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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name CASA DE ESPERANZA  
other names/site number BLAS AGUILAR ADOBE

2. Location

street & number 31806 El Camino Real N/A not for publication  
city, town San Juan Capistrano N/A vicinity  
state California code 06 county Orange code 59 zip code 92675

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Kathryn Gualtieri 8/16/90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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):  
Added to the National Register  
Andrew Byer 10/1/90  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

vacant

**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Early California Adobe

foundation concrete

walls adobe

roof tile

other wooden room addition

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Blas Aguilar Adobe as seen today retains much of its original integrity and mass when compared to early photographs. It is a larger than usual adobe structure and rather massive in appearance. The adobe is rectangular in shape with the short walls parallel to the street. The walls are approximately two feet thick, typical for single story adobe construction. Today, the building is stuccoed and painted a warm beige. The windows, tile roof, and interior appointments are new.

It is said to be of very early construction, and nothing in the original materials observed on the site contradicts this belief. The interior underwent changes, installation of wooden cupboards and wall partitions, yet the interior adobe walls remain, and it is possible that removal of obviously modern materials would suggest the configuration which was detailed in a 1936 WPA report called Adobes of Orange County by C. E. Roberts. Adobe brick is very hard to demolish; very likely most of the original adobe is still in place. A recent survey by Gilbert Sanchez and Associates supports this. In his preliminary report, Mr. Sanchez states that the larger front part dates back to the late 1790s and the walls on the rear portion were added approximately in the 1840s. When Gilbert Sanchez and Associates examined the former exterior east wall of the adobe, which is now an interior wall, they found a window which was filled in when the rear portion was added in the 1840s. According to Gilbert Sanchez and Associates, it was customary when a property changed hands that the new owner would make some changes. In the case of Blas Aguilar, it is very likely that he added the rear portion in 1841 to the original adobe. See Map by Gil Sanchez.

The Blas Aguilar Adobe is located at 31806 El Camino Real in San Juan Capistrano. It was built as a single large adobe and stood next to a slightly smaller adobe structure, the "Casa Tejada". When Blas Aguilar purchased the two adobes, he incorporated the two structures as wings for the "Hacienda Aguilar Estate". The Blas Aguilar Adobe, also known as Casa de Esperanza, was the north wing and Casa Tejada the south wing. The Casa Tejada was demolished in 1930, and only the north wing, the "Casa de Esperanza/Blas Aguilar Adobe", remains. During the early days of 1795 and the time of Blas Aguilar, the two adobes looked much the same -- both were larger structures with rough outer adobe walls and the traditional tile roofs which were handmade in the Mission.

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The adobe faces west onto El Camino Real. It is detached, measuring 33' x 75'. The entire lot size is 6,100 sq. ft. The setbacks of the adobe are 14' on the west side along El Camino Real, 30' on the north side to accommodate the gravel driveway, 28' on the east side, and 18' on the south side. The entire building is stuccoed and painted. The walls have a distinctive crooked appearance that is highly visible even through the stucco. The doors and the windows are deeply recessed. The red tile roof has a low pitched front facing gabled-shape. A matching shed-style porch roof runs across the front. On the north and south sides the roof is a slight overhang. The tiles seem to be set on concrete, and this roof is not the original one.

When the adobe was built in 1794, it had a tile roof just like the adjacent Casa Tejada. Photograph #8 shows this type of tile roof. Sometime after 1890, the tile roof of the Casa Esperanza fell into disrepair and was recovered with a thin shingle roof -- see Photograph #9. This same photograph also shows the Casa Tejada on the left side with its original tile roof intact. The same pictures show us the courtyard/patio between the two adobes and the adobe wall that ran along the west side of the property with the large gate facing El Camino Real. A bill for tarpaper and other materials from the local lumber company in 1938 and a letter from Alfonso Yorba thanking the Historical Society of Southern California for their donation tell us that the entire roof and the porches on the north and west sides were recovered. Photographs #10 through #14 show this new roof.

The Archdiocese of Orange purchased the Casa de Esperanza/Blas Aguilar Adobe from the Aguilar family approximately 1940. It was at that time that changes occurred on the outside and the interior of the adobe to accommodate two families. The exterior walls were stuccoed and painted, new contemporary windows and doors replaced old ones. The present tile roof was installed and the porch on the north side removed. The porch on the west side facing El Camino Real remained, was painted, and new tile roofing installed as well as a cement slab that replaced the former wood floor which is 33' in length and 5' wide. The wooden rear addition as seen on Alfonso Yorba's 1938 sketch was converted into a garage.

Comparing the floor plan of Alfonso Yorba of 1938 to the existing interior layout as seen today, one notices certain changes. The former 50' sala was partitioned off to make room for a kitchen. The former tile floor as mentioned by Yorba is cemented over. The adobe walls still exist as depicted in the sketch of 1938, especially the interior center wall. See map by Gil Sanchez.

The earliest existing picture, Photograph #8, taken prior to 1885 shows the south side with rough adobe brick and a traditional "horno" (oven) under a shingled overhang. Photographs #10 through #14 taken in the 1930s show the

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west and north sides stuccoed or heavily whitewashed while also showing that the former adobe wall facing El Camino Real and the gate are no longer there. The south side still has the adobe bricks exposed. See Photographs #10 and #11 taken from the roof of Casa Tejada looking into the former patio. In the same pictures, one notes that the large overhang and the horno are missing. Photograph #10 taken from the roof of the Casa Tejada shows that the rear portion of the roof on the Casa de Esperanza is somewhat lower and the wall built of adobe while Photograph #14 of the north side shows wood siding in the same rear area. The bill of the lumber company states that the wall at the rear of the adobe was part wood and part adobe. Today, that area serves as a double garage. Garage doors have replaced the wooden wall on the north side and the roof is of uniform height.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Settlement

1790-1885

NA

Government

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person

AGUILAR, Don Blas

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Casa de Esperanza is significant in the settlement history of San Juan Capistrano under Criterion A as one of the oldest adobes in the community, dating to the period when Mission San Juan Capistrano was under construction. It is the only adobe that remains from a row of large single story adobes built at the turn of the 18th century on El Camino Real and fronting the now developed Mission Plaza. The building is also significant in the governmental history of the community under Criterion B for the association with Don Blas Aguilar who enlarged and lived in the house from 1841 until his death in 1885. Aguilar was the last Alcalde in San Juan Capistrano under Mexican rule and the first Justice of the Peace under American rule. Aguilar was much respected as Justice of the Peace and he symbolizes the transition from Mexican to American government.

On April 21, 1990, OHP staff visited the site to assess the overall integrity of the building, which in photographs appears low. The site visit proved the building has not suffered a loss of integrity in terms of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. When seen in its setting on El Camino Real in view of the Mission, the significance of Casa de Esperanza as an early secular building outside the Mission compound and later as the residence of an important individual is easily conveyed.

When the Mission of San Juan Capistrano was established in 1776, the earliest buildings on the Mission grounds were a temporary chapel and a dwelling to house the missionaries and their domestics. When construction of the large stone church was begun in 1794, the area outside the immediate Mission grounds experienced a building boom. Indian neophytes, under the supervision of the Padres, constructed several large adobe buildings fronting the Mission Plaza for the purpose of housing the military guards and soldiers stationed at the Mission.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bancroft, Hubert Howe: HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA, History of California, San Francisco, 1884-1890.

Bandini, Helen Elliott: HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA, American Book Co., 1908.

Engelhardt, Zephyrin: SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO MISSION, Los Angeles, 1922.

Hallan, Pamela: DOS CIENTOS ANOS EN SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Irvine, 1975.

Yorba, Alfonso: Notes and accounts on the Blas Aguilar Family, 1938. "Old San Juan - Last Stronghold of Spanish California," Orange County News Magazine, February, 1965.

Archives of the Mission San Juan Capistrano.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessors Map, Book 124, Page 16, County of Orange, Block 10, #008 (124-160-008)

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property .14 acre (6,100 sq. ft.)

UTM References

A 

1	1	4	3	8	6	4	0	3	7	0	6	8	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

On the west side facing El Camino Real the lot is 63 feet in length. The north side runs 98.64 feet to the east side which is 61.05 feet in length. The south side is 91.98 feet long.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot the building sits on.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Ilse M. Byrnes  
 organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 2/28/90 - 6/20/90  
 street & number P.O. Drawer 1029 telephone 714/493-4222  
 city or town San Juan Capistrano state CA zip code 92693

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Recent excavations by LSA Associates in the immediate area of the Casa de Esperanza uncovered several foundations of large buildings. Archeological studies of the cobble foundations state 1795 as the date of construction. Early Mission records mention adobe construction in that area between 1794 and 1803. The existence of the adobes is also confirmed by Alfred Robinson during his visit to San Juan Capistrano in 1829. The WPA report by C. E. Roberts dates these early adobes to the 1790s.

In the early 1900s, the adobes along El Camino Real and the immediate vicinity fell either into disrepair or were removed to make room for downtown development. The Casa de Esperanza/Blas Aguilar Adobe is the only one remaining of all the adobes that once stood along El Camino Real, and on May 2, 1988, LSA Associates, Inc. of Irvine conducted a survey for the City of San Juan Capistrano and stated that the Blas Aguilar Adobe is a good candidate to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

It is believed that the first occupant of the Casa de Esperanza was Isidro Aguilar, a half-Aztec stone mason from Culiacan, Mexico. Isidro Aguilar superintended the building of the Stone Church at the Mission from 1799 until his death in 1801. He never saw the completion of the Stone Church which was in 1806.

Right next to the Casa de Esperanza stood another adobe, the Casa Tejada. It was located on the south side and ran parallel to the Casa de Esperanza. With the decline of the Mission under the reign of the new Republic of Mexico with its uncertain Mission policy, the Casa Tejada came into the possession of the last Indian Chanter of the Mission named Zeferino Taroge. The neighboring Casa de Esperanza became the property of Madalena Amador.

In 1841, Zeferino Taroge sold the Casa Tejada to the newly arrived Don Blas Aguilar and his wife Maria Antonia Guterrez y Cota. Shortly after, Don Blas Aguilar also purchased the Casa de Esperanza from Madalena Amador. The Casa de Esperanza and the Casa Tejada became known as the Hacienda Aguilar. After the purchase of the two adobes, Blas Aguilar constructed some smaller buildings on the east side of the property. They probably served as storage areas, and he also added a long adobe wall with a large entrance gate on the west side running parallel with El Camino Real. Photograph #9 shows the inner courtyard/patio with tile floor, the well in the center, and the gate opening on to El Camino Real.

Don Blas Aguilar was born February 3, 1811, son of Don Rosario Aguilar, a Spanish corporal stationed at the Presidio in San Diego. In Father Engelhart's book San Juan Capistrano Mission, he states that Don Rosario was Alcalde (magistrate) in San Juan Capistrano in 1843-1844. According to Alfonso

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Yorba's 1938 account, Don Blas Aguilar was the last Alcalde in San Juan Capistrano under Mexico until 1846 and the first Justice of the Peace under the United States.

Blas Aguilar was the legal head of the pueblo. An Alcalde, according to W. W. Robinson in Lawyers in Los Angeles enacted, adjudicated, and executed local laws... "was judge of the first instance, justice of the peace, notary public, recorder, escrow agent in land transactions, boss of the ayuntamiento (council), jack of all trades, and probably the town's most useful citizen."

Unfortunately, in the first part of the 19th century, public records were poorly kept, and we are unable to specifically list what Blas Aguilar's contributions and accomplishments were to San Juan Capistrano. We do know that holding the position of an Alcalde, especially the last one under Mexico, and being the first Justice of the Peace of the United States were very important positions in any community.

The Hacienda Aguilar was well known throughout the land for its elegance and beauty. Don Blas was a very gracious host to many, and he was much respected as the Justice of the Peace. After Don Blas died in 1885, his wife continued living in the Hacienda Aguilar. Upon her death, her son Don Jesus Aguilar became the owner. He in turn signed over the Casa Tejada to his sister Dona Lorenza Aguilar de Manriques while he maintained the Casa de Esperanza as his own home. During the 1890s, the buildings on the east side of the property fell into disrepair as did the wall and central gate on the west side facing El Camino Real. Don Jesus Aguilar, after his marriage to Dona Baldineda Ruiz y Canedo de Aguilar, left the Casa de Esperanza to live in his wife's adobe. Records indicate that the Casa Tejada stayed in good repair but that the roof of the Casa de Esperanza had fallen in.

Don Juan Aguilar, son of Don Jesus Aguilar, took over the Casa de Esperanza in 1910, and together with his father and his brothers Francisco and Blas II started to restore the Casa de Esperanza. Old newspaper accounts tell that after restoration, Don Juan converted the adobe into a very fine private museum that housed a large collection of family heirlooms and books. Don Juan worked for Monseigneur O'Sullivan as a guide and assistant manager at the Mission and was much involved with the restoration of the Mission.

Don Juan Aguilar was also widely read and acquainted with famous authors whose autographed books filled the walls in the Casa de Esperanza. He himself wrote a manuscript of Don Marcos Forster y Pico. He died in 1936 leaving the adobe to his brother Blas II. Don Blas Aguilar II continued living in the adobe until his death in 1937 when it became the property of the youngest brother Don Francisco Aguilar. The untimely death of Don Francisco in 1938 left the

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adobe to his sole heir Juan Aguilar II who was 14 years old at the time. In 1940, the Archdiocese of Orange bought several properties along El Camino Real, among them the Casa de Esperanza or Blas Aguilar Adobe. It was at that time the adobe received the stucco, tile roof, paint, and the garage on the rear north side.

From 1900 to the present, El Camino Real underwent dramatic changes. Of the numerous adobes that once stood there, many had already disappeared prior to the turn of the century. The 1930s saw additional destruction of buildings take place and marked the end of the Casa Tejada when it was torn down.

Records show that by 1850 the town of San Juan Capistrano was built around a central plaza which was bounded by the Mission on the north. Adobe buildings lined the east and west sides of the plaza. The east side contained the homes of Jose Canedo, Jose Parra, and the estate of Blas Aguilar. Today the only one left of all the adobes that once fronted the Mission Plaza is the Blas Aguilar/Casa de Esperanza.

Other adobe structures can be found in San Juan Capistrano. In the Los Rios Historic District there are four small two-room structures dating to 1800. Close to the Mission on Camino Capistrano are two adobes dating to 1840, and some distance from the Mission, on the Ortega Highway, is the Miguel Parra Adobe, another two-room structure, dating to 1850.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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This information is the same for all photographs listed.

BLAS AGUILAR ADOBE/ CASA DE ESPERANZA  
San Juan Capistrano, California  
Ilse M. Byrnes  
August 1988, January 1989  
P.O. Drawer 1029, San Juan Capistrano, Ca 92693

- # 1. View of front of the Blas Aguilar Adobe facing West onto El Camino Real, taken from El Camino Real.
- # 2. Same view as # 1, frontview of the Blas Aguilar Adobe, West side, taken from El Camino Real.
- # 3. Southside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken in August 1988 before removal of gardenshed.
- # 3 A. Same view as # 3, Southside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken in January 1989 after removal of shed and after all the windows were boarded up.
- # 4. North/West view of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken from the El Camino Real.
- # 5. Northside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe. On right side of photograph is the North/West corner of building.
- # 6. Northside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe, left side of photograph is the North/East corner of building. Photographs 5 & 6 can be matched up for a complete view of the entire Northside of the adobe. On the left hand side is the present double garage.
- # 7. Eastside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe. The left portion of the wall is solid adobe. The right side is wood and plaster, partially visible is the garagedoor.
- # 8. Blas Aguilar Adobe-photograph taken in 1880 shows the South/East corner with an "Horno" (Oven) under lean-to. Kneeling woman grinding on "metate" is Maria Antonia Guiterrez y Cota who was Don Blas Aguilars wife. The man chopping wood is Cervantes a handyman.
- # 9. Blas Aguilar Adobe on right side, Casa Tejada on the left. This photograph was taken from the Eastside of the property (rear) facing West onto El Camino Real. This is a view of the inner patio of "Hacienda Aguilar" with the well in the center. On the far side is the adobe wall with the large main gate opening unto El Camino Real which Blas Aguilar built approx. 1845. Date of photograph: approx. 1890.
- # 10. Southside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken from the roof of Casa Tejada. Note exposed adobe brick with minimal whitewash. The roof appears to

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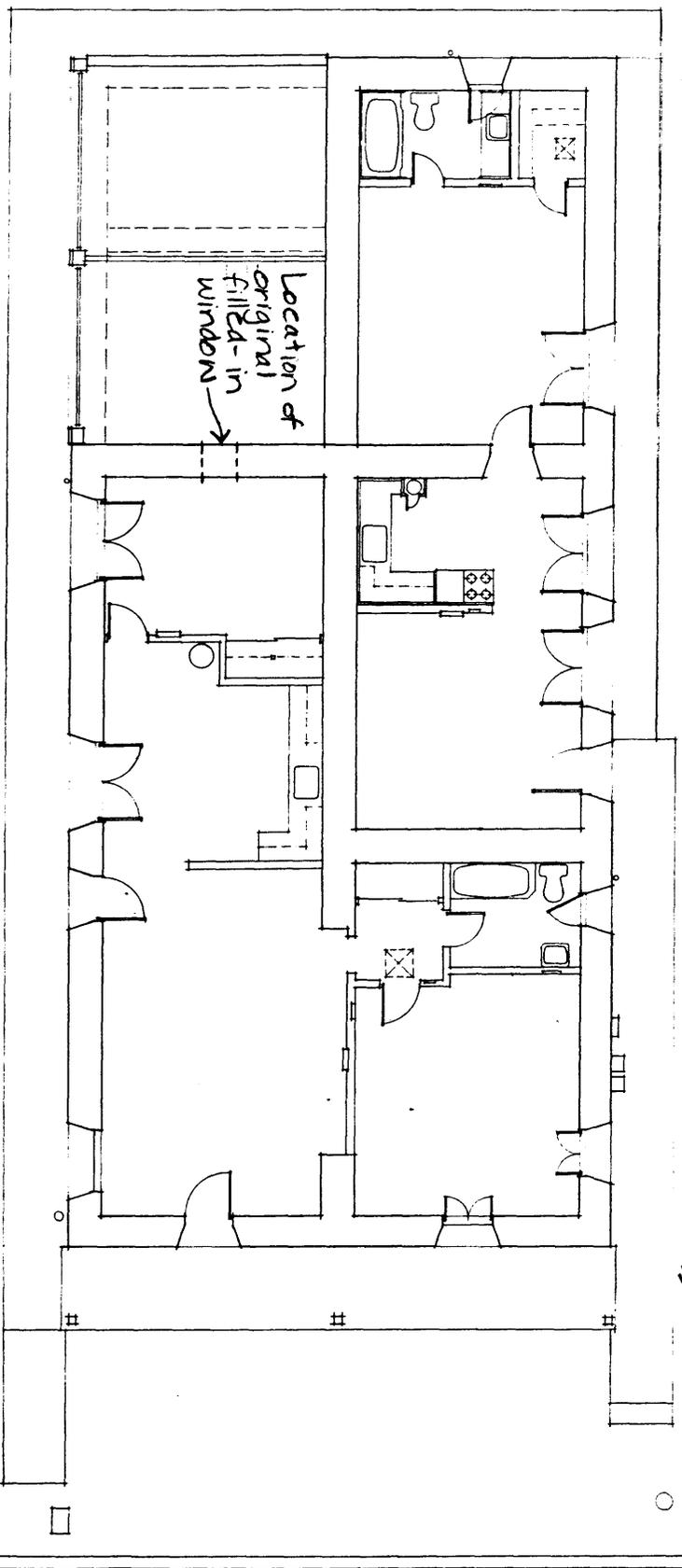
PHOTOGRAPHS:

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have been recently tarpapered. Visible is the height difference of the roofline to the rear of the adobe. This shows the room addition by Blas Aguilar in the 1840's. Photograph taken in the 1930's.

- # 11. Southwall of the Blas Aguilar Adobe. Early 1930's.
- # 12. South/West corner of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken from El Camino Real. The Westside is partially stuccoed or whitewashed. The Southside shows exposed adobe brick. The former adobe wall- ref. photograph # 9 -no longer exists when this photograph was taken approx. 1935.
- # 13. North/West corner of the Blas Aguilar Adobe taken from El Camino Real. On the right side of photograph is the Casa Tejada before its destruction. Photograph taken approx. 1935.
- # 14. Closeup of the North/West corner of the Blas Aguilar Adobe, approx. 1935
- # 15. Closeup of <sup>o</sup>tw windows on the Northside of the Blas Aguilar Adobe, adjacent to the garage. before they were boarded up.
- # 16. Closeup of two windows on the South side taken January 1989.



1840s portion  
 Wall extending above ceiling line is crudely plastered and not whitewashed. Walls below are plastered and whitewashed w/a very rough finish.

1790s portion  
 Extremely fine mud plaster with whitewash can be seen on wall above attic. Pink and yellow washes can be seen on early mud plastered walls.

Casa De Esperanza  
 31806 El Camino Real  
 San Juan Capistrano, CA  
 Orange County

The Blas Aguilar Adobe  
 Existing Condition 1990  
 Floor Plan

No scale

