

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 23 1986

date entered

OCT 23 1986

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

1. Name

historic FRANCISCO PLAZA
and/or common FORT FRANCISCO MUSEUM

2. Location

street & number 312 South Main Street n/a not for publication
city, town La Veta n/a vicinity of
state Colorado code 05 county Huerfano code 055

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of La Veta Administered by: Huerfano County Historical Society
street & number P.O. Box 174 (continued)
city, town La Veta n/a vicinity of state Colorado 81055

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Huerfano County Courthouse
street & number 401 Main Street
city, town Walsenburg state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? n/a yes no
date 1986 n/a federal state n/a county n/a local
depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society, OAHP 1300 Broadway
city, town Denver state Colorado

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
n/a excellent	n/a deteriorated	n/a unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	n/a ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	n/a moved date n/a
n/a fair	n/a unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Francisco Plaza, built in 1862, is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Francisco Street in La Veta, in south central Colorado. The plaza consists of two historic adobe structures forming a U-shape around an open courtyard. The lot on which the plaza sits composes the Fort Francisco Museum Complex and includes a number of historic buildings moved to the site during the 1960s. A small one story frame gift shop was recently constructed abutting the northeast corner of the northeast section of the plaza (see Figure 1).

The plaza was evidently originally a large U-shaped adobe structure, 100 feet to a side and enclosed on the fourth side by a fence. In the center was an open courtyard where the well, dug in 1862, was located. A small opening between two buildings on the north side served as an entrance into the courtyard. Characteristic of early Hispanic architecture, the structure was constructed of adobe bricks 18 to 24 inches thick and had a flat, dirt roof supported by vigas.

In 1876, when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad lay tracks on the east side of the plaza, the fence forming the east wall of the enclosed plaza was removed. A photograph taken about 1876 shows the west end of the U-shaped plaza with its flat roof and what appears to be the gabled roof of the northeast section of the plaza. It is not known whether this section was originally constructed with the gabled roof or the roof was added at a later date. There were no trees on the site and the railroad tracks are visible in the foreground of the 1876 photograph.

By 1895, a gabled roof had replaced the flat roof on the northwest section of the plaza. Francisco Plaza was now characteristic of the Territorial style of architecture commonly found in the southwestern United States--combining elements of Hispanic (in materials, shape and use of vigas) and Anglo (in the treatment of doors, windows and roof shape) architecture.

The 1895 photograph shows the new gabled roof on the northwest section covered with rough planks, while the gabled roof on the northeast section was covered with wooden shingles. A crudely constructed shed roof, with one slope of the roof lower than the other, covered the southwest corner of the plaza.

A small open porch on the northwest end of the plaza was built between 1880 and 1895. It featured a picket fence and hipped roof supported by plain wooden posts. These were eventually replaced with log posts. A second open porch, no longer standing, with hipped roof supported by turned wooden posts, was built on the west end of the plaza around the turn of the century. On the north wall of the northwest building, a long porch running the length of the building was built about 1902. It was screened in about 1912 and enclosed in 1958. The lower section of the porch is, however, original.

In 1918, the southwest corner of the plaza was razed and a small one story adobe house with a flat roof and open porches on the south side was built on the same site. Sometime during the 1930s or 1940s, a hipped roof was added to this structure, replacing the flat roof. Although attached to the original plaza (the structures share a wall), the house is not connected and is considered a non-contributing element. Its presence does, however, enhance the feeling of the original plan and preserves the historic U-shape of the plaza.

(continued)

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1862 - 1899 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Francisco Plaza, built in 1862, is significant as the first dwelling in the Cuchara Valley, and one of the oldest remaining structures in South Central Colorado. It is associated with early settlement and agriculture in the Cuchara Valley and is also significant as a good example of the Hispanic and Territorial styles of architecture.

Colonel John M. Francisco first saw the land during a prospecting trip in 1834 and decided that he wanted to settle in this area. He and Henry Daigre purchased the land for Francisco Plaza from the Vigil-St. Vrain Land Grant, one of the few land sales later approved by the United States Congress. The adobe plaza was built in 1862 by Francisco, Daigre, and an Hispanic work crew.

John M. Francisco, (the rank of colonel was honorary) was born in Georgia and served as a sutler, providing supplies to the army at Fort Garland and Fort Massachusetts, both located in Colorado. His partner, Henry Daigre, was a Frenchman from Quebec and met Francisco while serving as an ox-team driver in the army supply business. The two developed a cattle business for the purpose of selling beef to the military.

The large farm and ranch operated by Francisco and Daigre became known as the Cuchara Ranch or Francisco Ranch. The headquarters were at Francisco Plaza, and the settlement that developed around the plaza served as the home of the Hispanic employees who raised grain and hay for the livestock. Hiram Vasquez, who helped build the adobe plaza, remained as the foreman of the ranch and handled the cattle drives to the forts.

The area around the plaza continued to expand with the influx of new settlers. A large number of them were from Georgia, including a large group of Southern sympathizers who arrived at the end of the Civil War. This group was led by Green Russell, founder of the Gilpin County mining camp of Russell Gulch.

As the community developed, Francisco Plaza became a supply center as well as a social and economic center for Hispanic and Anglo settlers. The first post office was located in the plaza from 1870 to 1876 and it also served as one of Huerfano County's first three polling places. During the late 1860s, the plaza provided protection for the settlers from the Ute Indians who occasionally attacked the settlement.

In 1876, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad arrived at Francisco Plaza, marking a new period of change and growth. The settlement served as the temporary terminus of the railroad line, which led to the establishment of several freighting companies to carry goods by wagon from the depot to the mining camps in the San Juan Mountains. It was during this time that the rooms of the plaza were converted for use as a hotel, general store, telegraph office, and depot. It was also the headquarters of Field and Hill, Outfitters (as seen in the 1876 photograph), one of the leading freighters in the region.

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bray, Lauren C. "Hiram Vasquez, Frontiersman," Colorado Magazine, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1
January 1960.
Colorado Chieftain, September 7, 1876, September 20, 1876.
Colorado Historical Society, Photographic Collections.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1

Quadrangle name La Veta

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A

1	3	4	9	9	1	9	0	4	1	5	0	9	8	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Hirleman Christofferson, researcher edited by Sally Pearce, OAHF

organization Huerfano County Historical Society date August 10, 1985

street & number Box 12 telephone 742-3325

city or town La Veta state CO 81055

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 Barbara Sudler

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 16, 1986

For NPS use only

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

for Alvares Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 10-23-86

Attest:

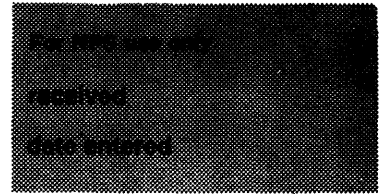
date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Francisco Plaza, LaVeta, Huerfano County, CO



Continuation sheet

Item number 2

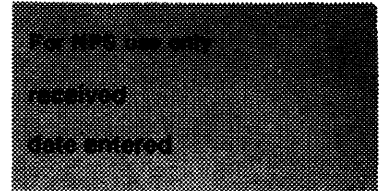
Page 2

Owner of Property (continued)

Leora Heyl
124 West Field
LaVeta, CO 81055

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Continuation sheet

FRANCISCO PLAZA

Item number

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The two remaining adobe buildings which form the north and west walls of the plaza were covered with adobe mud in 1982, giving the exterior walls a stucco-like finish. This was done to help preserve the adobe bricks, an historic treatment of adobe as well as a contemporary technique for preservation:

"In historic tradition, walls were finished with a coat of mud of lime plaster. If given occasional renewal, mud or lime plaster is probably still the best known technique for preserving the structural adobe."¹

One section of the wall, located in a protected area, was left uncovered to display the original crude brick appearance.

Each of the two buildings or wings has four doors and four windows facing the open courtyard, typical of the Spanish plaza. It is presumed that there were no openings on the north west outside walls originally. The present bays were probably cut around 1875 when the fort was no longer used for defense. Windows which face onto the plaza are original, wood frame, double-hung sash, with plain surrounds. They are either six-over-six in the northeast section or four-over-four in the northwest section. Most of the doors facing the plaza are original and all are pre-1900. The original 1862 doors are solid, paneled wood frame with plain surrounds and the later pre-1900 doors are wood frame with plain surrounds and double window panes in the upper section.

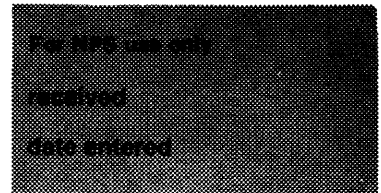
The interiors of the plaza buildings have remained basically unchanged. The only major alteration was to make the rooms accessible by interior doors, which were probably cut through pre-1900. The northeast section has four rooms, with an outside entrance into every room and interior doors connecting the rooms. The museum section of the west wing contains seven rooms which are also interconnected. The original dirt floor was covered relatively early with wood flooring which still remains intact. The walls are plaster. Two rooms compose what is now a private residence on the south end of the west section.

There are at least five remaining fireplaces, mostly brick with plain mantels. Three of the fireplaces are in a corner location, traditional to Spanish architecture. The fireplaces are, like the walls, covered with plaster.

The following is a more detailed description of the individual rooms (see Figure 2):

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Continuation sheet FRANCISCO PLAZA

Item number 7

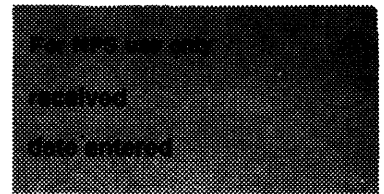
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Rooms

- H-1 The room was built in 1863 as the grainery. It was 40 x 60 feet.² In 1882 it was used as Town Hall.³ This section of the plaza is now a private residence, which was built in 1919. It is probable that some of the original adobe bricks were used in its construction.
- H-2 In 1876, this room was the headquarters of Field and Hill, "forwarders", as called at the time. They supplied the town and the railroad with most of their supplies. The space is now part of a private residence.
- W-1 This is the southernmost room of the Museum. It is an office/storeroom/bathroom. In 1876, it was the Plaza Hotel of Andrew Francisco.
- W-2 An original room whose later use is unknown. At one time or another, however, it is known that the Fort was used as:
- a. practice room for the La Veta Brass Band⁴
 - b. a bakery⁵
 - c. a doctor's office⁶
 - d. carriage repair and painting shop⁷
 - e. apartments⁸
- W-3
- W-4 See W-2
- W-5 This room is not a part of the original structure. The existence of cut-stone lintels--the only room with such lintels--indicates it was built in the 1880s, when La Veta's stone building boom began. These rooms, W-5-7, were John Francisco's own home. It is surmised that W-5 was built as an entry and kitchen. Though part of this addition is now a bathroom, it was not built as such, since Francisco not only died before La Veta got waterworks, or sewer, but also because it has an outside door and two windows.
- W-6 Original, see W-2.
- W-7 See W-2. These rooms were still in use as apartments in 1958, when the Museum acquired the property.
- Porch Local legend tells that the porch was built after Francisco's death in 1902 by his heirs to improve the property. A newspaper article read that, indeed, "porches, fences" were added, and "renovations to preserve it longer" were done.⁹

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Continuation sheet FRANCISCO PLAZA Item number 7 Page 4

E-1-4 The east building has experienced the least change and is closest to the original. The north wall (see photograph # 4) still has no doors or windows. There are two innerconnecting doors, one in E-1 to E-2, and from E-3 to E-4, which may have been cut as early as 1869.¹⁰ E-3 is particularly interesting due to the hundreds of square nails visible in the floorboards. Of plank construction, these floors were probably laid in the late 1860s or early 1870s, though the above source says the floors were still dirt in 1869. The peaked roof on this building was made of handmade wooden shingles and probably raised in the 1870s, the first roof like it in the county.¹¹

1. Jerome Iowa, Ageless Adobe: History and Preservation in Southwestern Architecture, (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 1985), p. 96.

2. Huerfano Herald, May 4, 1882.

3. Huerfano Herald, May 4, 1882.

4. Huerfano Herald, September 28 and December 21, 1882.

5. La Veta Advertiser, September 16, 1899.

6. Huerfano Herald, July 21, 1881.

7. La Veta Advertiser, January 18, 1908.

8. "Seven families and several bachelors are living in the Plaza, the oldest habitation in town", Huerfano Herald, November 25, 1880.

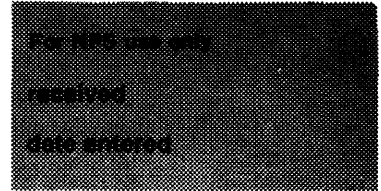
9. "40 Years Ago" column in the La Veta Advertiser, June 19, 1942.

10. Newspaper biography of W. B. Hamilton, La Veta Advertiser, January 23, 1931.

11. Obituary of Edward Berry, builder of roof, La Veta Advertiser, October 10, 1908.

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Continuation sheet Francisco Plaza

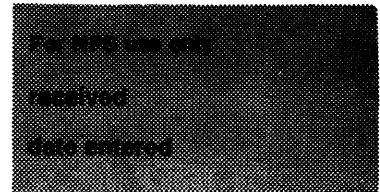
Item number 7

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Because of the changes to the lot that have occurred since the acquisition of Fort Franciso by the museum, the nominated area consists of only the fort itself, and the courtyard. Noncontributing sections of the fort include the gift shop, of recent construction and attached to the north end of the east section, and the private residence, attached to the south end of the west section. The residence was rebuilt in 1919, outside the period of significance of Francisco Plaza.

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Continuation sheet FRANCISCO PLAZA

Item number 8

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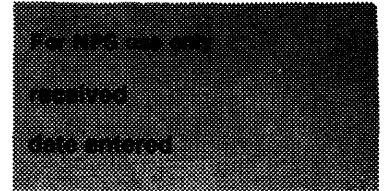
The arrival of the railroad and the expansion of the settlement led to a new name for the little community--La Veta. Papers for incorporation of the town were filed by noted railroad tycoon and entrepreneur William Jackson Palmer and Governor Alex Hunt in 1876. La Veta was not officially incorporated until 1886 and the town never grew to more than 800 or so in population. Cattle and freighting continued to be the major industries in the region.

By the 1890s, Francisco Plaza was one again a residence and farm. By that time ownership had fallen solely to John Francisco. Francisco and Daigre had broken their partnership--possibly as early as 1870. Daigre lived elsewhere. Changes continued to be made to the building by Francisco, who rented the rooms to families and businesses. Francisco died in 1902 and the property was inherited by his sister-in-law Ann Hamilton (Mrs. Andrew L.) Francisco. In 1918, Ann Francisco either sold or gave her brother John Hamilton a portion of the fort on the south. (While many local residents say that the south portion was merely remodeled into a separate residence, there has been speculation that the old building was removed and replaced. This supposition is based on reports from the La Veta Advertiser for August 15, 1919, which said that the basement was in and the walls halfway up.)

In 1958, the Huerfano County Historical Society opened the plaza as a museum, and in subsequent years, added a number of historic buildings to the property. The lot on which the plaza sits has, since the late 19th century, been occupied by numerous buildings, as it does today. However, because the historic buildings have been recently moved to the lot, they are excluded from the nominated area.

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Continuation sheet

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Fort Francisco Museum Collections. La Veta, Colorado.

Huerfano County Historical Society Collections. La Veta, Colorado.

Iowa, Jerome. Ageless Adobe: History and Preservation in Southwestern Architecture. Santa Fe NM: Sunstone Press. 1985.

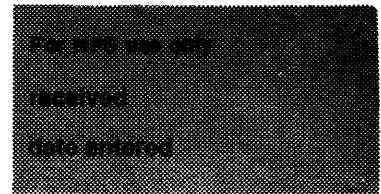
La Veta Advertiser. January 26, 1901; March 27, 1902; October 10, 1908; March 20, 1942; June 15, 1951.

Spencer, Elma. Green Russell and Gold. 1966.

Territorial Daughters. Pioneers of the Territory of Southern Colorado. 1980.

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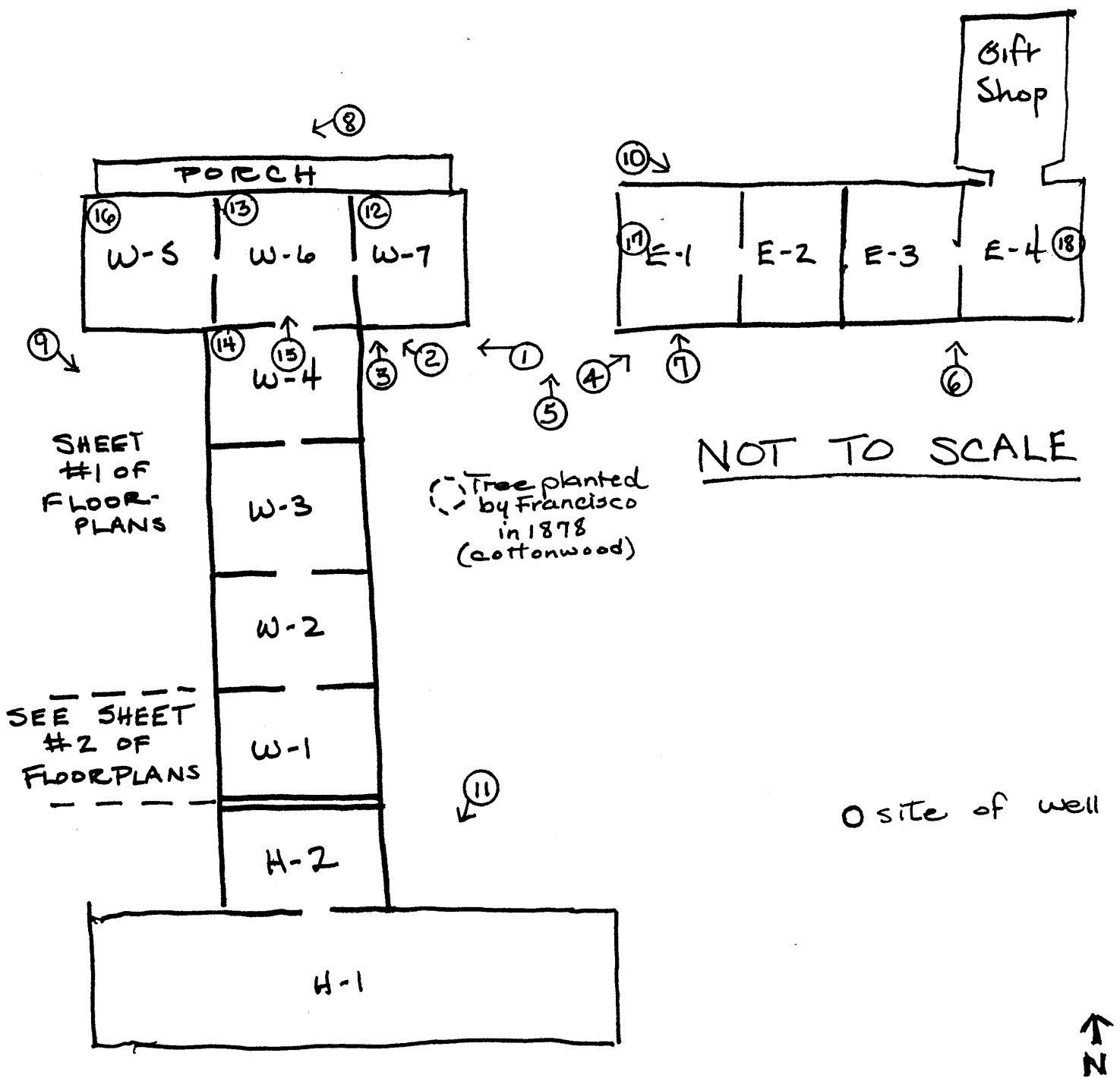
Continuation sheet Francisco Plaza Item number 10 Page 2

Verbal Boundary Justification

Because of the changes to the original lot on which Francisco Plaza sits, the nominated area consists of the building itself and the interior courtyard space.

Verbal Boundary Description (See Figure 1)

Beginning at the NE corner of Fort Francisco gift shop, the boundary extends 15' from the end wall and extends west and southward 15' from the outside walls of the giftshop to within 15' from the north wall of the east wing; the boundary then extends westward to a point 15' from the NW corner wall of the west wing; the boundary turns southward, extending 15' from the west wall of the west wing to a point 15' from the SW corner wall of the private residential unit; the boundary then extends eastward 15' from the south wall of the private residence to a point 15' from the SE corner wall of the private residence; the boundary then turns northward, extending to a point 15' from the NE corner wall of the private residence; the boundary then turns due east, running along an imaginary line extending out from the north wall of the private residence to the intersection with another line extending 15' from the east wall of the east wing; the boundary then turns northward, extending along a line 15' from the east wall of the east wing and gift shop to the point of beginning.



NOT TO SCALE

(---) Tree planted by Francisco in 1878 (cottonwood)

SHEET #1 OF FLOOR-PLANS

SEE SHEET #2 OF FLOORPLANS

- Key:
- H = House, private residence
 - W = West wing of museum
 - E = East wing of museum

FRANCISCO PLAZA
LaVeta, Huerfano County, Colorado

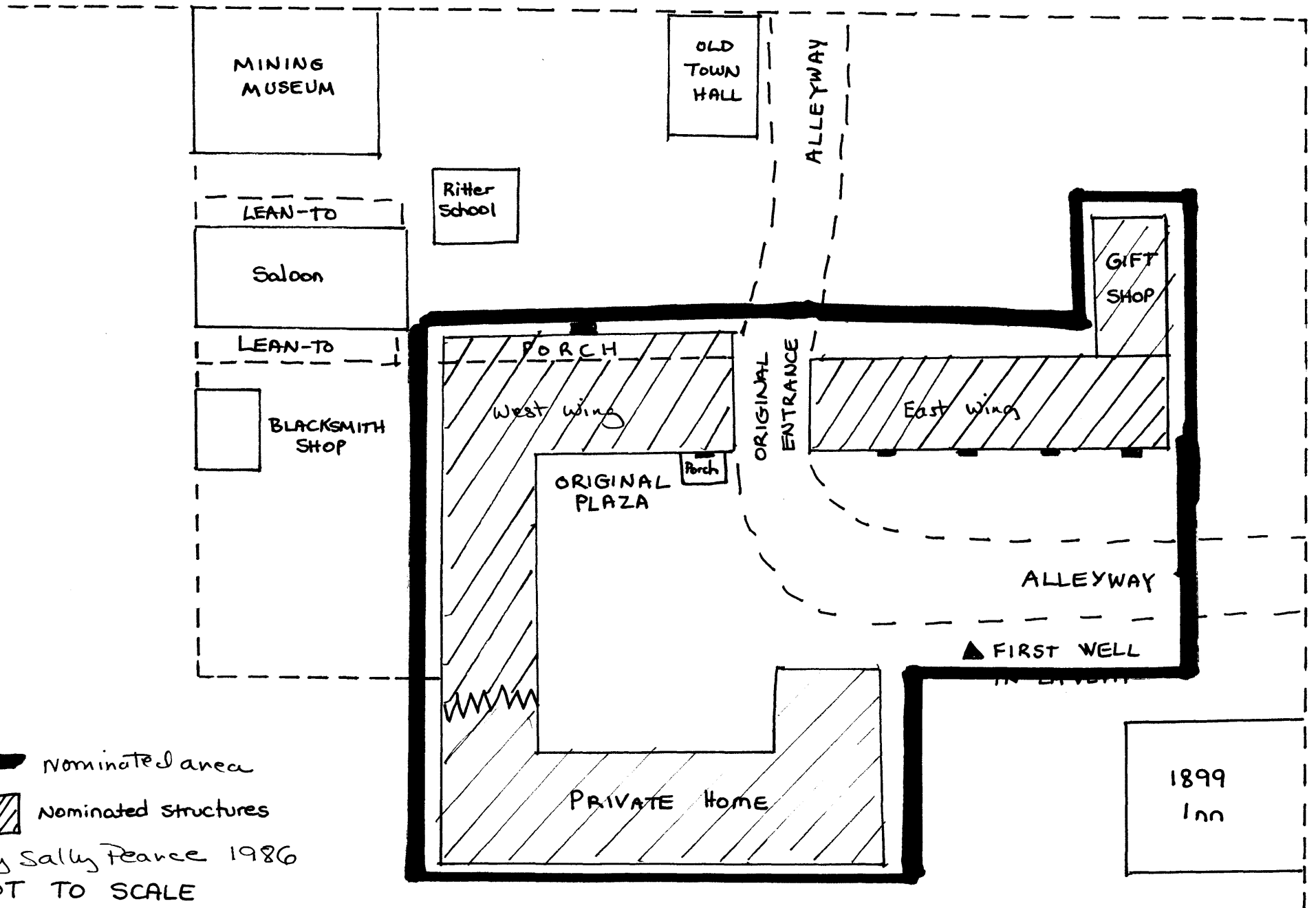
Sketch plan of interior.
By Nancy Hirleman Christofferson
July 1986
Not to Scale

Figure 2 Circled numbers keyed to photos.



FRANCISCO PLAZA /
FORT FRANCISCO MUSEUM COMPLEX
LA VETA, COLORADO
HUERFANO COUNTY

FIGURE 1

FRANCISCO STREET



MAIN STREET

-  Nominated area
-  Nominated structures

By Sally Pearce 1986
NOT TO SCALE