

1935

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Recommended Citation

Hendrick, A.. "City of the Holy Faith." *New Mexico Quarterly* 5, 3 (1935). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol5/iss3/11>

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City of the Holy Faith

By A. HENDRICK

THE MASSIVE iron bell in the Cathedral tower swings lazily from side to side, tolling six. A newly risen sun looks down on the deserted plaza and creeps into crooked streets, nosing into darkest corners and tinting window panes saffron.

Two nuns make their way to the Cathedral, past the old Governor's mansion, a low, flat-roofed adobe building that occupies the south side of the plaza. The wooden latch is tightly barred now, but in a few hours it will be unlocked for tourists who will cross the venerable threshold, parade disinterestedly through the room where a portion of *Ben Hur* was written, through the room filled with relics of Southwestern archaeology, through the room that is now a library. They will buy a picture postcard, inscribe thereon the usual remarks about wishing the recipient were there, thank heaven they have "done" the museum, and depart to look for further thrills.

The peace of the early morning is disturbed by sounds of hard hooves on cobblestones, iron wheels jolting on uneven pavement, and shrill whistling. A burro ambles along the west side of the plaza, pulling a two-wheeled cart after him. The whistling is emanating from a Mexican niño atop the boughs of piñon in the cart. He has gathered the piñon in the surrounding hills and brought it back to town. Piñon makes handsome fireplace fuel, and those artists and writers who have studios on all the twisted back streets must have open fires. They complement the charm of Santa Fe's Spanish atmosphere and relieve the nippiness of Santa Fe's summer nights.

A rotund, white-aproned grocer is sweeping out the front of his store on west plaza. Piggly Wiggly is all over the world and even in Santa Fe picturesqueness fails to nourish human beings. The shops to his right and left

cater to tourists. Their windows display Mexican hand-made glass of amber, amethyst, and aquamarine, native Indian pottery, hand-woven Navajo rugs, jewelry made from coin silver and set with turquoise.

The grocer stops sweeping and leans on his broom. He stares vacantly at the opposite side of the plaza. A barber shop with its patriotic pole is sandwiched in between two curio shops; a drug store with its flamboyant Coca-Cola sign flanks one corner, a branch of a New York Stock Exchange firm guards the other. A cafe whose window exhibits wondrously flecked mountain trout, elbows an art shop with a window of etchings and oil paintings by local artists.

Two early-rising travellers in quest of breakfast come from the La Fonda, most unique of hotels. This casa grande is patterned after an Indian Pueblo, built of adobe with three set-back stories. It occupies a square block and its casement windows are grilled, its window sills and frames are painted brown. La Fonda guests pronounce it a treasure house, as they roam the lobby with its great fireplace and Spanish furniture, and eat tortillas, chili con carne, and tamales to the tune of a Mexican stringed orchestra and a splashing fountain, in the patio.

But our early-risers partook of tortillas, chili con carne, and tamales last night. This morning, being Bostonians, on reaching the cafe with the speckled trout in the window, they call for soft-boiled eggs.