

HABS. CAL. 322

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MIGUEL

La Casa de ~~Michael~~ Blanco
2625 Huntington Drive, San Marino,
Los Angeles County, California.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of California. #3.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Henry F. Withey, District Officer
407 So. Western Avenue,
Los Angeles, California.

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MIGUEL
LA CASA DE MICHAEL BLANCO
2625 Huntington Drive. San Marino.
Los Angeles County, Calif.

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19-SANMA

Owner: San Marino City School District.

Date of Erection: One story part possibly 1830-1840.
Two story part " 1865-1880.

Architect: Unknown

Builder: "

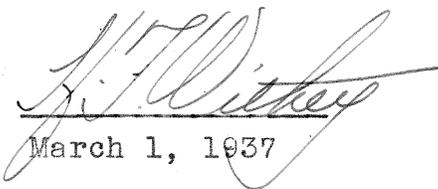
Present condition: In a much neglected condition being occupied by Japanese farm tenants.

Number of Stories: Part one, Part two.

Materials of Construction: One story part, field stone foundation, sun dried adobe brick walls plastered both sides, framed and shingled roof, wood floors. Two story part - brick foundation, wood framed construction, ship lap siding on exterior, shingle roof, wood floor, plastered and papered interior, wood work painted.

Other existing records: A description and photographs in article entitled "In Pursuit of Vanished days's" by Marion Parks" 1928. Annual Publications Historical Society of Southern California 1928. "Historic Spots in California, The Southern Counties" by Hero Eugene Rensch.

Additional Data: This house is generally understood to have been the house of Michael White who came to California in 1829, and resided in San Diego for several years, married the youngest daughter of Dona Eulalia Perez de Guillan, keeper of the keys at San Gabriel Mission. In 1831 White obtained a grant of 500 varasc (a Spanish yard of 33 inches) square adjoining the Titus ranch north of the San Gabriel Mission.


March 1, 1937

 7/21/37

ADDENDUM TO:
CASA DE MIGUEL BLANCO
(Michael White Adobe)
2701 Huntington Drive
San Marino
Los Angeles
California

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO CASA DE MIGUEL BLANCO (Michael White Adobe)

HABS NO. CA-322

This report is an addendum to a one page report previously submitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: 2701 Huntington Drive, City of San Marino, County of Los Angeles, California (Assessor's Parcel Number 5331-020-901). Located in the southwest corner of the San Marino High School campus, which is situated on the north side of Huntington Drive between Winston Avenue on the west and Gainsborough Drive on the east. The building faces south onto the L-shaped swimming pool and east onto the baseball diamond. Latitude/longitude: 34°7'31"N 118°5'53"W¹

Present Owner: San Marino Unified School District
1665 West Drive
San Marino, California, 91108

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Casa de Miguel Blanco (or Michael White Adobe) is significant both as a rare example of the adobe construction methodology, and for its association with its original owner, Michael White, also known as Miguel Blanco (1801-1885). One of the first Anglo colonists in what was to become California, he associated closely with local Mexican society and eventually gained Mexican citizenship. White arrived in California as a British sailor in 1829, and worked variously as a mail courier for the Mexican government, a rancher, and ship builder. In 1830, he married Maria del Rosario Guillen and later raised thirteen children in his adobe, built in 1845 on 75 acres granted to him by Pio Pico.

The adobe's form, plan, space, structure, and style are representative of mid-18th century adobe construction. As one of only 39 remaining adobes in Los Angeles County, it is a rare example of the property type.

¹ Latitude and longitude measured by Google Maps.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** 1845
2. **Architect:** Not known
3. **Original and subsequent owners:** Michael White (1802-1885) occupied 1845 – 1878; Luther Harvey Titus (1822-1900) owned 1878 – 1887,² James C. Flood (1826-1889), ownership commenced 1887³; Governor Henry Harrison Markham (1840-1923); Louis Leonard Bradbury (1823-1892)⁴, ownership terminated 1899; Isaac Newton Van Nuys (1836-1912), ownership commenced 1899,⁵ San Marino Unified School District, 1928 – present.⁶ There is no evidence that any 19th century owner after White lived on the property; they had extensive land holdings and known residences, and used the land for agricultural income.
4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** Unknown
5. **Original Plans and Construction:**
No original plans or photographs prior to 1928 are known to exist. Earliest photographs appear in the 1928 annual publication of the Historical Society of Southern California in the article “In Pursuit of Vanished Days” by Marion Parks. More comprehensive photographs from 1936 were taken as part of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), and show the Casa de Miguel Blanco, hereafter referred to as the Michael White Adobe or Adobe, with certain alterations (described below).

Knowledge of the Adobe’s original appearance is based on informed contemporary observation. The Adobe is an L-shaped house sided with smooth stucco. A one-story wing is arranged in a north-south orientation (north wing), and a one-and-a-half story wing arranged in an east-west orientation (south wing). Clad in wood clapboard siding, the gable roof has slightly overhanging eaves, which is fairly steep above the south wing and shallower along the north wing. A *corredor* (roof-covered porch) supported by two wood posts is located along the east elevation of the north wing, with an additional porch located along the south elevation of the south wing. Two chimneys were present in 1977.⁷
6. **Alterations and additions:**
Due to the varying wall thickness, height, and ceiling treatment of the north and south wings, it is hypothesized that they were built at different times. The south wing was built first in 1845, with the north wing added some time prior to 1880. The wings share cold-joined walls of adobe brick.

² *An Illustrated Historic of Southern California: Embracing the Counties of San Diego, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Orange, and the Peninsula of Lower California from the Earliest Period of Occupancy to the Present Time* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1890), 766-768.

³ John R. Kielbasa, *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., Inc, 1977), 210.

⁴ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript.

⁵ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript.

⁶ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript.

⁷ Pamela Lee Gray, Department of Parks and Recreation 523 form, “Miguel Blanco Adobe,” prepared July 1977.

1936 HABS photographs and drawings (Figures 1-9) and an early, undated historic photograph (Figure 10) show the Adobe with a wood frame two-story addition, attached via a (now sealed) doorway on the west wall of the south west room. 1936 HABS photographs also show a lean-to of unknown construction date along the north elevation of the south wing accessed from the east by double doors as well as an enclosed porch along the east elevation (used for parking by 1936). It is estimated the wood frame addition was constructed between 1865 and 1880 by Michael White to house his growing family of thirteen children.⁸

The two-story, wood frame addition was removed around 1947 when Tony Garcia, who worked for the San Marino Unified School District's maintenance department and resided at the property from 1942-1947, moved the two-story wood frame addition to 704 El Monte Avenue, where he reconstructed it as a two-story duplex.⁹ Photos from circa 1947 show the Adobe with the wood frame two-story addition removed, while the lean-to is still evident (Figures 11-13).

An aerial photograph from 1949 shows a school complex facing Huntington Drive while the Adobe is evident behind (Figure 14). The Adobe appears to be surrounded by trees and open space in this photo with dense residential development on all sides outside of the school property.

In contrast, photographs from 1952 show large areas of deterioration with significant portions of the roof missing in the south wing (Figures 15-17). It is possible the Adobe suffered damage due to the July 1952 Tehachapi earthquake. The lean-to has been removed in these photographs, as well as the enclosure around the porch along the east elevation. In addition, door leaves and window sash have been removed.

A restoration of the Adobe began in 1952 was completed in 1956.¹⁰ Undated photographs taken after the 1952-1956 restoration show the Adobe with reconstructed porches, south wing brick chimney, new windows and doors including window grates, new roof, new brick paving on the exterior, cement plaster cladding, and plantings along the north wing (Figures 15-18). Interior brick floors replaced plank floors described in 1936 HABS documentation. Although a chimney is evident in the north wing in the 1936 photographs, it is no longer extant. A plaque on a pedestal was added southeast of the adobe in 1956 (Figure 15).

By 1959, the area immediately surrounding the adobe was fenced on the west and south with chain link above retaining walls enclosing the adjacent High School pool (Figures 18-19). At an undetermined date, a fence with steel pickets on the north and east adjacent to walkways leading to athletic fields was added to fully enclose the Adobe (Figures 20-21). There do not appear to have been any alterations since the Adobe was surveyed as appearing eligible

⁸ Henry F. Withey, Historic American Building Survey, "La Casa de Miguel Blanco," March 1, 1937.

⁹ Laura Bee Eckert, "Historic Home Made into Paying Proposition," *Pasadena Star News*, July 16, 1950.

¹⁰ "Adobe will preserve San Marino Memories," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1952, 19.

for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 or since it was designated local historical landmark in 1989.

B. Historical Context:

Michael White (1802–1885)

As a participant and witness to the early history of Los Angeles, the Michael White Adobe continues to appear eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion B for this association. When he was 76, Michael White (also known as Miguel Blanco) gave an oral history to Thomas Savage for the Bancroft Library in 1877. Thomas Savage wrote in his introduction that he found Michael White to be genial and obliging, willing to impart what he knew. “It is evident that he is a man who gave but little of his attention to politics, and would take no part in civil strife...Mr. White is in very feeble health; his hand is extremely shaky, his memory seems to be quite fresh, and I am led to believe... that he is a truthful man, a man who means always to speak the truth.”¹¹

In the oral history, Michael White tells the colorful narrative of his life chronologically. Born in Kent, England in 1801, he was apprenticed to a whaling ship in 1814, arriving in Baja California in 1817. His sailing adventures continued along the Alta and Baja California coast, as well as to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands), interspersed with overseeing construction of boats in Santa Barbara and San Pedro around 1928.¹²

It was likely during construction of the schooner Guadalupe in San Pedro for the Mission San Gabriel in 1830 that he met his wife Maria del Rosario Guillen. They were married in 1831 at Mission San Gabriel and he promptly left for Mazatlan, Mexico. Maria was daughter of the famous centenarian Doña Eulalia Perez de Guillen, who lived until 1878 to be over 100 years old and was known as “Mother Superior” of San Gabriel mission and “keeper of the keys,” and White’s marriage appears quite strategic. By this point, Michael White had become a Mexican citizen, correspondingly changing his name to Miguel Blanco to reflect his new citizenship.¹³ Returning from Mazatlan, White and his family settled at Rancho Los Nietos.¹⁴ His first of thirteen children was born soon thereafter.¹⁵

In 1836, while White was still living at Rancho Los Nietos, Judge Jose Sepulveda tried to convince him to fight in a skirmish in San Diego. Declining, White replied, “Yes, I am a citizen of Mexico, but not a citizen of revolutions.”¹⁶ This attitude against aggression was one he took throughout the turbulent years leading up to the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 and American control of California, although he reluctantly participated in the Battle of Cahuenga in a company led by William Workman in late February 1845 that overthrew Micheltorena as well as the Battle of Chino in a raid led by Benjamin Wilson in September 1846. Loyal to his English ancestors and Mexican citizenship, White felt “that the Americans have treated him badly; he accuses Americans of having swindled him out of lands and robbed him of other property...All this misfortune he lays at the door of Americans, their authorities, and laws.”¹⁷

¹¹ Michael C. White, interviewed in 1877 by Thomas Savage., Published in *California all the Way Back to 1828; Early California Travels Series XXXII*, Bancroft Library, 1877.

¹² White, 15-32.

¹³ Kielbasa, 210.

¹⁴ White, 33.

¹⁵ 1850 United States Census Records, Los Angeles County, sheet 32.

¹⁶ White, 35.

¹⁷ White, 15.

In 1839, White traveled to New Mexico with 50 horses and mules, ending up in Taos where he sold his livestock.¹⁸ Two years later, he returned to California with the renowned Rowland and Workman Party, which also included Benjamin Wilson, who became a close friend and neighbor of White.

While Rowland and Workman were together granted 48,000 acres of Rancho La Puente, in 1843, White had his first foray as a landholder when he was granted Rancho Muscupiabe in the Cajon Pass in San Bernardino by Mexican Governor Micheltorena. At the confluence of several overland routes, White lasted only one year on the land and quickly abandoned it as indefensible.

In 1845, he was granted 500 *varas* (or approximately 75 acres) from the new Mexican Governor Pio Pico and called his ranch San Isidro (or San Ysidro) where he constructed the subject property and later the two-story wood frame addition. It is possible he received his ranch in connection with his service to Mission San Gabriel or for his role in construction of the schooner Guadalupe or, as others suggest, as Doña Eulalia's son-in-law.¹⁹ White planted a vineyard and orchards containing a variety of fruit trees on his ranch and permanently settled down from his adventures. White's rancho was a sliver between the vast ranchos of San Pasqual, which was nearly 14,000 acres, later purchased by Wilson, and the Santa Anita ranch, which was 13,319 acres owned by Hugo Reid, and later made famous as the "Arcadia" of E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin.²⁰

White parceled off portions of his rancho to his children as they had their own families. Notably, one daughter married Francisco Alvarado, brother of Mexican Governor Jose Alvarado while another daughter married Joseph Heslop (Jose Eslope).²¹ In 1878, White lost his ranch to L.H. Titus in a sheriff's sale. To save the ranch, his mother-in-law, Dona Eulalia considered joining the Barnum circus as the oldest woman in the world, but she died the same year.²² He purchased a \$2,000 cottage in Los Angeles which burned down the same year.²³ Until his death in 1885, White lived with his children.

Other Owners of Subject Property

Luther Harvey Titus (1822–1900), who owned adjoining property, came to California in 1869. He grew oranges on his 65 acres, selling his land in 1887 for \$15,000.²⁴ The property was allegedly sold to the San Francisco silver baron James C. Flood (1826–1889),²⁵ and was later owned by Governor Henry Harrison Markham (1840–1923) and Louis Leonard Bradbury (1823–1892) who gained on-going fame through his development of the Bradbury Building in downtown Los Angeles. The property was deeded to Isaac Newton Van Nuys (1836–1912) by 1899.²⁶ Given extensive land holdings of these prominent men and well-known residences, there is no evidence that any of them or their families lived at the property.

¹⁸ White, 43–46; Kielbasa, 210.

¹⁹ Kielbasa, 210.

²⁰ Midge Sherwood, "Michael White: Sailor, Adventurer, Rancher," pamphlet published by the San Marino Historical Society, April 1983.

²¹ Kielbasa, 210.

²² Sherwood, Midge. *Days of Vintage, Years of Vision* (San Marino, CA: 1982).

²³ Sherwood, "Michael White: Sailor, Adventurer, Rancher."

²⁴ *An Illustrated Historic of Southern California*, 766–768.

²⁵ Kielbasa, 210.

²⁶ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript, 7.

San Marino High School

The first school in San Marino opened in 1918 with 58 students at a site on Huntington Drive between Virginia and West drives. School enrollment grew over 600% between 1917 and 1928 causing the school board to purchase a site for another elementary school at the intersection of Huntington Drive and Granada Avenue, as well as a site that would become San Marino High School. In 1928, 18 acres of White's former ranch property was purchased by the San Marino Unified School District, which leased it as a flower and vegetable farm to a Japanese family. When the Japanese family was interred during World War II, the subject property was occupied by Tony Garcia, who worked in the maintenance department of the San Marino Unified School District.²⁷

Although the intention of purchasing the 18 acres was as a future high school, the site was initially used for Carver Elementary School, which was constructed in 1947 with school buildings bordering on Huntington Drive. The school was named after Kauffman L. Carver (1888–1971), who served on the school board for 19 years (with 13 of those as president) and advocated for the Adobe's preservation.

Until 1921, when South Pasadena and San Marino formed a new school district, San Marino students attended high school in adjacent cities. In 1952, after heated debate and a City-wide election, it was decided to separate from South Pasadena and form a separate San Marino High School. Carver Elementary School was converted and expanded to accommodate the high school in 1952, with a new elementary school located on San Gabriel Boulevard.²⁸ San Marino High School appears to have opened at the subject property by 1955 and by 1959, the adobe was surrounded on west and south by the High School swimming pool and on the north and east by athletic fields. The San Marino Unified School District was formed in 1957.²⁹

A longtime San Marino resident, Carver spearheaded preservation of the Adobe. "It was planned at that time, 1952, that the house would become an integral part of the community used partly as an historical site and partly as a meeting place for campus organizations."³⁰ After the 1952-1956 restoration, the Adobe was used briefly as a historical museum exhibiting Indian collections of Aileen White and Laurie Coleman, as well as miscellaneous artifacts donated by Collis H. Holladay.³¹ By 1972, the Adobe was known as the "Pep Adobe" and used by the Pep Squad for storage. The bronze marker was placed by the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West after the restoration.³²

Ranchos in Southern California

The following table identifies the 39 extant adobes in Los Angeles County described in *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County* by John Kielbasa (published in 1997) and an additional four adobes identified from further research.

Five other adobe houses are located in the vicinity of the Michael White Adobe. The San Gabriel Adobes were associated with the San Gabriel Mission, the "social, economic and

²⁷ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript, 7.

²⁸ Midge Sherwood, *San Marino; From Ranch to City* (San Marino: San Marino Historical Society, 1977), 18-

19.

²⁹ *50th Anniversary of San Marino, 1913-1963* (San Marino: Turner & Stevens, 1963), 13.

³⁰ San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript, 7.

³¹ Sherwood, *San Marino; From Ranch to City*, 26.

³² San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript, 7.

religious center of Southern California.”³³ The recently restored Hart Adobe is located in Sierra Madre and was constructed by John Jacob Hart. The substantially altered Hermitage Adobe was constructed for James Craig. The Flores Adobe was so called for General Jose Maria Flores, who led the Mexican Army of California during Mexican War and retreated to this site. The Flores Adobe was constructed by Juan Perez, a cousin of Doña Eulalia, on Rancho San Pasqual, which she is credited for opening to settlement.³⁴ Finally, the Hugo Reid Adobe is located on land that previously belonged to the adjoining Santa Anita rancho.

| | Name | Location | City | Use | Year Built |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Pico Adobe (Ranchito Romulo) | 10940 Sepulveda Boulevard | Mission Hills | Closed, earthquake damage | 1834 |
| 2 | Lopez Adobe | 1100 Pico Street | San Fernando | Museum | 1883 |
| 3 | Rancho Los Encinos (De la Osa Adobe) | 16756 Moorpark Street | Encino | Closed, earthquake damage | 1849 |
| 4 | Miguel Leonis Adobe | 23537 Calabasas Road | Calabasas | Historical Museum | 1846 |
| 5 | Reyes Adobe | Reyes Adobe Road at Rainbow Crest Drive | Agoura Hills | Closed, city plans to restore and turn site into historical museum | 1797-1820 |
| 6 | Sepulveda Adobe | Mulholland Highway at Las Virgenes Canyon Road | Malibu Creek State Park | Abandoned | 1860s |
| 7 | Catalina Verdugo Adobe | 2211 Bonita Avenue | Glendale | Park ranger HQ for Glendale Rec and Parks, plan to turn into museum | 1860-65 |
| 8 | La Casa Adobe de San Rafael | 1330 Dorothy Drive | Glendale | Owned by city, open to public 2 days/week | 1872-75 |
| 9 | Rancho La Liebre Adobe | Tejon Ranch Company, State Route 138 | 10 mi. e. of Gorman | Private land, not open to public | late 1850s |
| 10 | La Casa de Miguel Ortiz | 13980 Elizabeth Lake Road | Elizabeth Lake | Private residence, not open to public | |
| 11 | Avila Adobe | 10 E. Olvera Street | Los Angeles | Available for tours | 1818 |
| 12 | Rancho Los Feliz Adobe | Griffith Park, 4730 Crystal Springs Dr. | Los Angeles | HQ for park rangers, Griffith Park | |

³³ Kielbasa, 214.

³⁴ Sherwood, *Days of Vintage*, 467.

| | Name | Location | City | Use | Year Built |
|----|--|--|------------------|--|-------------------|
| 13 | Rancho La Brea Adobe (Gilmore Adobe) | 6333 W. 3rd Street | Los Angeles | Private office | 1828-1830 |
| 14 | Rocha Adobe | 2400 Shenandoah Street | Los Angeles | Private residence | 1865 |
| 15 | Rancho La Cienega O'Paso de La Tijera | 3725 Don Felipe Drive | Los Angeles | Private offices | late 1770s |
| 16 | Centinela Adobe | 7634 Midfield Avenue | Los Angeles | Houses local artifacts, open to public | 1834 |
| 17 | Rancho San Pedro (Dominguez Ranch Adobe) | 18127 Alameda Street | Compton | Public museum | 1827 |
| 18 | Rancho Los Cerritos Adobe | 4600 Virginia Road | Long Beach | Museum and library, open to public | 1844 |
| 19 | Rancho Los Alamitos Adobe | 6400 Bixby Hill Road | Long Beach | Adobe and gardens open to public as a museum | 1806 |
| 20 | Juan Matias Sanchez Adobe | 946 Adobe Avenue | Montebello | Open to public for guided tours | 1845 |
| 21 | Flores Adobe | 1804 Foothill Street | South Pasadena | Private residence | 1839 |
| 22 | Michael White Adobe | 2701 Huntington Drive | San Marino | Private property, on school site | 1845 |
| 23 | San Gabriel Adobes | 315 Orange Street | San Gabriel | Private residence | early 1770s |
| 24 | Hugo Reid Adobe | Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, 601 Baldwin Avenue | Arcadia | Interior not open but viewable through windows; Part of LA State and County Arboretum in Arcadia | 1839 |
| 25 | Pio Pico Mansion | 6003 Whittier Blvd. | Whittier | Public museum | 1852 |
| 26 | William Workman Adobe | 15415 East Don Julian Road | City of Industry | Major alterations | 1842 |
| 27 | William R. Rowland Ranch House | Lemon Creek Park, 130 Avenida Alipaz | Walnut | Viewable by appointment only | 1850 |
| 28 | La Casa Primera | 1569 N. Park Avenue | Pomona | Public museum | 1837 |

| | Name | Location | City | Use | Year Built |
|----|--|--|---------------|--|------------|
| 29 | La Casa Alvarado | 1459 Old Settlers Lane | Pomona | Private residence | 1840 |
| 30 | Adobe de Palomares (La Casa Madera) | 491 E. Arrow Highway | Pomona | Open to public | 1850-54 |
| 31 | La Casa de Carrion | 919 Puddingstone Drive | La Verne | Private residence | 1864 |
| 32 | Gage Home (Casa de Rancho San Antonio) | 7000 East Gage Avenue | Bell Gardens | Private residence and office | 1840 |
| 33 | Shadow Ranch | 22633 Vanowen Street | Canoga Park | Park community center | 1869-1872 |
| 34 | Hermitage Adobe | 2121 Monte Vista Street | Pasadena | Private residence | 1869 |
| 35 | Hart Abode | Memorial Park, 222 W. Sierra Madre Boulevard | Sierra Madre | Memorial Park, grounds of Sierra Madre City Hall | 1885 |
| 36 | Mitchell Schoolhouse Adobe | 24151 San Fernando Road | Santa Clarita | Museum, City Point of Historical Interest | 1860s |
| 37 | Ortega-Vigare Adobe | 616 S Ramona Street | San Gabriel | Private residence | 1792-1805 |
| 38 | El Molino Viejo | 1120 Old Mill Road | San Marino | Public museum | 1816 |
| 39 | Hawks Adobe | 37 E. Montecito | Sierra Madre | Retail business | 1895 |

Adobe construction

The predominant mode of construction in Los Angeles prior to the population boom of the 1880s was adobe. The benefits of adobe construction include climatic considerations. As a slow conductor of heat, adobe structures maintained a stable interior temperature despite wide climate fluctuations.³⁵ Adobe structures were relatively small and consisted of only a few rooms, usually rectangular in plan, but less commonly L-, U-, or H-shaped. Ideally, adobe structures were constructed on high ground near a fresh water source. Stones cleared from the site were often used in the foundation. Made from readily available materials, adobe bricks were composed from mixture of water, earth, and clay found near the home site combined with straw or horse hair and sand to hold the mixture together. The wet, mud-like substance was then poured into rectangular wood frames, typically 18 x 24", and formed into bricks that were spread out and allowed to partially dry. At that point, the frames were removed, leaving the adobe brick to completely dry in the sun.

³⁵ Eyre, Thomas T. "The Physical Properties of Adobe Used As a Building Material," *The University of New Mexico Bulletin Engineering Series* 1, no. 3 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Bulletin, 1935), 32.

When the bricks were dry they were stacked on the foundation to create thick walls and held together with mud mixed with sand. Traditionally, Southern California adobes were single-story buildings. By the mid-1800s, larger, more elaborate adobes and two-story adobes started to appear. Primitive adobe houses had thatched roofs made from tree-branches or *tules* (swamp rushes) found near rivers or streams. Later roofs were made from wood beams and planks. *Brea* (tar) was used to caulk the space between the planks. Generally roofs were flat. However, in the 1860s, adobes began adopting gabled roofs covered with wood shake.³⁶ Although interior floors were initially packed earth, they were later lined with clay tile. Plaster was applied to walls. While this form of construction is generally quite durable, heavy rains can easily melt the walls without sufficient protection.

³⁶ Kielbasa, viii.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character:** The building displays key features of typical 19th century adobe construction, including traditional materials (adobe brick, wood framing), L-shaped layout, gabled roof, and *corredor*-style porches.
2. **Condition of Fabric:** The overall condition of the building is good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The Adobe is in one and a half stories. The south wing is approximately 18'-0" high at the roof's peak. It consists of two rooms, and occupies an area measuring 31'-9" (E/W) by 20'-0" (N/S). The north wing connects to the south wing via its south west room. The north wing consists of one room measuring 15'-0" height, and 14'-4" (E/W) by 17'-8" (N/S).³⁷
2. **Foundations:** Underlying foundations are not visible. Traditionally, adobe buildings rest on a rubble stone foundation.³⁸ Brick platforms laid under the porches around the Adobe extend six inches above grade and were laid in the 1952-56 restoration. Concrete slab may underlay the brick layer.³⁹
3. **Walls:** The walls are constructed of adobe brick faced with cement plaster cladding. On the east, west, and north elevations, the upper walls (area contained within the gable end) are covered with horizontal 5" wood planks or clapboard. Supporting walls of the south portion of the building are 1'-8" thick, whereas those of the north portion are 13" thick.

Two "windows" have been cut into the exterior concrete plaster cladding to reveal underlying adobe. Located on the east and north elevations of the south wing, the "windows" are framed in wood with metal grate and Plexiglass coverings.

4. **Structural system, framing:** The Adobe's structural system consists of thick adobe walls. Most walls are load bearing, with the exception of stud framed partition walls separating the east and west rooms of the south wing and surrounding the bathroom in the north wing (which date from the 1952-56 restoration). The floor is of red brick construction, possibly laid over a concrete slab on grade dating from the 1952-56 restoration.
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** There are two *corredores* (roof-covered porches) supported by wood posts. *Corredor* roofs are framed by 2" x 4" rafters with solid sheathing, which are supported by 6 x 8" beams. Beams are in turn supported by 6" x 6" posts.

³⁷ Measurements relating to roof and building footprint are taken from Melvyn Green and Associates' "Michael White Adobe in San Marino Conservation Options Report," October 2007. Height is estimated from 1936 HABS drawings.

³⁸ Kielbasa, viii.

³⁹ Melvyn Green and Associates, "Michael White Adobe in San Marino Conservation Options Report," October 2007, 4.

A porch along the south elevation of the south wing measures approximately 31'-9" in length and 6'-4" in depth. It is supported by four decoratively carved posts.

A shorter porch located along the east elevation of the north wing measures 17'-8" in length and 8'-0" depth. It is supported by three square cut posts.

Porch roofs are framed with 2" x 4" rafters spaced 24" apart with solid sheathing. These rafters are supported by 6" x 8" beams, which are in turn supported by porch posts.

6. **Chimney:** There is one rectangular, brick chimney centered in a main room of the south wing which dates at least in part to the 1952-56 restoration. The remnant of a chimney flue is visible along the north wing's east wall.

7. Openings:

- a. **Doorways and doors:** There are six doors on the Adobe's exterior. The historic "main" entrance is located in the center of the south elevation. This door features a recessed panel at the base and four decorative rosettes below a large single glass pane. Above the "main" door is a five-light transom. Also on the south elevation is a multi-light, 12-paned wood door located at the porch's east end.

On the north elevation of the south wing, another multi light, 12 -paned wood door opens off the side of the short porch. In the east elevation of the north wing, a simple carved door with a single, upper glass pane opens onto the center of the short porch. Doors in the north wing facing west and in the south west room facing west are currently sealed.

- b. **Windows:** Fenestration generally consists of 12-paned, six-over-six wood frame and sash double hung windows with metal grates on the exterior. The windows are trimmed with unpainted wood. Exceptions to the 12-light form include a six-paned casement window in the north elevation of the north wing at attic level, and a single paned window in the modern bathroom in the north wing (appears modern).

8. Roof:

- a. **Shape, covering:** The sloped, gabled roof consists of typical rafter and ceiling joist type construction. Visible rafters measure 2 x 4" and are spaced 16" apart. The south wing roof has a 3:12 slope, while the north wing roof has a 6:12 slope. All roof sections are covered with wood shake.
- b. **Cornice, eaves:** The gable roof has slightly overhanging wood rafter eaves, which are sloped fairly steep above the south wing and shallower along the north wing.

C. Description of Interior:

1. **Floor plan:** The interior of the adobe house is separated into three rooms, with one room in the north wing that retains evidence of a chimney along the east wall,

and two rooms in the south wing (see 1936 HABS floor plan and elevations, Figures 5-8).

2. **Stairways:** The Adobe is on one level with no stairways.
3. **Flooring:** The floor is of red brick construction, likely dating from the 1952-56 restoration. Floor level drops by sloping between the north and south wings, dropping 5" from the north wing porch into north wing, and drops an additional 5" from the north wing into the south wing.
4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Much of the Adobe's interior (painted plaster, stud framed partition walls, and wood paneling) likely dates to the 1952-56 restoration. Walls in the south wing on the interior (dividing the two front rooms) are clad with painted wood planking. The building's exterior walls (that define the building's footprint) are covered on the interior in painted plaster. There is significant deterioration due to rising damp in the east wall of the southeast room, where a horizontal line of plaster loss above the baseboard running the length of the wall reveals crumbling adobe below. Crumbling plaster can be found along the lower two feet of the north wing walls.

The south west room is painted rose with white trim. Areas of lost plaster reveal a lower level of cobalt blue painted plaster. The south east room is painted cream, with a warm taupe on window trim and the interior-facing wall. The north room is painted cream, and fallen plaster in this room reveals a light yellow painted layer beneath.

The south wing rooms feature flat, 7 ¼" baseboards and simple curved ceiling molding. Chair rails are present in the south west room.

The ceiling consists of 1 ½" wide wood boards nailed to ceiling joists. Ceiling boards run east to west in the south east room and in the north entry hall, and north to south in the south west room and south entry hall. The ceiling is painted white in the north wing and the south west room of the south wing, and left unpainted in the south wing. In the north wing, the paneled ceiling edges are canted at an angle following the steep slope of the roof, and meet the walls at a lower elevation than in the south wing.

5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** There are six interior doorways and four interior doors. Doorways are generally framed with simply carved wooden beams painted white. Two gently arched doorways separate the two rooms in the south wing, and another arched doorway leads to the entry hall of the south "main" entrance.

Three identical solid wood doors (between the two south wing rooms and on two closets) feature a five paneled neoclassical design. The door between the south west room and the north wing features a sunburst carving on the lower half, and a single panel of glass in the upper.

- b. **Windows:** Windows are trimmed with crown molding in both the north and south wings. Sills are 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " deep, and both sills and jambs angle inwards towards the sash (making a sloped frame around windows).

- 6. **Decorative features and trim:** The fireplace in the west room of the south wing has a carved wood mantel of simplified neoclassical design, with an architrave-like shelf supported by flattened pillar sides. In the south west room, a 3' deep recessed niche with a gently arched opening is located north of the doorway that connects the east and west rooms.

A wood panel was removed from the doorway connection between the north and south wings to reveal underlying adobe construction.

- 7. **Hardware:** Doorknobs on all interior doors are porcelain. Door knob plates on doors between the north and south wings and between the south east and south west rooms feature decorative cast and/or engraved designs (probably not original).

- 8. **Mechanical equipment:**

- a. **Heating and ventilation:** The Adobe was originally heated by wood burning fireplaces and ventilated with fresh air. No systems have been updated.
- b. **Lighting:** No original lighting features remain. A wrought iron chandelier in the south west wing and two hanging lantern-style lights above the south wing entrances appear to be 20th century reproduction pieces.
- c. **Plumbing:** Modern plumbing in the north wing dates to the 1952-56 restoration.

- D. **Site:**

- 1. **Historic landscape design:** The only landscape element that may be original is a cypress tree that shades the north elevation. Surrounding landscape has been occupied by San Marino Unified School District structures.
- 2. **Outbuildings:** None remaining

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

Historic drawings dated March 1, 1936 were executed as part of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) by Henry Withey.

Melvyn Green & Associates, "Michael White Adobe in San Marino Conservation Options Report," October 2007

B. Early Views:

Historic American Building Survey (HABS): Photographer, Henry Withey. Collection located in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.

- April 1936, "View from Southeast"
- April 1936, "South Front Elevation"
- April 1936, "View from Northeast rear"
- April 1936, "View from Northwest rear"

Huntington Library from the collection of Helen S. Giffen:

- No date, east elevation, with two story wood frame addition, view west

Los Angeles Public Library:

- No date, east elevation, view west

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>

San Marino Historical Society:

- No date, south elevation view (pre-restoration)
- 1947, south elevation, view north
- 1947, west and south elevations, view north
- 1947, south elevation, view north
- 1952, north elevation, view south
- 1952, south and east elevations, view north
- 1952, west elevation, view east
- 1952, south and east elevations, view northwest
- 1952, south elevation, view north
- 1952, detail of east elevation (2 views)
- No date, south elevation, note swimming pool, view north
- No date, east elevation corridors, view west
- No date, west and south elevations, view north

United States Department of Agriculture – courtesy of GeoSearch, Inc.

- Aerial photographs from 1928, 1938, and 1949

C. Interviews:

Michael C. White, interviewed in 1877 by Thomas Savage. Published in *California all the Way Back to 1828; Early California Travels Series XXXII*, Bancroft Library, 1877.

D. Bibliography:

Primary and unpublished sources:

California Death Index, <http://vitals.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ca/death/search.cgi>.

San Marino Historical Society, unpublished manuscript.

Withey, Henry. "La Casa de Miguel Blanco," Historic American Building Survey, March 1, 1937.

1850 United States Census Records, Los Angeles County, sheet 32.

Secondary sources:

"Adobe will preserve San Marino Memories," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1952, p. 19.

An Illustrated Historic of Southern California: Embracing the Counties of San Diego, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Orange, and the Peninsula of Lower California from the Earliest Period of Occupancy to the Present Time (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1890).

Eckert, Laura Bee. "Historic Home Made into Paying Proposition," *Pasadena Star News*, July 16, 1950.

Eyre, Thomas T. "The Physical Properties of Adobe Used As a Building Material," *The University of New Mexico Bulletin Engineering Series* 1, no. 3 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Bulletin, 1935).

Gray, Pamela Lee. Department of Parks and Recreation 523 form, "Miguel Blanco Adobe," prepared July 1977.

"In Pursuit of Vanished Days," Marion Parks. Annual publication of the Historical Society of Southern California, 1928.

50th Anniversary of San Marino, 1913-1963 (San Marino : Turner & Stevens, 1963).

Kielbasa, John R., *Historic Adobes of Los Angeles County*, (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., Inc, 1977).

"San Marino Adobe Recalls Lore of Michael White, Soldier of Fortune," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1956, p. F9.

Sherwood, Midge. *Days of Vintage, Years of Vision* (San Marino, CA: 1982).

Sherwood, Midge. "Michael White: Sailor, Adventurer, Rancher," pamphlet published by the San Marino Historical Society, April 1983.

Sherwood, Midge. *San Marino; From Ranch to City* (San Marino: San Marino Historical Society, 1977).

Savage, Thomas. "Michael C. White." *California all the Way Back to 1828*; Early California Travels Series XXXII, Bancroft Library, 1877.

Winkler, Peggy. "A San Marino Overview," *The Grapevine*, published by the San Marino Historical Society, Fall 1996.

E. Supplemental Material

Historic photographs and drawings, including 1936 Historic American Building Survey material by Henry Withey, are included as Figures 1-21 at the end of this report.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Buildings Survey has been prepared as a mitigation measure under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the San Marino High School Michael White Adobe Project. The project description in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) includes “demolition of the Michael White Adobe...The Adobe footprint would be replaced with a concrete-asphalt open area that would be accessible to all school occupants.” Project alternatives considered in the EIR include relocation and stabilization, and disassembly and storage, both of which require HABS level photographic and written documentation.

Parts I through IV were prepared by Sylvia Schweri of Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, using research and information in the Historical Resources Technical Report of the project EIR completed by Jenna Snow of Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, with edits and additions by Robert Chattel, AIA. The Historical Report was prepared in October, 2009.

Black and white photographic documentation from October, 2009 was completed by Tavo Olmos of Positive Image.

E. Supplemental Material

Historic Photographs

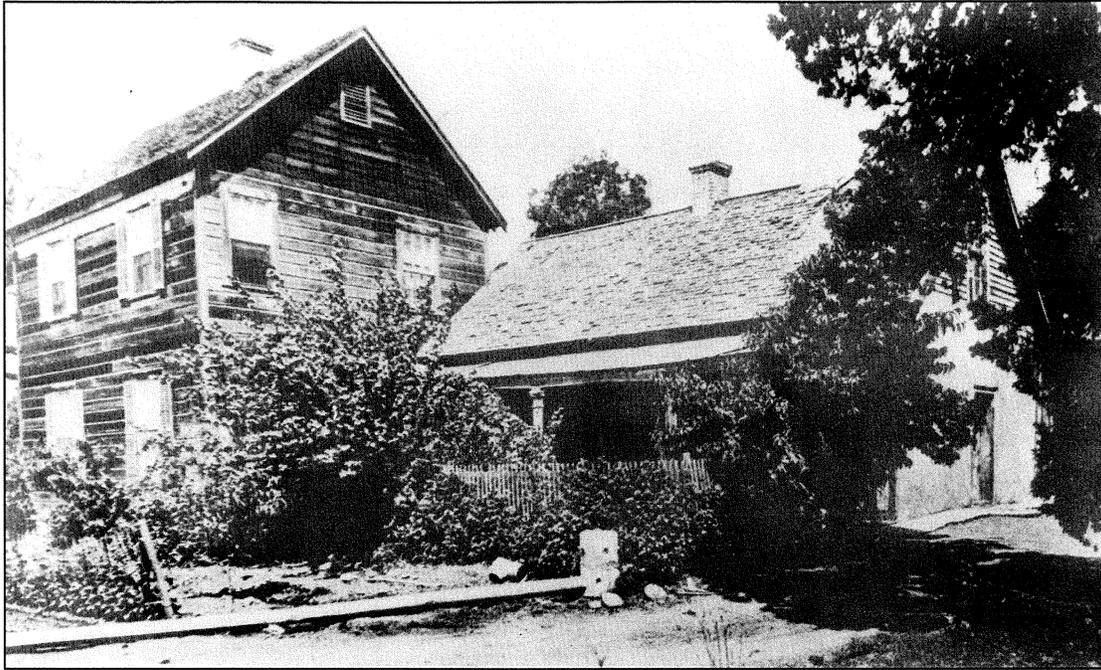


Figure 10: South elevation (left) and east elevation of south wing (right), note two story wood frame addition, view north west (San Marino Historical Society, nd)



Figure 11: South elevation, view north west (San Marino Historical Society, 1947)



Figure 12: West elevation (left) and south elevation (right), view northeast (San Marino Historical Society, 1947)

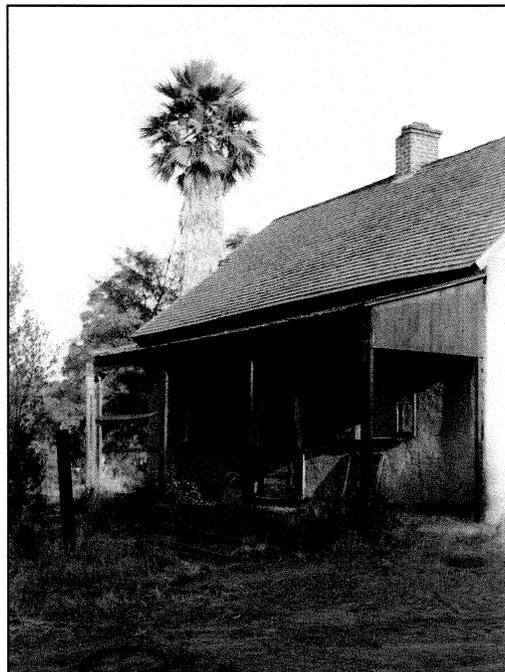


Figure 13: South elevation, view northwest (San Marino Historical Society, 1947)



Figure 15: North elevation, south wing (left) and north wing (right), view south (San Marino Historical Society, 1952)



Figure 16: South and east elevations, view northwest (San Marino Historical Society, 1952)



Figure 17: South and east elevations, view north (San Marino Historical Society, 1952)

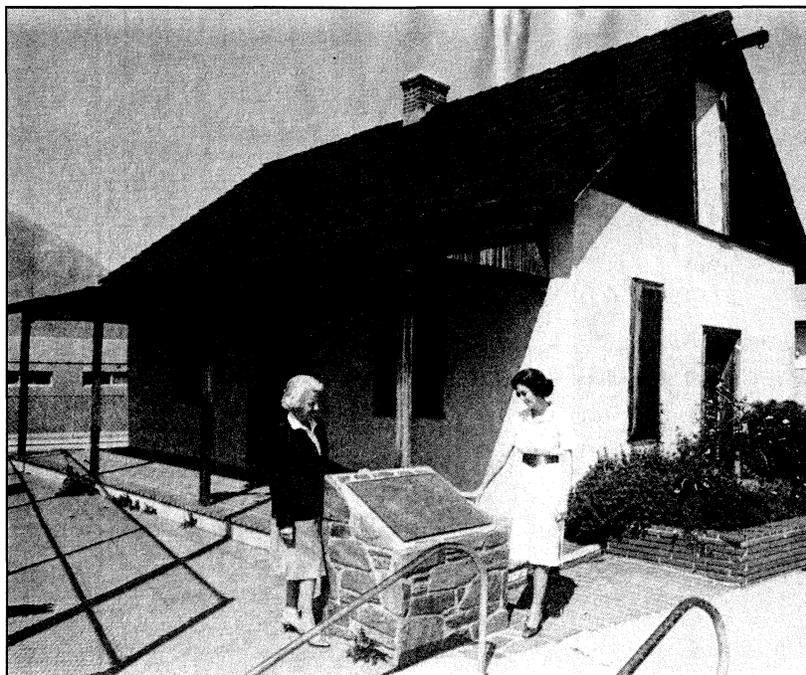


Figure 18: South elevation, view northwest (San Marino Historical Society, c. 1950s)



Figure 19: East elevation *corredores*, view west (San Marino Historical Society, nd)

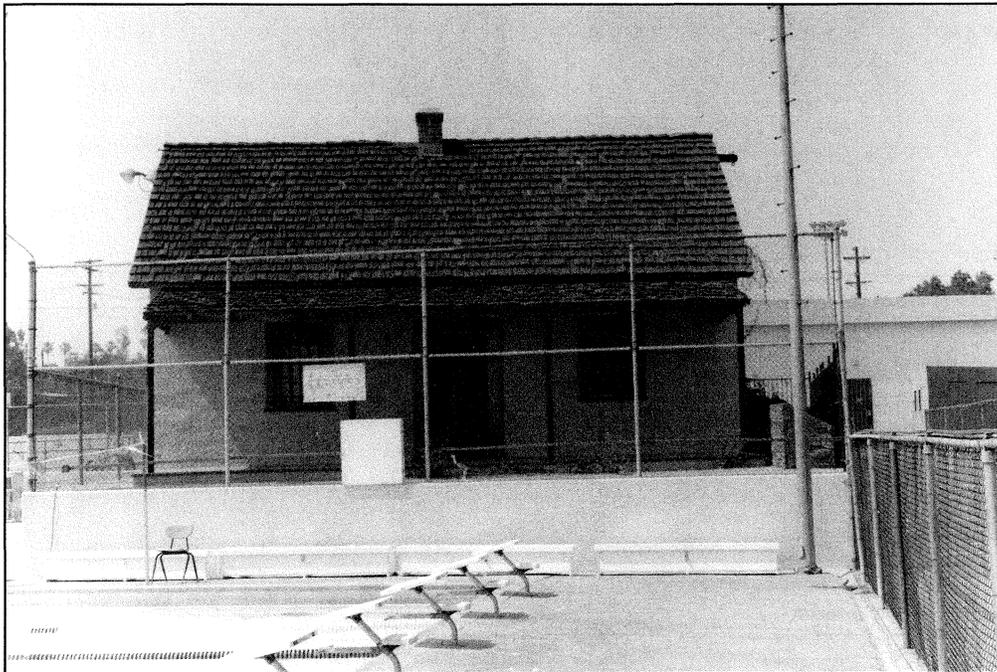


Figure 20: South elevation, note swimming pool, view north (San Marino Historical Society, nd)

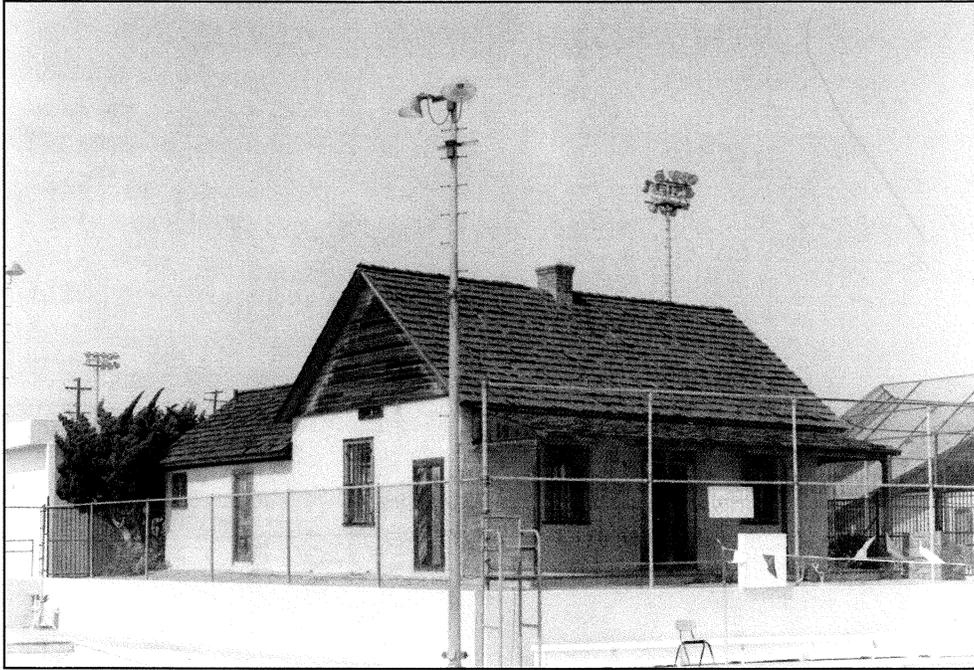


Figure 21: West and south elevations, view northeast (San Marino Historical Society, nd)

The address of the Casa de Miguel Blanco was originally recorded by HABS in 1936 as 2625 Huntington Drive. It has been changed to 2701 Huntington Drive.