

NAME OF PROJECT

Restoration of Pelanconi House (1855-1857)

DESCRIBE EXISTING BUILDING:

Two structures are joined together to create a single large dining room by the removal of two adjacent walls and the creation of a roof over a shared passage way. The Main Street building is a one-story brick structure with a stucco finish. The Olvera Street structure is a small square brick building with hand fired bricks, engaged brick columns set with French doors in between and a balcony. It has a semi basement and an upper floor which contains much of its original plaster work, sash and woodwork.

DESCRIBE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BUILDING:

The Pelanconi House is significant because it was one of the first buildings to be constructed in Los Angeles of fired brick and is the oldest one still standing; and because it reflects the heritage of three distinct ethnic groups in Los Angeles - Italian, French and Mexican. There is no comparable structure in Los Angeles.

The land on which the building was built was owned by Juan Ramirez whose daughter Isabel married in 1860 the second owner of the building and the person for whom it was named - an Italian, Antonio Pelanconi. The original owner of the building was Guiseppi Covacchichi, an Austro-Dalmatian from Trieste. Although little is known of Covacchichi, the Pelanconi family was quite prominent. They constructed several buildings in the immediate neighborhood including a large winery almost directly opposite the Pelanconi House on the east side of Olvera Street. The building to which the Pelanconi House was attached in 1930 was built by Antonio Pelanconi's son Lorenzo in 1916 as a warehouse in which to store their wine. The building is important to the Italian community, many of whom settled in this area in the late 19th century and to the French community through their countryman, Jose Mascarel, a prominent landowner and Mayor of Los Angeles who owned the Pelanconi House in the 1870s. It is also important to the Mexican community, because in addition to the original owner of the site and his daughter, the building is associated with a prominent Mexican restaurateur and civic leader, Consuelo De Bonzo who was persuaded in 1930 by Christine Sterling, founder of the Olvera Street marketplace, to open a Mexican restaurant there, as part of Sterling's plan for the revitalization of Olvera Street. It was the first restaurant in Los Angeles to serve "Mexican" food (as opposed to "Spanish"). The restaurant still operates in this building on Olvera Street.

Conservation of the building as the City's oldest surviving fired brick structure is vitally important.

DESCRIBE PROJECT:

Prepare historic structures report on building. Interior and exterior restoration and seismic stabilization of building.

DESCRIBE WORK TO BE DONE:

Construction will encompass structural stabilization, life safety systems and exterior and interior restoration of the building including preservation of all the original fabric. Preparation of an unmanned exhibit space accessible to the public. Cost estimate of work \$612,000.