

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

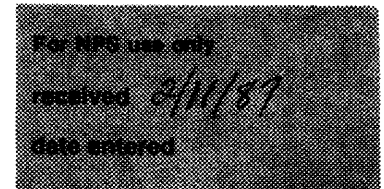
Page

1. Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto; maps 7, 13; ill. 4 (view from Grotto) 115 (contemporary appearance), 139 (ca. 1919); 20' E of Old Highway and 50 yards S of highway's turn into the village of Los Ojos. Los Ojos, NM.
4. Owner: San Jose Parish, P. O. Box 6, Los Ojos, NM 87551.
Attention: Rev. Donnan Herbe.
7. Description: concrete foundation; shallow ogee vault approximately 15' high and 10' deep of rubble pumice with concrete mortar set against rock outcropping; statues of praying girl and Our Lady of Lourdes surrounded by ceremonial candles and artificial flowers, gravel pull-off below shrine at side of highway.
8. Significance: The Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto meets National Register Criterion A because it illustrates the pervasive influence of Catholicism on the social, cultural and economic history of the Tierra Amarilla area. As such, it qualifies as an exception to the normal limitations on the registration of religious properties (as discussed in: National Park Service, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria For Evaluation," June 1, 1982, pp. 46-47). In addition, the Grotto in its siting at an historic vista at the entrance to the village of Los Ojos meets Criterion C as an example of rural landscape design.

Catholicism and Local History. Catholicism was an inherent part of the ethnic-cultural identity of the Hispanic settlers of northern New Mexico. In the Tierra Amarilla area, one of the last frontiers of Hispanic settlement, all of the first settlers in 1860-61 were Hispanic Catholics and every prominent citizen for the next four decades was Catholic. This included all of the leading nineteenth century merchants, foremost among them Irishman T.D. Burns. The few Anglo-American outsiders, such as the handful of soldiers who stayed in the area after Ft. Lowell was closed in 1869, converted to Catholicism (if they were not already Catholic) as an indispensable step in joining the community. The first non-Catholic influence in the area was the Presbyterian mission school founded at Tierra Amarilla at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the non-Catholic population probably was not more than one percent of the area's total population of 2,000 in 1920, and the area remains overwhelmingly Catholic today.

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In Hispanic communities throughout northern New Mexico, religious belief historically was projected from churches into the entire environment and was given a tangible form as private chapels, shrines, temporary altars, and, in houses, as family altars and wall niches for statuary. Religious processions, most importantly Corpus Christi, annually visited these secondary religious sites. Chapels, shrines and temporary altars were usually sponsored by ricos, the wealthy merchant, land and sheep-owning families.

Five historic churches have been recognized in the Historic Resources of Tierra Amarilla nomination for their architectural significance. Historically, temporary altars were erected in the area, although today none are. The Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto is the only remaining historic religious site in the area, other than the churches. It commemorates Josepha Burns' escape from mishap when she lost control of her buggy and her horse raced down the steep road to Los Ojos, an event which she attributed to divine intervention. This probably occurred sometime between 1915 and 1917 —between the time her husband died and when she died. The shrine was her idea and she may have initiated its construction, although her children saw it to its completion in 1919.

The shrine conforms to many typical characteristics of secondary religious shrines in Hispanic northern New Mexico, (e.g. the patronage of wealthy people, investing a place other than a church with religious significance, and the yearly processional from church to shrine).

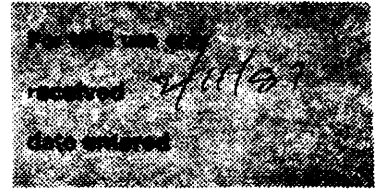
Rural landscape design. The shrine is located beside the road into the valley where Los Ojos first becomes visible. (Tierra Amarilla Historic Resources Nomination, Part I, ill. 4 shows the view of Los Ojos from the shrine.) In local religious symbolism, the Virgin of the shrine is a guardian overlooking those in the valley. Likewise, those entering the valley here are also seen as coming under her protection. When native residents, who have moved away from the area, return today, a trip to the shrine is a typical part of their visit.

The shrine also marks the entrance into Los Ojos. The two individuals who prepared this National Register nomination, although themselves Protestants, unconsciously responded to the importance of the site when they began their field survey here. Similarly, many, if not most, tourists today notice the grotto and stop here. They thereby are afforded the most important historic panorama of the village.

10. Acreeage: less than one. UTM Ref: 13 360170 4065420

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Boundary: A trapazoid, approximately 40' X 40' formed by lines parallel to and ten feet from the northeast, southeast and southwest sides of the shrine and the southeast side of the Old Highway. Since this property is unplatted the boundary has been drawn tightly to include only the shrine and the pull off area below it at the side of the Old Highway.

Village of Los Ojos

Fields

115/139

4

Grotto

Old Highway

U.S.S. 64/84


Map 13.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto
Los Ojos, N.M.

Historic Resources of
Tierra Amarilla, N.M.
Part II, 1985

N ↑

Photos 

Boundary 

Approx. Scale 1" : 200'

