

THE PERMANENCY OF URBAN
DWELLINGS IN MEXICO CITY,
1700 TO THE PRESENT
The Case of Vecindades

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During the course of this research, a number of nineteenth-century buildings which are still standing in Mexico City were photographed and the following information noted: The number of stories, the number of additions to the original structure, and the use assigned to each addition at the time of the visit. At each building an individual was sought who might provide the following information: (1) The use which the interior parts of the building received; (2) the number of housing units in the building; and (3) the changes introduced in the building to accommodate new business, small stores, or private offices. Those elements of the building which might reveal the use and overall condition of the structure were photographed, and the following criteria were established for describing the general use which might be assigned to a given building:

- I. A business
- II. A business on the ground level with a housing unit on the upper story
- III. A single house
- IV. A building with several housing units, all of which were occupied at the time of the visit
- V. A building with several housing units, some of which were unoccupied due to hazardous conditions, or which were partially destroyed
- VI. Buildings in transition—housing units being transformed into offices, shops, schools, or private businesses.

To refer to the overall condition of the building, the following categories were proposed: X—Excellent conditions; XX—Fair conditions; XXX—Defects in the construction, such as cracking, peeling, or warping of the woodwork; XXXX—Dangerous conditions. The 5,550 interior and exterior photographs were organized into a portfolio which may be used in future studies related to the architectural styles, the present conditions, and the permanence of urban dwellings in Mexico City.

A detailed study was also made of a particular type of construction known as the *vecindades*, or apartment complexes. They were organized according to date of construction and grouped into one of three time periods: Eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century. Of the 1,346 buildings visited and photographed, 328 were *vecindades* (24.3 percent of the total). The following table shows the century in which the *vecindades* were constructed:

<i>Century</i>	<i>Number of Vecindades</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Number of Vecindades</i>	<i>Percentage of All Buildings Visited</i>
Eighteenth	125	38.1%	9.2%
Nineteenth	198	60.3%	14.7%
Twentieth	5	1.5%	0.3%

It was demonstrated that Mexico City expanded toward the north-north-eastern section of the city during the nineteenth century. Migrants who moved to the capital throughout the 1800s settled in the numerous *vecindades* being constructed in that area, for it was the gateway to the city and the job market. Today's residents in the *vecindades* of Mexico City are native to the capital. These buildings no longer receive migrants moving to the city in search for employment, but serve as permanent homes for those living in the area. Since most of the *vecindades* built in the nineteenth century are still used as apartment complexes housing numerous families, the permanence of housing units in Mexico City may have been proved.