

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received OCT 4 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Los Valles de San Geronimo del Tecolote

and/or common San Geronimo; registration name: San Geronimo Historic District ✓

2. Location

street & number Forest Road 18 and Tecolote Creek,
2 miles S.W. of State Highway 283 N/A not for publication

city, town San Geronimo N/A vicinity of

state New Mexico code 35 county San Miguel code 047

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership; see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. San Miguel County Clerk's Office

street & number San Miguel County Courthouse

city, town Las Vegas state NM 87701

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NM Historic Building Inventory;
State Register Site #795 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division 228 E. Palace Ave., Room 101

city, town Santa Fe state New Mexico 87503

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The village of San Geronimo lies on the west side of Tecolote Creek, in the valley of the stream, on the eastern slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico. It consists of 22 nineteenth century buildings that retain their early architectural appearance and four non-contributing buildings of more recent construction. Crops are cultivated in the creek bottom by means of irrigation ditches. The original acequia madre, or mother (irrigation) ditch, runs through the village. The hills on either side of the creek are used for grazing. In the last century, the town was much larger, but several excellent examples of buildings in New Mexico's Territorial Style remain, as well as a number of folk vernacular types that illustrate interesting combinations of building techniques and materials. A typical rural church of the nineteenth century occupies the plaza which was formerly entirely enclosed by buildings.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1830s - ca. 1900, 1899 **Builder/Architect** Various builders

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

With its irrigated farms and common pasture land, the village of San Geronimo was typical of Mexican land grant settlements of northern New Mexico established during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It was one of the largest and most prosperous trade centers in the eastern Sangre de Cristo Mountains, situated on a branch of the Santa Fe Trail. As such, its architecture exemplified the rural vernacular types of the surrounding region. Still standing in the village are several particularly fine examples of New Mexico's Territorial Style, as well as a number of simpler traditional types. Regional folk building techniques and the use of native building materials are well demonstrated in San Geronimo. The villagers retain their early agricultural customs, irrigating crops in the creek bottom by means of the acequia madre (mother ditch), and grazing animals on the hills of the valley. As practiced in the Hispanic land grants, this traditional communal land use provoked fierce Spanish-American conflict in New Mexico. San Geronimo played a significant role in political and social history as headquarters of Las Gorras Blancas (the White Caps), one of the most important late nineteenth century protest movements in the Southwest. Home of the movement's founder, Juan José Herrera, the village was also the scene of the first incident of organized violence by these vigilantes who sought to prevent the open range of their grants from being seized and fenced by large land owners under American land laws. While the night riders failed to preserve the common-lands, they inspired a political movement of far-reaching populist resistance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 54.2 acres

Quadrangle name San Geronimo

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
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D	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>3</u> <u>8</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>
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F	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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H	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>--</u>	county	<u>--</u>	code	<u>--</u>
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state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>--</u>	county	<u>--</u>	code	<u>--</u>
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betsy Swanson, Architectural Historian

organization NM Historic Preservation Division date April, 1983

street & number 228 E. Palace Avenue, Room 101 telephone (505) 827-8320

city or town Santa Fe state New Mexico 87503

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9-27-83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature] date 11/15/83
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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PROPERTY OWNERS - Contributing Buildings

Building
Number:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Antonio Gutierrez
(San Geronimo Allotment Trustee)
1518 S. Pacific
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>2. Isabel Benavidez
2525 Encino
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>3. Erlinda Chavez
9508 Claremont N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87112</p> <p>4. Ramon Benavidez
2525 Encino
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>5. Fermin Crespin
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 360
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>6. Rose Marie Crespin
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 360
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>7. Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>8. Horacio Quintana
(San Geronimo Allotment Trustee)
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>9. Judy Chavez
c/o Mr. & Mrs. Siegfredo Chavez
P.O. Box 26112
Albuquerque, NM 87125</p> | <p>10. Mr. and Mrs. Siegfredo Chavez
P.O. Box 26112
Albuquerque, NM 87125</p> <p>11. Jose Gutierrez
(San Geronimo Allotment Trustee)
1518 S. Pacific
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>12. Leo Quintana
(San Geronimo Allotment Trustee)
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>13. Jose Jeronimo Crespin
4531 W. Lea, S.W.
Albuquerque, NM 87105</p> <p>14. Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>15. Luis Saavedra
513 57th St., S.W.
Albuquerque, NM 87105</p> <p>16. Victoria Quintana
c/o Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> <p>17. Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701</p> |
|---|--|

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18. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church
W. National Ave. & Court House
Las Vegas, NM 87701

19. Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701

20. Antonio Gutierrez
1518 S. Pacific
Las Vegas, NM 87701

21. Antonio Gutierrez
1518 S. Pacific
Las Vegas, NM 87701

22. Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701

PROPERTY OWNERS - Non-Contributing Buildings

23. Pete and Cynthia Quintana
Box 1741
Las Vegas, NM 87701

24. West Las Vegas Schools
Superintendent's Office
100 Bridge Street
Las Vegas, NM 87701

25. Josef and Maria Gutierrez
1518 S. Pacific
Las Vegas, NM 87701

26. Judy Chqvez
c/o Mr. & Mrs. Siegfredo Chavez
P.O. Box 26112
Albuquerque, NM 87125

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PROPERTY OWNERS - Land Plots within Boundaries of Historic District Having no Structure

Lucia Herrera
Box 356
Mineral Hill Rte.
Las Vegas, NM 87701

Horacio Quintana
Box 365
Mineral Hill Rte.
Las Vegas, NM 87701

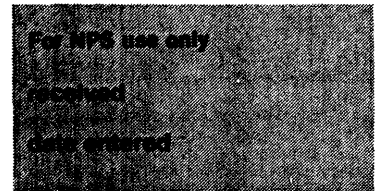
Siegfredo Chavez
P.O. Box 26112
Albuquerque, NM 87125

Robert and Mary Lue C de Baca
1126 Morris, N.E.
Albuquerque, NM

Frank E. Herrera
Box 356
Mineral Hill Rte.
Las Vegas, NM 87701

Jose B. Crespín
Box 360-A
Mineral Hill Rte.
Las Vegas, NM 87701

Community of San Geronimo
c/o Leo Quintana
San Geronimo
Mineral Hill Rte.
Box 365
Las Vegas, NM 87701

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Resembling a ghost town, the group of weathered adobe, rock and log buildings that now comprises the village of San Geronimo lies along the west side of Tecolote Creek, nestled in the valley of the stream amid cottonwood and fruit trees. In the creek bottom, the few remaining residents continue the historic agricultural activities of the community. Crops are raised with the aid of irrigation ditches, although both creek and ditches run dry in times of drought. On either side of the village, the steep grassy hills of the valley provide pasture land.

The forested Sangre de Cristo Mountains rise immediately west of the town. On the opposite side of the Tecolote, the gentler slopes of the Las Vegas Range separate the village from the plains to the east. To the south, the flat pinon-covered top of Tecolote Peak is visible, and looming on the northern horizon is Hermit Peak, an enormous rock that is the dominant landmark of the region.

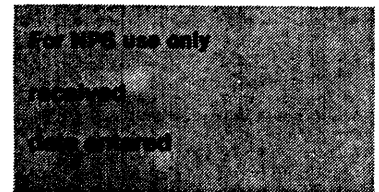
At an elevation of 6800 feet, the village is frequently covered with snow in winter. Summers are warm, but are tempered by thunder showers that form daily over the mountains. Dirt roads that follow historic routes leading north, south and east from the village are sometimes impassable in wet weather. The roads once converged on the village plaza which is not clearly defined today but which once formed a one-acre square surrounding the church.

In the last century, the town was considerably larger in both size and density. Rock foundations and ruins of adobe walls are scattered about the village, but a greater number of structures have entirely disappeared. There is no documentation as to the early appearance of the village, but oral tradition and population figures suggest that San Geronimo formerly consisted of several hundred buildings. The 26 buildings in the town today are situated without apparent plan or pattern, but a few streets are still discernible.

Most surviving buildings are in a state of disrepair but they retain their historic architectural features by reason of their years of neglect. In comparison to the scattering of historic buildings in the surrounding mountain region, the village of San Geronimo contains a large grouping of early vernacular architecture characteristic of the eastern slopes of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Unlike most early architecture in New Mexico, these buildings routinely make combined use of a variety of available building materials. They also exhibit unusually steep, double-pitched roofs that may represent a remote ethnic influence of historic importance in this mountain area.

Among the village buildings are several especially fine examples, including a church, houses, barns, storehouses and former stores. Their native construction of rock, adobe and log is often mixed, though this sometimes indicates additions or restorations of a later date.

In floor plan, the houses are one room deep and strung out lengthwise by additional rooms. It is apparent that wall sections of adobe, rock or mud-plastered log have sometimes been attached to the original core of a house. In other cases, the length of certain houses has been subtracted by the erosion and ruin of adobe sections. Likewise, some deteriorating sections might have been reconstructed in a material other than that

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with which the original house was built, and it is often difficult to distinguish the older portions. Both rectangular and L-shaped plans are common in the village, and these are always one room deep.

An interesting construction material found in this mountain region and demonstrated at San Geronimo is a crude sort of lath and fill construction locally called "adobe relleño." Small strips of wood, waste from sawmills, were nailed to log uprights to form a frame which was stuffed with wet mud and plastered over. Buildings which have received recent improvements are plastered with cement.

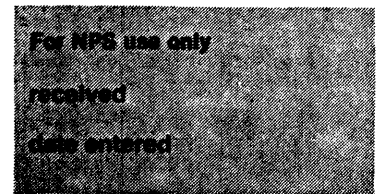
Roofs are covered with shingles, vertical boards and corrugated metal. A distinctive architectural feature of San Geronimo is the steeply pitched roof, useful in shedding snow and rain. These sometimes incorporate wide gallery overhangs and abruptly change pitch before reaching the eaves. This roof form is a characteristic of French colonial architecture in America and perhaps reflects the presence of French fur trappers in this mountain area of New Mexico.

Several buildings are of New Mexico's Territorial Style, displaying such Greek Revival Style decorative details as pedimented, splayed or moulded lintels, and doors with glazed transoms and sidelights. Other refinements are seen in these buildings such as beaded planks in the gallery ceilings, panelled doors and door jambs, jigsaw trim, chamfered gallery posts, and scored plaster walls. Much attention was given to producing a three-dimensional illusion of stone work in the scoring. In one case, the penciling was repeated in three colors: white, brown and black. Further attempts to shade and model the surface of plaster quoins to imitate stone are apparent in this building.

Interior decoration at San Geronimo includes a pressed metal ceiling with center medallion in a room of a house that served a commercial purpose, and the corrugated metal ceiling of the church seamed with pressed tin strips of Classical Style moulding and cast-iron bosses. The interior woodwork of one house was crudely grained with paint in imitation of wood grains. These touches of elegance point to the early importance of San Geronimo as a trading center in the remote region.

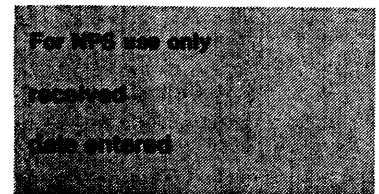
Buildings and sites contributing to the character of the district:

- *1. House: L-shaped, 1-1/2 stories, scored lime plaster over rock walls, shingled, hipped and gabled roof with one dormer, jigsaw brackets on chamfered gallery posts, moulded lintels on entrance facade. Pitch of roof incorporates pitch of galleries which originally surrounded house. Owner wishes to restore house to historic appearance.
- *2. House: rectangular, 1 story, metal gable roof, adobe plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, one window retains splayed lintel, beaded planks in ceiling of gallery. Gallery on entrance facade. Narrow metal apron overhangs eaves on three sides and probably replaces original surrounding gallery.

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- *3. House (said at one time to have also served in part as a store and as a post office): Territorial Style, rectangular plan, 1 story, scored and penciled lime plaster over adobe brick and rock walls, with evidence of scored adobe plaster under the lime plaster (present exterior plaster is white penciled with red, with a band of light pink painted around the lower quarter of the wall; beneath this surface is evidence of light blue paint and the original surface appears to be scored adobe plaster). Roof is of shingle covered with metal, steeply pitched gable with unequal double pitch above eaves. Wide gallery on three sides, raised wooden gallery floor with jigsaw picket railing and chamfered posts, beaded planks in gallery ceiling. Moulded lintels on the west and south facades, pedimented lintels on the east facade, panelled doors and surrounds with glazed transoms. This house was probably one of the finest in the village. It formerly extended further on the north end, now contains three large rooms. In the yard is a well house that served the community. The well is about 30 feet deep and lined with rock to a width of about three feet on each side.
4. House: rectangular, 1 story, adobe brick with gable roof and small windows. In ruin.
5. House (vacant): rectangular, 1 story, adobe and cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, metal gable roof, later wood addition on south end.
6. House: 1 story, L-shaped with porch on entrance facade, rock with adobe plaster, metal over vertical board and batten gable roof.
7. House (vacant): 3 small log cabins joined lengthwise, plastered with adobe and a separate small adobe brick building, metal gable roofs, rock foundation.
- *8. Club House (vacant): small, 1 story, square, rock, 1-room building with high pitched hipped roof of metal with a round wooden ball at peak. Built about 1890 as a men's literary club. Rock addition with shed roof made several decades later when building was used as a house. Small cold storage structure in ground in front of building, later wood enclosure forms porch on facade.
- *9. House, store and post office (vacant): Large, 1-1/2 stories, T-shaped building in partial ruin which served a variety of purposes and apparently received numerous additions and remodelings through the years. Lime plaster over adobe brick on rock foundation. Plaster is in part scored and penciled in white, brown and black to give illusion of three-dimensional stone work, with quoins at corners of north facade. Portion of west wall of south wing and a lean-to attachment at end of south wing are of "adobe relleño" construction. Gable, shingle roof with double pitch above eaves, wide overhanging galleries, one dormer remains. This was obviously one of the most important buildings in the village as the exterior and interior contain numerous decorative refinements; some pedimented lintels, some moulded surrounds on doors and windows, wooden gallery floors, chamfered posts and beaded plank ceilings in the galleries, crude false wood graining of some woodwork, glazed transoms and panelled doors, a pressed tin ceiling with center medallion in the room that probably served as a store or post office.

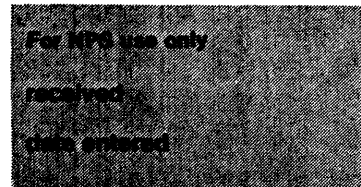
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- *10. Large barn: rock, gabled, dormered roof with large vigas. An L-shaped portion remains today of what may have been a square building with wooden stalls opening to a central court. A stone wall partially defines this square plan. Said to have been an animal compound for use at night for protection against Indians.
11. Barn (former house): rectangular, 1 story, cement plaster over adobe brick. Built in 1936 as a house and recently converted into a barn with the walling up of doors and windows.
12. House (vacant): rectangular, 1 story, rock with gable roof of vertical board and batten. In ruin.
13. House: rectangular, 1 story, adobe plaster over adobe brick, porch on facade. Small addition at rear. Metal gable roof.
14. Barn: rectangular, 1 story, squared logs, gabled metal roof.
15. House: L-shaped, 1 story, cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, metal gable roof. Plain wood fenestration.
16. House: L-shaped, 1 story, cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, metal gable roof, gallery in L and across one gabled end, floor-length double-hung windows, diamond pattern window in east gable. Small lean-to addition at rear.
17. House (vacant): small rectangular, gabled, adobe brick and plaster house with a shed roof addition of plastered logs at one corner of facade. Porch with vertical plank railing. In front yard of house is a log storage shed in ruin.
- *18. San Geronimo Roman Catholic Church: rectangular with quadrangular apse and square sacristy on east side of apse end. Cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation. Hipped metal roof with gabled front has interesting double pitch above eaves of apse. Double hung windows of nave have Gothic fanlights. Small wooden bell tower situated over facade. Door is recent but panelled surround is obviously old. The interior has an arched ceiling covered with corrugated metal, the seams of which are lined with pressed metal strips of egg-and-dart and rope mouldings. These metal mouldings are also used in place of capitals for the square choir loft supports. Floral design cast-iron bosses placed at intervals down the center of the ceiling have hooks attached, probably for hanging lanterns. The altar and choir loft railings are of jigsaw designs. The large altar with statuary probably dates from about 1900 and was undoubtedly an expensive "import". An organ in the choir loft dates from about 1870. Tradition indicates that the church may have been originally constructed about 1850. Certain sources suggest that the building may have been renovated about 1906. The church is in good condition and is well maintained. A priest comes from Las Vegas once a year to say Mass in the building.
19. House (vacant): Territorial Style, 1 story, gabled, rectangular, adobe brick building with an adobe shed roof addition at the north end of the facade and a plank shed roof addition at the south gable end. Pedimented lintels; arched lites in panelled door. Stone foundation. Vigas exposed on interior.

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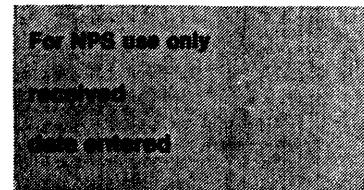
20. Barn (former house): rectangular, 1 story, cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, metal gabled roof. Metal overhang on two sides collapsing. A house recently converted into a barn with walling up of windows and doors.
21. Barn (former house): rectangular, 1 story, cement plaster over adobe brick with rock foundation, metal gable roof with overhang on two sides. Exposed vigas on exterior walls. A house recently converted into a barn with walling up of windows and doors.
22. House (vacant): 1 story, L-shaped, with gallery in L, gabled metal roof. Constructed of logs plastered with adobe (with some more recent cement plaster). Interior vigas. Rock foundation. Plain wood fenestration, vertical plank floor.

Sheds, corrals and ruin foundations are contributing associated structures.

Noncontributing buildings:

23. House: recent adobe brick structure presently being remodeled.
24. Former School: concrete block building, built 1959.
25. House: built in 1955 using traditional materials (adobe scored plaster, jigsaw work in porch supports) but plan and roof form are out of keeping with indigenous architecture of the village.
26. House: recent concrete block building.

* - Most significant.

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Local tradition suggests that San Geronimo was the site of an Indian pueblo prior to Spanish colonization of the area in the late eighteenth century. Indian artifacts found in the village may support this tradition. However, no archeological investigation has been conducted and no archeological site has been recorded on the site of the town. Residents also maintain that a kiva is buried on a hill at the north end of the town. This area, on the west side of the Tecolote Creek and north of the arroyo behind the church, is known by the inhabitants today as "Pueblocito" or "Little Pueblo." Archeological investigations in the nearby area have revealed sites dating back to the Folsom culture. A quarry two miles north of San Geronimo attracted pre-historic Indians and pueblo ruins have been located in the area. Indian settlements on these eastern mountain slopes were abandoned by the 1300s.

San Geronimo was settled under the Mexican regime in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It lies within the Las Vegas Land Grant, first granted in 1823. In that year, Luis María Cabeza de Baca received the grant of public land from Governor Bartolome Baca. Cabeza de Baca was driven from his land by Indians and, in 1835, 29 other settlers petitioned for a grant of public land covering the same Territory as the 1823 grant. Constitutional Justice José de Jesús Ulibarri y Duran granted to these settlers about 500,000 acres, centered about the present-day town of Las Vegas. San Geronimo was established just within the extreme western boundary of this grant. Under the conditions of the grant, later settlers were also allowed the privilege of taking up land within the grant.

The Las Vegas Land Grant was the ninth tract allotted by the Spanish and Mexican governments to colonize this region of northeast New Mexico. By the time of American conquest in 1846, fourteen grants had been awarded in the area supporting about ten thousand people. The colonists grouped in small communities along waterways within the grants, farmed the limited arable land, and grazed their herds and flocks on the surrounding hills, mountains and plains. The settlers were assigned specific ownership of house lots encircling the village plazas and field plots strung out along the stream courses. But the largest portions of the grants, the vast grazing lands vital to the grantees' livelihood in the semi-arid country, were held in communal ownership. All watering holes were also for common use as were the acequias, or irrigation ditches. The grantees shared in the construction, maintenance and defense of their villages, roads and acequias. Grant boundaries were vague and tended to be loosely defined by customary patterns of use.

The earliest settlers of San Geronimo probably came from the nearby Land Grants of San Miguel del Vado (made in 1794) and Tecolote (made in 1824). The Tecolote Grant was less than 10 miles down Tecolote Creek. The San Miguel del Vado Grant, which centered on the Pecos River 15 miles to the southwest, was the first out-post established in the region. It had been founded as a buffer against hostile Plains Indians by Spanish colonists and military personnel and Genizaro Indians. The latter were Plains or Nomadic Indians who had been converted to Catholicism and partially assimilated into the Spanish culture. Fray Angelico Chavez, in his Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe 1678-1900 p. 205, also suggests that Indians from the declining pueblo of Pecos may have contributed to the Hispanicized population of the region. (See Pecos National Monument and San Miguel del Vado Historic District, both San Miguel County, National Register of Historic Places).

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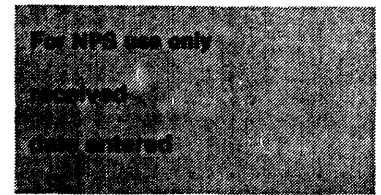
San Geronimo was probably founded in the 1830s. During the nineteenth century, the village was called Los Valles de San Geronimo del Tecolote and an 1841 reference to this place name indicates that the settlement was in existence at that time. According to the 1878 testimony of Pablo Montoya, a farmer in the nearby village of San Jose, to the special agent of the Surveyor General's office regarding the traditional boundary divisions of the San Miguel del Vado and Las Vegas Land Grants, points "known to him since 1841" included one named "Cuidos de la Sierra de los Valles de San Geronimo del Tecolote."

Other records giving some indication of the age of the settlement include a New Mexico Department of Public Welfare study of 1937 mentioning "at least three houses" in the village as having been built "before 1848" and a San Miguel County District Court case citing use of a certain fresh water spring before 1841. In the case of Francisco Esquibel vs. Zenovio Apodaca et al., May 24, 1881, the inhabitants of Los Valles de San Geronimo were said to have been entitled to the use of this spring for "30 years or more."

Like other villages in the region, San Geronimo was laid out around a square plaza, with roads dissecting the four sides of the plaza and with the church located in the center. Houses and barns were grouped together in the village for protection against Indian raids to which the village was subject until about 1870. Crops were cultivated in fields outlying the village, up and down Tecolote Creek. The acequia madre, or mother ditch, coursed through the village as it does today. Pasture land on the hills of the valley and a spring known as "El Ojo del Valle" were held in common ownership according to land grant regulations. The fields, ditch and pastures are still put to the same agricultural use, although in private ownership.

As one of the largest and most important villages in the region, San Geronimo's architecture exhibited considerable refinement. Many buildings displayed Greek Revival Style designs, an influence brought from "the States" during New Mexico's Territorial Period of the second half of the nineteenth century. Several fine examples in the Style are still standing. Also of note are the simpler vernacular types demonstrating a variety of combinations of building techniques and materials, including log, rock and adobe.

The most striking feature of San Geronimo's buildings is the steep and double-pitched rooflines. The change of pitch, employed to accommodate a gallery or overhang, often occurs high above the level of the eaves. The sudden uplift can also be seen to take place at the eaves, as in the apse end of the church and the building that formerly housed a men's literary club. Isolated examples of this roof form can be found on the eastern slopes of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo Mountains and they may represent a distant cultural influence. The trait is characteristic of French colonial roof types that were introduced to this country by Norman settlers in Canada and the Mississippi Valley. French fur trappers frequented the mountains of northeast New Mexico and some settled in the region. A French Canadian fur trapper named Pierre Lesperance is known to have settled in San Geronimo and is said to have been a founder of the village.

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Born in Quebec in 1791, Pierre Lesperance first came to New Mexico in 1817 with a party of Missouri trappers. The entire party was arrested by the Spanish and imprisoned for a time in Santa Fe. Lesperance returned to New Mexico in 1822 to trap and search for placer gold. In 1837, he became a naturalized citizen of the Mexican Republic and assumed the name of Pedro Bueno-Amigo Esperanza. At about the same time, he established a ranch and sawmill on the Tecolote near San Geronimo. The water-powered mill had a capacity of 8,000 feet of lumber per day. In 1857, Lesperance was joined in business at San Geronimo by his Canadian nephew of the same name. The nephew continued to operate the mill and ranch after his uncle's death in 1879. Both men were said to have been carpenters and may have been responsible for architectural features at San Geronimo reminiscent of French building traditions.

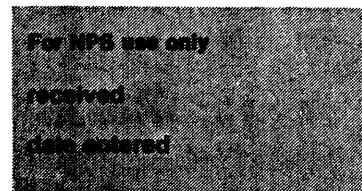
Although some of San Geronimo's surviving structures are in a state of disrepair, there have been few alterations made to the historic buildings and few modern intrusions to the village. Three property owners have expressed interest in restoring their buildings to their historic appearances.

San Geronimo enjoyed increasing prosperity because of its important crossroads location. From this point on the Tecolote Creek, an Indian trail is said to have crossed the mountains to the west prior to Spanish colonization. This trail appears on the earliest published U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maps of the region (Ruffner, 1873; Morrison, 1875; and Wheeler, 1869-69). The maps show that the trail went to Santa Fe and other points west by way of Las Colonias and Pecos. The Wheeler map identifies this rugged route as the "Santa Fe Trail." It served as a short cut across the mountains while the longer Santa Fe Trail commonly taken by wagon trains skirted the mountains to the south. Portions of the trail still exist as it follows Santillanes Creek in the direction of Barillas Peak.

The same Army maps show that wagon roads, following present-day routes, led north, south and east from San Geronimo. The road to the east connected the village with Las Vegas, county seat and commercial center. Southward, the road led to the village of Tecolote on the Santa Fe Trail where the army established a post in the mid-nineteenth century and where a railroad station was built in 1883. The road north led to Fort Union and points north by way of Gallinas, Las Dispensas and Sapello.

In San Geronimo's heyday, one of its wealthiest citizens owned a large freighting business and a majority of village men were employed by him to drive teams to the States for merchandise. The freighters returned to their homes with luxuries from the East, the latest news, and the most fashionable notions. Decorative refinements still to be seen in the buildings of this remote mountain village reflect such contact with the outside world.

The town also served as a trading center for smaller mountain villages in the vicinity, as well as a business center for local industries that developed in the area. As the tracks of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad neared Las Vegas in the late 1870s, a tie-cutting industry was established in San Geronimo. Because the lands surrounding the village were then heavily timbered, the railroad company chose San Geronimo for the location of their first sawmill in the state. It was built in 1877 by Eugenio Romero

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who contracted to supply all the ties that the railroad would need from Raton to El Paso. Much of the town of Las Vegas was also built with lumber from sawmills on Tecolote Creek. These mills also provided props for mining operations that surrounded the village at the turn of the century. The mining industry in the vicinity of San Geronimo began with a "gold rush" in 1881 that brought a sudden influx of thousands of miners into the area.

The 1880 census, taken the year prior to San Geronimo's "gold rush," listed 737 residents. In 1907, a population figure of 536 was recorded for San Geronimo. By this time the depopulation of the village had begun, but it could boast of a post office, several stores, a school house, church and rectory, and even a club house for a men's literary society. The last named building still stands and served as a gathering place for orations and lectures on articles in weekly newspapers and magazines by the several residents who subscribed to them.

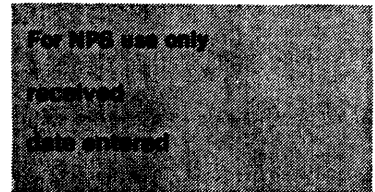
The church may have originally been built about 1850, at the beginning of the American Period when a program of rural church construction was undertaken in New Mexico. In 1895, the population increase of San Geronimo area prompted Archbishop Placide Louis Chapelle to briefly establish an ecclesiastical parish at San Geronimo, served by a French priest. The church's ancillary buildings, an eight-room rectory, stable and storage structures, are now gone.

In the late nineteenth century, San Geronimo played a significant and dramatic role in one of the most important Spanish-American protest movements in the history of the Southwest. The movement's origin and precipitating event is described by Robert J. Rosenbaum in Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest, "The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation":

"On the night of April 26, 1889, masked and armed horsemen rode toward a ranch near the village of San Geronimo, in San Miguel County, New Mexico Territory. Two Englishmen named William Rawlins and Frank Quarrell claimed the ranch, which boasted four miles of new wire fence erected at a cost of over \$750. The masked band leveled the entire fence, leaving only kindling and glittering fragments. Neither posts nor wire would ever fence anything again!"

San Geronimo was the home of Juan José Herrera, founder and leader of a vigilante group organized to combat land grant speculation under American law and the fencing of the open range. Called Las Gorras Blancas, or the White Caps, for the hooded masks they wore, the organization was composed of land grant farmers who were being stripped of pastoral rights vital to their survival. The night raids involved not only fence cutting, but also the burning of barns and houses, the destruction of railroad ties and bridges, the cutting of electric poles, and, occasionally, killings. Within a few years, the secret society of night riders had spread throughout much of northern New Mexico. Their violent acts deterred Anglo-American immigration to New Mexico, discouraged investment of Eastern wealth in New Mexico, and delayed Statehood for the Territory. Land speculation was brought to a standstill.

Las Gorras Blancas has been called the most important Spanish-American protest between the Taos Revolt in 1847 and the Alianza Federal de Mercedes Movement in the 1960s. As home of the White Caps' leader, the village of San Geronimo served as the

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movement's secret headquarters.

Juan José Herrera was a San Miguel County native who had lived outside of New Mexico for a time, acquired knowledge of Anglo-American law and became involved with the national union called the Knights of Labor and other populist causes. Upon returning to live at San Geronimo in 1887, Herrera organized Las Gorras Blancas with his brothers Pablo and Nicanor. He also formed a number of Knights of Labor lodges in Las Vegas and the surrounding villages. While concealing his White Caps activity under the guise of union organizing, he also politicalized the White Caps movement. Membership of Las Gorras Blancas, Los Caballeros de Labor and El Partido del Pueblo Unido (the people's party), largely corresponded. Pablo Herrera, who had served time in prison for murder and was himself murdered by a political foe, was elected to the Territorial Assembly. Juan Herrera served as Probate Judge of San Miguel County.

Although "the poor masses," or "las masas de los hombres pobres," as their defendants called them, who inhabited the Las Vegas Land Grant and other grants, finally retained only their "house lots and garden plots under ditch" and lost their common range land in political and legal ruses, Las Gorras Blancas had a profound influence on political populism that continues to be felt today. It served as an important model for future Spanish-American protest movements.

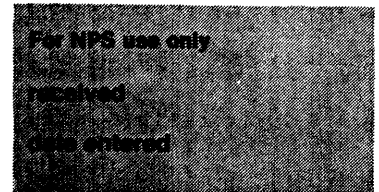
Juan Herrera's house at San Geronimo no longer stands. It is probable, however, that the building that is said to have served as the "Men's Literary Club" heard many a political debate and may have served as a clandestine meeting place for members of Las Gorras Blancas. It was constructed about the time that the movement began.

Loss of their common lands destroyed the economic base of land grant villages such as San Geronimo. The semi-arid country could not support large rural populations by farming alone. The Las Vegas Land Grant dispute was finally settled in 1903 when the Territorial legislature passed a bill that gave the District Court of San Miguel County the power to appoint and supervise a board of trustees to manage the grant. The board could issue deeds and had the power to "lease, sell or mortgage any part of said tract." Land not actually occupied was sold and "los pobres" lost their common pasturage. In 1906, the board of trustees allocated to the village of San Geronimo a narrow tract of land along the course of the creek embracing the village and measuring about a mile wide and about three miles long from north to south. The tract was called the San Geronimo Allotment and a village resident was chosen as trustee of the allotment. This trustee was assigned the duty of conveying the separate deeds to the occupants of the allotment claiming ownership and the land within the allotment was parcelled out to the residents. A few small parcels, such as the plaza, remain in the common ownership of the allotment and several village residents continue to serve as trustees of the allotment.

Other factors also contributed to the demise of San Geronimo. Completion of the railroad, depletion of the forests and disappearance of the logging and mining industries brought an end to the prosperity and growth of the village. Early in this century, San Geronimo experienced a sudden decline in population as people of this rural area moved to Las Vegas.

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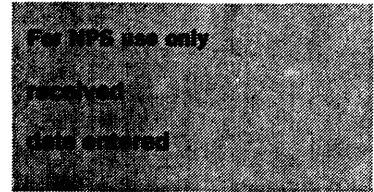
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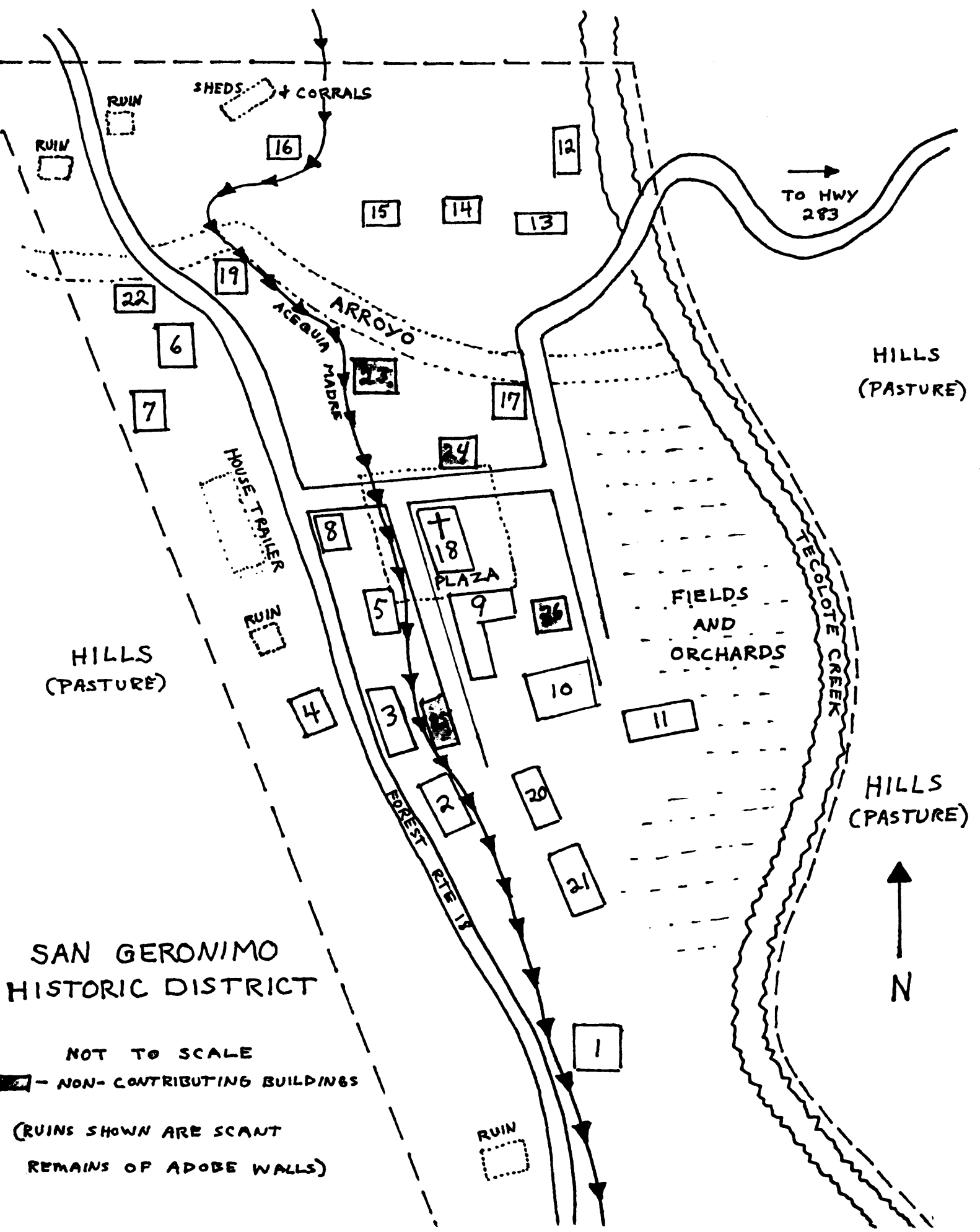
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Verbal boundary description and justification:

Beginning at a point on the east bank of Tecolote Creek 510 meters south of bridge crossing of the road to Hwy 283, proceeding west 340 meters to a point just west of the juncture of a side road with Forest Route 18, turning north to parallel Forest Route 18 680 meters to a point just west of a fork in the road, then running 420 meters to Tecolote Creek, and following the east side of Tecolote Creek 650 meters to the starting point. The district boundaries include all the remaining structures in the village, foundations of ruined buildings, and the acequia madre (main irrigation canal) and the creek which borders the east side of the village which also serves to irrigate the fields in the village.

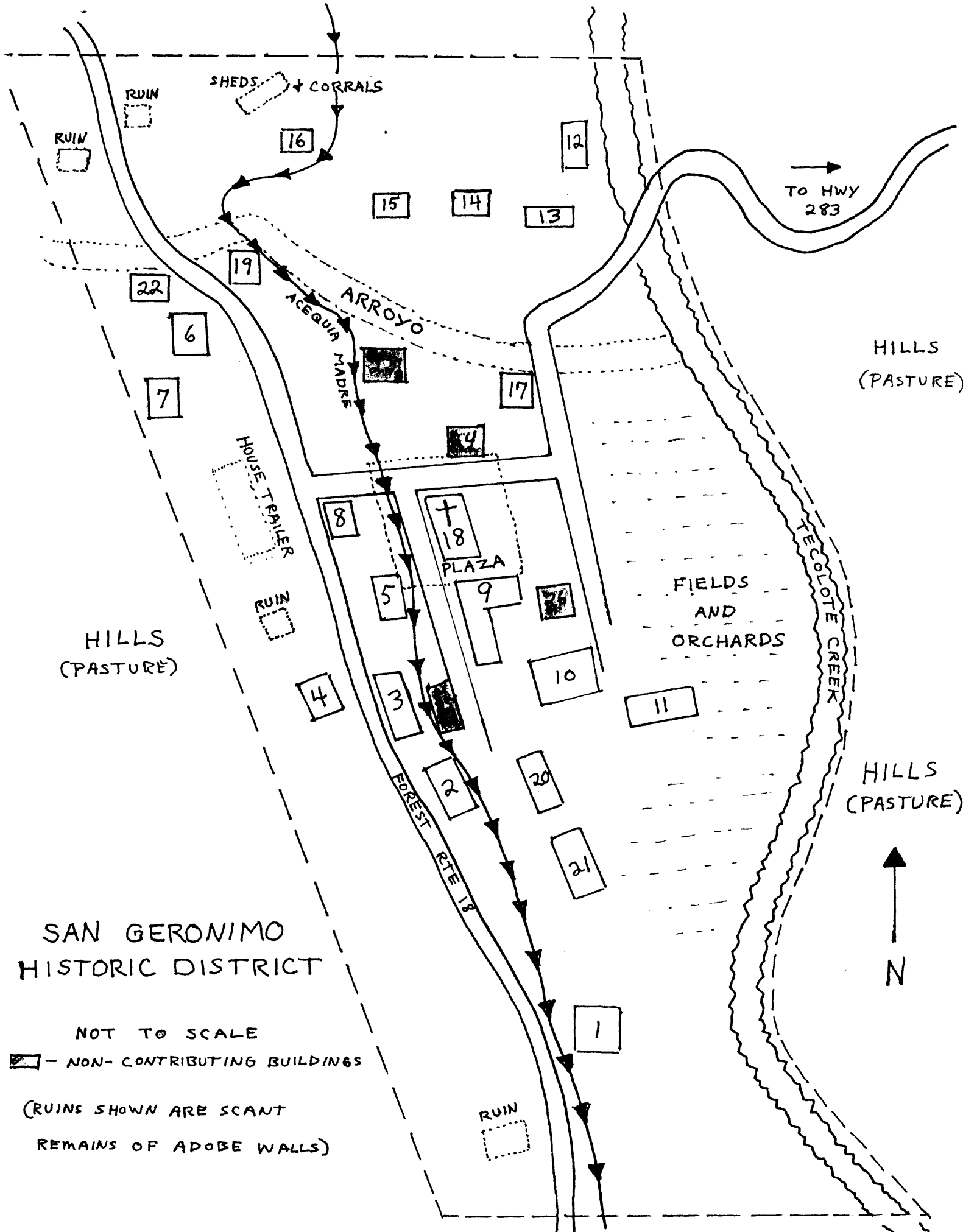


**SAN GERONIMO
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

NOT TO SCALE

 - NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

(RUINS SHOWN ARE SCANT
REMAINS OF ADOBE WALLS)



SAN GERONIMO
HISTORIC DISTRICT

NOT TO SCALE

■ - NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

(RUINS SHOWN ARE SCANT
REMAINS OF ADOBE WALLS)

HILLS
(PASTURE)

HILLS
(PASTURE)

FIELDS
AND
ORCHARDS

HILLS
(PASTURE)

