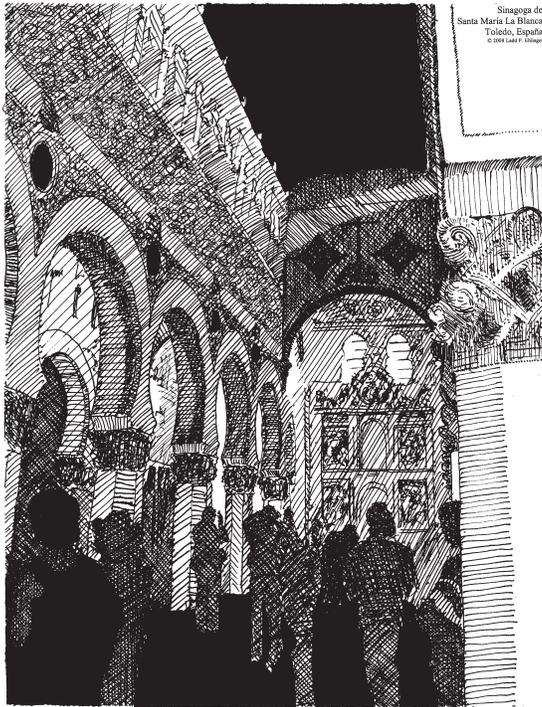




ARCHITECTURE

EHLINGER & ASSOCIATES

SECOND QUARTER 2008



Sinagoga de Santa María La Blanca

This issue's limited edition print of a sketch by Ladd P. Ehlinger is of Sinagoga Santa María la Blanca (St. Mary of the Snows) in Toledo, Spain. This synagogue was founded in Ca. 1203 - 1205, nearly two centuries before the Tránsito Synagogue, which was featured in our 1st Quarter 2008 newsletter. It is one of the three remaining synagogues in Spain, and actually functions today as a museum.

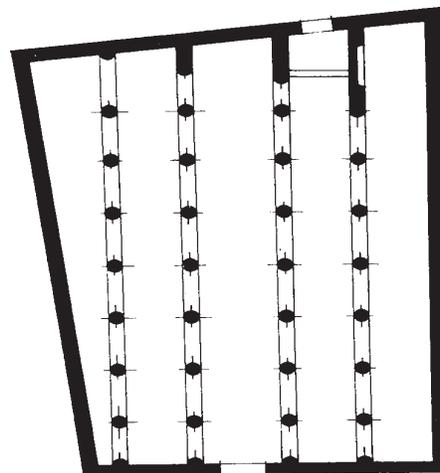
This synagogue was designed by unknown Mudéjar architects. If you recall from the Tránsito article last issue, Mudéjar (pronounced moo-DAY-har) is a type or style of decorative and carved plaster with very intricate geometric patterns that was developed by craftsmen /artists in Spain during the time of the Moorish occupation. Mudéjar ornament was used in Islamic, Jewish and Catholic places of worship and other buildings throughout this period of time. The Islamic / Mudéjar influence is readily apparent throughout the building.

In plan, Santa María la Blanca has five aisles formed by four colonnades of

octagonal drums supporting seven horseshoe arches each on capitals with very decorative filigree of vegetal inspiration from Almohad influence. The architrave (space above the arches) is filled with Mudéjar ornament above and between bandings on the white walls that support the wooden roof structure. The bandings are thought to have had inscriptions on them at one time, though today in their "restored" state, they are plain. The flooring is a decorative red tile that dates from the restoration also, so the original flooring is unknown. It is believed that there was a niche for the Ark though it no longer remains, nor is it known where the Bimah was.

The ambiance is more like a Mesquita (Mosque) than a synagogue because of the five parallel aisles and horseshoe arches, perhaps also because of

the lack of a women's gallery (the other Spanish synagogue have women's galleries). However, some believe that a Women's Gallery did exist when the synagogue was first built because there are brackets in the masonry on the western end that appear to have been for holding wooden beams that are otherwise unexplained.



PLAN

Some scholars believe that Santa María la Blanca was originally built as a mosque, construction date unknown, that had burned Ca. 1180, which explains the multiple aisle plan. These same scholars also believe that Joseph ben Meir ben Shoshan (Yucef Abenxuxen) was the patron for the reconstruction of the building into a synagogue. Joseph was the son of a finance minister (almozarife) to Alfonso VIII of Castile (ruled 1158-1214). If so, he certainly had the money to be the patron of such a project.

After 1492 and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, this synagogue was also converted to a Catholic church — hence the name. The original Jewish name is unknown. It was stormed by a Christian mob led by St. Vincent Ferrer. The building was later used as a carpenter's shop, a store, a barracks, and a refuge for reformed prostitutes. The altar from the 16th century is from its use as a Christian church remains.

WELCOME ABOARD

Janet Fernandez has recently joined the E&A team. Janet is our new Administrative Assistant and brings 11 years experience in the construction industry to the job. She had taken off a few years to have children, and has re-entered the world of work. Janet lives in LaPlace with her husband and 3 kids.

Max Noches has also joined E&A full-time as an Intern Architect since his graduation from U. LA. LA. (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) with a Bachelor of Architecture. Max is no stranger to E&A since he worked here for two summers and several winter and spring breaks doing drafting work while being a full-time student. As an Intern Architect, Max will be preparing to take the Architect's Registration Examination (ARE) and accruing hours of experience in various categories determined by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) to qualify him to take the exam and to be licensed - a 3 year ordeal every intern undergoes.

Rebuilding After the Fire

After 3 months of wrangling with our insurance company, negotiating with contractors, battling with banks, and debating with building inspectors, my new house is finally under construction!

My neighborhood was built in the late 30's and early 40's, and are all very similar. While we had the opportunity to design and build whatever we wanted, we chose to keep with the existing cottage/colonial styles that dominate.

With our daughters growing quickly, we've chosen to build larger than before. The original house was 1250 s.f.: the new one will be 2000 s.f. Our lot is small, so we had to do two stories in order to accommodate our needs. We considered doing 1-1/2 stories, but felt that it made more economical sense to do a full second story. It also allowed for better clustering of house use and functions in the design.

This is where we begin to differ from the rest of our neighborhood. There are a number of 1-1/2 story houses - ours will be one of the only two story house in about a 4 street radius.

Then we had to deal with being in a flood zone. It's quite frustrating - our property is right on the edge of a flood fringe (and has never flooded as far as we know, even during the 1973 flood). The line cuts right through the middle of our property! For future value, we wanted to do a raised foundation instead of slab on grade, but in order to meet current flood requirements, we had to raise the crawl space to one foot above flood elevation - adding about 8" of soil. Then, the crawlspace needs a 32" clearance. The property slopes, so the front of the house will be 6 blocks in height - 4 feet off the ground!

Most of the houses around us are only 2' off the ground. They have 3 or 4 steps up to the front porch - we'll have seven. Between this height, and being two stories, we're concerned that we may be overbuilding for what the neighborhood market can bear, but since we have no plans to sell, it's not a big concern.

Besides, it will be fun to throw water balloons from the second story balcony!

We expect to finish the house sometime in late October or early November, and to move in before Christmas.

Perrin Ehlinger

