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Notes on the Duran Chapel, Talpa, New Mexico

By Harry Garnett
November, 1951

It was the last of February, 1943, that I decided to spend a month or two in Taos. I had some blankets and santos to sell and I wanted to try to get in the Duran Chapel and, if possible, buy some of the santos. I had heard many times from my friends in Taos how tough old Duran was.

One sunny morning after a few days in Taos, I went out to see Duran with a Spanish friend of mine. When we arrived in front of his place, we saw him coming up the hill with a shovel. My Spanish friend stopped him and, after introducing me, asked him if he didn't have some santos he would sell. The old man looked me straight in the eye and said, "Will you give a thousand dollars for one?" With that he walked away. I thought to myself, this old boy is really tough. While talking to Duran, I saw two young girls and a young boy come out of the front house. They were curious as to what we wanted.

That night, I tried to figure some way to break the ice with Duran. I decided I would have to find out something about the old man before I would get anywhere. Two days later, I was back at Duran's. I knocked on the front house. A young girl came to the door. I told her who I was and that I wanted to ask a few questions about Leandro Duran. She said Duran was her grandfather. In the house was another girl and a young boy. This was the family of Frank Duran, son of Leandro Duran. The family consisted of the mother, Pacifica (17), Cecelia (15), and Tomas (14 The father had died some years before. The children were eager to talk about grandpa. They said he was a miser, had lots of money, he was mean, buried his money, only had two friends, lived alone in three rooms next to their house, cooked his own meals, baked his own bread, and asked nothing of any of them. I said that grandpa must be very lonesome. They said, yes, that ever since his wife died he had changed. I said that there must be something that grandpa likes. Pacifica said that he loved cake but was too stingy to buy any. I found out what time Duran came in from working in the fields and planned with the children to give grandpa a party.

I took the children to Taos the next day for lunch and got more information on Duran. A few days later I drove up to the Duran's with three bricks of ice cream and a big pink cake. The children came out and said that grandpa was eating his dinner. I never saw anyone so surprised as when I walked in with the children. I introduced myself. I could see that the children were shy of grandpa, so through Pacifica I told him that we heard that this was his twenty fifth birthday and we wanted to celebrate with him. This broke the ice. The old man had a good laugh over it. He offered me the best chair, his own, with a cushion in it. I kept kidding him through Pacifica and he enjoyed it. The party was a success. Duran ate ice cream and cake until I wondered where he put it. When he was smoking a cigar, I told him all about the Taylor Museum, showed him photographs of some of the santos, explained what we were trying to do with our collection. I never mentioned his santos, but asked him if I could see his church some time. After the party, I walked up to my car with the children. Pacifica said that this was the first time they had seen grandpa laugh in a year.

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After a few visits, still not asking him to sell me santos, I was his friend. One day we were in the chapel and I was admiring two bultos on the altar. I asked him if he didn't think the altar was too crowded, he had too many santos. He laughed and said maybe he would sell me one.

Most of the mornings I spent in Taos with George Travis and Ralph Meyers, curio dealers, trading or just shooting the breeze. One morning I walked into Travis' shop and he showed me three bultos that he had bought the day before. I traded for the three bultos and that afternoon I went out to Duran's. The old man told me that someone had stolen three of his santos and he would sell me two of his santos before they were stolen. Duran was a Shylock and his price was the highest I had ever paid for santos of this size. I made a deal for the San Geronimo and the St. Raymond.

Duran had a son, Jose, who lived about a hundred feet to the east of his house. Duran hated Jose's wife and children and would have nothing to do with them. Jose's wife had a daughter fourteen years old, a blond, by another marriage. She was a nit wit if I ever saw one and her mother was not far behind. That night at dinner with Travis I asked who sold him the three bultos that I had bought. He described Jose's wife and blond daughter exactly. A year later, I saw the photo that Wilder had taken of the Duran Chapel altar and there were the three bultos that I had traded from Travis.

The Santo Entierro in the Duran Chapel was the finest large figure that I had ever seen. Wilder was anxious to get this santo if possible. One rainy day I was in Duran's house. The old man was in a good mood. I asked him if he would sell the Santo Entierro. He laughed and said, "Yes, for a thousand dollars." Duran always got a big kick out of asking high prices and I always pretended that he knocked me over when he asked them. This always got a laugh from him. I carried most of the time five or six hundred dollars in cash. I went to the bank and got all the five dollar bills they could spare. Later I went out to see Duran. I told him his price was too high for the Santo Entierro and I had to go back to Colorado in a few days. There was a table about 30"x30" where Duran ate. I walked over to the table, pulled the large roll of bills out of my pocket and slowly laid them down one by one so that they would cover the table. I could see the old man watching me. After laying down the last bill, I turned my pockets inside out and told him that was all the money I had. If he wanted to sell the Santo Entierro, the money was his. I knew he couldn't resist after seeing all that money. The old Shylock came over to the table and started counting. There was no laughing over this deal. After some time he picked up all the bills and said I could have the santo.

A few days later I told Duran that I had to go to California, as my wife was out there and her mother was sick and she couldn't get any help on account of the war. I said I didn't know. I said I didn't know when I would get down to Taos again, and would't he sell me a few more santos. He said, "If I sell you all my santos you won't come to see me again." I had oversold myself, so I packed up my santos and came back to Colorado Springs. Then I went to California in May. In August I came back to Colorado Springs to close my house for the winter. I was to have some time in Taos before going back to California. I had kept in touch with Duran from California. I would send him postcards from Old Mexico, bull fights and beautiful senoras. Taos never seemed so wonderful to me as it did after being in San Diego. I went out to see my old friend, Duran. He was in the blacksmith shop fixing a wagon wheel. When he saw me he dropped everything, came up and threw his arms around me, squeezed me so tight he broke the frames of my glasses in my pocket. At seventy-three, Duran was as strong as a bear. We had a long visit. He hadn't sold any santos. I told him about the war, the activities of the Navy around San Diego, how hard it was to get gas to come to see him. Wilder was quite anxious to get the altar from the chapel. Mitch told me if I got the altar to wire him, as he wanted to take it out. I was anxious to complete the collection of the Duran santos and tried to impress on Duran how tough it was to get gas and that I couldn't keep running down to Taos all the time. This took patience and repeating many times. Then Duran said "If you can't get gas, give up your car and use one of my horses." He said I could live with him, that there was a vacant house next to the chapel I could have. He even offered me land that I could build on. This was too much, so I saved my breath and never mentioned the war or gas.

After about a week, I had three more santos from the chapel and was dickering for the altar. One day after a couple of hours of horse play, I bought the altar. I wired Mitch to come take it out. Mitch wrote that he couldn't get away at that time but would be down shortly. It must have been three weeks later. I had all but two of the santos in the chapel when Mitch phoned me that John Meem of Santa Fe had sent him a two hundred word telegram, saying that I was going to take the altar from the Duran Chapel, one of the historical chapels in New Mexico. Meem at that time was head of The Historical Society of New Mexico and "everything else that was Holy." Wilder told me to hold everything, as he had to go to Santa Fe and see Meem about the altar.

Up to this time no one in Taos knew what I was up to. I had worked quietly, spending a great deal of time with my friends in Taos and working on the Duran Chapel at the same time. The day after Wilder phoned me, all of Taos knew about the altar. Andrew Dasburg of Taos was the one who phoned John Meem that I was looting the Duran Chapel. That morning after breakfast I met Pascual Martinez, the Mayor of Taos, on the Plaza. Martinez told me that he had been appointed to see if he couldn't get Duran to sell the chapel to The Historical Society of New Mexico. Martinez advised me not to take the altar from the chapel. Martinez was nice about the whole thing and is still my friend. George Travis told me that Victor Higgins, the artist, said that I would never take the

santos and altar out of Taos. Bert Phillips, an old time artist of Taos, told me not to worry -- that I had a perfect right to the altar. He remarked that Dasburg was only jealous that he didn't get it. I felt I was in the right, so did George Travis, Ralph Meyers, Bert Phillips, J. H. Sharp, the artist, Mabel Luhan and some others who didn't dare take sides. Howard Cook, the artist, and Andrew Dasburg who live out Talpa way, brought Duran to Cook's house and gave him coffee and cake. They told him he had been robbed as the altar was worth over a thousand dollars. With Duran, the Shylock, this hurt -- to think he had sold the altar at less than it was worth.

The talk at this time had been all about the altar, but I was afraid if it was found out that I had the santos they would try to take them away. So, I went out to my cabin and hid all the santos. I wanted to block the deal by the Historical Society to buy the church, so I went out to Duran's. Duran was friendly, but I could see that the price of the altar was uppermost in his mind. Duran told me about his talk with Dasburg and Cook. I told him that I would sell the altar to anyone who would pay a thousand for it and split the profit with him. This eased the situation. I told him of my talk with Martinez, about the Historical Society wanting to buy his church and I added that they would run it as a tourist attraction. The old man hit the ceiling. He said, "No one will ever run my church, it is my church and as long as I live I will always keep it." That was all I wanted. I had beat the Historical Society to the punch. When Pascual Martinez went to see Duran about buying the church, he was almost thrown out on his ear. Cook, Dasburg and Martinez told Duran that they would raise money to plaster his church and put it in good condition and it wouldn't cost him anything. Wilder came through Taos at noon the next day. I told him all that had been going on. He left for Santa Fe to see Meem and said he would be back the next evening. Wilder came back the next evening at midnight. He said, "We will have to give the altar back."

(The following dictated by Wilder) (1-10-52) On my visit to New Mexico I had an opportunity to talk with Andrew Dasburg and after meeting with him I went immediately to Santa Fe to talk matters over with John Meem. Dasburg was quite disturbed and thought that the Taylor Museum had schemed the whole affair in an effort to tear down the chapel and have it moved to Colorado Springs However, he was perfectly willing to abide by any decision John Meem might make.

Upon reaching Santa Fe, I went immediately to see John Meem and talked for approximately two hours with him. The upshot of our conversation was that the Taylor Museum would cooperate with any qualified agency in New Mexico in an effort to preserve the Duran Chapel. Specifically, I proposed that the defunct Society for the Preservation and Restoration of New Mexican Missions be reorganized and, if the Duran Chapel seemed to come under the terms of the charter, the Taylor Museum of the Fine Arts Center would be happy to

contribute $500.00 as an initial fund towards the restoration of the Chapel. Mr. Meem agreed that this was a most generous gesture on our behalf and and thought that the obligations of the Taylor Museum had been completely discharged and he would forthwith see what could be done toward reconstituting the organization mentioned.

The entire discussion was carried on in the most friendly terms and Mr. Meem seemed assured that the museum had no intention of destroying a monument. (end of Wilder's statement)

I only remember that Mitch said that Meem remarked that I was the most dangerous man in New Mexico. It was a sad blow to me after all my work to have to give the altar back. What hurt me more than anything was the fact that it was the Santa Fe crowd that made me do it. I made up my mind that I would get the altar some day, come hell or high water. I had all the Duran santos packed in boxes so we loaded them in the station wagon and it was a relief to me when they were on their way to Colorado Springs.

I knew I was through in Taos for some time, so I started packing. I went out to see Duran and told him I would sell him back the altar. He was more than willing to give me back the money I had paid him. We talked for some time. During our conversation, Duran remarked that in all the years he had lived in Talpa, Cook, Dasburg and Martinez had never come to see him. Then he said, "Mr. Garnett, they were just jealous of you getting the altar". Leandro Duran was of the old school. He lived as his grandfather had lived -- oil lamps, wood stoves, with horse and wagon for his transportation. I never saw an old man work so hard, planting his crops in the spring, reaping the harvest in the fall, year after year until his death. He saw through the reason the anglos came to see him for, as he told me later, they never returned or kept their promise to restore his church. I returned to Colorado Springs and then went to California.

Duran Chapel, Talpa, New Mexico
by Harry Garnett 1952

I returned from California in May 1947. Four years had passed since I was forced to give back the Duran Altar. When I went out to see Duran, the old man was sitting in the sun outside his home. As I walked down from the road he got up slowly and came to meet me. I could see that he had slipped since our last meeting. He remarked that he had been sick most of winter. He took me down to the chapel. He wanted me to see his grandson's grave in front of the chapel. The grandson had been killed in the war. Duran was proud of the white stone monument the government had placed at the grave. This was the only stone monument that had ever been in the graveyard and it stood out among the weathered crosses. I looked at the Chapel and there was a hole in the front as big as a wash tub. I thought of the big to-do four years ago when the big shots in Santa Fe thought this gem of primitive New Mexican architecture was to be destroyed. How the Taylor Museum had offered $500.00 toward the restoration of this little chapel when $250. would have put the chapel in perfect condition and cost New Mexico nothing. I asked Duran if anyone had been to see the chapel to see what condition it was in. He said, "No one has has been here since you gave me back the altar". In four years the State Historical Society, with $500. to play with had done nothing with the Duran Chapel. This was Santa Fe all over. I knew at the time I had to give the altar back that it was just a severe case of jealousy, not that Santa Fe gave a damn about the Duran Chapel. After my return, Duran didn't mention the fact that Dasberg, Cook or Martinez had never returned to see him or made any effort to restore the Chapel. Pacifica told me that it hurt Grandpa that none of the angolos returned to see him. She said, "Grandpa doesn't like angolos and you are the only angolo friend he has. In my talks with Duran I could see that he had made up his mind to keep the altar and the remaining santos. He said, "After I die my son and grandchildren can do what they like with the church, but I would like for them to always keep it. Willard Hoagland who was employed by the Lab in Santa Fe, was given the job to try to raise $2000. to buy the Duran Chapel. This was after I had given the altar back to Duran in 1943. I met Hoagland in the bar of the hotel at Taos. I asked him how he was progressing with the restoration of the Duran Chapel. ~~This was after I had~~ He said " Since you gave back the altar, there has been no more interest in the Chapel and they (The Historical Society) have given up the idea to do anything with the Chapel". This only confirmed my opinion that Santa Fe was not interested in the Duran Chapel. They didn't want the Taylor Museum to have the altar and santos.

During my stay in California, Pacifica had married a young Spanish American named Romero, who was with the army in Italy. Duran had given Pacifica a piece of land, just across the road and north of Duran's house. Pacifica had saved the money she had received from the government and was building, by herself, a two room adobe house, which she had started in 1945. She laid the bricks and when I saw it, the walls were part way up. She had a man help her with the foundation and make the window sills. As Pacifica told me, " I work like hell".

One day I found Duran up where Pacifica was building her house. Duran had his team and wagon loaded with long boards of native lumber. Thewe were for the roof. Duran would get the boards to the edge of the roof and Pacifica, with Durans help,got them on the roof. How Pacifica managed those heavy ten inch boards in laying the roof was beyond me. Pacifica was not ober five feet two and I doubt if she weighed a hundred pounds. Later I saw the finished house and it was remarkable what this youngster had accomplished. I saw no plumbing and asked Pacifica where she would get her water. She said, "Out of the ditch". I mention this to show that in New Mexico the pioneer spirit was still alive in 1946.

Tomas, Pacifica's younger brother, had married a pretty Spanish girl, whose complexion was a little lighter than the average. When their first baby was born it had red hair and blue eyes. Tomas' wife was the only one of the family who would speak up to Duran. One day I was in Duran's house with Tomas' wife and baby. Tomas' wife said, "Grandpa says my baby is part anglo, but I tell Grandpa the baby looks just like him". Duran didn't like this. Pacifica told me Grandpa never liked Tomas' wife after the baby was born.

In the late fall I found Duran at the chapel. He was using the chapel to store part of his wheat crop. In looking around the altar I missed the little Santo Nino in the basket. I asked Duran where it was. Duran replied that it was at Pacifica's. That meant only one thing; Pacifica was expecting a baby. I asked Duran how many babies this Santo Nino had helped into the world. He threw up his arms and said Hundreds. This little Santo Nino never returned to the Duran Chapel. For the next two years the babies came. Cecila, Pacifica's younger sister, had married. When I bought the altar and the santos and looked for the Santo Nino, it was in Cecilia's room.

Duran told me the Santo Nino was the most popular santo in his church. This corresponds with what Medina told me when he gave me the tiny Santo Nino from the Medina private Chapel.

The next two years on my visits to Duran he never changed his mind about selling the altar and the santos. The chapel was gradually going to pieces. Duran had lost all his old time vigor. As Pacifica told me, "Grandpa just sits in the sun and has very little to say".

For two months I was not feeling too well and I didn't get to Taos. Then came a letter from Duran, saying that a Spanish trader had been to see him saying that I was dead. He went on to say that the trader had offered him an automobile for the altar. I knew the trader was Florence from Las Vegas, New Mexico. I also knew that Duran hated automobiles. Duran's letter snapped me out of what ever was wrong and in a few days I was on my way to Taos. Pacifica told me that Florence had told Duran that I was very sick and that he (Duran) would never see me again, so he better trade the altarfor the auto. Later I found out that Charles Carroll of Taos had sent Florence out to Duran's to see if he could get the altar. Charles Carroll said to me, "I don't see how you ever got in with Duran." He said that every time he took friends out to see the chapel it cost him twoto three dollars to get in the chapel. Stallings told me that it took the State Historical Society of New Mexico three

men ths to get Duran's permission to make drawings and survey the Duran Chapel. Duran treated all angdlos alike. If they wanted to see the Chapel he charged them what he felt like.

Report No. 3 by Harry Garnett DURAN CHAPEL

I saw Leandro Duran the last time in October, 1949. In my last talk with him, I could see he had made up his mind not to sell the altar and bultos during his lifetime. That Christmas as usual I sent him a Christmas box. In January I had a short note from him thanking me and saying that he was not well. About the 15th of March, 1950, I was in Taos and went out to see Duran. Tomas's wife came out to the car and told me Grandpa had died in February, 1950. She said Jose Duran wouldn't let us in Grandpa's house to get your address so we couldn't tell you he was dead. I asked to whom he left the Chapel. She said to Jose and the grandchildren. From previous exprience I knew I was in for a tough time. Jose had five children, all small, and there were six more grandchildren by the other two sons. These six grandchildren were grown and had no use for their uncle Jose. I had met Jose but twice in the seven years I had called on Duran. Jose did not speak English. Leandro Duran hated Jose's wife and said if Jose died first he would kick his wife and all her kids off his property, so there was friction all the time between father and son.

I askd if any traders or Taos people had been to see Jose to buy the altar. She said no one had been to see Jose. Leandro Duran just before he died had dictated a will to two of his old companions. It was written on tablet paer with a pencil but it was legal in New Mexico. Jose would not let the grandchildren see the will and their information had come from outside. I went over to see Jose. Jose's wife did the talking. Jose was left all of the property, the Chapel going to Jose and the grandchildren. He had not had the will probated. After his father died, Jose

who thought that money was hidden there, put a padlock on his father's house. They asked me how much money I had paid Duran for santos. Jose said his father sold a piece of property for $350.00 just before he died, but when he died he had only $15.00 in his pocket. Jose said, "I asked my father twice before he died if he would tell me where he had buried his money, but he would not answer me." Jose's wife said she thought Duran had given the money to Pacifica or Tomas. Jose's wife was the lowest type of Spanish-American I had run across and my sympathy was with the grandchildren. Jose was the dumb type. He could never make up his mind and he would rub his chin and scratch his head until his wife barked at him and made him snap out of it.

I saw that I would have to sell Jose's wife on the idea of selling me the alter. I told Jose why I thought the money was hidden in Duran's house -- he told me several times that he had buried his money and that whoever found it would have to dig for it. Because Jose and his wife were superstitious, I told them I would go to see a well known fortune teller in Taos; perhaps she could tell where the money was hidden. This fortune teller was a Spanish woman who lived down the Taos valley. Most of the Spanish people were afraid to go to her because she had a reputation for telling them things they did not want to hear. She was Mamby's sweetheart at the time he was murdered and this added to the Spanish people's superstition.

I could see Jose's wife was impressed and she promised to help me get the alter if I would help them find Duran's money. Jose promised to see an attorney about the will the next day. I had contacts to make among the Penitentes in other villages around Taos, so three days later while I was sitting ~~in the plaza~~

in my car in the plaza of Taos, Jose's wife came to tell me that Jose's attorney wanted to see me. This was like a solar plexus blow to me. If there was anything I didn't want it was my name brought up in connection with the Duran estate. Although seven years had passed, I knew the big shots in Taos had not forgotten about the Duran altar deal in 1943. Jose's wife gave me the name of the attorney, Esquipula Martinez, who had his office in his home on Pueblo Road. I was grateful that he was Spanish and not an Anglo.

I found Martinez in the kitchen of his home. He was close to seventy and of the old school. He told me I couldn't buy the altar at that time because the will would have to be probated and it would be about April 15th before he could go before the court with a petition to see the contents of the Duran Chapel. I gave Martinez the history of the Duran altar deal since 1943, telling him what the Taylor Museum was trying to do to preserve the old santos and how Duran felt about the Anglos of Taos before he died. When I left I felt I had made a friend. I gave him ten dollars. I told him this was not a bribe but I did appreciate the information he had given me. I asked him to keep the Duran estate as quiet as possible and I would return before April 15th.

Late the next afternoon, to keep my promise to Jose, I went to see the fortune teller. She lived in a small adobe down the valley a mile from Taos; the place was poorly furnished. Though she was Spanish she had been married to an American named Fergusson who died some years before she became Mamby's sweetheart. I could see that she had been a very pretty woman at one time. I told her about Duran and how I wanted to find the money he was supposed to have buried. I sat in a kitchen chair while she sat at a table

with a soiled pack of playing cards. While she shuffled the cards and laid them on the table she talked of Duran, asked questions, and said that there were many buried treasures around Taos as the old Spanish people never trusted banks.

It was dusk by this time and the only light came through the open door. A mouse came out of the hole in the wall and sat looking at both of us. I could see why the Spanish people were afraid of this woman. The place was spooky. At last she said the money is in the Duran house and it looks like it is under the floor in the room where his wife died. It was about dark by now and I was glad to pay her and get away.

The next day I went out to tell Jose what the fortune teller had said. Jose's wife was excited and told me not to tell Pacifica or any of the grandchildren. I told Jose I would be back before April 15th and to keep quiet about the Chapel. Duran had three sons and only Jose was living. I had worked quietly and so far no one seemed to know or care that Leandro Duran was dead. When I returned to Colorado Springs I repeated to Wilder all that had transpired. Wilder had two bills of sales drawn up. One in English, and one in Spanish. These were for Jose and his wife to sign in event I got the Altar.

I decided to return to Taos before the 15th of April as I was afraid that Chas. Carroll would find out Duran was dead and get Alfonso Florence of Las Vegas, New Mexico to try and buy the Altar. I drove to Taos April 11th. That same day I went to see a friend who traded with Florence and who sold Santos to Carroll. He told me that Florence had been to see Jose Duran about the Altar and that Carroll was putting up the money. I drove out to Durans and saw Pacifica first. She said that Florence had been there and was trying

to line up the grandchildren. Pacifica said " You know Grandpa didn't like Florence and wouldn't let him in his home." Florence also offered Pacifica a new cook stove if she would help him get the Altar. Florence was the smartest of all the Spanish traders. He could talk the rural Spanish people out of their only shirt and I knew that he would stop at nothing to get the Altar. He would promise gifts to all the grandchildren but forget all about it after he got the Altar. I told Pacifica to try to keep her sisters and brother in line and I would see they got extra money as soon as I got the Altar. Pacifica said "Mr. Garnett we have always wanted you to have the Alter."

I went over to see Jose. Jose's wife was upset and said Florence would pay big money for the Alter. I told her that she knew Leandro Duran was a smart old man who knew a crook when he saw one and that he wouldn't let Florence in his house. I also asked her if she knew that Florence offered Pacifica a new cook stove if she would help him. Jose's wife blew a fuse "The dirty so and so I knew he was a crook." Nothing I could have said would have helped me more as Jose(s wife hated the grandchildren. Jose wouldn't speak to the grandchildren and they were afraid to ask Jose about the estate. I passed along all the information I could get to the grandchildren. Jose was executor of the estate.

I decided to get all the grandchildren together with Jose's wife to see where I stood. By this time the whole deal was as confusing as a rat race in a wash tub with a new headache every day.

Next I went to see Martinez the attorney. Martinez told me the money from the sale of the Altar would have to be devided three ways, to the sons of Duran or to their heirs. This I kew would cause Jose to talk, as I had told Jose he would get more than the rest as he had five children.

Back to see Jose with the bad news. Jose and his wife had it up and down in Spanish. After they had calmed down I said to Jose, " If you will play fair with me I will give you an extra hundred dollars when I get the Altar". Jose said, "You were good to my Father and I know that he wanted you to have the Altar." I knew that they would double cross me for a slick dime but for the time being I had the inside track. If I played my bribes right I would have a good edge on anything Florence could do.

At the meeting of the heirs and Jose's wife we all stood between the two houses. I told them that their grandfather wanted them to keep the church and if they decided to keep it I would try and raise some money to restore it. They all shook their heads, they didn't want the church. I told them since we had most of the Saints from the Chapel in Colorado Springs the Alter and remaining Santos should all be together. One man I had never met said the Santos and Altar are worth $2,000.00. Pacifica said "You are crazy." So it went on and on for two hours. I noticed that Tomas was whispering to some of the other hiers. He looked sully and angry. I knew that he had turned on me for some reason. After the meeting I called Tomas over to my car and told him that I had always been for him and his sistws. He said "Why do you go see Jose so much?" I said because he is executor of the estate and can do with it as he pleases. I told Tomas I would give h[illegible] and his sister $50.00 if he would try and line up the other heirs for me. He said "Do you think I can do it?" I said "Sure you can."

This is the way it went everyday. Learning the hard way about Spanish-Americans. Everyday Chas. Carroll through Alfonso Florence was on the job. Thursday the 15th of April was to be the big day. Jose with his attorney was to be in court at 3 P.M.. I had an

agreement with Jose that he was to come to my cabin as soon as he had permission to sell the Alter. I didn't dare show up in Taos that afternoon. I knew that Florence would be outside the courtroom to collar Jose and I knew from the grape vine that Carroll had drawn $700.00 from the Taos bank and Florence would have the money in his pocket.

Thursday at 3:30 P.M. I walked out to the road from my cabin. No sign of Jose's old Ford. 4:00 P.M. still no Jose by 4:30 P.M. I was fit to be tied. I knew it didn't take that long before the judge. I assumed Jose had sold it to Florence. All I could do was to stay put. 5:00 P.M. still no Jose. Fifteen minutes later Jose and his wife came. Jose lokked as if he was in a daze. His wife said,"We were held up by Florence." Florence had a big roll of bills, more money than Jose had ever seen, nearly a thousand dollars. By this time I was worn out and mad. I knew they were going to put the bite on me for more money. I said,"What the hell do you want?" "I am dam sick and tired of waiting on you." Jose said that he would have to have a $100.00 more. I had a lot of cash on me , but the extra $100.00 I had to write a check. Jose and his wife signed the bill of sales. I went out and picked up the santos from the Chapel. I went to the trucking company who ran trucks to Raton and Colorado and ordered a truck for 2:30 P.M. Friday afternoon. Tomas came out that night for his $50.00. Friday morning everything seemed calm. At 2:00 P.M. I went out to see about taking the Altar out of the church. When I got to Duran Jose's wife and all the grandchildren were out in the yard. I said, "Where is Jose?". Jose's wife said Florence came out and told Jose they would throw him in jail if he sold the Altar to an unbeliever. Florence had scared Jose half out of his wits. I heard later that Jose almost turned white. Jose had gone to see his sttorney.

By this time my truck was due. Jose had the keys to the Chapel and I couldn't get in. Nothing to do but to go back a few miles and stop the truck. I met the truck two miles from Taos.I told them I couldn't get the Alter and could they pick it up Saturddy. They said no interstate trucking Saturday. I would have to wait until Monday. I drove up to see Martinez, the attorney, and there was Jose sitting in the kitchen with the same dumb expression on his face. I let loose with both barrels at Jose. Martinez told me before Jose that the alter was mine and he couldn't keep me from taking it. I said to Jose, "You be home in an hour and I want that Altar." My blood pressure had gone up 50 points the day before waiting for Jose. Now it was up again. I drove down to see a friend who I knew would know what Florence and Carroll were up to. He said I can't take sides, but I will tip you off. If you want the Altar you had better get it out this afternoon, as Carroll is watching the road to see if the Alter goes by and you know they could throw you in jail on a trumpped up charge, until they could find someway to take the Alter away from you. I know that the sheriff of Taos would do this, if word came from Santa Fe.

The Altar was eight feet long and six feet high. I knew it would jolt to pieces if carted in a regular truck. I knew Carroll and Florence would see it go by as Carroll's house was on the road I had to take. I walked out of my friend's house about as low as I ever expect to be. I drove out to Duran's to look at the Altar. Jose met me in the yard and walked to the Shapel with me. We moved the long table from in front of the Altar. The largest panel in the Alter was in the center. I saw this would go in my car between the front and back seats. I figured the painted panels were the most valuable part of the Altar. I asked Jose to get two hammers. We climbed up beside

the Altar. One on one side and one on the other. Gradually we got the top frame of the Altar loose. When the top beam came off the whole Altar came apart. I packed the panels with blankets in my car. Tomas said he had an old pickup and would take the frame and large beam to my place in Taos. I told him to give me five minutes start and then to come to my cabin. I stored the frame in a garage of a friend. Just as it was getting dark I pulled out of Taos. I didn't breatheeasy until I crossed the Colorado line.

Over seven years I had worked to get the two Bultos and Altar from the Duran Chapel. When I delivered the Bultos and part of the Altar to Wilder at the Museum, Wilder said he had a call from John Meems of Santa Fe about the Altar. This was only the beginning. Chas. Carroll disposition wouldn't let him take the defeat lying down. Carroll hired attorneys who tried to force me to return the Altar. Carroll gave publicity to the newspapers of Taos and Santa Fe against myself and the Taylor Museum. The telegrams, letters and newspaper clippings received are all part of the record of the Duran Chapel and are in the files of the Taylor Museum.

Almost two weeks after I returned with the Altar, George Mills, of the Museum staff took the station wagon to Taos and brought back the parts of the Alter I had stored.

Jose paid Martinez his attorney $150.00 from the money paid for the Alter to settle the whole estate ... "What a Stinker".

Harry Garnett..1953.

DURAN CHAPEL...LEANDRO DURAN

Leandro Duran died in February 1950 at seventy nine. His sickness,death and burial were the same as if the year had been 1860.There was no Doctor.An old woman who lived down by the Talpa Church gave him home remedies.After he died, as quickly as possible(for there were no undertakers)they put on his black suit and white shirt.A coffin was fashioned of rough native lumber and Duran was placed in it.The body lay in state in the little Chapel.One of the grandchildren remarked "it was so cold Grandpa kept well".(Sometimes it takes the Priest a week to get around to a burial in the country).When they dug his grave two and a half feet deep they dug up two other burials.

For fifty years Duran dictated and ruled all thoes that lived on his property.I doubt if there was a tear shed at his passing.He is buried against the south wall near the Chapel,not in the center of the grave yard as he had planned and only a two foot cross of native lumber is on his grave.

Leandro Duran was the most interesting spanish character I ever met in New Mexico.I never heard anyone speak a kind word about him.All the family were afraid of him.To me he was just a lonely old man.

George - This is correct -
Harry -

THE DURAN CHAPEL AND LEANDRO DURAN. Harry Garnett.

The Duran Chapel at Talpa was dedicated to Our Lady of Talpa. The santo of Our Lady of Talpa in the Duran group is the smaller figure of the two of Our Lady. In my many talks with Duran about the Chapel, here is what he told me. Leandro Duran was adopted when he was a baby by Pableta Sandoval. Pableta Sandoval's father was Nicholas Sandoval. It was Nicholas Sandoval, with the help of his neighbors, who built the little chapel in the eighteen twenties. Duran said that Pableta told him that her father, Nicholas Sandoval, wore his hair in a queue. The chapel was built because it was over two and a half miles to the Ranchos de Taos Church and at times there were Indian raids and it was dangerous to go as far as Ranchos de Taos. After Nicholas Sandoval died, the property was left to Pableta Sandoval. Duran was just a small boy when Nicholas Sandoval died. At Pableta Sandoval's death there was a fight among the children over the estate. Gradually, Duran got control of the Sandoval property from the heirs.

The house in which Duran lived was much older than the Chapel. The Duran Chapel was attached to a house block that ran west from the chapel and then north, ending in the Duran house. Duran said that all the buildings that ran from the chapel to his house were the original Sandoval property. The museum people in Santa Fe claim that the altar and its reredos were painted by Rafael Aragon, who was commissioned by the Sandoval family to execute the six by eight foot reredos along with the santos. According to an inscription in one of the boards in the ceiling, the chapel was dedicated by Padre Martinez of Taos in 1851. Some say that it was reroofed at that time. I doubt this, as there is an earlier inscription hardly legible in the ceiling near the front of the chapel. Padre Martinez dedicated the chapel in 1851, but the chapel was built some years before that.

The walled-in graveyard in front of the Duran Chapel was so full of burials, that when they dug a new grave they dug up a quantity of bones. The bodies were never buried over two and a half to three feet deep, with two feet of earth on top. Nicholas Sandoval, Pableta and a few others of the Sandoval family are buried under the adobe floor of the chapel.

When I bought the Santo Enterrio from Duran, I noticed a hand hewn black cross about seven feet tall leaning against the front wall of the chapel. Duran told me that on Good Fridays they would take the figure of Christ from the casket and put it on the cross. There were holes bored in the cross and they would place wooden pegs in the hands and feet to hold the figure. After the ceremony of the Crucifixion, they would place the figure of Christ back in the casket. I told Duran that the cross went with the Santo Enterrio. He said that the cross was to go over his grave when he died. He refused to give up the cross. Some time later I had to pay him $20.00 for the cross. The Duran Santo Enterrio is now a crucifix on the black cross and is a permanent exhibit in the Fine Arts Center.

In the old days most chapels and moradas had a drum which hung on the wall of the chapel. These drums were home made, sometimes made from a large lard pail or from a burned out log, with goat skin over both ends. They were laced so they could be tightened. There was one in the Duran Chapel. Duran said that when there was a drouth, the neighbors would gather at the chapel for a religious procession through the fields. One would carry the bulto of Mary and another the Crucifix, sometimes two men would carry the large black cross. Duran said he led the procession beating the drum to attract God's attention. Also, they wanted Mary and her son to see the condition of the farm lands. They would stop now and then for prayers. He said many times they brought rain.

I asked Duran one day why he buried his money. He laughedand said that he didn't trust the bank in Taos, said everyone in the old days buried their money. I asked him if he should die how would Jose, his son, find the money. He said, "He will have to dig for it." On another occasion he told me that he would leave a map, showing where the money was buried. Then he laughed and said, "When they dig where the map says, they will find only an empty box." I could see why Duran buried his money but I could never understand, when Duran knew he was going to die, why he didn't tell Jose where the money was buried.

Dave and Mary were a young Spanish couple who worked for the Kentnors at the Sagebrush Inn. Dave bought an old adobe house and some land from Leandro Duran. The price was about two hundred and fifty dollars. They were to pay so much each month. When they went to pay Duran, he would pull a paper from the sugar bowl and put down how much they paid. Mary had a baby and Dave got behind with his payments. Dave told Kentnor that he was afraid he would lose his house. Kentnor told Dave that he would pay off the house and Dave could pay him later. When Dave told Duran that Kentnor would pay off the balance on the house, Kentnor said to Duran, "We will go to Taos and have the deed made out." Duran said, "There isn't any deed." Kentnor asked Duran how Dave could prove that he owned the property. Duran said, "My father left it to me, I sell it to Dave, everybody knows it belongs to Dave." Dave never got his deed and the last I knew he was still living in his house.

Esquipula Martinez is one of the old Spanish attorneys of Taos, a man about seventy. I met him through Jose Duran at the time he was trying to get the chapel released by the court so it could be sold. We were sitting in Esquipula's kitchen one day, when he told me that when he was a young man he and Frank Duran were pals, went to all the dances together. This was about 1900. He said that the Duran Chapel was the most beautiful little church in all of Taos county in those days. He said he had never seen a church that was kept in such immaculate condition. They would have fiestas at the Duran Chapel for Our Lady of Talpa and they often lasted for two days. He said, "I never had a better time, as when I went to the fiestas at Duran's."

THE LITTLE SAN ANTONIO FROM THE DURAN CHAPEL.

No saint is more loved in New Mexico than San Antonio of Padua. There were more bultos of St. Anthony in New Mexico than any other santo except the crucifix. Over the seven years that I worked on the Duran Chapel at Talpa, I became interested in a small bulto of St. Anthony on the altar of this chapel. One day after I had learned by heart the names of all the bultos on the altar, I missed the San Antonio and I asked Duran where it was. Duran told me that it was down at the Talpa Church. He said "some of the old people there are not well and they want St. Anthony to pray to. He said when they were younger they used to come to my church, but now they can't come here." I would ask from time to time "Where is St. Anthony?" Once Duran told me that an old woman at Ranchos deTaos had taken it for a while. I know that this bulto of St. Anthony was gone at one time for six months. It was the only santo from this chapel that was away most of the time. This St. Anthony I brought back at the time I got the Duran Altar.

Garnett...1954

Notes on the Duran Chapel and Leandro Duran.

The room attached to the Duran house on the south was used as a store room. There was no door and the roof in the back had caved in. In the back of this room were two complete Chimayo blanket looms. These looms were hand made and in the early days most of the people in northern New Mexico wove Chimayo blankets. Duran told me that the looms were used by him and his wife and they wove many blankets. When we went back to his house, he took me in the large bedroom to the north of his quarters. This was the room where his wife died. Duran walked over to an old fashioned bed, pulled back the bedspread and there was a large Chimayo blanket that he said his wife had woven. This room was never used and was spotless. In this room was a wooden chest. It was filled with dresses that over the years women of the village had made for the Saints of the Duran Chapel. It was the custom in the early days for women who wanted to ask a favor of their favorite Saint to make the Saint a new dress, most of these dresses were of silk and quite fancy.

In the summer and early fall the only time I could find Duran at home was around 12:30 PM, when he would come in from the fields to his dinner. Duran's noon meal consisted of potatoes and eggs fried. He would build a fire in his wood cooking stove. On the stove was a cast iron skillet, with the lard still clinging to it from his last meal. He would pull the lid from the stove and place the skillet on the fire. He then peeled a couple of potatoes, these he cut in round slices in the skillet, after the potatoes were turning brown, he would break two eggs in with the potatoes and stir the

potatoes and eggs together. It certainly didn't look tempting to me. He then brought out two loaves of bread that he had baked himself. Each loaf was the shape of a hard roll, but twice as large. This was his big meal of the day. I was with Duran many times when he cooked his meals, but I never saw him change this diet. He gave me one of his loaves of bread and it weighed half as much as the iron skillet. Duran was seventy six years old at this time and I doubt if he had ever heard of a balanced diet.

There were two round holes under the altar in the dirt floor of the Duran Chapel. One hole was four inches across and the other about three inches. These holes were about 12 inches deep, with moist earth at the bottom. Around the lip of the holes the adobe was as smooth as glass. The moist earth was supposed to heal all your aches and pains, when used as a poultice. Duran told me that every year many people came to get this healing earth. Duran also said these holes were there when he was a boy.

REPORT BY W.S.STALLINGS ON THE DURAN CHAPEL
AND RAFAEL ARAGON, SANTERO.

"The evidence establishing the identity of Jose Rafael Aragon is considerable and conclusive. It consists of an inscription on the ceiling of the Duran Chapel in Talpa, a signed retablo, and inscriptions on three altar pieces supplemented by documentary data. The Duran Chapel in Talpa is a small private chapel adorned with an altar-screen and many sculptured pieces in the same style as the church at Cordova. The altar-screen in the Duran Chapel is unquestionably by the same hand as the main altar-screen at Cordova.

On the ceiling of the Duran Chapel are three inscriptions. One in black script declares that the chapel was dedicated to the use of the priest, Don Antonio Jose Martinez "today 2 July 1851." The second in faint red script, is a prayer of exhortation ending with "This chapel was roofed the 2 of July 1851." The third inscription, a very faint writing in red, reads "in the name of God all powerful, and of the ever Virgin Mary, of Talpa, from the year 1838 it was made Jesus, Mary and Joseph to the devotion of the slave, Nicholas Sandoval by the hand of Rafael Aragon, approved by the inimitable Don Jose Antonio de Zubiria. (Jose Antonio de Zubiria was archbishop of Durango Mexico and included in his see New Mexico.) Roof beams from the Duran Chapel date 1830, 1837, and 1838. Evidence appears quite clear: the chapel and its contents were begun or commissioned in 1838; it was finished and dedicated in 1851; and Rafael Aragon was involved. That he was the santero appears from other sources.

In the collection of Dr. Herbert J. Spinden, Brooklyn Museum, there is a retablo of San Cayetano signed "Aragon Jose Rafel." This is in the same personal style as the altar-screen in the Duran Chapel. The principal altar-screen in the Cordova Church, is likewise in the same style, formerly bore a full inscription in two oval panels on each side of the base. One of these, which at one time named the painter, is defaced; the other, naming the visiting priest at the time it was done, is unmarred. Although largely illegible, the following may be traced in the former: "With...this...was painted Don...Rafael Jose...being the guardian, the priest, Don Fernando Ortiz." Fr. Fernando Ortiz was parish priest at Santa Cruz, in which parish Cordova is, from 1834 to 1838. Which fixes the date of the altar-screen. It further appears from the records of the parish that Rafael Aragon was a resident of Cordova."

There is more to this report of Mr. Stallings, which will be found in the Taylor Museum. (untitled, unpublished manuscript whose main topic is tree-ring dating of retablos.)

SANTOS FROM DURAN PRIVATE CHAPEL, TALPA, NEW MEXICO

1398 El Santo Entierro. Bulto. Height 66". Hole in upper back reveals heart with painted human face.

1400 San Ramon Noñato. Bulto. Height 26". Surrounded by niche-like frame. Monstrance in right hand, umbrella-like staff in other.

1401 San Geronimo. Bulto. Height 27". Kneels on worm-like dragon, in triangular nicho of painted wood. Holds wooden flowerlike staff in right hand, shell-like object in left.

1448 San Jose. Bulto. Height 32". Wooden crown on head. Niño and flowering staff missing.

1449 Crucifix on stand. Bulto. Cross 45" high.

1450 Nuestra Señora de Talpa. Bulto. Height 29" on stepped base 5" high. Wooden crown on head, dove painted on front of chest. Fancy pattern painted on skirt. Niño missing. sewing fit

1451 Nuestra Señora de Soledad. Bulto. Height 39 1/2". Shoulder joints pivot, elbow joints sleeves of deerskin. Black gown with white panel in front.

1458 San Antonio. Bulto. Height 15 1/2". Mica flowers on robe.

3902 Nuestra Señora Reina del Cielo. Height 27 1/2" on irregular globe. Niño missing. Fancy pattern painted on skirt.

3903 Santo Niño. Bulto. Height 10 1/2". Seated position. Wicker cradle.

3904 San Antonio with Niño. Bulto. Height 19".

3906 Reredos. Retablo. Height 71 1/2" plus three 12" plaques. Width 115". Two pictures each in three vertical panels. Inscribed in Spanish: left panel "la pura y limpia conception" and "Misero lo de los Dolores;" center panel "Las tres divinas personas" and "Nuestra padre Jesus;" Right panel "Nuestra Senora de la Soledad" and "Nuestro padre San Francis." Dove in center plaque on top, abstract flowers on right and left.

3931a,bA Pair of unidentified objects resembling Pueblo dance wands. Approximately 7 1/2" by 2 1/4" each.

5056 Wooden hammer with 1398.

5057 Casket for 1398.

855 doctored N.S.?

854 CRUCIFIX?

THE COLORADO COLLEGE
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO 80903

1.- La pura y limpia Conliacion (probably: Concepción)
2.- Mi señora de los dolores.
3.- Las tres divinas personas/ Nuestro padre Jesús/ Don José de la luz de gracia (probably: y)
4.- Nuestra Señora de la Soledad/ Nuestro Padre San Fransis [co]† (s, incorrect spelling, s for c)
5.- Un padrenuestro y una avemaría
por vida y alma del pintor.

† deleted

Copy of inscriptions on Duran reredos made March, 1972 by Senor Juan Ayala native of Spain, Professor of Spanish at The Colorado College at the request of Robert Morris, Art Historian at C.C. for Martha Tilley.

INSCRIPTIONS ON CEILING OF NAVE IN DURAN CHAPEL, FROM HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, 4-5-34, by Alan Fisher & Bradley P. Kidder.

En el Nombre de Dios todo poderoso
y de la siempre Virgen Maria, de
talpa, des de el Año de 1838 se
Savrico Jesus Maria y Jose A de
--dires del esclabo --secolas

Sandoval permano del es
--- des Rael Aragon Aprovado
por el imimo Don Jose An to
de subiria viva Jesus
Maria y Jose

Maria Santisima
de los dolores ampore
y faboresca al dos las
debotoe -- esclabos
de la sangre de Cristo

En el nombre de Dios to
de poderoso para prensi
piar este Jersiao Jesus
Maria y Jose disen los
esclavos de la sangre
de Cristo
se te ho este ora
torio el dia 2 de
Julio de 1851

En esta Adorasion de
Mi Senora de Talpa
fue consedido y fabriaa
cado su oratorio A
disposecion del
presvitero Dn Anto
Jose Martines el dia
de hoy 2 de Julio
de 1851 es divano (?)
Jose de Grasia Senora Lege

I asked Duran one day why he buried his money. He laughedand said that he didn't trust the bank in Taos, said everyone in the old days buried their money. I asked him if he should die how would Jose, his son, find the money. He said, "He will have to dig for it." On another occasion he told me that he would leave a map, showing where the money was buried. Then he laughed and said, "When they dig where the map says, they will find only an empty box." I could see why Duran buried his money but I could never understand, when Duran knew he was going to die, why he didn't tell Jose where the money was buried.

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