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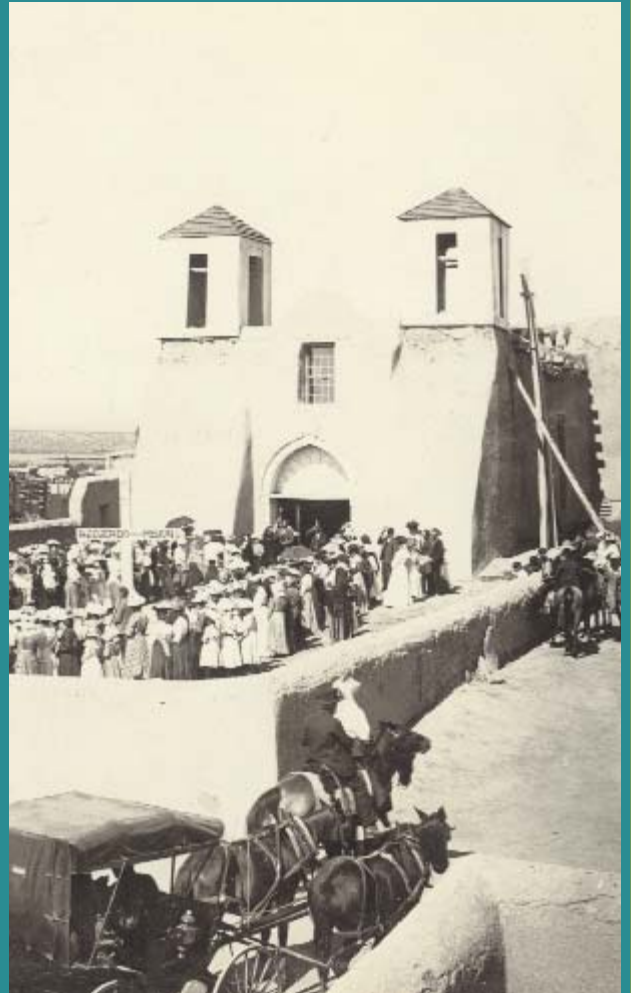
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Historic Churches first printing, 2011

# HISTORIC CHURCHES

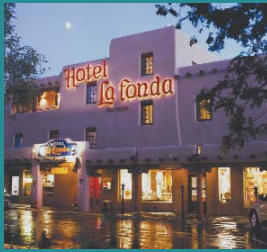
of Taos and  
Northern New Mexico



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# HISTORIC CHURCHES

## of Taos and Northern New Mexico

*Our faith is drawn from the earth.*

Picuris tribal member Carl Tsosie

We invite you to explore the historic adobe churches of northern New Mexico. Observe the melding of 500 years of multicultural influences in their distinctive architecture. You will see that these sometimes humble structures are the very heart of the communities they serve.

Please observe visitors' etiquette throughout your journeys. Photography is generally acceptable outside (there are camera fees at some pueblos) but never inside. These architectural treasures are houses of worship. Honor their sanctity with the same respect you afford your own spiritual spaces.

The traditions that created these 24 *iglesias* (churches) can be even better understood by visiting the museums of Taos and Chimayó. You will see artifacts like those that adorn the churches—*santos* and *retablos* (images of saints), photography exhibitions with commentary by experts in the fields of art and architecture, and artists' interpretations of the churches in paint on canvas.

For contact information on each church, visit [archdiocesasantafe.org](http://archdiocesasantafe.org).

To learn more about the churches and to share the photographs you take, go to [taos.org/churches](http://taos.org/churches).

Compiled by  
Elizabeth J. Cunningham



## 1 SANTA CRUZ DE LA CAÑADA

### Holy Cross of the Canyon

*Built:* 1733-1748

*Community:* Santa Cruz near Española

*Feast Day:* May 3

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 47 miles

*History:* The village of Santa Cruz, just east of Española, played a prominent role in late 17th century New Mexico. In 1692 Diego de Vargas led his first expedition into New Mexico, intent on recolonization after the 1680 Pueblo Revolt that routed the Spanish. Through reconnaissance he found the Santa Cruz Valley the most promising area outside the capital, Santa Fe. In 1695 de Vargas brought sixty-six Zacatecas families to settle what would become the northern region's administrative center.

As the royally appointed Spanish governor of New Mexico, de Vargas named its second official city *La Villa Nueva de Santa Cruz de la Cañada de Españoles Mexicanos del Rey Nuestro Señor Don Carlos Segundo* (the New Town of the Holy Cross of the Canyon of Spanish Mexicans of the King Our Lord Carlos the Second).

In 1733 the colonists began constructing their church, Santa Cruz de la Cañada. The cruciform adobe mud and mortar structure consists of a steep gabled front with adjoining twin bell towers and thick, massive buttresses at the rear that support the building's side and back walls. Since 1920 the church has been under the guidance of the Sons of the Holy Family.

*Today:* This is one of the finest remaining examples of 18th-century Franciscan architecture in New Mexico.

*Directions:* From NM 84/285 in Española, turn east on NM 76. Drive one mile to McCurdy Road; turn north.

PHOTO BY ALFRED V. KIDDER, 1908



NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

## 2 EL SANTUÁRIO DE CHIMAYÓ

### Sanctuary of Chimayó

*Built:* 1813-1816

*Community:* Chimayó

*Feast Days:* January 15 and July 25

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 52 miles



NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

*History:* This masterpiece of Spanish Colonial architecture is built on earth said to have miraculous curative powers.

PHOTO BY  
CARLOS VIERRA,  
CIRCA 1917

The Spanish settled in *Chimayó* (Tewa Indian: flaking stone of superior quality) prior to 1680. Between 1813 and 1816, Bernardo Abeyta began work on a private chapel to house the crucifix of Our Lord of Esquipulas. As early as 1813 a Spanish priest had written of people coming here from afar to seek cures. The church Abeyta built measured 60 by 24 feet with three-foot-thick adobe walls, twin towers, and a buttress at the back. A pitched corrugated roof was added by Santa Fe architect John Gaw Meem shortly before ownership was transferred to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 1929.

*Today:* El Santuario is designated by the Archdiocese as a pilgrimage shrine. During Lent and Holy Week thousands of *peregrinos* (pilgrims) journey on foot to Chimayó from as far away as Taos and Albuquerque. Don't miss the interpretive museum located nearby. Masses are held throughout the week.

*Directions:* From NM 76, turn south on NM 503. Location/parking clearly marked.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### 3 NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL ROSARIO

**Our Lady of the Rosary**

*Built:* 1760

*Community:* Truchas

*Feast Day:* October 7

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 40 miles

*History:* Two families, the Romeros of Santa Cruz and the Espinosas of Chimayó, founded this mountain settlement on the High Road to Taos in the mid-1700s. Named for the *Rio Truchas* (trout river), the village was built according to Spanish government specifications. All houses shared common outside walls and formed an interior plaza. The walled community had only one *zaguan* (entrance gate) the width of a single cart. This provided defense in times of Indian attacks. In 1762, however, Comanche raids became so fierce that residents from Truchas and neighboring Las Trampas took shelter within the walls of nearby Picurís Pueblo.

By 1770 the Truchas settlement had grown to 25 families. Their church, thought to date back to 1760, underwent renovations in 1878. Changes by 1900 included a corrugated pitched roof overlaying the original flat one, a bell tower, and a buttress on the south wall.

*Today:* Residences and a partial wall, part of the village's original layout, still surround the church. Mass is held every Sunday at one of Truchas' two churches. Allow time to visit art galleries and artists' studios within the village.

*Directions:* NM 76 makes a right angle turn in Truchas at County Road 75. Take 75 north ¼ mile to church.

PHOTO BY  
SAM BACA,  
1986

### 4 SAN JOSÉ DE GRACIA DE LAS TRAMPAS

**Saint Joseph**

*Built:* 1760-1776

*Community:* Las Trampas

*Feast Day:* March 19

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 32 miles

*History:* What has been called "the most perfectly preserved Spanish Colonial church in the United States" is located in the small mountain community of *Las Trampas* (the traps, or snares). The settlement dates back to 1751 when Governor Tomás Vélez Cachupin granted the valley to twelve Hispanic families. The villagers financed and built their church by contributing a sixth of their annual earnings as well as performing all the work themselves. The church with its massive four-foot-thick walls and two towers was completed in 1776.

Recent preservation efforts started in 1932 when the Society for the Preservation of New Mexico Mission Churches provided a new roof. In 1966 parishioners, citizens, and historians saved San José de Gracia from bulldozers when NM 76 was widened. Its *mayordomos* (church stewards) and parishioners received national recognition for maintenance of their church. Every two or three years the community remuds the structure, assisted by volunteers from near and far.

*Today:* This is one of New Mexico's three surviving 18th-century churches. Mass is held every first and third Sunday. The area is known for its fine weavers and fiber artists.

*Directions:* On NM 76, 7 ½ miles south of Peñasco; 7 ½ miles north of Truchas.



NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

## 5 SAGRADO CORAZÓN DE JESUS

### Sacred Heart of Jesus

*Built:* 1920

*Community:* Rio Lucio

*Feast Day:* the Friday following the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 28 miles

*History:* Not far from Peñasco on the High Road to Taos is the small farming community of *Rio Lucero* (shiny river). One of several small villages in the Peñasco Valley, including Rodarte and Llano San Juan, it adjoins Picurís Pueblo and the Carson National Forest. Its inhabitants grow high altitude crops of alfalfa, corn, and peas as well as apples.

The church, built in 1920 and located along the roadside of the village, has a pitched corrugated metal roof and a belfry with board facing. Sagrado Corazón de Jesus is one of the missions administered by the parish of San Antonio de Padua in Peñasco.

*Today:* This is a rural village chapel used for family devotions and monthly mass. Feel free to walk around the outside and take pictures. The chapel is just west of the community of Peñasco, a great place to have lunch and visit art galleries.

*Directions:* On NM 75, 1½ miles west of NM 76.

PHOTO BY JAKE RODRIGUEZ, 1986



## 6 SAN LORENZO DE PICURÍS

### Saint Lawrence of Picurís

*Built:* circa 1769, began restoring circa 1988

*Community:* Picurís Pueblo

*Feast Day:* August 10

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 26 miles

*History:* Picurís Pueblo, one of the country's earliest continuously-inhabited settlements, has been home to the northern Tiwa-speaking *pe'ewi* (mountain people) since 1250. In the early 1600s the Spanish government sent missionaries to *Nuevo Mexico* to build churches and convert the native people. The first San Lorenzo church, built at Picurís in 1621, was burned to the ground during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Comanches destroyed the rebuilt church in 1746.

Construction began again in 1769 using the ancient puddled adobe building technique. The single nave structure measuring 19 by 66 feet was completed in 1786. After several changes, the entire church was rebuilt to its original profile in 1960. In the 1980s water damage caused the structure's complete collapse.

When the community decided to rebuild in 1990, the newly formed Picurís Pueblo Restoration League oversaw the project. Although the Picurís people did most of the work, volunteers came from neighboring Peñasco, a local motorcycle club, even from California, to help. One tribal member stated the new church with its solid cruciform-shaped foundation represents the future strength of the Picurís tribe.

*Today:* Though the church is seldom open to the public, there are interesting crafts shops nearby and Picurís welcomes visitors to tour the pueblo and attend annual ceremonial dances.

*Directions:* Off NM 75, 1 mile west of NM 76.

PHOTO ABOVE  
CIRCA 1915



PHOTO BY  
NANCY  
WOODWARD,  
1990



8

SANTA CRUZ

Holy Cross

Built: 1811

Community: Ojo Caliente

Feast Day: May 3

Distance from Taos plaza: 44 miles



7

SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

St. John the Baptist

Built: 1913

Community: Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

Feast Day: June 13 and 24

Distance from Taos Plaza: 42 miles

*History:* In Tewa, the language of this pueblo, the name O'ke means "We are the brothers." Two other pueblos existed in this area before the present one. Before the Spanish *entrada* (arrival) in 1540, this site—known as Yungue-Owinge—was a legendary meeting center for Indian peoples.

In 1598 explorer Juan de Oñate, governor of New Spain's province of New Mexico, arrived at O'ke with 400 Spanish colonists and established the first Spanish capital. Within months the Spaniards had erected the colony's first adobe church, completed in September of the same year.

Spanish rule proved too oppressive and led to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, an uprising that originated at San Juan (O'ke). After the Reconquest, Fray Juan Alvarez reported a new church under construction in 1706. That Spanish Colonial adobe structure stood until 1913 when Father Camille Seux replaced it with a stone church built in the French Gothic style.

*Today:* The Pueblo people reclaimed their original name, Ohkay Owingeh, in 2005. Across the plaza from the church, view the stone chapel Father Seux funded and had built in 1890 in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes.

*Directions:* From NM 68 turn west on NM 291 into the Pueblo center.



*History:* Land records place the earliest settlement of Ojo Caliente (hot springs) at 1730. The threat of Ute raids caused people to abandon this strategic outpost of the Spanish Empire in 1748. Comanche attacks hindered settlement throughout northern New Mexico until Governor Anza defeated these fierce warriors. After the peace of 1786, Ojo Caliente's resettlement began with the 1793 issuance of land grants. When the Utes posed a threat, the inhabitants built a fortress church, completed in 1811. Huge vigas (beams) supported thick impenetrable adobe walls, and small portals in the walls allowed for rifle fire. The church was eventually abandoned when a new one was constructed nearby in 1939.

By 1986, significant deterioration prompted preservation efforts. The New Mexico Community Foundation helped initially with stabilization, then the community stepped in and worked for two years on the aged church. They completed their labor of love in September 1994.

*Today:* A visit to Ojo is not complete without a soak in the natural hot springs that comprise Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort and Spa. Tours of the church can be arranged through the spa. Mass is held every Sunday.

*Directions:* From NM 285 turn west on County Road 414 toward spa; ¼ mile ahead on south side.

PHOTOS BY  
RICHARD  
FEDERICI,  
1973

PHOTO BY  
BARBARA  
ZOOK,  
1990

## 9 SAN JUAN NEPOMUCENO

**Saint John Nepomuk**

*Built:* 1832

*Community:* El Rito

*Feast Day:* May 16

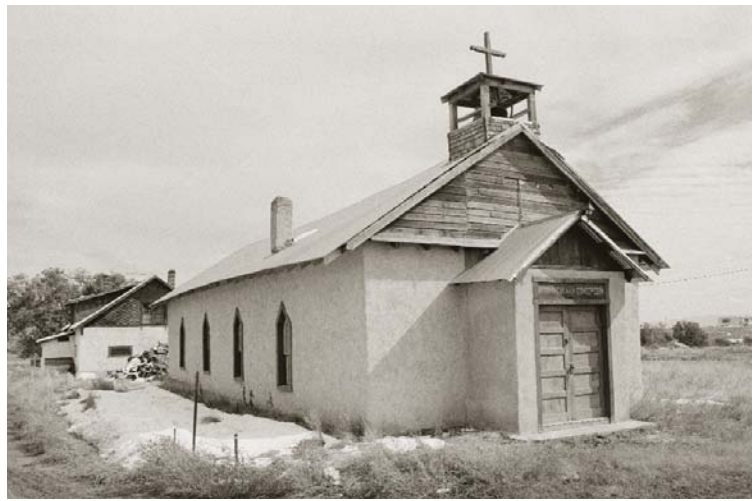
*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 52 miles

*History:* The Hispanic settlement of *El Rito* (the little river) began in 1808 when inhabitants of Abiquiu purchased farmland from the original Spanish land grant holders. Separated from their mother church in Abiquiu—a difficult 14-mile ride on horseback—the people began constructing their own church in 1827. Changes occurred in 1869 when Bishop Lamy (the subject of Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*) appointed El Rito as the area’s mother church. Under Lamy, the French priests, dissatisfied with the look of this Hispanic church, added French architectural elements, including a pitched roof.

In 1979 the decision to restore the church to its original state brought unforeseen disaster. It was discovered that water had seeped in under the hard plaster added in the 1940s and dissolved the adobe, which led to a series of collapses. Architectural consultants advised using a wood and steel frame for support and cement mortar to secure the adobe bricks. Completed December 1981, the new structure proved strong enough to support the church’s two-ton bell. When it rang in the inaugural mass, parishioners shed tears of joy.

*Today:* Mass is held every Sunday. Other than at this time, the church is only viewable from the outside.

*Directions:* From NM 285 turn west on NM 111 then south on County Road 554; 12 miles to center of El Rito.



## 10 CONCEPCIÓN IMMACULADA

**Immaculate Conception**

*Built:* 1900

*Community:* Tres Piedras

*Feast Day:* December 8

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 32 miles

*History:* Three giant rock towers rising out of the plains gave *Tres Piedras* its name. These prominent features have served as a landmark from prehistoric times. The Jicarilla Apache ranged here until the advent of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Intent on building a line to Santa Fe, the railroad sent John Rinker and a 30-mule-team supply caravan to the area. When Rinker arrived in the fall of 1879, he found good water and plentiful timber for railroad ties. He immediately built a commissary, mess hall, and hay barn, all enclosed within a stockade against Indian attack. Small cabins soon sprung up, and the population boomed with the discovery of gold in the nearby canyons.

By the 1930s, however, the population had dwindled to around 25 Hispanic families who raised stock and milled lumber. Although *Tres Piedras* was founded in 1879, the community’s church wasn’t built until 1900. The original adobe had a pitched metal roof and wooden belfry. Some decades later a new metal roof replaced the old one, and in 1984 a small vestibule was added on the front.

*Today:* Mass is held on the first Monday of every month.

*Directions:* From NM 64 turn north on NM 285; drive ¼ mile then turn west on dirt road; ⅓ mile to church.

PHOTO BY  
MORT  
MOTIER,  
1986



# 11 NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

**Our Lady of Guadalupe**

*Built:* 1817

*Community:* Velarde

*Feast Day:* December 12

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 32 miles



*History:* Some of the first arrivals to this area descended from Juan Pérez Velarde, a Spaniard who settled in Guadalupe del Paso in 1725. By the 1770s Joaquin Velarde family members had migrated to northern New Mexico to a place called *La Joya* (the basin) because of the land's suitability for *hortalizas* (gardens). In the rich soil along the Rio Grande, grains, chile, and corn grew in abundance. In the early 1900s when a post office was established in *La Joya*, it was renamed after then-postmaster David Velarde.

Church signage dates Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe to 1817. Its size—approximately 40 by 80 feet—and four-foot-thick adobe walls would have provided protection from Indian attack.

Sometime between 1900 and 1920, a pitched tin roof replaced the flat one. In 2006 the community replaced the tin with a new corrugated metal roof and a year later they removed the hard plaster and replastered with adobe.

*Today:* Velarde is famous for its cherries, apricots, pears, and apples, sold throughout the summer at roadside stands.

*Directions:* From NM 68 turn west on County Road 53; ½ mile to fork, then north 500 yards to church.

PHOTO BY  
JAKE  
RODRIGUEZ,  
1986

# 12 NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES

**Our Lady of Sorrows**

*Built:* 1892

*Community:* Pilar

*Feast Day:* September 15

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 23 miles

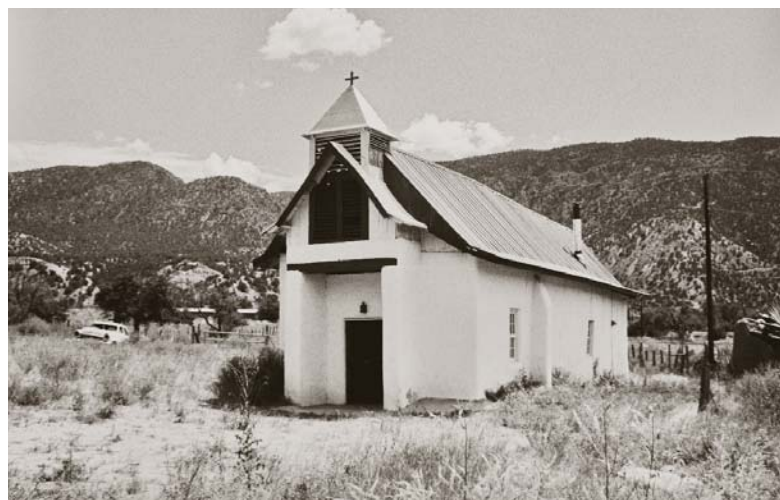
*History:* Originally, Jicarilla Apaches farmed in the community now known as *Pilar* (pillar), on the east bank of the Rio Grande. In 1795 Governor Fernando Chacón granted the land to 25 Spanish families in the community then named *Cienaguilla* (little marshes). Over the next five decades relations between the peoples deteriorated, finally resulting in conflict. In 1854 Picuris and Ute Indians routed 60 dragoons from the Ft. Burgwin cantonment near Taos in the battle of *Cienaguilla*.

The adobe church was built in 1892 with a pitched roof and an entry portico topped by a belfry. (The colorful red metal panel roof replaced the old one in 1986.) With the advent of a post office in 1912, the community acquired the name *Pilar*. Although the origin of this place name is not clear, one possibility derives from one of Spain's principal religious sites, *Nuestra Señora de Pilar* in Zaragoza.

*Today:* Take time to enjoy the Orilla Verde Recreation Area along the Rio Grande in *Pilar*. Artists' studios are often open to the public, however the chapel is private.

*Directions:* From NM 68 turn northwest on 570; ½ mile along the river; right at church.

PHOTO BY JAKE RODRIGUEZ, 1986





# HISTORIC CHURCHES

## HIGH ROAD TO TAOS

From Española to Picurís

- 1 Santa Cruz de la Cañada
- 2 El Santuario de Chimayó
- 3 Nuestra Señora del Rosario
- 4 San José de Gracia de las Trampas
- 5 Sagrado Corazón de Jesús
- 6 San Lorenzo de Picurís

## LOW ROAD TO TAOS

From Española to Tres Piedras

- 7 San Juan Bautista
- 8 Santa Cruz
- 9 San Juan Nepomuceno
- 10 Concepción Inmaculada

## CENTRAL TAOS AREA

From Velarde to Taos Pueblo

- 11 Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe
- 12 Nuestra Señora de los Dolores
- 13 San Francisco de Asís
- 14 Nuestra Señora de San Juan de los Lagos
- 15 Nuestra Señora de los Dolores
- 16 San Antonio de Padua
- 17 Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe
- 18 San Gerónimo de Taos

## NORTHERN TAOS COUNTY

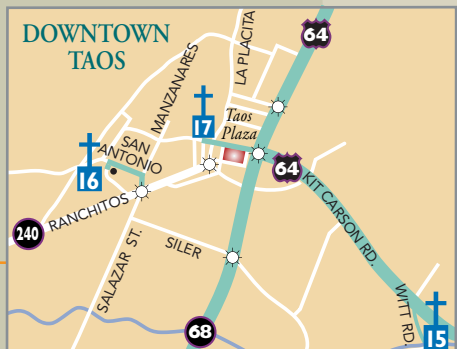
From Arroyo Seco to Costilla

- 19 Santísima Trinidad
- 20 Nuestra Señora de los Dolores
- 21 San Cristóbal
- 22 San Antonio de Padua
- 23 Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe
- 24 Sagrado Corazón

## Area Legend

- Paved Roads
- Unpaved Roads
- Historic Churches

Maps by Burrell Breneman © 2011 Webb Design Inc., Taos.



# 13 SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS

## Saint Francis of Assisi

*Built:* circa 1810

*Community:* Ranchos de Taos

*Feast Day:* October 4

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 4 miles

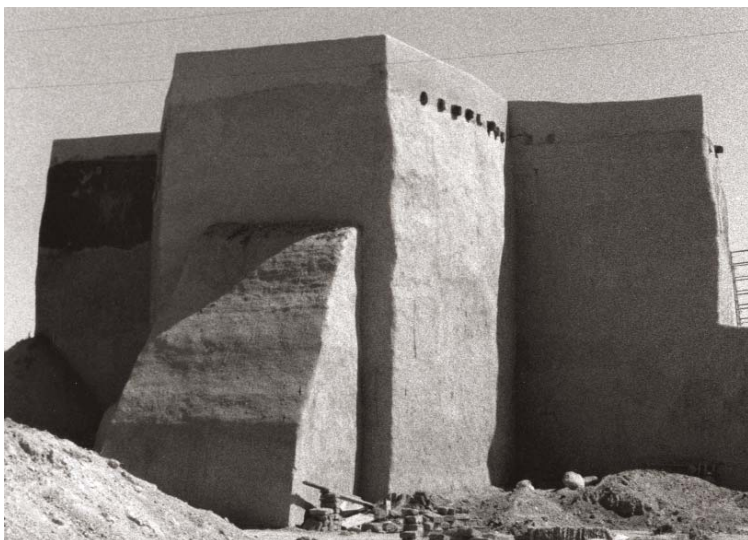
*History:* San Francisco de Asís is one of the finest examples of Franciscan architecture. Its massive walls, broad planes and gently rounded apse buttresses have inspired works by painters and photographers like Georgia O’Keeffe and Ansel Adams since the 1880s. Like many other Spanish churches, it has a long history. The plaza at Ranchos de Taos (“ranchos” referring to military outposts dating back to the 1680s) was completed in 1779, making it the oldest settlement in the Taos Valley.

The community obtained license to build a church in 1803. It took forty years and tens of thousands of adobe bricks to create the 120-foot-long structure with its twin towers, six-foot-thick walls, and adobe abutments. Damage sustained from hard plaster applied in the 1960s brought the community together to restore their church.

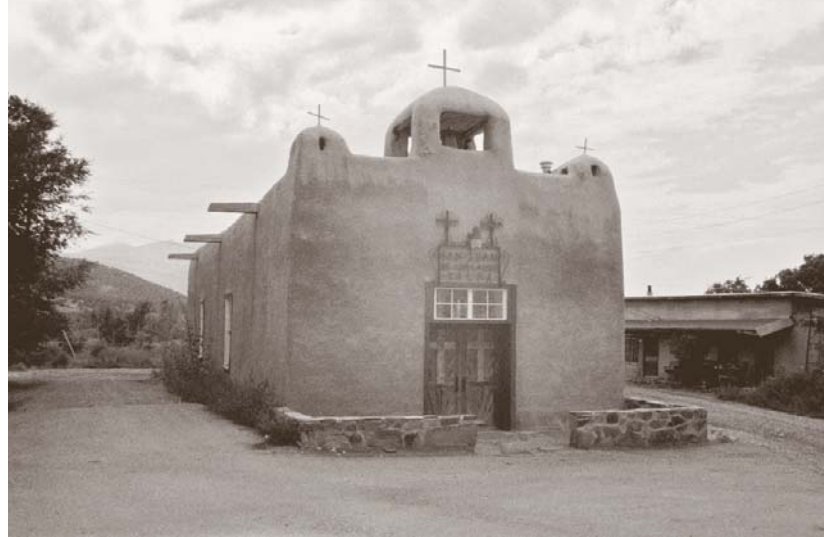
*Today:* Two weeks every June, the *mayordomos* (church stewards) direct their parishioners in the annual *enjarre* (remudding) of this iconic Spanish Colonial structure. The church is open for visitors daily and mass is held several times each day. Allow time to enjoy the galleries and shops that surround the church.

*Directions:* On NM 68, ¼ mile south of NM 518.

WEST SIDE OF CHURCH, n.d.



NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK



# 14 NUESTRA SEÑORA DE SAN JUAN DE LOS LAGOS

## Our Lady of Saint John of the Lakes

*Built:* 1828

*Community:* Talpa

*Feast Day:* October 7

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 5 7/10 miles

*History:* Established in 1823, *El Barrio* (the neighborhood) de Nuestra Señora de San Juan de los Lagos de Rio Chiquito was once a district of Ranchos de Taos. By 1827 the new village’s citizenry numbered 30 families. That year Bernardo Duran petitioned Padre Martínez, the parish priest, for the right to build a chapel in honor of Our Lady of San Juan. Duran, one of the village’s prosperous residents, provided the funds to build a small church, completed in 1828.

In the early 19th century annual *cordons* (trading expeditions) departed from the Taos Valley and other parts of the *Nuevo Mexico* colony to exchange hides, wool, and woven goods in Mexico. At the great trade fairs in Jalisco, the New Mexicans visited two famous pilgrimage shrines: Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos and Our Lady of Talpa. Sometime afterwards the community became known as Talpa.

*Today:* Now, as in days past, important events in the lives of Hispanic villagers—baptisms, marriages, and funerals—center around their private chapels. This chapel is not open to visitors but the view of the exterior makes the trip worthwhile.

*Directions:* On NM 518, 1 7/10 miles east of NM 68.

PHOTO BY  
ROBERT  
NESTOR,  
1986

# 15

## NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES

### Our Lady of Sorrows

*Built:* 1873, reconstructed in 1917

*Community:* Cañon near Taos

*Feast Day:* September 15

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 1½ miles

*History:* In 1796, the Spanish Fernando de Taos land grant included two plazas: one of them in Taos, the other in Cañon. The plaza of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores lies one-and-a-half miles southeast of Taos Plaza at the mouth of the canyon for which the village is named.

In spring 1847 Lewis Garrard accompanied a party of mountain men riding out of Taos Canyon into the Taos Valley. He described what he saw: "The valley, in every direction, was cultivated, and in the total absence of fences, presented the unusual sight of one large field, stretching away for miles, intersected by numberless ditches." Today many old families still hold large parcels of land in this area.

Landowners Pablita and Elizardo Madrid donated a parcel for building their community's church, completed in 1873 and remodeled in the 1950s.

*Today:* Parishioners celebrate the Sorrowful Mother's feast day with vespers and a procession, followed by a mass the next day. Mass is also held on the first Wednesday of each month.

*Directions:* 830 Witt Road, ¼ mile southeast of NM 64 (Kit Carson Road).

PHOTO BY ROBERT NESTOR, 1986



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# 16

## SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA

### Saint Anthony of Padua

*Built:* circa 1860

*Community:* La Loma Plaza, in Taos

*Feast Day:* June 16

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* ½ mile

*History:* La Loma (the hill) has the distinction of being one of two fortified plazas in New Mexico that remains residential. Like the adjacent original settlement of Taos, La Loma Plaza was constructed on a hill as a fortress against Indian attacks. Low, flat-roofed adobe houses with shared walls faced onto the open *plaza* (square) in the center. The rear walls faced outwards with no windows, forming an unbreachable battlement much like the centuries-old walled Spanish town of Avila. Residents could walk on the rooftops and guards posted there had the added advantage of the hill's height to keep watch from.

According to records kept by Dolly Valdez-Mondragón, her great-grandfather Inocencio Valdez, Sr. owned the northwest section of the plaza and donated the land for a family chapel. Built in the 1860s, it was named after the village's patron saint, San Antonio de Padua. The families used the chapel for devotions, rosary recitation, *velorios* (wakes), and occasionally for mass.

*Today:* This is another private chapel, open to villagers but not to visitors. Do stroll around the residential *placita* (little plaza) and imagine how life must have been when Indian raids occurred.

*Directions:* San Antonio Street at La Loma Plaza.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

## 17 NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Built:* 1802, present church (below) completed in 1962

*Community:* Taos

*Feast Day:* December 12

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 1/10 mile

*History:* In 1801 construction started on an adobe church with a flat roof and walls three to four feet thick. From 1826 to 1857 it served as the local priest Padre Antonio Jose Martínez's headquarters. In 1833 it became the Taos Valley's parish church, and in honor of the Hispanic community's venerated priest was referred to as "the Padre Martínez church." Over a century later it was torn down due to poor condition and replaced by a second Guadalupe church (pictured here at top). When a fire in June 1961 destroyed the second church, the parishioners decided to rebuild for the third time.

The new church, located on a site adjacent to the former one, was designed with curved lines and rounded walls, a departure from the traditional straight lines of southwestern adobe architecture. The parish dedicated their modern-style church,

"unlike any other in the Archdiocese," in December 1962, with the words "May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us preserve it for many years to come."

*Today:* Masses are held daily. Note the painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the right of the altar. It was painted in 1674 by Jose Santiago, and was later a gift to Padre Martínez from Mexico. It has hung in all three churches.

*Directions:* 205 Don Fernando Street.

SECOND CHURCH, EARLY 1900s

PHOTO BY BURRELL BRENNEMAN, 2011



## 18 SAN GERÓNIMO DE TAOS

### Saint Jerome of Taos

*Built:* 1850

*Community:* Taos Pueblo

*Feast Day:* September 30

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 3 miles



TAOS PUEBLO: NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK AND WORLD HERITAGE SITE

*History:* Although the Tiwa-speaking people of Taos Pueblo have occupied this site since around 1350, ancestral Puebloans lived in neighboring pithouses about three hundred years earlier. Hernando de Alvarado from the 1540 Coronado expedition was the first European visitor to this famous northern New Mexico landmark, now the only World Heritage Site in North America.

Sometime after his arrival in 1598, Oñate sent Fray Zamora to the pueblo to establish a mission. In 1640 and again in 1680, Taos Pueblo people revolted against the Spanish, both times killing the oppressive Franciscan priests and destroying their mission churches. Relations improved in the 1700s and another adobe mission church was built by 1726. It stood until the Taos Revolt against American occupation in 1847. Artillery fire from U.S. troops left that church in ruins, still visible today. Around 1850 building began on the present adobe church located closer to the plaza. Remodeling done in 1920 included the addition of the belfry.

*Today:* A visit to Taos isn't complete without a visit to Taos Pueblo. Note there is an entrance fee and a fee for camera equipment. Be sure to visit artisans' shops around the pueblo's plaza.

*Directions:* At the entrance of Taos Pueblo.



PHOTO BY JANET BURNS, 2011

## 19 SANTISIMA TRINIDAD Holy Trinity

*Built:* completed 1834

*Community:* Arroyo Seco

*Feast Day:* September 15

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 9 miles



PHOTO BY  
SAM BACA,  
1990

*History:* The community of Arroyo Seco takes its name from “dry watercourse.” Three years prior to establishing homes there in 1807, Cristóbal Martínez and Jose Gregorio Martínez farmed in this narrow valley nestled in the mountains. Other settlers soon joined them.

Church construction may have started as early as 1820 and was completed in 1834. The massive size of the structure—30 by 70 feet with thick adobe walls—in proportion to the small *placita* (little plaza) where it stands provided a defensive sanctuary during Indian raids, common at the time. In 1911 after the railroads made new materials accessible, a pitched roof was added.

In 1965 a new church was built nearby to accommodate Arroyo Seco’s population growth. The original historic church eventually fell into disrepair and in the 1990s the New Mexico Community Foundation began stabilization efforts. From 1995 to 1997 parishioners, aided by Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps, fully restored La Santisima Trinidad.

*Today:* The church sits just off the main street of “Seco,” a thriving artists’ community filled with shops and cafés. The church is seldom open to the public, but walk around its exterior and marvel at how it was built before the days of heavy machinery. Mass is held every Tuesday evening in summer.

*Directions:* Behind north side shops on NM 150.



## 20 NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS DOLORES Our Lady of Sorrows

*Built:* early 1830s

*Community:* Arroyo Hondo

*Feast Day:* September 15

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 12 miles

*History:* Settlement in Arroyo Hondo (deep valley) officially began in 1815 when the Spanish government approved Nerio Sisnero’s petition for land to support some fifty householders. In 1823, 100 *varas* (approximately 300 sq. ft.) were set aside for a central plaza, around which the village and the church were built.

When Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy made his first visit in 1852, Padre Martínez persuaded him to establish the area’s first parish there. The original flat-roofed adobe remained intact until 1916 when the French priest Father Girard, who disliked the local architecture, undertook extensive remodeling. Changes included the removal of massive corner buttresses and the addition of a pitched shingle roof and a wood-shingled belfry; the original windows were replaced with neo-Gothic windows. Soon the church resembled the French architecture of Girard’s homeland.

In 1990 parishioners discovered roots growing in the mud walls after stripping away the exterior hard plaster. Guided by their own restoration committee, the people raised funds with annual fiestas and in ten years completed the renovation.

*Today:* Now the interior and exterior are preserved, along with the prayers of the ancestors. Mass is held every Sunday.

*Directions:* From NM 522 east on B-143 (Hondo Seco Road) 1 mile.

PHOTO BY  
SAM BACA,  
1988



## 21 SAN CRISTÓBAL

### Saint Christopher

*Built:* 1935-37

*Community:* San Cristóbal

*Feast Day:* Last weekend of July

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 17 miles

*History:* In the early 1800s population growth in Taos accelerated and led to the establishment of new communities northwest of Taos Pueblo. On land that was originally farmed by Arroyo Hondo residents, the agricultural community of San Cristóbal was founded in about 1860.

The village was too small to support a church and for decades the inhabitants attended mass in Arroyo Hondo. In the 1930s the community grew large enough to warrant building their own church. The Silva family donated land and the people made enough adobe bricks to begin building in 1935. When the San Cristóbal church was completed in 1937, it had only a wood stove for heat and no water. Since then the parishioners have installed gas, electricity, and running water. The pitch-roofed church with its concrete belfry is built in the simple nave style and falls under the jurisdiction of the Holy Trinity Parish in Arroyo Seco.

*Today:* As with other adobe churches, San Cristóbal requires constant maintenance; most recently *majordomos* and parishioners repaired the ceiling. Mass is held on the first and second Saturdays of each month.

*Directions:* From NM 522, east on Forest Road 493;  $\frac{1}{10}$  mile to Camino de Medio.

PHOTO BY  
JOHN WATSON,  
1998

## 22 SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA

### Saint Anthony of Padua

*Built:* 1840

*Community:* Questa

*Feast Day:* June 13

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 25 miles

*History:* Several attempts preceded the official founding of the San Antonio del Rio Colorado community in 1842. Indian attacks thwarted Francisco Laforet's first efforts in 1829, forcing him to move to a *cuesta*



(ridge) near the foothills of the Sangre de Cristos that offered more protection. The next *pobladores* (settlers) arrived in 1835, only to be dispersed again by bands of raiding Indians. By the 1850s conditions changed to allow the construction of a church, first mentioned in the Santa Fe Archdiocese records in 1860 after Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy visited the area. He reported a "beautiful new chapel on the north side of the Rio Colorado plaza."

That church was replaced by the present one, completed sometime between 1865 and 1875, which served as the mother church for the surrounding community missions until 2008. It had become evident that capillary action of water beneath hard plaster had caused cracking and bowing in the east wall and nave and recently the west wall gave way.

*Today:* Questa residents are currently negotiating the reconstruction of their beloved church. Visit the community's art galleries, cafés, and shops.

*Directions:* Behind Parish Center on NM 522, just north of NM 38.

PHOTO BY  
JANET BURNS,  
2011

PHOTO BY ROBERT NESTOR, 1986



# 23

## NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Built:* circa 1940

*Community:* Cerro

*Feast Day:* December 12

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 40 miles

*History:* Settlers from Taos and Questa established this farming community, named after the Cerro Guadalupe Mountains, in 1854. The villagers built a church on Cabresto Creek some time later.

When Father Smith came to serve at Cerro in 1940, however, the old adobe building was crumbling and leaking. The priest asked his parishioners if they wanted a new church, cautioning they would receive no outside assistance. Under his administration, the determined congregation made plans to replace the old church. Some of the veterans returning from World War II began making adobes. The people came together to finance and construct their new place of worship. The resulting cruciform structure, built along the roadside, has a lofty, two-story profile where distinctive walled-in double towers frame a bell suspended between the two. The building stands as a testament to the villagers' willpower and their love of the Lord.

*Today:* Mass is held on Tuesdays. Cerro is near Wild Rivers Recreation Area along the Rio Grande. Stop by the Visitors Center (10 miles west) for recreational and geological information, Memorial Day to Labor Day.

*Directions:* From NM 522 turn west on NM 378; 1½ miles to church.

PHOTO BY ROBERT NESTOR, 1986



# 24

## SAGRADO CORAZÓN

### Sacred Heart

*Built:* circa 1890

*Community:* Costilla

*Feast Day:* First Friday of July

*Distance from Taos Plaza:* 45 miles



PHOTO BY  
ROBERT  
NESTOR,  
1986

*History:* Just one mile from the state border, Costilla lies at the southernmost end of Colorado's San Luis Valley, a rich high-elevation farming region. According to one source, the first settlers accompanied Juan de Jesus Bernal from Arroyo Hondo in 1852. The pioneering families built their homes around four plazas that defined the original Costilla community. The adobe church, cruciform in shape, was built on the *Plaza de Arriba* (upper plaza). The community land was split up when the U.S. government redrew New Mexico's northern boundary in 1861. Families with homes in the *Plaza de Abajo* (lower plaza) found themselves living in Colorado Territory (now known as Garcia, Colorado). Then as now, the faithful living in Colorado had to cross the state line to attend services at their community church in Costilla.

*Today:* Mass is held the first Friday of each month, the second and fourth Saturdays, and on Sundays. Costilla is located near the protected Valle Vidal wildlife refuge area.

*Directions:* From NM 522 turn west on Old State Route 516; ¾ mile to church.

## CHURCHES BY COMMUNITY (with map locator number)



**Arroyo Hondo**  
Nuestra Señora  
de los Dolores  
20



**Questa**  
San Antonio  
de Padua  
22



**Arroyo Seco**  
Santísima  
Trinidad  
19



**Ranchos de Taos**  
San Francisco  
de Asís  
13



**Cerro**  
Nuestra Señora  
de Guadalupe  
23



**Rio Lucio**  
Sagrado Corazón  
de Jesús  
5



**Chimayó**  
El Santuario  
de Chimayó  
2



**San Cristóbal**  
San Cristóbal  
21



**Costilla**  
Sagrado  
Corazón  
24



**Talpa**  
Nuestra Señora  
de San Juan  
de los Lagos  
14



**El Rito**  
San Juan  
Nepomuceno  
9



**Taos**  
Nuestra Señora  
de los Dolores,  
Canón  
15



**Española**  
Santa Cruz  
de la Cañada,  
Santa Cruz  
1



**Taos**  
San Antonio  
de Padua,  
La Loma Plaza  
16



**Las Trampas**  
San José de  
Gracia de las  
Trampas  
4



**Taos**  
Nuestra Señora  
de Guadalupe  
17



**Ohkay Owingeh  
Pueblo**  
San Juan  
Bautista  
7



**Taos Pueblo**  
San Gerónimo  
de Taos  
18



**Ojo Caliente**  
Santa Cruz  
8



**Tres Piedras**  
Concepción  
Immaculada  
10



**Picurís Pueblo**  
San Lorenzo  
de Picurís  
6



**Truchas**  
Nuestra Señora  
del Rosario  
3



**Pilar**  
Nuestra Señora  
de los Dolores  
12



**Velarde**  
Nuestra Señora  
de Guadalupe  
11



As part of a visitor education program, the Town of Taos has developed many travel itineraries, including this driving tour of historic churches and a walking tour of historic sites within the downtown district. Stop by Taos Visitor Center or download the tours online, TAOS.org.

## TOWN OF TAOS VISITOR CENTER

1139 Paseo del Pueblo Sur  
(NM 68 at NM 585)  
800-348-0696 • 575-758-3873

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Published by Taos County Lodgers Association and the Town of Taos.

Designed and produced in Taos by Webb Design Inc.

Compiled by Elizabeth J. Cunningham with assistance from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, the parish churches of Northern New Mexico, Cornerstones Community Partnerships, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Museum of New Mexico History, New Mexico State Records Center & Archives, and Taos Historic Museums.

Special thanks to the funding sponsors listed on the back cover for their financial support of this project.

Printed in Albuquerque by Starline Printing.

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## PHOTOS COURTESY OF

Cornerstones Community Partnerships, Santa Fe: 3, 4, 6 (*Woodward photo*), 8, 13, 19, 20, 21.

New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division, Santa Fe: 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24.

Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico Museum of History, Santa Fe: 1 (*Neg. # 031493*), 2 (*Neg. # 014375*), 9 (*Neg. # 124387*).

Taos Historic Museums: 6 (*old church*), 16, 17 (*old church*), 18.

**On the cover:** San Francisco de Asís Church, Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico, n.d. Image No. 62863 from the Historical Society of New Mexico Collection. Courtesy of New Mexico State Records Center & Archives.