Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción de los Piros de Socorro del Sur was founded in 1680 following the Pueblo Indian Revolt. The first mission church was built in 1691 and was re-built twice following the devastating floods of 1740 and 1828.
The current mission was dedicated in 1843 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places with national significance. Oral history has the vigas (roof timbers) being salvaged from the original mission and decorated and painted by the Piro Indians who settled Socorro in 1680.
A Community Collaboration

Cornerstones Community Partnerships (Santa Fe, NM)

Historic Missions Restoration, Inc. (El Paso, TX)

La Purísima Restoration Committee (Socorro, TX)
Along the Camino Real Near El Paso, TX
Cornerstones was invited in 1998 by La Purísima to provide an initial Conditions Assessment.

Two years later, Cornerstones was asked to supervise the project.
Basal Stabilization Front Facade
K.E.Y.S. Academy Participation
Volunteers from the El Paso Archaeological Society.

Archaeological Investigations

Archaeologist Claudia Belair (Mexico City, MX)
Demonstrating the application of the first coat of lime plaster.

Pat Taylor, Project Coordinator
Using a *plana de madera* on the second (finish) coat of lime plaster. This plaster is protected using seven coats of lime wash.
Consolidation
Splicing Effort
North American Community Service volunteers from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico helped with the splicing effort.
COMMUNITY

Volunteers from UTEP’s Center for Civic Engagement.
Saturday Volunteer Days
TX ‘Welfare-to-Work’ Program
El Paso Community College Electrical Journeyman Classes
$300,000
core support
provided by Houston Endowment

$197,221
Congressional appropriation
*Save America’s Treasures* program

Statue of San Miguel during the annual fiesta. September 2004.
Contributors

El Paso Community Foundation; Kenedy Memorial Foundation; Texas Historical Commission; Wells Fargo Bank; El Paso Quadracentennial Commission; McKee Foundation; Bank of the West; El Paso Electric; Houston Endowment; National Trust for Historic Preservation; Upper Rio Grande Work Force/Texas Workforce Commission; El Paso Community Foundation – Lipscomb; UTEP – Governor’s Office; Rocky Mountain Mortgage Co.; Chase National Bank; Tigua Native American Tribe; Abell-Hanger; Brown Foundation; Meadows Foundation; Summerlee Foundation; Texas Criminal Justice Department; Moleen Foundation; City of Socorro; Socorro Independent School District; Advanced Research Project, UTEP; Chemstar Lime; El Paso Archaeological Society; Community Volunteers; Socorro Mission and San Raphael Parishioners; H. W. “Skip” Clark; North American Community Service; International Council on Monuments and Sites; NMSU Department of Engineering Technology; NMSU Public History Program; El Paso Community College Trades Program; EPCC Architecture Department; Ysleta Lutheran Mission; La Purisima Restoration Committee; YMCA of El Paso; Dan Leary, University of Texas at Austin; Ramon Barajas and Family; Enrique Trevizo (Ft. Worth, TX); Contributors to the “Have a Heart, Save Our Mission” Benefit Dance; Albert Palacios and his classmates, Socorro High School; Judge Rubin Lujan (Clint, TX), the Socorro High School Theater Department, UTEP’s Center for Civic Engagement, the United Native American Nations, and individual contributors too numerous to mention.
Tury Morales (Chair, La Purísima Restoration Committee) and the El Paso Mission Trails Association will be working with Steve Burns, NPS Historic Landscape Architect, to work on an appropriate plan for the Socorro Mission Complex Landscaping Plan.
Socorro Mission Viga Pigment Workshop

A workshop engaging the community and local schools on the historic pigments found on the 17th century decorated *vigas* (interior roof support elements)
Invitations for the Socorro Mission Viga Pigment Workshop were extended to over 19 schools within the El Paso and Mesilla Valley area.

Attending the workshop over the course of 4 days were over 60 students from 5 schools; NMSU Art Department (conservation class), Ysleta School District’s Parkland and Bel Air High Schools, New Horizons Home School Academy, and the El Paso Archeology Society. We also made presentations to the Fine Arts Department at Ysleta Independent School District which resulted in scheduling presentations to art classes at Bel Air High School and Parkland High School.
Gerardo Calderón Magallón
Art Conservator from Mexico City,
Conducted the Viga Pigment Workshop.
How the *vigas* were made?

We shaped the *vigas* with an adze.
In squaring the viga we involved everyone.
Gerardo explained the different types of natural organic and inorganic pigments as well as natural products such as casein, beeswax, nutshells, and organic resins (dammar) that are used in pigmentation.
Conservation demonstration

Cleaning the *viga* with a soft brush to remove the loose dirt.
Carefully using a scalpel to remove the plaster residues.
Carefully removing old over painting with a scalpel
Cleaning the remaining dirt left with turpentine. Turpentine also moisturizes the wood.
Tests results of the application of the varnish indicated that we needed to cut into half the proportion of the mix of linseed oil because it darkened the wood too much.
In addition to the viga pigmentation is the need to conserve the religious artwork. Silvia Marinas, Art Conservator at NMSU has recently offered to have her class conserve pieces as a lab class.
The vigas have had several stories told of their origins. One story is that the vigas came from Northern New Mexico. Another one is of the vigas being brought from East Texas. The other story is that they were harvested locally from the Rio Grande River Valley.
We sought to have the species question answered and Dr. Scott Beasley of Arthur Temple College of Forestry identified the species as *Populus Fremontii*, a Fremont cottonwood. This wood species is known to reach 60 feet in height with a truck 2 to 3 feet in diameter. The last question to have answered is the dendrochronology of the vigas.
We would like to thank the National Trust for Historic Preservation Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund and the Texas Preservation Trust Fund Grant.

A special thanks to Dr. Beasley and the Arthur Temple College of Forestry in providing the species identification.

We would also like to thank

Save Americas Treasures
&

Texas Historical Commission

A very special thanks to our Cornerstones Community Partnerships Board for their ever continued support.
Socorro Mission Preservation Project

December 2005