



In the spring of 1849 when Lt. Delos Bennett Sackett arrived to lay out the new town, he found 120 eager settlers camped in brush shelters on land that later became the heart of Las Cruces. The families waited while the lieutenant and his men, using a rawhide rope, marked off the city's new streets. When the men finished, they gathered under a big cottonwood near what is now Griggs Street and set up for drawing of lots. The heads of families drew lots from a hat to determine which property each family would own.

The original town was thirteen blocks long by six blocks wide, laid out in an American-style grid. The first blocks settled included Water Street, so called for its proximity to the acequia, Main Street, Church Street, and Campo Street. In the first years Las Cruces was mainly a one-story town. Its dusty streets were lined with adobe houses, courtyards and corrals.

— Linda G. Harris, 2003

The Las Cruces of 1849 is still evident today in the Mesquite Street Historic District. This walking tour focuses the area south of Klein Park.

1. Nevarez House

100 S. San Pedro Street

Jesus F. Nevarez and his wife, Mary Kelsey Nevarez, had this large adobe house built about 1913. Jesus alternated the position of county clerk with his brother, Miguel, for many years. In the 1920s and 30s eloping pairs from Texas often came to Las Cruces to be married and the house proved easy to find in the small hours of the morning when enamored couples sought marriage forms.

2. Bombach House – Valencia Apartments

119 S. Campo Street

This large building was constructed in the late 1880s as the residence of Otto Bombach, a merchant who had emigrated from Prussia. The property was purchased by Manuel Chavez, a well known county office holder and court interpreter. In 1927 Chavez removed the roof of the central hall to form a courtyard and so converted the house to apartments. A saw made of barbed wire was used to cut new doorways through the thick adobe walls. The apartments were favorites of career women and for a time was home of Lela Carwardine, one of the early women pilots who flew in powder puff derbies. Guy and Robert Floyd purchased the building in 2003, remodeling it to serve as the office of Las Cruces Abstract & Title Company. The hall was restored and care was taken to preserve as much original material as possible.

3. Santa Rosa Rico House

339 E. May Street

This territorial style adobe was built in the 1890s. Like many of his neighbors, Santa Rosa Rico was a freighter. He was the only survivor of a wagon train massacre and in later years worked for the sheriff's department.

4. Jose Camunez House

306 S. San Pedro Street

A stucco, hip roof, adobe home built about 1920 was the residence of Jose Camunez who was a town trustee in 1914. He was also one of the early fire chiefs in Las Cruces.

5. Jesus Heredia Medina House

305 S. San Pedro Street

Born in the state of Chihuahua Mexico in the 1860s, Jesus Medina immigrated while still a youth to the United States. An artist and sign painter, Medina saw military service during the Spanish American War. In 1907 he designed and built his family's home with his own hands. The large arches and deeply recessed porch show elements of Mexican architecture. Originally the house had a flat roof.

6. Roybal Apartments

408 S. San Pedro Street

Built by Vicente Roybal in the final quarter of the 19th century, this New Mexico vernacular adobe structure with stepped buttresses has changed very little from the time when freight wagons stirred the dust of the street. When the writer C. L. Sonnichsen said that "Las Cruces had buildings that would be skyscrapers except that they lay on their side," he may have been referring to the row of apartments.

7. Silverio Gonzalez House
417 S. San Pedro Street

In 1887 Silverio Gonzalez bought a house (possibly of *jacal* construction) at this location from Hilario Morales who had never filed a deed claim with the county. Two years later in 1889 Gonzalez petitioned to have his deed recorded stating that he “is about to complete a second and larger house on the lot and make other valuable improvements.” The court accepted the petition and registered this house in his name. The house is now occupied by Melendrez family, descendants of one of Dona Ana Bend Colony Land Grant original settlers.

8. Alvarez House
428 S. San Pedro Street

The beautifully preserved pedimented windows on the 19th century house are an example of what many window frames were like on better built homes throughout the Southwest during the Territorial period. It is now difficult to know whether the hip roof is original or added later to this house owned by the families of Borja Alvarez and Diego Alvarez.

9. Barncastle House and Store
127-129 S. Mesquite Street

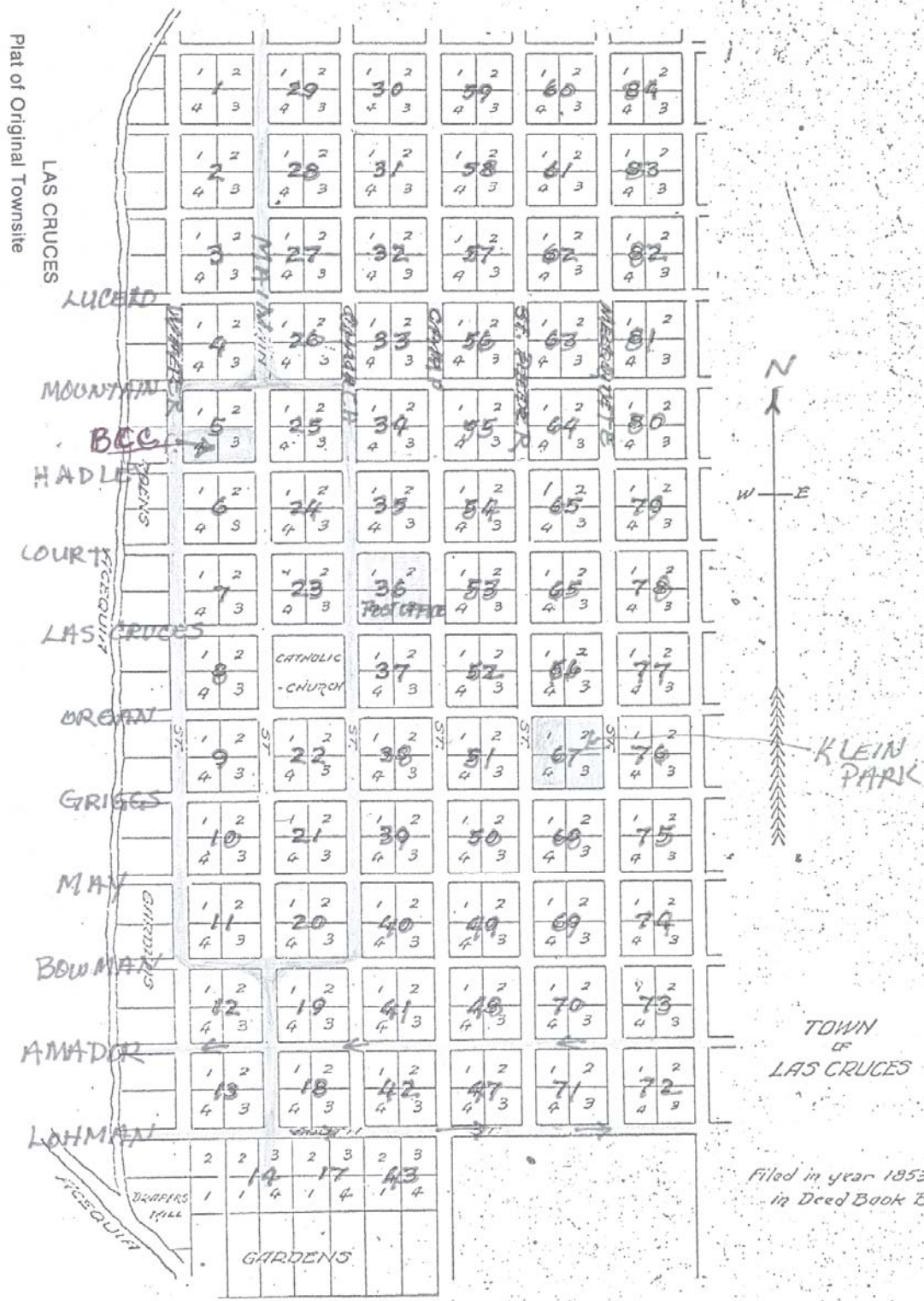
Tony Barncastle was a well-known merchant in Las Cruces and in the 1920s served the town as a trustee. A descendent of John Barncastle who came to New Mexico with the California Column in the 1860s, Tony lived and worked in this well preserved New Mexico vernacular structure. Of special interest is the soft rose color of the plaster and the truncated hip roof covered with corrugated metal.

10. Sierra / Carbonniere House
101 S. Mesquite Street

About 1867 Francisco Sierra and his wife, Refugia Salmon de Sierra, emigrated from Mexico and by 1870 they built the oldest part of this house, the four rooms fronting on Griggs Avenue. In time the property passed to their daughter Antonia and her husband Jean Carbonniere. Jean was born in France and was brought to the Mesilla Valley by his uncle, Frank Carbonniere, a miller. Carbonniere enlarged the house in 1910 and in the 1930s their son, John, operated a print shop in the eastern most room of the original house on Griggs. In 1939 the property was separated into two homes, one of which is still owned by the descendents of the builders.

11. “The Long Adobe”
542 E. Court Avenue

When built in the late 1800s, the house was a plain adobe rectangle covering a full quarter of Block 78 in the Original Townsite Addition. The building’s “wings” were just one room deep and surrounded an interior patio. Each room had its own street side door and window. At that time it was called “The Long Adobe” and was a bordello. The Sanchez family purchased the property in 1935 and used it as rental units before deeding it to their four sons in 1950. As was the custom, the house was divided by so many vigas per son.



References:

- The Las Cruces Historic Building Survey*, Doña Ana County Historical Society, 1982
- The Mesquite Street Historic District, Self Guided Tour*, Las Cruces CVB, 1999 brochure
- Driving Tour, Mesquite Historic District*, Las Cruces CVB, undated brochure
- 16th Annual Home Tour*, Las Cruces Symphony Guild, 2007
- Dona Ana County Documents Online: Assessor Parcel Maps