



Sofia's Mexican Kitchen Restaurant

The historic building has taken on many names and owners since 1907, but will always be best remembered as Sofia's Mexican Kitchen Restaurant.

The building is an adobe structure built circa 1907 and was operated as Johnson's Grocery Store until Mr. Johnson was robbed and murdered in 1932. Mr. John Oliver Wilson purchased the building for "taxes owed". He then renovated the building creating the first Help Yourself Maytag Laundry in Casa Grande which operated until the mid-1950s. Mr. Wilson's daughter Christine Hansen refurbished the laundry into a catering business. In 1959, Sofia helped Hansen turn the catering business into a Mexican food restaurant. In spite of the most beautiful neon sign made by Sofia's relative Pedro Guerrero, the restaurant was only open for about a year. Hansen reopened the restaurant in 1961 as Sofia's Mexican Kitchen and hosted locals until she sold the business in 1982. Many people today remember her as Christine Burton, her married name.

The Sofia's neon sign still sits high on a free standing pole at 3rd Street and Picacho. It's covered with white paint and the neon has not glowed for many years. After all contacts associated with Sofia's Restaurant had been exhausted people only remembered that the sign contained the colors orange and turquoise and that it was a family restaurant. But, Christina Hansen Burton, who passed away in 2012, was remembered as a caring and nurturing owner who often fed duck hunters after hours, fed needy families, and opened the back door to the homeless for hot meals. Other restaurants followed in the same building: Adobe Inn, Casa Grande Café, and Lupita's each serving a variety of Mexican and American foods. The building is now listed on the Local and National Register of Historic Places and is currently for sale.

Lacking historic photographs and relying almost solely on the recalled memories of locals, the artist used a creative method to blend memory with nostalgia and historic records. She began with the image of a 1950's era local family with three children. The grandfather of these children ate at Sofia's frequently and remembered the words that were painted on the sign. The artist used an acrylic wash technique that would lend nicely to the concept that everything was a bit hazy and undefined in memory. It's a memory framed in antique gold, as often our mind's eye preserves the goodness we remember so well.

To learn more about historic restaurants, families, buildings, and structures visit the Casa Grande Valley Historical Society Museum. Visitors can explore the history and heritage of Casas Grande exhibits and photos. Research materials are available by appointment.