

BULLETIN

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Saguan

Photo: Alan K. Stoker

The Donaciano Vigil House

by Myra Ellen Jenkins

Once the home of an important, and controversial, soldier-politico-land owner during the period of Mexican sovereignty and the early

decades of United States control of New Mexico, the Donaciano Vigil house at 518 Alto Street is one of
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Vigil House, *continued*

Santa Fe's most significant buildings. It was built in the early 1800s by Donaciano's father, Juan Cristóbal, also a military man who held various local offices during his lifetime, as the family residence. Constructed in the typical Spanish colonial fashion around a central placita, it dominated the agricultural lands and outbuildings necessary for an urban hacienda.

In his last will and testament of May 31, 1832 Juan Cristóbal Vigil described the property thus: "I declare for my goods the house of my abode which is composed of four parts and an orchard with five fruit trees, and in addition to this a plot of land close by, and contiguous to the said land a large room and another structure which because they are old have been assigned as a stable for the animals and a barn." Buildings presently on both the east and west joined to the house by common walls, but now with different owners, were undoubtedly part of the original structure. He also stipulated that the house with all its furnishings was to remain the sole property of his wife, Maria Antonia Andrea Martines, during her lifetime and was not to be divided among the children so long as she lived. A smaller house, also located on the land, was bequeathed to a daughter, Maria Inés, who was not to share later in the inheritance of the main building. Juan Cristóbal died soon thereafter and was buried in the small *campo santo* in front of the military chapel, La Castrense, the site of present Dunlap's store. Before her death some two years later, Maria Antonia gave a verbatim description of the house in her will, with the proviso that the property

should be divided among the heirs, except for Maria Inés who had already received her portion.

Within the next eight years Donaciano bought out the other heirs so that when he made out his own will in 1842 or 1843 he was the sole owner. In that document he stated that he had built one new portion and had purchased some of his sister Maria Inés' land: "I declare that I have bought from my sister Inés ten varas of land on the highest part of all the lands which my father left, for entrance and exit, commencing at the river."

When Donaciano executed this premature testament he was one of the most powerful citizens in New Mexico. Born in 1802, he had somehow received an excellent education. Enlisting in the presidial company of Santa Fe at an early age, he had then seen service in both the Taos and San Miguel del Vado companies in various campaigns against the Navajo and was commissioned captain of the Vado company in 1842 as a result of particular action in the capture of the Texas expedition during the previous year. Throughout the frequent changes in government during the troubled years of Mexican rule and in the events surrounding U.S. occupation in 1846, he exhibited the amazing ability to emerge on the winning side. During the August 1837 expedition of ill-fated Governor Albino Pérez against the Santa Cruz revolutionists, Donaciano was either captured or surrendered, then was suddenly released. Acquitted by a court martial of cowardice or collusion in January of the following year, he got



Corner Fireplace
Photo: Alan K. Stoker

his army rank back and acted as Military Secretary to Governor Antonio Armijo until 1843. His cooperation with U.S. forces in August 1846 was rewarded by Brigadier General Stephen Watts Kearny on September 22 who appointed him secretary of the territory. Attorney-historian Ralph

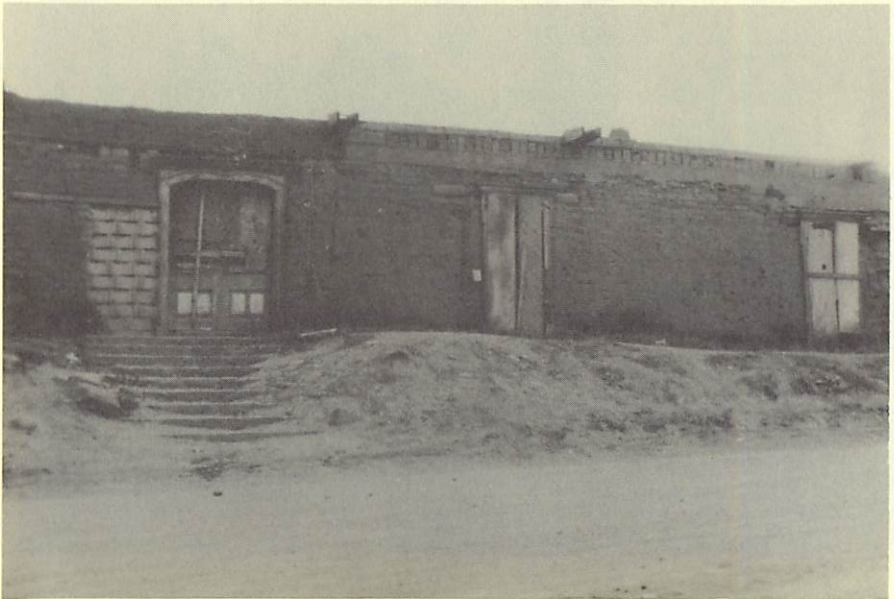
E. Twitchell gives Vigil sole credit for having discovered and foiled an abortive uprising against U.S. military forces in Santa Fe planned for Christmas Eve of that year. Contemporary accounts, however, name several other individuals as responsible or partially responsible.

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Vigil House, *continued*

The president nullified Kearny's unconstitutional proclamation of territorial status but, following the January 19, 1847 assassination of "Governor" Charles Bent at Taos, Vigil was appointed acting civil governor by military commander Sterling Price, with presidential approval, and served in that capacity until Mexico and the United States

Grafton Baker to meet in the Castrense to carry out its deliberations, Vigil defied the judge and refused to be sworn in as he was opposed to such a secular function being carried out in a consecrated building, especially since his father was buried in its cemetery. When citizens and army personnel rallied to his defense, the jurist reconsid-



*Front (1959) Before
Photo: Charlotte White*

signed the February 2, 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As chief executive, one reform which he constantly advocated was the passage of a free public education bill.

In 1851, as a member of a federal court grand jury ordered by Judge

ered an initial threat to jail Vigil and moved the court elsewhere.

After his tenure as civil governor was over, Vigil continued as Registrar of Land Titles and was placed in charge of recording the Spanish and Mexican official documents of land title and grant

until Congress established the Office of the Surveyor General in 1854. Much of the testimony which he gave in adjudication of various land grant cases before that official over the next decade was highly suspect. He also acquired interests and speculated in several grants in the Pecos region. On November 27, 1856 he and his wife, Refugia Sánchez, sold

Cemetery, but the location of their graves is not of record.

The property so conveyed by the Vigiles for the munificent sum of \$250 consisted of the land, bounded on three sides by other owners and "on the north by the ravine [barranca] of the river," the house, probably other buildings which were not listed, and "a *molino* [mill] which



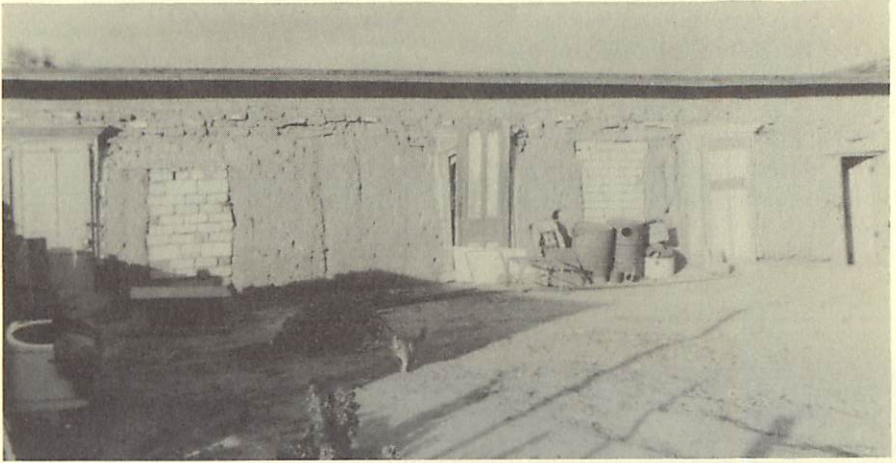
Front (After)
Photo: Len Bouché

the Santa Fe property to Vicente Garcia and moved to Pecos. Donaciano died August 11, 1877 at his son Epifanio's home. Plaqued by the Foundation as the José Alarid house, this building is located at 338 E. De Vargas. Donaciano and Refugia are buried in Rosario

is adjacent to the house and land," presumably located on the river. Garcia then bought other land on the east as far as Guadalupe Church. He seemed to have been in occasional straitened financial circumstances, for in August 1867 he mortgaged the

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Vigil House, continued



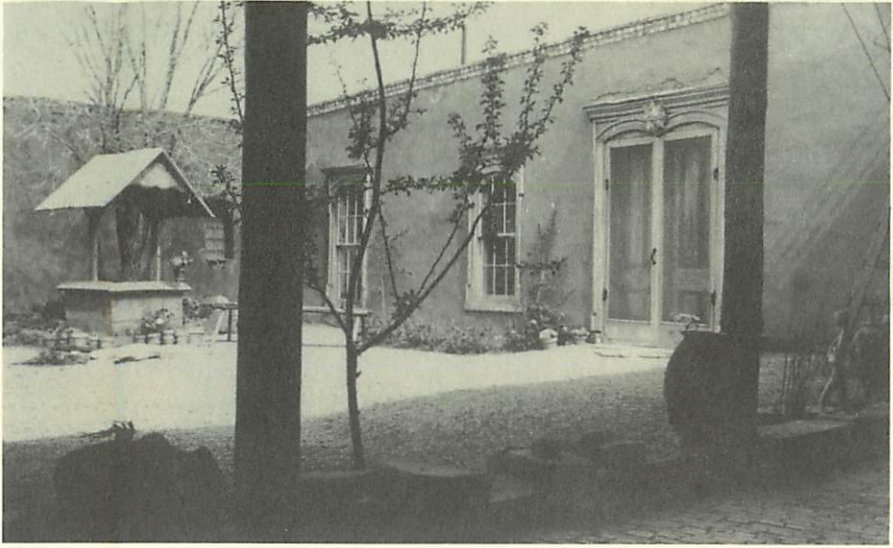
*Back (1959) Before
Photo: Charlotte White*

Vigil property to the Spiegelberg Brothers mercantile firm. He redeemed it some six months later, only to use it as collateral for a loan in 1871 from newspaperman William H. Manderfield.

Garcia died at his home December 30, 1889 and the Vigil property remained in the possession of his descendants for many years. In 1930 it was mortgaged to flamboyant Santa Fe curio dealer J.S. Candelario. There is no record of redemption and finally, in March 1946, after having bought up state tax certificates for several years, Candelario received full title. He sold it less than a month later. The new owners attempted to rehabilitate the structure which had seriously deteriorated from neglect. Among the improvements was the installation of five windows and a handsome wooden door leading from the front

portion into the patio. These had formerly graced the original Loretto Academy until the 1948 remodeling of that building. Plagued also by delinquent taxes and other financial problems, the owners were forced to terminate their plans. In the late 1950s they went to California and on March 2, 1959 gave a quit claim deed to Charlotte White of Wilmette, Illinois who was planning to move to Santa Fe and was sensitive to the restoration possibilities and then to the historic significance of the venerable house. She and her friend, artist-sculptor Boris Gilbertson, spent a month during the summer in clean-up operations and in May 1960 moved to Santa Fe and began the lengthy project of restoring both house and grounds to their former dignity and charm.

New roofs on both front and rear sections stopped further damage to



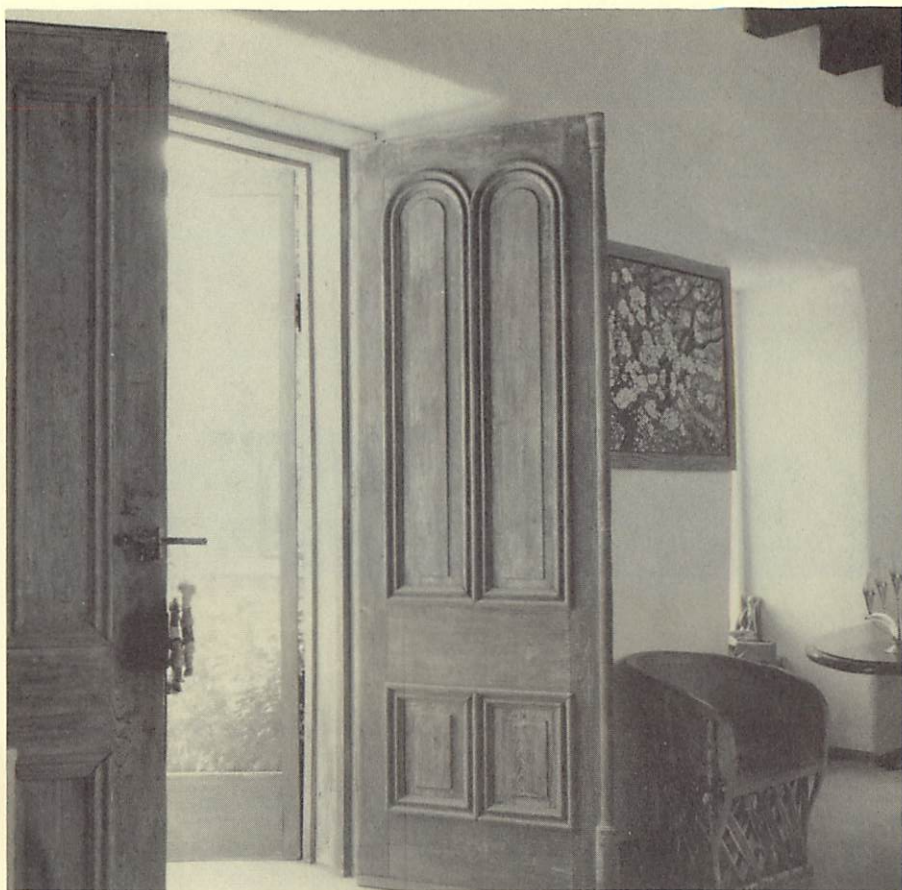
*Back (After)
Well and Patio
Photo: Alan K. Stoker*

the massive adobe walls which, however, required major repair. Rotted window frames were replaced and some windows relocated. A door on the northwest was removed so that a large corner fireplace could be built. The entrance from the street was through a large wooden gate on the east side. The former owner had erected a plaster board-cement wall from the entrance to form a hallway leading to the rear section and into the yard and had cemented the floor. Demolition of this wall revealed that the hallway area was the original saguan. A portal was constructed along the alignment of the wall, facing the patio. Bricks acquired from the recently-torn-down state penitentiary on Cordova Road, laid

in an attractive pattern, replaced the cement floor. Cement steps from the street to the entrance gave way to a pathway paved with cut stones, also from the old penitentiary. Later, a ponderous, stationary wooden gate, with a "needle's eye" door cut into it, was fashioned by Gilbertson to replace the former nondescript one.

The removal of nearly two feet of dirt from the entire surface of the patio revealed its original level, still containing a few flagstones, and the existence of the well. This essential feature for the early household, lined with river rock, was excavated to the depth of some sixteen feet and then topped by an open, wooden superstructure.

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Door From Loretto Academy
Photo: Alan K. Stoker

Vigil House, *continued*

By June, 1961 the exterior was ready for mud replastering. Two experienced women plasterers from the village of Cañones were hired to perform this important task in the proper, traditional fashion.

Work on the front section was completed by 1963. The south portion, however, which consisted of one large room, lacking even a

ceiling, was virtually untouched. Ten years later another major project was begun, completed in 1979, to transform it into kitchen, bedrooms and dining area. Its south portal was designed by Gilbertson to become a greenhouse. Slanted, removable plastic-covered panels were placed between the portal posts during the cold months to protect the plants

and provide a solar heating unit for the house.

A description of the original Vigil property written in 1909 noted: "It was a retired, quiet retreat, once abounding in magnificent trees, planted by the hands of Judge Vigil." By 1960, however, there was but one tree standing, a forlorn tamarisk in the patio. A horticulturalist of no mean ability, Charlotte White set about to recreate the former abundance of the planting and in the process to add a few touches of her own. As was the case with the patio, some two feet of top dirt and debris were removed from the large back area, where Gilbertson also had his studio-workshop. Literally tons of rich mountain soil were then hauled in. Juan Cristóbal's will had stated that there were "five fruit trees"; Charlotte planted sixteen in the back

alone and several in the patio as well as setting out grape vines. A vegetable garden in the back has provided an abundance of fresh produce throughout the years. A profusion of flowers, including Roses of Castille, a gift from the painter Olive Rush, soon were blooming throughout. Potted plants fill the portal greenhouse and adorn the patio.

The Donaciano Vigil House was plaqued by The Historic Santa Fe Foundation as "worthy of preservation" in 1962. Placed on the State Register of Cultural Properties on May 23, 1969, it was one of the first sites to be so recognized after the passage of the state's historic preservation bill in that year. On June 28, 1972 it was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Sources

Mexican Archives of New Mexico, State Records Center and Archives, Military Records, 1835, 1837; 1839; 1843; Governor's Papers, 1838-1843

Donaciano Vigil Papers, State Records Center and Archives.

Territorial Archives of New Mexico, State Records Center and Archives.

Records of the Surveyor General of New Mexico, State Records Center and Archives.

Santa Fe County Clerk's Records, Deed Books B, D; Mortgages, Books A and 17; Miscellaneous, Book 154.

Abstract of Title, No. 4389, Hutchison Abstract Co., in possession of Charlotte White.

G. Emlen Hall. *Four Leagues of Pecos: A Legal History of the Pecos Grant*. Albuquerque, 1984.

Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico*. Denver, 1909, pp. 207-228.



Bonnie Halda, Filmore Rose and Don Van Soelen, left to right.

Rehabilitation Seminar

In cooperation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation-National Trust for Historic Preservation's seminar in celebration of National Preservation Week was held on May 14 at Sweeney Convention Center. Titled "Rehabilitation—Economic Benefits," the program included "Status of Santa Fe Historic Districts" by Linda Tigges, City of Santa Fe Planning Department; "Procedures for Certification" by Bonnie Halda, architect with the National Park Service, Denver Regional Office; "Tax Incentives," Filmore Rose, attorney with Koch-White-Kelly and McCarthy, Santa Fe; and "Case Study—Campanilla Compound, Santa Fe" by I.M.c.A. Cunningham, developer, Aspen, Colorado and Boston, Massachusetts. Don Van Soelen, past president of the

Foundation, served as moderator.

Ms. Tigges pointed out the five historic districts in Santa Fe and discussed the code differences. She urged Santa Feans to attend the meetings of the Historic Design Review Board on the second and fourth Mondays of every month. Ms. Halda dealt with the steps involved in applying for the Federal investment tax credit. She brought along copies of the book *National Park Service Standards for Rehabilitation*, the guideline for applying for credit. Mr. Rose, a tax credit specialist, explained the complicated Federal and state tax credit laws. A new state law was enacted this year and, among his list of suggestions, he urged everyone to keep up to date on the laws which are changing all the time. The final speaker, I.M.c.A.

Cunningham, described his experiences while working on the Campanilla Compound. With plot plans he discussed the design changes made in the project to conform to tax credit laws. The seminar closed with questions and discussion.

Program coordinator was Richard

Grenfell, board member and chairman of Endangered Properties Committee. The National Trust for Historic Preservation gave financial aid to the seminar. Thanks also goes to *The New Mexican* for donating two advertisements.

Foundation Library

A new source of information is building at the Foundation office as we begin a reference library on preservation, particularly in the Southwest. These books will be for reference use in the office, not for circulation. The titles we have on hand now are:

John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect, Early Architecture in New Mexico and Of Earth and Timbers Made: New Mexico Architecture, all three by Bainbridge Bunting; *The Missions of New Mexico since 1776* by John L. Kessel, *The Missions of*

New Mexico 1776 translated and annotated by Eleanor B. Adams and Frey Angelico Chavez, *Pueblo Deco: The Art Architecture of the Southwest* by Marcus Whiffen and Carla Breeze, *Upper Santa Fe Canyon Oral History Project*, funded in part by a grant from the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, and *Camino del Monte Sol Architectural Survey* prepared by Michael Belshaw.

We will be purchasing more books for the library and will also welcome gifts of suitable volumes.

Loretto Chapel News

On September 26th the Loretto Chapel volunteers met at the Inn at Loretto for coffee and orientation. As of last June 1st, Sister Rita Romero retired as Chapel Manager. The new Manager, Pamela Pacheco, spoke to the group and was most cooperative, offering to help in training new volunteers.

A lifelong resident and historian of Santa Fe, Anita Thomas, shared

memories of her days as a student at Loretto Academy and she also provided anecdotes and historical knowledge about the Chapel's history.

Barbara Martin is looking for more volunteers to help on a substitute basis. If you are interested, please call her at 983-2134 or leave a message with Louise Fairchild at the Foundation Office, 983-2567.

Membership Activities

Las Vegas Tour



Architectural Tour of Las Vegas: Plaza Hotel in background

On Saturday, October 6, 1984, The Historic Santa Fe Foundation sponsored an architectural tour of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Forty-seven members and guests of the Foundation participated in the tour which was led by Christopher Wilson, an Architectural Historian who served as Director of the Las Vegas Historic Building Inventory from 1982 to 1984.

According to *Architecture and Preservation in Las Vegas*,* that city contains the largest and one of the most important collections of

historic architecture in New Mexico and, at the completion of the architectural survey, approximately 800 of its structures (individually and in districts) will be listed on the State Register of Historic Properties. The tour sampled this rich architectural past in historical order, from the Mexican-style adobe residences of Old Town dating from the mid-1800s to the elegant Anglo-American-style residences built in New Town during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Late in the morning, members of

the tour had the opportunity to visit the Artesanos Book Store on Old Town Plaza and learn about current revitalization efforts from the owner, Mrs. Diana Stein. Afterwards, the Foundation enjoyed a buffet lunch at the recently-restored Plaza Hotel followed by a tour of the hotel conducted by one of the owners, Mrs. Katherine (Kak) Slick.

The tour continued to the commercial areas of New Town, but an unscheduled cloudburst late in the afternoon forced a quick retreat to the bus from which the remainder

of the tour took place.

We are grateful to those who contributed to the success of this event, particularly Chris Wilson with his encyclopedic knowledge and sensitive interpretation of the architecture of Las Vegas and the forty-seven members and friends whose interest and enthusiasm were constant in both fair weather and foul.

* Volumes II and III. Las Vegas, NM: Citizen's Committee for Historic Preservation, 1982 and 1984

Architectural Tour of Las Vegas: Old Town



Annual Meeting of the Historic Santa Fe Foundation

The Annual Meeting and election of Board Members will be Monday, January 14, at Palen Hall, Episcopal

Church of the Holy Faith. The time is 7:30 p.m.

Santa Fe Architectural History Inventory

The Santa Fe City Planning Department, with grant assistance from the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Bureau, is conducting an architectural history inventory of the Santa Fe National Register Historic District. The inventory area is bounded roughly by Guadalupe and Rosario Streets on the west; Griffin St., Rosario Blvd., Camino Santiago, Artist Rd. and the Hillside neighborhood to Camino Cabra on the north; Camino Cabra on the east; and San Acacio, Camino San Miguel, Acequia Madre, Garcia St., Camino de las Animas, Old Santa Fe

Trail and Paseo de Peralta to Guadalupe on the south.

The survey staff has 3 members: Susan Lopez, a graduate of the UNM Architecture School; Michael Belshaw, who surveyed the Camino del Monte Sol District; and Harry Weiss, preservation specialist and inventory coordinator. Information which Foundation members may have concerning individual buildings or the general architectural history of Santa Fe would be most welcome. Please contact Harry Weiss at 982-2047 or through City Planning at 984-6603.

Santa Fe Women's Ensemble — Christmas Concert

Foundation members and their guests are invited to attend a performance by the Santa Fe Women's Ensemble in Loretto Chapel on Saturday, December 22, at 3:00 p.m. Sakina von Briesen, Administrative Director, announced that again this year the Ensemble will be accompanied by harpist Rosalind Simpson, and the eleven voice group directed by Priscilla Zimmerman will perform John Rutter's "Dancing Day," a popular setting of many

carols, Palestrina's "Magnificat in the Fourth Mode," Christmas songs from Spain and Australia and other familiar pieces. Be sure to mark your calendar for this very special event!

This is the fourth Christmas that the Foundation has been pleased to sponsor the public concerts by the Santa Fe Women's Ensemble which are scheduled to be held in Loretto Chapel on December 20, 21 and 23. For ticket information about these public performances, call 982-9385.

1983 Christmas Lighting Contest

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation is sponsoring the 1984 city-wide 19th Annual Traditional Christmas Lighting Contest. Only traditional lighting, farolitos, and luminarias are allowed. Anyone can enter. Entry blanks must be in the hands of the committee no later than December 21st. Additional blanks are available at the Chamber of Commerce and by calling the Foundation office, 983-2567 weekdays. Contest chairman is Pen LaFarge.

The contest is open to individuals and neighborhood groups of three or more homes within the city limits. Six individual prizes will be awarded in each of two divisions with the dividing line Old Pecos Trail to the Plaza, west on Palace and Johnson

and north on Guadalupe. First prize is \$50, second prize \$35, third prize \$25, honorable mention \$15, and there is a \$15 special honorable mention for smaller homes. There will also be a group prize of \$50 in each division. Compounds particularly lend themselves to group entries. This year in order to encourage businesses to participate, a \$50 city-wide commercial prize will be awarded. All winners will receive certificates.

Beginning at 5 PM on Christmas Eve, three teams of judges will begin their tours. Entrants are reminded to turn off porch lights, spot lights and Christmas tree decorations during the judging hours, or they will be disqualified.

*Seasons
Greetings!*

LIGHTING CONTEST ENTRY FORM:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

MAIL TO: Lighting Contest, P.O. Box 2535, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501
Deadline is December 21