

# THE ORIGINAL CROSS OF THE MARTYRS

*Placing Historic Santa Fe Foundation's Stewardship in Modern Context*  
Pete Warzel

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation prides itself on being a relevant, viable resource for education, architectural and cultural history, for and of the long and complex heritage of the city and surrounding areas in Northern New Mexico. As you all are extremely aware, we, all of us, are experiencing a worrisome and emotional time due to major upheavals in our society – the COVID-19 crisis, and how we all stay safe and healthy and attempt to return to normalcy; and the social movements in our city and state are more broadly focused to include the colonial injustices to our native tribes, as well as the ongoing discrimination against Blacks, Chicanos, Mexicans, Hispanos, and Native Americans.

In the continuing discussion of colonial injustices and current racial prejudices, the subjects of monuments, their place and messages, has become a subject that is rightfully being addressed, discussed, and, in some cases, the monuments and statues deemed inappropriate are being modified or removed.

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation owns and is the steward for a monument that fits into the discussion – The Original Cross the Martyrs, or The Old Cross of the Martyrs, erected in 1920, so a full 100 years ago this year.

This Cross was the original cross. A second, more well-known cross was erected by the Santa Fe Fiesta Council with a grant from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission in 1977, and is owned by the Caballeros de Vargas. The land was deeded to them by the Santa Fe Archdiocese, on the hill at Fort Marcy, and visible to most of the city. This second monument was erected for better access by the procession that culminates there on Fiestas Sunday, the original being in a congested residential neighborhood and a less direct route from the Plaza.

Both crosses commemorate the deaths of 21 Franciscan friars in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and as such are monuments anchored in the Spanish Colonial past. Here, we address the original since it is owned by HSFF and is in our care, as well as listed on our Historic Register of Properties Worthy of Preservation.

The staff, the Education/Research/Archives Committee composed of staff, board directors and volunteers, and the HSFF Board of Directors, began a dialogue in June 2020, and have discussed the current social context of what and how our duties are to this 1920 monument. This has been a productive and enlightening examination, especially given our mission to “preserve, protect, and promote the historic properties and diverse cultural heritage of the Santa Fe area, and to educate the public about Santa Fe’s history and the importance of preservation.” We have determined that the proper way to preserve and protect is to focus on the education portion of our mission.

The plaque on the cross itself states:

*Cross of the Martyrs Erected by members of the Knights of Columbus and the Historical Society of New Mexico in memory of the Franciscan Friars who were killed by the Pueblo Indians in the revolution in the Province of New Mexico August 9th and 10th A.D. 1680.*

The Cross was gifted to The Historic Santa Fe Foundation in 1993 by the Near North Neighborhood, that raised funds to purchase it from the Orthodox Catholic Mission Parish of St. Joseph. It was originally placed and erected as noted above, and was the site of the annual procession on the Sunday of Fiestas. It was dedicated on September 15, 1920 during the annual Fiesta.

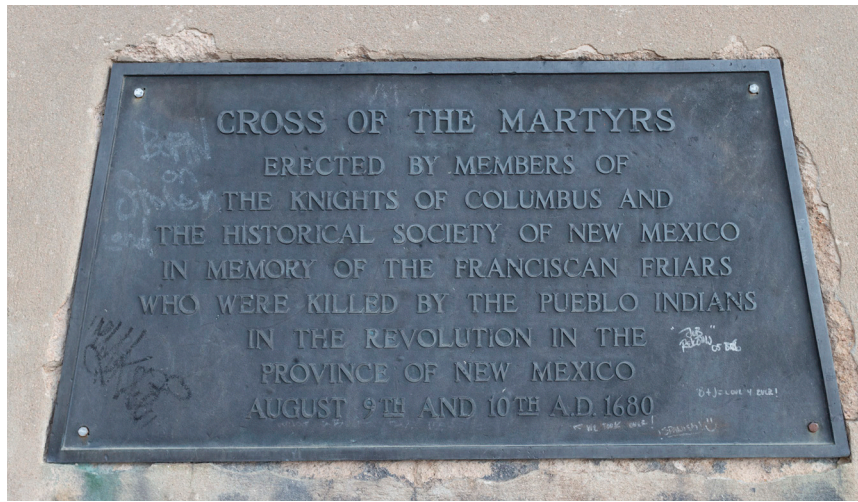
The informational sign was erected in 1994. In both English and Spanish it states:

*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. Life was not always peaceful. In order to regain control of their homeland, in 1680, many pueblo people, led by Popé, a San Juan Indian, united to drive the colonists out. Twenty-one Franciscan friars and numerous colonists were killed in what has come to be called the Pueblo Revolt. The rest of the settlers fled south to El Paso del Norte. It was not until 1693 that the province was resettled under the leadership of Governor Diego de Vargas.*

The Original Cross of the Martyrs was added to the HSFF Register of Properties Worthy of Preservation in 1994 by the Board of Directors. It, and our offices at 545 Canyon Road, El Zaguán, are now the two remaining properties owned by the Foundation following a strategic plan implemented by the Board of Directors in order to enhance the financial position of the Foundation, and to focus on education, outreach, collaborative programs in restoration, and on the expansion of the historic register and re-publication of Old Santa Fe Today. Additionally, a master plan is being implemented at El Zaguán to ensure its preservation as well as better access and utilization in order to fulfill our mission.

As the existing signage states “Life was not always peaceful. In order to regain control of their homeland, in 1680, many pueblo people, led by Popé, a San Juan Indian, united

to drive the colonists out.” This narrative addresses the Pueblo Revolt and the violence of that war for independence, the first successful revolt against colonial occupation on what is now U.S. soil. But, what followed in the re-taking of the land has been brushed over in the general narrative and short hand version of history.



our aware environment today. The HSFF staff and Board of Directors recognize and understand that there are many views and interpretations at work here, all valid, and all in need of recognition.

We feel that the cross and its identifying signs should and must remain as is, as a statement in time in 1920.

However, we feel we must also place that history in a current context. To do so, HSFF will erect a small, explanatory sign that states:

*The Historic Santa Fe Foundation, owner and steward of this monument, considered its place in history in light of the cultural concerns and social protests in 2020. The monument was built in 1920 as part of the Santa Fe Fiesta, recognizing the influences of three major cultures in New Mexico's heritage. Please engage in the meaning of the monument at [www.historicsanta-fe.org](http://www.historicsanta-fe.org). You may also use this QR code to leave comments.*

That history must be recognized. Santa Fe is not the “city different” in its history of colonial occupation and we should not be afraid of acknowledging so.

The further history of the Cross is to commemorate and highlight what amounted to a restart of the traditions of Fiesta in 1920. It is interesting, and perhaps a misdirection, that the deaths of the Franciscan friars in the Revolt is commemorated when the purpose of the monument in the context of Fiesta was to highlight not the Revolt, but the return, and how that changed the trajectory of history, including the deep seated cultural memories that remain today.

Ralph Emerson Twitchell, Edgar L. Street and Walter G. Turley designed the monument for placement on the hilltop supposedly near or on Vargas' encampment before entering the city. As stated above, the Knights of Columbus and the Historical Society of New Mexico funded the construction of the Cross by the Midland Bridge Company, the firm that constructed the Bridge of the Hidalgos on Grant Street.

The bridge was also designed by Turley, and finished and dedicated at the same time as the Cross in time for 1920 Fiesta. The Cross became the centerpiece for that event and those following annually. Although the intent by Edgar Lee Hewett, founding director of the Museum of New Mexico as well as the School for American Research (now the School for Advanced Research) was to honor all cultures in the city with this 1920 Fiesta, and all did participate in the events, that sense of caring and equanimity may not translate as genuine in

This short narrative will direct the reader to our website through the web address as well as a QR code, where a more in-depth discussion of the monument will detail the history as well as what is not said within the context of the monument and signage. The additional sign recognizing the current unrest and question, and pointing the visitor to a deeper examination of meaning is meant as a marker in time – a clarification that what may have been acceptable 100 or 200 or 400

years ago is not in tune with our cultural climate today. Changing the existing explanatory signage at the site could never be right for all points of view, could never capture the entire landscape of understandings. We hope the ability to expand and include all sides on our web site will be a step in the right direction. And, when the web site is complete, we will notify you and hope that you will comment, and add to the discussion of what this all means going forward.

