

VILLAGE OF CHIMAYO
State Highway 76
Chimayo
Rio Arriba County
New Mexico

HALS NM-7
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

VILLAGE OF CHIMAYO

HALS NO. NM-7

Location: State Highway 76, Chimayo, Santa Fe County and Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. About 24 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
Lat: 36.000922 Long: -105.931594 (Center of Plaza del Cerro, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: Chimayo is the common name of a rural ensemble founded in the late 18th and the early 19th century in the Spanish-colonial heartland of North America. This vernacular settlement was an outpost on the northern edge of the Spanish empire, deep in the southern Rocky Mountains, along the Rio Santa Cruz, a narrow tributary valley of the Rio Grande. The cultural landscape of Chimayo still bears witness to the extension of the Spanish colonial empire into North America.

The well-known Plaza del Cerro in Chimayo was a fortified urban ensemble comprised of many connected residences around a hollow rectangle. It is an outstanding example of the Spanish-colonial Laws of the Indies architectural planning of human settlement in a desert oasis, the use of adobe construction in a major complex, well adapted to its environment, along with a remarkable geometrical form.

Chimayo was and continues to be a historic center of wool weavers, chili farmers, and a place of religious pilgrimage. Its influence as a center of traditional arts strengthened in the 19th century.

The cultural landscape of Chimayo comprises a comprehensive ensemble of structures, places and spaces, with the vast majority of components still in place, well preserved, and clearly observable.

Chimayo has been subject to modern development. The integrity of the cultural landscape is fragile. Change threatens attributes of the authenticity of the associations of buildings and open spaces and the spatial patterns of settlement and land-use, and the character and feeling of the past embodied in a way of life bound to agriculture and artifice¹ that contributed to Chimayo's distinctive and persistent folk landscape.²

Description: Chimayo is an unincorporated census-designated place in New Mexico overlapping the boundary of Rio Arriba and Santa Fe counties. Chimayo

¹ John R Stilgoe. *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845*. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT, 1982.

² Alvar W Carlson. "Rural Settlement Patterns in the San Luis Valley: A Comparative Study," Colorado Magazine. *State Historical and Natural History Society*. Denver, CO, (Spring), 1967.

includes many neighborhoods, each distinguishable with its own name, originating in the period of Spanish-colonial settlement.

Geographic Setting:

New Mexico is a desert state in the southwestern United States. An enchanting landscape contrasts parched desert, table land incised by deep valleys, and soaring forested mountains in two separate ranges -- the San Juan on the west and the Sangre de Cristo on the east, with the Rio Grande between in the form of an elongated horseshoe-shaped basin opening to the south.

The Rio Grande and its tributaries drain an enormous region of soaring alpine mountains, rugged mesas, and high valleys, but the valleys comprise only one percent of the total land area of the entire province.³ These valleys are the life-blood of the region. They were the cradle of New Mexican civilization and instrumental to Spain's successful colonization.⁴

Elevations in Rio Arriba range from 5,000 feet above sea level in the lowest valleys, to above 13,000 feet on the highest peaks. The alluvial valleys that range in elevation between 5000 and 6500 are frost-free from 160 to 170 days. The growing season is suitable for agriculture. The short warm season in the mountains are not suitable for agriculture but provide excellent summer grazing. The mesas are too dry for farming but provide limited winter grazing.

The mean annual precipitation in the lower valleys is ten to fourteen inches, with cycles of wet years alternating with dry years.⁵ The mountains accumulate forty inches of water from deep winter snowpack and summer thundershowers. The low precipitation in the valleys is insufficient for most crops, but diverting water from the mountains through systems of ditches to the fields enables a viable and intensive irrigated cultivated agriculture.⁶ Water was drawn from the mountains in this manner for centuries to irrigate the lower valleys and the compact clusters of farmstead settlements strung along the narrow irrigated valleys of Rio Arriba evolved as urban microcosms.⁷

The fertile Valle de la Rio Santa Cruz is a microbasin incised in the colorful gulches and crenellated ridges of the heavy weathered Mesa De La Ceja, the so-called "badlands" of the Espanola Valley.⁸ Rio Santa Cruz and Rio Quemado

³ Marc Simmons. "New Mexico's Colonial Agriculture," *El Palacio* (vol. 89, no 1), 1983.

⁴ Alvar W Carlson. *The Spanish-American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba*. John Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, MD, 1990.

⁵ The United States Department of Agriculture. *Soil Survey of Santa Fe Area, New Mexico* (Santa Fe County and Part of Rio Arriba County). Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, In cooperation with New Mexico Agriculture Experiment Station. Albuquerque, NM, 1971.

⁶ Peter Van Dresser. "The Bio-Economic Community: Reflections on a Development Philosophy for a Semiarid Environment," in Knowlton, Clark S. (ed.) *Indian and Spanish American Adjustments to Arid and Semiarid Environments*. Texas Technical College. Lubbock, TX, 1964.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Elizabeth Kay. *Chimayo Valley Traditions*. Ancient City Press. Santa Fe, NM, 1987.

originate in the rugged western foothills of the majestic Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) mountains. They converge at the head of the Chimayo valley and flow as a perennial stream fifteen miles west to Espanola to the Rio Grande.

Chimayo valley is a two-mile wide and seven-mile long crescent-shaped basin in the upper Santa Cruz Valley.⁹ An extension of the valley continues northeast as Arroyo De La Canada Ancha, and another southeast into up the canyon of El Potrero. Together they encircle the prominent cone-shaped Tsi Mayo, the sacred hill of the ancient Tewa Indians that marks the eastern end of the valley.¹⁰ At the western end of the valley the Rio Santa Cruz exits a narrow canyon through Mesa de la Ceja.

History: Rio Arriba may be one of the oldest cultural landscapes in the United States.¹¹ Tewa Indian place names of sites in and around the Chimayo valley is confirmation of the significance of the valley in ancient American culture.¹²

From the center of the pueblo plaza, beginning at the kiva, the Tewa cultural landscape and traditional worldview expands outward along the cardinal directions to shrines at springs, in caves, and on nearby hills and distant mountain peaks.¹³ At the eastern end of the Chimayo valley the large conical flat-topped hill, Tsi Mayo in Tewa lexicon, is the sacred abode of ancestral spirits who guard the Pueblo world.

At the base of Tsi Mayo lies Tsimajopokwi, the ancient Pueblo shrine, located where the present-day plaza el Potrero contains the famed Christian shrine, el Santuario de Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas, or simply Santuario de Chimayo.¹⁴ The Indian name can be interpreted to mean "the town at the pool with healing properties"¹⁵ Built in 1816, today Santuario de Chimayo, with its healing earth, is known internationally as the Lourdes of the Southwest.¹⁶

Rio Arriba was the Spanish colonial province upriver from Santa Fe. It is the symbolic heart of the Spanish-American homeland.¹⁷ The spatial pattern of

⁹ The United States Office of Indian Affairs, Indian Land Research Unit. Tewa Basin Study, Vol. II, Spanish-American Villages. Office of Indian Affairs, Indian Land Research Unit. Released by Soil Conservation Service, Region 8, Division of Economic Survey. Albuquerque, NM, 1935.

¹⁰ John P Harrington. The Ethnography of the Tewa Indians. Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report No. 29. Washington, DC, 1916.

¹¹ Stephan F de Borhegyi. "The Evolution of a Landscape," *Landscape* (vol. 4, no. 1), 1954.

¹² Harrington, *ibid*.

¹³ Alfonso Ortiz. The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society. University of Chicago Press. Chicago, IL, 1969.

¹⁴ Stephen F deBorhegyi. "The Miraculous Shrines of Our Lord of Esquipulas in Guatemala and Chimayo, New Mexico," in El Santuario de Chimayo. Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Inc. Santa Fe, NM, 1956.

¹⁵ Ortiz, *ibid*.

¹⁶ Kay, *ibid*.

¹⁷ Donald W Meinig. Southwest. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1971.

settlement in its delicate fusing of human artifice with the natural environment¹⁸ contributed to the development of a distinctive and persistent folk culture.¹⁹

On the surface, upon first impression, it appears that Chimayo has changed only little from the Spanish-colonial plantation it once was.²⁰ The centuries of internal and external forces working upon the cultural and social contexts of land use²¹ are indicated in the manner in which people have used, perceived, and shaped the landscape,²² as well as preserved the heritage places. That web of interrelationships between culture, society, nature, history, and economics continue²³ and promises more change.

Generations made and successive generations have continued to remake the cultural landscape of Chimayo^{24 25} by "making do" with materials at hand.²⁶ Chimayo has evolved in succession with each generation from prehistoric times to the present, accumulating layers of human artifact upon the land as in a palimpsest, with layer laid upon layer, in succession over time. This ongoing process does not wholly erase the former. The new adapts to the former as long as it is useful.²⁷ Chimayo has evolved through this process of episodic change, with no great plateaus of change, in an evolving process of adaptation of land to new uses by successive generations.²⁸ The original sense of place remains within this palimpsest of landscape change as new overlays preserve a remnant of the former.

The community of Chimayo is a "collection of dwellings" spread out across the valley and foothills in clusters of family neighborhoods or plazas. Each is an "intimate relation of fields and clustered structures."²⁹ Chimayo lacks what Saarinen³⁰ and Norberg-Schulz³¹ characterize as townscape, referring to the intimate scale and arrangements of public places and buildings. In other words, Chimayo is a vernacular settlement. The community evolved incrementally

¹⁸ Nazari, Sharon (ed). *The 1989/1990 ASLA Members Handbook*. The American Society of Landscape Architects. Washington, DC, 1989.

¹⁹ Carlson, *ibid.*

²⁰ Stilgoe, *ibid.*

²¹ Ervin H Zube and Margaret J Zube. *Changing Rural Landscapes*. Univ. of Massachusetts Press. Amherst, MA, 1977.

²² Jonathan Berger. "Guidelines for Landscape Synthesis: Some Directions Old and New," *Landscape and Urban Planning*, (vol. 14), 1987 pp. 295-311.

²³ Gary T Moore, Gary T. "Environment and Behavior Research in North America: History, Developments, and Unresolved Issues," In Daniel Stokels and Irwin Altman (eds.) *Handbook of Environmental Psychology*. John Wiley and Sons. New York, NY. (vol. 2), 1987.

²⁴ John B Jackson. *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J. B. Jackson*, edited by Ervin H. Zube, U. Press, 1970.

²⁵ Stilgoe, *ibid.*

²⁶ Robert Z Melnick, Daniel Spoon, and Emma J Saxe. *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, DC, 1984.

²⁷ deBorhegyi, 1954, *ibid.*

²⁸ Kevin Lynch. *What Time Is This Place?* MIT Press. Cambridge, MA, 1972.

²⁹ Stilgoe, *ibid.*

³⁰ Thomas F Saarinen. *Environmental Planning: Perception and Behavior*. Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, IL, 1984.

³¹ Christian Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. New York, NY, 1979.

rather than growing systematically according to a preconceived plan.

At the mid-twentieth century, forces of physical change were so evident that cultural anthropologist deBorhegyi speculated where the current course of change would lead the community in preserving its heritage:

*What the future will bring [to Chimayo] is hard to predict....a new settlement pattern will soon evolve....it can be expected that the little villages with their old plazas will probably remain for a while as tourist attractions, even though they have already lost their original function.*³²

Chimayo embodies the history of Spain, Mexico, and The United States of America. Each nation in turn has marked the landscape with the imprint of social, technological, and economic innovation³³ in recognizable patterns of spaces, districts, nodes, landmarks, paths, and edges.³⁴ These are culturally meaningful, persistent, encoded^{35 36} and meaningful orienting features to the community, and not just relicts of the past preserved for tourism.

These place-images of Chimayo as a rustic Spanish farming village persists both internally within the community and externally through traditions, literature, painting, photography, historical journals, advertisements and other private and public documents.³⁷ In places of habitual exposure, each person possesses a personal image of place.³⁸ In groups of people, such as in communities, public images are shared, rooted in cultural meaning systems, and integrated into the larger cultural patterns.³⁹

Chimayo's folk landscape has been described in many ways. Regional novelists Horgan,⁴⁰ Cather,⁴¹ and Waters⁴² have portrayed the natural materials of the architecture and landscape in terms of colors and textures of nature. Jackson⁴³ described the setting as "authentic -- not self-conscious." It lacks evidence of the political organization of time and space.⁴⁴

Vernacular landscapes generally exhibit human adaptation to site and climate in

³² deBorhegyi, 1954, *ibid.*

³³ Melnick et al, *ibid.*

³⁴ Lynch, 1973, *ibid.*

³⁵ James Spradley. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Holt, Rinehart and Winsten. New York, NY, 1979.

³⁶ Bert E Swanson and Richard A Cohen. *The Small Town In America: A Guide for Study and Community Development*. Institute on Man and Science. Rensselaerville, NY, 1976.

³⁷ Ervin H. Zube and Christina Kennedy. "Changing Images of the Arizona Territory," in Leo Zonn, (ed.). *Place Images in the Media*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1988.

³⁸ Jon Lang. *Creating Architectural Theory: The Role of the Behavior Sciences in Environmental Design*. Van Nostrand, Reinhold. New York, NY, 1987.

³⁹ Spradley, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Paul Horgan. *The Centuries of Santa Fe*. E.P.Dutton & Company, Inc. New York, NY, 1956.

⁴¹ Willa Cather. *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Knopf. New York, NY, 1967.

⁴² Frank Waters. *People of the Valley*. Swallow Press, Athens, OH, 1969.

⁴³ John B Jackson. 1984. *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. Yale University Press. New Haven, CT, 1984.

⁴⁴ Lynch, 1972, *ibid.*

terms of well-proven forms that admit limited variations more than theoretical or aesthetic pretensions. The total involvement of place-makers with the particular setting results in a distinct identity.⁴⁵

The Entrada:

When Governor Don Juan de Onate arrived in the province of Rio Arriba, in 1598, to establish an administrative headquarters of his colonial kingdom he located it within an Indian village near the confluence of Rio Chama and Rio Grande. Tewa Indians of San Juan Pueblo helped this band of colonists survive their first winter.⁴⁶ Onate moved his headquarters the following year across the Rio Grande to a new municipal settlement called San Gabriel. There it remained until 1610 when Don Pedro Peralta, third governor of New Mexico, relocated the colonial administrative headquarters to the newly established La Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Assisi, or Santa Fe.⁴⁷

Eighty-two years passed between the entry of Spain into Rio Arriba in 1598 and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 that forced the colony out. During those initial years approximately three thousand European expatriates developed a settlement on the Rio Grande watershed that stretched from Socorro in the south to Taos in the north.⁴⁸

The hacienda of high-ranking Spanish colonial officer Captain Antonia Moraga and the estancias of Captains Luis Martin and Juan Ruis were established in the Chimayo area in this early period.⁴⁹

The hacienda was destined to not become a principal landscape feature in Rio Arriba as it was in Mexico. This form of a powerful landed estate "with widely scattered large properties supported by labor of dependent Indians," was rare in Rio Arriba, and existed possibly in name only, interchangeable with estancia. Isolation and limited tribute from Indians hindered the establishment of this form of feudal empire.⁵⁰

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 that forced the colony out of Rio Arriba prevented the hacienda from becoming firmly established there.⁵¹ Tensions flared between the colonists and Indians and exploded into a war that forced the Spanish out of the province for twelve years, until 1692 when Don Diego De Vargas reclaimed

⁴⁵ E Relph. *Place and Placelessness*. Pion Limited. London, 1976.

⁴⁶ Herbert H Bancroft. *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. Vol. 17. History of Arizona and New Mexico*. The History Co. San Francisco, CA, 1889.

⁴⁷ Myra E Jenkins. "Spanish Land Grants in the Tewa Area," *New Mexico Historical Review*, (April, vol. 47, no. 2), 1972.

⁴⁸ Gibson, Charles (ed.). *The Spanish Tradition in America*. Harper & Row Publishers. New York, NY, 1968.

⁴⁹ Myra E Jenkins and John O Baxter (eds.). *Settlement and Irrigation in the Santa Cruz - Quemado Watershed*. State of New Mexico Engineer's Office. Santa Fe, NM, 1986.

⁵⁰ Boyd C Pratt and David H Snow. *The North Central Regional Overview: Strategies for the Comprehensive Survey of the Architectural and Historic Archaeological Resources of North Central New Mexico*. 2 Vols. Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division. Santa Fe, NM, 1988.

⁵¹ Bancroft, *ibid*.

Rio Arriba for Spain. A change in colonial government land use policies after this re-conquest banned the system of *encomienda*, impeding the incipient military aristocracy and its exploitative institution of tribute from regaining its grip in Rio Arriba.⁵²

After the Re-conquest:

The re-conquest of Rio Arriba brought the return of colonists to reclaim the land for Spain. Some of those that had occupied land in the Chimayo area before the Pueblo Revolt returned without appropriate official sanction shared their valley with Indian refugees of the Pueblo Revolt,⁵³ much to the anguish of colonial officials who requested that the villa be compactly populated.⁵⁴ The settlers of La Canada, as this community was known, returned to ranches along the Rio Santa Cruz from the foothills above Chimayo to the Rio Grande and spread out across the valley floor in a pattern of clustered family compounds, building their homes on the many dry hills, preserving the valley floor for irrigated agriculture. They patterned the valley with ditches called *acequias* that conveyed water from the mountain to irrigate their fields and livestock pastures.

The colonial villages were self-sufficient communal farming settlements and government administrative land grant institutions with judicial powers that controlled the common resources and provided for land resource allocation for the good of its members.⁵⁵ On March 18, 1695, Governor De Vargas authorized a new *estancia* in the Santa Cruz Valley west of Chimayo for seventy families from Mexico, officially called La Villa Nueva of de Santa Cruz de Espanoles Mexicanos del Rey Nuestro Senor Carlos Segundo. Santa Cruz became one of the principal settlements in colonial New Mexico, next in importance only to Santa Fe and Albuquerque.⁵⁶ De Vargas removed the Indians from Santa Cruz and permitted them to take land in the Chimayo area not already claimed by the Spanish.

Hydraulic Culture:

The two oldest hydraulic societies in the United States existed side-by-side in the upper Rio Grande valley during the colonial era. Both the native Pueblo Indians and the Spanish colonists had cultural traditions of irrigated agriculture. The irrigation technologies of the two cultures fused in Rio Arriba.

When the Spanish colonists came onto the scene in Rio Arriba the eastern Pueblo Indians of the upper Rio Grande watershed had already developed into an early stage of hydraulic society.⁵⁷ They practiced an agriculture that utilized the

⁵² Gibson, *ibid.*

⁵³ Jenkins and Baxter, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Marc Simmons. "Settlement Patterns and Village Plans In Colonial New Mexico," *Journal of the West*, (vol. 8, no. 1) (January), 1969, pp. 7-21.

⁵⁵ Stilgoe, 1982, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Myra E Jenkins. 1972, *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Elsie C Parsons. "The Social Organization of the Tewa of New Mexico," *American Anthropological Association* (vol. 1, no.

best arable soils of the river floodplains, constructed terraced fields to catch rain runoff, fabricated check dams to divert water from streams and arroyos, and farmed where seepage from springs provided moisture for plants to grow.⁵⁸ Their social organization had not developed far enough to govern cooperative labor to develop extensive community-wide irrigation projects.⁵⁹

The Spanish colonists adopted the subsistence agriculture technology of the pueblos, and they learned from the Indians where, when, how, and what to plant. They also brought to America from the Moors of Spain a social organization to govern cooperative labor to develop extensive community-wide irrigation projects. They constructed systems of efficient distribution and instituted a civil administration over the allocation of water. The colonial folk-engineered, gravity-fed, ditch irrigation systems of Rio Arriba still exist and remain in use. They represent the union of old world and new world hydraulic traditions.⁶⁰

Folk Landscape:

The colonists' adaptation to physical geography was a major determinant in shaping the cultural landscape that evolved in the high valleys of the Rio Grande basin. Hand dug ditches that originated at mountain freshets snaked along the contours of hills, often for miles, conveying water to irrigate garden plots in the valley. Garden plots by necessity and for convenience lay below the irrigation ditches. Water was conveyed by gravity. The character of the landscape below the ditches was an immense unfenced garden. The semi-arid land above was without supplemental water and gardens did not grow there.

The colonists built their homes on dry hills above the irrigation ditches. In this way they preserved land on the lower slopes and valley floor for gravity-fed irrigation. Corporate adaptation to the unique conditions of land, climate, opportunity, and economy created this iconic landscape.

Urban planning in Europe had a broad theoretical and experimental basis on which the first colonial towns were established in New Mexico.⁶¹ A century of experience in colonial town planning was codified and published in 1681 as part of the broader Recopilacion de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias (the Laws of the Indies). The town planning sections of these laws date from 1573.

The Laws of the Indies were specific to the form which Spanish towns in the New World should take. High Renaissance concepts of clarity, regularity, order, and harmony were emphasized as cultural symbols that would minister

36), 1929, pp. 3-309.

⁵⁸ Simmons, 1969, *ibid*.

⁵⁹ R Gwinn Vivian. "Conservation and Diversion: Water-Control Systems in the Anasazi Southwest," in Theodore E Downing and Gibson McGuire, *Irrigation's Impact On Society*. University of Arizona Press. Tucson, AZ, 1974.

⁶⁰ Lee F Brown and Helen M Ingram. *Water and Poverty in the Southwest*. U. of Arizona Press. Tucson, AZ, 1987.

⁶¹ John W Reys. *Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, N.J, 1979.

"civilization and Christian order" to the "most primitive outposts."⁶²

The model colonial town was organized around a central public plaza (plaza mayor) with subordinate plazas (plazas minor) providing for the sites of churches and semi-private residential uses.⁶³ Article 129 of the Laws created a distinct urban/rural settlement pattern that designated the allocation of public open space within a settlement for the purposes of community recreation and pasturage of livestock:

*Within a town ... a plan is to be made ... dividing it into squares, streets, and building lots ... beginning with the main square from which streets are to run to the gates and principal roads and leaving sufficient open space so ... there will always be ... space where the people may go for recreation and take their cattle to pasture without them doing any damage.*⁶⁴

Plaza del Cerro in Chimayo is a surviving remnant of Spanish town planning. It retains historic form and character. The layout was based on Spanish ordinances derived from the theories of Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti. Beyond the walls of this architectural gem, Chimayo evolved as a vernacular settlement.

Scholars are uncertain when Plaza del Cerro was constructed.⁶⁵ It is possible that it dates from the eighteenth century sometime after 1776 when Teodoro de Croix became the first commandant general of the Provincias Internas de Mexico. It was built to "regularize" Rio Arriba to a higher standard for administrative purposes for efficiently increasing the population.

An Administrative Council held in Chihuahua on July 4, 1778, recommended measures for the unification of Rio Arriba by moving its scattered rural populations to walled plazas.⁶⁶ Many fortified walled towns on the frontier had their beginnings during this time.⁶⁷

The need for a fort existed prior to 1786 to protect the settlement against warring Indians.⁶⁸ Chimayo protected the eastern edge of the Spanish colony from 1598 to 1695.⁶⁹ A defensive tower is built into the walls of Plaza del Cerro, possibly constructed around 1730, as a fort for protection against Indian hostilities and

⁶² Dora P Crouch, Daniel J Carr and Alex I. Mundigo. Spanish City Planning in North America. MIT Press. Cambridge, MA, 1982.

⁶³ Reys, 1976, *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Axel I Mundigo and Anna M Mundigo, Anna M. "Ordinances for the Discovery, New Settlement and Pacification of the Indies," In Daniel J. Carr (ed.) Hispanic urban planning in North America. Garland Publishing, Inc. New York, NY. 1991, pp. 3-31.

⁶⁵ Nelson Arroyo-Ortiz. Plaza del Cerro: Written Historical and Descriptive Data. Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Washington, DC, 1975.

⁶⁶ Allen Johnson and Dumes Malone. Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. II. Scribner and Sons. New York, 1958.

⁶⁷ Simmons, 1969, *ibid*.

⁶⁸ Arroyo-Ortiz, *ibid*.

⁶⁹ Alice Bullock. Mountain Villages. Sunstone Press. Santa Fe, NM, 1973.

raids.⁷⁰ The first settlers, the Martinez, Jaramillo, Ortega and Mascarenas families, moved into the "Canada del Tzimayo" and built their homes around a rectangular plaza now known as the plaza del Cerro.⁷¹ The plaza "probably assumed its present form sometime prior to 1750"⁷² and already existed when Governor Juan Bautista de Anza was ordered to gather the scattered population of la Canada into a regular plaza between 1777 and 1788.

Governor de Anza, in 1786, initiated a thirty year period of peace with the nomadic Comanches, who afterwards helped defend the colony against other intruders. Indian hostilities resumed again in the 1820s when New Mexico became a colony of Mexico and the Spanish militia departed Rio Arriba. After many years of peace the 1830s saw continuous warfare with the Navajo.⁷³

The Laws of the Indies had little influence on the development of Chimayo beyond the walls of Plaza del Cerro. Chimayo evolved over centuries. Its beginning was primitive and lacked the expediciencies of civilization. Survival on the frontier offered the colonial farmer little opportunity to concern himself with the "gentle art" of town planning.

Literate professionals and urban theorists in distant Spain effected little innovation in urban planning in Chimayo.⁷⁴ Chimayo expresses its medieval tradition more than the formal geometry inspired by the Laws of the Indies.⁷⁵

Community planning in Rio Arriba was mostly adaptation to the environment⁷⁶ The colonists utilized the limited natural resources, their ingenuity derived from Spanish tradition, and adaptation of Pueblo traditions in building a subsistence society. Chimayo was a rustic settlement identified more with the natural environment than with European civilization.

Chimayo is distinctive more for a beauty than prominence, exemplified in its natural landscape⁷⁷ that profits Chimayo with an appropriateness of scale and a powerful spirit of place gained from a topological organization of space.

The three basic forms of colonial rural settlements in Rio Arriba were plaza,

⁷⁰ Marc Simmons, 1969, *ibid.*

⁷¹ Stephan F de Borhegyi, 1954, *ibid.*

⁷² Reys, 1979, *ibid.*

⁷³ Janet Lecompte. Rebellion in Rio Arriba 1837. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1985.

⁷⁴ Simmons, 1983, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Dan Stanislawski. "Early Spanish Town Planning In The New World," *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (January) 1947, pp. 94-105.

⁷⁶ Alan G Harper, Andrew R Cordova, and Kalervo Oberg. Man and Resources in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, 1943; Alvar W Carlson. "Rural Settlement Patterns in the San Luis Valley: A Comparative Study," *Colorado Magazine*. State Historical and Natural History Society. Denver, CO. (Spring) 1967, pp. 111-128; Paul Kutsche and John R Van Ness. Canones: Values, Crisis, and Survival in a Northern New Mexico Village. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1981; Cris Wilson and David Kammer. Community and Continuity: The History, Architecture and Cultural Landscape of la Tierra Amarilla. New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. Santa Fe, NM, 1989.

⁷⁷ Norberg-Schulz, *ibid.*

rancho, and lugar.⁷⁸ The plaza and its diminutive the placita was created for the defense of a small population. Plaza del Cerro is an example of plaza. A rancho, or poblacione, was a rural settlement of loosely-grouped farmsteads and ranches. The rancho was a residential enclave of several households (sitios), their adjacent garden plots (suertes) and surrounding communal lands (ejido) for grazing, gathering, and recreation.⁷⁹ The lugar was merely a small place for farming and often lacked grazing land. A land grant was a corporation of plaza, ranchos, and lugares. Chimayo consisted of a plaza, multi-nucleated placitas, poblaciones, lugares, and the associated communal lands.

Extensive acculturation penetrated the most isolated villages of Rio Arriba in the twentieth century, yet rural traditions, religion and historic folkways continue. The persistence of artifacts, spaces, and places of the Spanish-colonial landscape has been equally enduring.

Landscape change in Chimayo came gradually and almost imperceptibly during the Spanish-colonial period when the settlement was first laid over the natural landscape. The Mexican Revolution brought economic development and landscape change came more rapidly after 1821 when manufactured goods and commerce entered New Mexico over the Santa Fe Trail.⁸⁰ Prior to then, when barter was common, the majority of the population had never used money. When New Mexico was organized as a United States Territory in 1846, subsistence farmers and stockmen sought desperately to retain their ancestral lands and traditions.⁸¹ Mercantilism initiated a "rapid economic revolution" when the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad was extended into Rio Arriba in 1881.⁸² For the first time, mass produced goods and new technologies introduced with the railroad replaced centuries-old labor-intensive folk traditions.⁸³

The written material and social comment that appeared in the first decade of the twentieth century exposed Chimayo to the travel industry as a romantic place. This interest resulted from the national debates that raged over New Mexico's petition for statehood. Chimayo was the largest traditional village in New Mexico and well-known for its cottage weaving industry. The majority of its inhabitants spoke Spanish and little or no English.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Simmons, 1969, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ H.I. Priestly, et al (trans.) "Viceroy Marques de Falces: Land Ordinances [1567]," in Charles Gibson (ed.). The Spanish Tradition in America. Harper & Row Publishers. New York, NY. 1968, pp. 128-136.

⁸⁰ Janet Lecompte, *ibid.*

⁸¹ Suzanne Forrest. The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1989.

⁸² John R Van Ness. "Hispanic Village Organization in Northern New Mexico: Corporate Community Structure in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in Paul Kutsche (ed.) The Survival of Spanish American Villages. Colorado College. Colorado Springs, Co, 1980.

⁸³ Jerome Iowa. Ageless Adobe: History and Preservation in Southwest Architecture. Sunstone Press. Santa Fe, NM, 1985.

⁸⁴ Meinig, 1971, *ibid.*

Most Americans in 1912 would have found Chimayo “unfamiliar and exotic.”⁸⁵ Travelling there from Santa Fe was a difficult two and a half hour horse drawn buggy ride along the rough creek bed of the Rio Santa Cruz. The destination was to the ten or eleven little settlements known singularly as Chimayo that stretched for miles in the upper canyon “(...) snugly nestled along the foothills ... a straggling place, with streets ... in their irresponsible and altogether unsuspected twinings and twistings.”⁸⁶

Chimayo was a prosperous village. Its inhabitants were thrifty and the land was “trim and neat.”⁸⁷ The village was an industrious work-place. Ristras (strings) of red chili pods curing in the bright dry autumn sun hung from the vigas (rafters) of almost every house. Smoke curled up from hornos (outdoor beehive ovens) at the farmhouses, and lines of jacals (vertical timber fences and open sided sheds) kept livestock from spoiling the gardens. Miscellaneous farm implements animated the landscape with rural industry. There were eleven stores in Chimayo in 1935. Six were blanket dealers, four were general merchandisers, and two were grocers.⁸⁸

Plaza del Cerro was characterized as a large “Mexican” plaza, divided into fragrant flower gardens, surrounded by well-built and attractive, whitewashed single story, flat roof adobe houses. The plaza was a stop on the important Chimayo-Truchas-Penasco trading route between Santa Fe and Taos.⁸⁹ There was a post office and a dry goods store on the plaza, but the “modern” stores in Espanola were already supplying at that time most of the mercantile products used in the valley.⁹⁰

Dwellings and accessory structures were crowded together on the small hills (lomitas) and ridges above the valley floor, surrounded by unfenced gardens, fruit orchards, pastures, and floodplain meadows in a labyrinth of irrigation ditches. The smallness of scale was accentuated by the surrounding Mesa De La Ceja.

The Santa Cruz valley was a garden. A broad continuity of open space spread out across the valley. There was little forest canopy, except for the thin line along the river and the bosques (floodplain forest) spread out over the ciengas (swamps), and the trees that flourished in wet areas bordering the acequias, marking their courses across the valley.

⁸⁵ George W James. Indian Blankets and Their Makers. A.C. McClurg & Co. Chicago, IL, 1934.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Eugene A Barlett, Least Known America. Fleming H. Revell Co. New York, NY, 1925.

⁸⁸ United States. Tewa Basin Study, 1935. Vol. II, Spanish-American Villages. Office of Indian Affairs, Indian Land Research Unit. released by Soil Conservation Service, Region 8, Division of Economic Survey. Albuquerque, NM, 1939.

⁸⁹ Arroyo-Ortiz, 1975, *ibid*.

⁹⁰ Donald Usner. *The Plaza Del Cerro in Chimayo: Settlement and Function*. (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Department of Geography). University of New Mexico. Albuquerque, NM, 1991.

The narrow cart paths of natural earth that crisscrossed the village were crowded with herds of sheep and goats. Automobiles were a spectacle and shared the rough roads with the older forms of transportation -- people traveling on foot, on horseback and burros, and in primitive carts.⁹¹

The first automobile in New Mexico was purchased by Territorial Governor Miguel Otero in 1904. New Mexico state route 76 was constructed in the 1920s between Espanola and Chimayo over stretches of burro trails, moving the main road from the bed of the Rio Santa Cruz to accommodate automobile traffic.⁹² The construction of state roads in New Mexico would have a significant influence on shaping the new cultural landscape, particularly in the form it gave to villages.⁹³

Chimayo was one of the most conservative villages in New Mexico.⁹⁴ Custom and tradition persisted, including the use of burros for transporting produce long after the automobile came into use. The continued use of primitive agricultural practices and farm implements required little or no capital investment and were well adapted to the subsistence economy and small garden plots.⁹⁵ Custom and tradition persisted in Rio Arriba long enough to merge with the popular 1920s revival of Spanish colonial arts and crafts in Rio Arriba, and many archaic traditions were renewed before being completely lost. This renewal was encouraged by the developing tourist industry.⁹⁶

The Society for the Preservation and Restoration of New Mexico Mission Churches, with interest in preserving New Mexico's Spanish and Mexican heritage,⁹⁷ purchased el Santuario de Chimayo in 1929 and deeded it to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Archdiocese, setting the stage for a burgeoning tourist industry.

In 1935 the population of Chimayo was 1,188 persons, compared to a population of 3,177 today (2010 census). The best agricultural land was in use. Good farming practices over centuries rested the land from production on a rotating basis to retain the vitality of the soil.⁹⁸ That changed in the 1930s, when the shortage of jobs outside the village brought families "home" to sit out the Great Depression. New ideas brought back to the village set the stage for landscape

⁹¹ Forest, *ibid.*

Peter Brown. "State Highway 76: Road of fear to Chimayo," *The New Mexican* (March 28) 1976, pp. 10-11; see also James, 1939, p. 168, for an amusing description of travel along the Rio Santa Cruz.

⁹³ Boyd C Pratt and David H Snow. The North Central Regional Overview: Strategies for the Comprehensive Survey of the Architectural and Historic Archaeological Resources of North Central New Mexico. 2 Vols. Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division. Santa Fe, NM, 1988.

⁹⁴ Bradford L Prince. *Spanish Mission Churches of New Mexico*. The Torch Press. Iowa, 1915.

⁹⁵ Harper et al, 1943, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Bainbridge Bunting. Early Architecture in New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1976; Forest, 1989, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Betrice Chauvenet. John Gaw Meem: Pioneer in Historic Preservation. Museum New Mexico. Santa Fe, NM, 1985.

⁹⁸ Forrest, 1989, *ibid.*

change. The main crop was chili and fully one-third of the land under cultivation was given over to its production. Wheat was next in importance, but not enough was grown to satisfy local demand⁹⁹ The spurt of population growth and reach for a capital-based economy pushed agriculture into marginally productive land. The economic depression combined with the severe drought that lasted from 1931 to 1934 devastated local agriculture and impoverished the community.¹⁰⁰

The sixteen arroyos that entered Chimayo from Mesa De La Ceja varied from twenty-five to two hundred yards wide (United States, 1939). Heavy rains accumulated on the mesa and poured through these typically dry arroyos. For this reason no structures were built in the arroyos except for the few precarious acequias that bridged over them. Garden plots were located beyond danger of flooding.

Rio Santa Cruz, unlike the arroyos, meandered through a wide floodplain of bosques (forests), cienegas (swamps), and hoyas (marshes – wet grassy meadows). The river cut precipitous cliffs on the southern edge of the valley at the base of Mesa De La Ceja.

A dam was built in 1926 across the Rio Santa Cruz above El Potrero. Construction costs exceeded projections and the project became a financial failure in furnishing water for irrigation purposes.¹⁰¹ The reservoir eased annual flooding in the valley and facilitated expansion of agricultural into the floodplain below the dam.

In 1930, 84,000 automobiles were registered in the whole state of New Mexico.¹⁰² By 1935, thirty-nine cars and three gasoline pumps were in Chimayo.¹⁰³ State route 76 between Chimayo and Espanola was a narrow winding dirt road. The dry arroyos doubled as primitive roads to scattered placitas, except when heavy rainfall rendered them impassible.

Chimayo continued to grow as a tourist destination in the 1930s. The travel literature projected a romanticized image. For example, Casey¹⁰⁴ stated that Chimayo was hardly what he considered an American village. Others captured the historic setting:

small neat small fields and casual orchards ... a few scattered adobe homes, a small store ... the irregular hillside plaza, many winding narrow streets ... unexpected narrow lanes lead to groups of houses atop the hills ... huddling cozy houses, with their well-swept yards ... hugging the steep,

⁹⁹ United States. 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Peter Brown, 1976, *ibid.*

¹⁰³ United States, 1939, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Pearle R Casey. "Chimayo, the Ageless Village," *Southwest Lore*, Vol. 1, No 4, (March) 1936, pp. 12-13.

*rocky streets, ranged haphazard about the old plaza[s].*¹⁰⁵

In 1943, the Manhattan Engineering District of United States Army Corps of Engineers began constructing the secret Federal city of Los Alamos in the visible distance on the remote Pajarito Plateau in a race to develop "Project Y" to create the atomic bomb that would end World War II.¹⁰⁶ Los Alamos is a technological and economic oasis in the midst of tradition.¹⁰⁷ Men from Chimayo found employment in Los Alamos and commuted the twenty-five miles over crude roads to work in various labor and technical capacities. These jobs provided an alternative to farming, paid well, and ultimately had a large role in changing the landscape of Chimayo.

Chimayo became a bedroom community for its residents employed at Los Alamos and their jobs created a demand for nonfarm rural housing. Civilian employment offered an alternative to farming that enticed many rural families to leave the mountain villages. For many, part time farming became an evening, weekend, or retirement activity.¹⁰⁸

The Spanish-Americans of Rio Arriba experienced a practical adjustment to the changes of the 1950s, but all did not necessarily accept those changes. For the Spanish-American, the present is always momentous. The past is not easily discarded because it serves to sustain culture by confirming the present and slowing the pace of cultural change.¹⁰⁹

The villages of Rio Arriba in the 1950s presented no outward display to attract the chance stranger -- signs and billboards were absent -- the isolated villages belonged entirely to the people who lived, worked, and died in them. The natural colors, materials, and random forms of old New Mexican villages blended with the surrounding natural environment that provided many of the materials with which they were made.¹¹⁰

The folk landscape of Chimayo was not able to serve the needs of the modern society evolving there in the 1950s. Families moved away from the traditional placitas to their new homes that were being constructed in the continuous line of residential development emerging along State Highway 76 between Chimayo and Santa Cruz. Some older people still lived in homes on the plazas, but the mobile generation who worked in Los Alamos was moving to homes along the modern highway. It was difficult for the casual visitor traveling along this

¹⁰⁵ Patricia Ross. "Village of Many Blessings: A Fragment of Colonial Spain in New Mexico," *Travel*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (February) 1935, pp. 35-37, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Pratt and Snow, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Kathleen Parker. "Lab workers who live off-site sought for oral history project," *New Mexican* February 17, 1993.

¹⁰⁸ Lynell Rubright. *A sequent occupation of the Espanola Valley, New Mexico.* (unpublished master thesis in geography) University of Colorado. Boulder, CO, 1967.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Mead. *Cultural Patterns and Cultural Change.* New American Library. New York, NY, 1955.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

highway to distinguish one community from the other, as there were no visible public centers of activity.¹¹¹ The economic forces affecting the region created individual autonomy and liberated people from the communal style of living on the old plazas.¹¹²

The character of the rural landscape in Chimayo began to change rapidly in the 1960s without the benefits of guiding land use controls. A new landscape was evolving and the form that it would take was then uncertain. Change was coming in a few concentrations of residential subdivisions and mobile home parks. An indiscriminate mixture of private and public land uses were preempting the small farms and threatened to pave over the traditional irrigated agricultural lands of the entire valley.¹¹³

The Spanish-American population residing in nonfarm housing in the 1960s accounted for the predominant land use in Chimayo.¹¹⁴ It was predicted that the historic cultural landscape would disappear beneath a growing concentration of nonfarm residences, which would become the dominate feature of the future landscape.¹¹⁵

Those forces of change in Rio Arriba during the 1960s were not so much from physical occupation by Anglo-Americans as from the infrastructure and institutions established there by them. These included improved transportation and creating new urban business centers.¹¹⁶

For example, real estate development in nearby Espanola was symbolic of the new landscape emerging in Rio Arriba. Drive-in theaters, gas stations, and shopping centers sprawled along the roadways. This sub-urbanism was predicted to spread from Espanola to the surrounding traditional villages.¹¹⁷ It was recommended that the small Spanish villages should exploit the uniqueness of their cultural landscape to stimulate tourist industries, such as in Chimayo where the "old world" atmosphere is preserved.

Social relief programs were steered to Chimayo in the 1960s. Advocated by the Federal Government, community action programs provided incentives and financial resources to install electricity, and to repair and upgrade irrigation systems, improve land and livestock, and revitalize village life. Improved roads, quite literally, paved the way to link the village socially and economically to the regional urban centers.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ deBorhegyi, 1954, *ibid.*

¹¹² Usner, *ibid.*

¹¹³ Larsen, *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Carson, 1990, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Rubright, *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Suzanne Forrest. [The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico's Hispanics and the New Deal](#). University of New Mexico

Commercial fruit orchards became a prominent landscape feature beginning in the 1960s when federal relief money built an apple processing plant serving 500 growers with cold storage capacity for 100,000 bushels in anticipation of bountiful harvests. In 1964 a pilot project of the Research, Conservation and Development Council in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture initiated the apple industry in Chimayo. Growers were taught how to improve quality and yield by proper fertilizing, pruning and spraying of fruit trees.¹¹⁹

Fanciful stories written in the 1960s characterized Chimayo as purely a Spanish town as any in the United States. Visitors walking from Plaza del Cerro along the old dirt roads winding through the village to el Potrero daydreamed of the archaic village and the life that it once embodied. Collectors from across America and the world came to visit the traditional weavers, but the village lacked restaurants and lodging to accommodate tourists.¹²⁰

The stretch of State Highway 76 between Espanola and Chimayo was paved with asphalt for the first time in the 1960s. While there were no roaring cars, one observer commented that the village “bears a confusing wound -- perhaps one that in time will seem to close over”¹²¹

In the 1970s State Highway 76 between Espanola and Chimayo was labeled the “road of fear.” It is the main street through Chimayo “and it is a monster that screams all night with the sound of skidding cars.”¹²² The highway was scenic but deceptive and a treacherous route. The right-of-way was only forty feet at the widest points. It was hemmed in between hills, houses and steep gorges. Summer rainstorms carried mud and boulders from flooding arroyos across the highway. Blind curves and steep hills made traffic so dangerous that home owners along the road constructed barricades of concrete and boulders to protect their properties from being destroyed.

All the while, Chimayo retained a rural beauty and image of an “old world” village. Fruit orchards planted in the 1960s were killed in the 1970s by a severe freeze. The apple processing plant was closed and what remained of Chimayo's orchards was being converted into nonfarm residential sites. “The economy of the fruit growing industry ... is not one of bright prospect, but the old fruit trees surrounding new homes provide a colorful and attractive background.”¹²³

The comprehensive plan that was prepared for Espanola and surrounding rural

Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1989.

¹¹⁹ Kenneth W. Larsen, Kenneth. *Comprehensive Plan--Espanola Planning Area Including Portions of Rio Arriba and Santa Fe Counties*. Espanola Area Planning Commission. Espanola, NM, 1971.

¹²⁰ Winfield T Scott. "The Still Young Sunlight, Chimayo, New Mexico," In Wheeler, 1964.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Brown, 1976, *ibid*.

¹²³ Larsen, 1971, *ibid*.

communities in the 1970s provided a historical portrait of Chimayo:

*Random homes, mostly adobe, are dispersed through fruit orchards with an occasional but not concentrated commercial establishment such as a neighborhood grocery store, service station, bar, beauty parlor, artisan shop (weaving or woodcarving) The landscape is natural; most of all streets are native soil and dust*¹²⁴

Travel writers bolstered the “old world” image well into the 1980s and they continued to describe Chimayo as an old sleepy Mexican village frozen in time.¹²⁵ The piercing caw of Magpies that broke the quietness impressed them.¹²⁶

Scholars, too, recognized the persistence of the archaic landscape through the centuries of change. The land use patterns that had emerged generations ago, despite a century of outside intrusions, still shaped the landscape.”¹²⁷ Chimayo was no mere holdover from the past. The village is continually restructured in accordance with changing economies and demographics as the local population adapt to present conditions in specific and meaningful ways.¹²⁸

The 1990 US Census reported a population of 2,772 persons in Chimayo. 2,585 or 93 percent of the population have Hispanic surnames. From a labor force of 1,192 people, 97 percent commuted to jobs outside the village. 56 percent of commuters drove alone. They traveled an average 35.2 miles to work.

The census classified 100 percent of the population as urban dwellers. This suggests that Chimayo was completely transformed from an agricultural village in 1935 to a bed-room community in 1990 with no viable commercial agricultural interests. The fruit stands along the public roadways tell a different story.

Ditch associations have maintained the annual flow of water for hundreds of years.¹²⁹ The old acequias continue to carry water to fields of alfalfa, kitchen gardens, lawns and ornamental gardens in the contemporary landscape. These irrigation ditches are a heritage resource. Their continued use is an integral part of the evolving cultural landscape of Chimayo.

Plaza del Cerro has persisted into the present age. Some of the old houses surrounding it are in ruins. Others are preserved, restored and given new a life.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ See: Henry A Murry. Thematic Apperception Test: Pictures and Manual. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. 1943.

¹²⁶ Cheryl Wittnenauer. "Chimayosos fighting mad about crime," The New Mexican, February 15, 1987.

¹²⁷ Chris Wilson and David Krammer. Community and Continuity: The History, Architecture and Cultural Landscape of la Tierra Amarilla. New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. Santa Fe, NM, 1989.

¹²⁸ Paul Kutsche and John R Van Ness. Canones: Values, Crisis, and Survival in a Northern New Mexico Village. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1981.

¹²⁹ Stanley Crawford. Mayordomo: A Chronicle of an Acequia in Northern New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM, 1988.

The Ortega chapel and the cultural museum are open to public visitation. Entry to the cultural museum is from a narrow dirt path. A wooden footbridge along the path crosses the original Acequia de los Ortega and passes through a picket gate entering into a space bounded on two sides by a native plum (*Prunus* spp) thicket, bushes of the yellow rose of Castile (*Rosa* spp), and giant cottonwood trees (*Populus fremontii* var. *wislizenii*) that are said to be the largest specimens remaining in the valley. Thick adobe walls of the old house frame two sides of this outdoor room, and the floor of this tiny rectangle is a carefully maintained turf bordered by wildflowers that display the adeptness of a skilled gardener. From this outdoor room, one crosses a portal (porch) and enters a doorway through thick adobe walls into the present and the past. The adobe floors of the museum are soaked in cow blood in the old tradition for durability and have the sheen of worked leather. It yields comfortably beneath each step. Carved timbers support a heavy planked ceiling carrying the weight of a dirt roof above. The insulation quality of adobe is fabulous. While it is a hot day outside, the inside is cool and comfortable. There is a kiva fireplace in a corner of each room. Tall, narrow, and shuttered windows open onto views of ageless spring wild flowers that grow luxuriantly in the rich soil of the old plaza.

The modern kitchen, bathroom, and electronic security system of this museum is a contrasting image of time and place. It expanded my perception of the resourcefulness of the people who have used this house over the centuries.¹³⁰ This house is symbolic of Chimayo, where the past is integrated into the present through cultural evolution and continual adaptation to the changing times. It is said that the built environment at every scale is a cultural cipher ... reflect[ing] the social organizations that created it and to which it caters. As perceptions of how society functions and should function change, so do the forms of the built world.¹³¹

An elderly informant who built his home in Plaza Abajo along State Highway 76 before it was paved and heavily traveled, said that he used to enjoy watching the herds of sheep that passed by his house as they were moved from mountain ranches to the market in Espanola. It was interesting to live beside the road on feast days, when mountain people traveled through Chimayo to the Indian Pueblos. An activity he particularly enjoyed was watching the Penitente Brotherhood file down the road between their moradas through the darkness of Lenten night. He expressed a deep loss and sorrow that his home is near the road now. He detests the roar of automobile traffic.

Except for the state highways and the short section of road to the elementary school, the local roads in Chimayo were unpaved in the 1990s. The arroyos still doubled as roads when dry, but when flooded they are still impassible. There is an explicit attachment, in Chimayo, to dirt roads, as one informant who had

¹³⁰ See: Lynch, 1972.

¹³¹ Lang, 1972, *ibid.*

traveled the world told me that she always longed for the dirt roads of home. The popular low-slung, customized automobiles (low riders) that crawl over the wash-boarded dirt roads are viewed with outside curiosity and local admiration.

Chimayo is a refuge to many, a place familiar and secure, a good place, and to some, even sacred. Family chapels, churches, the Santuario, and monuments infuse the cultural landscape with religious significance. For example, an image of the Virgin Mary carved on a rock in the foothills near a Penitente chapel cannot be seen from the road and is hard to find, but it is widely known within the community. Memorials left on the landscape by family and friends are placed in remembrance of departed loved ones or as promises for special blessings received. Descansos are a type of memorial to the deceased and mark the roadways. Crucifixes crown prominent hills marking the way of Good Friday pilgrimages to the Santuario, serving as reminders of the way of Calvary.

Each of the three contemporary precincts of Chimayo is marked by a church. The three principal churches are el Santuario de Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas (Santuario de Chimayo), Nuestra Senora del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel), and Nuestra Senora del Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows). Construction of the Holy Family Catholic church in 1966 united the Catholic community under one roof at the geographic center of Chimayo. The precinct is referred to as middle Chimayo. It lies on a natural terrace above the flood plain of the Rio Santa Cruz and includes the historic chapel Nuestra Senora del Dolores, the Chimayo elementary school, and the United States Post Office. In some descriptions Middle Chimayo and Lower Chimayo are synonymous.

Lower Chimayo is to the west, in the flood plain of the Rio Santa Cruz where a narrow canyon cuts through Mesa De La Ceja. The private chapel of the Martinez family, Capilla de Santa Rita, overlooks Lower Chimayo from a prominent hill.

Upper Chimayo is the precinct around Plaza del Cerro (plaza on the hill). The private chapel of the Ortega family, Oratorio de San Buenaventura, is located there. This well-known area is frequently cited in literature as Chimayo.¹³²

A second geographic reference system classifies Chimayo into Upper, Middle, and Lower Chimayo. Upper Chimayo extends from Mesa De La Ceja south to the base of el Llano (the plains). Lower Chimayo is the floodplain of Rio Santa Cruz. Middle Chimayo lies between them, roughly paralleling State Highway 76 bisecting Chimayo lengthwise. In this geographical reference system the Holy Family Catholic Church is again located in Middle Chimayo.

A third reference system identifying the historic precincts of Chimayo is no

¹³² Stilgoe, 1982, *ibid.*

longer commonly in use. Mostly an older population knows it. The younger generations seem little aware of its relevance. This reference system identifies locations of the historic barrios (neighborhoods).

The landscape of el Llano (the plains) is a desert environment. It lies above the acequias and is not irrigated. During the colonial era this was an ejido (common grazing land).

El Llano is located on the high alluvial floodplains below and south of Mesa de la Ceja, bounded by the eroded foothills of the mesa to the north, east and west, and on the south by the floodplain of the Rio Santa Cruz. The land is deeply dissected by arroyos and free standing rock formations from the mesa punctuate the skyline.

Los Ojuelos (the springs) and Las Abuelos (the grandparents) originated as ranchos with the associated sitios (enclave of several households) on dry hilltops overlooking irrigated suertes (adjacent garden plots). El Cerro de los Duranes is a Penitente morada (chapel) and landmark in this historic agricultural precinct.

El Llano de los Trujillos, named for the Trujillo family of ranchers, lies eastward on the plains. This placita (small plaza) is not a formal rectangle. It fits snugly to the natural hill. The sitios and jacals (traditional stacked-log corrals) survive as a picturesque ensemble on dry slopes above the acequia and ejido (surrounding communal lands).

Los Pachecos, named for the Pachecos family of ranchers, lies in the foothills east of the plains. This placita is not a formal rectangle. It fits snugly to the natural hill. The sitio forms a well-defined central sub-urban space. Traditional adobe barns are preserved on the dry slopes above the acequia. A tiny private family chapel (capilla) is a Los Pachecos landmark.

La Cuchilla (the edge of a knife) is a historic placita with a panoramic outlook over the Chimayo valley. This sitio is a linear cluster of houses and associated structures along a narrow ridge that extends into the valley from Mesa de la Ceja. The suertes associated with this historic placita lie at the base of the ridge below the acequia. Similar settlements built on narrow ridges are found in the mountain foothills east of Chimayo. This architectural form provided a defensible fortress in the wilderness. The historic capilla, Nuestra Senora del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) is a La Cuchilla landmark.

El Rincon de los Trujillos (inner corner of the Trujillos) is a historic placita with a panoramic outlook over the Chimayo valley. This sitio is a linear cluster of houses and associated structures strung along the steep slopes of a large hill marking the northeast corner of Chimayo. Giant cottonwood trees (*Populus* spp) line the acequia and are el Rincon landmarks.

La Centinela (the sentinel) is a historic placita located in the Arroyo de la Canada Ancha (large canyon) in the northeast extension of the Chimayo valley that leads up into the foothills of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains. This colonial sitio was established as a first line of defense to protect the eastern edge of the village against attack.¹³³ Extensive apple and cherry orchards remain as la Centinela landmarks.

Rio Chiquito (little river) lies to the east of La Centinela at the head of the Rio Quemado Canyon. This historic sitio consists of a linear cluster of houses and associated structures strung along the edge of the canyon overlooking the lush, green suertes in the valleyfloor below. Rio Chiquito is an isolated settlement in the rugged eastern foothills.

Plaza Del Cerro is the plaza major of the Chimayo valley. The plaza is a hollow rectangle formed by the ring of surrounding houses. The plaza is surrounded by suertes of many acres of good farm land. Acequia de los Ortegas passes through the plaza. The favorable location on a low hill provides an example of excellent site planning above the river flood plain, with ample water for irrigation from the acequia which originates in the foothills above Rio Chiquito, and located at a favorable elevation for garden crops.

El Ranchita and Rancho de los Jaramillo are historic placitas. These sitios are located east of Plaza Del Cerro on a shelf of land on the western slope of Tsi Mayo.

El Potrero (the pasture) is not a rectangular plaza, but it consists of a clearly defined central public space surrounded by a loose assembly of houses. Small galleries, curio shops and a restaurant cater to tourists visiting this historic sitio . The famous chapel and Christian shrine, el Santuario de Nuestro Senor de Esquipulas is located here. Thousands of people crowd el Potrero on Good Friday each Lenten season in pilgrimage to the shrine and to the adjacent chapel, Santuario de Santo Nino de Atocha, a small private chapel on a prominent hill overlooking el Potrero. The historic landscape commons of Chimayo lay to the north of el Potrero are preserved through an open space conservation easement.

Los Ranchos (the ranches) is historic placita to the west of el Potrero surrounded by the marshes of the Rio Santa Cruz floodplain. Santuario Jesus Nazareno De Esquipulas, a Penitente morada, is a los Ranchos landmark in this precinct.

Los Vigil is a poblacione (loosely-grouped farmsteads) located in a narrow canyon of the mesa above and south of the Rio Santa Cruz. The green landscape of los Vigil stands out in sharp contrast to the surrounding red crenellated cliffs

¹³³ Bunting, 1976.

of the mesa that tower above and punctuate the skyline.

Plaza Abajo (lower plaza) is a poblacione surrounded by extensive suertes in the lower valley. Much of the farmland surrounding the plaza was pre-empted in the twentieth century by nonfarm housing. State Highway 76 passes through the plaza. The historic settlement is obscured along the highway behind a linear facade of houses. The historic capilla Nuestra Senora del Dolores is a Plaza Abajo landmark.

Los Martinez is a poblacione at the western end of the Chimayo valley. It has no central plaza. This precinct was a historic farming district, with extensive suertes, but the land is now largely converted into nonfarm houses. The historic capilla de Santa Rita crowns a large hill. It is a Los Martinez landmark at the entry to Chimayo.

High above the valley, from a hilltop above el Llano, on one early still morning a new day was signaled by house lights, illuminating one by one across the valley floor. In the silence the sound of the Rio Cruz River gurgled in the distance. One automobile headlight, then another, and then many more entered State Highway 76 until they transformed into a glowing stream of red taillights exiting the valley to the west. Their growing roar drowned out the river song. The brilliant sun rose slowly above the Sangre de Cristo Mountains illuminating a silhouette of crosses on other small conical hills awakening the green valley of Chimayo to the new day.

Conclusion:

Traditions of land use in northern New Mexico reflect popular American cultural values and beliefs. The Spanish-Americans are being integrated into the broad patterns of our national culture that will hurry the continuing evolution of Chimayo.

The subsistence economy and agrarian landscape of Rio Arriba began the slow conversion to an American landscape when New Mexico became a territory of the United States. When New Mexico became a state, in 1912, commercial agriculture was already reshaping the cultural landscape of Chimayo. Hardships of the Great Depression during the 1930s were relieved in the 1940s by jobs created in the development of the modern city of Los Alamos. This created a demand for nonfarm housing. The paving of State Highway 76 in the 1960s linked Chimayo to the surrounding urban areas and economic development. The tourist industry flowed over that highway in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s tourism had become an important economy in Chimayo, creating jobs, opportunity, and possibly for the first time, reversed the flow of talent from Chimayo to urban areas. Tourism is stimulated by Chimayo's history, culture and heritage, and will likely continue to shape the cultural landscape.

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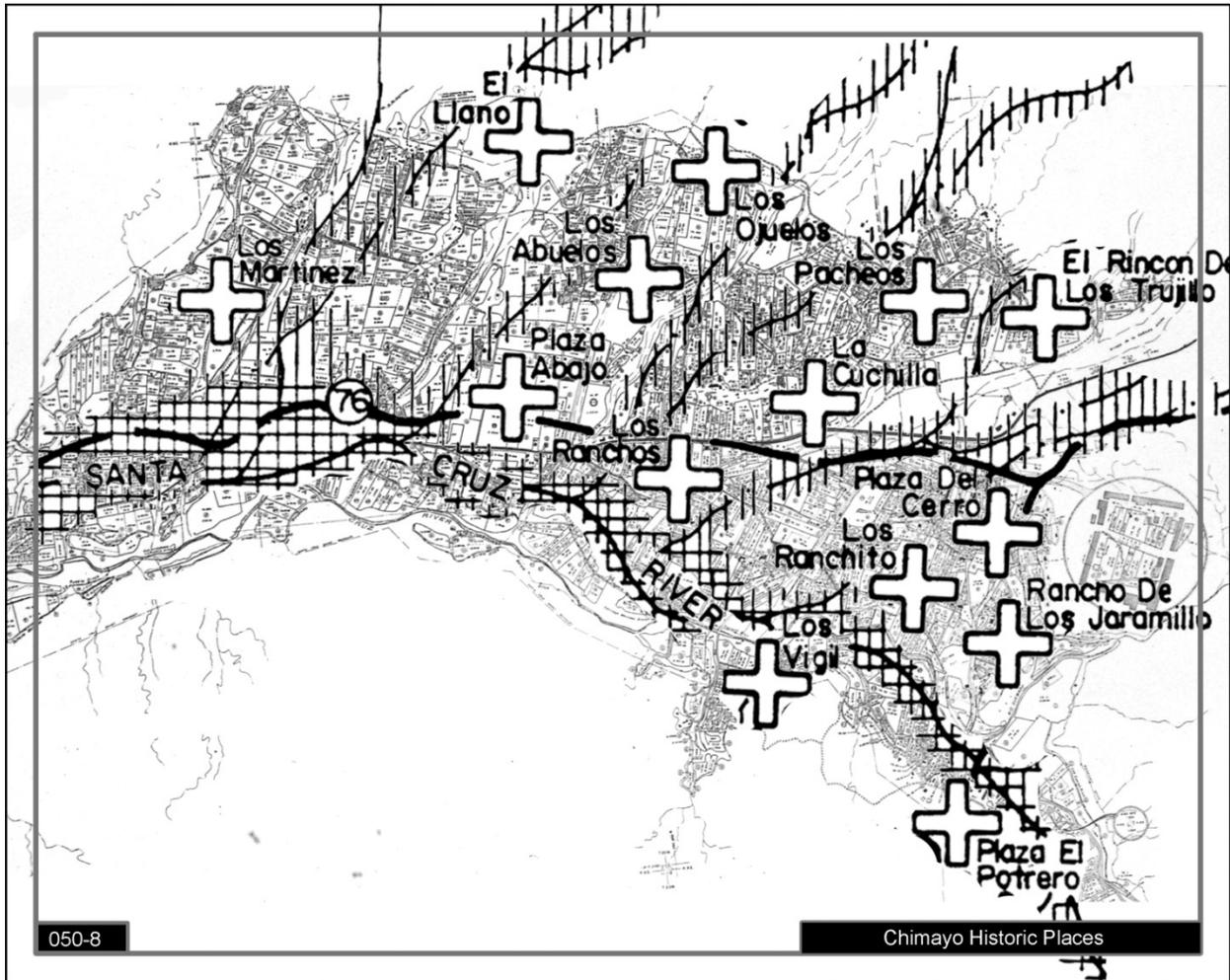
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May 26, 2012

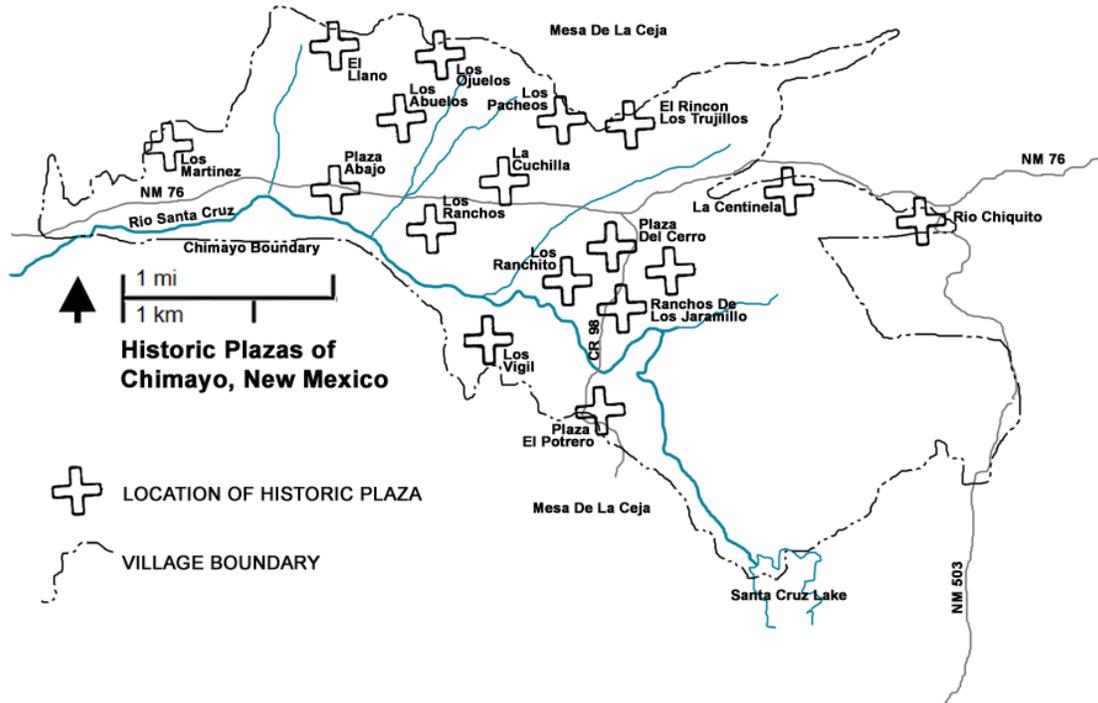


El Santuario de Nuestro Señor de Esquipilas, ca. 1993 (David Driapsa). Chimayo is best known today for this small historic votive chapel located within Plaza el Potrero. El Santo Nino de Atocia is another historic chapel in the same plaza. Many smaller private chapels are found within Chimayo.

¹³⁴ This source of this documentation is titled "The Conservation and Development of a Historic Vernacular Spanish-American Cultural Landscape: The Village of Chimayo, New Mexico." It is the thesis written and submitted by David Driapsa to the Faculty of the School of Renewable Natural Resources of the University of Arizona in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of landscape architecture, 1993. The graduate advisory committee included Ervin H. Zube, Ph.D., major professor; Charles W. Polzer, S.J., Ph.D., curator of ethnohistory, Arizona State Museum; and Laurie M. Johnson, associate professor.



Chimayo Historic Places Map, ca. 1993 (David Driapsa). The project data was compiled into a Kevin Lynch style map, analyzed and interpreted from the Jonthan Berger model of human ecological planning, and resulted in the creation of this illustration showing the nodes of historic plazas, open spaces, and pathways.



Historic Plazas of Chimayo, New Mexico, 2012 (David Driapsa). The historic plazas of the Village of Chimayo are concealed in the modern landscape but not forgotten in the residents' collective memory of the community. The social survey conducted in 1993 revealed them and resulted in the creation of this map.



Plaza del Cerro (David Driapsa, ca. 1993). Set back from the main roads, partly abandoned and in ruins, this old plaza struggles to exist with a few remaining residents. The Chimayo Cultural Preservation Association was founded a museum within this old plaza.



Plaza el Rincon de los Trujillos (David Driapsa, ca. 1993). Vestiges of historic landscapes remain where they are still useful, as here in is this old plaza, still occupied by proud descendents of the original group of Spanish colonists that established a settlement within the Chimayo valley.



El Potrero, the pasture. (David Driapsa, ca. 1993). El Potrero is the historic landscape commons, or communal open space, of the Village of Chimayo.