

1817

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DEC 21 1992

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name San José Church

other names/site number San José La Mesa; SR1283

2. Location

street & number 317 Josephine Street N/A not for publication

city or town La Mesa N/A vicinity

state New Mexico code NM county Doña Ana code 013 zip code 88044

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Am W Hill SAPO 12-15-92
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the
National Register

Date of Action

Shelton Byrum 1/21/93

San José Church
Name of Property

Doña Ana County, NM
County and State

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Other: Spanish-Pueblo

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Not visible

walls Cement stucco over adobe

roof Metal

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1868-1942

Significant Dates

1868

1877

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

San José Church
Name of Property

Dona Aña County, NM
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 3	3 3 9 2 0 0	3 5 5 5 1 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Corinne P. Sze, Ph.D.

organization Research Services of Santa Fe date November 17, 1992

street & number 1042 Stagecoach Road telephone (505) 983-5605

city or town Santa Fe state NM zip code 87501

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 7 Page 1 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

SUMMARY

This small, cruciform, adobe church with a single-aisle nave, trapezoidal sanctuary, and pitched metal roof was originally built between about 1868 and 1877. It faces southeast from the north end of a large open plaza in the village of La Mesa, in the Mesilla Valley of the lower Rio Grande. A bell tower forms an unbroken extension of the west side of the main facade, and a low, one-story sacristy lies at the northeast end of the building. Arched, brick-faced openings contain deeply recessed windows and the main entrance doors. The church has undergone a number of alterations during the Period of Significance including additions of the pitched roof over an original flat roof, a curvilinear gable on the main facade, and a belfry on top of the original open bell tower. After the Period of Significance the sacristy was added, window and door openings were arched and brick faced, and the side windows elongated. More recently a small utility addition was placed at the back of the building and finally, in 1992, the bell tower and belfry were completely reconstructed. The church is well maintained and in excellent condition.

DESCRIPTION

Exterior

The adobe walls of the church are covered with light brown stucco and vary in thickness from about three to about six feet. The smooth wall surface of the main facade is broken only by two arched, brick-lined openings containing double wooden entrance doors and a choir loft window directly above. A curved gable rises over and echoes the arched doors and window. Stretching west of the main facade is a square bell tower at the top of which rises above the roof line an open-arched belfry with a round dome topped with a cross (Photo 3). There are three long, arched, and brick-faced window openings on each of the side walls of the nave (Photos 4, 5). The projecting transept walls have no openings and are unadorned except for triangular gables (Photo 4,5). Small additions at the rear of the church contain heating and cooling systems, storage, and rest rooms (Photo 6).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 7 Page 2 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

Interior

The long narrow₁ nave is approximately 90 feet long, 21 feet wide, and 19 feet high (Photo 7).¹ The original eight to ten inch peeled-log vigas (ceiling beams) rest on simply carved corbels. The ceiling between the vigas has been plastered. The height of the nave varies about 6 inches laterally, perhaps originally for drainage. The nave walls have been plastered and painted white, and contain no moldings. There are 14 nichos (arched niches) in the side walls of the nave for the Stations of the Cross. The floor, which is some two feet higher than grade, is concrete which has been tiled and carpeted. A choir loft balcony extends across the back wall of the nave, about ten feet above the floor. It is supported by two squared posts with carved corbels (Photo 7), and projects out about nine feet.

The church widens to about 36-1/2 feet at the transept, the arms of which thus extend only about 7-1/2 feet beyond the nave walls. The ceiling of the transept is at least three feet higher than that of the nave perhaps to accommodate a clerestory window which was lost with the installation of the pitched roof. At the entrance to the sanctuary, the width of the church narrows again to about 17 feet, or almost five feet less than the width of the nave. Steps lead up into the sanctuary through an arch supported by fluted columns with broad square stepped capitals. The sanctuary tapers back to a width of about 11 feet at the rear. A six to seven foot high nicho at the rear of the sanctuary for the patron saint is now covered with a drape, pursuant to Vatican II.²

The reconstructed bell tower is entered through a door at the rear of the nave, under the choir loft. A replica of the original rough-hewn circular staircase (Photo 8) leads first to the choir loft and then to the belfry containing two original bronze bells. Each stair timber is attached to a vertical center post at one end and embedded in the tower wall at the other. The bells bear the manufacturer's name, L.M. Rumsey and Co., St Louis, Mo., and the dates of casting, 1878 for the larger and 1892 for the smaller.³ These two bells are all that remain of the original furnishings of the church.

1. Dimensions are those provided by Davis-Mancini, "An Architectural History of San Jose Church, La Mesa, New Mexico."

2. Van Dyke, Tina C. to San José Church File. Memorandum. May 14, 1986.

3. Davis-Mancini, 16.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 7 Page 3 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

Grounds

The boundary of the nomination includes the church building and a small strip of contiguous land that contains a concrete entrance ramp and semicircular steps leading to the main doors as well as concrete walks along the sides of the building. Beyond the boundary, within a few feet of the northeast side of the church lies a rectory dedicated in 1961. Northwest of the church at a slightly greater distance is a metal building which was built about 1970 for a parish hall. An allee of trees was planted in line with the main entrance in the 1980s and a low wall of red stone shipped in from El Paso was constructed at the street line, around the block which contains the church.

EVOLUTION OF EXTERIOR APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH

Photographs taken about 1913 show the exterior appearance of the church before twentieth century alterations (Photos 11, 12). Only the main facade was plastered, the flat roof was constructed of vigas (presumably supporting branches and thick layer of earth), and canales (drain spouts) protruded through the parapet wall to carry rain water off the roof in the traditional manner. The front entrance was the only arched opening; window openings were rectangular without arches and the windows themselves appear to be double-hung, wooden, and perhaps 4/4. A triangular false front or parapet rose above the main facade; the transepts had no shaped parapets. The bell tower had a flat, open top only slightly higher than the roof line and lower than the triangular parapet. There was a small window high in the west facade of the bell tower.

The alterations which brought the building to its present exterior appearance took place primarily in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1980s, and 1992. According to interviews cited by Davis-Mancini and those conducted more recently by Sze, in the 1920s the walls were reinforced with a rock facing about three feet high and the exterior was completely plastered and whitewashed. By the 1930s the pitched metal roof had been installed over the original flat, dirt roof, the front triangular gable changed to its present curved shape, and the belfry constructed on top of the tower.⁴ In the 1940s the sacristy was built.

4. It has not been possible to date these alterations with precision. However, informants whose memories stretch back into the 1930s are unanimous in affirming that they had occurred before their first recollections of the church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 7 Page 4

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

In the 1950s both the exterior and interior were cement stuccoed. The window openings were arched and together with the main entrance were faced with brick. The side windows were also elongated to provide more light to the nave and changed to metal casements with 12 lites and an arched top in three sections. In the 1980s small rooms were added across the back of the church, circular steps built in front of the entrance, and red glass was placed in the arches of the nave windows.

In 1989 the bell tower, which with its original rough-hewn, wooden, circular stairway was one of the most striking features of the church, was taken down after a crack developed where it joined the building. The tower has been entirely rebuilt to replicate its appearance at the time of its loss. The new tower, like the original, is constructed of adobe; the new belfry is of concrete block.

INTERIOR ALTERATIONS

About 1925 the original earthen floor was covered with a wood floor of rough planking which was in turn later replaced by concrete. In the 1950s the ceiling between the vigas was plastered to protect parishioners from dirt seeping through from the original roof. The entrance to the sanctuary was arched and the columns were built of cinder block, plaster, and molding (Photo 7). About the same time wrought iron the balustrades of chancel and choir loft replaced wooding railings.

Despite alterations the building has kept its basic plan and unadorned exterior with limited though enlarged openings and a reconstructed single side tower.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 5 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

SUMMARY

The San José Church is significant as a center of religious and cultural life in a small, closely-knit, primarily Hispanic community located near the Mexican border in the last section of the New Mexico ceded to the United States after the Mexican War. Architecturally it illustrates the persistence into the second half of the nineteenth century, of a style and technique of adobe church building developed by seventeenth century Franciscan missionaries in the earliest years of Spanish colonization in New Mexico. Alterations to the facade during the Period of Significance reflect the continuing evolution of architectural traditions in the twentieth century. The San José Church remains a carefully tended focus of religious and community feeling.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The village of La Mesa is located in the Mesilla Valley about 5 miles south of Las Cruces and about 40 miles north of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. Although a mission was founded at El Paso del Norte (modern Juarez) and a mission church dedicated there in 1668, settlement in the valley to the north was delayed until the early nineteenth century (the late Spanish period), and proceeded slowly until after the Mexican War (1846-1848).

The Mesilla Valley lies in the New Mexican portion of the Gadsden Purchase, a strip of territory along the Mexican border west of the Rio Grande, ceded to the United States by Mexico for ten million dollars in 1854. The purchase settled the border dispute that had arisen after the Mexican War and provided a southern route for a transcontinental railroad. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that concluded the Mexican War had granted to the United States the vast area of the Southwest stretching from New Mexico to California, and had further provided that those inhabitants who wished to remain citizens of Mexico could do so by migrating south of the new border.

As a result grants of land were issued and agricultural villages of repatriated New Mexicans were formed in the Mesilla Valley which was destined to be annexed in a few years to the United States. Nevertheless, centers of population grew in the years after the Gadsden Purchase. The village of Mesilla thrived as a major stop on the stagecoach route linking Texas and California until supplanted by Las Cruces when the railroad came through the valley. As the early grants became filled, new settlements such as La Mesa were formed.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 6 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

In 1857 approximately three hundred residents of the Mesilla Civil Colony Grant (1852) and the Santo Tomás de Yturbe Civil Colony Grant (1853) established a new settlement called La Mesa ("table land") on a vacant tract located between the José Manuel Sánchez Baca and Refugio Civil Colony Grants.¹ As the name would indicate, La Mesa was located on ground that was less vulnerable to the frequent flooding that submerged other parts of the valley. According to the descendants of the original families still living in La Mesa, the founders² were originally from El Paso del Norte now in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Franciscans who came with the earliest Spanish colonists to establish missions at the Indian pueblos along the Rio Grande in northern and central New Mexico established a tradition of church architecture which persisted from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Few in number, possessing only simple tools, and working at the farthest reaches of Spanish colonization in a land of few resources, the friars were limited to the only building materials at hand, adobe mud and logs. Adapting the building traditions of the indigenous peoples to the requirements of their own religion and culture, they induced the Indians to construct thick-walled adobe churches.

Within these churches, the missionaries created an open interior space that was larger and higher than anything in Pueblo architecture. This greater height was supported by heavily battered walls and thick exterior buttresses. The massive wall surfaces were unbroken except by small, infrequent window openings, projecting viga ends, and canales. Avoided were the arches, curvilinear parapets, and curved lines in general, which were typical in Mexico and became a characterizing feature of the mission architecture of California in the seventeenth century.

The mission churches and those built in new colonial settlements generally consisted of a long, narrow, single-aisle nave, without side aisles or side chapels, leading to a sanctuary which might be rectangular, trapezoidal, or apsidal. Sometimes transepts were added to create a cruciform plan in which the entrance to the sanctuary was always narrower than the nave.³ The width of the nave (hence of the church) and of the transepts was limited by the length of available roofing timbers and was usually between 25

1. Bowden, Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in the Chihuahuan Acquisition, 35-6.

2. Taylor, "San José Church."

3. Kubler, The Religious Architecture of New Mexico, 30.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 7 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

and 35 feet. The nave was usually about as high as it was wide and the length about four times the width.⁴ The Spanish custom of placing the choir outside of the sanctuary, usually in a balcony on the back wall of the nave was imported to Mexico and thence with the Franciscans to New Mexico.⁵

Roofs were flat rather than vaulted or domed, and constructed in the manner adapted from Pueblo tradition. Peeled logs were used as horizontal beams (vigas) which were allowed to project irregularly through the outer wall. Above them were placed branches, brush, and finally a thick layer of dirt. On the interior the vigas were left exposed and were supported where they joined the walls by carved corbel brackets. Water drained off of the roof through canales, roof drains made from a stone slab or a hollowed out half of a log which projected through a low parapet wall.

The entrance was usually placed in the center of the main facade with a small window above. Often an ornamental parapet contained one or more openings for bells or they were accommodated in a tower or towers. In northern and central New Mexico twin corner towers flanking the main facade were customary. In contrast small Mexican parish churches often had a single side tower as did the mission church closest to La Mesa, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe in El Paso del Norte.

Windows in the early churches were small, high, and generally limited to one over the entrance on the back wall illuminating the choir loft and one, or less frequently, two on one of the side walls. A uniquely New Mexican solution to the problem of lighting the sanctuary was the transverse clerestory window. Created by a difference in height between the roofs of the nave and sanctuary, or in the cruciform plan of the nave and transept, it substituted for the structurally more complicated dome common in Spanish and Mexican churches and illuminated the altar in dramatic contrast to the darkness of the nave. Although European churches usually face toward the west, New Mexican churches were usually oriented toward south or east in order, it is surmised, to maximize the light through the clerestory window which can only face in one direction.⁶

Isolated both by geography and a prohibition on trade with the other colonies of North America, Spanish building practices remained essentially the same for two and one half centuries until the United States assumed control of the region in 1846. The form of the mission church continued to be repeated

4. Ibid., 30-31; 56-57. Bunting, Early Architecture in New Mexico, 55.

5. Ibid., 57.

6. Ibid., 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 8 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

in Spanish community churches as well as private chapels. Even after the arrival of the railroad, some thirty-five years later, which brought with it wider possibilities of building materials and new ideas about style, change evolved slowly in more remote localities. The most extensively adopted innovation was the metal gable roof.

By contrast, in the larger population centers and successful railroad towns, fired brick, prefabricated decorative elements, and Victorian styles came to dominate commercial districts and newly platted neighborhoods. Just before the turn of the twentieth century, the railroad, having recognized early the power of architecture to promote the unique history and culture of the southwest and thereby inspire travel, brought the California Mission style to New Mexico in the design of depots and restaurants. In the first decades of the new century, it was common for old churches to be remodeled to add decorative detailing from this imported revival style which made extensive use of arches and curvilinear parapets.

SAN JOSE CHURCH

In the early years after the founding of La Mesa, the religious needs of the community were served by Juan Jesus Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish Jesuit, who conducted church services in various homes. In the 1860s work was begun on a proper church. According to oral testimony of his descendents, Jacobo Appelzoller both headed a committee of local leaders who organized the building of a church, and paid for the labor required for such tasks as cutting and preparing logs for vigas.⁷ The construction of the church was a community effort begun with the making of adobe bricks at the site. Until relatively recently a depression could be seen on the southwest side of the church, reputedly created by the removal of adobe mud.⁸ Tradition holds that the roof timbers were cut in the nearby Organ Mountains, transported by oxen and cart to the Rio Grande, and floated down the river to a point near La Mesa from which they were carried to the church site.⁹ Tree-ring dating has confirmed the 1868 traditional date for the building of the church and also established that the characteristics of core samples taken from the vigas at the San José Church are "practically identical" with corings taken from pines in the Organs and very similar to samples taken from the Guadalupe mission in

7. Davis-Mancini, 1; 17 (Note 5).

8. Ibid., 1; 18 (Note 14).

9. Ibid., 4; 18 (Note 17).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 9

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

Juarez also believed to have come from the Organs.¹⁰ The church was completed by 1877, the year the people of La Mesa deeded the building and land¹¹ to the Catholic Church in the name of Juan B. Salpointe, Bishop of Tucson.

Although completed more than twenty years after the American occupation of this region through the Gadsden Purchase, the church as originally built followed the tradition established by the Franciscans in building the adobe mission churches of New Mexico. Shared characteristics were general adobe massiveness; limited fenestration; unadorned walls and very limited use of arches; a simple cruciform plan with modest-proportioned transept; the long, narrow, single-aisle nave almost as high as it is wide; and the trapezoidal sanctuary, the approach to which is almost five feet narrower than the nave. The elevation of the transept roof suggests an original transverse clerestory window blocked by the addition of the pitched metal roof. The single rather than flanking towers demonstrate influence from the Guadalupe Church to the south, in present Juarez. Early twentieth century alterations, the curved gable, open-arched belfry, and arched windows reflect the influence of the California Mission Revival movement.

In August 1989 after a crack developed between the bell tower and the church, it was decided that the potential danger required that the tower be brought down¹² by the high-pressure hoses of the local volunteer fire department. The tower was completely reconstructed in 1992 by John R. Lavis Construction of El Paso under the direction of project architect, Pat Rand, A.I.A. of Carroll, Dusang and Rand, Architects and Engineers. A cabinet maker named McKinney also of El Paso was responsible for interior woodwork. Mexican nationals hand-hewed the stair treads to replace the original circular staircase. The adobes used to build the tower were imported from Mexico and laid in Portland cement.¹³ The belfry was constructed of concrete block. When the new tower was completed, the old bells were rehung in the belfry.

The church has always been an important cultural center for the community. It sponsors two fiestas, one in March in honor of the patron saint, and the other of more recent origin in July. Historically the feast of San José was celebrated on the saint's day, March 19. Children were excused from school and the festivities included a traditional parade around the village plaza, a bonfire, and fireworks. In recent years the celebration has been moved to the closest Sunday and begins with a Mass followed by the

10. Thomas H. Naylor to Mary Ann Thaeler, letter. December 3, 1983.

11. Inhabitants of La Mesa to Bishop Salpointe. Deed, March 22, 1877.

12. Las Cruces Sun-News. August 9, 1989.

13. Crocker, "Trip Report," March 28, 1991.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 10

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

traditional procession around the plaza with a statue of San José followed by a dinner in the parish hall. The whole community participates, food is donated, and local musicians play Hispanic and country western music. Since the 1960s the church also celebrates a mid-July fiesta with food and dancing under the stars. Another tradition takes place in June when two groups of women, dividing the town between the north and south, visit families to ask for donations and make contact with those who can't get out. Easter Sunday is celebrated with a sunrise service in the ball park across from the church.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The San José Church since its completion has dominated the landscape and served as a focus of community life. Centrally located it was bordered on the east by the old road from Mesilla to El Paso, the main street, and faced southeast onto the town plaza.¹⁴ The church with its tower, the tallest structure in the town, is the spiritual center of La Mesa, a small, primarily Hispanic, farming community. All masses are in Spanish, except one in English on Sunday for the young people. The church serves not only as a symbol of faith but as a social center for the town and remains a focus of community celebrations.

The parishioners, many of whom trace their roots to the original settlers, take great interest in their church. Historically its regular maintenance and repair, required by the effect of time and the elements on adobe mud, were a community activity which also provided an opportunity for improvements as local tastes changed. Routinely each year in preparation for the feast of San José, the exterior walls were patched with mud plaster. On the interior cracks¹⁵ and holes were filled with mud and the surface given a new coat of white wash. Periodic alterations to the exterior and interior have been a source of pride to the whole community.

14. Inhabitants of La Mesa to Bishop Salpointe. Deed, March 22, 1877. Town plat by Ira M. Bond filed in 1892 shows the church grounds facing an open square labeled "Plaza." In "The Catholic Church of La Mesa," Abstract of Title, 3.

15. Davis-Mancini, 7; 19 (Note 29).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 8 Page 11

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The San José Church is a nineteenth century adobe church which exemplifies the endurance over centuries of methods and techniques of construction developed by the Franciscans in seventeenth-century New Mexico. With its single tower, the church demonstrates a close cultural link with El Paso del Norte to the south. Alterations to the main facade during the Period of Significance are themselves cultural expressions consistent with the architectural movements of the region.

Their old church is a source of great pride residents of the Mesilla Valley and particularly to the parishioners whose interested care is evident in its excellent state of repair.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 9 Page 12 County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

Baldwin, P.M. "A Short History of the Mesilla Valley," New Mexico Historical Review 13 (July 1938): 314-324.

Bowden, J. J., Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in the Chihuahuan Acquisition. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1971.

Bunting, Bainbridge. Early Architecture in New Mexico. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.

"The Catholic Church of La Mesa," Abstract of Title No. 48890. The Southwest Abstract and Title Company, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Crocker, E. "Trip Report," March 28, 1992. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Davis-Mancini, Kathleen. "An Architectural History of San José Church, La Mesa, New Mexico" (unpublished paper) 1980. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Inhabitants of La Mesa to Bishop Salpointe. Deed, March 22, 1877. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Kubler, George. The Religious Architecture of New Mexico. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990. (Reprint of 1940 original)

Las Cruces Sun-News. August 9, 1989.

Naylor, Thomas H. to Mary Ann Thaeler, letter. December 3, 1983. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

"San José Church of La Mesa." Anonymous and undated compilation of documentation from written and oral sources. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Taylor, J. P. "San José Church," National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form (draft), October 18, 1965. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

Van Dyke, Tina C. to San José Church File. Memorandum. May 14, 1986. Files of the Historic Preservation Division.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 9 Page 13

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

Wilson, Chris et al. The South Central New Mexico Regional Overview. Santa Fe: Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico State Office of Cultural Affairs, 1989.

INTERVIEWS

Benavides, Luis. September 19, 1992.

Navarro, Alfredo. September 19, 1992.

Taylor, J. Paul. September 19, 1992.

Villegas, Father Robert. May 20, 1989.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number 10 Page 14

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary includes the church and a narrow contiguous strip of land extending 19 feet from the main (south) facade; 12 feet from the side of the tower on the west; and 4 feet from the furthest extension on the north; and 12' 2" from the nave wall on east to a point four feet from the south wall of the sacristy, then east to a point four feet from the east wall of the sacristy, and then north to a point four feet from the north facade; as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the church and features, such as steps and sidewalks, immediately associated with the church. It is drawn so as to exclude the rectory and parish hall which were built after the Period of Significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number Photos Page 15

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS

Information common to all contemporary photographs.

1. San José Church
2. Doña Ana County, New Mexico
4. September 18, 1992
5. New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

Information pertaining to individual contemporary photographs.

3. Corinne P. Sze
6. Overview, church (partial south and east facades) and rectory. Camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #1

3. Corinne P. Sze
6. Partial south facade through line of trees. Camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #2

3. Corinne P. Sze
6. South and partial east facades. Camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #3

3. Mary Ann Anders
6. East facade. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #4

3. Mary Ann Anders
6. West and partial south facades. Camera facing northeast.
7. Photo #5

3. Mary Ann Anders
6. North facade. Camera facing south.
7. Photo #6

3. Corinne P. Sze
6. Nave, looking toward sanctuary. Camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #7

3. Corinne P. Sze
6. Tower stairway (partial).
7. Photo #8

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property: San José Church

Section number Photos Page 16

County and State: Doña Ana, New Mexico

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

Information common to all historic photographs.

1. San José Church
2. Doña Ana County, New Mexico

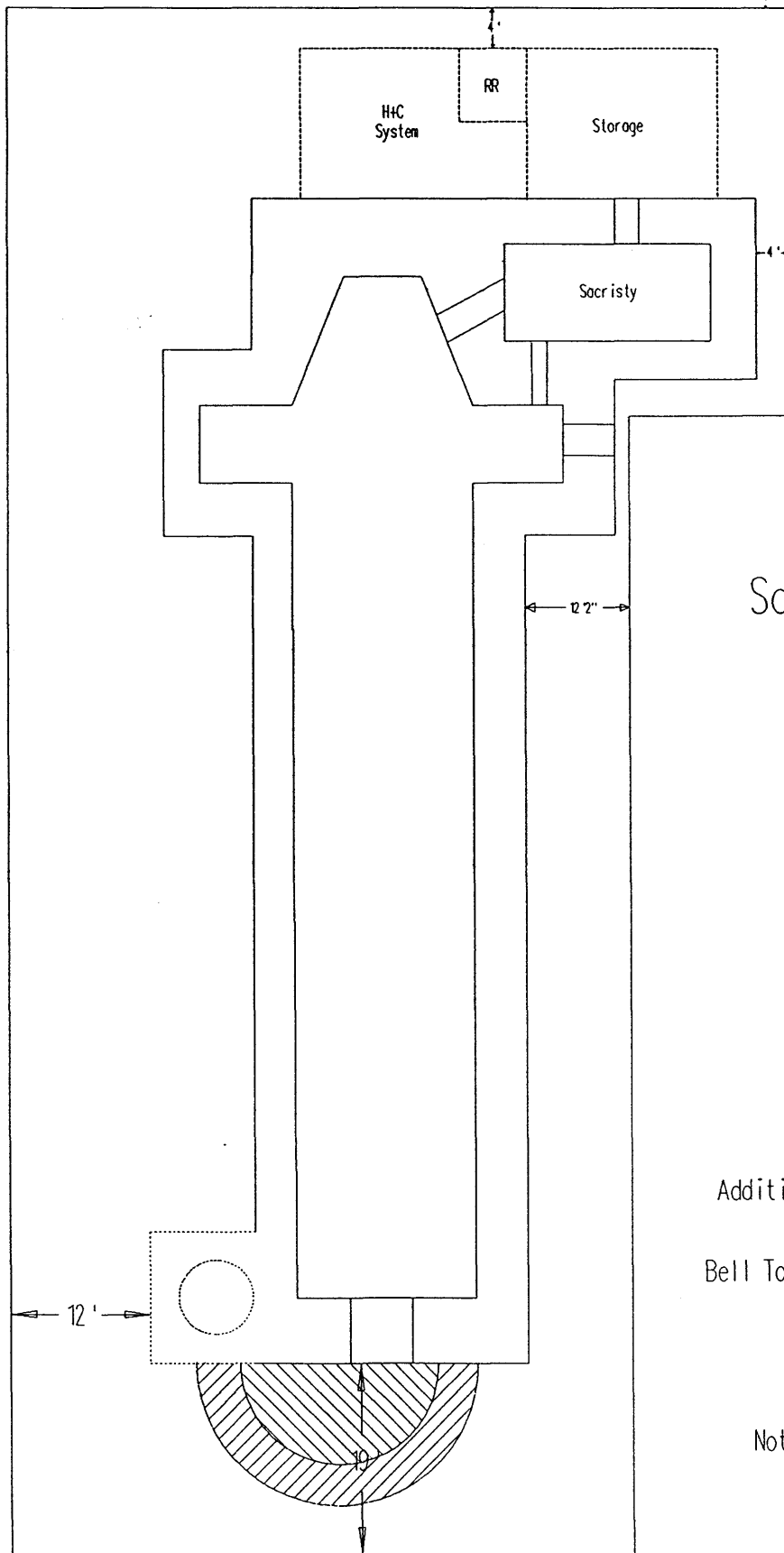
Information pertaining to individual historic photographs.

3. Marianne Thaeler
4. October 1985
5. Unknown
6. South and partial east facades. Camera facing west.
7. Photo #9

3. Marianne Thaeler
4. October 1985
5. Unknown
6. West and south facades. Camera facing north.
7. Photo #10

3. Unknown
4. 1913
5. Unknown
6. South and west facades. Camera facing north.
7. Photo #11

3. Unknown
4. 1913
5. Unknown
6. South and partial west facades. Camera facing north.
7. Photo #12



San Jose Church
 La Mesa,
 New Mexico

Addition, 1983 -----

Bell Tower, 1992 (dotted line)

Not to Scale