



## **Valdes House – 237 and 239 East De Vargas The Mission Café and Sweet Shop**

### **Determination of Historic Santa Fe Foundation Plaque Eligibility DRAFT – JWM- 9/29/09**

#### **Setting**

The Valdes House is situated along the north side of East De Vargas Street, between Old Santa Fe Trail and Paseo de Peralta. It is located in *Barrio de Analco*, a former residential area fragmented over the years by urban renewal and the State of New Mexico's expansion on the south side of the Santa Fe River.

Across the street from the property, where once stood the back campus of St. Michael's College, is the 1960s PERA building, with its huge parking lot. Remnants of St. Michael's College stand to the west, now converted to state offices. Providing a historical anchor to the neighborhood are San Miguel Mission, the "Oldest House" and a few pre-1930 adobe dwellings to the west, and the Arthur Boyle House to the east. The former Valdes House, now the Mission Café and Sweet Shop, is a survivor in this highly altered urban landscape, and a homey respite from the tourist bustle.

Behind a low white picket fence is a flagstone seating area. Near the center is a concrete and stone vault over where a hand pump well stood as late as 1989. Flanking the seating area are two short driveways. Though modern in paving material, they are situated where driveways were located as early as the 1930s. Shading this space are mature Chinese elms and Ailanthus trees. In the rear, forming another seating area, are mature apricot trees, one thought to be taken from Bishop Lamy's garden. Lilac bushes planted along the picket fence and a small annual flower garden in front give seasonal color to the property.

#### **237 and 239 East De Vargas Street**

The Valdes House consists of two buildings joined together to form a modified "L" plan. The first is a long, rectangular building made of adobe and covered with a modern hard stucco finish. Believed to have been constructed before 1855, its walls are of approximately 23" double adobe construction. It has a flat roof and a raised parapet. The roof slopes from south to north, measuring approximately 150" at the front (south), and 136" at the rear (north). The roof, reconstructed after 1989, has a projecting eave made of deck sheet plywood nailed to 2"x6" rafters. A 1'x10" fascia runs along its perimeter. Construction photographs from 1989 show the house had brick coping under a fascia board, suggesting a Territorial period modification. This decorative element may have been removed as it is obscured by the post-1989 roof design.

The front façade of the older building displays an irregular pattern of openings. From west-to-east is a non-original wood-panel-and-glass door; an original two-over-two double-hung wood window; a non-original wood-panel-and-glass door serving as the entrance to the café; and an original eight-over-eight double-hung wood window. All doors and windows align with historic openings. An original two-over-two double-hung wood window is situated at the west end of the building; across the north elevation, west-to-east are an original two-over-two double-hung wood window; an eight-light hopper window; and an original four-over-four double-hung wood window. A non-original “bump-out” addition obscures the original east elevation.

The Juan Bautista and Theodora Valdes House is attached to the older building by an adobe connector. Constructed in c.1927, it is an adobe L-plan residence, showing elements of the Spanish Eclectic and Pueblo Revival styles. The front (south elevation) of the house shows the greatest design with its arched entry, shed-roof porch, cubed masses arranged at different heights and its prominent chimney stack. Original windows are found along each elevation. The west is dominated by a series of four eight-light wood casement windows, once providing light and air to a sunroom/sleeping porch.

The front elevation contains mostly original windows; from west-to-east, a fixed eight-light wood window; an original one-over-one double-hung wood window; a two-light curved glass and two-panel wood door; and two four-light fixed windows. The east elevation reveals one original one-over-one double-hung wood window; the rest of the elevation is covered by an enclosure of an original porch that now serves as the café’s kitchen. The enclosure obscures an original one-over-one double-hung wood window, seen only from the interior.

The connector, believed to be built after the house was completed, features an original one-over-one double-hung wood window and a three-panel-and-glass wood door at the west elevation. The east elevation is altered by an addition across an original porch, containing the kitchen.

## **Interior**

Entering the older building from the south, one is greeted by a large room with seating and a counter space containing food displays, the coffee bar and the cash register. In the 1920s, this space was the living room of the house. Historically a bathroom sat where the counter space is today, with the hopper window providing air and light. The separate room to the left was always a bedroom, used in the early 1930s by Juan Jr. and Epigenia (Eppie) Valdes after they were married. An adobe wall once stood near the center of the counter, creating a divider between the living room and the master bedroom. The space now containing bathrooms once held a large kitchen.

The origin of the strip oak flooring and baseboard found throughout the house is unknown, but given their design and wear, they most likely date to the time Valdes family occupied the house. The walls show a recent diamond finish; the ceiling *vigas* are partially exposed in coved fashion but were covered in the 1940s with *manta* (muslin cloth).

According to Joe Valdes, who grew up in the house, the connector was built after his father's house was constructed. It originally served as the formal living room (parlor) of the Juan Bautista and Theodora Valdes House, and held a grand piano reportedly that came across the Santa Fe Trail. It is similar in finish and treatment to the original house.

With an ascent of two wooden steps, one enters what was once a bedroom. This is where Joe Valdes and his nieces and nephews slept in the 1930s. A beaver board wall divided the space into two bedrooms, with the south portion making the master bedroom for Juan and Theodora. The rectangular room to the west worked as a sunroom/sleeping porch, with a restroom at the south corner. Joe Valdes remembers moving into this space when he entered high school. The space to the east, now containing the kitchen and community room, historically was divided into three distinct rooms, containing from north-to-south a kitchen, a living room and the dining room. An arched entry, flanked by half-wall wooden china cabinets, divided the dining and living rooms. In the center of the south of wall of the community room is an original brick fireplace with a cast stone mantel.

## **Integrity**

For a building that is well over a hundred years old, the original house possesses a good deal of integrity. The greatest change to the exterior of the house is the post-1989 alteration of the parapet and roof. While these changes have affected the profile and height of the original building, creating a dramatic "shadow line" where none existed before, the overall massing and design of the house is intact. Despite alterations made for their use as a restaurant, the interior of both buildings retain a high percentage of original design and materials. Combined, both houses maintain sufficient integrity to communicate their historical significance.

## **Historical Context**

The first house, the long one forming the restaurant's entry, came into the family's possession when Manuel Valdes<sup>1</sup> inherited it in 1881 from his aunt, Maria Salome Padilla. The origin of the house is unknown, but given its construction—the thick adobe walls and linear plan—it most likely dates to the early 19th century, a typical farmhouse on the south side of the Santa Fe River.<sup>2</sup>

Manuel was born October 3, 1846 in Bernalillo, to Antonio Valdes and Maria Guadalupe de Valdes. In his youth he served as an altar boy to Archbishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy, and developed a lifetime friendship with the bishop, often accompanying the prelate to his retreat at today's Bishop's Lodge. Educated at Lamy's Latin School and St. Michael's College, he started his career in Bernalillo working for Jose Leandro Perea, a wealthy Mexican owning one of the largest wool wholesale houses in the state. Manuel worked as an accountant for Perea for ten years. He then moved to Santa Fe, where became an accountant and bookkeeper for the Spiegelberg Brothers, and later for Salomon Spiegelberg and H.B. Cartwright & Brother, prominent merchandising firms. Manuel married Luz

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<sup>1</sup> During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the family name appears in newspaper and other sources alternately as "Valdez" and "Valdes."

<sup>2</sup> The footprint of the house appears to correspond in location and plan with a rectangular dwelling depicted on the Gilmer Map, 1846-47. A 1985 survey for the property states the old house was built likely before 1855.

Delgado (1854-1907) in 1871, and together they bore six sons: Antonio, Felipe, Jose, Federico (Fred), Conrado (Conrad) and Juan (Juanito), and one daughter, Josefita.

A Republican in a deeply Democratic county, Manuel was remarkably elected Santa Fe County Assessor in 1890 while also serving as city treasurer. Two years later, Manuel became the city's second mayor, holding this title between 1892 and 1895. Concerned about the health and hygiene of the city, Valdes successfully introduced the first modern sewer system; prior to then, people used open trenches to dispose of their wastes. In 1916, he was nominated for city clerk. He worked until he was 70, retiring for only six years before suffering a stroke that resulted in his death. Having eschewed both alcohol and tobacco, Manuel attributed his longevity to healthy living and a constructive use of time. After his death, the house went to his daughter Josefita.

In c.1927, a separate adobe dwelling was built just to the south of the main home. Juan Bautista Valdes, one of Manuel's six sons, and his wife Theodora (Dora) started their family in this house. A butcher by trade, Juan worked at meat counters of many Santa Fe grocery stores, including Delgado's, Ballard's, Pacheco's Independent and Santa Fe Cash & Carry. For years, he served as a head usher at St. Francis Cathedral, coordinating processions and events. The couple gave birth to nine children, but only four boys survived, including future Santa Fe Mayor Joseph E. (Joe) Valdes.

Around 1930, the older house was subdivided into two units. Josefita initially lived at the west end (237); at the east end (237 ½) resided Joseph F. and Frances Moya. Moya, a fireman for the U.S. Supreme Courthouse, later became Joe Valdes' godfather.

Around this time, the family constructed another house (235) west of the old adobe. Conrado Valdes, one of Manuel's sons and an attendant at Quickel-Houk Motor Company (now Santa Fe Village), lived here with his wife Maxine Elmore, a former La Fonda Harvey Girl. Conrado served in the Cavalry during World War I, arriving in France in 1918. The house at 235 consisted of only a small bedroom, a bathroom and a kitchen.<sup>3</sup> At the rear of the dwelling, across what is now an addition, stood a wood shed used as a garage. The house went out of Valdes ownership in the mid-1940s.

In the 1930s, a sequence of occupants—most family members or friends of the family—lived in 237, starting with Roberto E. and Nellie Valdes. Josefita continued to live in 237 ½ many years before marrying Frank F. Lucero, a clerk and son of Dona Ana County Sheriff Felipe Lucero, noted for his involvement in the Pat Garrett murder. In 1938, the old house found Josefita and Frank Lucero living in 237 ½ and Juan Jr. and Eppie residing in 237.

During the Depression, East De Vargas Street was a world unto itself, isolated from downtown Santa Fe and its bustle. St. Michael's College commanded much of the streetscape, with its large study hall, recently completed gymnasium and a playfield fronting the south side. To the north,

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<sup>3</sup> To Joe Valdes, it is only coincidence that the property takes on a "compound" appearance. Manuel gave two of his sons, Juan and Conrado, property abutting the original house. Another son, Federico, was given land at 234 Canyon Road, which became *Alameda Ranchito*, a small farm with cows, chickens and a dairy.

starting at College Street (now Old Santa Fe Trail) sat a number of small adobe buildings housing small businesses or homes for staff working at the school. Most prominent was the “Oldest House,” a continual tourist attraction. A smaller adobe at 225 contained another attraction: Delgado’s Curio Shop, later Caveman’s Dwelling.

The Valdeses, with their three homes, dominated the street from this point to Boyle Lane (now Brothers’ Lane). Beyond their property, the landscape changed as one approached the Arthur Boyle house. Here Boyle ran the Boyle Floral Company, a cut-flower business, which included several greenhouses and a coal plant where El Castillo now stands. To the southeast lay a large Catholic cemetery outlined by an adobe wall. Unlike the bustling downtown, the density of East De Vargas was low, and the pace of living slower. This was the small world that Joe Valdes experienced growing up in *Barrio de Analco* in the 1930s and 1940s.

### **A World to Explore**

Most of his time was spent on the campus across the street. Instead of heading home after school, he and his friends continued to play—there was a pole vault pit lined with sawdust, a track and swing sets to explore. “There was no chance for you to get in trouble,” Joe recalls. “There was always someone there to straighten you up, right away,” referring to the 25 or so Christian Brothers who worked on campus.

If not at the school, the kids played on the street in front of the house, shooting marbles or flying kites. The few boys who lived in the barrio, mixed with the children from the Garcia, Delgado and Manhattan street neighborhoods. “It wouldn’t take long for something to get organized,” Joe remembers. At the river, the boys built dams in the summer for swimming holes. On the way, they could pluck black walnuts from trees planted on the east side of Boyle Lane.

At the river, Joe and his friends often collected bottles, which they sold for a few cents to the owner of Mutt & Jeff’s, a Greek restaurant at Montezuma and Don Gaspar. Joe can still point to an ovular-shaped scar on his left hand caused by broken glass. With the change, they bought hamburgers at Mutt & Jeff’s or headed upstream for barbeque at the Orchard Camp café. Life perhaps was simpler along those childhood trails of *Barrio de Analco*.

### **The Family Leaves**

In the early 1940s, 237 sat vacant for several years before becoming a rental property. Over the years it housed a succession of renters, including students attending St. Michaels. In 1949, only Lawrence Valdez, a credit manager at Goodrich Tires, was living in 237, followed in 1950 by a renter, Gregorita Pino. During the 1950s, it became the Santa Fe headquarters of the American Red Cross Association.

Juan Bautista Valdes died in 1963. With the children gone—Joe having left the house when he married in 1954—Theodora, a widow, lived alone in 239. After her death, the property went through various uses, mainly as rental. But no one from the family lived there again.

The house, surveyed in March 1985, appeared to be more or less a typical rental, with its minimal landscaping and original exterior finishes, before gentrification took over the Eastside. In the late the 1980s, Joe Valdes cleaned up the property, taking off the hard wavy stucco from the older building and exposing the original adobe construction, some of which were *terrones*, a construction technique more typically found in the Albuquerque area. In 1989 Valdes sold the property to Carolyn Stephenson.

Stephenson, a community organizer, initially used it to run Tewa Enterprises, a business co-founded in 1951 by Harrison Begay to sell silkscreen reproductions of his work and that of other Native American artists. The building went through several uses before Carolyn opened the Mission Café and Sweet Shop in 2006.

The restaurant, which uses authentic, natural and organic ingredients, is a community gathering place. “This building belongs to the community,” she says, referring to the community organizing that take place within the walls of the old Manuel and Juan Valdes homes.

Carolyn seeks Historic Santa Fe Foundation plaque registration to honor the property and the history of the Valdes family. She sees the restaurant as a “perfect example of adaptive reuse.” For Joe Valdes, who sat on the city planning commission that hammered out the 1957 preservation ordinance, the house is historic. Walking its halls, he can remember events from his childhood, savoring “a feeling” he says, which “is always there.” Both Stephenson and Valdes hope to get the house designated to coincide with the City of Santa Fe’s 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration.

### **Eligibility**

The Valdes House meets two of the plaque registration requirements, as it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a type of architecture identified with the history of Santa Fe and is associated with the lives of persons prominent to that history.

## Sources

Genealogical papers in possession of Joseph Valdes.

“Manuel Valdes, Second Mayor of Santa Fe, Dies, Aged 86, Friend of Archbishop Lamy.” Obituary. Undated. In possession of Joseph Valdes.

Sanborn Map Company, Inc. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1930. Microfilm Collection, Historic Preservation Division, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Santa Fe City Directory, 1928-1950. El Paso: Hudspeth Directory Company, various years.

Santa Fe New Mexican, various issues: 1890-1950.

Sze, Corrine P. and Beverly Spears. *Santa Fe Historic Neighborhood Study*. Santa Fe: City of Santa Fe, 1988.

Valdes, Joseph. Conversation with John Murphey, May 6, 2008, home of Joseph and Bernadette Valdes, Santa Fe.

\_\_\_\_\_. Conversation with John Murphey, September 9, 2009, Mission Café and Sweet Shop, Santa Fe.

Figure 1: Gilmer Map of 1846-47; arrow indicates possible location of Valdes House

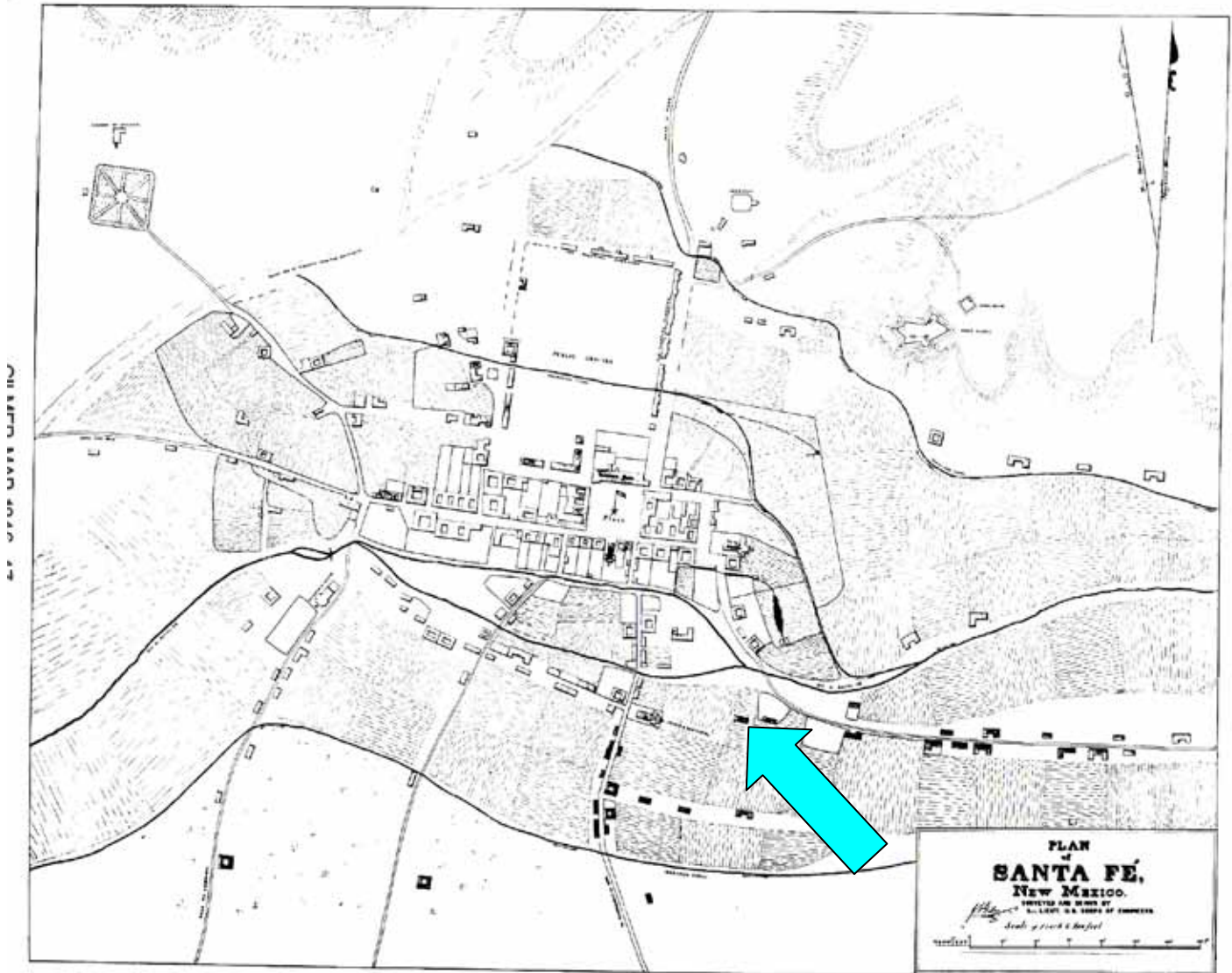


Figure 2: 1886 Santa Fe from St. Michael's College  
Photo Archives/NMHM/POG NN 10131  
Photographer Unknown

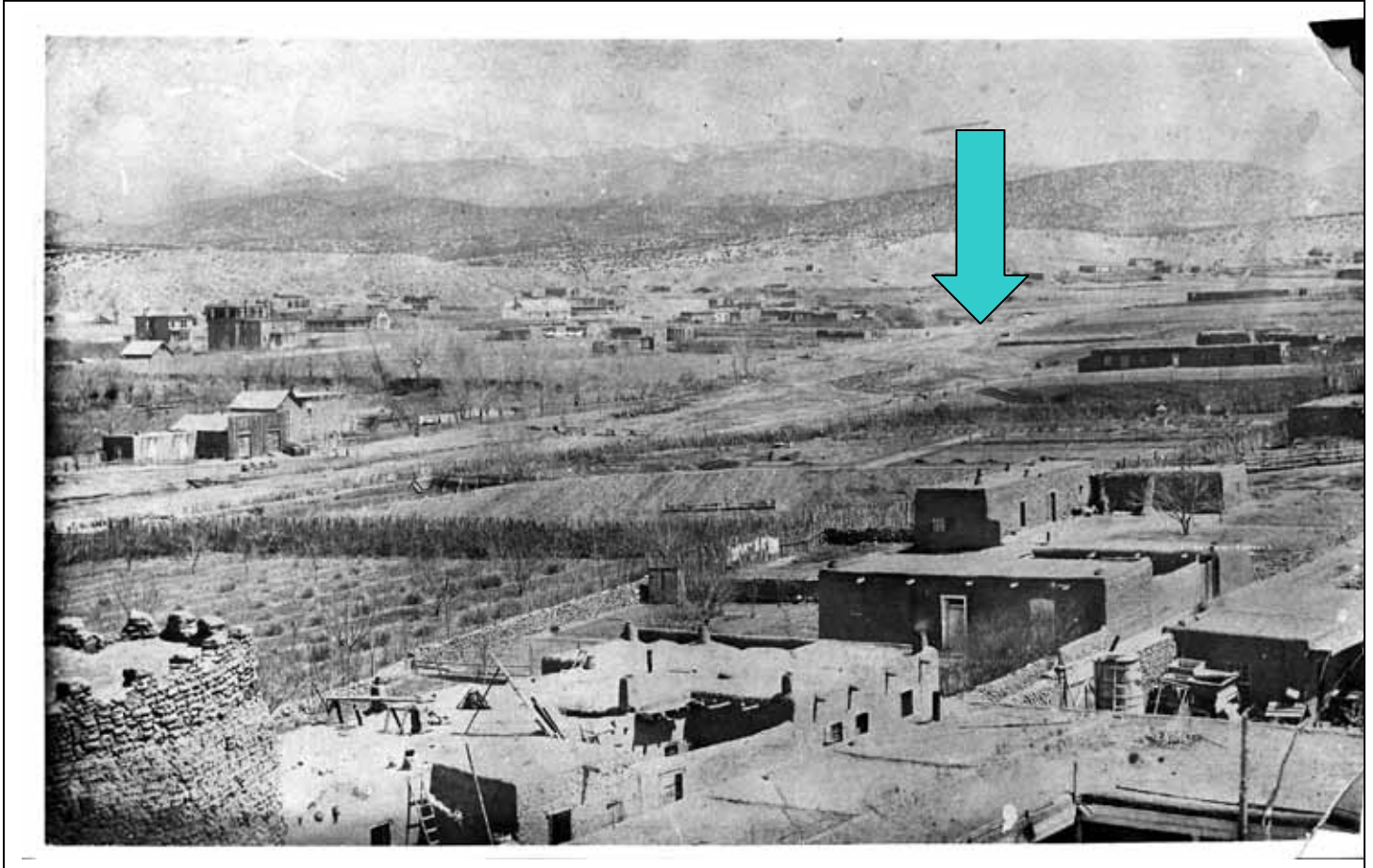


Figure 3: Blow-up of c.1886 Photograph of Santa Fe showing possibly the Valdes House

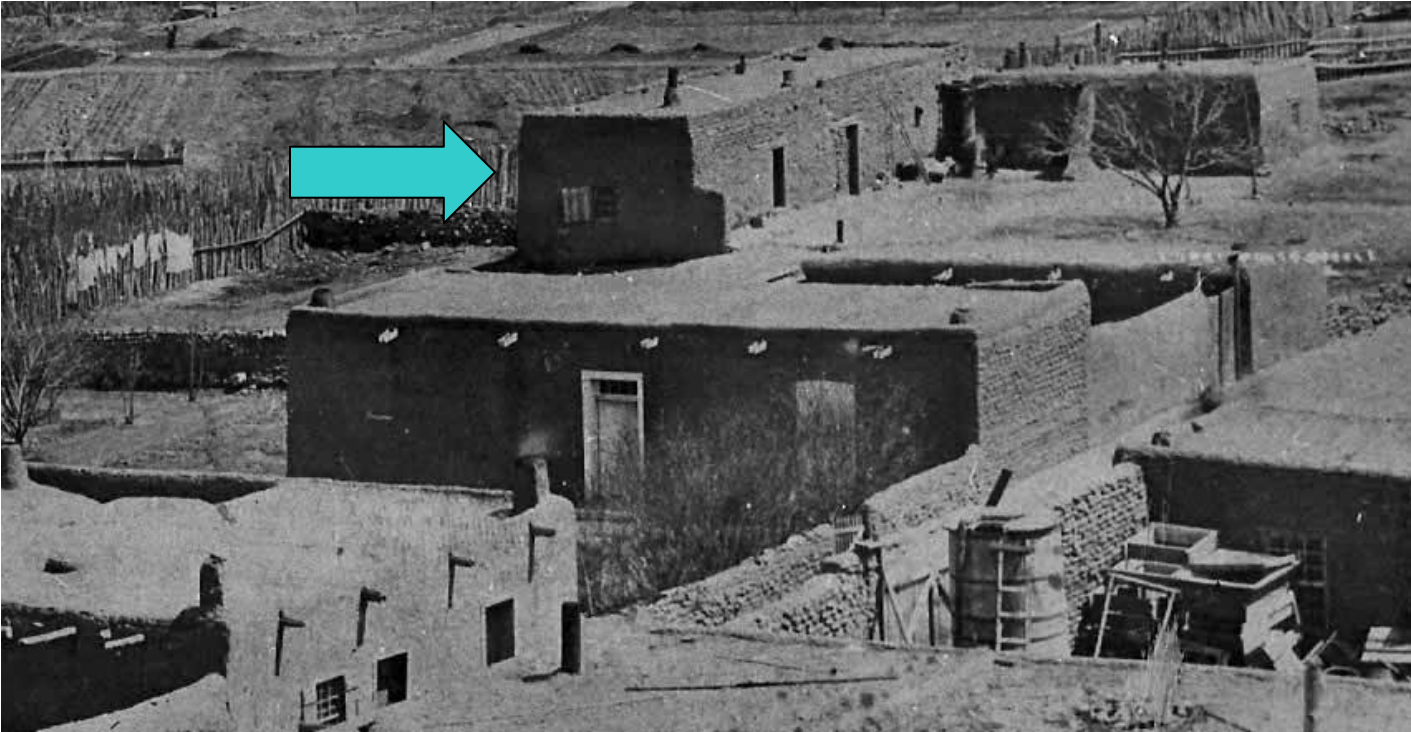


Figure 4: Manuel Valdes, courtesy of City of Santa Fe

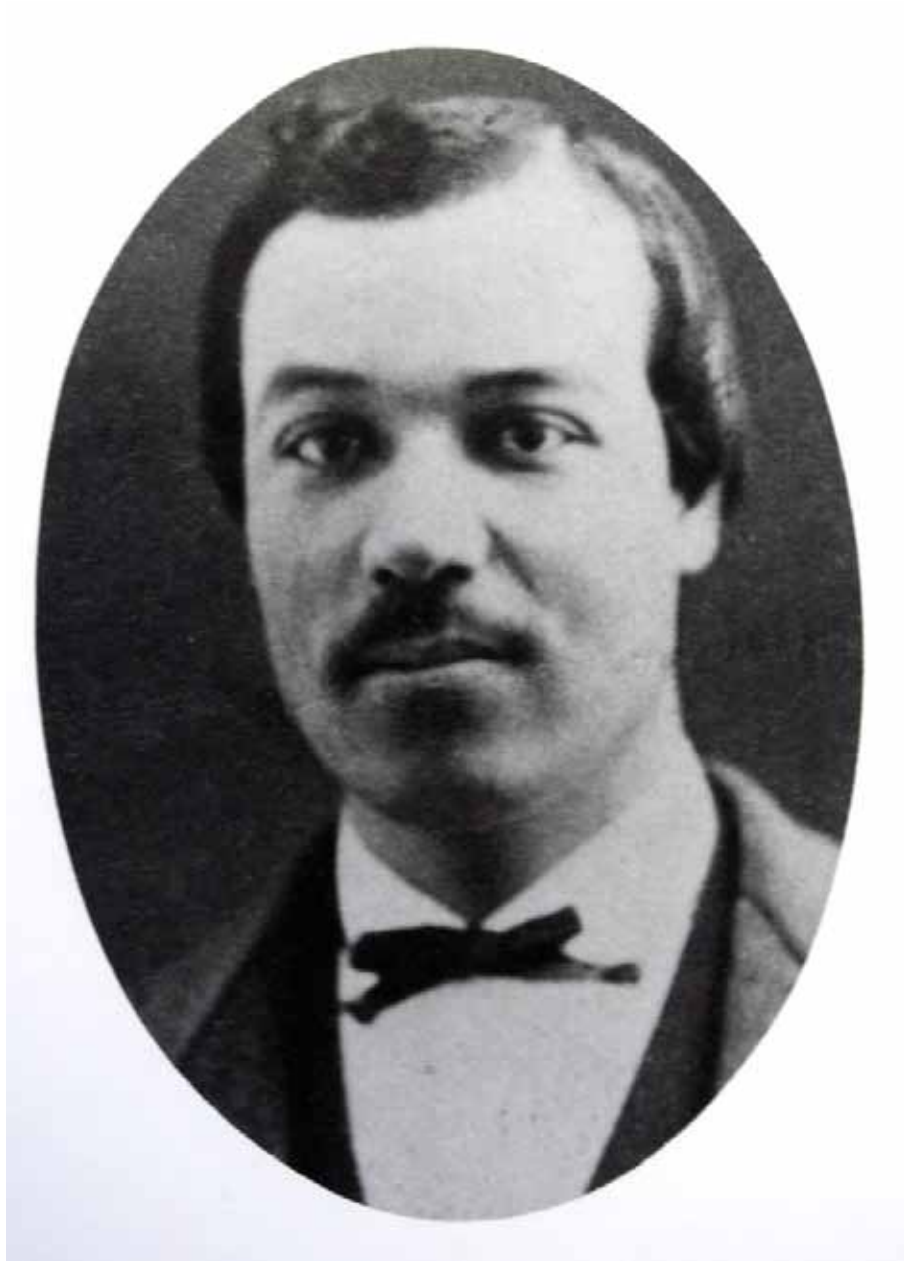


Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1930

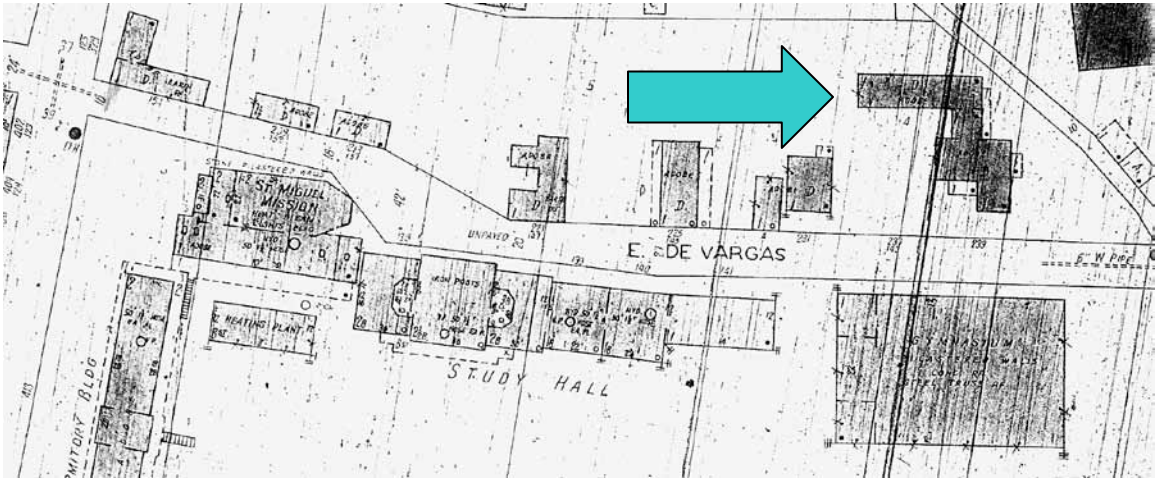


Figure 6: House pictured during 1985 Historic Building Inventory survey, courtesy New Mexico Historic Preservation Division



Figure 7: House before 1989 upgrade project, courtesy Joseph Valdes

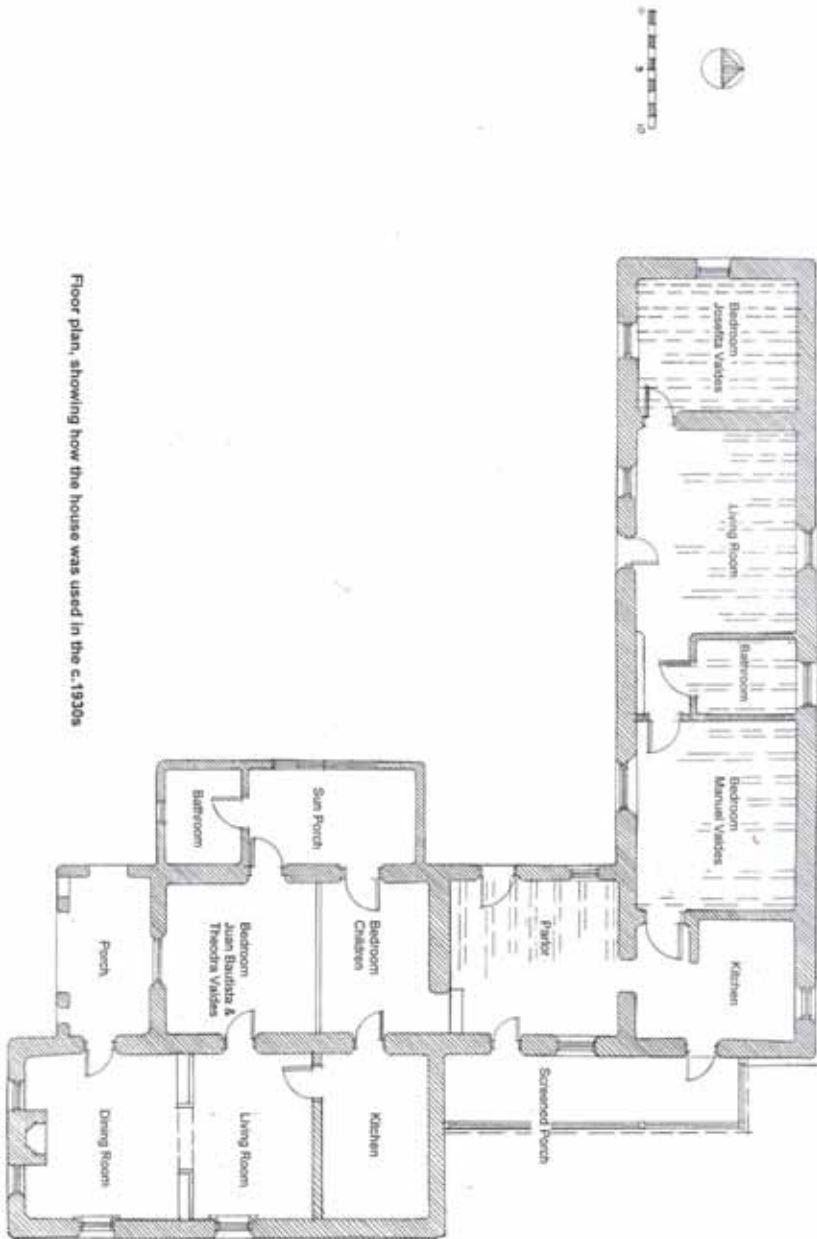


Figure 8: House during 1989 upgrade project, courtesy Joseph Valdes



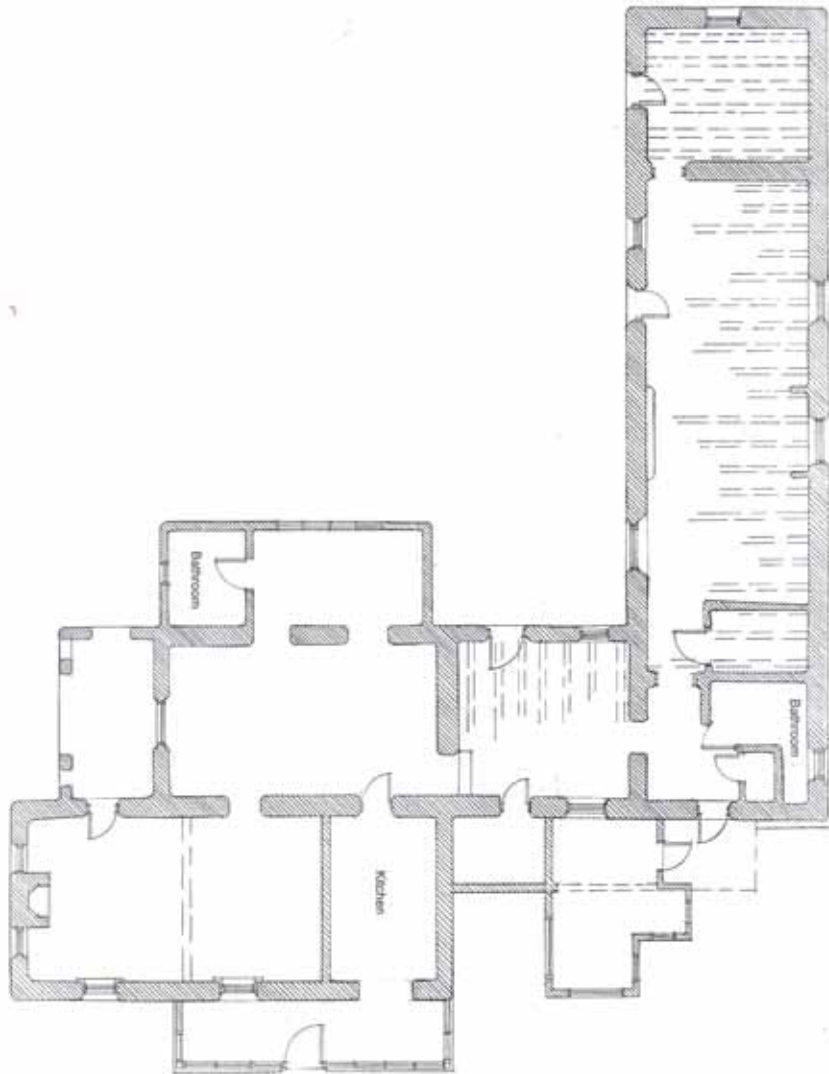
Figure 9: Joseph E. Valdez, September 9, 2009





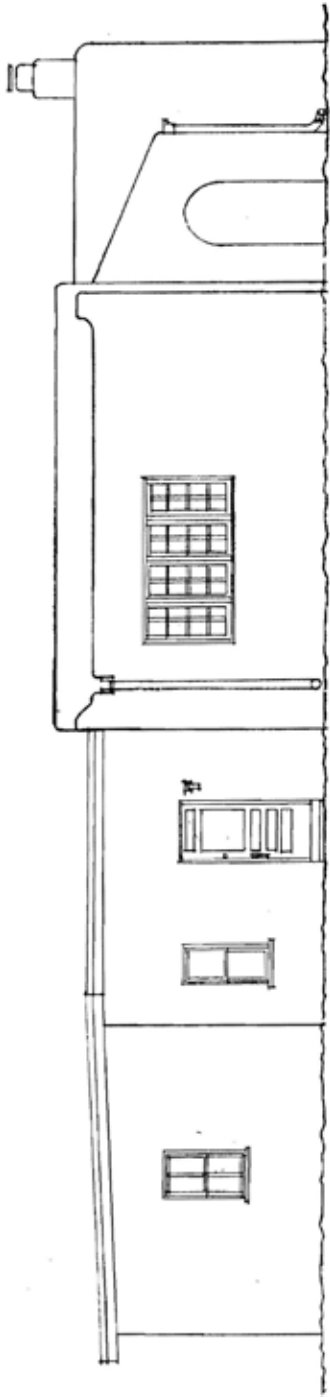
Floor plan, showing how the house was used in the c. 1930s

**Valdes House**  
 222 East De Vargas Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico  
 August 2008

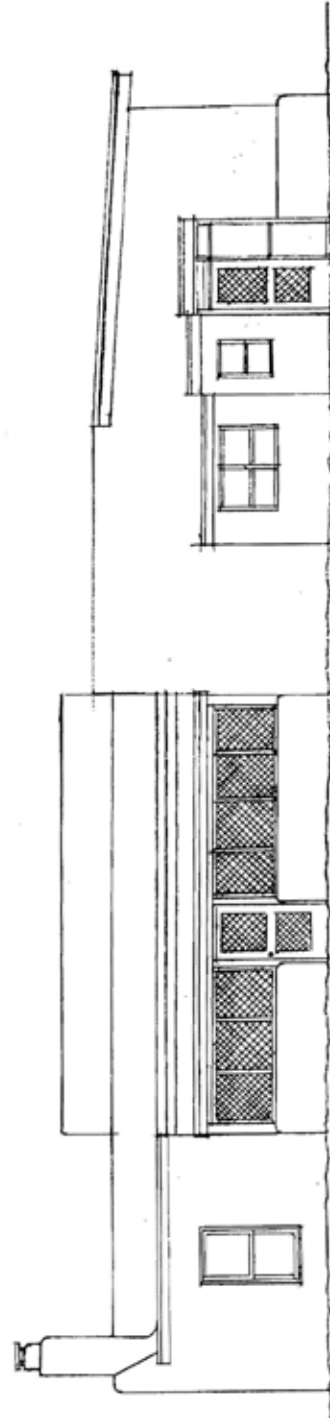


**Valdes House**  
238 East De Vargas Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico

August 2009



West Façade



East Façade

Valdes House  
239 East De Vargas Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico

August 2009 drawing by Graciela Tome

