

# BULLETIN

OF THE HISTORIC SANTA FE FOUNDATION



VOL. 23, No. 1

March 1996

*Photo by Wesley Bradfield. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. No. 52459.*



*Cross of the Martyrs on dedication day, Sept. 15, 1920.*

Dedication ceremony gathering for the Cross of the Martyrs during the Santa Fe Fiesta, September 15, 1920. Photographer: Wesley Bradfield. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. No. 52459.

This was an obviously well-attended event. The large number of people surrounding the Cross indicate that the land area to the west has eroded to its current knoll topped by the Cross.



# Cross of the Martyrs

*Mary Ann Anders, Ph.D.*

In August of 1993 the Historic Santa Fe Foundation became the owner of the original Cross of the Martyrs located on a tract of land adjacent to Paseo de la Cuma in the La Cuma Addition of Santa Fe. This acquisition was the result of at least two years of negotiations among the Near North Neighborhood and numerous concerned individuals to purchase the property from the Orthodox Catholic Mission Parish of St. Joseph and deed it to the Historic Santa Fe Foundation for preservation in perpetuity. This Cross of the Martyrs is considered to have a significant place in the history of Santa Fe and the bequest of the property to the Foundation will insure its safekeeping and maintenance. However, this cross is not to be confused with later crosses erected in different locations.

The original Cross of the

Martyrs was erected in 1920 under the auspices of the Historical Society of New Mexico and the Knights of Columbus to commemorate the deaths of the 21 Franciscan friars at the hands of the Pueblo Indians in the revolution in the Province of New Mexico on August 9th and 10th, 1680. This event was the result of the influx of Spaniards into what is now New Mexico. In 1598 a group of Spanish colonists, led by Juan de Oñate of Zacatecas, Mexico, established a settlement along the banks of the Rio Grande north of present day Española. In 1610 Governor Pedro de Peralta relocated the capital of the province to Santa Fe. Between 1610 and 1680 colonists moved into New Mexico, living primarily along the Rio Grande. Franciscan Friars established missions at most of the Indian pueblos. But life was not always peaceful.

*Courtesy Museum of  
New Mexico  
Neg. No. 57998*



*Construction of the Cross of the Martyrs, 1919-1920.*

The Indians, in order to regain control of their homeland, in 1680, led by Popé, a San Juan Indian, united, and in what has come to be called the Pueblo Revolt, killed 21 Franciscan friars and numerous colonists. The rest of the settlers fled south to El Paso. It was not until 1692 that the province was resettled under the leadership of Governor Diego de Vargas.

The Historical Society of New Mexico, established in 1859, had long supported the preservation of documents, artifacts and all things relating to events and people important to New Mexico's history and it was fitting that the group "take the lead in fostering the movement to erect in enduring form this beautiful Cross in memory of the cas-socked heroes of the Church." (Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Historical Society, August 2nd, 1920, State Records Center and Archives).

The plan to erect the Cross, according to Col. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, received enthusiastic response around the state. Mrs. Ella C. Weltmer and Mr. Samuel G. Cartwright of Santa Fe contributed the land on which the Cross now stands. Among monetary contributors were Hon. Benjamin F. Pankey, Lt. Gov. of New Mexico, the

Water & Light Co. of Santa Fe, Mr. William D. Murray of Silver City, Mr. E. P. Davies, representing the Knights of Columbus and Col. Twitchell.

The Cross was designed by Ralph Emerson Twitchell, Edgar L. Street and Walter G. Turley. It was constructed of reinforced concrete by the Midland Bridge Company. It is 25 feet high, eight feet in depth and weighs 76 tons. The Cross was dedicated during the Santa Fe Fiesta in 1920.

In 1712 an annual fiesta had been instituted by municipal authorities to commemorate the events of 1682 and it had become a permanent celebration for the town. The dedication activities for the Cross of the Martyrs during the fiesta in September of 1920 were both colorful and lent historical weight to the festivities.

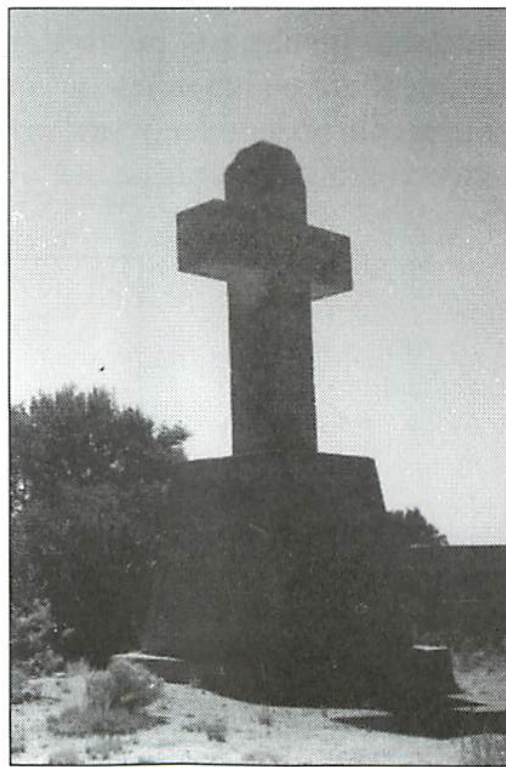
The dedication ceremonies began in front of the Palace of the Governors with about 500 spectators in attendance. Former Governor L. Bradford Prince, president of the Historical Society, gave a brief history of the rebellion that led to the friars' deaths and characterized the event as a sad blow to the Franciscan Order. He went on to speak of the martyrdom of the friars and the military achievements of Don Diego de Vargas's

reconquest and occupation of Santa Fe. The listening crowd applauded when Prince held up a framed document which he declared to be an order written by Vargas. After Prince's speech, a procession of spectators on horse back and in motor cars, led by Jose D. Sena in a cavalier's plumed hat and velvet breeches, as master of ceremonies, wound its way to the Cross for additional speeches. Governor Larrazolo, who was to have given an address on the Order of St. Francis, was unable to attend because of illness but there were other dignitaries on hand to add to the festivities.

The Cross continued to be used for fiesta activities for a number of years. The *New Mexican* reported in 1925 that the procession to open the fiesta was an impressive affair that attracted about 3,000 participants, including a band and the clergy. Bonfires on the hillside illuminated the cross and were repeated by bonfires on Fort Marcy across the canyon.

By some accounts a new Cross of the Martyrs was erected near the ruins of Fort Marcy sometime in the 1930s and by other accounts not until many years later. Historically, this near north edge of Santa Fe was defined by the hill that ran parallel to the northernmost

*acequia* and was the north limit of the irrigated fields. Until after the arrival of the railroad, this area was undeveloped except for a few houses, some military buildings, and a cemetery. In 1887 St. Catherine's Indian School was begun. Around 1900, the Presbyterians acquired property for a school and by 1912 two small residential areas began. In 1920 the Bridge of the Hidalgos was built and residential areas along Old Taos Highway began to take shape. Rosario Boulevard was built by 1933; about 1940 a small subdivision had begun. Today the area around the property that contains the Cross is densely



*Cross of the Martyrs, 1994.*

populated with residences. Eventually the Fiesta Council determined that it had no more use for the property in connection with the Santa Fe Fiesta and activities were moved to the site near Fort Marcy ruins. (Santa Fe Historic Neighborhood Study)

Although the exact chain of title has not been determined, the Cross has been owned by the School of American Research, the City of Santa Fe, the Orthodox Catholic Mission Parish of St. Joseph and now the Historic Santa Fe Foundation. It is the intention of the Foundation to maintain the Cross and property as a site significant to the history of the City of Santa Fe and that it shall not be used for residential, commercial or any other purpose except as provided in the Declaration of Cov-

enants and Restrictions.

Today the Cross is surrounded by condominiums and houses on the south, east and west and is barely visible through dense foliage from Paseo de la Cuma on the north. Yet, if one ascends the stairway leading to the Cross and its small parcel of open land, the Cross conveys to the viewer its commemoration of a major event in New Mexico's history.

## ENDNOTES

Sze, Corinne P. and Beverly Spears. *Santa Fe Historic Neighborhood Study*. Santa Fe: City of Santa Fe, 1988.

*The Historic Preservation Program for New Mexico: Volume I, The Historic Back-*

*Gathering for the dedication of the Cross of the Martyrs during Santa Fe Fiesta, September 15, 1920 .  
Photographer: H.C. Tibbitts  
Courtesy Museum of New Mexico  
Neg. No. 52462*



*ground. Santa Fe: State Planning Office, 1973.*

"Cross of Martyrs Dedicated."  
*Santa Fe New Mexican*, 15  
September 1920.

"Throng Pays Mead to Martyrs."  
*Santa Fe New Mexican*, 3 Au-

gust 1925.

Records of the Historical Society  
of New Mexico, 1859–1959.  
Minutes of the Executive  
Committee of the Historical  
Society, August 2, 1920.

Historic Santa Fe Foundation  
Properties. Cross Acquisition  
files.

*Dedication  
ceremony during  
Santa Fe Fiesta,  
September 15, 1920 .  
Courtesy Museum of  
New Mexico  
Neg. No. 52464*



*Courtesy Museum of New  
Mexico  
Neg. No. 52460*

*Procession to the Cross of the Martyrs during Santa Fe  
Fiesta, September 15, 1920 . Photographer: H.C. Tibbitts*