

For Sale

Knox Martin's Sunflowers

An acrylic on linen/fiberglass paper
45 3/4" X 72 1/4"

This abstract piece has been framed
in white metal leaf with plexiglass glazing.

Valued at \$10,500.

Contact Louise R. Guerrero
(713) 870-6867



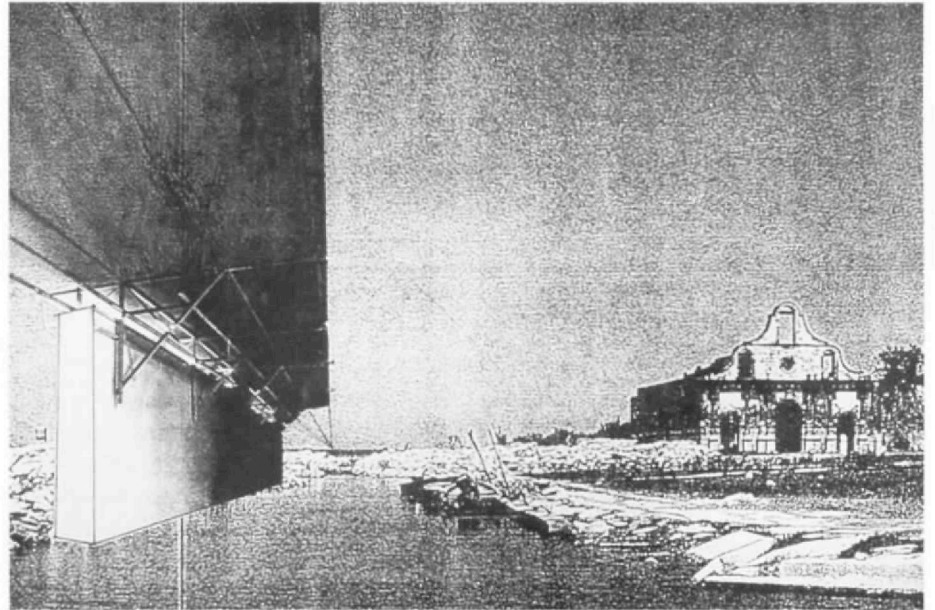
Sophisticated Cherokee Addition home
offered for sale by
Edie Archer



A Landmark property by
Architect/Owner William Cannady,
offered by
Texas Anderson
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PROPERTIES

HISTORIC BORDER TOWNSITE TO BE SUBJECT OF INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM



Proposal for Guerrero Viejo by Olga Vazquez, University of Houston architecture student.



Templo de Nuestra Señora del Refugio, Guerrero Viejo, Tamaulipas.

Michael Tracy and the River Pierce Foundation are planning a colloquium, "Culture, Water, and Money: The Passion of the Frontier," for 14 and 15 April 1995. It will focus on preservation of the townsite of Guerrero Viejo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, an 18th-century town located on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, downstream from San Ygnacio, Texas, headquarters of the River Pierce Foundation. In 1953, the population of Guerrero was relocated to the new town of Nueva Ciudad Guerrero by the Mexican government so that the reservoir of Falcón Dam could expand into the historic townsite, which lies on the banks of the Río Salado. On the U.S. side of the border, residents of the small town of Zapata, Texas, county seat of Zapata

County, and surrounding ranches were expropriated and displaced (but not resettled) by the International Boundary and Water Commission. Old Zapata was destroyed prior to its immersion by Falcón Lake. Guerrero Viejo was not destroyed, however. Because it lies at one edge of the reservoir, it is only partially flooded, even when the water is highest.

In the flood-prone portion of the townsite only two structures survive, the early-20th-century church of Nuestra Señora del Refugio and a two-story bandstand, centered in the plaza in front of the church. The church is a sandstone shell, only partially roofed. The portion of the townsite that does not flood contains the shells of simple but very solidly construct-

ed one-story houses whose precise alignments mark off Guerrero's grid of unpaved streets. All of the surviving buildings in Guerrero Viejo are built of locally quarried sandstone. Only traces of the stucco with which they were surfaced remain. Most houses are roofless; some still retain double-leaf wood street doors, grilled window cages, and in one case a TV antenna. Fragments of two public buildings, the Hotel Flores and the *parián*, the public market building, also survive. Although the townsite is owned by the Mexican government, a number of houses are occupied informally by members of two extended families who earn their livings fishing in the Río Salado. There are no public utilities, services, or institutions in Guerrero Viejo.

Guerrero is threatened by deterioration and decay from exposure to Falcón Lake, which has bleached the dark sandstone that it inundates a chalky white. Exposure to the elements and unrestrained vegetation are eroding the building shells that do not flood. Theft of architectural artifacts and vandalism are also a problem. Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History, which is responsible for the site, has posted signs asking visitors not to disturb its integrity. But the town's two cemeteries are vulnerable, especially the older one, whose walls have been breached and which has been invaded by vegetation.

In March 1993, a cleanup effort sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Mexico, with the city of Guerrero Nuevo and Los Caminos del Río, A.C. de México, as cosponsors, was organized to remove trash and cut back vegetation. This drew more than 300 Mexican and Texan volunteers from as far away as Monterrey, San Antonio, and Dallas. Some of the participants were returning to the town site for the first time since its initial flooding 40 years ago. Many families, not only in Guerrero Nuevo but in Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, have ancestral connections to Guerrero Viejo, which was the foremost urban center in the region until it was eclipsed by the two Laredos in the 1850s. José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, one of the leaders of the Mexican independence movement in Texas, was from Guerrero, as was Antonio Zapata, the African-Mexican rancher for whom Zapata County, Texas, was named.

Representatives of the World Monuments Fund visited Guerrero Viejo with preservationists from Mexico and Texas in May 1993 to inspect the town site in order to develop a conservation plan that would preserve Guerrero Viejo as a heritage park. Work on the plan has not yet begun, however, as funds are still being raised to finance the venture. Meanwhile, the National Institute of Anthropology and History is evaluating a proposal to designate the site a *zona patrimonial*, which would extend federal preservation

protection to it. The University of Houston's Atrium Press is publishing a book of images of Guerrero Viejo. And the revised and expanded edition of the Texas Historical Commission's award-winning book *A Shared Experience: The Architecture, History, and Historic Designations of the Lower Río Grande Heritage Corridor*, published in November, contains a new chapter on Guerrero Viejo, according to Mario L. Sánchez, director of the Texas Historical Commission's Los Caminos del Río Heritage Project. Like *A Shared Experience*, the Atrium Press book will include historic maps, historic photographs, and contemporary photographs of the townsite.

On 14 May 1994, Michael Tracy hosted a presentation in San Ygnacio by architecture students from the University of Houston and the University of Texas at San Antonio. Students presented projects that dealt with practical issues of architectural conservation in Guerrero as well as the more elusive theme of preserving cultural memory. Joining Tracy in an animated discussion of what might (or should not) happen at Guerrero Viejo were UH architecture professor Rafael Longoria, who is from Nuevo Laredo and is a descendant of one of the Guerrero families; Laredo architect and UTSA architecture critic Frank Rotnofsky; Dwayne Bohuslav and Gevork Hartoonian, both on the architecture faculty at UTSA; Henry Estrada of San Ygnacio; and Betsy J. Gill, Sam Johnson, and Peter Glassford of Laredo.

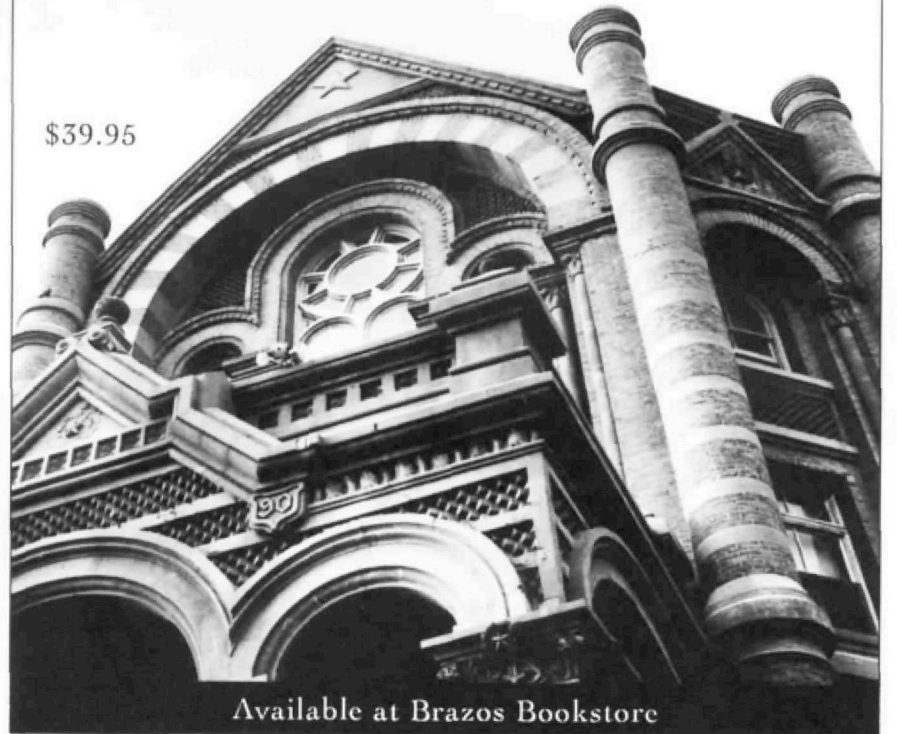
The exchange revealed cultural differences in the ways Mexicans and Americans reacted to Guerrero and, consequently, in what they identified as problematic about the site. The U.S. recommendation – decisive action to protect artifacts – contrasted with the Mexican view, which located issues of conservation in a broader cultural perspective that acknowledged the much more conservative (and, by default, conservationist) attitudes of Mexicans and the bonds of personal connection that joined so many families on both sides of the Río Grande to the region's history. The provocative and challenging nature of the discussion – the range of alternatives went from leaving the site untouched to reconstructing the town completely – prompted Tracy to issue what he called the San Ygnacio Resolve: to convene a meeting of Mexican and U.S. historians, preservationists, scholars, artists, and architects, who will be asked to define and debate alternative visions for Guerrero Viejo. The colloquium is intended to dramatize the cultural significance, and the vulnerability, of the 245-year-old Guerrero townsite.

Stephen Fox

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400 pp., 154 illus., 4 in color \$50.00 (Available January 1995)

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