

A HISTORY OF *LA POSADA*

Two centuries before the voyage of Columbus, Native Americans cultivated the alluvial terraces of the Santa Fe River. The ground on which *La Posada* is now situated had a fresh water spring and, with its location near the river, was undoubtedly farmed by the residents of surrounding pueblos.

After the Spaniards arrived in 1610, the land remained under cultivation serving the area, as it was prime agricultural land for the new Spanish inhabitants.

An irrigation ditch (the Acequia de La Loma) was constructed along the course of what is now Palace Avenue. This acequia was joined by the Acequia de la Guardia producing a water system that bisected this land and was fed in part by the spring providing the principal source of water to the area.

In the Pueblo revolt, the Indians cut off the acequias forcing the evacuation of the Spaniards. Later, Don Diego de Vargas, who is credited with the bloodless conquest of the Pueblo Indians of the area, cut off the acequias to drive the Indians out when he reclaimed Santa Fe.

While the precise date of acquisition is unknown, by the early 19th century the Baca family owned the *La Posada* property. This family is one of Santa Fe's oldest, having been one of the four original settlers that returned to Santa Fe from El Paso del Norte after expulsion of the Indians by De Vargas.

By the 1850's, Palace Avenue had developed as a public street, and in the succeeding fifty years it was to become the fashionable residential district in Santa Fe.

Portions of the Baca property bordering Palace Avenue and lying east off the present entryway to *La Posada* were conveyed after 1850 to Doña Francisca Hinojas. The widow was a member of another pioneer Santa Fe family (arriving shortly after 1700), Doña Hinojas was related to the Baca family. Some of her acquisitions were inheritance from the Bacas and some were by purchase. Doña Hinojas constructed a fine residence at 355 Palace Avenue, which still exists. Other portions of her property were subdivided and resold.

In 1876 Abraham Staab, who with three of his older brothers had immigrated to Santa Fe from Germany in the mid 1800's, acquired one of these parcels. They established one of the major mercantile businesses in the burgeoning capital and rose to civic importance. Along with other prominent Jewish families, they maintained a close relationship with Archbishop Lamy, and were major contributors to the building fund of the new Saint Francis Cathedral. Some historians have attributed the Hebrew Tetragrammaton inscribed over the Cathedral's entrance as a token of the Archbishop's gratitude.

Abraham promised his new German bride, Julia Schuster Staab, a mansion representing a new level of cultural achievement for the Southwest. Construction began in 1882 of a formal brick residence designed in a style identified with the French Second Empire. Its distinctive mansard roof and the classical organization of its floor plan, doors and windows set it apart from the traditional styles of Santa Fe. The materials for the Staab mansion, as well as the furnishings and art, were imported. The construction materials, brick, mahogany, and marble, came from the east by steamer and then by wagon train. The furnishings and fine art were European in origin, Italian paintings and statuary, antique French furniture and tapestries, English furniture in the Eastlake tradition.