

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 Francisco de Assisi Mission Church.	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 1 acre
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) On the plaza in Ranchos de Taos, U.S. 64, four miles southwest of the town of Taos, / Taos County.	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Catholic Church; Reverend John Watson Fitzgerald, P.O. Box 3745 Albuquerque, N.M. 87110	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

Built between 1772 and 1816, San Francisco de Assisi Mission Church is a large and excellent example of a New Mexico Spanish Colonial Church. This picturesque structure is probably the best known and most photographed of all New Mexico mission churches.

History

San Francisco de Assisi Mission was founded in the early 18th century. The existing church is believed to have been built about 1772. Tree ring boring of the ceiling beams, however, yield a date of about 1816, and it is probable that the roof was replaced or rebuilt about 1816.

The white-stuccoed adobe building, 120 feet long, has exceptionally massive walls and the front is enclosed by a forecourt with almost equally thick adobe walls, round on top. The two wide buttresses on the east front rise the full width of the twin towers and flank an arched entrance portal with surface tavery and double paneled doors. With a wide buttress against the apse at the west end and the beehive-curved buttresses at the corners of the boldly projecting north-south transepts, the structure is almost like a piece of abstract sculpture.

On the interior the vigas or beams of the flat ceiling are unusually close together and rest on elaborate double corbels. The choir loft over the entrance is lighted by a single window in the east facade. The nave is lighted by a single large window in each side wall, while the walls of the transepts and the sanctuary are windowless. Light for the sanctuary is provided by a clerestory window set in the transept wall over the nave roof. The large carved

(Continued)

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

George Kubler, The Religious Architecture of New Mexico (Colorado Springs, 1940); L. B. Prince, Spanish Mission Churches of New Mexico (Cedar Rapids, 1915); Earl R. Forrest, Missions and Pueblos of the Old Southwest (Cleveland, 1929); Cleve Hallenbeck, Spanish Missions of the Old Southwest (New York, 1926), 36.

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

Historic American Building Survey: Mission Church of Ranchos de Taos, 31 sheets, 1934; 11 photos, 1934, 1936.

10. PHOTOGRAPHS * 4814-4818 ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Good (Restored)	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Church and Museum	13. DATE OF VISIT March 25, 1968
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Charles W. Snell</i> Charles W. Snell	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE May 1, 1968	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/4 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.

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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) . . .

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STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
New Mexico	San Francisco de Assisi Mission Church

8. References (Continued)

Trent E. Sanford, The Architecture of the Southwest (New York, 1950), 144-45; Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 193, 196-97.

7. Continued:

reredos over the altar, partitioned into panels, contains several old paintings.

Present Appearance

In excellent condition, the church was thoroughly restored in 1967. The original adobe walls were covered on the exterior with a hard plaster as a protective coating. A new roof was placed over the structure and all of the vigas or ceiling beams and 60% of the corbels were carefully replaced with duplicates of the originals. Doors in the church were also replaced in a similar manner. The original Spanish period woodwork in the sanctuary, however, has been left intact. The structure is still used as an active parish church and is open to visitors.

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1. STATE New Mexico	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme IV, Spanish Exploration and Settlement
3. NAME(S) OF SITE San Francisco de Assisi Mission	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 1
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Ranchos de Taos, Taos County, U.S. 64 four miles southwest of Taos.	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Catholic Church	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

San Francisco de Assisi Mission stands in the center of the village of Ranchos de Taos, a small Mexican and Indian agricultural community that dates from the eighteenth century. Although the exact date is in dispute, the mission was built sometime in the eighteenth century. Tree ring borings, however, yield a date of about 1816, and it is probable that an earlier church on the site fell into ruin and was replaced by the present church about 1816. The church is a large and picturesque example of mission architecture. With thick adobe walls supported by buttresses, it is 120 feet long and enclosed by a six foot adobe wall. It has two bell towers. This church is perhaps the best known and most photographed of all New Mexico missions.

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

George Kubler, The Religious Architecture of New Mexico (Colorado Springs, 1940).  
L. B. Prince, Spanish Mission Churches of New Mexico (Cedar Rapids, 1915).  
Earl R. Forrest, Missions and Pueblos of the Old Southwest (Cleveland, 1929).

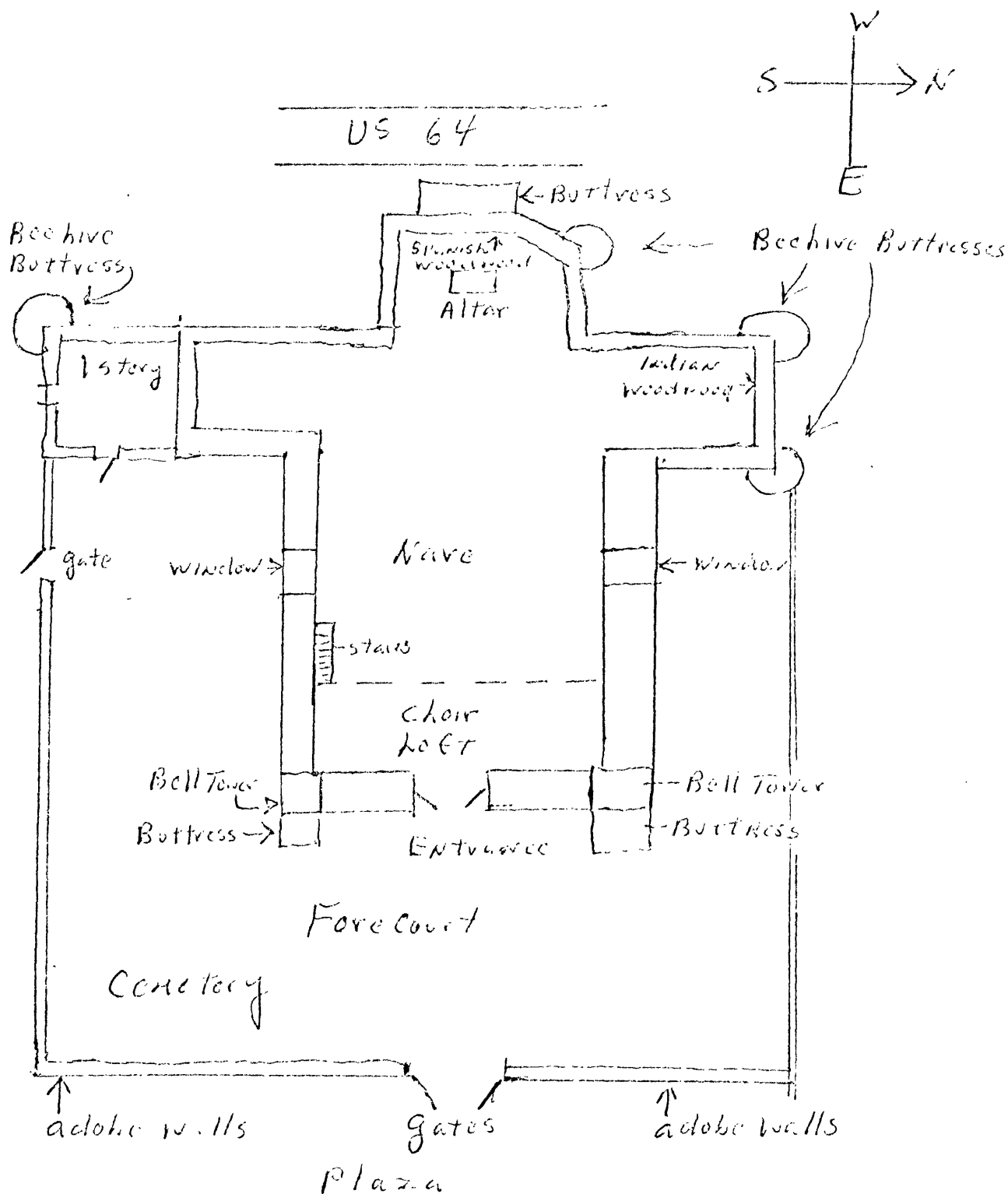
9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

None

10. PHOTOGRAPHS * ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Parish church	13. DATE OF VISIT May 14, 1958
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Robert M. Utley</i>		15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE June 5, 1958

\* 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)



Sketch Plan of  
 San Francisco de Assisi Mission Church,  
 Rancho de Taos, New Mexico

C. W. Snell 3/25/68