

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 Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Chope's Town Café and Bar

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 16145 NM Highway 28

City or town: La Mesa State: NM County: Doña Ana

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

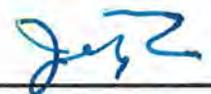
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

	<u>5/26/15</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Dr. Jeff Pappas, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

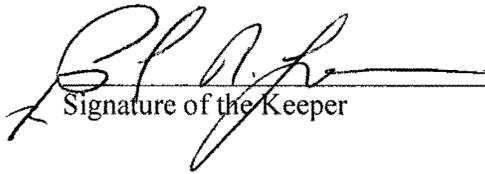
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:)


Signature of the Keeper

5/26/2015
Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial: restaurant

Domestic: multiple dwelling

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial: restaurant

Domestic: single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: No style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Stucco

Roof: Asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, and style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Chope's Town Café and Bar is a complex of three historic buildings that include a restaurant, which was begun in 1915, a bar, which opened in 1949, and a small casita behind the bar, which was built in 1957. Chope's is located on New Mexico Highway 28, the main thoroughfare through the small town of La Mesa, Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico. The one-story café features a side-gable roof, stucco walls, and several rear additions. The interior includes three dining rooms with vigas and *latillas*. Rear rooms serve as living quarters and food preparation areas. The bar, which opened in 1949, is a plain, rectangular building with a flat roof and adobe walls covered in stucco. The narrow, one-room bar features the historic bar across the back (west) wall and seating on either side of the entrance on the east side. The small, concrete-block casita was built behind the bar for bartending staff. It has flat roof and is clad in stucco. A noncontributing concrete-block and wood-frame storage building was built between the restaurant and bar in the 1980s.

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Narrative Description

Chope's Town Café and Bar is a complex of three historic buildings located on New Mexico Highway 28 in La Mesa, Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico. The café was begun in 1915, the bar, which opened in 1949, and a small casita behind the bar, which was built in 1957. The café and bar are oriented to Highway 28, the main north-south road through town. The café is located at the northwest corner of Highway 28 and Chopes Street. The bar is located north of the café in the center of the block. A paved walk on the property joins the two buildings. Parking areas are located between the two buildings and north of the bar. The property includes a few scattered trees, including a large pine at the northeast corner of the café, but the property is mostly open, flat, unpaved, and covered with gravel. The nominations includes two, free-standing back-lit plastic signs, erected in the 1950s.

Chope's Town Café

Chope's Town Café is a large, one-story, plain restaurant built of adobe walls covered with stucco. The building was built as a dwelling c.1880. In 1892, the Benvides family purchased the property and opened it as a restaurant in 1915 (photos 1-5). When it opened, the rectangular-shaped adobe-walled building included four rooms: a dining room and bar in the front; a kitchen and bedroom in back because the family continued to reside at the restaurant. In 1939, the kitchen was destroyed by fire. The current kitchen was built the next year on the north side of the café, west of the main dining room (dining room no.1). The original kitchen space, also called Abuelita's Cocina, was converted to dining room no. 3.

As the restaurant grew in popularity, the family made additions and alterations to the restaurant to accommodate the increasing number of patrons. The main entrance was moved from the front, along Highway 28, to the north side, adjacent to the restroom additions (photo 2). Many of the original sash windows were replaced with fixed- and sliding-metal windows (photo 3). In the 1970s, a low-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles, was built atop the original flat roof.

The interior of the café retains a high level of historic integrity, especially in its design, materials, and workmanship. The early 20th-century floor plan of dining rooms, kitchen, and bedrooms nos. 1 and 2 remains intact. The main dining room includes a pressed-tin ceiling and a *nicho* in the thick adobe wall (photo 6). Dining room no. 2, originally the bar, includes thick adobe walls, heavy and irregular vigas as well as *latillas* (photo 7). Dining room no. 3, which was built in 1940, features uniform, smaller-diameter vigas and also *latillas* (photo 8). The kitchen features modern equipment for food-preparation, but its plan remains intact (photo 11). Bedroom no.1, Chope and Guadalupe's bedroom, includes thick adobe walls and a *chimenea*, or fireplace (photo 9). Bedroom no. 2 was likely built by Margarito Benavides in the early 1900s (photo 10). It is built of wood frame and covered with stucco.

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By the end of the 20th century, as the reputation of Chope's spread, the Benavides family built additions to the rear of the building. In 1995, two food preparations rooms were built at the rear of the kitchen and dining room no. 3 (photos 12-13). In 2005, the family added a living room, sun room, and covered patio to the west end of the café (photo 5).

The exterior of Chope's Town Café retains its historic sense of scale, feeling, and association. Changes to the café in the second half of the 20th century include the addition of a gable roof, cement stucco walls, and altered window openings. These alterations have resulted in the loss of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship on the exterior. The interior, however, retains a high level of historic integrity because the design of the early 20th-century café remains intact with three dining rooms and the kitchen, built in 1940. In addition, the family's two bedrooms remain. These spaces feature significant elements of historic materials and workmanship, including adobe walls, vigas, *nichos*, and *latillas*. Although the exterior has been significantly altered, the café's principal contribution is its interior spaces because restaurant interiors are frequently remodeled and seldom survive over decades.

Chope's Town Café Bar

Chope's Bar is a plain, one-story, rectangular-shaped building, which was constructed as a welding shop in the 1930s (photos 14-17). Located adjacent Chope's Town Café, the Benavides family purchased the building in 1942 and opened it as Chope's Bar in 1949. It is constructed of abode with a cement stucco exterior, a concrete foundation, and a flat roof. The broad, main façade features only three bays: a central steel door and transom flanked by two, wood fixed windows (photos 15-16). The openings are supported with wood lintels. The windows are covered with burglar bars and recently added wood bars. The Benavides family recently applied a new coat of stucco to the older, failing stucco walls. In doing so, the painted advertisements, which dated from the 1950s and 1960s, were lost. The family contracted with a local artist to duplicate the painted advertisements. This repainting is currently in progress.

The interior of the bar consists of the original one-room dimly lit space and, along the west wall, the bar, which was built when the establishment opened in 1949 (photo 18). Chope's Bar included a pool table, which was soon moved out because it was a source of constant disagreements and altercations.¹ The space once occupied by the pool table along the front wall has since been used for dining.

The only significant change to the building, according to Cecilia Benavides, is the small shed-roofed addition, built in the 1960s, on the north and west sides. This addition includes room

¹ Yanez, Cecilia. Interview with Beth O'Leary, 6 December 6, 2014.

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for storage and a walk-in refrigerator (photo 17). For many years the bar had only one restroom, which served as the women's restroom. The men's room was added in the 1980s.²

Additional Resources

In 1957, Chope built a small, concrete-block casita for the bartending staff behind Chope's Town Café and Bar. The 13 x 18-foot shed-roofed building included one bedroom and a bathroom (photo 19).

In the 1950s, Chope installed two back-list plastic signs on steel posts. He installed a sign that reads "Coors Beer" at the northeast corner of the café and a sign that reads "Chopes Bar & Café" at the southeast corner of the bar (photos 2 and 14).

In c.1990, the family built a concrete-block and wood-frame storage building between the café and the bar. The shed-roofed building measures 13 x 47 feet with three doors and a small window opening on the front (east) façade (photo 20).

Contributing and Noncontributing Resources

Chope's Town Café is counted as one contributing building.
Chope's Town Café Bar is counted as one contributing building.
Casita is counted as one contributing building.
Coors Beer sign is counted as one contributing structure.
Chopes Bar & Café sign is counted as one contributing structure.
Storage building is counted as one noncontributing building.

² Ibid.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Women's History

Period of Significance

1915-1965

Period of Significance Justification

The period of significance begins in 1915, when the Benavides family opened a restaurant in their home in La Mesa, New Mexico and ends in 1965, at the 50-year end date.

Significant Dates

1915—Chope's Town Café opens.

c.1949—Chope's Town Café Bar opens.

1942-1964—Chope's participates in the Bracero Program.

1957—Chope built casita built for bartending staff.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of entertainment/recreation because for most of the 20th century the restaurant was a long-time family owned restaurant and bar serving traditional New Mexican cuisine. Chope's Town Café is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of entertainment/recreation because the café was an important community landmark that served as the hub of the La Mesa for social and political gatherings. Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of social history because of the Benavides family's involvement in the Bracero Program, a guest worker program initiated in 1942, which permitted Mexican nationals to live and work in the United States because of the shortage of American agricultural workers during the Second World War. Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of women's history because Longina Benavides and later Guadalupe Benavides began and continued to operate a successful restaurant business in the first decades of the 20th century, when there were few women entrepreneurs in New Mexico.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of entertainment/recreation because for most of the 20th century the restaurant was a long-time family owned restaurant and bar serving traditional New Mexican cuisine. Chope's is a rare, surviving property type because restaurants are frequently remodeled to keep up with current fashion and aesthetic tastes and it is unusual for a restaurant, or any business, to remain in the same for family for one hundred years. The *2014-2015 Las Cruces Yellow Pages* indicates that there are currently 295 restaurants from Las Cruces to La Mesa. The majority, roughly 58 percent, are restaurants chains or franchises. Forty-nine percent are "Mexican" restaurants, including six locally owned chains. The only operating restaurant in the region established before the Second World War is La Posta in Mesilla, which began in 1939. Chope's has remained in the Benavides family since 1915 and continues to serve recipes developed by matriarchs Longina and Guadalupe Benavides.

Chope's Town Café is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of entertainment/recreation because the café was an important community landmark that served as the hub of the La Mesa for social and political gathering like post offices and general stores had served as community gathering places in earlier generations. Jose "Chope" Benavides was a leader in the community, who was a successful businessman and active in the affairs of La Mesa. The dining rooms at Chope's Town Café served as places for the community to come

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together during meal times and when Chope hosted special events, such as meetings of benevolent associations and when he hosted politicians.

Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of social history because of the Benavides family's involvement in the Bracero Program, a guest worker program initiated in 1942, which permitted Mexican nationals to live and work in the United States because of the shortage of American agricultural workers during the Second World War. During the program, which ended in 1964, more than four million Mexican nationals were contracted to work in the United States.³ *Bracero* work was difficult and required long hours. Some *braceros* were mistreated by farmers and foreman. The low wages earned by *Braceros* varied among states, with wages in New Mexico between 75 and 90 cents per hour in the mid-1950s. In California during the 1950s, *braceros* earned 85 cents per hour, and in the 1960s they earned \$2.50 per hour.⁴

The *braceros* had a significant effect on farming, local businesses, and the culture of many agricultural communities, especially in border towns.⁵ La Mesa-resident Cora C. Reyes recalled that many *braceros* slept in barns and shared the facilities in the main house.⁶ *Braceros* were reprimanded for minute things. Anselmo Gamez recalled getting reprimanded after pausing for a drink in one-hundred degree heat.⁷ Though sometimes mistreated, the *braceros* were an essential part the nation's agricultural economy. Reyes remembers that her family contracted with *braceros* throughout the duration of Bracero Program and that many local farms and businesses would not have survived without the *braceros*.⁸

The Bracero Program was critical to the success of Chope's Town Café. The Benavides family relied on the Bracero Program for the local farm produce used to prepare their meals. The *braceros*, in turn, often ate at Chope's, which provided a special "lunch plate," which included enchiladas or meat, rice, beans, and tortillas. When the *braceros* could not afford to pay in cash, they bartered with fresh produce. Many *braceros* stopped by the café after working in the fields.

³ Richard B. Craig, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1971).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cora C. Reyes, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Bracero Archives, Las Cruces, NM, 1996.

<http://www.nmfarmandranchmuseum.org/oralhistory/detail.php?interview=135>, Accessed 4 April 2014.

⁷ Anselmo Gamez, New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Bracero Archives, Las Cruces, NM, 1997.

<http://braceroarchive.org/items/browse?search=anselmo+gomez+dona+ana+county&submitsearch=Search> Accessed 20 February 2014.

⁸ Reyes.

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When the Bracero Program ended, some *braceros* attained legal residency, many settling and raising families in the farm communities in which they had worked, including La Mesa.

Chope's Town Café and Bar is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of women's history because Longina Benavides and later Guadalupe Benavides began and continued to operate a successful restaurant business in the first decades of the 20th century, when there were few women entrepreneurs in New Mexico. Beginning in 1915, Longina prepared traditional New Mexican dishes from her home, which was reconfigured to serve as a restaurant. She developed an innovative marketing strategy in which she used a lantern to signal that fresh enchiladas were for sale. After marrying Jose "Chope" Benavides in 1937, Guadalupe became manager and chef of Chope's. She expanded the café's menu to include Mexican-American recipes she developed during her youth in Los Angeles. Both Longina and Guadalupe lived at Chope's and dedicated their working lives to the success of the restaurant, which became renowned throughout southern New Mexico.

Developmental history/additional context information (if appropriate)

The Benavides Family

Chope's Town Café is inseparable from the history of the Benavides family. Longina Benavides (1883-1940) began the restaurant in 1915, selling enchiladas with an outside lantern that she turned on to signal that fresh enchiladas were for sale. Longina made her enchiladas from onions, chiles, cheese, and handmade tortillas covered in red chile sauce. With the increasing popularity of the café, Longina's daughter-in-law, Guadalupe, stepped in as chef and manager when she married into the family.

Guadalupe Benavides (b. 1917) was brought to the US from Mexico at the age of two, when her mother died of influenza. One of six children, Guadalupe was raised in Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, she was joined by siblings Lino and Maria.⁹ Their Aunt Lucia shared her experiences as a cook for Pancho Villa in Mexico.¹⁰ Maria, the eldest of Guadalupe's siblings, was another important culinary influence on Guadalupe. Maria married Martin Saenz and in c.1935, the three, Maria, Martin, and Guadalupe, moved to La Mesa, New Mexico. In 1937, Guadalupe married Jose "Chope" Benavides at the Basilica of San Albino in Mesilla, New Mexico.

Guadalupe brought her own style of Mexican-American food and cultural heritage to La Mesa. She expanded the Chope's menu to include tamales, gorditas, flautas, and their famous chile rellenos. She also offered customers a choice between red and green chiles. Her recipes have

⁹ Cecilia Yanez and Amelia Rivas, Interview with Addison Warner and Norma Hartell, 30 April 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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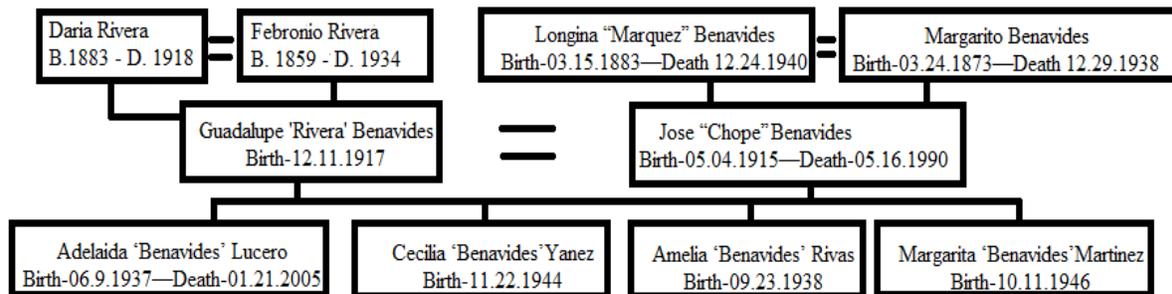
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not changed since she began cooking at the café. Guadalupe and Chope were involved in the local farming economy because Longina and Guadalupe insisted on using fresh local ingredients. In some cases, local farmers would allow Chope to pick his own chiles after the initial harvest.

Chope and Guadalupe had four daughters: Adeliada Lucero (1937- 2005), Amelia Rivas (b. 1938), Cecilia Yanez (b. 1944), and Margarita Martinez (b. 1946). With the success of the restaurant and bar, the daughters soon became involved in the family business. Their mother taught each of them the secrets to her cooking to ensure the future success of the café and bar. Guadalupe, who is 97 years of age, lives in bedroom no. 2 at the back of the restaurant as. The three surviving daughters, Cecilia, Amelia, and Margarita, continue to cook with¹¹ Guadalupe's recipes and manage the café and bar. The sisters have hired additional family members and others to serve as wait staff and to work in the kitchen.¹²

The Benavides Family



(Drawn by Norma Hartell and Addison Warner)

Jose "Chope" Benavides was born in 1915 and, after his death in 1990, remains a beloved figure in the community of La Mesa and in southern New Mexico.¹³ He acquired his nickname "Chope, from his father because he frequently wore *chopos*, or overalls. His restaurant not only served home-cooked food, it was a social center of the community and its dining rooms provided gathering places for social and political discussions among the farmers and workers in the surrounding communities of Mesilla, Mesquite, San Miguel, Vado, and La Mesa. Chope held weekly coffee club gatherings at the café in which local farmers discussed their crops, production, and other events that influenced agriculture and business in the surrounding community from the 1940s to the 1980s.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John A. Papen III, Interview with Addison Warner, 30 April 2014.

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Chope never held political office, but he was a committed Democrat and an important figure in the party in southern New Mexico. He served as precinct chairman in the 1956 presidential election in which he registered voters and organized transportation to the polls.¹⁴ Although affiliated with the Democratic Party, he campaigned, offered advice, and discussed politics with both Democrats and Republicans alike. He assisted politicians, such as former governors Edwin Mechem, Jerry Apodaca, and Bruce King. Chope's Town Café was a gathering place for political discussion in southern New Mexico.

Chope was member of the Knights of Columbus, becoming a "Guard" officer for Council 1226 of Las Cruces on June 4th, 1952.¹⁵ He was member of the Lions Club, which met on Monday nights at Chope's Town Café. Shortly before his death, he received the award for the "oldest living member" of the Lions Club¹⁶ He also volunteered at the La Mesa Fire Department and became fire chief in 1958.¹⁷ Chope Benavides was also involved with the local La Mesa Blue Jays baseball team in the 1940s. He would practice and travel with the team, though he never held a coaching position. Chope also translated and interpreted documents for illiterate and non-English speaking members of the community. Chope and Guadalupe attended San Jose Catholic Church in La Mesa, where Guadalupe was a member of the "Sacred Hearts of Jesus." Chope is buried on the grounds of San Jose Catholic Church.

Developmental History of Chope's Town Café and Bar

Chope's Town Café was built as a dwelling c.1880. In 1892 the Benavides purchased the property, which is indicated on a plot map of La Mesa from February 19, 1892. The plot map identifies that Lot No. 3 on Block No. 36 was owned by the Benavides family.¹⁸ The original portion of the house, along Route 28, served as the restaurant's first dining room (photos 10), bar (photo 11), and kitchen (photo 12) in 1915. Longina Benavides's bedroom was located in this part of the house. The room west of the original bar was the first kitchen, now dining room no. 3, also called Abuelita's Cocina (photo 12). The kitchen was destroyed by fire in 1939. The current kitchen, called Lupe's Comedor (photo 13), was built in 1940, west of the dining area.

During Prohibition, Longina acquired alcohol from Juarez, Mexico, which she sold in the restaurant.¹⁹ The popularity of the restaurant increased during the 1920s and early 1930s and

¹⁴ "Election Proclamation: Democratic," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 22 October 1956.

¹⁵ "Knights of Columbus Elect New Officers," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 4 June 1952.

¹⁶ Celia Yanez and Amelia Rivas, 30 April 2014.

¹⁷ "La Mesa Fire District Okayed By State Group," *Las Cruces Sun News*, 31 March 1958.

¹⁸ Doña Ana County Tax Assessor. Title Deed. Armijo Jacinto to Juan Benavides, Deed Book No. 16: 45, 1892.

¹⁹ Cecilia Yanez and Amelia Rivas, Interview with Addison Warner and Norma Hartell, 27 February 2014.

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in 1934, the restaurant obtained its liquor license and began to sell alcohol in the dining room and bar. The bar included a juke box and a slot machine for gambling.

Chope's thrived in the Mesilla Valley, where fresh vegetables are grown throughout the year, including corn, beans, and chiles. The chile is an essential ingredient in New Mexican cuisine and Chope's Town Café embraced the chile in their own style of New Mexican cuisine. The restaurant currently buys their red chiles from the Cervantes farm, which is located in Mesquite, New Mexico. The family purchases the "Joe Parker" variety of green chiles, which are grown in Hatch and Las Cruces, from Biad Chile Products in Mesilla, New Mexico. They purchase between 10 and 12 tons of these chiles each year.

Chope's Town Café is renowned for their chile rellenos and their enchiladas. The chile relleno at Chope's is a whole green chile stuffed with cheese, dipped in egg batter, and fried. The egg batter distinguishes Chope's chili rellenos from those served at other restaurants. Another specialty of Chope's is enchiladas stacked and covered with red or green chile sauce and cheese. The stacked version (flat enchiladas) is the New Mexican style of enchiladas with onions and an optional egg on top. They are stacked because the corn tortillas used in New Mexico are grainier, which makes them difficult to roll. Every plate at Chope's comes with their homemade salsa and a side of beans and rice, a mainstay of New Mexican cuisine.

Following the death of Longina in 1940, Jose and Guadalupe Benavides managed the café, continuing to serve Longina's famous enchiladas. In 1942, the family purchased a neighboring welding shop because Chope wanted a new building to separate the drinking establishment from the café, where his young daughters helped prepare food. Chope's Town Café Bar opened in 1949. In the 1960s, Chope built a low, shed-roofed addition to the north and west sides of the bar to accommodate storage and a walk-in refrigerator. The advertisements painted on the front and sides of the bar in the 1950s and 1960s included ads for Italian Swiss Colony Wine, Steel Brook Bourbon, and 7up. Italian Swiss Colony Wine was both inexpensive and popular in the early decades of the 20th century. A version of the Swiss Colony television jingle, "you just can't miss with Italian Swiss Colony," was painted on the front of the bar in the 1960s. In 2014, the family had a new coat of stucco applied to the bar. A local artist is currently repainting the advertisements.

Chope's after the Second World War

In 1957, Chope built a cinderblock casita behind the bar for the bartending staff. The small casita consists of one bedroom and a bathroom. Teresa Paredes Olivarez, who was from El Paso, worked at the bar, ate in the café, and resided in the casita from 1962 to 1967. The casita has

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been used for storage since 1980.²⁰ Chope built a long, rectangular storage building, which was constructed between the restaurant and bar c.1990.

After Chope's death in 1990, Guadalupe moved from the bedroom she had shared with her husband (bedroom no. 1) to bedroom no. 2. In 1995, a living room and the current larger preparation room were added to the west side. In 2005, a sunroom and an outside porch were added to the west side of the house. The sunroom is used for family meals.²¹ In 2010, new restrooms were added near the front entrance. In the 1970s, a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles was built atop the café's flat roof.²²

Chope's initially served the rural community La Mesa and surrounding farms. The reputation of the restaurant grew throughout the state and, in the 1970s the family printed shirts and bumper stickers to advertise the Chope's name.²³ The restaurant became a place to eat and drink for the larger community of Las Cruces, including New Mexico State University faculty and students, who traveled 16 miles south for Chope's New Mexican cuisine. Chope's Town Café currently serves more than 200 diners daily.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cecilia Yanez and Amelia Rivas, 30 April 2014.

²² Cecilia Yanez and Amelia Rivas, 27 February 2014.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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_____. Quitclaim Deed No. 12380. Inez Benavides et al to Jose Benavides. Las Cruces, NM, 1954.

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Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

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Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State

Yanez, Cecilia. Interview with Beth O'Leary. 6 December 2014.

Yanez, Cecilia and Amelia Rivas . Interview with Addison Warner. July 7, 2014.

Yanez, Cecilia and Amelia Rivas. Interview with Addison Warner and Norma Hartell, 27 February 2014.

_____. Interview with Addison Warner and Norma Hartell, 30 April 2014.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: Approximately one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 32.119287 Longitude: -106.706166
2. Latitude: Longitude:

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary of Chope's Town Café and Bar appears on a map as a thick red line drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary represents a portion of the Benavides-family property that was historically associated with Chope's Town Café and Bar.

Form Prepared By

name/title: Norma Hartell
organization: New Mexico State University
street & number: 120 Segovia lane
city or town: Mesquite state: NM zip code 88048
e-mail nchairez@nmsu.edu
telephone: (575) 650 5690
date: 29 December 2014

name/title: Addison Warner
organization: New Mexico State University
street & number: 4016 Mary Circle, Apt 8
city or town: Las Cruces state: NM zip code 88001
e-mail addisonwarne@yahoo.com,
telephone: (859)227- 5387
date: 29 December 2014

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State

name/title: Beth O'Leary (advisor)
organization: Professor Emerita, New Mexico State University.
street & number: 5757 Leasburg Drive
city or town: Las Cruces state: NM zip code 88007
e-mail addisonwarne@yahoo.com , nchairez@nmsu.edu,
telephone: (575) 644 1668
date: 29 December 2014

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator
organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
city or town: Santa Fe state: New Mexico zip: 87501
e-mail steven.moffson@state.nm.us
telephone: 505.476.04444
date: January 5, 2015

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Chope's Town Café and Bar

City or Vicinity: La Mesa

County: Doña Ana State: New Mexico

Photographers: Addison Warner, Norma Hartell, and Dr. Beth O'Leary

Dates Photographed: 2/24/2014, 03/03/2014, 10/20 2014, 12/10/2014, 01/03/2015

Description of Photographs and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State

- Photo 1 of 20: Chope's Bar (foreground) and Chope's Town Café (background, left), photographer facing southeast.
- Photo 2 of 20: Chope's restaurant, north facade, photographer facing south.
- Photo 3 of 20: Chope's restaurant, main (east) façade, photographer facing west.
- Photo 4 of 20: Chope's restaurant, south and east facades, photographer facing northwest.
- Photo 5 of 20: Chope's restaurant, west and south facades, photographer facing east.
- Photo 6 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, dining room no. 1, photographer facing west.
- Photo 7 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, dining room no. 2, photographer facing south.
- Photo 8 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, dining room no. 3, photographer facing west.
- Photo 9 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, Chope and Guadalupe's bedroom (no. 1), photographer facing west.
- Photo 10 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, Guadalupe's bedroom (no. 2) photographer facing south.
- Photo 11 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, kitchen, photographer facing north.
- Photo 12 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, preparation room, photographer facing north.
- Photo 13 of 20: Chope's restaurant, interior, preparation room, photographer facing northwest.
- Photo 14 of 20: Chope's bar, south and main (east) facade photographer facing northwest.
- Photo 15 of 20: Chope's bar, main façade, photographer facing northwest.
- Photo 16 of 20: Chope's bar, main entrance, photographer facing west.
- Photo 17 of 20: Chope's bar, north and west (rear) facades, photographer facing southeast.
- Photo 18 of 20: Chope's bar, interior, photographer facing northwest.
- Photo 19 of 20: Casita, photographer facing southeast.
- Photo 20 of 20: Storage building, photographer facing northwest.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Chope's Town Café and Bar

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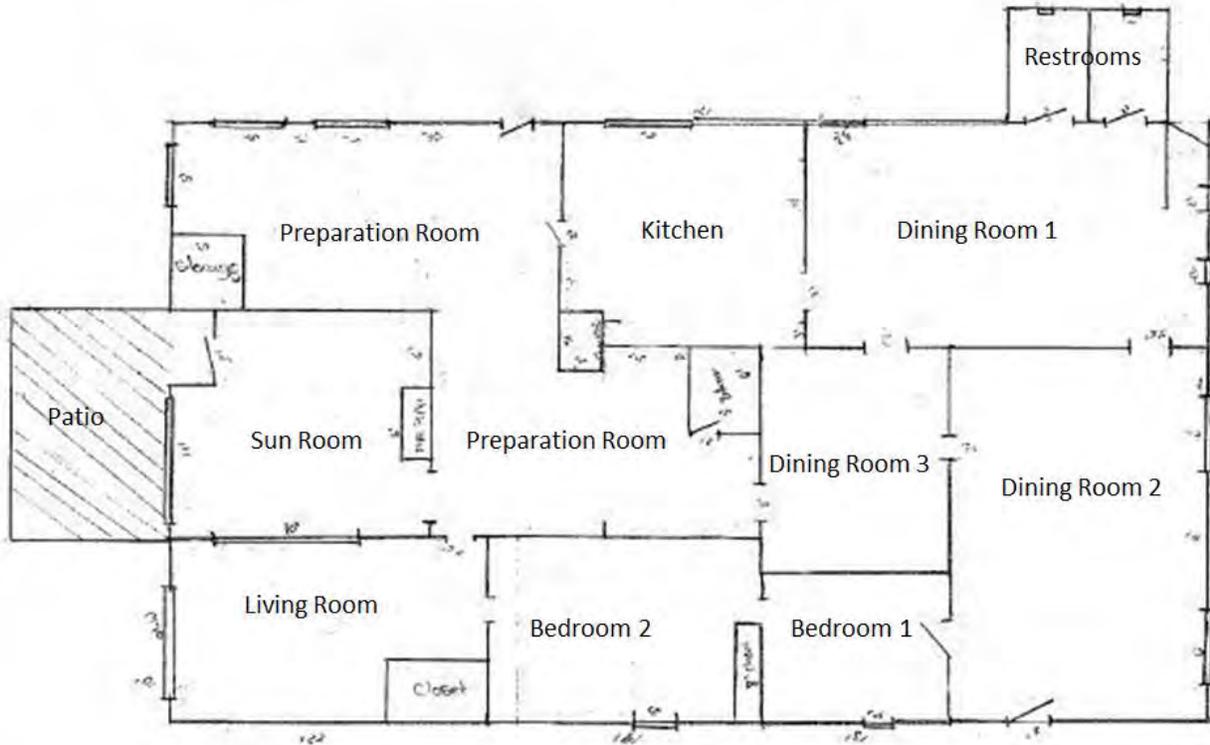


Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

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Chope's Town Café

Doña Ana County, New Mexico

Floor Plan drawn by Addison Warner and Norma Hartell

No scale

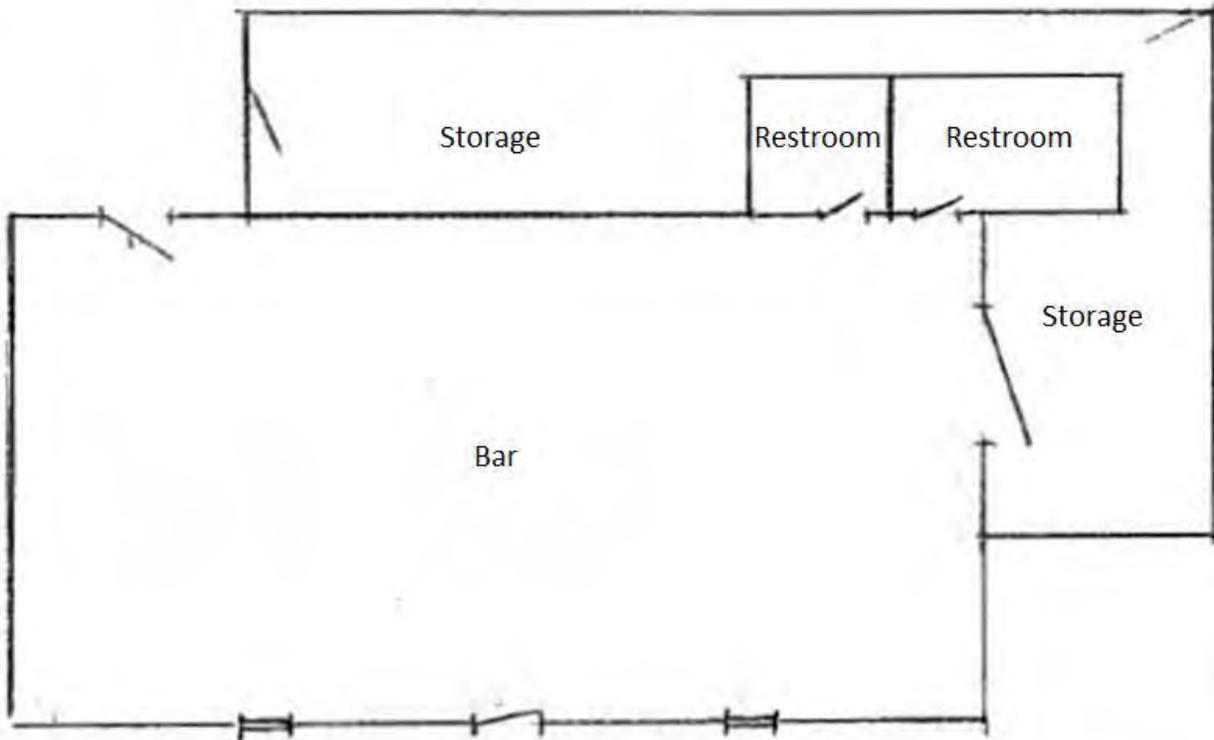


Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State



Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, New Mexico

Floor Plan drawn by Addison Warner and

Norma Hartell

No scale

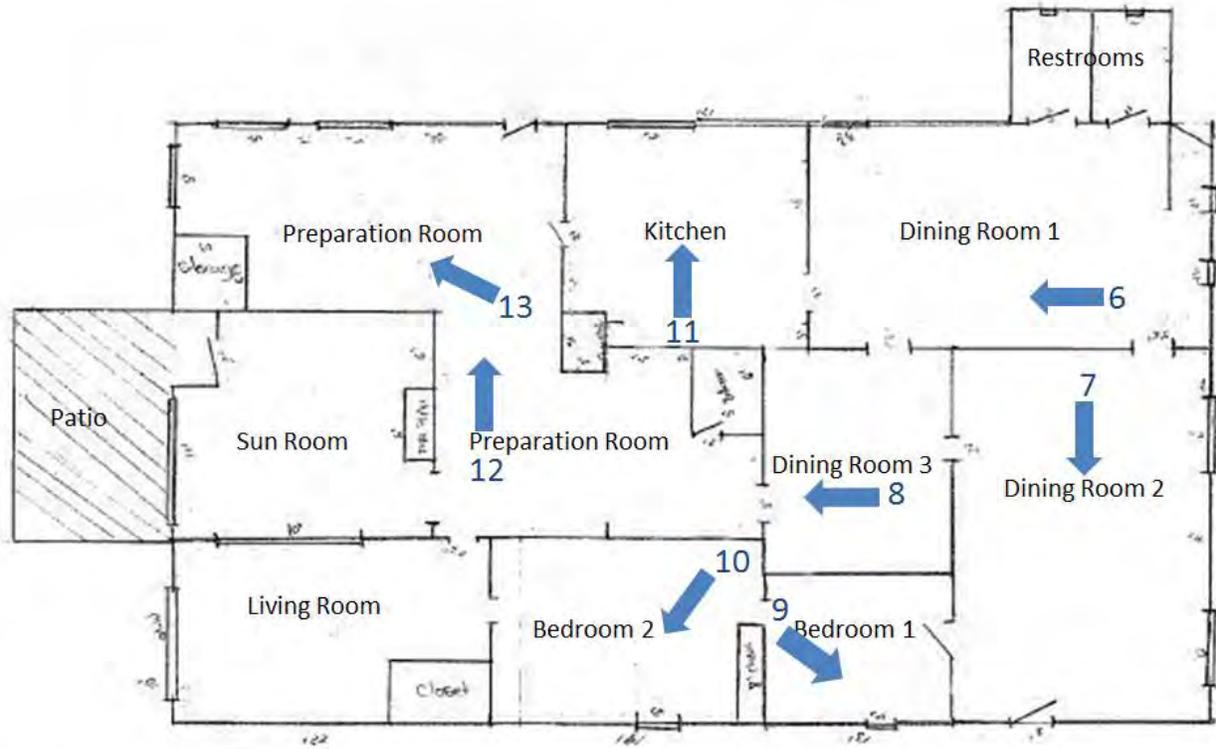


Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Chope's Town Café

Doña Ana County, New Mexico

Floor Plan drawn by Addison Warner and Norma Hartell

Photo number and direction of view 6 

No scale



Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Figure 1. Chope's Town Café and Bar with painted advertisements, 2009.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Figure 2. Longina and Margarito Benavides, c.1918.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Figure 3. Benavides family, left to right: Edmundo, Adelaida, Chope, Amelia, Hortensia (nanny), with baby Cecilia, and Guadalupe, 1944.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Figure 4. Jose "Chope" Benavides, 1940s.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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Figure 5. Fire Chief Jose “Chope” Benavides, left, and members of La Mesa Volunteer Fire Department, 1958.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

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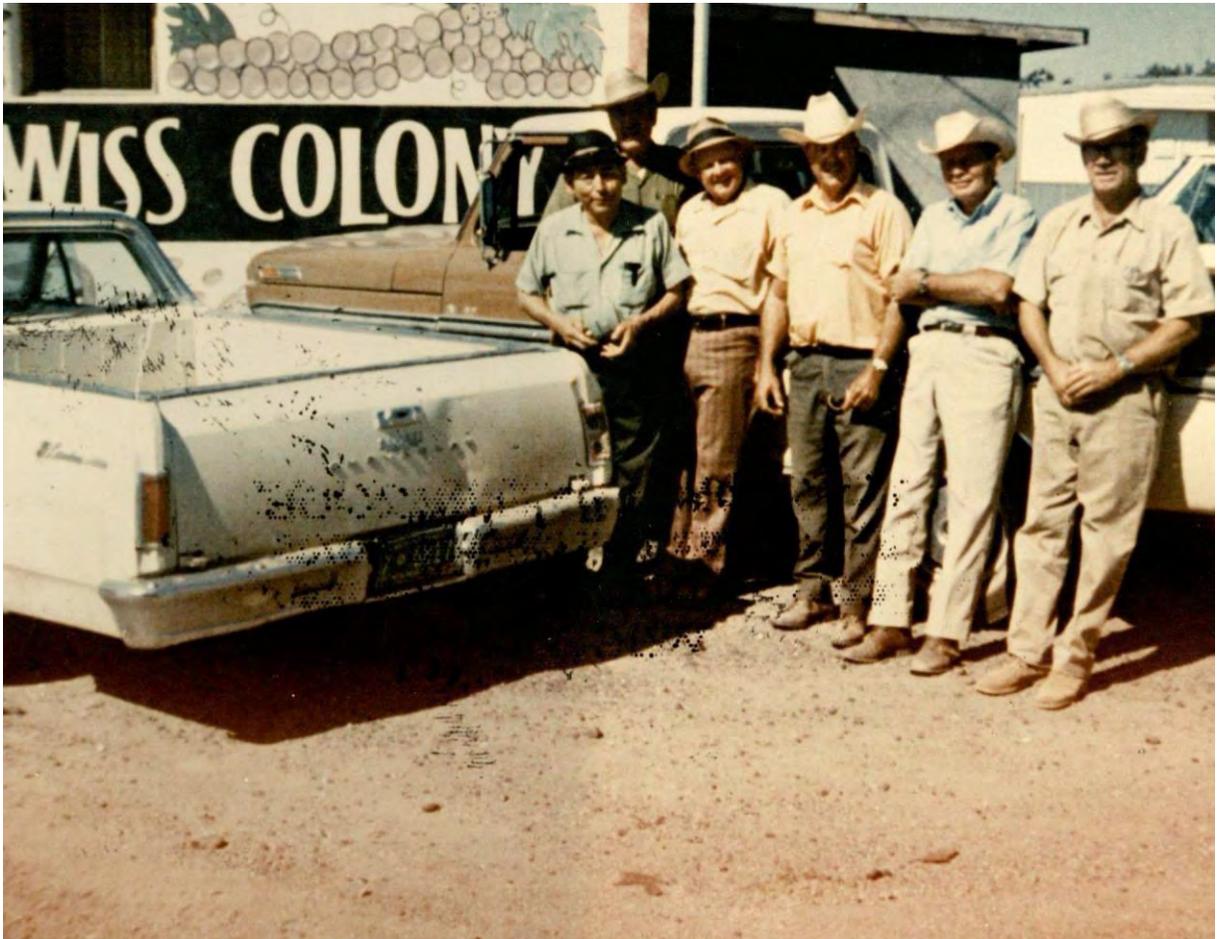


Figure 6. The weekly coffee club, with Chope at left, mid-1960s.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State



Figure 7. Chope's Town Café and Bar, with Chope at right, late 1960s.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

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County and State

Select Photographs



Photo 1 of 20: Chope's Town Café and Bar (foreground) and Chope's Town Café (background, left), photographer facing southeast.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State



Photo 2 of 20 Chope's restaurant, north facade, photographer facing south.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

County and State



Photo 14 of 20 Chope's Town Café and Bar, south and main (east) façade, photographer facing northwest.

Chope's Town Café and Bar

Doña Ana County, NM

Name of Property

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Photo 19 of 20 Casita, photographer facing southeast.



CHOPE'S
BAR
CAFE



Coors
BEER

CLOSED

000
275

Handicap
Parking







NO
PARKING
→

GRAND
OPENING
WELCOME
→















Handwritten note on the wall:

- 1. Wash hands
- 2. Wash hands
- 3. Wash hands
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- 10. Wash hands
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- 16. Wash hands
- 17. Wash hands
- 18. Wash hands
- 19. Wash hands
- 20. Wash hands

BASEBALL 2013





**CHOPE'S
BAR
&
CAFE**





After the Ride
GRAB SOME BUDS

**WELCOME TO
STUFF IT**



**CHOPE'S
BAR & CAFE**



Budweiser





Budweiser
Happy Hour
Tuesday 4PM-7PM
\$5.50 Bud & Dalgona 40s
Wednesday 4PM-7PM
\$5.50 Coors Light 40s
Thursday 4PM-7PM
\$5.50 Bud & Dalgona 40s
Friday 4PM-6PM
\$5.50 Bud & Dalgona 40s

BIZARRE FOODS
ANDREW ZIMMERMAN

Chope's

SMALL SIGNAGE
1. COORS LIGHT
2. COORS LIGHT
3. COORS LIGHT
4. COORS LIGHT
5. COORS LIGHT
6. COORS LIGHT
7. COORS LIGHT
8. COORS LIGHT
9. COORS LIGHT
10. COORS LIGHT

HAPPY YEAR

CHOP'S
BAR & CAFE





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Chope's Town Cafe and Bar

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW MEXICO, Dona Ana

DATE RECEIVED: 4/10/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/06/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/21/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/26/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000262

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Chope's Town Cafe and Bar is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation, Social History, and Women's History. An important social and political gathering spot in the tiny cross-roads agricultural community of La Mesa, Chope's represents a long-standing, family-owned restaurant operation, a rarity in the modern food service industry. Serving ethnically rooted New Mexico cuisine for almost 100 years, the restaurant was a central meeting spot for local civic organizations, political groups, and area farmers. Among the family members historically associated with the Chope's operation were mother and daughter Longina and Guadalupe Benevides, female entrepreneurs who managed day to day operations and cooking at the site, beginning with direct sales out of their home kitchen eventually establishing the current multi-building complex. During the period 1942-1964 agricultural production in the region participated in the federal Bracero Program that brought migrant laborers from Mexico to meet local labor demands. The family operating Chope's utilized Bracero program workers to provide fresh produce for their ethnic cuisine and in turn offered meals and assistance to the workers.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Criterion A

REVIEWER Paul R. Lusignan DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 5/26/15

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

Susana Martinez
Governor

BATAAN MEMORIAL BUILDING
407 GALISTEO STREET, SUITE 236
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501
PHONE (505) 827-6320 FAX (505) 827-6338



April 2, 2015

J. Paul Loether
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W. 8th floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Chope's Town Café and Bar in Doña Ana County, New Mexico to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- Disk with digital photo images
- Physical signature page
- Sketch map(s)/attachment(s)
- Correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do do not constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations: Note that this property is nominated at the national level of significance.

Sincerely,

Steven Moffson
State and National Register Coordinator

Enclosures