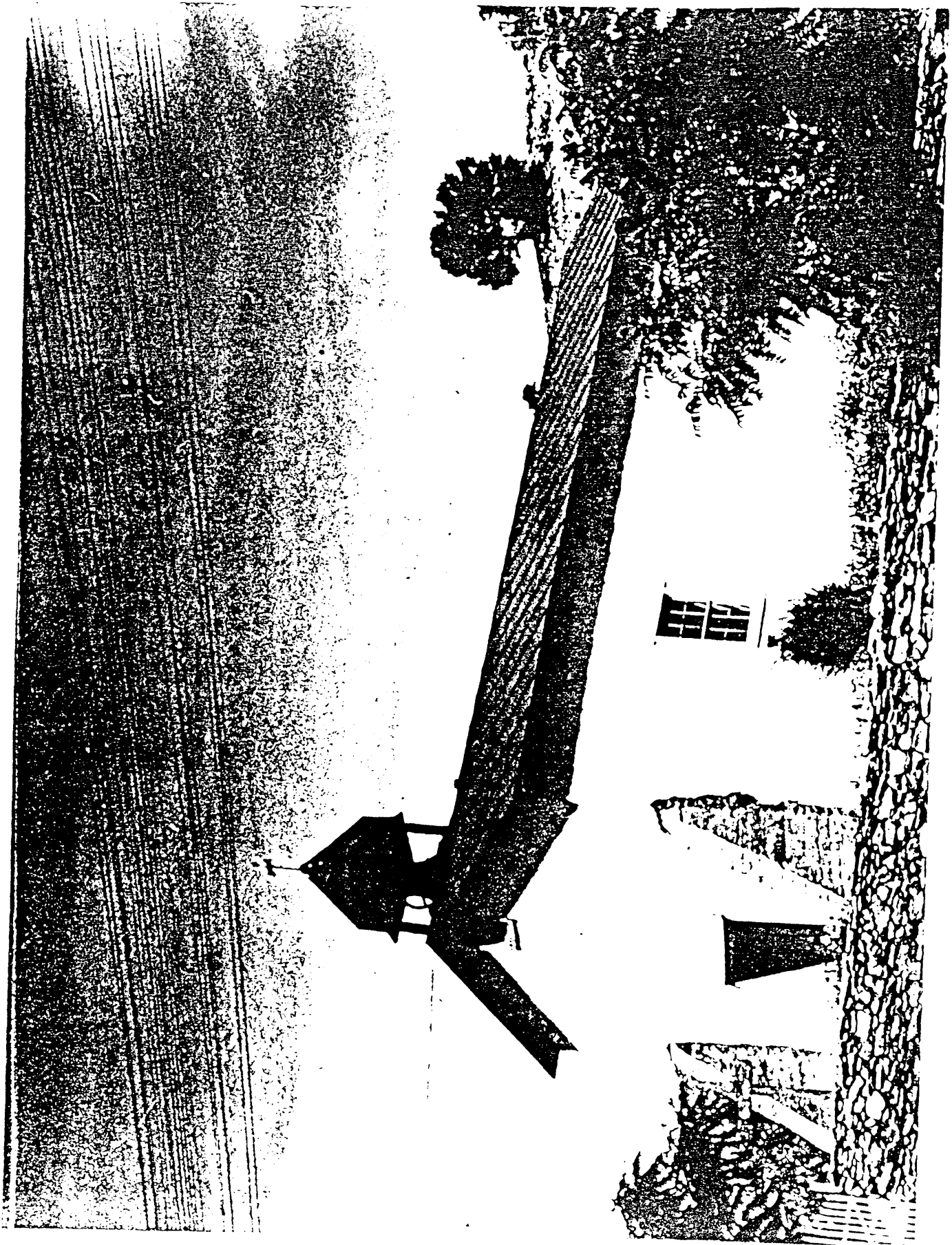
118

Nuestra Señora de Luz
Cañoncito, NM
n.d. [c.1914]



Nuestra Señora de Luz
Cañoncito, NM
n.d.

Museum of New Mexico 56641
Twitchell Collection



Nuestra Señora de Luz
Cañoncito, NM
1937