

RESTORATION AND VITALIZATION OF THE *ANTIGUO TRATO DE TOCINERÍA* (OLD PORK BUTCHERY)

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Research and documentation

Introduction

This work attempts to summarize the happenings of a historic building that is capable of transmitting to us with its own spatiality the way of life of the inhabitants of this city through time.

The criteria with which the city is distributed, made up of rectangular blocks and ordered orthogonally, as well as the lot distribution and the location of the building in relation to the foundation center, is reviewed.

The use and development of the architectural spaces is set forth hypothetically, since the fragmentation of the lots and the substantial modifications impede recognition or evidence of the original distribution.

The building, product of a determined period of time, has adapted itself to different uses with the passing of the centuries, which are molded through an uncountable number of interventions which may be identified on the walls that delimit each of the spaces. Due to its architectural, constructive and decorative features, it is considered a noteworthy monument of the 16th century.

With the reading about the building, one of the most relevant arguments for the economy of this city during the foundation process and during the first centuries of colonization is approached, documenting the economic, political, and social situation that transformed the environment.

The registry of the building's structure, of the construction systems and existing materials, as well as the superposition of the different stages in construction before the demand to satisfy each time new necessities for use, creating specific environments defined by orientation, height, and location regarding the housing estate, are carried out.

Historical background information

In the 16th century, Puebla was located among the important indigenous nuclei, close to Mexico City, on the way to the main vice royal port and as the head of the most productive agricultural region.

Established on the eastern edge of the San Francisco River and was later moved to the west of the brook, it was projected as a city “to be inhabited by Spaniards”.

The layout of the new city responds to the so-called classical model with checker-board design, with blocks measuring 100 x 200 *varas*¹; a block was planned for Plaza Mayor and around it the main religious and government buildings were erected, following, although imprecisely, the “Ordenanzas de descubrimiento y población” (Discovery and Population Ordinances) of 1573².

The blocks were sub-divided in eight lots each, same which with the passing of time were segregated, bringing forth a new urban image defined by architectural and decorative expressions which bring as consequence the loss of the original constructive unity; however, through a proper research process, it is possible to identify the special intercommunications and understand the civil architectural organization of the 16th century (see slide 1).

In the first block of the city, one of the most important buildings of colonial architecture and cultural collection of this city is located, known as “*Antiguo Trato de Tocinería*” (Old Pork Butchery), in which the production of bacon and sausages was carried out, giving place to the structure of spaces with particular features to keep areas at low temperatures but with good ventilation through refrigeration³; the house and the butchery are seen as two independent architectural components since there was no communication between them, but the distribution of both buildings occupy the equivalent of an eighth of a block; however, time, the various uses, and the collapse of some construction elements have generated large gaps and important transformations, for which presently, subdivisions and walled-up areas are observed, which do not allow one to see the complex and the original spaces..

¹ *Vara* is the Castilian equivalent to 0.835 cm.

² Méndez, Eloy, *La Conformación de la Ciudad de Puebla (1996-1980): una visión histórica*, Puebla, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1987.

³ Aspect that has been able to be verified since by its architectural features we may be talking about the cooling system by forced circulation, as well as dominant winds enter the vaulted space that was open toward the north and circulated toward the upper part, exiting through the oculi, controlling the excessive evaporation of moisture due to the funnel effect; due to the sub-divisions produced in the building through time, bays and ventilation areas remained sealed for centuries, but with the interventions and liberations, it has been verified that the interior temperature of the vaults varies between 8° and 10° Centigrade regarding the exterior, which contributed to the relative humidity of the place.

The house and the area destined to the pork butchery, constructively make up the architectural unit known as the bacon and sausage factory; information has been obtained that in 1794 the “*Subteniente de Dragones Don Roque de la Peña* obtained the house” through deed in which it is mentioned that the surface area is of 611 *varas*, 26 *varas* front, and describes each of the spaces made of walls whose thickness is of one *vara*, among which we find: annexes, gate, garage, portal, stable, bamboo awning, entresol, flight of stairs, living room, oratory, kitchen, rooms, courtyard and well with basin.⁴

Due to its singularity, historic and architectural representation, the complex, currently sectioned, appears in the body of the decree of 1977 by which it was declared a “Historical Monument Zone of the City of Puebla”, and it is cataloged by the National Institute of Anthropology and History as relevant monuments of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Constructive Chronology

The building which original corresponded to the eighth of the block on the corner of the street 2 Sur and avenue 9 Oriente, which is currently segregated and three buildings are identified, marked with the numbers 902 and 904 on the street 2 Sur and 201 on the avenue 9 Oriente, apparently with different formal, architectural and constructive features; however, from the inside of each of the buildings, it is possible to locate the intercommunications which allow one to visualize the stratified housing estate.

This work will specifically carry out the analysis of the building located on the street 2 Sur number 904, which is the area that presents the least destructive and invasive interventions, as well as most preserved relevant architectural elements.

We find the main entrance on the asymmetrical façade regarding the bays we can observe; on the front, in the first corridor, the annexes are located, which communicate with a central courtyard surrounded by bi-level corridors where the bedrooms are. In the living area, an arcade gatehouse in front of the main entrance can be seen, same which is walled-up with the same type of bond presented in the arcade in the upper level, which rises up over the vaults; the grey quarry stone columns and the half-point arches that define said space remain almost completely hidden in the wall; it is later sub-divided to make small rooms when its use changed to that of an apartment building (see slide 2).

⁴ Transcription of the deeds of 1766, when the buildings that make up the complex go to a sole owner. It is willed as private property until it becomes an apartment building. Due to deterioration, it is left abandoned and closed for more than ten years until 2002, when it was bought by a private citizen and the restoration work was begun.

The building basically presents two constructive stages. The first is made up of two stages in which it is possible to identify on the east side of the property two large cannon vaults that occupy a surface area of approximately 300 m² and on the west what remains of the house, of one story with mezzanine.

The second stage is made up of 5 phases. The first corresponds to the amplification of the house, creating a second level of approximately 400 m² for which reason the staircase has very specific features. In the next phase, the house is enlarged with the construction of a second level. In the third phase, the second and third level of the arcade above the vaults is built. In the fourth, modifications with decorations corresponding to the 19th century were developed. The last phase refers specifically to the alterations, walls that substantially affect the space and modify the architectural style.

Giving priority to the esthetic value over the historic value, it was necessary to assess the permanence or withdrawal of the elements added in the various constructive stages, same that were documented in detail, and through the release process, the recuperation of the spaces with a rich formal language was achieved (see slide 3).

Material and bond

In the building, it is possible to identify different types of materials and of different dimensions that were used through time in the transformation process. Because of the loss of a high percentage of collapsed walls, it is possible to see that the cannon vaults are basically made of Travertine stone and brick alternately, they have different dimensions. The east vault is larger than the west vault, and although the materials used in the bond are the same, the proportion is different.

The area corresponding to the house is totally covered with wood, shingles, flat roof and brick beams of various sizes, forms and designs.

The structure basically presents three systems- that made up of Travertine stone, brick and flat quarry stone, the second of pieces of Travertine stone, brick and quarry stone blocks, and the third with two rows of brick by two rows of Travertine stone.

Some areas with collapsed walls are still preserved, where it is possible to see various layers of paint that document the building's historic decoration.

The brick walls have thicknesses from 30 to 80 cm, depending on the period in which they were built, the oldest being the thickest.

The main gate and central courtyard have flat quarry stone as pavement and in the vaults, the floor was dirt. The second level is specifically characterized by the construction

of a oratorio covered by a semispherical dome topped with a *linternilla* (opening to allow light to enter) (see slides 4 and 5).

Identification of the original architectural spaces

According to the existing documentation, it is known that a bacon factory included, in general terms, four very differentiated spatial housing estates- the courtyards, pigsties, soapers, with their cauldrons, *tequesquiteros* and woodsheds, and living units and on the outside was the store where the soap and meat was sold.

The house-workshop favored the assignment of the space destined to livestock, adopting a preeminent place for raising and feeding. A pigsty in reality was a special area which included a courtyard that served as a sunning and wallowing area, stone drinking troughs, and vaulted passageways (see slide 6).

Around the courtyard, in the traditional *poblano* style, were sheds made up of quarry stone pilasters which held half-point arches which sheltered the inhabitants and workers of the house. These large passageways communicated the courtyard to the granaries located in an edge of the courtyard. These rooms, such as granaries, were made in general of two floors on the inside, in the form of lofts.

A soap manufacture area could be of average size, varying from 30 to 200 m²; its importance did not only radiate from the large dimensions it could occupy, but also in the productive process carried out within.

In the lower part of the house, the use of rooms and sheds was common, which served as shelter for the workers who temporarily or permanently resided there.

Besides the productive space, another element that differentiated this type of house was that of the shops on the outside. The façade in its housing estate was adjusted as a commercial zone through shops and outbuildings. The mercantile function demanded specific improvements to the house to ease the purchase, storage, and sales operations, be they wholesale or retail.⁵

As the study only covers one of the components of the monumental housing estate, the fragmented interpretation of the spaces identified is obtained through bibliographic research.

Restoration and vitalization

During the restoration process, the methodology which allowed an analysis of the building registered in a historic context was followed, as part of a segregated and

⁵ Cervantes Bello, Francisco Javier, (coord.), Loreto López, Rosalva, *Las dimensiones sociales del espacio en la historia de Puebla (XVII-XIX)*. “*Calles, zahúrdas y tocinerías, un ejemplo de integración urbana en la Puebla de los Ángeles del siglo XVIII*”, Puebla, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1990, Pp. 143-168

transformed housing estate and, specifically, as a relevant building due to its nature of “*unicum*”, which implicitly speaks to us of society, economy, and culture of our city.

Detailed reading was carried out which was documented through architectural surveys, identification of the wall structure and behavior of the constructive system, photographic survey, deterioration diagnosis, description of floors and coverings, and exploration to determine the subsistence of wall paint (see slide 7).

In August 2002, the recuperation process was begun through the restoration work; the problems mainly affecting stability and consistency of the wall structure were carried out, being determined that the damage presented due to the differential foundations and the latest earthquakes did not create great losses from the formal point of view; however, due to the lack of maintenance and abandonment, approximately 80% of the beams in roof terraces and mezzanines had collapsed.

The volumetrics of the building and the identification of the stratified spaces were able to be recuperated, consolidating the constructive systems and re-integrating the horizontal elements.

The wall structure was worked on, securing it with standing beams, the annexes like those existing in the vaults that remained isolated from the 18th century were released, due to the provisions issued through city council decisions to move pork butcheries to the city periphery due to problems they created; in this period, radical changes were made in the building’s distribution, building a second level, the oratory and the arcade.⁶

The roof terrace tiles in the living area, corresponding to the first constructive stage, were built with wood beams, a bed of shingles, earth filling and bricks placed with lime and sand mortar, with a slant toward the courtyard to drain rainwater, for which upon building the second level which reaches ten meters high, the walls rise up over the roof terrace, giving place to settling, which caused cracks and fissures, for which reason the wall system of the second level had to be improved, establishing the support necessary to achieve stability (see slide 8).

Through exploration, some walled-up bays were detected, among those that stand out were the flat moldings of the main entrance and the mixed line arches, elements which were released and re-integrated, making the traditional constructive system work; in the area of the vaults, which had been uninhabited for centuries, the columns that received the axial burden of the arcade on the upper level were eliminated.

⁶ City Council Minutes of the 17th and 18th centuries of the Very Noble and Very Loyal City of Puebla. Honorable City Hall of the City of Puebla, Administration 1993 – 1996.

Over the vaults, an area whose support walls are 0.60 m thick is present, and the head walls only 0.30 m, and 15.00 m high regarding street level. To reintegrate the covering of this space, implementing part with beams would conserve the transparency that keeps the space in the open air, as it had been for a long time, was decided, installing electric polycarbonate sliding roofs on a metal structure attached to the thin walls, supplying proper behavior in case of future earthquakes (see slide 9).

In the improvement process, the spaces offered by the historic building have been used, implementing the installations necessary for good function, taking advantage of the historic and architectural legacy that has been adapted to the activities our time period demands.

Currently, the building has been recuperated and is functioning almost in its totality, since it is still necessary to explore the oven and the adaptation of some spaces.

This historic building has held cultural, social, and gastronomic taste-testing events, abiding by the nature of the architectural heritage, integrating it to social and economic activities. (see slide 10).