



## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240



The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to announce actions on the following properties for the National Register of Historic Places. For further information contact Edson Beall via voice (202) 343-1572, fax (202) 343-1836, regular or E-mail: Edson\_Beall@nps.gov

Visit our web site at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr>

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 3/26/01 THROUGH 3/30/01

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

\* COLORADO, CONEJOS COUNTY, S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior,  
603 Main St., Antonito, 01000322, LISTED, 3/29/01

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE EQUIVALENT,  
Meridian Manor, 1424 Chapin St., NW, Washington, 01000324, LISTED, 3/29/01

FLORIDA, ALACHUA COUNTY, Lake Pithlachocco Canoe Site, N end of Newman's Lake,  
Gainesville, 01000303, LISTED, 3/27/01

FLORIDA, BROWARD COUNTY, Gilliam, Sam, House, 11 SW 15th St.,  
Ft. Lauderdale, 01000289, LISTED, 3/29/01

FLORIDA, POLK COUNTY, Roosevelt School, 115 East St. N, Lake Wales, 01000306,  
LISTED, 3/29/01

FLORIDA, SARASOTA COUNTY, Blackburn Point Bridge,  
Blackburn Point Rd. at Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Osprey, 01000290, LISTED, 3/29/01

FLORIDA, VOLUSIA COUNTY, Downtown DeLand Historic District,  
Roughly bounded by Florida & Rich Aves., Woodland Blvd., & Howry Ave.,  
DeLand, 87001796, ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 3/28/01

GEORGIA, TATTNALL COUNTY, Smith--Nelson Hotel, 118 S. Main St.,  
Reidsville, 01000305, LISTED, 3/29/01

MASSACHUSETTS, MIDDLESEX COUNTY, Dutton--Holden Homestead,  
28 Pond St., Billerica, 01000307, LISTED, 3/29/01

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Listed 3-29-2001

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

# MAPPED

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior

other names/site number La Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos / 5CN817

## 2. Location

street & number 603 Main Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Antonito [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Conejos code 021 zip code 81120

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [ X ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ X ] statewide [ ] locally. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Gregoria Cortez* State Historic Preservation Officer February 9, 2001  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- entered in the National Register  
[ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
[ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain  
[ ] See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Name of Property

Conejos County/Colorado  
County/State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing.**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social/meeting hall

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social/meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Hispano Fraternal Building

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Adobe  
roof Metal  
other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
[X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
[ ] B removed from its original location.
[ ] C a birthplace or grave.
[ ] D a cemetery.
[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
[ ] F a commemorative property.
[ ] G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
[ ] previously listed in the National Register
[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic
Social History
Architecture

Periods of Significance

1925-1950

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[ ] Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Name of Property

Conejos County/Colorado  
County/State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) NM T 33N R 9E S 29 SE, SW, NW, NE 7890 ft.

1. 13 410360<sup>✓</sup> 4103610<sup>✓</sup>  
Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Arnold and Maria Valdez

organization Valdez and Associates date September 29, 2000

street & number Route 1, Box 3-A telephone 719-672-3678

city or town San Luis state Colorado zip code 81152

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior Daniel L. Valdez, Presidente Superior

street & number 603 Main telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Antonito state Colorado zip code 81120

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The *Concilio Superior* (Superior Council) is the main headquarters for *La Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos* or S.M.P.D.T.U. (The Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers). Completed in 1925, this lodge hall is located in Antonito, a railroad era town located in Conejos County. One of the most prominent buildings in the business district of Antonito, the S.P.M.D.T.U. *Concilio Superior* is situated the northwest corner of Main and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The lodge faces Main Street, which is also denoted U. S. Highway 285. It has a 54'-by-127' rectangular plan, a concrete foundation, and 20-foot high adobe walls with a stucco finish. A parapet wall with concrete coping obscures the gabled end of the east facade. Raised rib "Pro-Panel" metal roofing covers the front gabled roof with its overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. Two adobe chimneys pierce the roof's east and west slopes. The roof is comprised of steel Warren trusses spaced on fifteen-foot centers that are supported by a series of interior reinforced concrete pilasters. Rough sawn 2'-by-12' rafters spanning perpendicularly to the trusses are sheathed with 1" rough-sawn planks.

The east elevation, facing Main Street, has four concrete pilasters topped with concrete ball finials that divide the facade into three bays. The central bay has a recessed entry with two steel support columns. At the center of this recessed area is a window that was used as a ticket booth. Flanking the ticket window are two paneled wood doors with transom lights. These two doors organized patrons entering into the lodge hall. Currently, because the S.P.M.D.T.U. no longer sponsors sports or social events, only one door is used and the other is locked. Above this entry are three windows evenly spaced between pilasters. Painted in bold letters below these windows are the words "CONCILIO SUPERIOR"; "S.P.M.D.T.U." and "1900" are painted above the windows. The parapet wall peaks within this central bay. The outside bays each have two windows—one above the other; between the windows of the north bay "BUILT 1925" is painted. The fixed sash windows on the main level are wider than the taller, double-hung sash 1/1 windows on the upper level. All the windows are original, single pane glass and all have concrete sills.

The elongated, south elevation consists of a series of five windows. These double hung sash, wood frame, windows have one-over-one lights. A small square window toward the rear of the building lights an interior bathroom. A larger double hung 1/1 window, at the same height as the upper level windows on the facade, provides a southern view for one of the loft rooms. All windows have poured concrete sills except the one for the bathroom. There is a slightly recessed double door entrance on this south wall facing 6<sup>th</sup> Street. A transom tops the two solid doors. This side of the building is decorated with three murals, painted by artist Fred Haberlein in the mid-1990s. The side entry is framed by a large mural depicting local landscape features with an emphasis placed on an *acequia* (a traditional irrigation ditch) tended by the contemporary families of the *pobladores* (settlers). Towards the front of the building is a second elongated mural with a *Mestiza* (woman of mix-blood heritage) surrounded by well-tended fields, an adobe homestead complete with an *horno* (earthen oven), and local landscape motifs. The final mural towards the back of the building depicts a male angel protecting the earth. While the imagery is decidedly modern, use of religious figures such as angels is a part of the Hispano/Mexicano culture of the Southwest.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 2

---

The gabled rear (west) elevation is windowless, with a small attached shed-roofed structure that houses heating equipment. Intermittently spaced, small triangular knee braces support the overhanging eaves of the roof.

There are six, double hung sash, wood frame windows on the north elevation. Because of exposure to the elements, shade, and frost-freeze, the north side of the building has required maintenance. Apparently the adobe weakened through the years as a result of moisture infiltration, and concrete block reinforcement was needed on the northeast portion of the wall. However, as this north wall of the lodge abuts an adjoining building, it is not readily visible.

The interior of the structure is a large, rustic, open space with exposed steel Warren trusses, wood rafters, and a wooden floor. Located along the north and south walls are simple handcrafted small wooden bleachers. An indented raised stage area with a mural serves as the centerpiece of the interior stage area. Completed around 1980 by *Los Murulistas del Valle*, the interior mural depicts Mexicano nationalistic and agricultural themes. The stage (which is accessed by stairs at both ends and the center) houses two bathrooms at its sides. A stone veneer was applied to the low wall below the stage. At the east end, opposite the stage, is a recessed concession counter. Adjacent to the counter is a door leading to office area, storage space, and stairs to the upper level. Currently, the spacious loft rooms are unused.

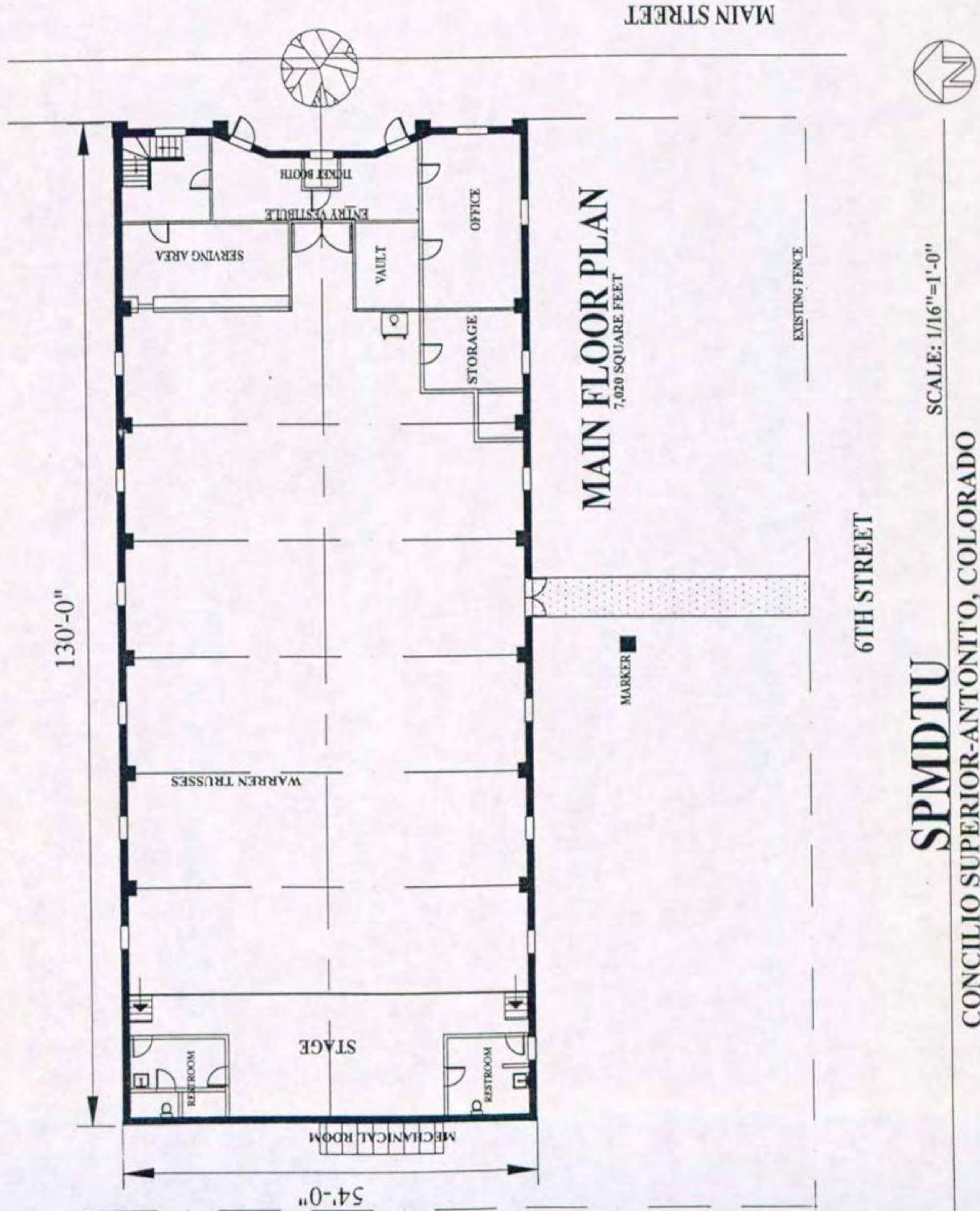
The building has undergone very little alteration since its construction. While the majority of the interior configuration is original, an office space addition with a vault was completed at the southeast corner of the interior in 1945. Concrete blocks were used to repair the north wall of the structure in the 1950s after part of the adobe wall collapsed. In 1985, a bathroom was added to the rear office. Also in the 1980s the rolled roofing was replaced with ribbed metal panels. Finally, contemporary murals were added in the 1980s and in the 1990s. None of these changes have a dramatic impact on the integrity of the lodge hall.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado



SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

**SPMDTU**

CONCILIO SUPERIOR-ANTONITO, COLORADO

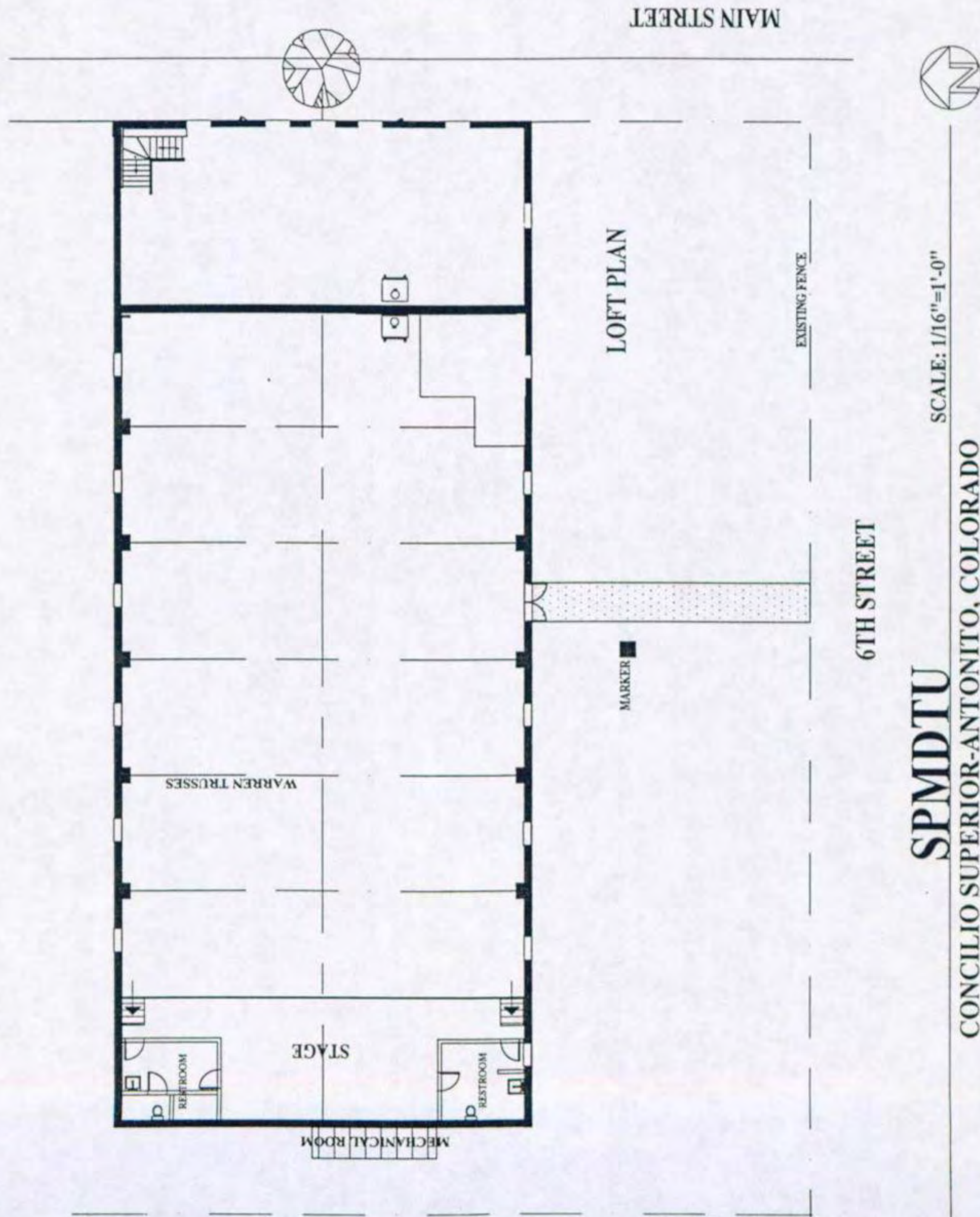


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 5

---

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Serving as headquarters for *La Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos* (the Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers), the *Concilio Superior* is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History. The building represents an important aspect of Colorado's social history, while also reflecting Hispano heritage in the state. *La Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos* (or S.P.M.D.T.U.) originally organized to address the needs of Hispano workers in Colorado's San Luis Valley. The S.P.M.D.T.U. illustrates how Hispanos organized regionally to combat racial hate, economic exploitation, and lack of social services through communal acts of charity among its members. After the fraternal organization spread into other regions of Colorado and New Mexico, S.P.M.D.T.U. members began constructing a headquarters in 1923, which was completed in 1925. Eventually, the *Concilio Superior* conducted business, served as the convention center, and was the organizing body for the sixty-four lodges located throughout Colorado, and in parts of New Mexico and Utah. As the headquarters for this pervading organization, the *Concilio Superior* is considered significant at the state level. Membership in the organization peaked to over 3,000 after World War II. The period of significance ends in 1950 to reflect this trend and to comply with the National Register's fifty year rule.

The *Concilio Superior* is also eligible under Criteria C for its architectural significance. The building reflects changes from older adobe architectural traditions to modern vernacular forms popularized between 1923 and 1950. The *Concilio Superior* is an example of the way S.P.M.D.T.U. lodge construction encouraged other Hispano enclaves in the San Luis Valley to modernized Main Street facades. The *Concilio Superior* embodies the trend of local Hispano builders to adopt steel trusses and commercial windows, and to replicate prevalent Southwest vernacular design fashionable in northern New Mexico in the 1920s-30s (e.g., curvilinear parapet, decorative embellishments, concrete sills, and an emphasis on massing).

**THE ORIGINS OF MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES IN AMERICA**

Scholars trace mutual aid societies (as they evolved in contemporary urban America) to medieval European guilds. By the nineteenth century English laborers replicated the medieval mode under the rubric of "friendly societies." The primary difference between older "guilds" and modern "friendly societies" was the fact that unskilled laborers self-organized and established voluntary dues to support their sick brethren and families of departed members. During the same period, agricultural leagues emerged in Spain. A clear distinction of nineteenth century Spanish "mutual protection" leagues was their focus on rural issues like irrigation, land tenure, and agricultural concerns. Equally outstanding, the Spanish model promoted early forms of "collective insurance" (Rivera, 1984:1-3).

While Colonial New Englanders formed the first self-help charitable organization in 1657, fraternal insurance benefits were not introduced until the 1860s. Despite insurance benefits, American benevolent associations were not popular until masses of needy European immigrants saturated urban centers late in the nineteenth century. In a different manner, skilled artisans on the eastern seaboard (like their

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 6

---

predecessors before them) depended on guilds to protect their status and maintain mutual support in a crisis. In the period after the American War with Mexico and prior to the Civil War, guilds transformed from an exclusive craft organizations pandering to the government, to public advocates for labor reform, and finally, late in the 1860s to labor organizations with bargaining power.

Like their American counterparts, Latinos self-organized through mutual aid societies or artisan guilds. While both groups emerged during the Spanish Colonial Period, labor unions and mutual aid societies evolved differently in Mexico after 1848. Whereas skilled U.S. workers organized in response to American expansionism and the increased demand for skilled laborers, Mexican artisans and laborers formed coalitions because of war related displacement. By the middle of the 1870s, trade unions and mutual aid societies became immensely popular in Mexico. Indicative of their importance is the fact that Mexican newspapers supported union oriented fraternal organizations (Gomez-Quinones, 1994:54). With travel to and from Mexico and expanding border cities, *sociedades mutualistas*, or mutual aid societies, spread in urban and rural Southwest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Acuna, 1988: 96).

In the context of the Southwest, *sociedades mutualistas* provided charitable services and rudimentary union activities. *Mutualistas* offered a clear contrast to benevolent societies and unions operating on the east coast. Simply, *mutualistas* were multi-generation mixed-blood populous of a territory forcefully annexed by the United States in 1846. In this context, the need to ban together was not related to softening the pressures of assimilation or protection of skilled workers. Rather, *mutualistas* organized because of their demeaned status as conquered people of color. By the 1870s, *Tejanos* (as Mexican residents of Texas are self-identified) were the first to mobilize to combat poverty, race hate, and labor exploitation by forming their own mutual aid societies (Rivera, 1984:31). Soon after mutual aid societies emerged in Latino enclaves in the Southwest. The best example of the popularity of *sociedades mutualistas* is the *Alianza Hispano-Americana*. Founded in 1894, the *Alianza* was the largest union-oriented fraternal society in the Southwest. Fighting to protect the rights of Latino laborers, the *Alianza* obtained higher wages for striking copper miners in Arizona in 1903 (Rivera, 1984:39). Equally important, the *Alianza* established affordable insurance coverage and death benefits for members. Like Black laborers in the South, Latinos living in the Southwest could not obtain insurance because companies refused to enroll workers of color because supposedly "they all had tuberculosis" (Ibid.: 29). The *Alianza* is credited as being the model for Latino mutual aid insurance. Due to their participation in the American Civil Rights Movement, the *Alianza* is heralded as a forerunner to the Chicano Movement (Rivera, 1984:38). While the myriad of *sociedades* established in the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the 1940s adopted different names, focused on a variety of issues, and had varying organizational structures, Latino mutual aid organizations shared common goals. There were at least eighty-five groups operating in Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah; some of these organizations had statewide leagues and affiliated lodges in rural areas and in cities like El Paso, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Dallas, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Oakland. Of this number, seven mutual aid societies operated in Colorado including, the *Alianza Hispano-Americana* and the *Sociedad Proteccion Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*. The remainder *sociedades mutualistas* in the state were based in rural areas in northern Colorado's sugar beet belt.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 7

---

The emergence of quasi-union activities by *sociedades mutualistas* is linked to the fact that typical mutual aid societies and unions in the Southwest were sharply divided along racial and class lines. For example, it was not until the 1880s that *Mexicanos* in Texas, California, Texas, and New Mexico were invited to join the Knights of Labor. The Knights welcomed *Mexicanos* into their ranks in Las Vegas, New Mexico as tension over the railroads and land grabbing peaked. While conservative elements in Las Vegas did not approve of the militant views of the Knights of Labor, this union was one of the few that accepted Spanish-speaking laborers as members and as union organizers (Gomez-Quinones, 1994:56).

#### NEW MEXICAN MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES

*Sociedades mutualistas* in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado can be traced to the establishment in the Southwestern Frontier. The two outstanding examples of early collective self-help organizations in the upper Rio Grande Bioregion (which includes Colorado's San Luis Valley), are religious confraternities and agricultural associations. *La Sociedad de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno*, or the Society of Our Father Jesus the Nazarene, also known as *Los Hermanos Penitentes*, is a seventeenth-century New Mexican lay confraternity. The *Penitentes* (self-named *hermanos* or brothers) transferred religious customs and mutual aid traditions from New Mexico into the San Luis Valley by the middle of the nineteenth century. Formed as fraternal brotherhood, the *penitentes* organized villages in the absence of Catholic priests through the replication of their annual Lenten ceremonies. By providing services for the sick and dying members and offering material assistance to families in need, the *hermanos* were models of community self-reliance through mutual aid. *Penitentes* adopted an internal structure for governance and by 1810 formal rules were established (Weigle, 1976: 55). Although custom still governs this group, most contemporary *penitentes* pay nominal dues, many have by-laws, and some are incorporated as non-profit organizations. *Acequias*, or irrigation organizations, are a second parallel association. Developed from Iberian, Moorish, and Pueblo influences, *acequia* associations like *mutualistas*, are community self-help cooperatives. Water users, or *parciantes*, elect a *comisionado*, or commissioners, to govern *acequia* activities. Because *acequias* focus on irrigation, *mayerdomos*, or ditch bosses, are appointed from among the *parciantes* and paid with fees generated from members. The *pobladores*, or Hispano settlers, of Conejos County (where the concept of the *S.P.M.D.T.U.* originated) continues the tradition of *Sociedad de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno* and *acequias*. Clearly, the successes of both self-help models laid the groundwork for the emergence of Colorado's *sociedades mutualistas*.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE S.P.M.D.T.U. IN COLORADO

After 1848, American prosperity boomed with the annexation of Mexican Territory. As U.S. primacy peaked mining, ranching, and land rushes prompted a multitude of conflicts. With the blatant violation of the guaranteed property rights under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, former citizens of Mexico attempted to protect their land grants from the railroad, homesteaders, and miners. By the 1890s, what remained of the land grants in New Mexico and Colorado were dismantled through biased judicial proceedings and by attorneys operating as land rings. Faced with the loss of traditional upland commons and pastoral-based livelihoods, many men from the region were forced into low-paying jobs and exploited (Deutsch, 1987:13-

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 8

---

40). In this context *La Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*, or the S.P.M.D.T.U., formed in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado.

Celedonio Mondragón (along with a core group of supporters) organized *La Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*, or the Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers, in Antonito, Colorado in November 1900. Mondragón resided in Santa Fe, New Mexico prior to moving to Colorado. Previously, Mondragón and his brothers had apprenticed as *plateros*, or jewelry makers, in Durango, Mexico union (Salazar Interview). In all likelihood, because of his professional status Celedonio was a member of a guild-type union. Eventually, Mondragón married his first wife and they moved to Santa Fe where he opened a silver shop, specializing in fabricating filigree, a finely patterned Moorish-Iberian jewelry produced in Mexico and in the urban centers in the Southwest. In 1896, while living in Santa Fe, Mondragón became affiliated with *Sociedad Protección Mutua Por Ley y Orden*, or the Society for Mutual Protection through Law and Order, a mutual aid society operating out of Las Vegas, New Mexico (López, 1958:14). This group was one of several union oriented mutual aid societies emerging in New Mexico during the 1880s and 1890s. This was a violent period in New Mexico as Hispanos forcefully resisted the enclosure of the *ejido*, or community commons, by incoming emigrants, the railroad, and land companies. Correspondingly, the Knights of Labor organized workers involved in the construction of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. Two secret militant resistance movements were also engaged in a fence and range war in Las Vegas and in other areas of northern New Mexico. In contrast to the Knights of Labor and the local underground resistance, the *Sociedad Protección Mutua Por Ley y Orden* frowned on militant activity to mediate labor and land conflicts. Sometime in the 1890s, Mondragón unsuccessfully attempted to form an alternative to both groups in Las Vegas and in Santa Fe. Unsuccessful and frustrated, Mondragón moved into Colorado, settling in Antonito, a platted rail town situated on the "Chile-Line" and serving the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

When Mondragón arrived in Antonito he had copies of the rules of the Order of Saint Francis of Asís and the regulations for the *Sociedad Protección Mutua Por Ley y Orden*. From these models Mondragón and six other men composed the "*Reglas Mutuas*," or mutual regulations. In brief, the regulations specified *mutualistas* must be male, between the ages of 18-60, mentally competent, and free of prior conviction. Later, *mutualistas* adopted a specific rule limiting membership to Latinos. To maintain status *mutualistas* were required to attend meetings regularly, to pay dues, and to be good citizens (*Ibid*:15). As lay Franciscans were "obliged to be compassionate and [show] mercy," and to practice *hermanismo*, or brotherhood, the S.P.M.D.T.U. maintained high moral standards (Sanchez, 22 July 1999). Regardless, *mutualistas* could not be ministers of any religion nor could they be political bosses (Sanchez, 1971: 4). By 1910, the society offered a "modest" unemployment and sickness subsidy, and funeral and burial assistance. As a means of identification, S.P.M.D.T.U. members were required to wear *divisas emblemáticas*, or badges, made of ribbon and embossed with the insignia. The simple insignia has two shaking hands at the center of a circle.

Initially S.P.M.D.T.U. members gathered in homes of members. In order to organize a *concilio*, or council, ten members were required. Within the first decade of its establishment, there were an estimated seven

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 9

*concilios*. By 1915 the number grew to approximately ten councils with an estimated membership of 430 individuals (Sanchez, 1971: 5). In 1902, the first lodge outside of the San Luis Valley was established in Ignacio, Colorado and in 1914, the society formed in Denver. In the 1920s, the organization spread to Durango, Pagosa Springs, Montrose, and later to Aguilar, Brighton, and Walsenburg. The Durango lodge indicates the level of participation by members. In thirty years of existence, 38 of its 50 members were active (Lopez, 1958:57). The society expanded into New Mexico in 1914. By 1946, the S.P.M.D.T.U. had lodges in Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Clearfield., Utah. All totaled the society had 16 lodges in the San Luis Valley, at least eight others in Colorado, 21 in New Mexico, and three in Utah. We may never know the full extent of the organizations as the location of an additional 14 decommissioned lodges remain unidentified. Membership declined during the Great Depression due to the financial instability of members. This trend continued during World War II as members left for military duty or moved to urban areas where they found work in defense industries. After World War II, *mutualistas* peaked to over 3,000 members (Romero Interview; 9-14-2000). By 1971, membership dropped to 1,096 as the rural economy plummeted and many relocated to work in urban centers like Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Denver, and Albuquerque (Sanchez, 1971: 3). Currently, the S.P.M.D.T.U. is in a period of revival with membership of 600.

When the federation was incorporated under Colorado laws in 1911, the "*Preambulo*" (preamble) stated that the S.P.M.D.T.U. offered "Protection against injuries of tyrants and despots, of usurpers of land and justice, and of those who take our lives, our honor, and property." To accomplish this feat the Preamble vowed that its members would "...stretch our hands to our brothers...hold our heads high...help...and console" ("*Preambulo de 1911*" in Lopez, 1958: 17; translated by Rivera: 1984:47). The preamble's strong opening statement reflects the racial intolerance experienced by Colorado's Latinos. Although, the organization's biographer states that there was "considerable discrimination" in Conejos County, Colorado newspapers reflect the anti-Hispano sentiments in the state (López, 1958: 11). For example, Colorado's oldest established newspaper, the *Rocky Mountain News*, noted on November 9, 1866 that "The counties of Conejos and Costilla are settled, principally, by New Mexicans, a mongrel race, half Spanish and half Indian."

In his published letters to the *Chillicothe Leader* (an Ohio newspaper) dated November 18, 1884, Charles Fletcher Lummis (a writer and journalist who chronicled his walk from Ohio to California) outlined public stereotyping of Colorado's Hispanos when he stated that "Mexicans" are called "Greasers...out here." By 1892, Lummis penned his apology in *A Tramp Across the Continent*. Of significance is Lummis' report on the continuity of racial bigotry: "In Colorado the Mexicans are much in the minority, and are frequently nicknamed "greasers"—a nomenclature which it is not wise to practice as one proceeds south" (Padget, 1995: 427-8).

The *Alamosa Independent Journal*, a daily operating out of the San Luis Valley's largest town, provides specific instances of racial unrest in a five county area. A poignant example was a series of murders of Hispanos in the San Luis Valley. In an article appearing on January 23, 1902, the *Alamosa Independent Journal* described how Hispano shepherders were shot at and threatened, while their flocks, mules, and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 10

---

dogs were killed and the camp burned. On June 26, 1902, serial killers murdered Hispano shepherders and prominent ranchers, while their Anglo-American assailants were routinely acquitted. The *Journal* observed that state and local authorities "failure to assist in the capture and conviction" created an appearance of an "endorsement of the killing or winking at the methods of the highwaymen." On August 14<sup>th</sup>, the *Journal* again reported that "shepherders are being murdered and sheep killed by the hundreds." The article concluded: "justice will have to be done in time to come in order to stay a body of men whose rights the law fail to recognize."

Well before the onset of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and migration from the war torn Republic of Mexico northward into the Southwest, the term "Mexican" was considered to be a demeaning racial slur. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, multi-generation Latinos distinguish themselves from recent arrivals from Mexico by changing nomenclature to validate their American citizenship. According to José Timoteo López, the S.P.M.D.T.U. redefined the membership clause in Article Seven. Initially, the society used the term "*Compatriotas Mexicano*," or Mexican Compatriots, to describe its members. With anti-immigrant sentiment rising and citizenship of all Spanish-speakers questioned, the society changed nomenclature to "Hispano-Americano" (López, 1958:19). Obviously, the organization was mindful of maintaining its corporate standing by accentuating that its members were American citizens.

Chronic bigotry continued to increase after World War I. In the 1920s and 1930s, Hispanos and Mexicanos became targets of nativism as labor disputes intensified. In 1936, the governor of Colorado attempted to halt Spanish-speaker (including U.S. citizens) from entering southern Colorado. With two checkpoints at Fort Garland (in neighboring Costilla County) and Antonito, Hispanos and newly arriving Mexican laborers felt the blunt of discrimination regardless of the term of their residency (Mondragón-Valdez, 2000: 38-9).

Although the anti-Mexican sentiment has softened through time, the most constant feature of the S.P.M.D.T.U. revolves around mutual aid during sickness and consolation of membership during death (Sanchez, 21 July 1999). Initially, members support each other during illness and death via dues. In 1914 the S.P.M.D.T.U. started to offer death and burial insurance. Operated in the mode of "mutual fraternal insurers" to 1996, the society eventually found it impractical to compete with commercial insurers (Sanchez, 23 August 2000: 1). A related need of the society was how to inform the broad-based constituency. In an effort to communicate activities, members passed a resolution adopting a Spanish language newspaper as a medium of communication. Between 1911 and the 1940s, four different Spanish Language newspapers in southern Colorado and New Mexico were the "official organ" for the organization. Newspapers publishing S.P.M.D.T.U. news included *La Aurora* (Antonito), *El Heraldo del Valle* (San Luis), *La Victoria* (Raton, New Mexico), *La Opinion de Rio Arriba* (likely somewhere in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico) (*Ibid*).

Because of the distance between *mutualistas*, the leadership rotated meetings regionally among various *concilios*. Once the number of *concilios* grew, the organization constructed its Antonito headquarters. Initially, a wealthy businessman attempted to sell a building to the *mutualistas* for their headquarters/lodge

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 11S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

hall. The offer was declined as the *mutualistas* wanted to customize their lodge. To undertake this project, all members were assessed a small fee to purchase lots on Main Street and later they were taxed between \$5.00 to \$15.00 to pay for construction. Construction contributions were eventually repaid to the family upon the death of the member. The contractor for the project was Victor Manzanares, an adobe mason. The building took three years to complete due to the size, massing, and complexity of construction. Apparently, Manzanares underestimated costs when he bid construction at \$14,500. Work stopped for one year and members had to help complete the construction of the building in 1925 (Lopez, 1958:21). Oral accounts of older members also stated that some batches of adobe bricks were defective. Perhaps, that is why a section of the north wall had to be repaired in the 1950s (Romero Interview). Regardless, a wealthy Antonito merchant offered to purchase the building three times and was turned down each time by *mutualistas* (Ibid., 21).

The "*constitución*" (constitution) is the supreme law governing the S.P.M.D.T.U. However, internal matters are under the jurisdiction of the *Concilio Superior* or Supreme Council. The *Concilio Superior* consists of eight officers including: *Presidente* (Superior President), *Vice-Presidente* (Vice-President), *Secretario-Tesorero* (Secretary-Treasurer), *Consejero* (Counselor), *Calificador* (Chancellor), *Mariscal* (Marshall), *Guardia* (Guard), and *Portero* (Doorman) (Sanchez, 1971:10-11). The *Cuerpo Legislativo Superior* (Supreme Legislative Body) is composed of district legislators (and their alternates) elected at a convention held every two years. Additionally, three elected members (independent of the *Concilio Superior* and the *Cuerpo Legislativo*) form a *Cuerpo Judicial Superior* (Supreme Judicial Body). A *Cuerpo Regulator* (the regulating body appointed by the *Presidente*) functions as a presidential cabinet advising on financial and other important matters (Briones Interview). While individual *concilios* have autonomy over their internal affairs, they are governed by the *Concilio Superior*. The S.P.M.D.T.U. is distinct in that its base of operation originated within the San Luis Valley, the first area settled in the state and the old core of Hispano population. Furthermore, the S.P.M.D.T.U. is the only Hispano mutual aid society of its era to continue to hold conventions (Ibid).

## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Initially Colorado's S.P.M.D.T.U. had no lodges. In the manner of the earliest *penitentes*, *mutualistas* used homes of their members during the first years. Perhaps that is why gathering spaces for the *penitentes*, known as *moradas*, and the early lodge halls of the *mutualistas* often resemble each other. Like *moradas*, the S.P.M.D.T.U. lodges used adobe construction and were domestic in scale. Eventually the *penitentes* and *mutualistas* purchased or constructed buildings as old gathering places lacked privacy. Despite their similarities, *moradas* have all their windows shuttered, contain interior prayer spaces, and often have a belfry with a cross. In contrast lodge hall windows are not covered; their interior meeting spaces are secular; and their exteriors are often identified with the organizational name and insignia. Furthermore, whereas *penitentes* sited their *moradas* in remote areas to ensure secrecy, the *mutualistas* located their lodges in easily accessible places near roads.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

---

S.P.M.D.T.U. lodge construction prompted the introduction of new architectural features within Hispano enclaves in the San Luis Valley. The *Concilio Superior* served as a model for the SPMDTU lodge in San Luis (in neighboring Costilla County), which was constructed two years later in 1927. Both buildings inaugurated a local trend among Hispano builders to utilize steel trusses and commercial windows while replicating prevalent Southwestern vernacular designs. A hallmark feature of the *Concilio Superior* was its massing, which not only indicated the size of its membership, but also reflected the society's various activities (e.g., socials, dances, and sporting events). The *Concilio Superior* provided a safe place for Hispanos to gather together, to conduct meetings, and to socially interact without fear of intimidation. The building remains a prominent feature along the town's Main Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 13

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1988.

*Alamosa Independent Journal*, Reprint from the Del Norte Prospector, 26 June 1902.

"Another Sheep Killing," *Alamosa Independent Journal*, 23 January 1902.

"Another Sheep Herder Shot," *Alamosa Independent Journal*, 14 August 1902.

Briones, Rogelio, interviewed on September 8, 2000, at Centennial School, San Luis, Colorado, by Maria Mondragon-Valdez.

Conejos County Clerk and Recorder. "Commercial Property Appraisal Record," 1997.

Deutsch, Sarah. *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Legislative Committee. "Revision And Summary of By-Laws Of The S.P.M.D.T.U," 1996. pp. 1-21.

López, José Timoteo. *La Historia de la Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos*. New York: Comet Press Books, 1958.

———. *Union Protectoria Constitution* (as it appears in Lopez, p. 17).

Padgett, Martin. Travel, Exoticism, and the Writing of Region: Charles Fletcher Lummis and the "Creation" of the Southwest," *Journal of the Southwest* 36, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 421-449.

"The People Who Oppose State Organization," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 November 1866.

Quinoñes-Gomez, Juan. *Mexican American Labor: 1790-1990*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994.

Rivera, Jose A. *Mutual Aid Societies In The Hispanic Southwest: Alternative Sources of Community Empowerment*. Southwest Hispanic Research Institute: University of New Mexico, 1984.

Romero, Thomas, phone interview on September 14, 2000 by Maria Mondragon-Valdez.

Salazar, Esequel, phone interview on September 16, 2000 by Maria Mondragon-Valdez.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 14

---

- Sanchez, Frederick C. "A History of the SPMDTU," *The San Luis Valley Historian*. Winter 1971, pp. 1-12.
- . "SPMDTU sought fairness for railroad workers," *Alamosa Courier*, 18 September 1990, p.3.
- . "SPMDTU represented various workers," *Alamosa Courier*, 21 September 1990, p.3.
- . "History of the SPMDTU," *Alamosa Courier*, 27 September 1990, p. 1.
- . "History of the SPMDTU," *Alamosa Courier*, 29 September 1990, p.1.
- . "SPMDTU favored aid of poor within society," *San Luis Valley Lifestyles*, 21 July 1999, p.1.
- . "SPMDTU celebrates centennial," *San Luis Valley Lifestyles*, 23 August 2000, p. 1.
- Valdez Arnold A. *Hispanic Vernacular Architecture and Settlement Patterns of the Culebra River Villages of Southern Colorado 1850-1950*, Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1992.
- Valdez Arnold and Maria. *Historic and Architectural Context for Costilla County, 1851-1941*. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1991. On file at the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.
- . "Hispanic Contributions to the Adobe Architecture of New Mexico," *Adobe Journal*, No. 8 (1992), pp. 36-41.
- Valdez-Mondragon, Maria. 2000. "The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County: Village Architecture and Its Historic Context, 1851-1964" National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form. Draft on file at the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.
- Weigle, Martha. 1976. *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 15

---

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 5 and 6, Block I, Original Townsite of Antonito.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel of land historically associated with the building.

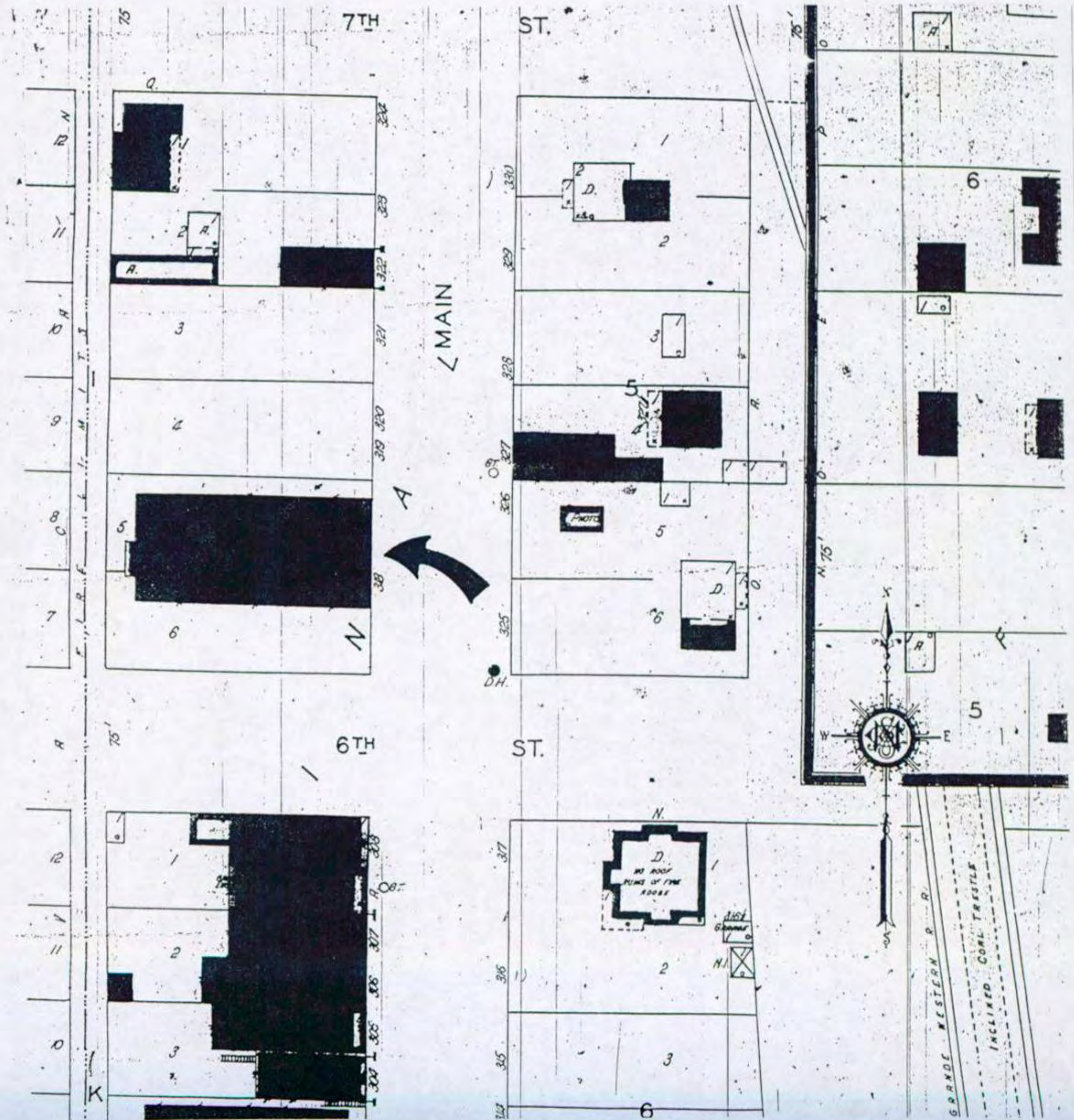
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 16

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Sanborn Map - Antonito, June 1930



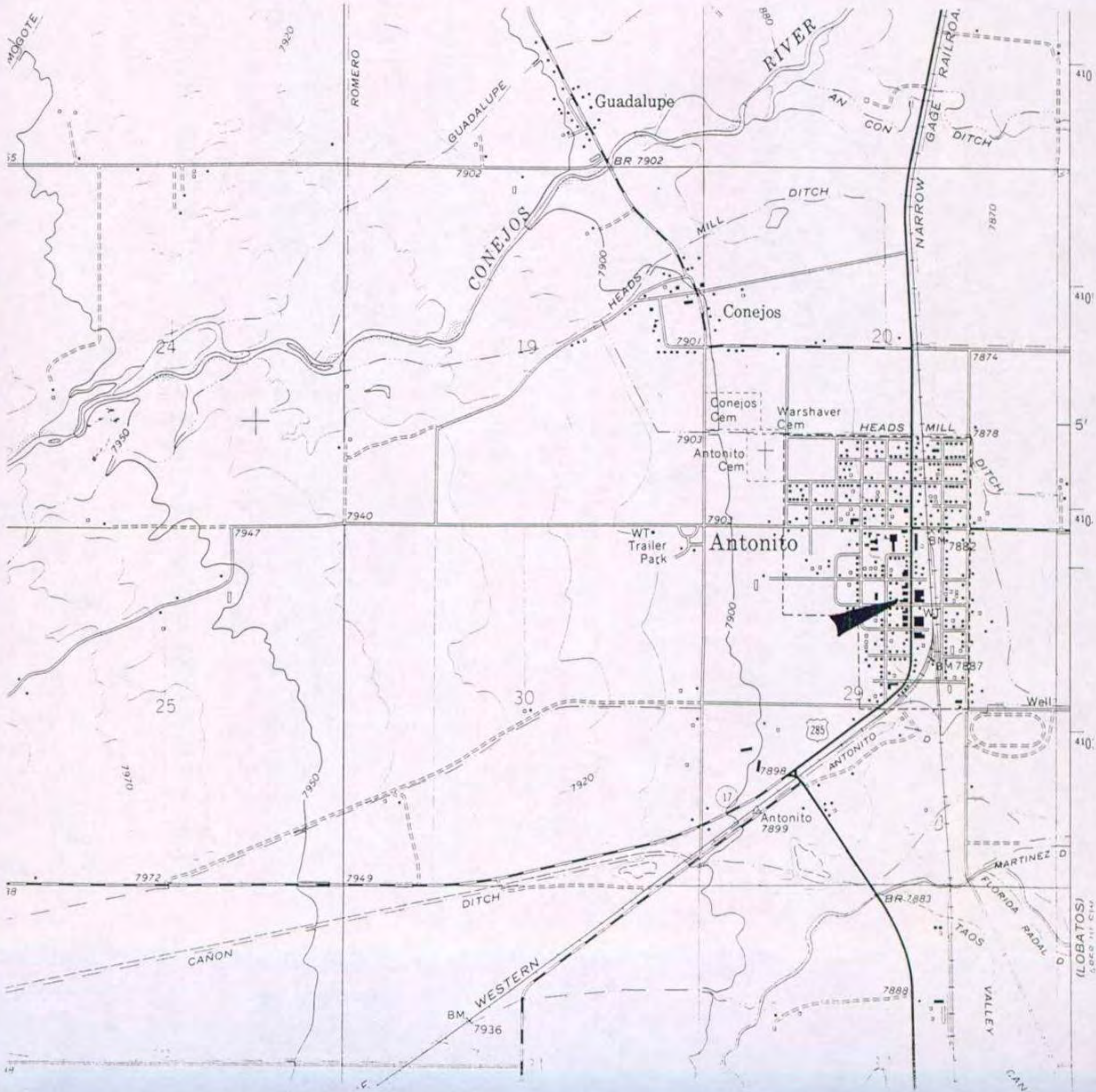
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 17

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

U.S.G.S. MAP - Antonito Quadrangle (1967)



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
Conejos County, Colorado

Section number \_\_\_ Page 18

---

**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Name of property: S.P.M.D.T.U. Concilio Superior  
County and state: Conejos County, Colorado  
Photographer: Arnold Valdez  
Photograph Date: 19 June 2000  
Location of Negatives: Arnold Valdez, Route 1, Box 3-A, San Luis, Colorado

Photo #	Description
1	east and south elevations, camera facing NW
2	east elevation, camera facing W
3	close up of mural on south elevation, camera facing NW
4	close up of mural around entrance on south elevation, camera facing N
5	south and west sides, camera facing NE
6	northwest corner, camera facing SE



1



2





3



4



5



6