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RESUBMISSION FLORENCE MRA

Avenenti House (203 Butte)
Pinal County
ARIZONA

Summary

This property was returned for substantive reasons. For item 7, the reviewer stated that the discussion of the appearance, changes, and conditions of the principal elevations (particularly the fenestration obscured by foliage) should be expanded. Also for item 7, the listing of the "minor" window changes should be more specific. For item 8, an expanded discussion should be included as to the significance of this home as a notable example of the Sonoran/Early Transitional residence style, i. e., its ridge vents, turn-of-the-century roof construction, and the integrity of this home in relationship to other homes locally. Also, the reviewer stated that a discussion of the ridge vents (its use, construction, and so forth) should also be included.

Significance

In order to understand best the architectural and historical significance of the Avenenti House, a discussion is required on the Sonoran style and the Early Transitional style. The best description of the Sonoran and Early Transitional styles is found in Harris Sobin's scholarly publications, Florence Townsite A. T. (1977) and Florence Townsite Historic District (1981). Much of the following discussion is based on these two exhaustive studies of these important architectural traditions.

The Avenenti House is representative of the broad cross-section of the various vernacular building traditions which appeared in Arizona during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning, first, with an early period of acculturation in which most Anglo and Mexican-American settlers adopted primitive, regionally congruous, Hispanic architectural and urban patterns, relying on materials immediately at hand and on Mexican adobe masons using traditional techniques. Second, it reflects a period of cultural fusion (coinciding approximately in Florence with the mining boom) in which Hispanic adobe wall forms are combined with Anglo-American framed roofs, the latter facilitated by the availability of dimensioned lumber and Anglo carpenters.

The Sonoran Style

Buildings of the Sonoran style, characterized by single story, linear row house configurations, are usually constructed of adobe (Janus, 1984). The most basic form of a domestic building was often a square, one-room "building block", and house plans were

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later developed based on the use of the adobe "unit-cube". With this room as a starting point, more rooms were often added onto later as a settler became established, married, started a family, and needed more space (Sobin, 1977).

Such modular planning provided houses which from modest beginnings could be readily added on to, along with exterior [door and window openings] changes. When taken together with the fact that rooms in these early houses were not specifically designated or designed for any one use or purpose but were available for a whole range of domestic functions, it seems clear that the Sonoran tradition provided a high degree of internal [and external] planning flexibility. (Sobin, 1977)

Also notable of the Sonoran style are the earth roof and metal canales (rain spouts) and parapeted walls that conceal flat roofs (Janus, 1984). "Walls were frequently, although not always, plastered with mud on the outside to help keep out moisture" (Sobin, 1977). The facades are depicted by a rhythm of alternating door and window fenestration. Doorways are recessed into the interior surfaces of the thick adobe walls, and the windows are placed flush with the exterior wall surfaces. Door and window openings were usually spanned with paired mesquite lintels. Adequate cross-ventilation was facilitated by the simple device of placing window and door openings symmetrically opposite each other within each room.

Adobe walls provided more efficient thermal protection against heat or cold than either brick or frame construction; these buildings provided relatively good thermal comfort throughout the entire year. During the winter, the smallest adobe required only a minimal amount of heat; the logically designed fireplaces were, almost invariably, placed in room corners and formed a 45-degree angle across the corner and usually had a rectangular fire chamber with an elegant wood-cased mantelpiece above it.

An early local custom of the use of the Sonoran style is that of locating one or more walls of stables, garages, and other outbuildings directly on a street property line. The use of such "zero setback" siting, even in residential areas, helps define lot boundaries, which in turn helps to strongly reinforce adjacent street spaces (Sobin, 1981).

The major defect of a Sonoran home was the substantial amount of maintenance required on the canales and the roof to keep the home waterproof. The canales conducted water through the thickness of the parapet and projected up to two feet beyond the exterior face of the wall to throw rainwater well clear of the wall surface during downpours. If these canales were not well-maintained and kept clear of obstructions, ponding would occur and lead to seepage through the mud roof, eventually causing serious leaks. In order to continue functioning as moisture-barriers, the earth roofs themselves needed careful maintenance as well (Sobin, 1977).

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The Early Transitional Style

The Transitional modes mixed the best aspects of several earlier styles which were better adapted to the desert environment than the all-mud Sonoran vernacular or the brick and frame styles imported from other climates (Sobin, 1981).

The "Early Transitional" style is characterized by adobe walls topped by dimensioned timber pitched-roof structures, usually gabled and covered with wood shingles. As compared to Sonoran roof structures which required many large and heavy solid timber beams for their support, the gable-form of the Early Transitional roofs permitted much longer spans while using much less material (Sobin, 1977). This type of roof structure provided an end to the leaky roofs of the Sonoran style; it also provided attic space for these homes, which in turn gave good insulating properties in both hot and cold weather. Attics were often ventilated at gable-ends, using small openings fitted with louvered doors (Sobin, 1977). The ridge-line of the house is always parallel to the street with at least one of the long facades containing the front door.

Basic plan-types were very similar to the more linear variations of the Sonoran. The major axes of buildings were usually parallel to the streets on which they were situated. One or more facades were located directly on the property lines along those streets allowing no space for a front yard at all; this is the case for most of the Early Transitional residential and commercial buildings in Florence. In many cases, as in the Sonoran tradition every room of a building was equipped with a door communicating directly with the adjacent street. This allowed each space to be used as a separate rentable unit, thus providing the building considerable flexibility in actual use. As with Sonoran houses, rooms still had no fixed or "assigned" functions nor was any room of the house specially designed for a specific purpose.

The detailing and construction of foundations, floors, and door and window openings remain essentially unchanged from the Sonoran style; typically, doors and windows were built across from one another to allow for cross-ventilation within the house.

As compared to the corner placement of Sonoran fireplaces, those used in Anglo-influenced buildings (beginning with the Early Transitional) were inevitably located in the middle of one (or more) of the transverse crosswalls within the building; a center-wall location permitted flues to penetrate the roofing near or along the ridge-line, providing better draft and structural bracing for the chimney itself (Sobin, 1977). Again, its adobe walls gave it more efficient thermal protection against heat or cold than either brick or frame construction.

"Balloon-frame" techniques were also used on Early Transitional style homes which provided environmental protection to exterior surfaces. These concepts were soon applied to the earlier Sonoran structures. Finally, besides the additional "new style"

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pitched roofs over many of the mud roofs in town, various types of verandas, arcades, and porches were added onto both old and new buildings (Sobin, 1977).

Characteristics

The Avenenti House retains its characteristics which make it a good example of the Early Transitional architectural style. Its major distinguishing characteristic is its pyramidal-hipped roof with ridge vent. It is a "four-square" plan house. It utilizes wood windows along with an entry that is wood with wood paneling. The sills and lintels remain intact. Its walls are made of adobe. The ridge-line is parallel to the street. The north facade contains the front door and is located directly on the property line, allowing no room for a front yard. It has zero set-backs. Finally, the fireplace is located in the middle of a transverse crosswall. The specific features which make this building a good representative example of the Early Transitional style include the pyramidal-hipped roof, the zero setback, the "four-square" plan, and the adobe walls.

The ridge vent makes for the uniqueness of this home. It is the only remaining example of a rare innovative cooling technique which is constructed into the framework of the roof system. Its purpose is to ventilate the home. This modified Anglo roof feature is indicative of the climactic adaptability of the Anglo influence. Due to the fact that temperatures in Arizona may exceed 120 degrees in the summertime, it is absolutely necessary to have ventilation.

The uniqueness of this home is further enhanced by the fenestration on the north and south facades along with the west elevation. Due to the fact that most windows on Sonoran homes are flush with the exterior walls, the fenestration on these sides of the home are recessed into the adobe walls.

Integrity

The Avenenti House is essentially unchanged from its historic appearance with the exception of window replacements on the east elevation of the house. One window has been infilled with a wood, double-hung window sash which was transformed sometime during the 1920s. The other is an aluminum case, sliding window which is still recessed into the exterior wall but was changed during the 1960s. The original sills and lintels still remain in place. The openings remain intact, and the new windows are easily reversible.

Sonoran style homes originally had no landscaping. The foliage in front of the north fenestration is mature landscaping that was planted sometime during the 1940s to add to the appearance of the home. Due to the fact that the street in front of the Avenenti House is a major thoroughfare, the present owners have let the trees grow to their current size to allow for privacy. Although this mature landscaping does obscure the principal facade and is not considered a historic feature of this property, the building is

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nominated to the National Register on the basis of its architectural significance. The present landscaping does not detract from the architectural significance of the property nor does it appreciably affect the setting.

An important fact must be mentioned here. Any adobe homes that still remain today in Arizona reflect the state's colonial period. It was not unusual for families to construct a room or delete a door or window since these homes were made of mud. These changes reflect the growth of families and their preferences in the appearance of their homes. The transformations on these homes also reflect the transformation of the Arizona Territory over time. These changes, like those of the Avenenti House, have achieved significance.

Boundary

The boundaries of the Avenenti, Encarnacion, House are identical to those of the tax parcel number (#202-03-015-9) for the property. This is the present and historic extent of the property and is less than one acre in extent.

Bibliography

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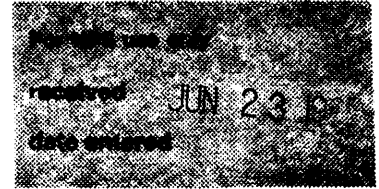
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I concur with the statements as presented in this resubmission:

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Shereen Lerner*

Title *SHPO*

Date *6/16/87*