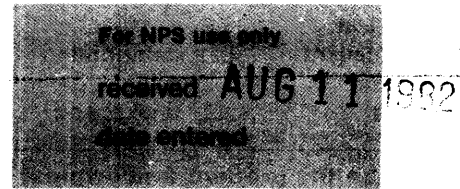


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Old Armijo School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1021 Isleta Boulevard, S.E. <sup>Bivd., S.E.</sup> not for publication

city, town Albuquerque vicinity of congressional district

state New Mexico code 35 county Bernalillo code 001

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"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: community facility

4. Owner of Property

name Albuquerque Public School, Francisco D. Sanchez, Superintendent

street & number 725 University Boulevard, S.E.

city, town Albuquerque vicinity of state New Mexico 87106

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bernalillo County Records

street & number 505 Central, N.W.

city, town Albuquerque state New Mexico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Landmarks Survey State Register Site #852  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date January, 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Landmarks Survey, Redevelopment Planning

city, town Albuquerque state New Mexico

---

## 7. Description

---

**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

---

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

The Old Armijo School is located in one of Albuquerque's oldest communities, the Armijo district, some three miles south of the city's railroad-era downtown. The school faces onto Isleta Boulevard, once the city's and the state's primary route to the south and was, at the time of its construction in 1914, surrounded by farms and ranches in what was considered to be a rural community. Although it has undergone a series of additions and modifications in its 67-year history, including the stuccoing of the original brick facade, it still remains an unmistakable South Valley landmark. Much of the school's architectural integrity stems from its broadly sloping ridged hip roof, tall banks of windows and predominantly unaltered interior plan. The building's design was both functional and innovative for its time and remains today as the unique surviving example of Albuquerque's vernacular rural educational architecture.

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page 1

The massive ridged roof originally included a squarish wood shingled and louvered bell tower that was perched above the school's main entrance. The bell was reportedly stolen during Halloween in the late 1920's, and the tower was later covered with asphalt shingles when a new roof was added. Eventually the tower was removed altogether. The roof that remains today is original, although the four tall brick chimneys that served to heat the building have been removed. There are two ridged hip wings that extend to the north. They were built side by side with a smaller ridged industrial style skylight fitting between them. The skylight was later covered up from below when a ceiling was built over the central corridor separating the four rooms, three to the west and one large room to the east (see plan). Four separate classrooms, a central hall, two bathrooms and a kitchen facility exist today (see plan). Although the floor plan has been slightly modified, the strength of the original design has not been lost.

The large original windows arranged in threes, fours and fives have been altered, yet in most cases retain their original elements, including 6/6 double hung wood sash windows and triple light transoms. Some of the window openings have been panelled over and recently metal grilles were fixed to the exterior trim to secure the building from vandals. Front and rear doors include transoms which still exist in their original state. On the front facade, above the school's main entrance, is the concrete plaque with the construction date. It, like the entire brick exterior, has been covered with stucco applied in the 1960's, when it was rehabilitated to its present condition. On the west facade there are steps that lead down to a basement entrance which presumably was used for storage. A colorful mural, coordinated recently by local neighborhood artists, covers the east-facing facade and can be seen from the turn in Isleta Boulevard some 250 yards away. The property around the school is used for parking and, with the exception of some elm trees planted to the west, has not been landscaped. A flagpole still stands in front of the school.

The original interior of the Armijo School was probably very similar to another school that was also designed by Montoya, the Atrisco School, which was described as having 12 foot metal ceilings painted a reflective buff color, grey walls that neutralized the glare coming through the tall windows, and a uniform lighting system that spread light evenly over the similarly ordered seating plan below. Montoya replaced the traditional slate blackboard with a green erasable surface. Still remaining are Armijo's transom windows, which eliminated

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

Page 2

most severe drafts while maximizing air circulation; the proportions of the classrooms, which created a better relationship between the teacher and students; and the placement of the room's stove away from the doorway drafts and to the side, so that there would be a smoke free environment. In the large east classroom there is the original set of floor to ceiling folding doors that were used to divide the room into two. When the doors were opened, this space functioned as a family or community hall where exhibitions, performances and meetings could be held. The room still serves this function today and is used by the school's present tenants, Casa Armijo, as a public space. There is a magnificent mural on one of the walls in this room depicting scenes from Hispanic history.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**      1914                      **Builder/Architect**      Atanasio Montoya

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

Old Armijo School's significance is tied in large part to the fact that it is the sole remaining example of the work of Atanasio Montoya, the educational reformer who almost single-handedly brought Albuquerque's rural schools into the twentieth century. When it was built in 1914, the school was described by the Albuquerque Journal as "modern in every particular, well ventilated, well lighted, and equipped in accordance with the very latest and most approved ideas." The Old Armijo School was originally known as the Ranchos de Atrisco District 4 School and was the second of Montoya's constructions as Superintendent of the Bernalillo County's schools in the period just before the First World War. Atanasio Montoya appears to have been a remarkable man who saw the need for reform in rural education. He designed Old Armijo himself, as he did all the county's new schools of this period, and supervised its construction. As superintendent, he hired improved teachers and developed a progressive program and philosophy within the schools. Through his initiative, the city's outlying school system became established in the modern sense, and the Old Armijo School stands today as one of the only reminders of that of progress.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Kavanaugh, Helen S., A History of Administration in the Albuquerque Public Schools, 1950, M.A., Univ. of New Mexico; Albuquerque Journal, Feb. 7, 9, 11, 18, 23, 1912; Albuquerque Tribune, July 6, 1967; New Mexico Highway Journal, Oct. 1930, p. 36; interviews with Mrs. Elmer Young, Mr. Gene Martinez, and Mr. Joe Fernandez.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .6 acres

Quadrangle name Albuquerque West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	3	3	4	7	7	25	3	8	80	35	0
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

See continuation sheet.

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Norton, Historical Architect

organization Albuquerque Historic Landmarks Survey date January 1982

street & number P.O. Box 1293 telephone 505/766-4720

city or town Albuquerque state New Mexico

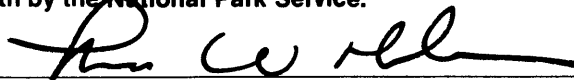
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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

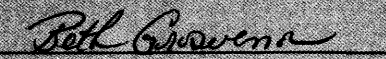


title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8-6-82

For NPS use only

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

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/15/82

Attest:  
Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet    Significance    Item number    8    Page    1

Montoya was 36 years old when he was appointed Superintendent of the County Schools. He was born in Casa Colorado, Valencia County, New Mexico, studied at the University of New Mexico, and later taught Spanish there for six years, as well as having read the law on his own. Whether or not he had any architectural or building experience is not known; but the fact that he designed and supervised the construction of the county schoolhouses supports the assumption that he had a working knowledge of school architecture. The Old Armijo School is a fine example of functional school architecture with many details that were considered revolutionary for its time.

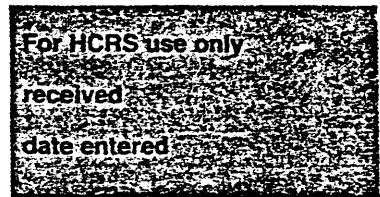
The visionary features of the typical Montoya school, of which Old Armijo is an excellent example, included a standardized and economical plan that was orderly, light filled, and temperature controlled. Although the school was so crowded that it necessitated the construction of two similarly-styled "annex" buildings in the rear (now a government office facility), it was a model of its kind. The Old Armijo School building housed the first and second grades in the western rooms and the seventh and eighth grades in the partitioned eastern room. Transom windows were opened in the hot months to ventilate the space, and a modern stove heated the nearly square rooms unevenly in the winter. Still this was a vast improvement over existing schools in nearby Barelvas, Duranes and Los Griegos which were reported to be chaotic, drafty and poorly lit. Teachers in these district schools normally stood at the far end of a long room--paper peeling off of rough adobe walls, doors leaking air and dust--with many of the students out of sight or silhouetted against small brilliant windows that cast high contrast light into a small proportion of the room. In the winter, the stoves in these rural schools, often mended together with bailing wire and located at a far end of the classroom, would leak smoke which would be blown about in the drafts between the two doors at either end of the room. Getting students to regularly attend was as difficult as finding and keeping qualified teachers to teach them.

When Montoya was appointed, one of the first things he did was to eliminate the special teaching permits that had been issued in the past. Examinations were held at the County Courthouse, and a minimum second grade certificate was required of all county teachers.

The role of the teacher in the Montoya School program was to be a model of intelligence and understanding. He believed that

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8

Page

2

the "public school is the great democracy which molds citizens and the teacher's influence is paramount." He encouraged the teachers to bend to understand the conditions and specific needs of each student by reaching out into the home community. An indication of how seriously he took the classroom experience came during his first meeting with the district school teachers, when he restricted the use of switching or caning, much in vogue at that time and often instigated by parents who practiced it at home; he declared, "The mission of the teacher is more important than that of the priest, the minister or the parent, in these county schools. It is a strong statement but I mean it."

Montoya seems to have been equally ambitious in his vision of building the schools into a modern system. He was in a unique position to do this since an arrangement had been made in an early state constitution to allocate 1/12 of the state's revenue to education; and when New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912, aid was provided to school districts unable to provide five months of schooling per year. The Old Armijo School fell within one of these rural districts in the Armijo community, which was described at the time as "a picturesque little farming community." In order to raise monies to improve the existing facilities and increase teachers' salaries which had been fixed at about \$40 per month prior to statehood, Montoya presented nine bond issues to the voting public in the school districts. Within two years he had raised \$17,900. To the male farmers and ranchers in these rural districts who were eligible to vote on the bond issues, this sum must have been a considerable hardship, and it is a testimony to the credibility of Montoya and the need for better schools that the money was raised at all. What Montoya did with these educational funds was remarkable. Between 1912 and 1914, he raised enrollment in the county from 1,309 to 2,100 students. The number of qualified teachers was increased from 34 to 50, and they were offered increased salaries that varied from \$60 to \$75 per month.

The Old Armijo School itself cost \$12,000 to build and equip, and it was later expanded to include the two annexes as the district population grew. Increased enrollment necessitated the construction of the Kit Carson Elementary School a quarter mile to the south in 1940. When the school closed in 1948, it was reported to have had 327 students, nine teachers and a principal. After becoming a neighborhood nuisance as a vacant structure in the 1950's, it was rehabilitated by the Bernalillo County Economic Opportunity Board in the 1960's. Rented from



United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8

Page

3

the Albuquerque Public Schools, who absorbed the school when the county and the city consolidated educational systems in 1949, the school housed government offices running community social programs until the mid-1970's. Today the building is being used as a community center and is known as Casa Armijo, a facility with an Hispanic character serving the Atrisco neighborhoods with several cultural programs. Despite a variety of uses and alterations, the Old Armijo School has remained a South Valley community fixture for over 68 years.

United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Geographical Data/Verbal Item number

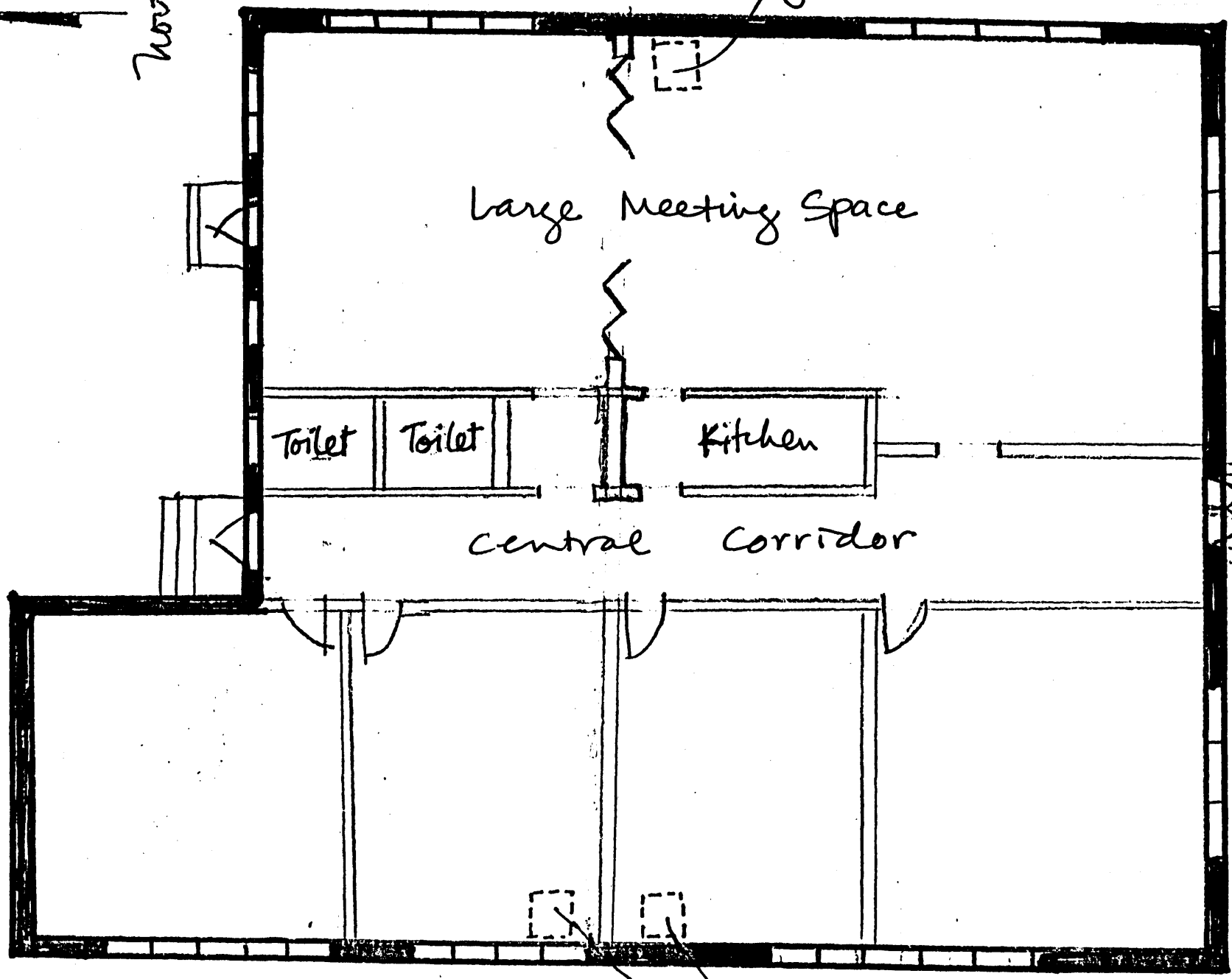
10

Page 1

The nominated property encompasses the southern half of Tract 130, Section 2, Miramon Addition as shown on MRGCD Map #44. Beginning at a point at the S.W. corner of Tract 130, bounded by Isleta Boulevard and Gatewood, proceed north 180 feet past the main school house but before the old school annex; thence, proceed east 150 feet to a point, thence south toward Isleta Boulevard a distance of 144 feet and thence west 162 feet to point of beginning. The nominated property excludes the detached "annex" building to the rear of the main school house. The boundary only includes the 1914 Old Armijo School building site itself and is approximately .6 acre in size.

not to scale

North



Chimney + stove

Large Meeting Space

Toilet

Toilet

Kitchen

Central Corridor

Chimney + stove

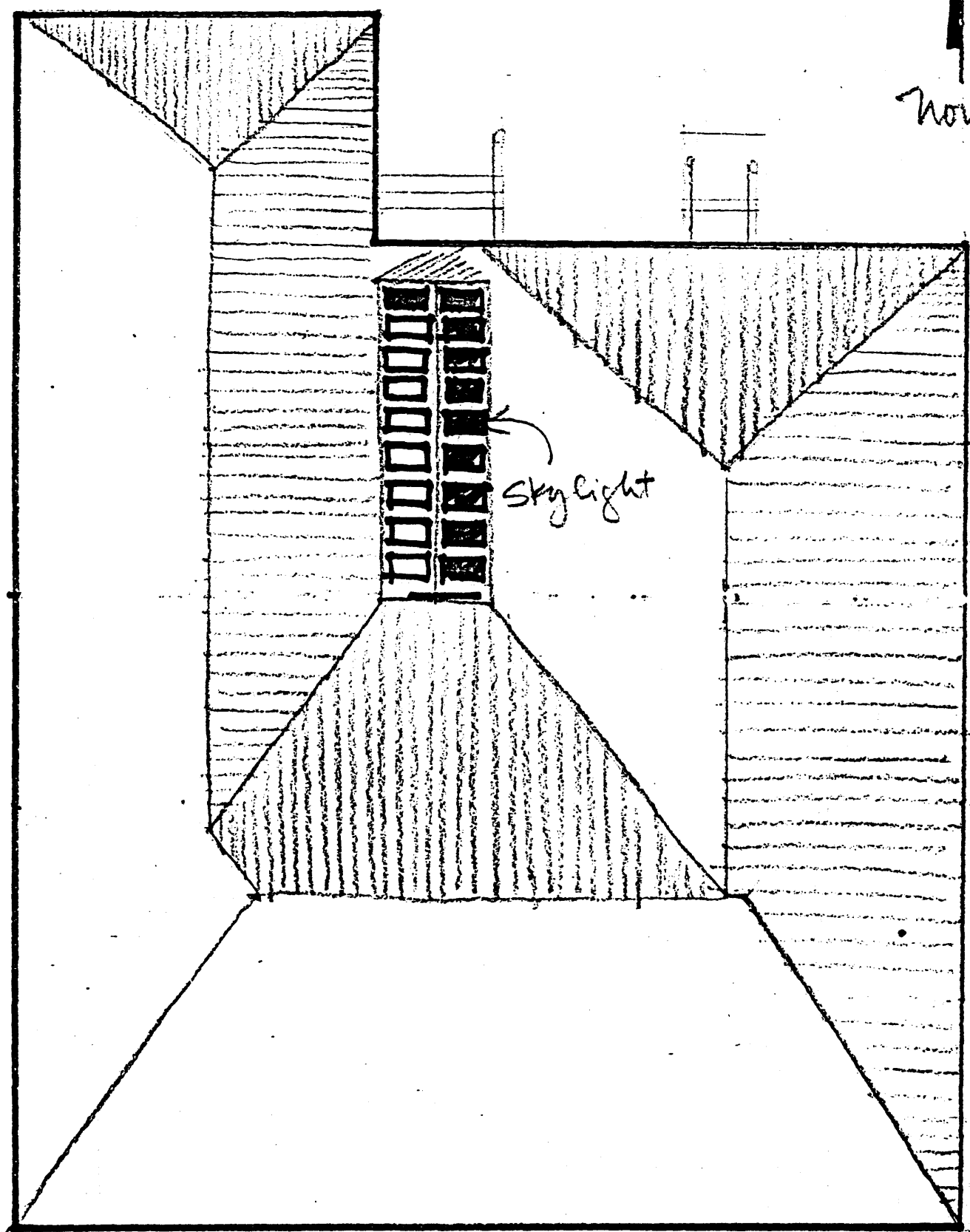
Floor Plan

# OLD ARMIJO SCHOOL

1021 ISIETA BLVD. SW ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

not to scale

North



Roof Plan

OLD ARMIJO SCHOOL  
1021 ISLETA BLVD SW ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.