

CHARLES ILFELD BUILDING
224 North Plaza
Las Vegas
San Miguel County
New Mexico

HABS NM-207
NM-207

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Addendum to CHARLES ILFELD BUILDING

HABS No. NM-207

Location: 224 North Plaza, Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico.

The Charles Ifeld Building is located within the Plaza Historic District and is included as a contributing structure in the "Historic Resources of Las Vegas, New Mexico" inventory for the National Register of Historic Places (1984).

Significance: Erected in two stages, in 1882 and then more than doubled by 1890, the Charles Ifeld Building is representative of the town's continued role as a trading center and its increased prosperity after the American Civil War and the coming of the railroad. The Ifeld Company shifted from retailing into a wholesale and warehouse operation to accommodate changes in the market economy after the depression of 1893.

History: Present-day Las Vegas, New Mexico, has its antecedents in a land grant from the Mexican government to twenty-nine families in 1835. Together they were to establish an independent, farming village and thereby further settlement in the valleys east of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Indeed, Las Vegas resembled a self-sufficient, agricultural community until the American Civil War. The town center was a rectangular plaza; low, one-story adobe buildings with flat roofs dotted its periphery. South of the plaza a residential neighborhood formed in the 1850s; another was located to the northwest of the plaza. The plaza, however, retained its commercial, religious, and civic functions. Spatial relationships between the buildings and their site, streets, and each other reflected the prevalence of Hispanic traditions in this early period.

After the Mexican War in 1846-48, settlers and supplies from Fort Union altered the character of Las Vegas, importing Anglo-American tastes and building materials. Architecturally this brought hipped and gable roofed structures to the landscape, as well as those made of stone and brick masonry and those made of wood. Aesthetically builders adapted the Greek Revival, and later, for their commercial buildings, the Italianate.

The first commercial buildings were erected on the plaza; ranchers and traders came to town and their business cemented Las Vegas's place as a mercantile center from the 1840s onward. Its location on the Santa Fe trail further augmented this role. Traders such as Charles Ifeld established businesses along the trail; Ifeld also opened a dry goods store in a one-story adobe building on the plaza.

The railroad arrived in 1879, although its depot was located across the river from the plaza. The depot provided a second locus for growth in the city; the plaza remained its center, and was the

site of the best examples of late nineteenth-century Italianate-style commercial structures. Examples included the Plaza Hotel and the Charles Ilfeld Building, both begun in 1882.

Description: The Ilfeld building is a three-story, commercial structure built in the Italianate-style fronting on the plaza. The walls of the front facade are made of a finished ashlar sandstone, while those to the sides and rear consist of rubble stone. The cornice is a pressed metal. The building is ornamented with classical details such as brackets for the cornice and corner quoins, plus decorative window surrounds at the second and third floors. The second-floor windows are paired, each glazed with one-over-one lights. Surmounting each pair is a bracketed segmental hood with rosettes. The third-floor windows are also paired, with one-over-one glazing, but are capped by a bracketed flat arch hood with lion heads.

Sources:

“Charles Ilfeld Building,” *Historic Las Vegas, New Mexico: Along the Santa Fe Trail*. Las Vegas: Citizens’ Committee for Historic Preservation, 2004.

“Charles Ilfeld Building,” New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, State Planning Office, ca. 1977.

Chris Wilson, “Nuestra Senora de Los Dolores de Las Vegas (City of Los Vegas),” Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1984.