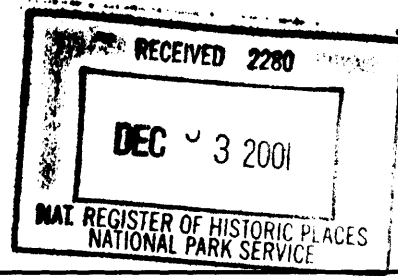


(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1468

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 237 Don Gaspar Avenue  
CITY OR TOWN: Santa Fe  
STATE: New Mexico CODE: NM COUNTY: Santa Fe CODE: 049  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
VICINITY: N/A  
ZIP CODE: 87501

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
 meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  
 statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

NM SHPO

10/26/01  
Date

Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper (for)

Date of Action

1/18/02

---

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public-state

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** BUILDING

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** GOVERNMENT: courthouse

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** GOVERNMENT: courthouse

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Other: Territorial Revival

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION Concrete  
WALLS Stucco; Concrete  
ROOF Asphalt  
OTHER Brick; Brass; Glass

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-11).

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Law; Politics/Government; Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1937-1951

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1937

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Street, Gordon F., original architect; W. C. Krueger & Associates, architects, 1964 addition

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-17).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-18).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

---

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**    Zone Easting    Northing  
                          1 13    415021    3949151

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheet 10-19)

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** (see continuation sheet 10-19)

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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**NAME/TITLE:** David Kammer, Ph.D., with assistance from Historic Preservation Division staff

**ORGANIZATION:** Consulting Historian

**DATE:** April, 2000

**STREET & NUMBER:** 521 Aliso Drive, NE

**TELEPHONE:** (505) 266-0586

**CITY OR TOWN:** Albuquerque

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87108

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** Santa Fe, N. Mex., 7.5-minute series map indicating the property's location (see attached).

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-20)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

---

**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** New Mexico Property Control Division

**STREET & NUMBER:** 1100 St. Francis Drive, Joseph Montoya Building, Room 2022

**TELEPHONE:** (505) 827-2141

**CITY OR TOWN:** Santa Fe

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87501

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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### Description

The New Mexico Supreme Court Building is situated at the southeast corner of Don Gaspar Avenue and East De Vargas Street on a slight rise overlooking the Santa River in Santa Fe. The building presents a striking profile of a Y-shaped mass composed of a center three-story stepped core flanked on each side by two-story stepped wings. The exterior of the building is composed of brick faced with light cream-colored stucco. Exemplary of the Territorial Revival style, the Supreme Court Building is outlined with brick coping and displays classical elements at its main entry and brick windowsills. The double brass main entry door and many of the building's interior fixtures incorporate the Zia sun, an indigenous symbol that became part of New Mexico's architectural design in the 1930s. To the east is a three-story addition made to the building in 1964. Sympathetically rendered, the addition does little to diminish the overall appearance of the building. The New Mexico Supreme Court Building retains a high degree of integrity as to its location and setting, its design and workmanship, and its association and feeling as a New Deal-era public building in New Mexico.

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Facing west onto Don Gaspar Avenue, just north of East DeVargas Street, the Supreme Court Building is located at the northern end of a group of state government buildings referred to as the Capitol Complex. One of the oldest public buildings constructed within this area, the Supreme Court Building is set on approximately one acre of land along the southern boundary of Santa Fe State Park, or the *Alameda*, that lines the Santa Fe River. The landscape of the park, consisting largely of cottonwoods and conifers planted along the channel of the river, contributes to the setting of the building. This complementary setting is especially apparent from the vista offered along its north elevation where a flagstone pathway borders the *Alameda* and along Don Gaspar Avenue where the two wings emanating from the core of the building form a courtyard-like lawn (see Figure 7-1). Viewed from the Don Gaspar Avenue Bridge, the front elevation of the building framed by a ring of conifers conveys a sense of scale, setting and composition characteristic of many of the public landscape and architectural projects carried out by the New Deal in New Mexico.

The New Mexico Supreme Court Building was constructed as a Public Works Administration (PWA) project (5544-R) between 1935 and 1937. Typical of many of the projects undertaken by New Deal programs in New Mexico, the design of the building embodies a number of elements associated with the Territorial Revival style for which the building set a precedent in the state's public architecture. Typical also of the larger PWA construction projects, the building employs a range of modern construction materials and techniques. The introduction of these materials and techniques permitted it to function initially as both the seat of the state's Judiciary Branch of government and the site of the offices for the State Attorney General and State Treasurer.

The original building, built on a Y-plan, consists of a three-story stepped core, flanked by two-story stepped wings arranged at oblique angles to the core (see Figure 7-2). The core serves as the primary entrance to the building, which is accessed through a pair of heavy brass doors burnished with the symbol of the Zia, and sheltered by a portico displaying classically influenced columns (see Photos 1 & 2).

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Section 7 Page 6

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Arranged at a skew to the northwest, is the wing of the former offices of the State Attorney General and Treasurer. This wing displays an irregular fenestration pattern of single and paired steel casement windows across each elevation. A separate entry to the wing is located to the west and consists of a pair of brass doors crowned by a broken pediment. The wing to the northeast, containing the offices of the Supreme Court, displays an almost symmetrical pattern of steel casement windows across its main façade, each with the symbol of the Zia arranged at the center of the three-part design (see Photo 3). The three-story north elevation of this wing has an irregular massing with a mixture of single and paired steel casement windows. At the center of the third floor is a balcony framed by concrete balustrade. A balcony of this same design is also located on the south elevation of the northwest wing. The extended core of the building forming, in essence, a third wing juts out to the rear or south of the main lobby and houses the State Law Library. The exposed west elevation of the library consists of three floors illuminated by five ribbon-like rows of single casement windows. The east elevation of the library is no longer exposed, as it now directly abuts the 1964 addition.

Designed by W.C. Kruger and Associates, the three-story addition is essentially rectangular in plan and is rendered in much the same scale, massing, and architectural treatment as the original building (see Figure 7-3 & Photo 4). The longest façade of the addition is its east elevation, which has a symmetrical arrangement of single steel casement windows on the second and third stories, with three balconies arranged at regular intervals on the third floor. The second and third stories cantilever over the first floor by the means of brick piers. A central breezeway runs across the entire elevation of the first floor, which reveals a symmetrical arrangement of single steel casement windows and entrance openings. The south elevation serves as the south entrance to the Supreme Court Building, and is composed of a symmetrical arrangement of steel casement windows, with two balconies in balanced composition on the second story. Because much of the first floor of the addition is below the grade of East De Vargas Street, it appears to be only two stories from this vantage point and Don Gaspar Avenue and, therefore, does not constitute a loss of integrity to the primary façade of the original building.

The frame of the building, including its foundation, structural members, and floors is made of concrete. The use of concrete provided the Judiciary with vaults and storage spaces for the State Treasurer, whose office was initially located in the building, and renders it a semi-fireproof structure. Many of the State Law Library's collection of historic records are stored in the concrete-lined basement. The basement also houses the building's mechanical plant, much of which has been replaced and updated as the Supreme Court Building Commission, which oversees the operation of the building, has sought to maintain its safety and comfort.

Use of these modern building materials and construction techniques also permitted architect Gordon F. Street to design a building to meet the spatial needs of the Judiciary Branch of state government, which had previously been housed in cramped quarters within the state capitol building (now the Bataan Memorial Building). The plan that Street developed included a central core and two flanking wings. The core portion, stepping from two to three stories, extends approximately 65 feet to the rear and contains the State Law Library. Its three floors of stacks, still marked by their original cork floors, are organized around a central atrium

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Section 7 Page 7

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surrounded by low-railed balconies (see Photo 5). The atrium is illuminated in part by a clerestory consisting of a series of single windows lining its upper elevation.

In front of the library portion is the marble-paneled lobby measuring approximately 30 square feet. Small halls flank either side of the lobby, narrowing to corridors extending the length of the two wings flanking the core (see Figure 7-3). Stepped from one story along the front elevation to two stories along the rear elevation, these wings were designed to house the two key components composing the state's judicial system. One wing housed the Judiciary Branch and the other the offices of the Attorney General, a part of the Executive Branch of state government, and those of the State Treasurer. The northeast wing, extending approximately 75 feet from the hall flanking the lobby, contains the Supreme Court Chambers and an adjacent Robing Room, as well as the offices of the Judiciary's administrative staff, with the justices' chambers located on the second floor. The northwest wing, extending approximately 88 feet from the hall flanking the lobby, originally contained the offices of the state's Attorney General, as well as those of his administrative staff. Following the addition to the rear of the building in 1964 and, two years later, the creation of the New Mexico Court of Appeals, the northeast wing and portions of the addition were occupied by the Court of Appeals judges and their administrative staff.

The elements evident in the design of the building's exterior elevations underscore the role that it, along with the New Deal's Federal Emergency Recovery Act (FERA) Building (now the Villagra Building), played in pioneering the Territorial Revival style in New Mexico (Wilson 1997: 282). The brick coping, brick sills, and some windows with brick surrounds, as well as the main entry portales with its classical posts and the cream-colored stucco facing, represent the key elements characterizing the style. The balanced but slightly irregular massing, however, with its setbacks forming multiple planes and the use of heavy wood lintels at the main entry and at some of the windows suggest how Street was able to incorporate into the design elements associated with the already popular Pueblo Revival Style. The rear addition employs many of those same elements incorporating wood lintels above some windows doors and further amplifying the style with the use of small balconies and sidelights at some entries.

Similarly, an array of details throughout the interior of the building suggests the extent to which Street sought to celebrate the region and its heritage. Heavy wood corbels and highly finished wood beams mark the atrium ceiling in the law library. Rounded hearths present in some of the offices and Robing Room suggest Pueblo and Spanish building traditions (see Photo 6). The Zia sun symbol, popularized in much of the state's tourism material during the 1930s, appears in relief on the panels of paired large brass doors at the main entry, as well as in the large fixed metal window above the entry. The icon also appears on door fixtures and in numerous lighting fixtures ranging from the elegant wrought iron cylindrical chandeliers hanging from the atrium ceiling, to the lights flanking the main entry, to the small overhead lights located in many of the offices (see Photo 7).

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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Despite the more than six decades that have elapsed since the opening of the Supreme Court Building, it retains a high degree of historic integrity. The addition at the rear of the building undertaken to meet the judiciary's need for more space does not affect the appearance of the front elevation and blends sympathetically with the *Alameda* and its environs. Similarly, many of the interior features of the building including its original elevators with a hand-operated interior grill doors, the metal coverings of the radiators, the low-lying metal railings facing onto the atrium at the second and third floors of the library also convey the historic character of the building.



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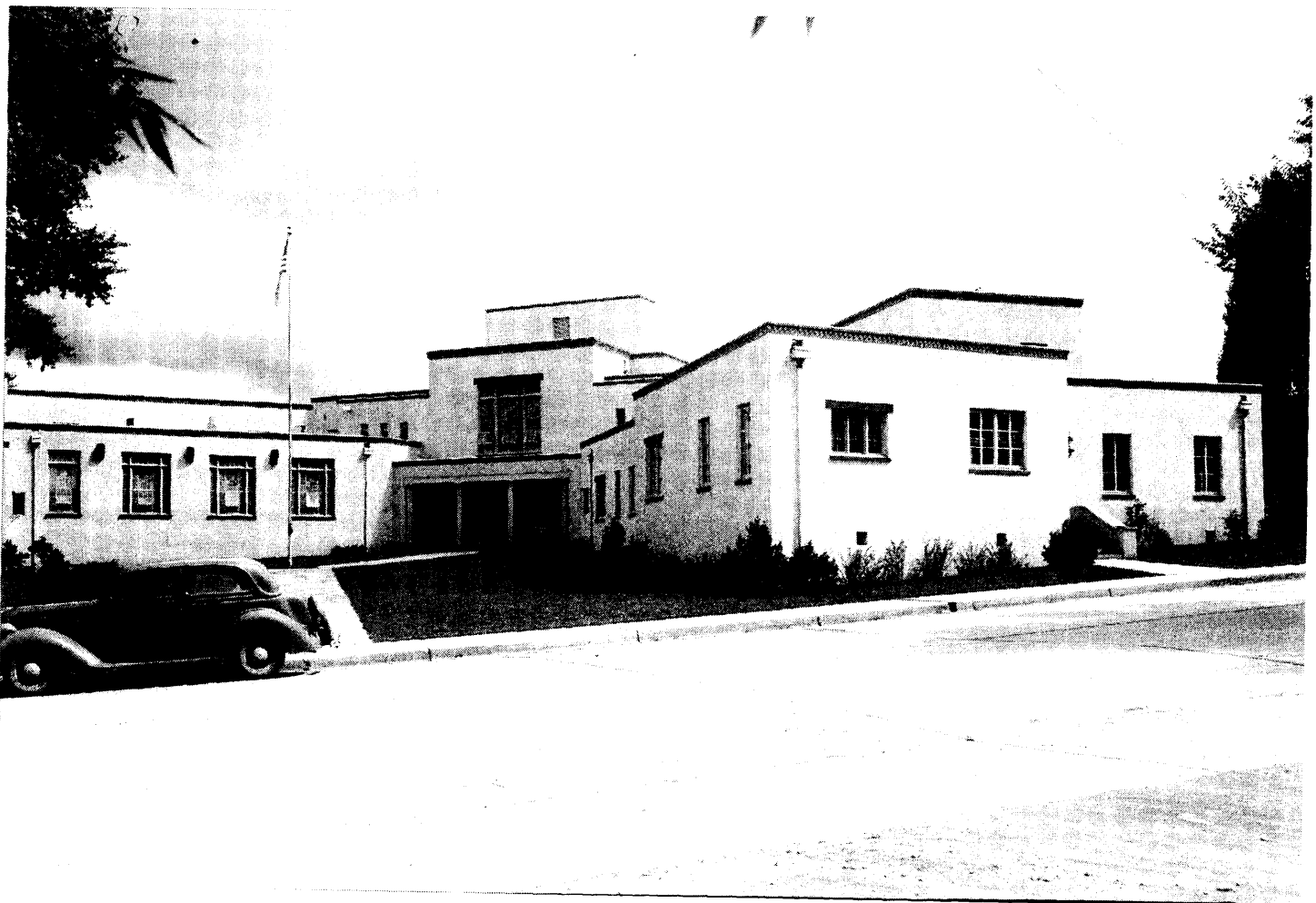
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Figure 7-1

Circa 1938 Photograph (Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, negative no. 51417)



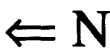
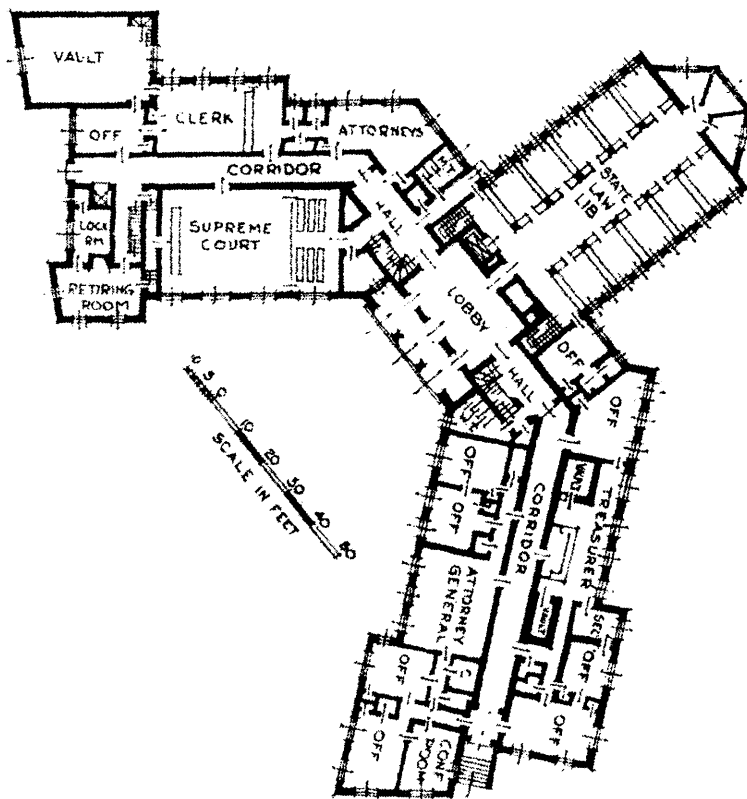
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Figure 7-2 1937 First Floor Plan (Courtesy Short, C.W. and Stanley-Brown, 1939, p. 64).



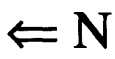
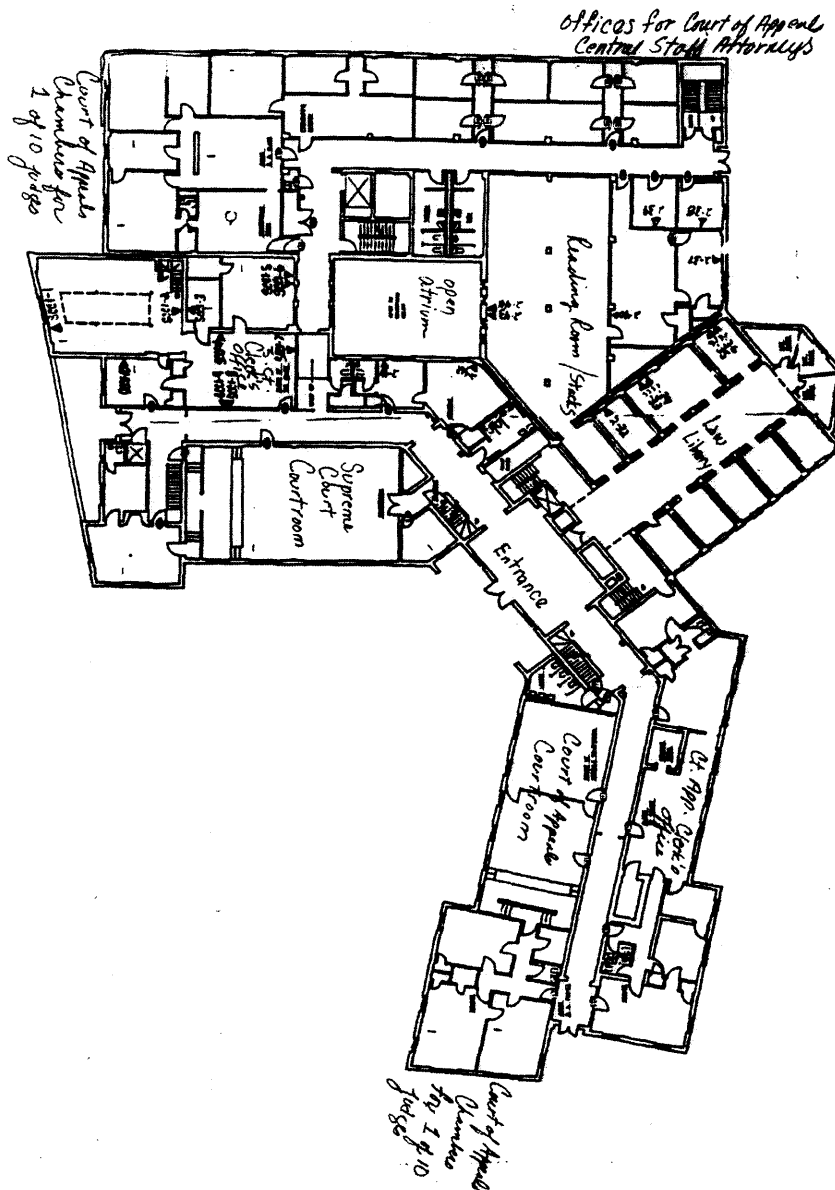
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Figure 7-3 Current First Floor Plan (not drawn to scale)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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### Statement of Significance

Although New Mexico's constitutional convention of 1910 provided for an elected Supreme Court as a component of the territory's anticipated statehood, it was not until 1937, that the state actually completed a building specifically designated as the center of its Judicial Branch. On August 9, 1937, the Supreme Court Building was dedicated, ending a quarter century during which the Judiciary had been located in often cramped quarters within the State Capitol. Situated on land the state acquired as it sought to shape a Capitol Complex south of the Santa Fe River, the new building was constructed as a Public Works Administration project, one of many such public buildings that emerged as a result of New Deal efforts in New Mexico. Typical of many of those buildings, the Supreme Court Building incorporated a range of stylistic elements associated with the region's architectural styles. One of the first public buildings to employ details specifically ascribed to the Territorial Revival style, it played a pioneering role in defining an architectural vocabulary that has characterized much of New Mexico's public architecture for the past six decades. Although the 1964 addition increased the width and somewhat distorted the balance of its original Y-plan, viewed from its primary façade along Don Gaspar Avenue, the historic Supreme Court Building appears much as it did in 1937. Noteworthy for its critical role both as an important New Deal project and as a building defining much of the state's future public architecture, and as the continuous location of the state's Supreme Court, the New Mexico Supreme Court Building is eligible for listing under Criteria A and C at the state level of significance in the areas of Law, Politics/Government and Architecture.

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As they adjourned on December 28, 1933, for the New Year holiday, the five justices of the Supreme Court met in conference and approved an application for a loan and grant to construct a new building for the court's use. Noting, "such [a] building is necessary," they resolved to move ahead and submit an application to the Public Works Administration for the necessary funding. The resolution requested a "sufficient allotment of money to construct a separate building for the Supreme Court of the State of New Mexico, and the Department of Justice of the State of New Mexico" (Supreme Court Records Vol. K: np). The justices' initiative reflects both the history of the Judicial Branch during the state's first quarter century and the growing awareness of public officials of the great potential the New Deal's nascent economic stimulation programs held for expanding the state government's infrastructure.

Prior to the issuing of the Kearny Code of 1846 and the creation of the New Mexico Territory in 1850, the dispensation of justice had largely been a local matter with the chief local official, or *alcalde*, acting as a judge and with the governor reviewing appeals. Even during the Mexican period from 1821 to 1846, this practice of locally dispensed justice persisted despite a more complex system of district courts and judicial review prescribed by the constitution in faraway Mexico City. The creation of the Territory of New Mexico, while bringing New Mexicans within the nation's judicial system, did little to foster a locally determined judiciary, as the president of the United States appointed the three justices of the Territorial Supreme Court.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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Although they met periodically in Santa Fe, the justices spent much of their time traveling independently throughout the far-flung territory and holding circuit court sessions in the larger towns.

When the court convened in Santa Fe, it met in the Palace of the Governors, the territorial capitol until 1886. Thereafter, it moved, along with the rest of the territorial government to a new building located on lands south of the Santa Fe River. Purchased by the legislature in 1884, this area, historically known as the *Barrio Analco*, had long been an agricultural area inhabited by *genízaros*, or detribalized Indians, residing in the colonial town. As late as the 1880s the area was a mixed lower-income residential and agricultural quarter, even as the new capitol began to take shape.

The move of the Judicial Branch to the new capitol continued the practice of housing it under the same roof with the executive and legislative branches. Following the burning of the new capitol building in 1892, a new building designed by Issac Hamilton Rapp was begun in the same area in 1895 and occupied in 1900. Nearby, on the same state-owned parcel of land a new Governor's Mansion also arose. Describing the two public buildings as "set in a beautiful wooded park and are models of modern architecture," the Legislative Manual of 1911 praised their classical details (Kammer 1993:11). Once again, the Supreme Court was housed within the new capitol building. With the advent of statehood in 1912, this spatial relationship continued with the now elected three-member New Mexico Supreme Court occupying rooms within the capitol as its chamber and offices.

Although the apparatus of New Mexico's state government exhibited relatively little growth during the state's first 20 years, the capitol building soon became overcrowded. Recognizing this need for space, in 1917 the state legislature passed a bill providing for the construction of a supreme court building to be erected just south of the old capitol building. Voters, however, turned down the bond issue to finance the project (Albuquerque Journal Nov. 8 1933:1). Even after the construction of an additional wing to the capitol in 1922, the spatial needs of the court also increased, especially after the number of justices was raised from three to five in 1929. Despite the limited space that the judiciary, as well as other agencies created under the three branches of state government, the state's political leaders were unable find ways of overcoming these deficiencies until the mid-1930s. Limited by a narrow view of the role of state government and, increasingly during the 1920s, by declining revenues from its property tax, state government and its small infrastructure faced a crisis well before the onset of the financial depression in 1929 (Kammer 1994: 5-17).

With the coming of the New Deal, however, and the myriad of programs designed to provide work relief through public works projects as a means of stimulating the national economy, New Mexico experienced an infusion of federal funds. These funds affected government both at the local and state level and resulted in a marked increase of construction projects. In anticipation of receiving the New Deal funds, the State Planning Board was formed in 1934, and in its first report highlighted the need to acquire building sites in order to establish a new capitol complex (Sze 2000: 3).

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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Among the New Deal programs carried out in the state were some 96 non-federal PWA projects in which the PWA contracted directly with a local authority, such as a municipality, school district or university, to carry out a public works project funded through a low-interest loan or grant. Following legislation suggested to state leaders by New Deal officials in 1935, many of these local authorities were permitted to issue bonds to repay their PWA loans, backing them through anticipated income generated as a result of the project itself. Much of this income was to be derived from user fees, for instance, such as those colleges raised through the collection of room and board fees or those that irrigation districts raised through assessments.

Termed "self-liquidating" projects by the State Planning Board (a New Deal created and partially-funded agency), this innovative means of providing backing for these PWA construction loans contributed to the ability of the Supreme Court to realize the resolution the justices had approved in December 1933 (Kammer 1994: 39). First, a building commission, consisting of the five justices, was created to serve as the court's local authority. Then debentures issued against anticipated court fees were sold to the PWA. During the late 1930s, the Building Commission would also sell building bonds to the State Treasurer in order to retire the debt incurred by the construction project ahead of schedule.

Once the means for funding the new court building had been determined, the Building Commission began to move ahead with the project, developing both plans for the project and searching for a suitable location. At its October 17, 1934 meeting, S. R. DeBoer, the New Deal planner working with the State Planning Board informed the board that the Building Commission had developed a plan and selected a possible site consisting of 0.75 acres at the northeast corner of Don Gaspar Avenue and DeVargas Street. Owned by Mrs. N.B. Laughlin, who sold it to the state for \$15,000.00, the site was consistent with the board's goal of acquiring "ample property for a comprehensive single unit plan." Moreover, pushing the Main Capitol Grounds north to Santa Fe River also linked the growing complex with the Santa Fe River Park, one of the first parks in the newly created state park system. Undertaken by a company of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the park project consisted of rectifying the river channel through the construction of masonry walls, bridges and landscaping the riverbanks with trees, lawns and picnic benches. As DeBoer and the board worked to articulate their plan, they envisioned the Main Capitol Grounds from a perspective north of the river. This composition entailed a series of planes rising from the park, "stepping up to a two story building," and then progressing up the hill to the capitol (State Planning Board October 22, 1934: 7). Completion of the park, or *Alameda*, along with the adjacent court building would offer a seamless link with the public buildings farther up the hill.

Integral to the achievement of the board's plan, however, was a thorough rethinking of architectural design. New Mexico would need to renounce "copying the foreign types of buildings" that had "no relation to the unusual background and history of New Mexico" (State Planning Board October 22, 1934: 7). Instead, the board advocated that designers must pursue the "realization of a type of architecture which is peculiarly its own," even going to the extent of eventually redesigning the exterior of the capitol itself. Describing this regional design as "the local Santa Fe type of architecture," the plan also offered general terms defining the style as "fully harmonious" and having "simplicity of design, correct uses of wall space, masses and color."

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

Moreover, it suggested that "The Spanish-Indian architecture seemed the most appropriate for the purpose" of the capitol building group.

When scrutinized, the language of the planning board regarding its regional architectural tastes appears less narrowly prescriptive than generally suggestive of design elements associated with the state's "unusual background and history." This broader definition of regionalism would certainly have been consistent with the board's awareness of recent works completed by John Gaw Meem, in which his use of a range of territorial design details had begun to expand conventional interpretations of regionalism. Taking the essential Spanish and Pueblo design elements, Meem, and others had demonstrated how inclusion of the state's 19<sup>th</sup> century territorial building practices might be used to broaden the definition of regionalism (Wilson 1997: 281-283). These elements such as brick coping and the sharper edges it engendered, generous fenestration, the use of classical details at windows, doors and portals, permitted a more eclectic rendering of traditional regional design.

As architectural historian Chris Wilson suggests, "The New Deal helped stimulate a new regional idiom." It did so by providing the means through federally funded public works projects, especially under the PWA, CCC and Works Progress Administration (WPA) for Meem and other architects to define a regional architecture. The Supreme Court Building contributed significantly to this process of defining an emerging regional idiom. Its designer, Gordon F. Street (1893-1943), had worked in Meem's firm in Santa Fe from 1927 to 1932 and then struck out on his own, already designing Harrington Junior High School in Santa Fe, employing the Territorial Revival style when he received the commission for the court building. Working contemporaneous to Meem who had received the commission to design the FERA Building and was employing similar stylistic elements, Street rendered the court building using a broad range of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Territorial elements. He also retained earlier regional elements, such as the large wood lintels above some windows and the clerestory illuminating the Law Library atrium. He also employed the multiple planes associated with Pueblo communities and, more broadly, envisioned by DeBoer and the planning board as essential to the stepped composition shaping the vista of the Main Capitol Grounds. He further reinforced the building's sense of place with his widespread use of the Zia symbol throughout the interior, as well as the use of corbels and heavy beams across the atrium.

When the building was dedicated on August 9, 1937, it had cost \$306,000 to construct, of which \$171,000 was a loan made to the Supreme Court Building Commission by the PWA and \$135,000 a grant from the PWA. Unlike many of the state's WPA projects, which, in general, employed those on relief and involved the use of locally supplied materials, the court building also employed the skilled carpenters and masons. Their skills account for the interior's striking use of varied marble in the lobby, the intricate fixtures, and the finely crafted wood details. Just two years after the dedication, when the PWA published its national survey of public architecture it had helped to underwrite, it included the building as illustrative of the regional architecture the PWA had helped to foster in the Southwest (Short 1939: 64).

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National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 16

New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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Although the Building Commission initially intended for the Supreme Court to be housed in one wing of the building and the Attorney General and State Treasurer to be housed in the other, by the early 1960s as the roles of state government expanded, the building had become overcrowded. The Building Commission sought to alleviate the problem by constructing an addition at the rear of the building in 1964 that included additional meeting rooms, offices and library reading rooms. When the Attorney General's offices were transferred, the northwest wing became the home of the Court of Appeals created in 1966 to alleviate the high court's heavy docket. As a result, the building truly became the center of the state's Judicial Branch of government.

Over the decades, the Supreme Court Building has come to be appreciated not only for the legal traditions it represents but also for its significance as a part of the New Deal's legacy in New Mexico. The justices of the Supreme Court, the Building Commission, and the Chief Clerk are proud of the heritage the building conveys and are committed to preserving it.



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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
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Figure 8-1 Circa 1938 Post Card (Courtesy Southwest Arts & Crafts, Santa Fe)

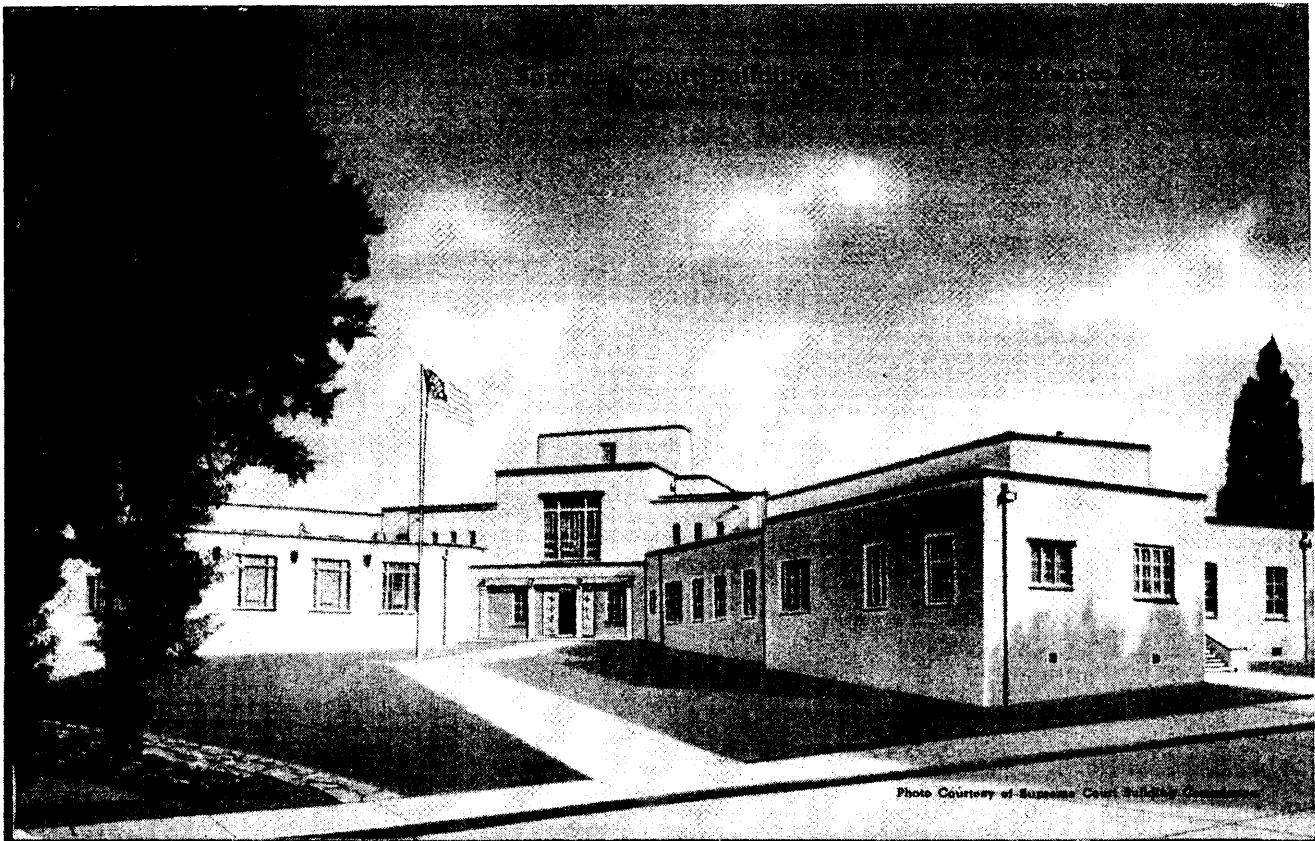


Photo Courtesy of Supreme Court Building

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### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 9-12 of Block 53, as indicated on King's Official Map of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico.

### **Verbal Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Supreme Court Building.

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New Mexico Supreme Court Building  
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### PHOTO LOG

**The following information pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted:**

New Mexico Supreme Court Building

Santa Fe

Santa Fe County, New Mexico

David Kammer

Negatives on file at the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

December 1999

Photo 1 of 7

Primary Facade

Facing southeast

Photo 2 of 7

Main entry doors

Facing southeast

Photo 3 of 7

Zia symbol

Facing east

Photo 4 of 7

1964 addition

Facing west

Photo 5 of 7

State Law Library interior

Facing northeast

Photo 6 of 7

Office fireplace

Facing east

Photo 7 of 7

Light fixture

Facing southeast