9. Indian drummers at Tesuque Pueblo.

3 SANTA FE TO TAOS - 83.6 MILES

0.0 Miles. Beginning at the main plaza, the route leads north on Washington Street to Federal Square and then to the Old Taos Highway. (Route Numbers 285, 64.)

1.2 Miles Right. As the road ascends, the Governor’s mansion stands on a hilltop (1955, Willard Kruger). The entire residential zone east of the road has been built since World War II.


Right. Panoramic view of Sangre de Cristo Mountains, elevation of Santa Fe Baldy 12,622 feet.

5.5 Miles Left. Santa Fe Opera, founded 1956. First building burned 1967, new amphitheatre ready summer of 1968 (McHugh and Kidder). Acoustics excellent; the balcony provides shelter in case of shower. The rear wall of stage can be removed to permit spectacular view of Jemez Mountains and lights of Los Alamos.

8.8 Miles Left. Tesuque Pueblo turnoff (no photographing). A small post-Rebellion pueblo (pop. 259) built around a plaza. The irregularities of the front building line give variety, yet maintenance of 90-degree coordinates insures a coherence of plan. The two-story block on the south is typical of early pueblo massing. Originally there were no openings on the ground story since rooms were entered by ladders through hole in roof. Lower rooms were largely used for storage. The half-destroyed rooms on west side illustrate the transient nature of adobe construction which begins to disintegrate as soon as formed. The wall one sees is the back wall of a front room.

San Diego de Tesuque Church (1915). The graveyard behind church retains a few elaborate wooden crosses of a type that was once prevalent. Return to Highway 285.

10.2 Miles Left. Camelback Rock, eroded sandstone formation. Also a view of Los Alamos on distant mountain, about 20 miles cross-country.

13.3 Miles Left. Cuyamungue, former pueblo location. Actually there are numerous small ruins on low hills along the creek whose once more plentiful water furnished irrigation. Scattered houses and commercial buildings here date within the present decade.

15.2 Miles. Highway 4; turn left (Los Alamos 20 miles).

15.7 Miles Right. Pojaque, recent settlement near an old pueblo which dissolved (c. 1915); valley farms irrigated from Nambe River.

16.6 Miles. Old road along Nambe River parallels present highway and has access to several estates and old farm houses.

20.8 Miles Right. Road to San Ildefonso Pueblo. Less interesting from an architectural point of view as population has dispersed over reservation. Several good, unrelated buildings remain near the old plaza.

22.2 Miles. Cross Rio Grande River near Otowi Bridge of literary fame (The House at Otowi Bridge by Peggy Pond Church).

23.2 Miles. Highway 30, turn right.

NMA September-October 1970
28.0 MILES. Turn right for Puyé ruins (7 miles). Puyé is a Pueblo IV site (c. 1150-1450) and perhaps the ancestral home of the Indians now living in pueblos in the river valley. Two areas of habitation: cliff dwellings and mesa top.

The mesa top contains ruins of a fairly large community house built around a rectangular court, an arrangement that is smaller but basically similar to that of a modern pueblo like Tesuque. Rooms are arranged in series as much as 11 deep, but most are very small (9 to 14 feet wide and sometimes as narrow as 4 feet). Two, even three stories high, the upper levels were set back with the roofs of lower rooms utilized as terraces. The cramped rooms with tiny windows and doors, low ceilings, and no fireplaces would hardly constitute a comfortable living environment. The houses provided storage space and minimal shelter, but the working day was spent out of doors. The present walls are reconstruction, laid over early foundations that had almost disappeared.

Beyond the living area to the east is a large kiva, a round ceremonial chamber excavated in the soft tufa and entered by a ladder through a large smoke hole. As usual, the kiva is equipped with a ventilator shaft oriented north and equipped with a deflector (masonry baffle to protect fire from the draft). Smoke from the fire escaped from the same hole through which people entered by ladder. The roof is a reconstruction.

The south rim of the mesa drops off abruptly and there are steep and difficult paths cut in the rock by which one can descend to a series of shallow cave dwellings and thence to the parking lot below. Older than the community house on the mesa top, these cliffside dwellings began as shallow caves that had eroded in the soft tufa. These spaces were squared up, using harder stones as abrasives, then augmented by the construction of regular rooms in front of them. Two stories in height, roof tops here were also used as living terraces. Several rooms have been reconstructed as has been the roof of the small kiva partially excavated in the rock.

Return to Highway 30, turn left.

29.9 MILES. Turn right into Santa Clara Pueblo (pop. 1,119). Although the outline of the plaza is irregular and buildings differ in heights, a basic order prevails because walls are all parallel or at right angles to each other. The square kiva built above ground is a late variation of the traditional structure which was subterranean and usually circular. The decaying structure on the north illustrates the fugitive nature of adobe.

Return to highway by north road.

31.8 MILES. Española. Settled in the 17th century but no early buildings survive. Take Highway 84 north from town.

32.9 MILES. Turn right on gravel road which parallels new highway. It passes several old adobe buildings and gives a picture of rural New Mexico. The acequia (irrigation ditch) runs just beyond the line of houses and waters fields and orchards which lie at a slightly lower level. Fields are long and narrow to secure frontage for each on the main ditch. Frequently they are very narrow as a result of the Spanish custom of subdividing the land among all of the heirs.

38.8 MILES. Cross Rio Chama.

39.1 MILES. Turn right on dirt road about 100 yards short of Highway 74.

39.6 MILES. A scattered agricultural community called Chamita. Although most houses have been remodelled and hard plastered, a characteristic L-shaped plan can be distinguished with windows and doors opening to a protected southeast exposure.

40.0 MILES RIGHT. Church of San Pedro de Chamita. Although hard plastered and equipped with late 19th century belfry and doors, the church retains the polygonal apse and stepped silhouette that permitted the transverse clerestory window. Within, extremely simple corbels support the vigas and there is an early retabla overpainted with kitchen enamel in recent years. The ranchers in this area were dependent on the church in San Juan Pueblo as late as 1794. The present building probably dates shortly before the drastic decline that followed the secularization of the Franciscan missions of 1834.

41.2 MILES RIGHT. Yunque ruins. Now a low mud mound, the original structure was a crescent-shaped community house occupied by Indians when Don Juan de Oñate arrived in 1589. Additional rooms at the southeast corner were apparently constructed to accommodate the Spanish and this, therefore, became the first Spanish capitol of New Mexico. The quarters occupied by the Spanish are almost indistinguishable from those for Indians with some rooms barely large enough for a man to lie down in. The Spanish transferred the capitol to Santa Fe in 1610. The Yunque site was partially excavated by field sessions of the UNM Anthropology Department in 1958-1961.

41.2 MILES. Cross Rio Grande River.

42.0 MILES. San Juan Pueblo. Pop. 1,457. The Spanish resettled the Indians at this site following the 1692 revolt. The core of the pueblo has disintegrated and only one block of two story houses stands, but in 1776 Fray Francisco Dominguez, official commissary visitor to the missions of New Mexico, tells us that the plaza was defined by the flank of the church and “three tenements separated from one another at the corners.”

The present brick church (1913) contains three elaborate marble altars. Across the road is a more interesting stone chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. This chapel and the handsome stone pedestal for the statue in front of the church were sponsored by a French priest, Father Camile Seux, who served the pueblo from 1868 to 1922. An inscription dates the pedestal 1888 while stained glass windows in the chapel are signed, “Mailhot, Clermont-Ferrand, 1889.” Architects of the chapel were Antoine and Projectus Mouly who also designed Loretto Chapel and Saint Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe. The general store east of the chapel retains some character of a 19th century trading post.
10. Puye Cliff dwellings.

11. Church of San Pedro de Chamita
12. Lorencita Pino, Potter - Tesuque Pueblo.

42.2 MILES. Bear left on gravel road (the macadam road leads east to Highway 64). This is the early road from Santa Fe to Taos.

43.6 MILES LEFT. Swan Lake, home of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Garland and one of the most elaborate haciendas in northern New Mexico, it was built over a number of years by Marie Garland. In addition to a private estate, it has served as a dude ranch, a summer cultural institute, restaurant, headquarters for a motion picture company and location for a TV serial. The estate takes its name from an unusually large tanque (irrigation reservoir) on the garden side.

44.6 MILES. Alcalde. Approximately the location of a settlement called Rio Arriba by Dominguez and located on one of the most important early land grants, that given to Sebastián Martín. The present aspect of the houses is recent, but some foundations and the general shape of the plaza are probably old.

47.0 MILES LEFT. Los Luceros, the best preserved 19th century hacienda in northern New Mexico. As with many adobe structures, the antiquity of this important house is hard to assess. There are ruins of an Indian pueblo on the property, even perhaps under the house. It is possible that some of the walls are old and the idea of a two story dwelling was not uncommon in early New Mexico. Nevertheless, the present form of the mansion with encircling two story veranda and fine Territorial trim is unquestionably late, probably after the Civil War when the area's most elaborate Territorial style building or remodeling was accomplished. The porches, with posts ingeniously contrived of several small members, could not have been built until saw mills were equipped to do relatively precise work. The rather formal plan with three rooms on each side of a central hall is also Territorial. This hall is too long and narrow to have served as a zaguán. The splendid sala across one end of the second floor is unique. The wood enframement of the opening into this room is capped by a pedimented lintel that has a curious, bald look, exactly like those found on some facade windows of the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe.

In the late 19th century the house belonged to the Lucero family, hence the name, but was purchased and remodelled by Miss Mary Wheelwright in the early 1920's. Upon her death, it and part of its collection of Colonial art were acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Collier. To it they brought their extensive collection of Spanish Colonial art which became the nucleus of the International Institute of Iberian Art founded and directed by them. Mr. Collier has engaged in extensive stabilization of the house, including the construction of reinforced concrete foundations to equalize settling.

Los Luceros also has a private chapel built, according to legend, after the house was spared from a flood in 1886. Despite the fact that it was designed to have a ridge roof which precludes a functioning clearstory window, the chapel nevertheless retains the traditional stepped-up profile at the altar end as well as
13. Former railroad station at Embudo

the polygonal apse. The handsome double doors were brought from the Policarpio Romero house in Peñasco, the work of Gregorio Ortega of Truchas in the 1870's.

47.8 MILES. Return to Highway 64 and turn left. 56.2 MILES LEFT. Embudo Station. Abandoned depot of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad built in 1881 and now used as a foster home for children. A narrow gauge line that began construction in Denver in 1871, the railroad reached this valley in 1880. Embudo Station was a shipping point for lumber, mining products, and fruit. It was also a coaling and water stop and had a turntable. The station provided a restaurant where passengers could refresh themselves while the train refueled. Immediately north of Embudo the line began a long, steep climb (1,125 feet in seven miles, a 4% grade). The station was closed in 1934 and the rails were taken up in 1942 and shipped to Burma along with the rolling stock, but the cut can still be seen on the west wall of the Rio Grande Canyon.

A station master named Henry Wallace who came to Embudo in 1912 is responsible for the cobblestone masonry around the station and other buildings. Actually, however, the masonry is a veneer over the railroad's conventional wood station. Wallace also built several storage rooms and fireplaces using larger stones. The railroad subsidized his activity by hauling in cement and carloads of stones.

57.2 MILES LEFT. Cobblestone house and storage units built by the same station master and also veneer. Long empty, these buildings were occupied and restored by a hippie colony in 1968.

58.8 MILES. Embudo Valley turnoff. For an additional excursion into the Embudo watershed turn right: Highway 75. The watershed of some 300 square miles derives the name from its funnel-like shape where five streams converge before passing through a rock defile about one mile from the turnoff. Originally the only road to Taos passed up this valley and thence over the mountains to Talpa and Taos because the Rio Grande Valley became too precipitous. The town of Embudo (now called Dixon) had a population of 69 in 1776 and today it still retains the remains of two early defense towers. The upper reaches of the watershed was the scene of extensive lumbering between 1907-26.

59.4 MILES RIGHT. Embudo Hospital, the oldest and probably the best hospital in Taos County. The Presbyterian Church began mission activity in the mountain villages soon after 1900. As schools and hospitals in rural New Mexico were almost nonexistent, the church provided both along with their mission work. This hospital was founded as early as 1914 in
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the town of Dixon. It moved to the present site in 1940, and the most recent addition dates from 1961.

79.2 Miles Right. Llano Quemado, a farming community of the early 1800's. Its Fernandez house with a characteristic "shepherd's bed" fireplace is illustrated in Taos Adobes and there is a pleasant small church. Farming was carried out in the irrigated valley to the north.

79.7 Miles Right. Ranchos de Taos. Although the date of the present church is sometimes mistakenly given as 1772, there is no description of it or the town by Dominguez (1776) though his ambiguous reference to a "plaza which is being built in the cañada" may possibly refer to Rancho. The main doorway and pointed windows of the nave were added by an unknown craftsman sometime after the Civil War, and a drastic remodelling in 1967 replaced several roof beams. Despite protests and offers of financial assistance to preserve the old mud plaster, the exterior was covered with cement plaster. Although assurances were given that the beautiful, undulating contours of the edifice would not be changed, the parapets were rebuilt with concrete block and wall surfaces were regularized. The unfortunate result is a harsher, more mechanical composition than the old one recorded by photographers like Paul Strand and Ansel Adams or painters like Georgia O'Keefe. The interior also underwent a certain stiffening in the renovation though the present pews and forced air heating are more comfortable than the old benches and wood stoves. The apse and right transept retain good provincial Baroque altar screens, the latter by Molleno executed before 1818.

Preceded by a walled atrium in the center of which rises a cross, the church illustrates how directly, though on a modest scale, New Mexico mission churches trace back to the "fortress churches" built by 16th century mendicants in Mexico. The same point is borne out by the polygonal apse and placement of the choir loft just above the main entrance. The principal divergence from Mexican prototypes is the transverse clearstory window while the cruciform plan differentiates it from the single nave scheme used for New Mexican churches of the 17th century built in Indian pueblos.

As late as 1840 the colorful journalist, Matt Field, described Ranchos de Taos as a fortified town defended with strong gates that could be shut in times of emergency. One and two story houses along the north side of the plaza retain some of the early sense of enclosure and may incorporate parts from earlier buildings.

80.8 Miles Left. Sagebrush Inn (1930).
83.6 Miles. Taos Plaza.
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