

## The Advent of Santa Fe Style by Kurt Faust

The architecture of Taos Pueblo is undoubtedly one of the primary sources of inspiration for what is now known as Santa Fe Style. The main part of the present Taos Pueblo buildings were most likely constructed between 1000 and 1450 A.D. They appeared much as they do today when the first Spanish explorers arrived in Northern New Mexico in 1540 searching for the fabled golden cities of Cibola.

The Spanish colonists built their first small adobe shelters of one or two small rooms with small doors and small windows. For more than two hundred years the homes changed little, mostly in size as families grew and new rooms were added. These homes grew first into a U shape and then into the closed courtyard homes which were entered through a Zaguan so they could be closed for protection. The Zaguan is often a pair of large gates which can be opened wide to allow passage of livestock and wagons or carts. Often there is a smaller door within the larger gates which can be used when the large gates are closed for pedestrian traffic.

In 1821 Mexico gained its independence from Spain and ended a centuries old prohibition of trade with the United States. The New Mexico region was hungry for trade goods and the Santa Fe Trail sprung up almost over night. Imported metal tools made working with wood easier and the increased contact with the Americans increasingly influenced the desire for buildings of different materials and styles.

Within two decades Manifest Destiny was reaching its peak as the newly seceded Republic of Texas was annexed into the United States. The interests of Mexico and the interests of the U.S. soon collided as claim was made for New Mexico and California. The Mexican-American War brought General Kearny to Santa Fe in 1846 to take over the territory. The viga posts and rough timbers of the portales began to be replaced with smooth square whitewashed posts. Some plate glass and a few fired bricks were shipped along the Santa Fe Trail. New saw mills made two story frame buildings possible. This began what is now known as Territorial Style.

Territorial Style is distinguished by its square wooden columns, painted wooden shutters and other casework around the windows. When bricks began to be manufactured locally, they were used to protect the tops of the adobe parapets.

When the railroad came in 1880 Santa Fe was in a full swing shift to becoming industrialized and Americanized. In 1881 and 1882 the Spiegelberg brothers built the first Italianate store-fronts, two two-story stores on the south side of the Plaza with metal cornices, cast iron columns and large plate glass picture windows which could be mail-ordered and shipped by rail. On the second building they used brick made at the new brickworks in town. These buildings were noticeably different than all the other buildings in town especially since they were built without any portales.

The Catron Building was built in 1891 on the Plaza's east side and north corner. It remains one of the few old non Santa Fe Style buildings uncovered with a coat of stucco.

In the middle of the east side of the Plaza the First National Bank built a building complete with Greek columns and capitals.

Because of the demise of the Santa Fe Trail when the railroad came to New Mexico, Santa Fe fell into economic decline. It became apparent that the old architecture needed to be preserved to attract tourists. This idea soon became the notion that Santa Fe needed a style of architecture of its own.

A fortunate turn of events occurred when Edgar Lee Hewett lobbied the Archaeology Institute of America to establish its new School of American Archaeology in Santa Fe. The New Mexico Legislature sealed the deal in 1909 when they established The Museum of New Mexico and offered the Palace of the Governors as its location. Hewett became the director of both institutions and hired, among others, Jesse Nusbaum, Sylvanus Morley, and Carlos Vierra as museum staff.

About this time the mayor appointed Hewett and Morley to the newly established Santa Fe City Planning board. The board was afraid Santa Fe was rapidly losing its character and beginning to look like Anytown, U.S.A. They recommended saving what was remaining of the old buildings and they also began to develop what they called the New-Old Santa Fe Style making sure it was distinct from the California Mission Style.

Jesse Nusbaum, a photographer, had worked with Hewett on Archaeological digs and was placed in charge of the restoration of the Palace. The Palace had many facelifts in its 300 years prior. General Kearny added a new portal with square posts in the mid 1800's. By the late 1800's Victorian bric-a-brac was added. The museum staff designed a new portal to "restore" the Palace to how it should have looked long ago and was completed in 1913.

Hewett was placed in charge of the exhibits of the 1915 California-Panama Expo in San Diego. One of the exhibits main attractions was the 5 acre Painted Desert. It featured reconstructions of Native pueblos, kivas, cliff dwellings, and hogans. The New Mexico Building for the exhibit was designed by Santa Fe architect Isaac Rapp and his partners. It was heavily influenced by the depictions of the mission churches and pueblos by museum staff member Carlos Vierra.

Rapp's firm designed the School for the Deaf which was completed in 1917. This building was a break with the traditional Spanish single story forms and drew on the multi-story pueblo forms. They then designed the La Fonda Hotel, on the south east corner of the Plaza and the Federal building which now holds the IAIA museum across from St. Francis Cathedral. These were built in 1921 ushering in what might be called the Golden Age of Santa Fe Style.

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