

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE New Mexico	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme XX Architecture (Colonial), IV
3. NAME(S) OF SITE San José de Gracia Church (Church of Santo Tomas Del Rio de las Trampas)	4. APPROX. ACREAGE .5 acre
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) North side of the Plaza in Las Trampas, State Route 76, Taos County.	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Mexico.	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

The church of San José de Gracia, erected between 1760 and 1776, is probably the best preserved and least altered of the Spanish Colonial pueblo churches built in New Mexico.

History

First settled in 1751 by 12 Spanish families from Santa Fe, the walled village flourished until there were 63 families numbering 278 people in 1776. Construction on the existing church began sometime after 1760 and was completed by 1776. Tree ring datings for two roof beams or vigas gives the date 1791 and 1812; this suggests that a new roof was placed on the church early in the 19th century. In Spanish Colonial times the parish as well as mission churches were staffed by Franciscan missionaries. When the New Mexico missions were secularized by the Mexican government and the friars forbidden to minister as secular clergy in 1834, the shortage of clergy in New Mexico became acute. As no secular clergy arrived from Mexico to replace the regular clergy, the spiritual leadership developed on lay leaders. This situation continued until the 1850's when the Catholic Church in New Mexico was reorganized under Bishop Lamy.

Until the 1920's the Trampas area remained so isolated and its economy so retarded that it was unaffected by American fashions of the late 19th century. It is to this cultural and economic isolation that the remarkable unaltered state of the San José de Gracia church is due.

(Continued)

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

See page 3.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Historical American Building Survey Data Book Report HABS No NM61
"San José de Gracia Church" by Bainbridge Bunting, December, 1961, 55 pp. "Las Trampas - A Special Report for the Advisory Board," (N.P.S. Mimeo., Santa Fe, N.M.), March, 1967.

10. PHOTOGRAPHS 4791, 4778 ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Parish Church	13. DATE OF VISIT March 25, 1968
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Charles W. Snell	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE May 1, 1968	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE New Mexico	NAME(S) OF SITE ✓ San José de Gracia Church (Church of Santo Tomas Del Rio) de las Trampas.
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7. Continued:

Present Appearance

The church has a single nave plan 100 feet long by 52 feet wide (outside dimensions) and, there are also transepts and a projecting apse. The adobe walls of the nave measure four and six feet respectively in thickness and rise to a height of 34 feet. Facing south, the facade has no towers, but projecting buttresses enclose a recess containing an outdoor balcony at the choir loft level. The two flanking buttresses are topped by small wooden belfries. Exterior architectural decoration is limited to the paneled main entrance door and the simple wooden balcony above.

Inside a small chapel to the right serves as the baptistry. The nave is lighted by two windows in the east wall, and the wood floor is made of hand-hewn slabs of wood set in rough frames five feet by two feet. Approached by a simple ladder, the wood-floored balcony over the main entrance serves as the choir loft. The under side of this loft is decorated with simple painted designs. The flat ceiling is supported by wooden vigas and corbels. Rather crudely cut but with strong profile, the carved corbels are more elaborate at the crossing area where the dramatic contrasts in lighting accentuate the design. The nave ceiling is 19 feet 6 inches high, and those of the transepts and sanctuary are 22 feet.

One of the most remarkable features of the New Mexico Spanish Colonial Churches, and one that is well illustrated here, is a transverse clerestory window located so that, though invisible from the nave, it throws a mysterious light on the sanctuary and altar. To accomplish this the transept roof was raised a few feet higher than the nave roof and this permitted the introduction of a low horizontal window over the nave roof, light from which would flood the otherwise dark interior of the altar area. Such clerestory windows are unknown elsewhere in Spanish Colonial architecture, or indeed in Christian architecture anywhere in the world, and they seem to have been an invention of the Franciscan padres of New Mexico. Old paintings adorn the carved wood reredos and side walls, and a wooden lattice railing serves as an altar rail.

The forecourt of the church is used for a graveyard and is surrounded by a low adobe wall with a handsome gate. The church has been little altered since the early 19th century. A new earth-filled roof was placed over the

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Page 3.

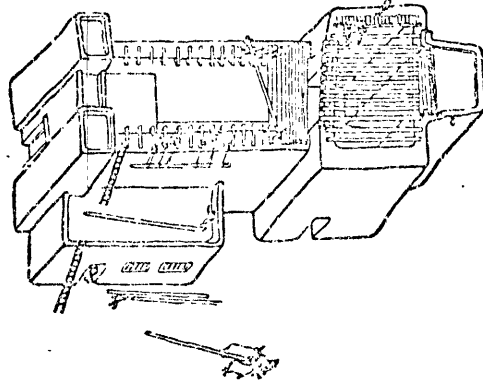
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7. Continued:

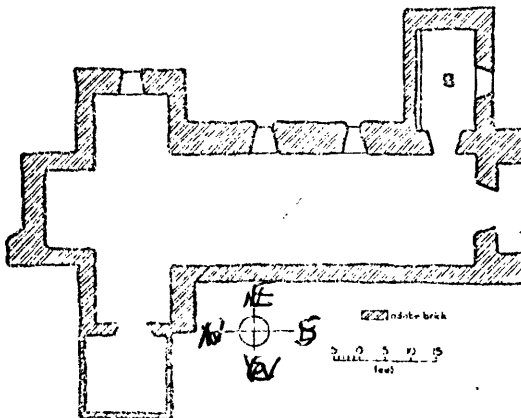
church in 1932 and a built-up asphalt roof covering was added over this in 1955. A new coat of mud plaster was also applied to the exterior of the church in 1961. The structure is still an active parish church and is open to visitors.

8. References:

George Kubler, The Religious Architecture of New Mexico (Colorado Springs, 1940), 126; Fray Francisco Atanasio, The Missions of New Mexico, translated by Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez (Albuquerque, 1956) 99-101, 251; Eleanor B. Adams, ed., Bishop Tamaron's Visitation of New Mexico, 1760, Historical Society of New Mexico Publications in History Vol. 15 (Albuquerque, 1954), 55. Bainbridge Bunting, Taos Adobes (Santa Fe, 1964), 62-67; Bainbridge Bunting and John P. Conron, "A Village and a Church-- Las Trampas," New Mexico Architecture (Sept-Oct. 1966) Vol. 8, No. 9 and 10, pp 27-31; Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952) 196-97; Trent E. Sanford, The Architecture of the Southwest (New York, 1950), 142-43.



158. Building a New Mexican mission in the seventeenth century (George Kubler, *Religious Architecture in New Mexico*, The Taylor Museum)



170. Plan of Santo Tomás, Trampas, N.M. (George Kubler, *Religious Architecture in New Mexico*, The Taylor Museum)