

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Laboratory of Anthropology

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 708 Camino Lejo \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Santa Fe \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district \_\_\_\_\_

state New Mexico code 35 county Santa Fe code 049

## 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name State of New Mexico

street & number 708 Camino Lejo

city, town Santa Fe \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state New Mexico

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Santa Fe County Court House

street & number

city, town Santa Fe \_\_\_\_\_ state NM

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Collections; Museum of NM State Register #217  
has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes  no

date May, 1971 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Bureau, 505 Don Gaspar

city, town Santa Fe \_\_\_\_\_ state NM

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"The clearly organized plan of the Laboratory is reflected in the elevations with the public and private areas located on opposite sides of a central entrance lobby. The former consists of three galleries and a large two-story hall called the lounge which, because of its independent entrance, would also be used for lectures and receptions but is now used as the Library. To the right an L-shaped wing contains administrative offices, a (too) small research library (now the site survey room), and ten offices for scholars attached to the institution. The three dimensional massing of the building expresses the differing functions within: the tall mass of the lounge and the large geometric forms of the galleries behind the portal are clearly public areas; the more fractured masses and smaller, irregularly placed windows indicate offices. Especially successful is the pervading sense of a living equilibrium of shapes even though the components are quite different: the few large forms of the lounge and galleries on one hand opposed by the multiple and less differentiated shapes on the other.

Also illustrative of Meem's masterly avoidance of dead balance and repetitiveness is the way the right wing is subdivided into three parts, each with its own fenestration pattern of projecting vigas, and parapet height. It would have been so easy for this area to have disintegrated into a jumble of competitive shapes or dull repetitiveness. A double window (two placed together) is rare in Spanish Pueblo architecture, but imagine the proportions of the central bay of this wing without it. Another fine touch that could so easily have missed the mark and degenerated into gadgetry is the facade of the lounge wing with the two very sculptural buttresses and the semi-differentiated form on the upper right side that looks as though it might have once supported a tower...The ecclesiastical note is continued on the rear (southeast elevation) of this wing with an enormous buttress which recalls the famous apse of the Rancho de Taos Church. Also reminiscent of the coros (choir loft) of mission churches is the interior galley located above the entrance. Particularly noteworthy here are the carved railings of the balcony, the stair and the corner fireplace. The splendid vigas in the lounge were specially ordered from the State of Washington and cost the princely sum of 38 cents per linear foot. The carving is more elaborate here and in higher relief than in later work.

The degree of picturesqueness present in this design is greater than in later Meem buildings, and in this respect the Laboratory is more closely related to the group of residences from the 1920s...This quality has just been noted in the external buttresses of the lounge wing, which look like adobe reinforcements that had been added to rectify a structural defect in the original building. In fact, however, these buttresses are hollow, constructed of terra cotta blocks and brick covered with stucco.

Actually, all exterior walls of the lecture room are double and consist of a thirteen-inch inner bearing and an eight-inch battered exterior wall. Though they have a dead air space between them that provides a modest degree of insulation and acts as a vapor barrier, the prime reason for the outside wall, of course, is visual. The two are tied together at intervals and toward the top the battered exterior member fuses with the structural one to produce an "eroded" look, while the bottom is supported on a "batter ledge" and extension from the reinforced concrete foundation and floor. If the batter is unusually large, as with the above mentioned buttresses or as others at Zimmerman Library, a separate foundation is supplied. At corners where the tapering profile is particularly telling, the batter edges are doubly large and project at forty-five degree angle from

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the walls, in some instances as much as sixteen inches. As each corner must be different if the composition is to look convincingly "aged," this requires that the contours and batter ledges of each corner must be constructed by hand; and as the working drawings do not illustrate this detail, instructions must have been given on the job by the supervising architect. Though such extensive use of hand labor is prohibitively expensive today, it was not so unreasonable when skilled carpenters and masons received \$1.25 an hour."

(excerpted from John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect by Bainbridge Bunting. School of American Research and University of New Mexico Press. In Press).

Since its construction in 1931, several additions have been made for storage facilities (see attached plat). The first in 1951 was a storage addition made on the west wing and was designed by the building's architect, Meem. In 1962 a free-standing storage building (designed by Robert Plettenberg) was built. That same year, the space between the Meem addition and the Plettenberg building (a car-port at that time) was filled in.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the building is the attention to detail on the interior as well. Door plates and pulls are hand wrought iron; doors, radiator covers and beams are carved. Even switch plates were custom designed. Additionally, much of the furniture made especially for the building is still visible and in use today.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (archaeology)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

**Specific dates** 1931 **Builder/Architect** John Gaw Meem

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Laboratory of Anthropology opened in 1931; it was founded for anthropological research, public education, welfare of the native races in the Southwest, and publication. This idealistic approach was made possible by funding for the Laboratory from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who pledged monies for the buildings and for five years of support. The architect of the project, chosen through a competition, was John Gaw Meem of Santa Fe, who has been recognized as one of the significant architects and advocates of the Spanish Pueblo Revival style. The Laboratory of Anthropology building is considered one of the major examples of this style. Collections housed at the Laboratory reflect 50 years of collection and acquisition (these were listed on the National Register in 1975) and represent a range and quality of Southwestern archeological and ethnographic specimens which are unsurpassed in historical continuity. Both the historical beginnings of the Lab's programs and the building itself are unique. Pioneer projects initiated at the Lab remain landmarks in the field of anthropology. The structure is a monument to a style and manner of building no longer feasible.

From the initiation of the Laboratory of Anthropology, summer field training sessions were begun. Scholars such as A.L. Kroeber, Leslie Spier, Ruth Benedict, Leslie White, Ralph Linton, and A.V. Kidder participated in these seminars. Later, prominent anthropologists such as Mayanist Sylvanus Morley, ceramacist Anna O. Shepard, Kenneth Chapman and H.P. Mera were all associated with the Lab. Its first director, Jesse L. Nusbaum, had a distinguished career with the Museum of New Mexico and the National Park Service as an archeologist, preservationist and administrator. The emphasis placed on research during the first 10 years of its existence was refocused in 1940 with the exhibition of Indian art. Increasing difficulty in raising funds resulted in the Lab's changed status from an independent institution to a unit of the State Museum of New Mexico in 1947.

The building itself is an architectural masterpiece which exemplifies the Pueblo Revival style. Building elements common to the early Spanish adaptations of the Indian style (such as flat roofs, exposed beams -vigas- and decking, buttressing and open spaces) are coupled with more stylized elements --all of which blend to make the building work as an integrated statement. Details of the interior were carefully drawn and executed by local craftsmen. The fixtures, handwrought in the style of Mexican tinwork, rely on decorative motifs associated with the building's style as do the carved furnishings, doors, vigas and corbels and were all designed and built to the scale of, and specifically for, the building. Fifty years later, the Lab retains the original integrity and elegance these contributing elements provide. Only minor modifications have taken place either to the exterior or the interior, principally those required to accomodate the archeological research which has been emphasized over the past 25 years.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bunting, Bainbridge "John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect" School of American Research and University of New Mexico Press. In Press.

John Gaw Meem Architectural Collection, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Santa Fe

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	3	4	1	6	3	2	10	3	9	4	1	6	9	2	10
Zone				Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

No individual legal description is available for this property. The nominated property is bounded by service drives 15' from the building on the east and west, by the main drive on the north, and by the arroyo on the south.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marsha F. Jackson, Registrar, Site Survey Records

organization Museum of New Mexico, Lab of Anthropology date November 1, 1982

street & number PO Box 2087

telephone 827-3242

city or town Santa Fe

state New Mexico 87503

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national     state     local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5-16-83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register



date 7/12/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Laboratory of Anthropology

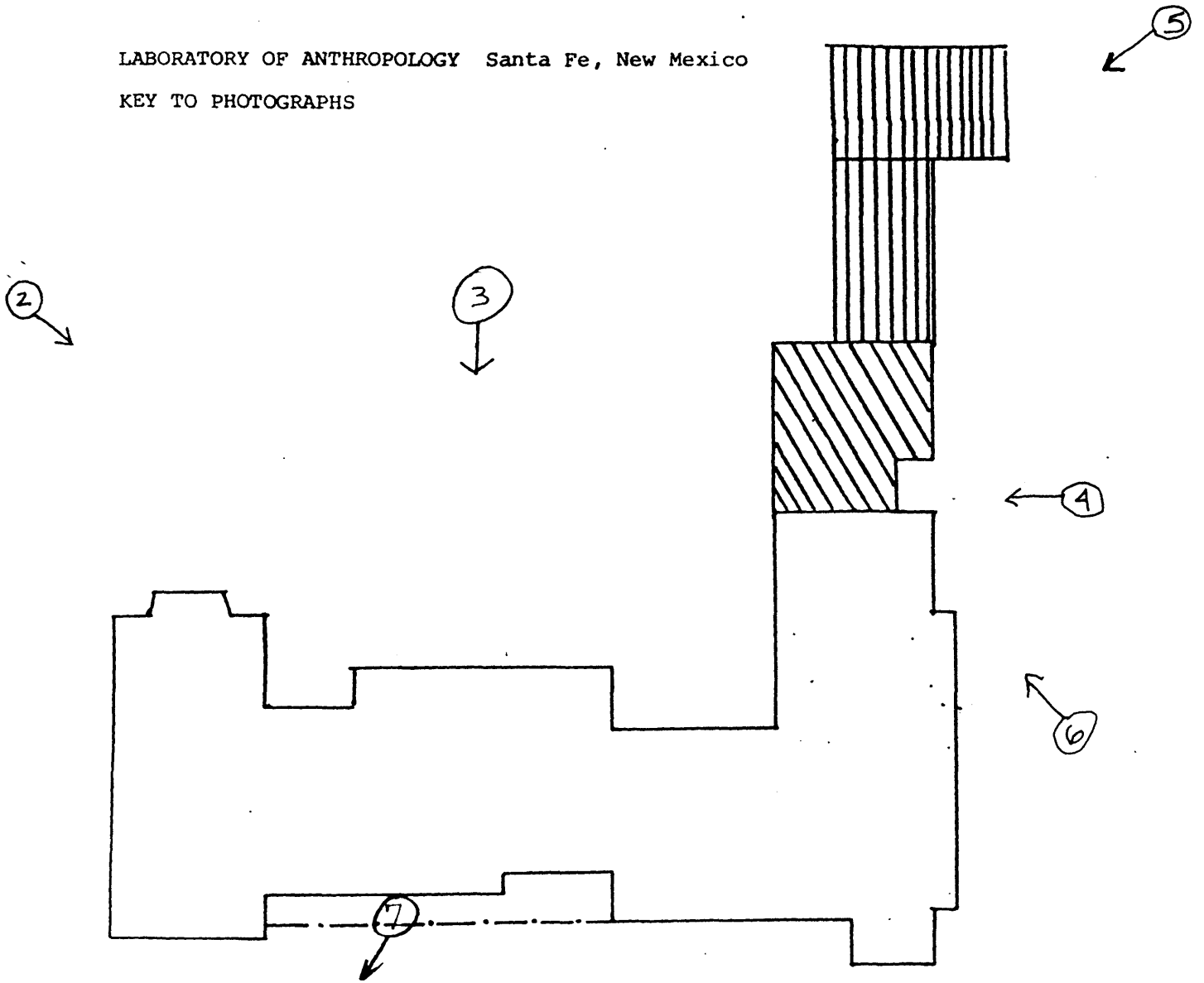
Item number 9

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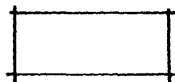
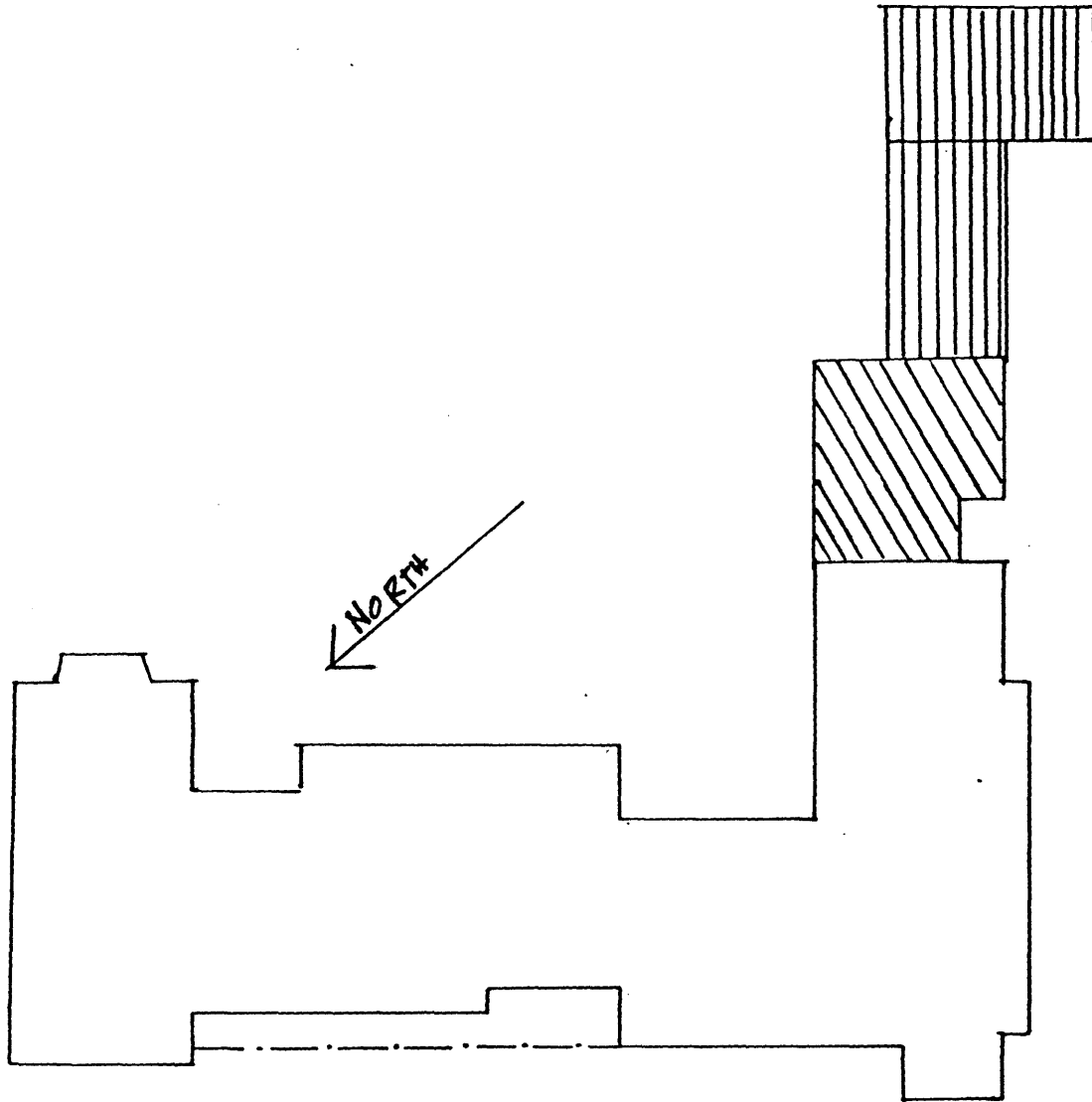
9

El Palacio. Quarterly Magazine of the Museum of New Mexico. Volume 87, No. 3. Fall 1981

LABORATORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY Santa Fe, New Mexico  
KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS



NORTH



1931- Laboratory of Anthropology -- John Gaw Meem, Architect



1951- Storage Addition -- Meem, Zehner, Holiern, and Associates  
Santa Fe, New Mexico



1962- Additional Storage -- Robert Plettenberg, Architect  
Prewitt House

Enclosed carport -Martinez Construction