

## Santa Fe Style Artists by Kurt Faust

Imagine if you lived in Santa Fe before the horseless buggy and before the arrival of the first railroad cars. A few thousand residents and scattered houses along the Santa Fe river valley and the plaza teamed with the tired oxen who carried the wagons along the Santa Fe Trail. A system of acequias, or irrigation canals, networked both sides of the river. The milpas, or cornfields, lined the acequias, providing simple foods and all transportation was by foot or hoof. Many of the rural households were one or two room adobe dwellings with a coating of mud plaster on the walls. The walls of these dwellings were constantly being washed away by the rains and continuously being re-plastered by the inhabitants. Thus, many of the buildings looked like they were in some stage of melting back into the earth.

When the railroad finally came to New Mexico, the main line went from Las Vegas to Albuquerque. Santa Fe was serviced only by a spur from Lamy which arrived in 1880. The railroad's ability to carry passengers and freight made the Santa Fe Trail from Missouri obsolete and caused a general decline in the Santa Fe economy, which lasted many years. The railroad made new building materials readily available and in an effort to gain statehood, the entire territory began adopting building styles from "back east." Santa Fe rapidly became a hodge-podge of building styles.

It was in this mood that a number of the business and civic leaders resurrected the dormant Historical Society of New Mexico. Its purpose, among other things, was to protect and collect artifacts from the earlier generations of peoples of the Southwest. To that end, the group obtained space in the historic Palace of the Governors on the Santa Fe Plaza in which was displayed a substantial collection of Pueblo Indian artifacts and attracted numerous visitors. With persistent effort by some members of the group, the Territorial Legislature in 1909 established the Museum of New Mexico and landed a home for the newly created (by U.S. Congress) School of American Archaeology. Edgar Hewett, a national leader in the field of archaeology, was named director of both the museum and the school.

Artists were attracted to New Mexico by the clean dry air, the clarity of light, and the cultural uniqueness of the area. Under Hewett's guidance, the Museum had an open door policy for any new artist arriving in Santa Fe. The Museum would offer studio space at the Palace and help the new arrivals find suitable housing. The Museum also frequently showed the work of the artists and promoted them in their newsletter *El Palacio*. With the founding of the Museum and the School of American Archaeology and the coming of artists and writers to the region in the early 1900's the stage was set for the transformation of Santa Fe.

Carlos Vierra was the first of the artists to immigrate to Santa Fe for health reasons. He relocated here in 1904. After regaining his health he traveled extensively throughout the region painting and sketching the Pueblo architecture and the old missions. Vierra was passionate about the preservation of the remaining remnants of "old" Santa Fe and held a strong vision of what the

new style should be. He built, in 1918, one of the first homes in the new style at the SW corner of what is now Old Pecos Trail and Coronado Street. Vierra's vision for his home was to combine the elements he had observed in the local indigenous architecture and to make the building look old from the very start. Vierra's sketches were instrumental in the design of the Fine Arts Museum by I.H.Rapp, which was constructed on the NW corner of the Plaza in 1917. Vierra became active in civic groups and advocated for adopting a new "Old Santa Fe Style" for new buildings. He was vocal about the need to reject California Mission style.

Many of the artists settled and built homes in the Canyon Road and Camino del Monte Sol area. In 1916 Alice Corbin Henderson came to Santa Fe to recover from tuberculosis. Her husband, William Pennhallow Henderson, was an accomplished painter. The family rented a small place at 452 Camino del Monte Sol until Henderson built a new adobe house and studio at 555/557 Camino del Monte Sol. Henderson was very active in the creation of the new style and started Pueblo Spanish Building Company, a construction company. He designed and built the Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art, the Fremont Ellis house on Canyon Road, a house for Amelia and Martha White on Garcia Street, and he remodeled Sena Plaza.

Frank Applegate was teaching ceramics and sculpture at a school in New Jersey until, in 1921, he came with his family to visit artist friends Gerald and Ina Sizer Cassidy at their home on the corner of Canyon Road and Acequia Madre. Applegate soon bought a tract of land on Camino del Monte Sol. Applegate built several houses in the area and was a major supporter of the Cinco Pintores, helping them to acquire the land and materials for their own construction projects. His homes are at 408 Camino del Monte Sol, 830 El Caminito, 544 Camino del Monte Sol (purchased by artist Andrew Dasburg), and 558 Camino del Monte Sol. Frank was educated in architecture and gave good advice and help to many of the other artists and writers who settled in the area.

The Cinco Pintores were a younger group of artists who came to Santa Fe in the 20's. They banded together for promotional purposes. They were Willard Nash, Jozef Bakos, Will Shuster, Fremont Ellis, and Walter Mruk. They all built and lived near each other on Camino del Monte Sol. Some built more than one house on the Camino: Willard Nash lived at 538 and 566 Camino del Monte Sol, Joseph Bakos lived at 576, Will Shuster, over time, built three houses at 542, 550, and 580, Fremont Ellis lived at 586, and Walter Mruk lived at 558. These houses were built in the early to mid 1920's.

Most of the artists and writers of the time were involved in the creation of Santa Fe Style. Mary Austin built on Camino del Monte Sol. Olive Rush - restored an old home on Canyon Road and used it for gatherings of the Society of Friends. Gustave Baumann built a house in 1923 on Camino de las Animas. Henry Balink built a home and studio on Old Santa Fe Trail just across the field from Gustave Baumann. Witter Bynner owned an estate at Old Santa Fe Trail and Buena Vista which had several small spaces he rented to artists. Bynner's Estate, on the outskirts of town, became a veritable artists colony. Theodore Van Soelen built a beautiful house in Tesuque in 1926. Randall Davey bought and restored a home and orchard at the entrance to the

Santa Fe Forest now home to the Audubon Society. Amelia White, a very active patron of the arts, donated the land for the International Folk Art Museum, the Laboratory of Anthropology, and the Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art. She donated her house and land to the School of American Research and a small house for the Garcia Street Club.

The artists of the late teens and early 20's had a keen influence on the future of Santa Fe. They had passion for the land and a strong vision for the unique architectural opportunity present in Santa Fe at the turn of the century. They pushed for a styles ordinance that would protect and encourage furtherance of the local architecture and followed up with action by building their own homes in the style. They were very involved in the social fabric of the community and were instrumental in ushering in the legacy of arts we enjoy here today.

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