

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

For HPD Office use only: HCPI No. _____ District No. _____		<i>Please complete HCPI FORM 1 before completing FORM 2</i>	
		NRHP _____ SRCP _____	Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D
1. Name of property: Otero-Bergere House Fence and Wall	2. Location: 135 Grant Avenue Downtown and Eastside Historic District Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: H-2241	
		4. County: Santa Fe	
		5. Date of Survey: July 2, 2021; July 7, 2021; July 12, 2021; August 4, 2021; July 25, 2022	

ADDENDUM

Otero-Bergere House: Fence and Wall
135 Grant Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico (APN# 10248320)
 John W. Murphey Architectural History Services, August 10, 2023



Figure 1: Panel of White Picket Fence. July 12, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 2: Parcel aerial.

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Current Historical Designation

The property holding the fence and wall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Alfred M. Bergere House (NRIS 75001166) and designated a Significant Structure in the Santa Fe Downtown and Eastside Historic District. Neither the fence nor the wall has been formally evaluated for City of Santa Fe Contributing Status.

Addendum Background

A review of 1990s plat maps and other records determined that the so-called East-West Wall separating the former Safeway and Otero-Bergere House properties belonged to the latter property.¹ Following this discovery, the project proponents and the City of Santa Fe Historic Preservation Division agreed that the wall and a separate fence on the Otero-Bergere property would be considered for status independent of the Safeway Building.² City staff advised that the fence and wall status could attach to the existing Historic Building Inventory for the Otero-Bergere House, with the focus only on the history of the wall and fence.

Property Capsule History

The land on which the Otero-Bergere House stands was historically part of the royal presidio, a military fortification that protected Santa Fe during the colonial period. Following American Occupation, it developed into the Fort Marcy Military Reservation.³

¹ Colin T. Cameron, telephone conversation with Georgia O’Keeffe Museum project team and June 21, 2021, email to Daniel Hernandez et al.
² March 24, 2021, Zoom meeting with City of Santa Fe staff, and Daniel L. Schwab email communication to John Murphey, May 18, 2021.
³ The following history is taken from John W. Murphey, “Safeway No. 921, Georgia O’Keeffe Education Annex,” New Mexico Historic Properties Inventory form, June 13, 2021.

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The first iteration of the house — one of six Officers’ Quarters — began in 1870 with construction of a quarried stone foundation. Like fort structures from the Spanish period, it was constructed of adobe. Unlike these, it had a Georgian central passage plan and a flow of separate rooms in a parlor, dining, chamber, and kitchen configuration. It included additional rooms in an ell at the rear and bedrooms on an upper story accessed by stairs in the hall. The one-and-half-story cross-gabled plan and its placement back from the street made it distinctive. The officers’ houses were likely the first American-plan homes erected in Santa Fe. Part of the fort landscape included a picket fence delineating each home’s front, side and rear lot lines.

The house served as military housing until around 1904, after which it became a private residence owned at various times by the Baca, Luna, Otero, and Bergere families. In c.1924, during Eduardo Otero’s ownership, it was transformed into a Pueblo Revival-style residence. Nina Otero is thought to have overseen the work.

After 1976, following the death of Anita Bergere and Mary Kennedy, an attorney named Harry Bigbee acquired the property and used the house for his law practice. In 2001, the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum renovated the building, transforming it into the Research Center.

Picket Fence

A long, white picket fence edges the front of the Bergere-Otero House and marks the boundary between the private yard and the public right-of-way (Fig.3). Reconstructed and repaired in 2000-2001, it may incorporate elements of an earlier fence.

Its basic construction consists of 8’ sections of staves or pickets nailed to rails, which are, in turn, supported by posts. Each panel contains 19 pickets. The pickets — 3’ high, 3½” wide, and ½” thick — are spaced 2” apart. They taper at the top to a squared-off point (Fig. 4).

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The framework is made of ½” x 3½” wood rails joining interval posts. The top rails lap across the posts with angled mitered joints; the bottom rails tie into the posts with dados (Fig. 5). The pickets are affixed to the frame by two round-head machine nails spaced 1” apart (Fig. 6). A few staves show a different nailing pattern, with smaller finish-type nails spaced 2” apart.

The ½” x 4 ¾” posts are located on the interior and are not visible from the outside. The fence is bolstered by a concrete base or curb, measuring 8½” across and 13½” high (Fig. 7). This element brings the fence’s height to approximately 46” above the sidewalk.

Toward the north end is an opening holding a gate (Fig. 8). The entrance, made of the same pickets, is framed by square wood posts. The 11½” x 11½” posts are faced with boards and topped with a similar mitered capital. These may be older and survived the 2000-2001 reconstruction. The 4’-wide gate has a Z-braced frame and opens with newer butt hinges.

The fence reveals two types of paint layering, potentially suggesting the age of its members. A majority of the pickets and some rails show only one layer of white paint at wear points (Fig. 9). Other members (mostly rails) reveal multiple layers of paint (Fig. 10).

History

Based on photographs from the 1870s and ‘80s, wood picket fences defined the Fort Marcy Reservation, being located along the street and on the sides and backs of the individual house lots. While there are no images of the front of the Otero-Bergere House from this period (Figs. 11 & 12), photographs of the officers’ housing on Lincoln Avenue show a similar fence design (Fig. 13). The picket heads are of various shapes, some closer to a spade or Gothic point (Fig. 14); they rested directly on the ground or on a bottom plate.⁴

⁴ Newspaper accounts of the period present the arrival of the picket fence as an act of progress. As example, in 1883, a short piece in the *New Mexican* cheers the replacement of an “old unsightly wire fence” with a “neat picket fence, painted white.”

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The clearest historic images of a fence at the front of the property are photographs taken at the house in 1912 for the wedding party of Estella Bergere and Aldo Leopold (Figs. 15 & 16). Though the fence is situated in the background, enlarging and cropping the images gives a good sense of its design at the time. Later photographs of the house continue to show a picket fence at the front of the property.

The most critical image for this study is a photograph taken of a portion of the gate area on October 28, 1976 (Fig. 17). The picture shows a fence that is different from the type seen in the Leopold wedding pictures and the structure that is in place currently. As shown in the photograph, the pickets have a pointed head and are arranged at a wider spacing than currently. There are also more pickets between the posts. In the picture, moving south from the gate, there are 22 staves before the image is cropped. While the bottom rail is not visible, the top rail appears on the exterior side of the fence.

2000 HDRB Case

This or another fence came under consideration by the Board in 2000. Architect Greg Allegretti, who was the local associate for Gluckman Mayner Architects, designers of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum and Research Center, came before the Board with a proposal to replace a picket fence. Representing the client’s wishes, Allegretti initially proposed a solid wall. This was discouraged by HDRB staff, leading to a revised proposal to replace the fence with a new picket structure.⁵

The revision included replacing the existing wood gate posts with stuccoed concrete “pilasters.” The design was based on a schematic drawing prepared by Gluckman Mayner (Fig 18). At the November 14, 2000 HDRB hearing, the Board reviewed the fence replacement under Case #H-09-149. Following a discussion of its design, member Randall Bell made a motion “to

⁵ Greg Allegretti, telephone conversation with John Murphey, July 7, 2021. Allegretti characterized the work as a construction/reconstruction project.

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renovate the fence as is and replace in kind as needed” instead of replacing it.⁶ After further consideration, the Board voted unanimously “To renovate the existing fence as is, replacing material in kind where necessary, to retain or replace the base as necessary, and keeping the fence white.”⁷

It is unclear what occurred after HDRB approval. The Wolf Corporation oversaw its reconstruction. The company's files identify the project as “repaired to match existing.”⁸

The conclusion is that the fence was repaired and reconstructed, which included introducing new wood members. However, the current structure more closely resembles the 2000 drawing than the fence that stood in 1976. In this way, it is essentially a reconstruction following the Gluckman Mayner design.

Evaluation of Status

While a wood picket fence has defined the west edge of the property for over 100 years, the current structure, based on a 1976 photograph and an examination of existing materials and design, is not historic. Evidence indicates that the earlier structure was replaced to a great extent in the 2000-2001 project. Its design did not follow the earlier fence, but a design created by the architect. Consisting of a mix of new and older members, recast in a new design, it does not meet the threshold for Contributing status.

The recommendation is to designate the white picket fence a Noncontributing Structure to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District.

⁶ “Minutes of the City of Santa Fe Historic Design Review Board,” November 14, 2000, 19.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Susan Martinez, Wolf Corporation, telephone conversation with John Murphey, July 19, 2023.

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East-West Wall

Separating the Otero-Bergere House and Safeway properties is a 272' long solid wall. The stuccoed wall shows considerable variety in height, measuring at different points between roughly 72" and 102." As observed in a 1976 photograph coupled with physical evidence, the variations in height likely represent additions to an older, shorter wall.

Starting at the east end, which ties into a street wall along Sheridan Avenue, the "East Section" maintains a 72" height as it parallels the former Safeway building (Fig. 19). Aesthetic issues on the Otero-Bergere side, and a lack of adequate space on the Safeway exposure (Fig. 20), prevented the consultant from penetrating this section. Its construction is unclear. The section has pilasters on the Otero-Bergere side, potentially from older construction or an intervention.

After this roughly 110'-long section, the wall jumps to 102" high at the "Middle Section" (Fig. 21). Moving westward through a series of steps, it lowers to 72" and then steps up again to 86½" (Fig. 22). The wall terminates at Grant Avenue, tying into a lower cross wall dating to the Safeway era (Fig. 23).

Examination of the wall on the Otero-Bergere side revealed multiple layers of stucco. A fissure crack showed the currently painted stucco adhered by fiberglass meshing, covering an earlier cementitious salmon-color stucco (Fig. 24).

To understand the composition of the lower and assumed older wall west of the Safeway building, six penetrations were made at a position of 12" above grade. Removing layers of stucco and using a mason's tool revealed CMU hollow block construction (Fig. 25). The blocks were reminiscent of property walls erected in Santa Fe's subdivisions in the 1950s and '60s.

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History

The history of the East-West Wall is unclear. Anecdotal evidence suggests a wood picket fence separated the properties until the first Safeway building was constructed in 1941. A November 10, 1958 aerial photograph shows a wall running the length of the property (Fig. 26). By its shadow, it seems to be taller than the adjacent parked cars. This structure continues to appear in later aerials (Fig. 27). Physical and visual evidence indicates this wall was added upon in height, sometimes to a significant extent (Fig 28).

Evaluation of Status

The origin of the lower portion of the wall is unclear. However, penetrations indicated that, at least west of the Safeway building, it is of CMU block construction — a common postwar building material. Visual and physical evidence shows that this earlier structure was significantly built up in height and further altered with new stucco applications.

The recommendation is to designate the East-West Wall a Noncontributing Structure to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District.

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Figures



Figure 3: White picket fence. July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 4: Picket head. Apparent cut line circled. July 25, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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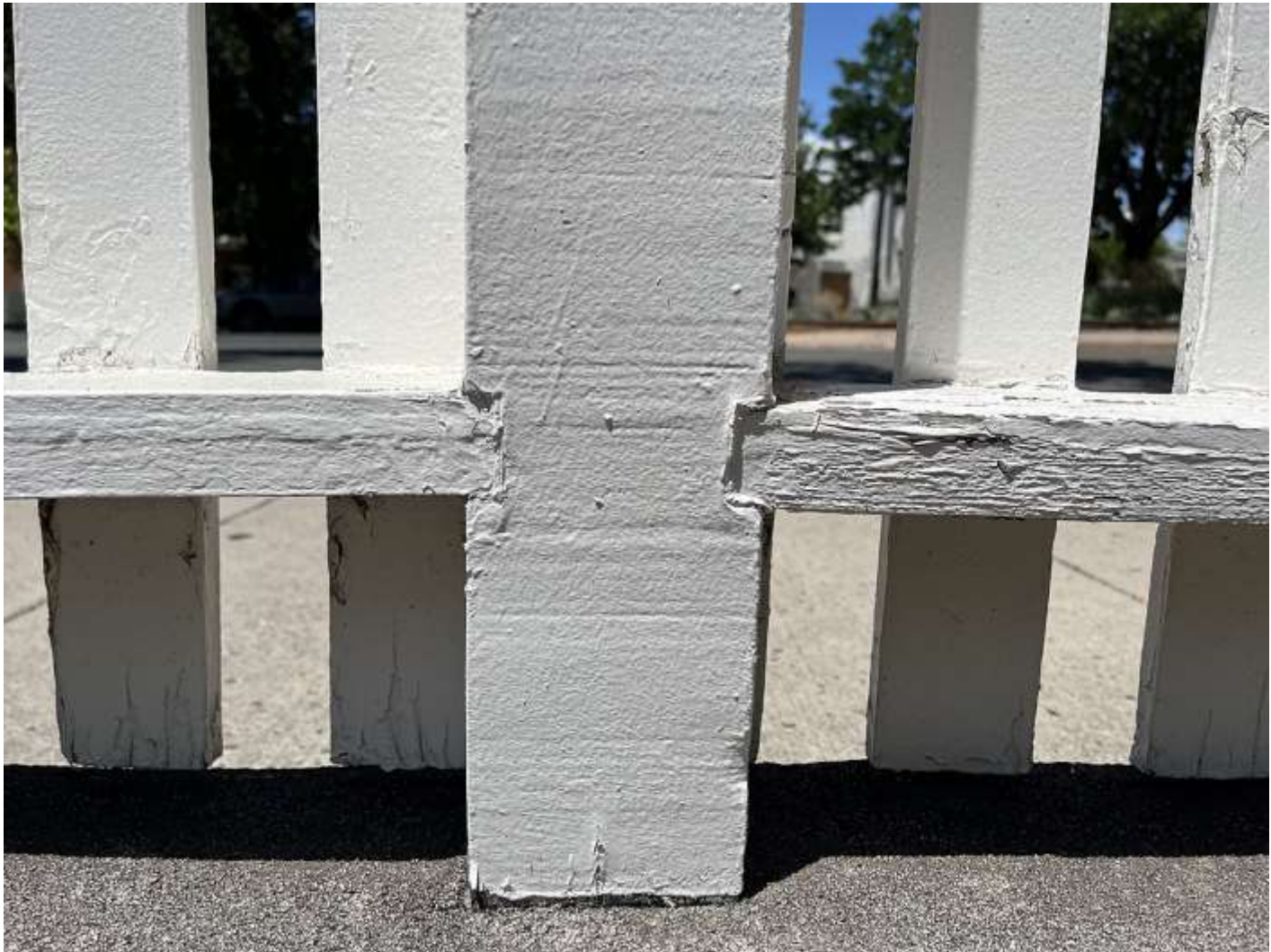


Figure 5: Dado connection. July 25, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 6: Two-nail pattern on picket. July 25, 2023, John W. Murphey.
 Note multiple layers of paint on top rail.

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Figure 5: Concrete curb or base. July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 6: Gate. July 25, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 7: Top rail with only one layer of paint. July 25, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 8: Top rail with multiple layers of paint. July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 11: Otero-Bergere House, 1873. Timothy H. O’Sullivan, photographer. Source: Still Picture Records Section, Special Media Archives Services Division, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

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Figure 12: Crop and blowup of Figure 11.

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Figure 13: Officers' Quarters, Lincoln Avenue, c.1880-82. William Henry Jackson, photographer. Source: Negative #001723, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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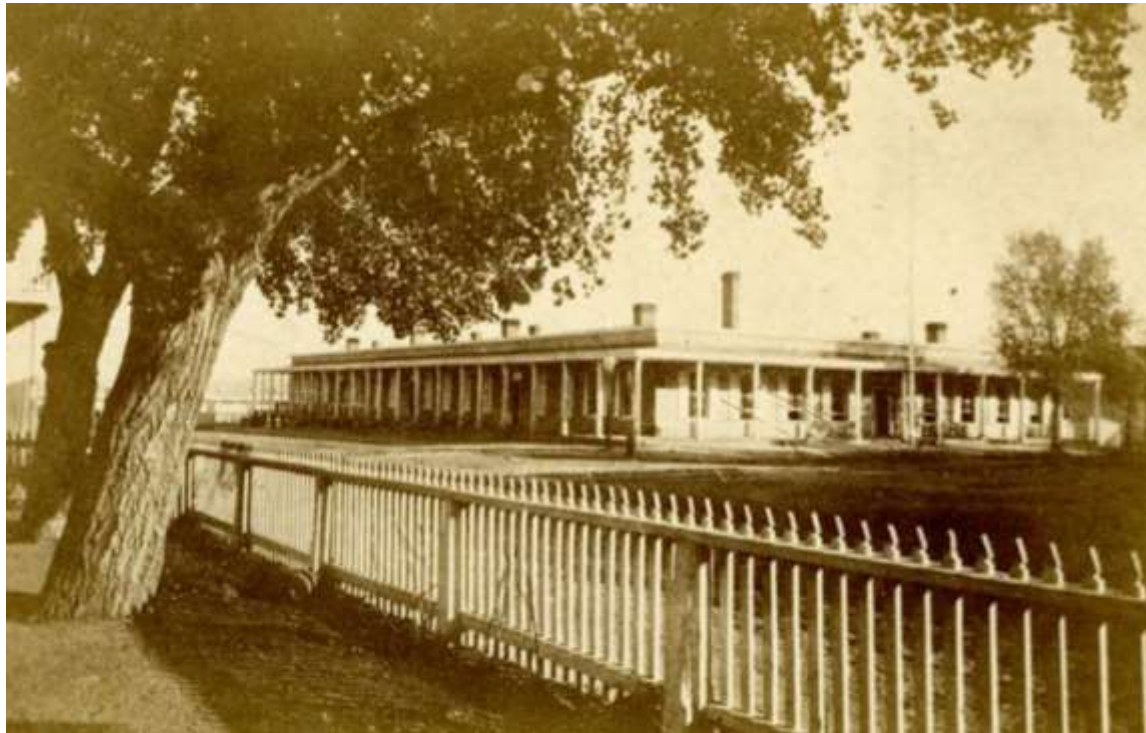


Figure 14: Headquarters Building, c.1880-82. William Henry Jackson, photographer.
 Source: Negative # 001723, Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Figure 15: Cropped image of Otero-Leopold wedding party photograph, 1912. Source: The Aldo Leopold Archives, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

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Figure 16: Cropped image of Otero-Leopold wedding party photograph, 1912. Source: The Aldo Leopold Archives, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

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HCPI No. _____	District No. _____ NRHP _____ SRCP _____ Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D	
1. Name of property: Otero-Bergere House Fence and Wall	2. Location: 135 Grant Avenue Downtown and Eastside Historic District Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: H-2241
		4. County: Santa Fe
		5. Date of Survey: July 2, 2021; July 7, 2021; July 12, 2021; August 4, 2021; July 25, 2022



Figure 17: Otero-Bergere House with front gate and fence, October 28, 1976. 135 Grant Avenue Family Album. Source: Private Collection. Image courtesy of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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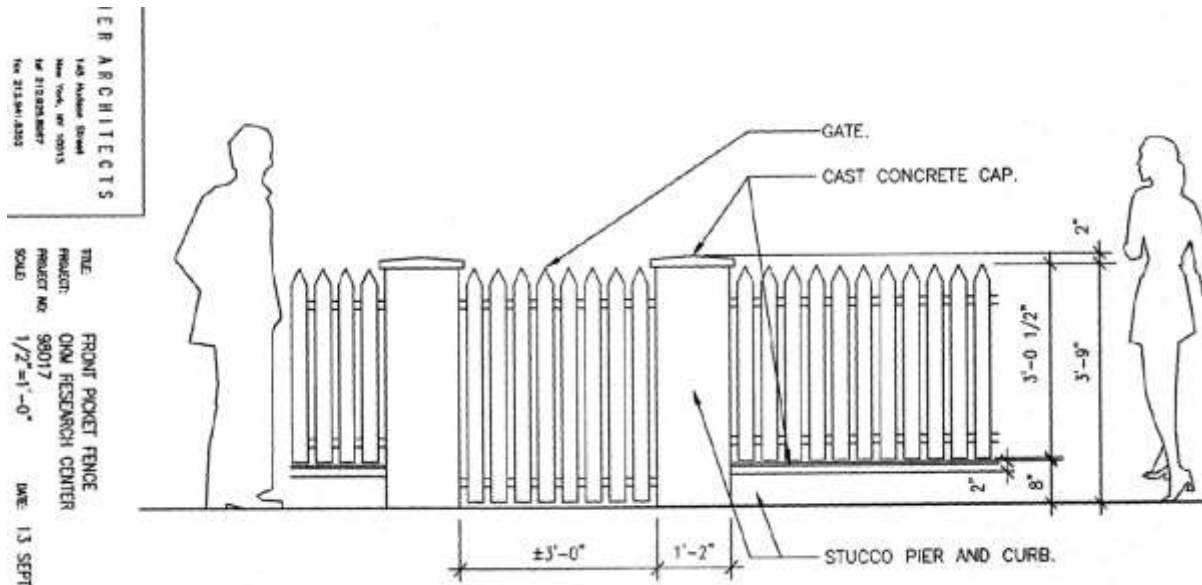


Figure 18: Picket design submitted in HDRB application, 2000. Gluckman Mayner Architects.
 Source: City of Santa Fe.

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Figure 19: "East Section." July 2, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 9: “East Section,” south elevation, left, Safeway Building, right.
 July 2, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 21: “Middle Section,” showing increase in height. July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 102: "West Section." July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 23: “West Section” terminus. July 2, 2023, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 24: Delamination of “Middle Section,” showing multiple stucco applications.
 July 2, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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Figure 25: Test bore #4, “Middle Section,” showing CMU construction. August 4, 2021, John W. Murphey.

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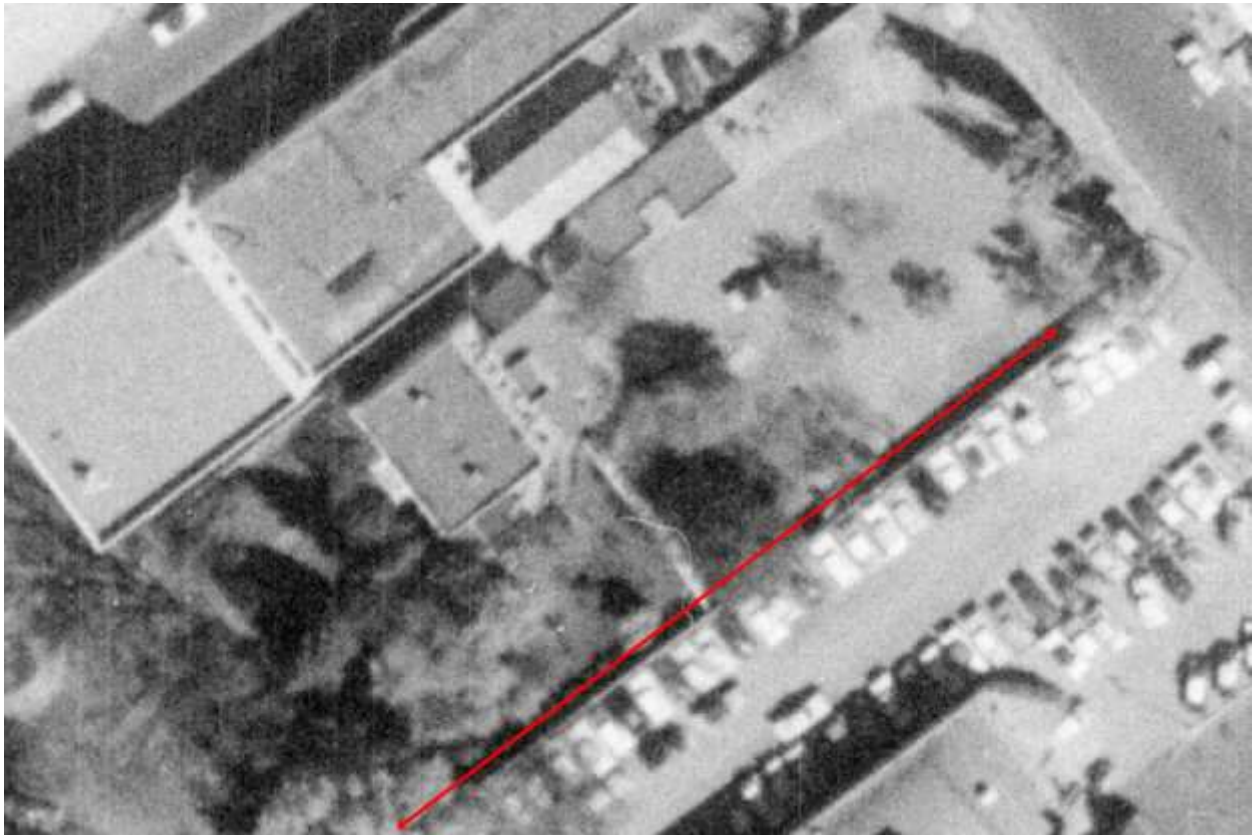


Figure 26: November 10, 1958, aerial photograph. Source: New Mexico Department of Transportation. A wall is visible.

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Figure 27: May 1, 1973, aerial photograph. Source: New Mexico Department of Transportation. A wall is visible.

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Figure 28: East-West Wall and fireplace, October 28, 1976. 135 Grant Avenue Family Album. Source: Private Collection. Image courtesy of the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Note that the wall appears to be added upon in height.

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