

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: John Gaw Meem Architects Office

Other names/site number: John Gaw Meem Office; Meem Building

Name of multiple property listing: Buildings Designed by John Gaw Meem, 1925-1959

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1101 Camino De Cruz Blanca

City or town: Santa Fe State: NM County: Santa Fe Zip Code: 87501

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

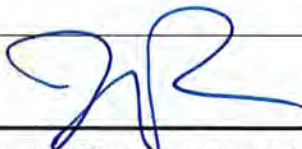
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A X B X C ___ D

	<p>4/10/19</p>
<p>Dr. Jeff Pappas, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer</p>	
<p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>Title :</p>	<p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

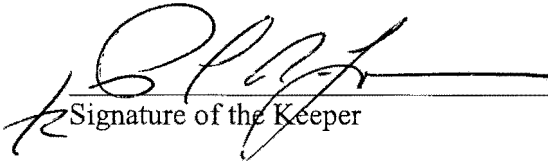
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National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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


Signature of the Keeper

6/6/2019
Date of Action

4. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

5. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade: professional (architect's office)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: school (secondary)

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6. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Pueblo

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stucco, Log, Glass

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is situated on a nearly level lot of approximately 1.4 acres in Santa Fe, New Mexico, near the city's eastern foothills. The lot is bounded on the north by the short Callecita Mera, by Camino San Acacio on the east (both dirt roads), on the south by Camino Cruz Blanca, and on the west by Camino del Monte Sol. The latter is the oldest of the roads. Its perimeter is partly defined by rustic juniper pole fencing and partly by barbed wire strands strung across juniper posts. The dirt roads and country-style fencing are reminders of the semi-rural setting of the office at the time of its inception in 1930.

Landscaping on the property is minimal, consisting of a few native trees—the most prominent a Rocky Mountain juniper planted near the south end of the west façade. Wide concrete sidewalks and low-stuccoed walls were installed in the courtyard at the rear in 1996. The grounds are kept mostly in a natural state.

Originally conceived and constructed by Meem as his bachelor residence and architect's office, the building underwent two principal transformations and several minor ones during its three decades of use by his architectural firm. After Meem's retirement, he and his wife Faith donated

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the office and additional property to the Santa Fe Preparatory School (Santa Fe Prep) for development of the school's permanent campus. Under the school's ownership, compatible new spaces were added to the office through a building campaign completed in 1996. It now serves primarily as Santa Fe Prep's art building, with one room devoted to classroom use.

Narrative Description

The former John Gaw Meem Architects Office is a single-story, approximately 6,576-gross-square-foot building constructed in the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. The flat-roof building is made of hollow-clay structural tile, known locally as "pentile" because the tiles were often manufactured by prisoners in the local state penitentiary. The roof was finished with buckskin-color stucco. Part of it sits over a basement once containing a boiler.

In its current configuration, the building has a modified U-shape plan with the base of the "U" forming the west (public) elevation. Vehicle access to the building is from Camino del Monte Sol, leading to a gravel parking area which faces the west façade (Photo 1). Pedestrian access from the east passes through a low masonry yard wall into an open courtyard formed by the north, south, and west wings.

Exterior Elevations

West Elevation

The front (west) elevation presents a series of masses of different heights, signaling the building's evolution (Photo 2). These room-block volumes of varying shape, along with a variety of window and door types, create a building much in the tradition of Southwest vernacular residential architecture—buildings that developed and increased in size to accommodate growing families and changing lifestyles. In the case of the Meem office, it grew to accommodate the needs of the firm as it expanded over three decades.

The west elevation emerged as the primary public façade in 1933, when Meem enlarged the building's footprint, changing the public entry from the south to the west side. At the time, the west elevation did double duty as the front face of the Meem's apartment as well as the public entry to his architectural firm.

The façade begins at the north with a handsomely proportioned mass built in 1933 to hold Meem's living room. Its battered and undulating walls and cubic form express the influence of native Pueblo architecture. It appears as though it arose from the earth. The living room's function is announced by its greater height, and the presence of a corner chimney and a large, offset double-hung wood window.

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In reworking the façade in 1933, Meem introduced one of his characteristic *portal* (porch) designs: a long, shallow portico bookended by projected cube-like masses. This form would be given to many of his Spanish-Pueblo Revival house designs of the 1920s and 1930s. The portal is supported by tapered posts and capped with corbels of modified neoclassical outline, with round *vigas* (roof beams) pushing out beyond a parapet, and a roof drained by three *canalés* (trough scuppers) created by hollowed out *vigas*. Its floor is made from locally quarried flagstone.

Recessed into a small alcove of the portal is a striking wood door, serving as the principal entry to the building (Photo 3). The door has two inset panels embellished with applied molding in the tradition of northern New Mexico vernacular woodworking that prevailed during New Mexico's Territorial period (1846-1912). Also reflective of Territorial influence is the door surround, crowned with a low-pitched pediment with a line of dentils. Above, a Spanish Revival-type tin light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

The wall to the right (south) is painted white and penetrated by Territorial Revival-type six-over-six double-hung wood windows, topped with exposed wood lintels. Near the south end is a line of four slightly larger double-hung wood windows (Photo 4). These are supported by a frame wall clad with V-groove vertical wood siding. The wall and its windows enclose a small portal erected in 1930, historically working as a passage between the original apartment and the office. Characteristically, Meem allowed the portal's beam, corbels, and exposed decking to remain visible from the exterior after the enclosure. A small mass south of the entry projects forward from the portal. This volume begins a sequence of three staggered masses which define the southwest corner (Photo 5). Each is a cube-shaped, with battered walls and rounded parapets penetrated with canales.

The first mass originally held Meem's private office. This is followed by a mass of the same height once containing the firm's public office. The former private office is fenestrated with an eight-over-eight double-hung wood window, while the onetime public office has had its original double-hung wood window replaced by a steel-frame composite window. The replacement window consists of two operable four-light steel casements flanking a picture window surmounted by fixed lights. It is likely that this window was installed at the same time as the steel sash window on the south side of the private office.

Capping the south end of the west elevation is another stepped-back mass, which returns upward to the height of the former living room. This larger volume contains the Ceramics Studio, which was added to the original south portal in 1996. On this façade, the studio's interior is lighted by three eight-over-eight double-hung clad windows, mulled together to create a single unit. The window is surmounted by a heavy wood lintel, a motif of Meem's residential designs.

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South Elevation

Beginning at the west corner, the volume making up Meem's first office is the most deeply recessed. In 1940 Meem took pains to replace its original south-facing six-over-six double-hung wood window with a steel frame unit to increase the illumination into his office. The custom window has two operable sashes, opening to the outside by scissor hinges. These are flanked by fixed sashes, each four lights high by light one wide. The south façade of the Public Office, with its centrally placed double-hung wood window, projects forward but maintains the same parapet height of Meem's office (Photo 6).

The south elevation continues to the east with a large mass that again projects forward. This holds an addition, the Ceramics Studio, constructed in 1996 (Photo 7). The addition is built up to the parapet height of the living room. It presents a prominent bank of south-facing windows made of five eight-over-eight double-hung clad windows mulled together as a single assembly. The treatment of these windows is a gesture to Meem's typical detailing when enclosing existing portals with glass walls.

The south-facing windows are bracketed with corner posts surmounted by half corbels and a center post surmounted by a full corbel. The corbels support an exposed wood lintel. This detail was also used in Meem's Director's Residence at the Laboratory of Anthropology (1930) and the Cyrus McCormick residence at Las Acequias (1931).

Of the greatest height, the Ceramics Studio is the main mass of the south elevation. From this point, the building steps back and slightly down to the east to a portal providing covered access to the easternmost room of the façade. Partially blocked from view by a free-standing kiln enclosure, the 1996 portal continues the post-and-corbels motif found on the Ceramics Studio windows. Beneath the portal are two new John Gaw Meem designs doors: one providing access to the original Blueprint Room and the other to a former garage.¹

East Elevation

The south end of the rear elevation begins with the Ceramics Studio, which is partially hidden from view by the kiln. The Ceramics Studio fenestration continues on this façade with a pair of six-over-six double-hung clad windows, mulled together as one unit. The portal addition wraps around the corner from the south elevation and continues as a passage into the original garage (Photo 8). At the west end of the portal is a Meem reproduction door providing entry to the ceramics room. Past the courtyard to the north wing is a small utility room erected in 1996. It is entered by two flush steel fireproof doors and is devoid of architectural detail.

¹ In 1994, the architect's daughter, Nancy Meem Wirth, and woodworker George O'Bryan, established John Gaw Meem Designs, LLC. The company, no longer in business, created careful reproductions of John Gaw Meem's custom door designs.

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North Elevation

The composite north elevation, facing onto a secondary parking area, presents the least cohesive side of the building. The different heights and volume shapes create a dynamic wall plane that changes in appearance depending on the position from which the building is observed (Photo 9). Historically it functioned as the secondary, non-public side of the office and residence. It has maintained this presentation, continuing with the introduction of the Digital Media Lab, in 1996.

The north elevation starts on the east with the rectangular, box-like projection of the Photography Studio's darkroom (Photo 10). At a lower height, the volume is without fenestration, other than a single flush steel door centered in its north wall. Behind and to the west is the north wall of the Photography Studio, with its parapet line rising approximately three to five inches above the darkroom. This space is accessed by a half-light wood door sheltered by a shallow canopy.

Placed back from the Photography Studio, with a parapet height matching the darkroom, is the north face of the second garage, constructed in 1933. Its short façade exhibits the indented shadow of the onetime garage doors. The doors were removed in the late 1940s to hold a narrow, multi-light fixed wood window.

Attached to the rear of the garage, with a slightly lower parapet, is a covered portal erected in 1996 which provides a sheltered walkway to the Kitchen. Beneath this portal are two doors. The first, a reproduction, gives access to Meem's latter office. The second is the original kitchen Dutch door, designed by Meem in his 1933 drawings of the apartment addition. The door has a Territorial-style head trim similar to that found at the west entry. Its upper leaf is glazed with nine lights, while the lower leaf has a diamond-shaped raised panel.

The final mass on this elevation is the north wall of the Conference Room (Photo 9). It is stepped back approximately eight feet from the portal, with a parapet height of fourteen feet above grade. The room appears to dominate the entire building, as it is placed at the lowest point of the footprint. Nearly centered in this façade is a single eight-over-twelve double-hung wood window, curiously lacking the exposed wood lintel that is found with the majority of windows of the office. A masonry chimney punctuates the roofline, representing the highest point of the building.

Courtyard Elevations

With the expansion of the apartment in 1933, the construction of an additional office in the late 1940s, and finally the erection of the Digital Media Lab in 1996, the building's footprint changed from L- to U-shaped (Photo 11). The change in plan created a courtyard area between the wings, which in turn evolved the once secondary elevations into public façades, especially in its current use, with the majority of students approaching by foot from the east.

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North Elevation

The north courtyard elevation is dominated by the original drafting room which bumps out from the wall (Photos 12-13). The function of this space is announced by its impressive fenestration that brings northern daylight into the building's primary workspace. There are four large wood windows, each consisting of two eight-light casements, topped by an eight-light operable transom. The overall size of each unit is approximately five feet' wide by seven feet high. Situated just to the east of the bank of windows is a fifteen-light flush steel door. It possibly replaced a fifth window that appears on the 1930 drawing of the office.

East Elevation

This elevation, at a slightly lower height than the adjacent drafting area, is the east wall of Meem's original small apartment (Photo 11). The functions of the rooms have changed over the years, except for the bathroom, but the elevation remains relatively unaltered. The southernmost room holds a bathroom with a small four-light wood casement. To the north, the original dressing room was converted to a second bathroom in 1996, but its original six-over-six double-hung wood window remains. The east wall of the previous apartment's living room, now a gallery, is penetrated by a non-original fifteen-light steel door. North of this door is a six-over-six double-hung wood window with an exposed wood lintel. Completing the elevation is the wall of Meem's original sleeping porch which was turned into an entry hall in 1933. Similar to the other sections, it retains its original six-over-six double-hung wood window.

South Elevation

The south elevation, facing the courtyard, reveals two stylistically distinct additions to the apartment Meem expanded in 1933. One of these is an expansion, once containing an office erected in circa 1950 to provide space for an increased staff during the postwar building boom. It likely replaced in part a temporary building that had been trucked to the site to house additional draftsmen during the firm's "deluge" of work during World War II.

The addition is a marked departure from the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style of the majority of the building. Aligning directly with the massing of the 1933 kitchen's south wall, to which it is attached, it presents a series of three pairs of mullied six-over-six double-hung wood windows, perched atop a low stuccoed wall (Photo 14).

Unlike the remainder of the office, where flat roofs are located behind stucco parapets, it presents a flat roof with extended eaves. At the west end, the boxed eaves carry briefly onto the south Kitchen wall in an attempt to tie the two together. At the opposite end, the overhang wraps around the corner of the east elevation, tying into the 1996 addition.

The second addition, built in 1996 to the east, is set back by approximately twenty feet (Photo 15). The Digital Media Lab was erected to expand Santa Fe Prep's visual arts program. It returns

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to the vocabulary of the Pueblo Revival manner. Its walls are topped by a rounded parapet, bringing the roof line approximately three feet above the office to the west. Centered in the façade is a shallow recessed entry, which contains a modern ten-light door, framed by sidelights and a transom, reflecting elements of Territorial Revival style.

Interior

As with the section above, the interior description begins at the west and proceeds through the building, first moving to the south wing and finishing at the extreme end of the north wing. The headings capture how the rooms mainly functioned during the building's use as an architect's office.²

Entrance Hall

Visitors enter the building through a small vestibule created across what was once the architect's sleeping porch. The hall opens to the former living room on the right (south) and the north wing on the left (north). Meem renovated the space in 1933 after his marriage to Faith Bemis. The room remains substantially as it looked in 1933, presenting a scored and dyed concrete floor and white plastered walls. At the base of the walls is a painted brown dado, a detail typical of the architect's Spanish-Pueblo Revival commissions and a motif found throughout the original office. A handmade Territorial Revival-style tin light fixture suspends from the ceiling.

During the 1933 renovation, the east window was replaced with a smaller unit. A broom closet was introduced on the left side and a coat closet on the right of the new window. The closets created an alcove in which Meem extended the window sill to become a deep stool. The closet doors are built with a simple design he would often use in decades to come, a flat wood slab carved with shallow V-grooves, giving the appearance of boards. Beneath the stool is a linen case containing a cupboard, two doors, and adjustable shelves. The simple frame-and-panel doors are inset with flat panels. The ensemble of woodwork gives a sense of depth to an otherwise shallow space.

Public Office #2

The next space is entered through a low arch topped with wood lintels, a treatment Meem first introduced in 1929, with the Mary Conkey Residence. Originally the living room of Meem's bachelor apartment, this space, with few exceptions, has maintained much of its period character. It is a rectangular volume marked by a strip-oak floor, white plastered walls with a brown dado at the base, and a ceiling of large, peeled, round vigas topped with V-groove decking (Photo 16). Sitting in the northwest corner is an archetypal Meem-designed *fogón* (fireplace) with its

² Various names were attached to the rooms during the building's nearly sixty years as an architect's office. The room names in the nomination derive from designations shown on architectural drawings, as well as interpretations of their function based on primary sources.

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distinctive elliptical opening, low hearth, angled flue, and delicate wrought-iron chimney-damper key. Meem would use this type of corner fireplace in many of his residential designs.

Changes to the room's original appearance mainly involve door replacements. On the east side of the south wall, the original door leading to what was a dressing room was replaced with a flush unit for an ADA bathroom installed during the 1996 renovation. Other doors have been replaced with units sympathetic to the original designs.

In 1933, the living room was converted into a bedroom for John and Faith Meem. After they moved to their new home in the late-1930s, the space was changed into an office for the architectural firm, replacing a smaller room built in 1930. Today, it functions as a gallery and hangout for students.

Hall A

This space, originally a small entry portal to Meem's apartment, was enclosed on the west side with a window wall (Photo 17).³ The wall is made of four, six-over-six double-hung wood windows supported by a frame clad with V-groove vertical wood siding. The interior wall is faced with smooth plaster painted white, but without the dado. It is entered from the north through Public Office #2 by an original fifteen-light wood door. The hallway has a flagstone floor that slopes slightly from north to the south to accommodate a five inch difference in the floor levels. The enclosure probably occurred shortly after 1944 when Edward Holien became a partner in the firm. Sets of architectural drawings for projects in progress hung from wooden racks in this area; a location that was quickly accessible to draftsmen.

Meem Office #1

Originally designated as a "Private Office" on the 1930 drawing, this room appears to have been Meem's personal office at least until 1940. Currently, it is used as a printmaking studio. The intimate, rectangular room is characterized by its north-south oriented, peeled vigas and a Meem-designed fogón taking up the northwest corner. It retains its plastered white walls and dado, and V-groove decking above the vigas (Photo 18).

At the south wall, the original six-over-six double-hung wood window was replaced with a steel sash unit. Beneath the window is a large radiator cover, thoughtfully designed by Meem to fit the location. The original eight-over-eight double-hung wood window remains at the west wall. This window, as with many in the older portion of the building, fits in an opening with deep, angled reveals, suggesting a handmade quality.

³ Although the portal is not shown on the 1930 floor plan, it is described as the "Present Portal" on the 1933 floor plan.

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The 1930 drawings indicate that a shallow alcove, possibly housing a bookcase, sat along the east wall. At some point, it was changed to a doorway with a pair of steps leading to the Drafting Room. The door appears to have been removed during the 1996 renovation.

The wood door to the adjacent office is an unusual Meem design, consisting of a top panel of spaced wood "lightning bolts" faced with a single glass pane above four raised panels. While not used frequently in his residential work, doors with a lightning bolt motif were employed for the Brownell-Howland House (1937) and F. Koch Residence (1952) commissions.

Public Office #1

Designated as the Public Office on the 1930 plan, the room served as a reception area until office manager Ruth Heflin moved her station to Meem's former apartment, and the firm shifted the main entrance to the west portal. Presently the small room works as the art department's office. Similar to Meem's space, it has a strip-oak floor, a ceiling made of vigas with V-groove decking, and plastered walls painted white, but without a corner fireplace (Photo 19).

The eight-over-eight double-hung wood window centered in the south wall is original. An earlier six-over-six double-hung wood window across the west wall was replaced by a steel frame window with two operable casements. It is likely that this window was installed in 1940, at the same time as the steel window in Meem's office.

The original entry door at the room's east wall, which leads to the south portal, has been removed, leaving a forty-two-inch-wide opening between it and the Ceramics Studio.⁴

Across the north wall are three original doors, all designed by Meem. The westernmost is the "lightning bolt" door leading to Meem's office. In the center is a small closet with a flat-slab wood door marked with shallow V-grooves. Further east is another lightning motif door, giving access to the first drafting room.

Drafting Room

Of all spaces, the Drafting Room most communicates the building's historic use as an architect's office (Photo 20). This impression is enhanced by its current function as a drawing studio, where drawing materials, furniture, and equipment are scattered about the room. In this modest room designs for many of Meem's most noteworthy buildings were committed to drawings.

In contrast to other spaces, the room conveys an intentionally utilitarian atmosphere, with its large north-facing windows, ceiling of exposed two-inch by eight-inch cross-bridged joists, and walls of un-plastered structural clay tile. Exposed steam radiators sit beneath each of the large north windows; fluorescent trough fixtures hang from the ceiling. The industrial feel is

⁴ The door's original wood lintel and jambs remain in place.

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additionally emphasized by its ten-foot, ten-inch ceiling height and lack of any stylistic ornamentation. Looking across the space, one can almost imagine a clutch of draftsmen, busily working at their drawings.

Behind a wall to the east is a grouping of smaller, interconnected rooms, which originally held the utilitarian functions of the office, such as producing blueprints, a storage vault, a bathroom, and a garage.

Blueprint Room

A modern door at the east end of the Drafting Room gives entry to an area originally used to produce blueprints. First identified as the “Blue Print” room, the space retains much of its former utilitarian character.

The exterior walls are painted clay tile while the interior walls are finished with plaster. The floor is smooth concrete, and the ceiling, as in the drafting room, is made of exposed joists with cross bridging.

A galvanized steel ventilation hood is recessed into the ceiling. It houses an operable louvered vent going through the roof to the outdoors. This vent, along with a double-hung wood window on the east wall, would have helped clear the room of fumes associated with the blueprint-making process. A door to the exterior at the south wall gave access to the outdoors where blueprints were exposed to sunlight for development.

In the mid-1940s, the firm abandoned the production of blueprinting, and purchased a Bruning brown-tone duplicating machine to make reproductions.⁵ The school converted the area to hold a low-fire electric kiln. Now used for this purpose, the space still conveys a sense of production.

Vault

Directly north of the Blueprint Room is a fireproof vault. The windowless volume is made of hollow-clay tile, with its floor and ceiling constructed of poured concrete. Access to the vault is through a heavy steel door. Manufactured by the Herring-Hall-Marvin Safe Company of Hamilton, Ohio, the vault was originally secured by a hasp welded to the door and the jamb. The vault held drawings and plans completed by the firm. It is currently used for storage.

Across the north wall, between the Blueprint Room and the Vault, is a tiny space containing a single toilet. It served as a bathroom for the drafting staff and remains intact. Of minimal size, with the toilet as its only fixture, it has a four-light casement opening into the former garage for ventilation. It is entered through an original five-panel wood door.

⁵ Tom Holien, transcript of an oral history conducted on July 9, 2015, by Deborah Lawrence and Alan “Mac” Watson, 12.

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Garage #1

The garage that housed John Gaw Meem's automobile is attached to the east wall of the Blueprint Room, which is now only accessible from the outside. The utilitarian area features a twelve-inch vinyl-tile floor, walls finished with painted plaster, and a ceiling covered with pine boards. A bank of windows across the north side provides the room with natural light.

Although the interior bears little resemblance to a garage, it does reflect its conversion by the firm for additional office space. The principal alterations include closing off the east garage door and replacing it with an eight-over-eight double-hung clad window, and enlarging the north window opening to hold new window units.

The increased fenestration would suggest that it was used as a workspace, although both Meem's daughter and a son of one of the firm's partners recall that it worked primarily as a place to store and show samples of architectural materials.⁶ During the 1996 renovation, the door from the garage to the Blueprint Room was closed off and a new exterior door created farther east along the south wall. The garage currently functions as a utility work room.

Ceramics Studio

The 1996 ceramics studio addition enclosed and greatly enlarged the original south portal. The modified space is a large, open room populated with work tables, benches and stools, and other equipment common to a ceramics studio (Photo 21). A bank of double-hung clad windows across the south wall provides natural light. Vestiges of the older portal are distinguishable from the rest of the room. These include four large wood posts surmounted by decorative corbels. The corbels carry a heavy wood beam, which in turn supports the vigas of the older portal.

The addition carries this theme forward with a ceiling made of similarly large, round vigas resting on a squared beam supported by posts topped with carved corbels. Subtle variations, mostly visibly with the shape of the corbels, mark the new from the old. The floor of the ceramic studio is made of scored concrete, reflecting the floor in the original portal.

The north wall across the former portal, near its west end, featured an original eight-over-eight double-hung wood window, which was removed and filled with glass block. This alteration likely occurred when the portal was enclosed by a window wall in the mid-1940s to create additional drafting space. The other original double-hung window, near the east end of the room, has been replaced with a Meem reproduction door. At the east wall there remains a pair of antique pintle-hinged wood shutters that open into the former blueprinting room. At the west end is one of the two original "lightning bolt" doors, which provides access to the Drafting Room.

⁶ Ibid., 10.

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Conference Room

The Entrance Hall includes two doorways leading to rooms that were constructed in 1933 when the north side of the building was expanded for an apartment for Meem and his wife. Historically, the left opening (south) led to the couple's living room, and later the architectural firm's conference room.

The interior of this grand room remains unchanged from its 1933 appearance, when it served as the Meem's living room. The large, rectangular space is finished with a strip-oak floor, white painted plaster walls, and a ceiling made of peeled, honey-colored vigas, topped with V-groove boards (Photo 22). Large ten-over-fifteen double-hung wood windows on the north, south, and west walls flood the room with natural light. Historic wrought-iron curtain rods span the window heads.

The room includes an original built-in bookcase topped with a lintel recessed into the east wall, and a fogón tucked into the northwest corner with a small nicho next to it. The bookcase, like those in other architects' offices, held design and construction reference works, catalogues, and trade magazines.⁷ Meem's carefully designed radiator covers continue to disguise the room's two steam radiators. The carved wood covers span the base of the north and south windows, with sufficient width to serve as benches.

Once the Meems' apartment was converted for office use, the large room proved challenging to program. The Meem files in the Southwest Collection at the University of New Mexico contain an undated sketch showing the room subdivided by partitions to form a private office, which the notes describe as a "Library" for "JGM." A more refined drawing which shows it divided into two conference rooms separated by a sliding curtain track. But there is no physical evidence that either of these ideas was set in motion.

Partner architect Edward Holien's son, Tom Holien, recalls that it worked as a large conference room and library from approximately 1944 onward.⁸ Nancy Meem Wirth, John Gaw Meem's daughter, remembers that the room contained a Meem-designed, wood trestle table, surrounded by leather chairs from Mexico.⁹ Historically it worked as place to meet with clients, present drawings, and go over the details of a plan. It is now used as a classroom for the instruction of American history, Middle Eastern, and African studies.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Nancy Meem Wirth, email communication to Alan "Mac" Watson, September 19, 2018.

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Hall B

This space was originally a corridor to the Kitchen, which now serves as a passage through a modern, steel flush door to additional classrooms. The door replaced a six-over-six double-hung wood window across the east wall of the earlier apartment.

The passageway is flanked on both sides by cupboards with fifteen-light glass doors with stacked wood drawers below. Above the opening to the Kitchen on the north wall is an alcove decorated with four vertical turned spindles. Spanning above the doorway is a valence of fanciful wood scrollwork. A Spanish Revival pendant tin light fixture hangs from the center of the ceiling. A notable feature, recalling its original utilitarian function, is a drop-down ironing board recessed into the south wall.

Kitchen

The compact, galley-type kitchen dates to the 1933 expansion, and to this day conveys its original function. The hall-like space is flanked by countertops and wood cupboards on its east and west walls (Photo 22). Beneath the east countertop is a sink cabinet that extends the full width of the room. It holds a cast-iron single-basin sink. Above the sink is an original six-over-six double-hung wood window which once opened to the outdoors, but now connects to a classroom. Along the west wall, the original range and refrigerator were removed and replaced with storage cabinets and shelves. An original Dutch door on the north opens to the outside.

New Office

Hall B terminates at its east end with a doorway leading historically to an office, most likely used by the firm's cost estimating section. The room is a simple rectangular, low ceilinged space dominated by windows across its south and east walls. Erected over a concrete slab, it was added to the office in the early 1950s during a period of increased work. It was evidently part of a project that included converting the north garage to a drafting room and private office for Meem. As noted in the exterior description, it is stylistically distinct from the overall Spanish-Pueblo Revival manner of the rest of the building. In keeping with this, its interior finishes are spare: a ceiling of acoustical panels with fluorescent overhead lighting, and a floor made of twelve-inch brown-linoleum tile. It is presently used as a 3D sculpture studio.

Digital Media Lab

Totalling approximately 1,125 square-feet, the Digital Media Lab contains four interconnected rooms designed for instruction, development, and editing of photographs. Forming the extreme north end of the building, it represents entirely new construction. The largest space is a rectangular, high-ceilinged classroom, utilitarian in appearance. Similar to the first drafting room, its ceiling is spanned with exposed joists. Its floor is finished with wood planking, its walls covered with plastered drywall. A door at the northeast corner leads to a group of smaller,

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utilitarian rooms used for developing and editing film. A chamber-like revolving door provides entry to the darkroom. The addition is devoid of any Spanish-Pueblo Revival treatment and, therefore, does not conflict with the earlier building.

Integrity

The John Gaw Meem Architects Office retains a high degree of historic integrity across its principal west elevation. This elevation, which became the public façade in 1933, has maintained its historic design, fenestration, and materials of the period. Secondary elevations, including the exterior north and courtyard south, changed as the office expanded in the 1940s and '50s, well within the period of significance (1930-1967).

The largest alteration is the two 1996 additions which bridge off the original footprint at the south elevation and northeast corner. Including the new south portal, these additions increased the building's footprint by 2,510 square feet. The additions were appended to elevations that already had experienced change or were historically secondary in architectural character. Designed sensitively to harmonize but not compete with the original massing, they have not negatively affected the building's ability to communicate its history.

Even the casual observer is able to appreciate that the John Gaw Meem Architects Office has retained considerable integrity of its interior spaces. This is partially due to its current use, which is dedicated to arts education. Students are drawing in the drafting rooms, washing paintbrushes in the kitchen sink, developing and printing film in the photography facility, and throwing pots in the ceramics studio.

As the building passed directly from its function as an apartment and an architect's office to use for arts education, very few changes have taken place in the spaces formerly devoted to housing the Meem family and his architectural practice and succeeding firms. Alterations to the original interior have consisted mainly of required door replacements and small adjustments made for programming. The most impactful changes were alterations to the two garages, which were historically secondary spaces.

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7. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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 values, 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1930-1967

Significant Dates

1930; 1933; c.1950; 1959;
1967

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Meem, John Gaw

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Meem, John Gaw (architect),
Eubank and Rugg (builder), 1930
Johnson, Victor (architect), 1996

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary Paragraph

The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because it is a rare and excellent example of an architect house and studio in a state where few architects offices from the 20th century are known to survive. The office, designed by Meem, remains mostly intact with both his residential rooms and the rooms dedicated to the production of architectural designs. The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion B because the Architects Office is the building most closely associated with Meem's professional life, spanning nearly a thirty-year period, between 1930 and 1959. John Gaw Meem's impact on the architectural development of Santa Fe and much of New Mexico is profound. Arguably the most influential architect in New Mexico during the 20th century, Meem not only systematized the Spanish-Pueblo and Territorial Revival idioms, but also introduced design concepts and architectural motifs that are still in use today. His leadership in preservation had direct influence on the physical design and appearance of much of Santa Fe and the state. His successor firm, Edward Holien & William Buckley, continued to advance his ideas and the Pueblo and Territorial styles for modern application. The John Gaw Meem Architects Office meets the registration requirements described in the multiple property submission, "Buildings Designed by John Gaw Meem, 1925-1959," for its association with Meem during the period from 1930 to 1959.¹⁰ The period from 1960 to 1967 represents the period following Meem's retirement when the office was occupied the successor firm, Edward Holien & William Buckley, and is not represented in the multiple property submission.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

John Gaw Meem Architects Office is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because it is a rare and excellent example of an architect's house and studio in a state where few architect's offices from the 20th century are known to survive. Meem deigned the building to serve as an architects' office, and it is complete with portions of Meem's residence and nearly all of architect's office and studio spaces intact. The office showcased for clients many of the architect's Spanish-Pueblo Revival-style architectural elements and design motifs, including his masterful design of portals. Architects' offices, unlike artist studio's which can often be reused without changes to the floor plan, require specialized spaces for reception, offices, conference rooms, spaces for reproduction of drawings, vaults for the storage of drawings, and drafting studios. As a result, many architect offices remained intact only as long

¹⁰ David Kammer, "Buildings Designed by John Gaw Meem, 1925-1959," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2002. (On file at the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, Santa Fe, New Mexico).

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as they continued to be used as architects' offices. Once the firm moved or dissolved, the space was usually transformed for a new purpose. Many architects practiced in rented space in downtown office buildings. When the practice relocated, these offices were usually rebuilt to serve new tenants.

The offices of some of the largest and most successful architecture firms have mostly not survived. SMPC Architects, established in 1942, continued to practice in the same International Style office in Albuquerque until 2017. The building is now vacant. Flatow, Moore, Bryan, and Fairburn practiced at 1840 Lomas Boulevard in Albuquerque from 1947, when the firm was established until 2002, when the firm dissolved. The building was demolished shortly thereafter. The Albuquerque firm Dekker/Perich/Sabatini began in 1948 and now practices in building it designed and constructed in 2006.

W. C. Kruger and Associates, once one of the largest architectural firms in the state during the mid-20th century, began in the 1930s and built an architectural office in 1948 on Palace Avenue in Santa Fe. This modern office remains mostly intact, including its second-story north-and-west-facing banks of studio windows.

New Mexico had fewer surviving architects' offices because it had fewer architects than many states. The New Mexico Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was established in 1947, when its membership rolls included only 22 architects. By 1955, the AIA directory included 28 architects. Meem helped establish the New Mexico Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and served as its first president.

The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is eligible at the state level under National Register Criterion B because the Architects Office is the building most closely associated with Meem's professional life, spanning nearly a thirty-year period, between 1930 and 1959. Meem, who practiced architecture from 1925 until 1959, is among the state's most significant architects of the 20th century whose work in Southwest regional styles shaped the built environment and a popular image of New Mexico and especially Santa Fe. Meem designed nearly 150 houses and his major public commissions include the renovation of La Fonda Hotel, the Laboratory of Anthropology, and about thirty buildings on the main campus of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is significant as the primary office and studio of master architect John Gaw Meem from 1930 until his retirement in 1959. John Gaw Meem, embraced philanthropic enterprises after 1959, and died in 1983.

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Developmental history/additional historic context information

Significant Events in the Architecture and Life of John Gaw Meem

A Family of Engineers

John Gaw Meem — the architect who would popularize the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style first in Santa Fe, and later across the Southwest — was born on November 17, 1894, in Brazil.¹¹ Referred to in family genealogy as John Gaw Meem IV, the future architect was the fourth in his line to carry the name. Though recognized as an architect, Meem was trained as a civil engineer, following a long line of male family members educated as engineers at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI).¹²

The VMI tradition began with Meem's grandfather John Gaw Meem II, a railroad engineer and Confederate officer born in 1833, in Lynchburg, Virginia. His father, Captain John G. Meem, was a successful banker, merchant, and planter, who made his fortune investing in railroads, canals and mills.¹³ His mother, Elizabeth Campbell Meem, was a descendant of William Russell, an original member of the Virginia Colony. Captain Meem came from Dutch stock; his great grandfather, Peter Meem, emigrated from the Netherlands and fought as a soldier during the American Revolutionary War.¹⁴

Both families had deep ties to the Shenandoah Valley. In 1839, Captain Meem purchased the famed Mount Airy estate, an 18th-century gentleman's farm located in Shenandoah County, Virginia.¹⁵ Situated on the western slope of Massanutten Mountain near the north fork of the Shenandoah River, the estate originally sprawled over 5,000 acres, including rich bottom land with a tract that is still called Meem's Bottom. It included an old colonial house, dubbed Dunmore that was built before 1790 of brick imported from England. President Millard Fillmore visited the estate during his administration, and was apparently so impressed with it that he

¹¹ John Gaw Meem's architectural legacy is presented in "Buildings Designed by John Gaw Meem, 1925-1959." The current nomination attempts to amplify upon the context, looking more closely at the architect's background and professional development as well as that of partners and associates in the firm. It additionally seeks to correct small errors found in earlier biographies.

¹² As of 1984, 25 descendants of John Gaw Meem I had graduated from VMI. J. Lawrence, Meem, Jr., editor, *John Gaw Meem and his Descendants*, (Mt. Airy, Va., 1985), no page.

¹³ W. Ashbury Christian, *Lynchburg and its People*, (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell Company, 1900).

¹⁴ "John Gaw Meem, Jr.," Typed manuscript, ("Archives Alumni Files," Virginia Military Institute Archives, Preston Library, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia), 1, (Hereafter cited as AAF/VMI).

¹⁵ "John Gaw Meem, Jr., AAF/VMI, 1; William Couper, *History of the Shenandoah Valley*, (New York, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1952), 1014; *Washington Post*, August 31, 1996: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/realestate/1996/08/31/a-farm-of-dreams-for-sale/70eae5ed-62fb-4c9f-bd9c-5d9d81ba3142/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2cdd1bafc3c0>.

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jokingly told Meem he would trade it for his presidency.¹⁶ Meem II inherited the estate after his father's death in 1873.¹⁷

John Gaw Meem II graduated from VMI in 1852, with a degree in civil engineering. He initially worked for his father in Lynchburg, but on the suggestion of a friend, joined Charles Fenton Mercer Garnett, a prominent railroad engineer, on a venture to build the first railroad in Brazil.¹⁸ Meem toiled for three years as an assistant engineer on the ambitious project, the Dom Pedro Segundo. Named after Brazil's emperor, Dom Pedro II, the 365-mile line became the backbone railroad of Brazil. Brazil would play an important part in the next two generations of Meems.

After the Civil War, General Meem, as he was later be called, relocated to Washington, D.C. He reportedly designed and supervised the construction of the first Bureau of Engraving and Printing office (1880) and other buildings around the capital. He later served briefly as a clerk for the United States Treasury Department, Office of Supervising Architect during the first Cleveland administration.¹⁹

The architect's father, John Gaw Meem III, was born on August 2, 1864, in the throes of the Civil War. Returning from Brazil, his own father John Gaw Meem II enlisted in the Eleventh Virginia Infantry Regiment, fighting in battles at Blackburn's Ford, Bull's Run, and Dranesville. In the fall of 1861, Meem II became the aide-de-camp to General E. Kirby Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederate States Army. It was in the general's Shreveport, Louisiana headquarters that the future architect's father was born and lived his first years, undoubtedly exposed to the strains of war.²⁰

John Gaw Meem III graduated from VMI in 1884 with honors, receiving a First Jackson-Hope Medal, representing the highest academically distinguished cadet in each graduating class. Unlike his father, he did not pursue engineering as his employment. He first taught at his alma mater for a few years, instructing in the subjects of chemistry, Latin and military tactics, while pursuing post-graduate training in civil engineering.²¹

¹⁶ James C. Meem, "Concrete-Steel Bridge and Road Improvements at Mount Airy," In, *Club Proceedings for 1912*, (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Engineers' Club, 1913), 87.

¹⁷ *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), January 3, 1908, 11

¹⁸ Confederate Publishing Company, *Confederate Military History, Volume III*, (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), 1039.

¹⁹ There is no indication that General Meem served as the supervising architect, or worked in an architectural capacity during his one-year stint with the department between 1888 and 1889, as claimed by McNary, 1977 and Wilson, 2001. Meem was hired by the department in February 1888, and less than a year later advanced to the position of chief computer, in the wake of new civil service rules that would have disqualified him from this position because of his lack of experience. This charge was made during an 1889 Senate investigation into reported irregularities of the supervising architect's office; *Indianapolis Journal*, February 8, 1889, 1.

²⁰ *The Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), November 23, 1924, 34.

²¹ James M. Morgan, *The Jackson-Hope and the Society of the Cincinnati medals of the Virginia Military Institute*, (Verona, Va.: McClure Press, 1979), 51.

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In 1889, he left VMI, and enrolled in the Virginia Theological Seminary, in Alexandria, graduating with a Doctorate of Divinity in 1891.²² The same year, under the sponsorship of the Protestant Episcopal Church, of New York City, he sailed to Brazil to become a missionary. Reverend Meem was assigned to Pelotas, a riverside city in southern Brazil of mixed French and Portuguese colonial history. An important railhead and port, its inner neighborhoods were laced with European-influenced street grids and stucco-faced buildings with intricate wrought-iron balconies.

There in 1894 he met and married Elsa Upton Krischke, the granddaughter of the American Consul to the region. It was in one these colonial-era districts, in a two-story house with a wrought-iron balcony, that the Meems settled. The same year, Elsa gave birth to John Gaw Meem IV, the first of five children.

Meem's father would add to the town's architectural heritage, designing a Neo-Gothic church, Igreja Episcopal do Redentor (1909), a few blocks from the central plaza.²³ Prior to that, Reverend Meem had designed a simpler Anglican chapel, Santa Rita do Rio dos Sinos (1894), in neighboring Rio Grande.²⁴

The future architect spent his youth in the city's colonial quarters, undoubtedly absorbing its architecture and ambience. He first studied at a local German preparatory school, with his father tutoring him in French, chemistry, and mathematics.²⁵

Following the family tradition, he enrolled at VMI, leaving Brazil in the summer of 1910 to attend the university at age 16. There, like his father, grandfather, and great grandfather, he pursued a degree in civil engineering.

His coursework consisted of descriptive geometry, drawing, and surveying, followed by two years learning the theory and practice of civil engineering. In drawing classes, Meem practiced topographical mapping, free-hand lettering, sketching from field measurements, and preparing working drawings — all of which would serve him well later as he pursued architecture.²⁶ The VMI students were taught through standard textbooks of the day, including Thomas E. French's *Engineering Drawing* and Gardner C. Anthony's *Mechanical Drawing*, as well as International Correspondence Schools pamphlets; books for a future designing railroads, highways and subways.

²² Ibid.

²³ Roger Langone Leal, "Escrita Na Arquitetura Eclética da Cidade de Pelotas: Inventário de Inscrições Tipográficas nos Imóveis Históricos (1850-1930)," (Dissertation, Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Brazil, 2018), 229. Reverend Meem would later restore an estate in Rio de Janeiro that became the foundation of a mission church in that city.

²⁴ Rev. James W. Morris, "The Land of the True Cross," *The Spirit of Missions*, (Vol. LXXXIV, 1919), 12.

²⁵ Beatrice Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem: Pioneer in Historic Preservation*, (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1985), 3.

²⁶ Virginia Military Institute, *Official Register, 1914-1915*, (Lexington, Va.: Virginia Military Institute, c.1915), 67.

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Of small stature, Meem was subject to hazing at VMI, but possessed sufficient vigor to participate in track.²⁷ He made a few friends, but would stay in contact with only one, Benjamin Allison Colonna, a fellow German language student and future Army officer. While not performing at the academic level of his father, the future architect appears to have done well, achieving fifth rank in his graduating class in the subjects of French and German, and seventh in Geology.²⁸ Four years later in the summer of 1914, he attained his B.S., graduating at number 18 in the class of 63 cadets.²⁹ Looking back over his career in 1972, Meem acknowledged that the “discipline I learned at VMI, has been immensely helpful to me.”³⁰ But the disciplined learning did not nourish his artistic soul.

The Junior Engineer

Upon graduating, Meem moved north to Brooklyn, New York, where his uncle James Cowan Meem was a successful and well-connected civil engineer. Born in 1866 in Tennessee, James trained as a civil engineer at VMI, like his brother, father, grandfather, and nephew. He graduated in 1885.

James Meem first worked as a surveyor for the U.S. Bureau of Engineers in Delaware.³¹ He relocated to Brooklyn in 1896, the same year he married his Cambridge, Massachusetts-born wife, Katherine Russell Dimick. They lived in an eight-room apartment in a five-story stone-clad building in a fashionable part of Brooklyn.³² James was a member of the Southern Society, a social dance club, and he and Katherine frequently appeared in the society column of the Brooklyn newspaper.

In New York, James initially worked as a municipal civil engineer and is claimed to have played a pivotal role in designing the first subway tunnel under the East River.³³ In 1902, he shifted to the private sector, becoming the chief engineer for Cranford & McNamee, guiding a major project to extend the New York Subway into Brooklyn. He was a founding member of the Brooklyn Engineers’ Club, which at the time of John’s arrival had 350 members. He served as its president in 1909.

With his many connections, James got the younger Meem a junior engineering position at the Underpinning and Foundation Company. Headquartered on Broadway in Manhattan, it was one

²⁷ Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem*, 12.

²⁸ Virginia Military Institute, *Official Register*, 89.

²⁹ “Background Information, John Gaw Meem, Virginia Military institute, 1914, 2, (“John Gaw Meem, 1914,” AAF/VMI).

³⁰ Quoted in “Internationally Known Architect John Gaw Meem IV ’14 Dies,” Newspaper clipping, (“John Gaw Meem, 1914,” AAF/VMI).

³¹ Lyon Gardiner Tyler, editor, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, (New York: Lew Historical Publishing Company, 1915), 1043.

³² A 1915 advertisement characterized the apartment as located in an “exclusive and quiet section” of Brooklyn. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 7, 1915, 14. The building still stands.

³³ Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem*, 5.

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of several contractors working with the Public Service Commission to complete New York's subway system. At the time of John Gaw Meem's arrival, the company was facing litigation for damaging property and was the target of labor complaints. At the firm, Meem worked on a project to extend the subway from Broadway to Manhattan, along Canal Street.

During his three years of employment at the company, Meem lived in a brownstone near his uncle's apartment. He occupied a small furnished room in the 1860s building which had been divided into numerous apartments and studios.³⁴

War Calls

With less than two years in the position, Meem left the Underpinning and Foundation Company. With Europe engulfed in war, the young engineer chose to serve his country, following a family steeped in military tradition.

In 1916, he enrolled in the Business Men's Training Company, a voluntary camp located in Plattsburg, in northern New York.³⁵ Geared toward professionals, it was disparaged as the "Tired Businessmen's Club."³⁶ Yet the four-week training played an important role in raising the nation's awareness of the need for military preparedness.

During the training, Meem took his examination to become a Reserve Officer in the United States Army. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant the same year. A year later, the engineer was called up for service and returned to Plattsburg in May 1917 for additional training. It was during this stint that Meem came down with a hard case of influenza, falling sick during a snowstorm at a National Guard camp on Long Island.³⁷

In August 1917, Meem was promoted to captain and joined the staff of the Education and Special Training Section of the War Plans Division of the Army, which trained technical and mechanical staff.³⁸

Sent first to Spartanburg, South Carolina, Meem organized the military department at Wofford College, a small liberal arts institution. He moved with the Section often, serving at training posts in Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts, at each point working with a local university. At his stint in Iowa, at the State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, Meem supervised 1,500 draftees being trained in blacksmithing, mechanics, and motor repair.³⁹ These logistical

³⁴ This is based on various 1914-15 advertisements for apartments in the building appearing in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

³⁵ Joseph Reid Anderson, *Record of Service in the World War of V.M.I. Alumni and their Alma Mater*, (Lexington, Va.: Virginia Military Institute, 1920), 230.

³⁶ Francis Russell, "When Gentlemen Prepared for War, *American Heritage*, (Volume 15, Issue 13, 1964): <<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/when-gentlemen-prepared-war>>.

³⁷ Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem*, 5.

³⁸ Anderson, *Record of Service in the World War of V.M.I.*, 231.

³⁹ Ibid.

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and management skills would later help Meem manage large-scale projects in the 1930s and 1940s.

Back to Brazil

With the war winding down, Meem returned to New York, following an honorable discharge on January 27, 1919. Back in Brooklyn, he weighed his options, as he apparently did not want to return to the hectic pace of contract engineering.

Missing his family in Brazil, he applied almost as a whim for a banking job in South America with the National City Bank of New York. In 1919, National City Bank (now Citibank) was the first American bank to have \$1 billion in assets. It had banks spread across the world, with 14 branches alone in South America.⁴⁰ Its South American portfolio included an office in Rio de Janeiro — representing the largest financial institution in the city at that time. Meem applied for the job of credit manager in January, and in February was packing his bags for Brazil.

Perhaps signaling his optimism for the new job, Meem's passport application indicated he would be doing work for the bank not only in Brazil but also in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.⁴¹ By February 19, Meem was situated in downtown Rio de Janeiro, working as an assistant credit manager for the American bank.⁴²

His family had relocated to the seaside city, where his father had risen to the level of an archdeacon. Archdeacon Meem established a mission at Icaraí, a beachside neighborhood founded by British colonists. There, he later designed a stone, English-inspired chapel, All Saints Church (1922) on a former colonial estate that he had acquired and restored with church funds.⁴³ Following his father's inspiration, John Gaw Meem IV would design over his career 22 churches and chapels, several with an Anglican influence.

Meem most likely felt welcomed and at home in his native country. But his contentment didn't last long. Only after a year of service, his health began to deteriorate. Coughing and sputtering, the bank sent him back to New York for a diagnosis. His doctor informed him that he had contracted tuberculosis, and advised against returning to Brazil. He recommended treatment at several well-known sanatoriums, including facilities in Saranac, New York, Asheville, North Carolina, or — at a much farther distance — Santa Fe, New Mexico.⁴⁴

Walking down Park Avenue after the doctor's visit, Meem by serendipity passed an Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe ticket office, and stopped to inquire about Santa Fe. He was handed a

⁴⁰ *Federal Reserve Bulletin*, October 1918, 942-943.

⁴¹ Passport application, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.; Roll #: 750; Volume #: Roll 0750 - Certificates: 76000-76249, 17 Apr 1919-19 Apr 1919.

⁴² Anderson, *Record of Service in the World War of V.M.I.*, 231.

⁴³ Morris, "The Land of the True Cross," 15; Morris, "A Soldier Missionary," magazine clipping, ("John Gaw Meem, 1884," AAF/VMI).

⁴⁴ Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem*, 7.

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brochure which touted the area's well-advertised salubrious climate and its mingled Indian and Spanish history. It mentioned two sanatoriums, one located on the outskirts of town with the optimistic name of Sunmount. The choice of Santa Fe and Sunmount was further cemented when he learned that a cousin, Mary Vilura "Lura" Conkey, had been convalescing at this sanatorium for two years and was quite happy with it.⁴⁵

Meem took a transcontinental train bound for California, getting off late at night at Lamy, New Mexico, the railroad's depot for Santa Fe. He checked into the El Ortiz hotel, a sprawling Harvey House designed by Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss that mixed Mission Revival and Spanish-Indian style elements. It would be his first exposure to the region's architectural vocabulary.

A Place of Rest and Creativity

Sunmount Sanatorium, formerly a camp of white canvas tents, sat on a hill on the southern outskirts of town. To get to it from Santa Fe's Plaza, visitors and residents passed through traditional farm fields watered by acequias, then up and over a ridge on a road — Camino del Monte Sol — recently populated with artists building their adobe studio homes. It would be at the top of this road that Meem would erect his first home and office.

By the time Meem arrived, the Sunmount tents had been replaced by handsome one-story buildings designed by the architectural firm of Rapp, Rapp and Hendrickson, progenitors of the so-called Santa Fe style. Erected in 1914 and 1920, their Sunmount buildings are considered one of the first major Spanish-Pueblo Revival designs in Santa Fe.⁴⁶ Meem would later describe them as "beautifully designed."⁴⁷ He would eventually design two remodeling projects for the sanatorium, one in the late 1930s to convert it into the short-lived, hacienda-styled Santa Fe Inn.⁴⁸

The future architect officially became a patient in January 1921 and was given a room on the south side of the main building where he would he convalesce for nearly two years.⁴⁹ Dr. Frank E. Mera, a friendly and wise physician, ran the sanatorium, geared to patients in the first and second stages of consumption. A graduate of Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia, Mera had been cured himself of tuberculosis in the early 1900s in Colorado Springs. He and his brother Robert, also a physician, purchased the former tent colony in Santa Fe with hopes of turning it into a first-class sanatorium.

As in most sanatoria in New Mexico, Dr. Mera practiced a climatic form of treatment in which patients were exposed to fresh air and a daily regimen of rest, healthful food, and nights spent on

⁴⁵John Gaw Meem, transcript of an oral history conducted April 19, 1977, by Beatrice Chauvenet, 2.

⁴⁶ John McNary, "John Gaw Meem: His Style Development and Residential Architecture between 1924 and 1940," (Thesis, University of New Mexico, 1977), 7.

⁴⁷ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 9, 1969, 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 31, 1938, 2.

⁴⁹ John Gaw Meem, April 19, 1977, 2.

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sleeping porches. Santa Fe's high altitude (7,000' and higher), and the pure mountain air were thought to be vital to the cure.⁵⁰

But the cure involved much more than restoring physical health. Dr. Mera and his wife Edna Robinson developed a program of spiritual and mental uplift. Meem would later write that Dr. Mera's approach put great effort toward the "patients' mental outlook [which] had great a deal to do with [their] recovery."⁵¹ Part of this involved in immersing the patient into culture and the arts. Sunmount hosted a lounge in which patients gathered to talk and read poetry. Over the years patients included poets Arthur Ivor Winters, Janet Lewis, Lynn Riggs, and Alice Corbin.⁵²

Mera occasionally opened the salon to the public, putting on talks by Santa Fe writer Mary Austin and poet Witter Bynner, Mayan archaeologist Sylvanus G. Morley, and historians associated with the Museum of New Mexico. Guests of the salon included national luminaries. Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsey gave poetry readings, and one night filmmaker Robert Flaherty presented a screening of his groundbreaking documentary, "Nanook of the North."⁵³

Meem appears to have thrived in this convivial, culture-infused atmosphere. A year into the program, he directed several one-act plays put on by the Sunmount Players for patients and the public.⁵⁴ He also translated Portuguese poetry, with a book of poems by Olavo Bilac printed privately.

A photograph of Meem taken toward the end of 1921 shows the patient posed outside of Sunmount, standing on the snow-spattered ground. He stands erect, and while appearing studious in his round glasses, he is dressed tentatively in Western wear, with a wide-brimmed hat and the high leather lace-up-type boots made popular by Teddy Roosevelt.

Becoming an Architect

Mera, who was perceptive—almost as if trained as a psychologist—saw in his Brazilian-born patient a talent for sketching, and by extension, architecture. The doctor brought Meem books of blueprints of drawings by noted architects to study.⁵⁵ The patient, while sitting up in bed, started to dabble in drafting, recreating designs in the books.

His first chance at actual design came when one of his fellow patients, Hubert Galt, a Chicago capitalist, bought a five-room adobe house and asked Meem to come up with a renovation

⁵⁰ Chris Wilson, *Facing Southwest: The Life and Houses of John Gaw Meem*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 2001), 11.

⁵¹ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 2, 1969, B-1.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Wilson, *Facing Southwest*, 11.

⁵⁴ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, December 31, 1921, 3.

⁵⁵ Bainbridge Bunting, *John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 11.

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scheme.⁵⁶ On a few sheets of yellow construction paper, Meem devised a set of elevations. Though stiff and untutored, the 1924 drawings indicate Meem's nascent understanding of the placement of Pueblo Indian-inspired cubic masses — a skill he would perfect in his professional practice. Impressed with the competence of the incipient architect, Dr. Mera provided Meem an old building on the campus to serve as his drafting room.⁵⁷

With Mera's blessing, Meem left Sunmount in October 1922, traveling to Denver to get further architectural training. He had arranged beforehand an apprenticeship at Fisher and Fisher, Architects, a firm which specialized in commercial and institutional buildings. In their office on the seventh floor of the U.S. National Bank Building in downtown Denver, the apprentice architect learned drawing and drafting skills, and — by observation — specification writing and project management.⁵⁸

The head of the firm, Arthur A. Fisher (1878-1965), encouraged Meem to join the Denver atelier of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. Led by architect Burnham Hoyt (1887-1960), the atelier followed the methodology of the New York-based arts and architecture school, which in turn was influenced by the original French *Écoles des Beaux-Arts*.

Formed in 1919, Atelier Denver was the only school in the Southwest giving architectural instruction.⁵⁹ Held at night in a basement in a mansion in Denver's Capitol Hill neighborhood, students paid \$5 a month for their training.⁶⁰ Nearly 30 students attended the Denver school during Meem's time there. Atelier Denver graduates included Victor Hornbein (1913-1995), one of Colorado's most important architects.

In his coursework, Meem learned the fundamentals of the Beaux-Arts approach, which consisted of studying works of classical architecture to learn harmony and proportion — subtleties that were absent in his VMI education. Students were taught to draw, producing skillful renderings of classically-inspired buildings. The Beaux-Arts Institute of Design promoted competitions, in which members of each atelier would design a building type selected by the national organization.

During Meem's time, competitions included calls to create a suburban tennis club, a memorial doorway, and an open-air theatre.⁶¹ A peer organization, the Society of the Beaux-Arts Architects led by architect Raymond Hood, judged the best drawings produced at each atelier. One of Meem's perspectives of a hypothetical museum received honors and was reproduced, along with other atelier designs, in *American Architect* magazine.

⁵⁶ Ibid. The house still stands at 850 El Caminito, Santa Fe.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁸ McNary, "John Gaw Meem," 9.

⁵⁹ Olga Jackson, *Architecture/Colorado: Mountains, Mines & Mansions*, (Denver: Denver, Colorado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1966), 20.

⁶⁰ The American Federation of Arts, *American Art Annual*, (Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Arts, 1921), 190.

⁶¹ *American Architect*, (Vol. CXXII, Number 2404, October 11, 1922), 525.

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While Meem would reject the strict axial symmetry of the Beaux-Arts model, he most likely gained most of his understanding of harmony and proportion at the atelier.⁶² Perhaps more significantly, Meem used his short time at the atelier to make professional contacts in Colorado that he would draw from throughout his career.⁶³

This began with Hoyt, who would become a close ally, who enticed him to cofound the Society for the Preservation and Restoration of New Mexico Mission Churches. Meem would serve as its chairman and supervising architect. This connection would give Meem a solid understanding of Spanish colonial architecture — much of which he would incorporate into his designs — as well as actual work including an important project to restore the mission church at Acoma Pueblo.

Though he made strides in his day-and-night-time education, the toil of the activities weakened him. Meem returned to Sunmount a little more than a year after he left, once again to recuperate. With his limited apprenticeship over, Meem turned to Santa Fe's native architecture to fulfill his education.

Several of Meem's fellow patients would play critical roles in his development as an architect. Early on, he spent most of his time socializing time with his cousin Vilura Conkey, who would become one of his earliest clients. Among the artistically-bent in Sunmount, former patient Carlos Vierra (1876-1937) — a California native of Spanish-Portuguese heritage — would greatly influence Meem's ideas about New Mexico's native architecture.

Vierra worked as an illustrator in New York City until contracting tuberculosis in 1904. He relocated to Santa Fe to recuperate.⁶⁴ A skilled photographer, he spent his time (when healthy) exploring the area's historic built environment — photographing and taking notes on folk elements, such as vigas, hand-built doors, and window framings. These were arranged in six photographic albums. Meem inherited the albums after Vierra's death in 1937, and they became a sourcebook for the architect.

Vierra — who arrived in Santa Fe 16 years before Meem — emerged as one of the strongest advocates for the preservation of Pueblo architecture, seeing in its environmentally responsive design a form that could be replicated for modern construction. Commenting in 1917, Vierra declared Pueblo architecture as the “nearest to pure American architecture we can approach.”⁶⁵

Following his own enthusiasm, he constructed a large, adobe, Santa Fe-style home on the outskirts of town. Erected in 1918-1919, and made of Pueblo-inspired roomblock massing with

⁶² The brief Beaux-Arts schooling most likely also influenced his career-long tendency to design facades as pictures, trimmed with regional historical decoration.

⁶³ Arthur L. DeVolder, “John Gaw Meem, F.A.I.A.,” (*New Mexico Historical Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3, July 1979), 212.

⁶⁴ McNary, “John Gaw Meem,” 11.

⁶⁵ Quoted in *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 5, 1917, 5.

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flat, terrace-like roofs, the two-story house was hailed in the Santa Fe New Mexican as the “‘last word’ in the original Santa Fe style.” The paper called Vierra an “apostle” of the trend.⁶⁶

Meem undoubtedly learned much from the gregarious, well-connected Santa Fe tastemaker. Some of Meem’s earliest and most important commissions included Vierra as a consultant, with the responsibility of reviewing the young architect’s designs for authenticity. This happened most vividly with the creation of Las Acequias, Meem’s first country estate design.⁶⁷ Commissioned by retired industrialist Cyrus McCormick, Jr., Meem assured that authenticity would be achieved through the architect’s “association with Carlos Vierra.”⁶⁸

Formative Period: Meem & McCormick, Architects

But it was a fellow patient of Midwest origin and nominal artistic inclination who became Meem's first partner in an architectural practice.

Born in 1903 in Albany, Indiana, Cassius D. McCormick (no relation to Cyrus) came down with tuberculosis in the mid-1920s. He arrived at Sunmount two years after Meem and would live there intermittently, while also seeking treatment at the Mayo facility in Rochester, Minnesota.⁶⁹ McCormick, who came from a family of industrialists, struck up a friendship with the nascent architect. McCormick’s business acumen would help Meem’s first go at architecture.

On February 22, 1924, announced their partnership, Meem & McCormick, Architects. Headquartered at Sunmount, Meem worked as the architect, while McCormick took care of business and promotion. They soon got involved in Santa Fe’s booming residential construction scene. In this capacity, Meem & McCormick worked as consulting architects for a local real estate syndicate, developing a restricted 24-lot subdivision in Santa Fe’s South Capital district.⁷⁰

Through his contacts at Sunmount — many of them wealthy — Meem soon gained commissions for small residential and remodeling projects. This included early formative designs, such as the Ashley Pond (1924), Meadors-Staples-Anthony (1925), Mary V. Conkey (1929) and the Robert Tilney (1929) residences, which reveal Meem’s learning process and experimentation with traditional forms and architectural ornamentation.

The Pond residence was built on Santa Fe’s prosperous Palace Avenue. With its three-level composition, hard rectilinear design, and white plastered stucco walls, it was more in keeping

⁶⁶ Ibid., July 30, 1919, 6.

⁶⁷ National Register of Historic Places, July 25, 2008, (#0800697).

⁶⁸ Quoted in Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 45.

⁶⁹ *Muncie Evening Press*, February 26, 1924, 3; December 29, 1924, 8.

⁷⁰ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 23, 1926, 5.

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with Irving Gill or Wallace Neff, but lacked the Southern California architects' skill at arranging vertical massing and fenestration.⁷¹

The next year, Meem drew up plans for the Meadors-Staples-Anthony house. This revealed more of a Spanish-Pueblo influence, with its softened massing, rounded parapets, projecting vigas, and wood lintels over the windows.

A remodel and expansion of a summer home for Chicago railroad executive Emory A. Stedman in 1926 allowed Meem to experiment with the design of a portal. Borrowing from the 1913 Palace of the Governors restoration, Meem cut a hole through the portal's end walls, creating a pedestrian passage — a theme he would use frequently in residential designs.

The house he created for his cousin Mary V. Conkey demonstrated a new level of maturity with its thoughtful arrangement of massing, flow of floor plan, and use of framed vistas. It additionally was Meem's first design to introduce Territorial Revival elements, as he put pedimented heads over the doors and windows. But for its all of its maturity, the architect trimmed the west-portal with an exaggerated line of stick-like salvaged vigas, recalling the earlier, more picturesque expression of the Santa Fe style.

For Robert W. Tilney, a retired stockbroker, Meem designed a house that advanced the Territorial Revival idiom. Tilney's wife, Suzanne, who wanted it to express "nothing heavy or Indian," pushed Meem to return to the hard lines of the Pond residence.⁷² Similar to his first commission, Meem capped the rectilinear volumes with brick cornices, used square posts at the porches, and introduced fanlight transoms over principal doors and windows. The interior featured a symmetrical central hall plan, similar to an American colonial-era house.

Through experimentation Meem would refine these early attempts at regional form, discarding some, like the stacked mass of the Pond Residence, and refining others to the point of purity.

Growing the Firm

To assist the growing practice, Meem hired new staff; skilled professionals that were needed to advance the firm from the shadow of Sunmount.

Arriving from Denver, Gordon F. Street (1893-1943) came to Meem in 1927, from the office of Temple Hoyne Buell, an architect who had moved from Chicago to Colorado to be cured of tuberculosis. With degrees in both engineering and architecture, Street had worked earlier in

⁷¹ Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 40. Modernists Irving Gill and Rudolph M. Schindler both visited Taos Pueblo in the 1910s, and admired the native architecture, but chose to express their admiration in more abstracted forms than Meem.

⁷² Quoted in Wilson, *Facing Southwest*, 40.

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Michigan and Oklahoma. In the latter, he assisted in designing the 55-room Marland Mansion (1925-28) in Ponca City.⁷³

Street's skills, especially in engineering and delineation, advanced Meem's office, giving the young firm the technical prowess to take on larger commercial projects. Street would leave the office in 1932 to form his own practice, going on to design many notable Territorial Revival-style public buildings in Santa Fe.

Around the same time, Meem hired Eugene F. Evans (1898-1974), a Missouri-born draftsman who had worked in Colorado Springs. Paul R. Hoover (1901-1956), another draftsman from Missouri, joined the firm in the late 1920s and performed much of the drafting duties during the early years. Others, such as Henry Sage Goodwin (1904-2002), a wealthy Groton School and Yale University graduate, seemed to drift to the office, most likely attracted more to Santa Fe's exotica than Meem's growing reputation.

The office embarked on its first major commercial commission with a remodeling project and later a substantial addition to the La Fonda hotel in Santa Fe in the late 1920s. This challenging project designed a tall wing of new rooms that were appended to the original two-story building designed by Rapp, Rapp and Hendrickson.

Meem's design, including the sixth-story battered-wall bell tower at the southwest corner, continued the Southwest accent promoted by the Fred Harvey Company — but with more restraint. While the young architectural firm would make little money on the project, Meem proved with it that he could handle large and complex commissions.⁷⁴

McCormick moved on before they finished the La Fonda project, leaving Santa Fe in November 1928. He would return to his native Indiana to work in his father's kitchen cabinet factory. McCormick would take over the business, the McCormick Brothers, and in the 1950s designed his own Santa Fe-style home in Indiana.⁷⁵ From this point on, Meem was the sole principal of the independent practice until 1940.⁷⁶

Santa Fe's Early Architectural Scene

John Gaw Meem took up his career in architecture at a critical juncture in the development of the Santa Fe or Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. While others had made contributions before him, it was Meem, a trained engineer, who systematized the form, especially in relation to the placement and balancing of masses and arrangement of portales. Meem brought to emerging

⁷³ Boyd C. Pratt, Carleen Lazzell and Chris Wilson, editors, *Directory of Historic New Mexico Architects*, (Unpublished document prepared for the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1988), 98.

⁷⁴ Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 77.

⁷⁵ A 1941 newspaper account states McCormick was building a "rambling Santa Fe style house" in Muncie. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 21, 1941, 2. Cassius D. McCormick died in 1981.

⁷⁶ McNary, *John Gaw Meem*, 18.

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style — which initially focused on a picturesque or archaeological presentation — clarity of form and spatial expression.

At the time that Meem went out on his own, his competition in Santa Fe was limited to a few trained architects. His main competitor was the artist and designer William Penhallow Henderson (1877-1943). Originally from Massachusetts, Henderson moved Chicago to Santa Fe in 1916 to be with his wife, poet, Alice Corbin Henderson, who was being treated at Sunmount.

A successful painter in Chicago, Henderson parlayed his talents in Santa Fe, becoming an influential member of its developing art colony. Henderson showed a keen interest in traditional Hispanic furniture and folk architecture. He began to design in adobe, promoting a hand-crafted, romanticized ideal of the emerging Santa Fe style. He initially built homes for artists. These were lavished with hand-carved elements.

In the mid-1920s, Henderson worked on a few speculative real estate developments. Under this guise in 1925, he formed the Pueblo-Spanish Building Company. The company produced handmade Spanish-styled wood furniture and designed a few adobe buildings. Aside from his own home and commissions he did for artist friends, his most well-known project is the restoration of Sena Plaza. His meticulous work — almost entirely hand-crafted — was stylistically in keeping with the Craftsman aesthetic and did not pose any threat to Meem's expanding practice.

A friend of Henderson, Meem later complimented the artist, calling him “instinctively an architect.”⁷⁷ They would both be granted architecture licenses, though neither were formally trained.

Other architects working in Santa Fe at the time included T. Charles Gaastra (1879-1947), a Dutch-born designer who relocated from Chicago in 1918 and spent a decade in Santa Fe defining his approach to the Santa Fe style. One of his works was so influential that was it chosen in 1926 for an exhibit in Berlin on new American architecture.

But Gaastra and the city's only other trained architect, George M. Williamson (1892-1979) soon relocated to Albuquerque, a much larger arena that offered more work. Within this vacuum, Meem's firm thrived in Santa Fe, getting dozens of commissions, both big and small.

An Office and an Apartment

With his office expanding, Meem needed to move from the small building at Sunmount.

On January 6, 1930, the Sunmount Company, most likely at the behest of Dr. Mera, deeded Meem a 1.605-acre lot near the sanatorium.⁷⁸ The level land, lying below and to the northwest of

⁷⁷ John Gaw Meem, transcript of an oral history conducted on May 31, 1977, by Beatrice Chauvenet, 3.

⁷⁸ Santa Fe County, “Warranty Deed, Sunmount Company to John Gaw Meem, January 6, 1930.”

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the Sunmount, had been subdivided into residential tracts, with streets named after Ivy League schools. It was on Yale Street that Meem would build his office and apartment.

The warranty deed for the property came with several restrictions. The parcel could only be developed with a residence that could include an office for the architect. A second restriction mandated that the residence had to be of the “Santa Fe, Spanish or Pueblo style of architecture.”⁷⁹ This provision hinted at Santa Fe’s restrictive style ordinance, to be created in part by Meem 30 years later.

On sheets of unlined paper, Meem calculated the cost to build the office. The land was \$2,000, the building estimated at \$8,000. Meem had only \$4,000 available. Over multiple sheets, the young architect scratched the cost of a loan, working out calculations, down to consideration of \$1,200 that could be drawn from what he called “Doubtful Assets.”⁸⁰

By early 1930, Meem had designed a comprehensive combined residence and office at the corner of Yale Street and Camino Monte del Sol. The drawings, executed by Paul R. Hoover, show a compound plan of two wings joined together at right angles. The upper portion forming Meem’s apartment contained a bedroom, a living room, dressing room, and a bath. The bedroom, following proper planning, occupied the far north corner of the wing. The small, 95-square-foot room was designed as a sleeping porch, and true to its purpose included large windows across three elevations. It opened onto a living room spanned with vigas with a fogón-type fireplace set in the northwest corner. This private area could only be entered from the east and had no internal connection to the architect’s office.

In contrast, the office sat along an east-west axis. A 30’-long, 8’-deep portal graced the south (then main) façade. The portal was the first impression a potential client would have approaching the building. Stepping through a 4’-wide door, one would enter the public office, a spare roomblock-like space with two windows. North of this, at a slightly greater size, was Meem’s office with a fogón fireplace tucked into the northwest corner.

The drafting room, sitting east of the offices, was the largest room of the wing. The 520-square-foot space was arranged as a rectangle with a strong north exposure. Tall wood casements, topped with moveable transoms, were designed to maximize the desired northern light, which provided drafters a consistent source of diffused illumination. By mid-1930s, six draftsmen were working in the room.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Untitled, undated document, “Gaw Meem Office Building, Meem” Job Number 149, Box 7, Folder 10, John Gaw Meem Job Files, University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico (hereafter cited as JGMJF/UNM).

⁸¹ Nancy Meem Wirth, transcript of an oral history conducted on February 23, 2015, by Alan “Mac” Watson, Deborah Lawrence, Wes Jansen, and Luc Traugott, 5.

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East of the drafting room were smaller rooms, one for the production of blueprints, and the other, constructed of concrete, working as a storage vault. As almost an afterthought, a rectangular, one-bay garage for Meem's automobile terminated the northeast corner.

From the exterior, the office presented a sense of Meem's evolving ideas of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. The architect placed the most emphasis on the south façade. It revealed an unsymmetrical but well-balanced presentation of roomblocks bracketing a recessed portal.

Typical of the style, the walls had a slight batter and were rounded at the parapets. Moving away from the picturesque display vigas of the Conkey house, the architect restrained their use at his office, placing only a few short poles over the portal. Other Spanish colonial elements and rustic treatments applied to earlier designs were eliminated, with the office instead emphasizing its massing.

To keep the cost down, Meem used hollow clay tile instead of adobes. These included 10,000 units manufactured at the state penitentiary in Santa Fe.⁸² Leftover material from the Conkey house was recycled into the project. The architect selected mostly standard windows and doors and finished the interior with plaster over lath. More traditional elements, such as the vigas, were produced locally. An invoice indicates that Beatrice Vigil, a rural county resident, supplied the project with 322' of peeled beams.⁸³ For comfort, Meem included a basement holding a steam heating plant. The Santa Fe contracting firm of Eubank and Rugg erected the nine-room building using dozens of local laborers, most with Hispanic surnames. The project concluded in July at an approximate cost of \$10,674.00.⁸⁴

Honeymoon Home

Meem's bachelor life didn't last long. In 1931, he took on a new employee — Faith Bemis, a young draftswoman introduced to him by his client Alice Bemis Taylor of Colorado Springs.

Born in 1902, Faith was the daughter of Albert Farwell Bemis, an industrialist whose family started the Bemis Brothers Bag Company, a national bag-making concern that designed its own worker housing. Faith followed her father's footsteps, becoming interested in architecture.

After attending Vassar College for two years, she enrolled in the Cambridge School of Domestic Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women, the first school devoted exclusively to the training of women in the fields of architecture and landscape design. Faith entered the program in 1922 while living at her parents' home in Chestnut Hill, a suburb of Boston. She completed her coursework in 1927, writing a thesis on the development of a small suburban community for Wellesley Farms, Massachusetts.

⁸² Eubank and Rugg to John Gaw Meem, July 23, 1930, Box 7, Folder 10, JGMJF/UNM.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ This is the cost Eubank and Rugg settled upon for construction. Eubank and Rugg to John Gaw Meem, January 10, 1930, Box 7, Folder 10, JGMJF/UNM.

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By the early 1930s, Bemis was working with fellow Cambridge School graduate Anita Rathbun at the New York City architectural firm of Cross & Cross, which at the time was involved in several large projects in Manhattan. In addition, Faith designed a house for her aunt, Elinor Gregg, in Washington, D.C. and developed drawings for her father, as a consulting architect to his town-building firm.⁸⁵

Bemis, like many of her male counterparts, soon found herself unemployed because of the depression. Suffering a succession of colds, Faith thought a change of climate could help.⁸⁶ Alice Bemis Taylor, Faith's aunt and an important client of Meem, asked the architect to take her niece on as an employee.

In a letter to Meem, Bemis state she had directed “her architect niece to come out and stay with me to work with you on the plans of the museum, and without you on the library at Colorado College. She’s darling — 27 or 28 years old. I thought she could kind of be the field architect.”⁸⁷ Meem recalled later that he hired her with “fear and trembling,” in order not to offend his valuable client.⁸⁸ After making a few adjustments to the male-dominated drafting room, he brought the new draftsman into his employ.

Faith worked on a number of designs, including a remodel of a cottage at Los Alamos Ranch School, a boarding school for wealthy boys in Los Alamos; the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, where she apparently had a hand in designing the theater; and the unbuilt Coburn Library of Colorado College, also in Colorado Springs.^{89 90}

Writing for the April 1932 edition of the Cambridge School Alumnae Notes, Faith described her new place of employment as “small and informal,” concluding that she was “thrilled to have a job in such an interesting part of the world,” finding it a “contrast to a New York office!”⁹¹ Within 18 months, the employer and employee were engaged, marrying on May 20, 1933.

Later that year, Meem expanded his former bachelor quarters into a space he thought practical for two working newlyweds. This involved creating a new wing north off his sleeping porch to increase the domestic functions of the apartment. The wing included a larger living room and a galley-type kitchen. Meem converted his former sleeping porch into an entry hall and the

⁸⁵ F.W. Dodge Co., *Sweet’s Catalog Service*, 1931, Vol. B, 1705.

⁸⁶ John Gaw Meem, transcript of an oral history conducted on April 26, 1977, by Beatrice Chauvenet, 3.

⁸⁷ Alice Bemis Taylor to John Gaw Meem, June 18, 1931, (“Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs,” Job Number 183, Box 9, Folder 2, JGMJF/UNM).

⁸⁸ McNary, “John Gaw Meem,” 26.

⁸⁹ John D. Wirth, *Los Alamos: The Ranch School Years, 1917-1943*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 234; several points of correspondence indicate that Faith played a role in designing the museum’s theater, John Gaw Meem to Betty Hare, October 5, 1932, (“Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs,” Job Number 183, Box 9, Folder 2, JGMJF/UNM).

⁹⁰ *Alumnae Bulletin* of the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Volume 4, #2, April 1932, no page.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

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original living room into their bedroom. They had moved into the revised quarters by late October 1933.⁹²

While Meem thought fondly of his new “honeymoon home,” Faith soon found the close arrangement to the office unsatisfactory, resulting in the couple building a home in the late 1930s on a separate property considerably south of the office.⁹³

First Partner: Hugo Zehner

The completion of the office signaled the professionalization of Meem’s growing practice. Coinciding with this, Meem and 31 other architects spread across New Mexico were the first to receive their licenses in May 1932. It was around this time that Meem hired one of his most important designers and his first partner, Hugo Zehner. Zehner would perform a critical role in expanding the firm.

Born in 1888 in Illinois to a German immigrant father, Zehner grew up in the town of Bellville, near St. Louis. His father, Henry, worked as a day laborer.⁹⁴ The younger Zehner moved ahead in life, enrolling in the engineering program at the University of Illinois at Urbana.

In his early 20s, he moved west, first settling around 1910 in Denver, where he worked as a draftsman. A few years later he relocated to Colorado Springs to work at MacLaren and Hetherington, a prosperous architectural firm that designed many homes and institutional buildings in the resort town. Scottish-born architect Thomas MacLaren, struck with tuberculosis, immigrated to the United States in 1894, seeking the cure in Colorado. The architect worked briefly in Santa Fe in 1910, designing a hybrid Versailles and Mission Revival manse for future New Mexico senator Bronson M. Cutting. Meem would later create a tasteful library addition for the senator’s home.

After departing MacLaren and Hetherington, Zehner moved back to Denver, taking a position with R. K. Fuller, in a practice that specialized in institutional and commercial architecture. Zehner had reached the position of chief draftsman before moving to Santa Fe in 1931 to join Meem, who would make him an associate three years later.

As a mechanical engineer, Zehner brought to the office significant engineering and cost calculation skills, which allowed Meem to pursue larger and more challenging work. Zehner’s diverse experience expanded Meem’s portfolio, as the new architect could take on designing commercial buildings outside of the regional idiom. For Albuquerque clients, Zehner (with associates) designed an Art-Deco-inspired façade for the Maisel Trading Post (1936+),

⁹² John Gaw Meem to Alice Howland, October 30, 1933, Box 12, Folder 1, John Gaw Meem Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

⁹³ John Gaw Meem, transcript of an oral history conducted on March 8, 1977, conducted by Beatrice Chauvenet, 27.

⁹⁴ United States Federal Census, 1900; Census Place: Belleville Ward 3, St Clair, Illinois; Page: 16; Enumeration District: 0083; FHL microfilm: 1240340.

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Streamline elevations for the Lovelace Building (1936+), and a ten-story office block, the Simms Tower, which was never constructed.

Zehner's engineering and management skills even helped Meem in his preservation work. The civil engineer supervised a five-year project to stabilize and restore St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe, and developed plans to preserve Pueblo mission churches.⁹⁵

Meem found Zehner's judgment "absolutely sound" and praised the architect's "excellence in administration."⁹⁶

Flowering during the Downturn

During the Great Depression, John Gaw Meem's office expanded rapidly, fueled by federally sponsored projects coming under various New Deal programs. He later called the 13-year period between 1929 and 1941 his "flowering or creative" years.⁹⁷

During the downturn, Meem and his firm would design over 20 residences and work on complex institutional commissions, including the Laboratory of Anthropology (1930), Santa Fe; Fountain Valley School (1930-37), Colorado Springs; multiple buildings at the University of New Mexico (1934-1936); and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (1936), a multi-story, exposed concrete building, composed of stepped back masses. For the latter, Meem was awarded a silver medal in the Fifth Pan American Congress of Architecture in 1940.

The majority of Works Progress Administration (WPA) designs in New Mexico were generated by staff architects, including a former employee, Gordon F. Street, and future Santa Fe competitors William Lumpkins, Kenneth S. Clark, and Willard C. Kruger (1910-1984). While Meem would receive some WPA work (mostly commissions for small armories), he got in the federal game in a major way by designing buildings financed by the Public Works Administration (PWA).

The more remunerative PWA contracts involved creating multiple structures at the University of New Mexico, where Meem was appointed the campus architect in 1934 — a position he held until his retirement in 1959. PWA work at the university began with the three-story Scholes Hall (1935), which led to one of Meem's most significant commissions, University Library, a nine-story, modernist take on the Pueblo Revival style completed in 1938.⁹⁸ In total, Meem and his office would design 36 structures for the university during his 25 years as campus architect.⁹⁹ Other PWA projects involved smaller commissions at Western and Highlands state universities as well as county and municipal buildings.

⁹⁵ Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 56.

⁹⁶ Quoted in McNary, "John Gaw Meem," 31.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 50.

⁹⁸ The library is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as, "Zimmerman Library," August 22, 2016, (#1600549).

⁹⁹ DeVolder, "John Gaw Meem, F.A.I.A.," 212.

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Another New Deal program, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), additionally helped advance Meem's career. Senator Bronson Cutting, a client, asked Meem to help establish the program, with the architect becoming the director of the New Mexico-Colorado district.¹⁰⁰ The work, some of which was most likely done in his office, put Meem in contact with several Colorado architects who would later work for his firm — and would become prominent preservationists on their own.¹⁰¹

Despite the wreckage of the depression, wealthy repeat patrons continued to hire Meem to design country estates similar to Las Acequias. Meem, unlike some progressive architects of his period, such as William Wurster and Richard Neutra, did not design houses for clients of modest means. He instead found the best clients to be those “who sat down with him, told him what they wanted and then went to Europe for the year.”¹⁰² This included the commission to create Los Poblanos (1932-35), a luxurious rural retreat he designed for Albert and Ruth Simms.

Mr. and Mrs. Simms—both former congressional representatives—operated a dairy with over 26 acres of cottonwood-shaded land along the west side of the Rio Grande north of Albuquerque. Here, Meem — with Ruth's input — enlarged an existing adobe home with additional wings to form an enclosed courtyard or placita, a design reminiscent of the hacienda homes of the wealthy during the Spanish and Mexican eras.¹⁰³

On the same site, Meem designed a separate building as a social and entertainment area for family and friends. The gracious H-shaped adobe structure dubbed La Quinta enframed a swimming pool and included a ballroom, library, and art gallery. The architect gave the buildings a Territorial Revival treatment, which emphasized symmetry and classical details along portales and door and window openings. Meem's biographers consider Los Poblanos as his finest residential work.¹⁰⁴

During this period of growth, Meem increased staff, bringing in additional drafters and an office manager. Ruth Heflin (1900-1977) was hired in 1935 and became an associate nine years later, working for Meem for 44 years. Meem recalled that “Ruth relieved me of all responsibility for the business details, and left me free to concentrate on design.”¹⁰⁵

Near the end of the decade, Meem was commissioned to design what he considered later to be one of his most satisfying works. Cristo Rey (1939-40), a massive Roman Catholic church, was built primarily to house an 18th-century reredos (altar screen) taken from Santa Fe's colonial military chapel, historically located on the south side of the Plaza.

¹⁰⁰ McNary, John Gaw Meem,” 27.

¹⁰¹ The pool of HABS architects who would later work for Meem included Bradley P. Kidder, Truman Mathews and Leicester A. Hyde.

¹⁰² Nancy Meem Wirth, quoting her father, *New York Times*, January 9, 1992, Home-1.

¹⁰³ Wilson, *Facing Southwest*, 140.

¹⁰⁴ Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 106; Wilson, *Facing Southwest*, 140.

¹⁰⁵ John Gaw Meem, March 8, 1977, 3.

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Measuring more than 30' high, Meem designed a tall, unadorned altar to display the hand-carved stone piece. He ingeniously employed a hidden transverse clerestory, to bathe the reredos in natural light.¹⁰⁶ The façade broke with the symmetry of the interior. Its different sized towers and wooden gallery reflected the influence of several Franciscan missions of which Meem had intimate knowledge through his preservation work. The design blended these influences into a uniquely modern edifice.

Built with over 150,000 adobes made on site, local workers and volunteers erected the chapel — which took less than a year to construct. It became the center of Santa Fe's newest parish and a landmark of modern adobe construction.

The War Years

In 1940, Hugo Zehner became a partner, leading to a new name for the firm: John Gaw Meem, A.I.A., Hugo Zehner & Associates. Meem later recalled that he selected Zehner in part to preserve his health, helping him lighten the heavy workload.¹⁰⁷

As with many architects who didn't serve directly in the military, the United States' entry into World War II provided Meem a significant boost in business. War-related work arrived quickly. Locally, the Army commissioned Meem and Zehner to design a hospital to hold up to 3,000 beds. Priced at \$3,000,000, the Santa Fe Army Hospital (also known as Bruns Army Hospital) was built quickly with standard barracks and wood-frame buildings.¹⁰⁸ The architect chafed at the Army's requirement to build from stock plans, and received a little more freedom to design with the next military project.

In 1942, the firm won a \$50,000 contract to design and lay out temporary civilian housing at Fort Huachuca, Army training grounds for African American soldiers, located in Cochise County, Arizona.¹⁰⁹ Zehner, as the firm's engineer-architect, played a critical role in planning the electric, water, and sewage system aspects of the projects. The units that Meem and his associates designed were a step above the usual barrack-like civilian housing of the period.

The Roswell Army Flying School in south-central New Mexico represented the firm's largest commission during the war. Attached to the Roswell Army Airfield, the training school started in September 1941 as a temporary defense unit.¹¹⁰ After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, its mission changed quickly into a permanent installation.

¹⁰⁶ Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 125-126.

¹⁰⁷ McNary, "John Gaw Meem," 31.

¹⁰⁸ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 17, 1942, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Arizona Republic*, September 13, 1942, 1.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Army, *Roswell Army Flying School, West Coast Training Center*, (Los Angeles: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1942), 51.

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In early January 1942, Meem and Zehner, along with the Roswell firm of Vorhees and Standhardt, won a contract to design 27 structures estimated to cost \$3 million.¹¹¹ It is unclear how the work was divided between the two firms, but the project involved developing a combination airport and campus composed of barracks, mess halls, classrooms, runways, hangars, and an air control tower.

Meem, as the lead designer, created a formal axial campus plan with multiple-story classroom and administrative buildings with flowing horizontal lines and aeronautical motifs. A month later, he flew to Washington, D.C., to personally deliver the plans for the airbase to the War Department.¹¹² But due to the urgency of the flying school's primary mission, the permanent campus plan was put on hold — and never constructed.¹¹³

The rapid escalation in war work led to hiring of additional personnel, with the firm employing nearly 40 drafters at its height. Ironically, as he grew his staff Meem lost some of his best designers who were inducted into service or went to work in the war industry. Bradley P. Kidder (1901-1973), a gifted designer made an associate in 1939, left to serve with the Navy.¹¹⁴ Of his principal designers, only Leo J. Wolmagood (1904-1975) would return to the firm after the war.

To accommodate new hires, Truman J. Mathews (1900-1964)—who would soon leave to work for Fairchild Aircraft Corporation—designed a temporary drafting room addition. Appended to the southeast corner, the gabled board-and-batten structure could hold up to 25 draftsmen. Mathews' plan additionally enclosed the south portal to accommodate the specifications section of the office. Even the 1930 garage was reworked to hold the expanded engineering staff.

Second Partner: Edward O. Holien

During the period of staff buildup, Meem hired Edward Obert Holien as an associate. The connection came through Holien's wife, Louise Preble, an interior designer, who Meem had met at the Atelier Denver in the 1920s.¹¹⁵ Holien was an architect with a modernist outlook but an appreciation for folk architecture, and he would become the firm's second partner. Possessing talent and multiple skills, Holien could serve as engineer, designer, planner, delineator — whatever a project required.

Born in Minnesota, Holien received a Master of Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1926, a program that still followed the École des Beaux-Arts model at the time. His training involved a stint with the New York firm of Allen & Collens and Henry C. Pelton, which included work as a second designer on the Chartres-inspired Riverside Church (1926-

¹¹¹ *Albuquerque Journal*, January 8, 1942, 7.

¹¹² *Santa Fe New Mexican*, February 7, 1942, 20.

¹¹³ U.S. Army, *Roswell Army Flying School*, 51. Bainbridge Bunting claimed that Roswell, and by association Meem's firm, lost out to Colorado Springs, which was rewarded the following decade with the new United States Air Force Academy; Bunting, *John Gaw Meem*, 57. There is no evidence to support this assertion.

¹¹⁴ *New Mexico Architect*, "Profile of an Architect: Bradley P. Kidder," *New Mexico Architect*, (April 1959), 7.

¹¹⁵ Holien, July 9, 2015, 4.

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1930), and later Reinhard and Hofmeister, playing a role in the creation of Rockefeller Center (1932-1940).¹¹⁶

Before joining Meem in 1944, Holien had been employed as a designer and chief draftsman for John K. Monroe, a Denver firm mainly known for church and school commissions. By the end of the decade, he had reached full partner, with the firm's name changed to Meem, Zehner, Holien, and Associates. But Holien, preferring the company of draftsmen, continued to work in the drafting room, only taking a private office after Meem retired.¹¹⁷

Post-War Boom

After the war, the firm continued to grow rapidly, mainly due to large institutional and commercial projects pushed forward by a population boom. Public commissions, many for the University of New Mexico, were the largest source of income for the expanding office. During this growth spurt, Meem worked less as a designer, turning over that role to Holien. In that position, Holien, as Zehner had before him, designed buildings outside of the Pueblo and Territorial Revival styles. Several of the schemes he created for the Southern Union Gas Company featured modern façades with large enframed glass bays trimmed with metal.

The founding architect spent his time developing new clients and working in a service capacity. His extracurricular activities included helping to establish the New Mexico Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, for which he served as its first president.¹¹⁸ In 1950 Meem became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects; two years later, his body of work was recognized with a retrospective at the Museum of New Mexico.

Despite pulling back in his professional work, Meem continued in his role as university architect, leading to many new projects as the University of New Mexico expanded its campus to accommodate a post-war boom in student enrollment.

The work generated by the office during this period employed a more modernist vocabulary. The firm no longer designed quaint country estates for wealthy second-home owners, but instead focused on large college classroom buildings to efficiently shelter hundreds of students. For practical reasons, reinforced concrete was substituted for adobe, and façades were patterned with large bays filled with oversized windows. Lines became sharper, with an emphasis on horizontality.

Many of the 1950s designs for the university have a stout figure, with long and tall classroom masses bulking up the composition. Balanced massing was often sacrificed to enclose as much square footage as possible. Picturesque details no longer appeared or were abstracted. Where

¹¹⁶ Boyd C. Pratt, et al, *Directory of Historic New Mexico Architects*, 47.

¹¹⁷ Holien, July 9, 2015, 5.

¹¹⁸ "Profile of an Architect: John Gaw Meem," (*New Mexico Architect*, October 1959), 27 and 29.

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Meem once employed wood for exterior elements, Holien designed a balcony for Hokona Hall (1955) entirely out of cast concrete.

Still, within this era of big and sometimes uninspiring institutional work, the occasional masterpiece arose. Designed in 1950 and completed two years later, the Bataan Memorial Methodist Hospital in Albuquerque represents a high point in the firm's work in the 1950s. Built with a T-plan to allow for expansion, the reinforced concrete building featured an eye-catching terraced tower at its center. The terraced design is reminiscent of Meem's earlier Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. But instead of an austere display of unadorned concrete, the volumes are cut with large openings framed with decorative spandrels. Harkening to an earlier period, the tower is crowned with a pueblo-like room faced with concrete balconettes.

The Expanding Practice

Meem hired additional architects and designers during this period of rapid growth. Architects John W. McHugh (1918-1995), Van Dorn Hooker (1921-2015) and Louis W. Walker (1924-1998) would join the staff in the 1950s. Each would become noteworthy after leaving Meem's firm.

The office, which grew to a staff of 15 by the late 1940s, required more space. Instead of designing a new building, Meem, following the tradition of accretionary growth, grafted new volumes onto the older structure.

In contrast, Meem's main competitor, Willard C. Kruger — who had enriched his firm with state government contracts — designed near the same time a new combined income-generating professional building and architect's office in downtown Santa Fe. The technologically modern drafting room and offices in the Kruger Professional Building (1950), made Meem's cobbled-together warren of rooms seem rustic in comparison. But Meem held a deep, almost spiritual respect for the land surrounding his office. And as recalled by one of his partners years later, the firm "liked the seclusion" at the top of Camino del Monte Sol.¹¹⁹

Meem chose to place a new room, most likely for the cost calculation section, along the north wing — attaching it to the kitchen of the former apartment. There Meem set the 216-square-foot rectangular room and converted an existing single-car garage into another drafting area, which later became his office.

The new office, boxed in by the garage and the former apartment, could only accommodate fenestration along its south and east exposures. A nearly continuous band of double-hung wood windows filled the walls, with a wide overhang placed above the windows to regulate sunlight. The interior of the new room was modest, consisting of a concrete slab floor and a Celotex ceiling.

¹¹⁹ William R. Buckley, quoted in *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 19, 1975, C-4.

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The office, although packed with employees, still maintained a formal decorum. Meem always dressed in a suit and often sported a bow tie. The junior partners and associates were encouraged to do the same, though they could end up in shirrtails by day's end. Office life included lively camaraderie, with each employee given a nickname: Holien was dubbed "Bung," Charles R. Sigler (1908-1987) "Chick," John McHugh "Johnny," and so on.¹²⁰ Meem, always generous, found house rentals for new employees, hosted office parties, and doled out Christmas gifts. But it appears the firm operated more in the factory style of hierarchical production than the atelier spirit of Meem's early training.¹²¹

Final Partner: William R. Buckley

Meem's final partner, William Robinson Buckley, arrived in the late 1940s to work as a draftsman. Born in Chicago in 1918, Buckley was the only child of George H. and Kathryn Buckley. His father, a prominent architect, was in partnership with Louis Skidmore, who would cofound Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in 1936.

The younger Buckley received his B.S. in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1940, where he met his future wife, Madge M. Gragg (1918-2010). He first worked for his father, becoming a junior partner in the firm. He moved to New Mexico in 1948, initially employed by Willard C. Kruger, Meem's main competitor at the time.

He joined Meem's firm the same year, and by 1952 had moved to the position of chief draftsman.¹²² He became a full partner in 1956, resulting in a name change to Meem, Holien, Buckley & Associates.

By this time, Meem had mostly stepped away from his role as senior partner. The pressure of the increased work in the 1950s—often producing a weekly crisis in the office—had strained him greatly.¹²³ The large commissions at the University of New Mexico were particularly stressful, especially as Meem would take any problem with a project seriously, feeling personally responsible.¹²⁴

The stress often led to punishing migraine headaches that would send the architect away from the office for days, leaving his partners to make decisions. This shift in management became almost permanent in 1956 when Meem took time off for a prolonged family visit in Brazil and other extended trips.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Holien, July 9, 2015, 7.

¹²¹ This is drawn from comments made by Tom Holien; Holien, July 9, 2015, 7.

¹²² *Albuquerque Journal*, October 11, 1956, 15.

¹²³ Holien, July 9, 2015, 7.

¹²⁴ Meem Wirth, February 23, 2015, 11.

¹²⁵ DeVolder, "John Gaw Meem, F.A.I.A.," 220.

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Santa Fe's architectural landscape had evolved considerably since Meem's debut. At the start of the 1950s only four other architects were working in the city, and only one, W.C. Kruger and Associates, could compete with Meem's office.

By the end of the decade, the number of architectural firms had more than doubled, several composed of former Meem employees.¹²⁶ Younger architects, including those with modernist tendencies (particularly John P. Conron, Robert E. Plettenberg, Philippe Register, and James A. Brunet), began to question Meem's orthodoxy while at the same time cutting into his residential work. Equally, merchant builders, most notably Allen Stamm, took Meem's ideas to develop middle-class subdivisions of scaled-down Pueblo-type homes. As a result, Meem's firm moved away from residential work, with only a few commissions that John Gaw Meem personally supervised of homes designed for friends and family members.

In November 1959, John Gaw Meem retired from the company that he had established 30 years earlier. At 65, his stature as an influential regional architect was well established. Over the years, Meem had worked primarily as a designer, practitioner, and preservationist. His writings were infrequent, and he doesn't appear to have ever taught. Instead, the prolific designer had built over the decades an oeuvre that defined the Pueblo and Territorial Revival styles. The famed regional architect died 24 years later, in Santa Fe, at age 88, in a hospital that he had designed.

Successor Firm: Edward Holien & William Buckley

Following Meem's retirement, there was concern over the direction of the company and whether it would retain his name.¹²⁷ The surviving partners worked out a deal, renaming the company Edward Holien & William Buckley. In the partnership, Holien would work as the lead designer, while Buckley would perform mainly business duties and client relations.

The successor company remained in the office at the top of Camino del Monte Sol, renting the building from their former boss. Because of Meem's good reputation, it initially got work without much challenge.¹²⁸ It continued to design primarily public buildings, starting with a series of commissions from the University of New Mexico.

Untethered from Meem's impress, Holien & Buckley employed an International scheme for the Fine Arts Center — its first major university commission. The Department of Architecture protested the initial design, which featured a flat roof and extensive glass panels, for its break with the predominant Spanish-Pueblo Revival look of the campus.¹²⁹ Questions also arose over its interior layout and program of spaces. Under pressure from the university, the successor firm retooled the design, which took on a familiar Pueblo massing scheme.

¹²⁶ This included single-architect and partnership firms headed by former Meem staff, including Truman J. Mathews, Leo J. Wolgamood, Bradley B. Kidder, John McHugh, and Van Dorn Hooker.

¹²⁷ Holien, July 9, 2015, 14.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁹ Van Dorn Hooker and Melissa Howard, *Only in New Mexico: An Architectural History of the University of New Mexico: the First Century 1889-1989*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 129.

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The firm's largest commission involved a multi-year program to design a campus in Santa Fe for St. John's College.¹³⁰ The selection of Santa Fe — reportedly one of 40 communities considered — took shape in 1961 when Faith and John Gaw Meem, along with several other families, donated 268 acres along the north slope of Sun Mountain, behind Meem's former office.

Soon after, a Santa Fe executive committee formed to begin planning and fundraising for the estimated \$7 million campus. The committee turned to Meem's successor firm, Holien & Buckley, to develop a master plan for the college.¹³¹ In the summer of 1961, Edward O. Holien drafted a master plan, conferring with Meem, who had been hired by the college as a consulting architect.¹³² By September, Holien had worked through three drafts of the plan.

The initial phase of campus construction was finished in September 1964, in time to receive the first class of students. Additional buildings were added to the campus over the years as funds became available. Influenced by their former mentor, Holien & Buckley developed a modified Territorial Revival template for the site.

Meem, as the consulting architect, played an active role in supervising the project. Reflecting on the new style, he wrote that it “will be completely contemporary in meeting the standards of living and scientific requirements demanded of a modern, advanced educational institution like St. John's College,” but assured, following the old Pueblo Revival dictum, that “walls will dominate rather than openings.”¹³³

Still, wanting to push the boundaries, Holien & Buckley inserted a few modern designs into the master plan. One of these, Santa Fe Hall (1963-64), employed a hexagonal shell to create a two-story mass of classrooms. Its angled form shielded recessed interior walls holding windows sheltered by concrete visors. The innovative arrangement was designed to filter out direct daylight, in theory reducing the glare on blackboards and other surfaces.¹³⁴ Despite the geometric form and innovative windows, the building's mostly solid massing, stucco cladding, and brick coping gave assurance that it ultimately adhered to the campus template.

Twilight of the Firm

With the death of Edward Obert Holien in May 1967, the firm was reduced to only Buckley assisted by his wife, Madge G. Buckley, who managed the office and sometimes prepared drawings. They continued with the St. John's program, designing additional classrooms and the Tower Building (1970), which forms the vertical focus of the campus. After finishing the first phase of the St. John's College plan, Buckley's practice wound down, with the architect vacating

¹³⁰ Listed on the National Register of Historic Places August 3, 2015, (#1500495).

¹³¹ Richard D. Weigle, *The Colonization of a College: The Beginnings and Early History of St. John's College in Santa Fe*, (Annapolis: St. John's College Print Shop, 1985), 43.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, as quoted in 91. The date of the brochure is not provided.

¹³⁴ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 9, 1964, 7.

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the office in the mid-1970s. After 50 years, the office closed its doors in 1989, six years after Meem's death.

Santa Fe Preparatory School

In 1968, John and Faith Meem began coordinating with Santa Fe Preparatory School to donate 13 acres east of the architect's old office for a new campus. The school, the first of its type in Santa Fe, opened 1961 with 62 students. It initially inhabited a complex of small adobe buildings that been used to fabricate oil burners.¹³⁵ Located far from the Plaza, along a low-lying area on the Santa Fe River, the site was ill-suited for a school. In addition, by the late 1960s Santa Fe Preparatory had doubled in student population — justifying a new location.

The school board accepted the donation and began to fundraise for a new campus, calling it the "Upper School." Work started on the first phase of the \$700,000 project in early 1970, following a design by Santa Fe-Albuquerque firm Register, Ross, and Brunet, Architects.¹³⁶ Three years later, the Meems approached the school again, this time with an offer to donate John's former office.

Meem had moved into the building after Buckley's departure, using it again as an office and meeting space. The donation was formalized on July 1, 1975. It coincided with the consolidation of the original "Lower School" on the river with the new campus. Given the name the Art and Music Center, Meem's office was immediately put into use, housing the fine arts and music programs.¹³⁷

By 1985, plans were underway to expand the building. The school needed to develop additional space for its ceramics and photography programs, which had outgrown the architect's office. Santa Fe architect Victor Johnson developed a plan to expand the footprint by roughly 2,830 square feet. The most visible expansion was a 1,000-square-foot mass off the south elevation, enclosing the portal to hold the ceramics studio.

To give adequate room for the studio as well as to provide a visual anchor to the west façade, Johnson designed it nearly two times as wide as the adjacent volumes. The wider addition created a pleasing pattern of staggered masses stepping back from the southwest corner. To reference the older portal, he framed a band of double-hung windows on the south elevation with small wood beams, posts, and corbels. Moreover, it is more sculptural form marked the addition from the older building.

Completing the U-shaped plan that Meem had begun in the early 1930s, Johnson designed a 1,125-square-foot volume at the northeast corner for a new photography studio and darkroom.

¹³⁵ John W. Murphey, "James L. Breese, Jr., Residence," New Mexico Historic Cultural Property Inventory and Evaluation of Historical Status Report, December 23, 2017.

¹³⁶ *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 9, 1970, February 8, 1970, 6, August 16, 1970, E-3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, "Viva" (magazine), October 19, 1975, 4+.

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Similar to the ceramics studio, he created the appendage at a taller height than the adjoining volume. He placed a formal entry across the south corner facing the courtyard. The depth of the entrance and its Territorial Revival door gave order to the building's completed north wing.

The project, which cost \$450,000, included renovating the building's stucco, which had fallen into disrepair.¹³⁸ Students were involved in some of the work. In 1996 the Victor Johnson plan for additions on the north and south ends of the building were completed and the building, now called the Meem Building, was formally dedicated.

Conclusion

The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is a rare and outstanding example of an architects' office in New Mexico. The building most closely associated with Meem's extraordinary body of work. The office saw the formation and growth of two regionally significant architectural firms, generating in combination more than 600 designs over a nearly sixty-year period. During Meem's tenure, this included dozens of commissions that helped define the Spanish-Pueblo and Territorial Revival styles. Numerous buildings designed in the office are considered architectural landmarks, with many listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The office worked as a training ground for talent, with several former partners and associates going on to successful careers in architecture. John W. McHugh, an associate and talented designer, recalled that Meem's "extreme sensitivity and easy elegance with regional architecture have led him to have a lasting effect on the men who worked with him."¹³⁹ This included the successor firm Edward Holien & William Buckley, who were influential in advancing Meem's ideas and developing their own a vocabulary for modern Pueblo and Territorial Revival designs.

¹³⁸ Ibid., May 2, 1996, 9.

¹³⁹ Quoted in Ibid., October 19, 1975, C-4.

John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Name of Property

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8. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Weigle, Richard D. *The Colonization of a College: The Beginnings and Early History of St. John's College in Santa Fe*. Annapolis: St. John's College Print Shop, 1985.

Wilson, Chris and Robert Reck. *Facing Southwest: The Life & Houses of John Gaw Meem*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005.

Wirth, Nancy Meem. Transcript of an oral history conducted on February 23, 2015, by Alan "Mac" Watson, Deborah Lawrence, Wes Jansen, and Luc Traugott.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University: John Gaw Meem Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 1.4 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.670332 | Longitude: -105.921827 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary appears on the sketch map as a red line drawn to scale and corresponding with the point of latitude and longitude in Section 10.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary includes the intact property historically associated with the John Gaw Meem Architects Office

10. Form Prepared By

name/title: John W. Murphey & Alan "Mac" Watson
organization: Architectural History Services
street & number: 440 Jackson Drive
city or town: Santa Rosa state: CA zip code: 95409
e-mail: John@archhistoryservices.com
telephone: 505-577-7593
date: October 16, 2018

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator
organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division
street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
city or town: Santa Fe state: New Mexico zip: 87501
telephone: 505.476.04444
date: September 5, 2018

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Name of Property

Santa Fe, New Mexico
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- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: John Gaw Meem Architects Office

City or Vicinity: Santa Fe

County: Santa

State: NM

Photographer: John W. Murphey, exterior; Harvey Kaplan; interior.

Date Photographed: Exterior, August 2, 2017, except where noted; interior, July 30, 2017.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 23. Setting and west (main) facade, photographer facing east.

2 of 23. West façade, photographer facing southeast.

3 of 23. West façade, entry, photographer facing east.

4 of 23. West façade, portal, photographer facing north.

5 of 23. West façade, south end, photographer facing southeast.

6 of 23. South elevation, west end, photographer facing north.

7 of 23. South elevation, 1996 Ceramics Studio addition, photographer facing northwest.

8 of 23. East elevation, south end, Garage #1 at right, photographer facing northwest. August 1, 2017.

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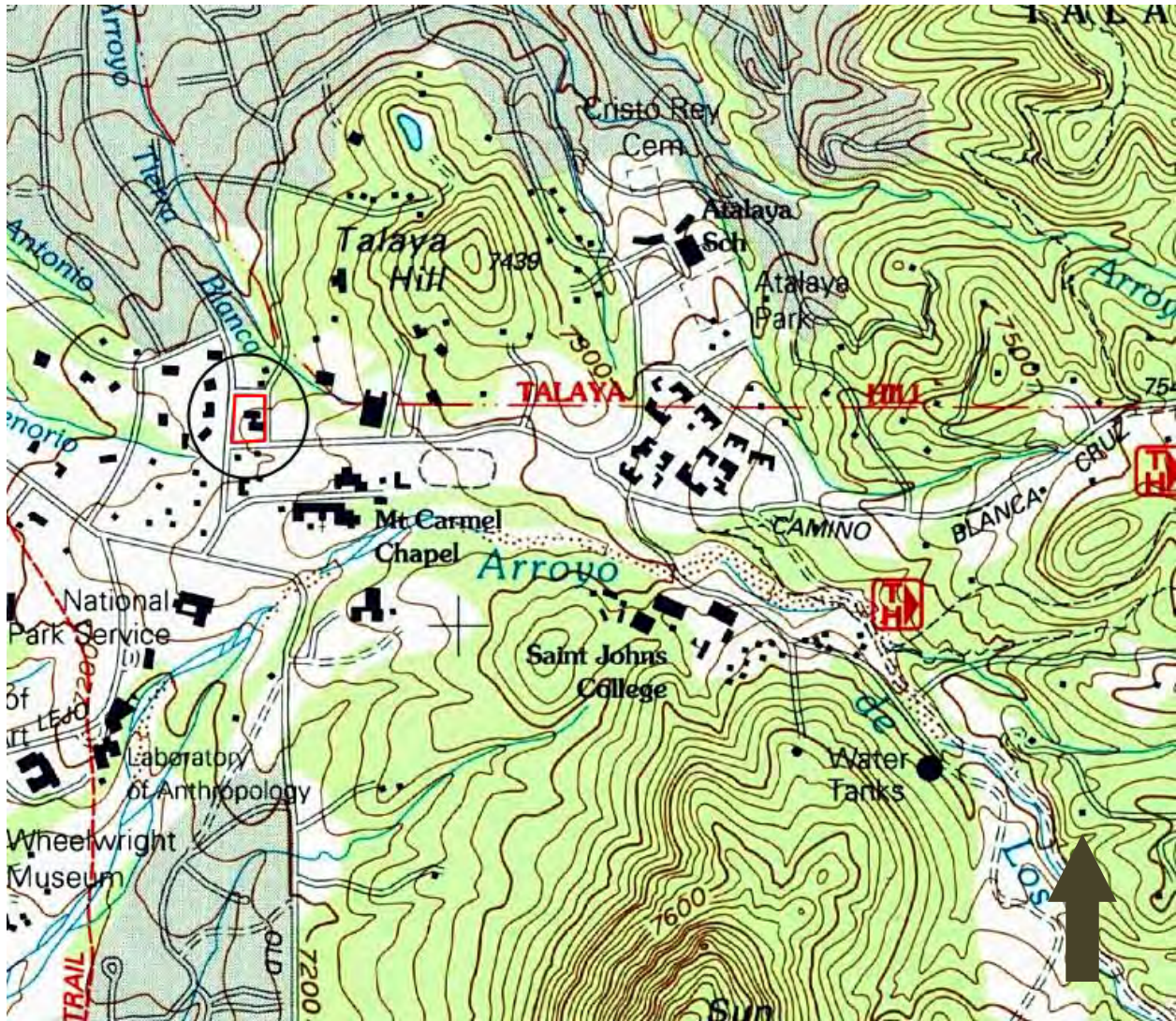
- 9 of 23. North elevation, photographer facing southeast.
- 10 of 23. North elevation, east end, Darkroom in foreground, photographer facing southeast. August 17, 2018.
- 11 of 23. Courtyard, east elevation at center, photographer facing west.
- 12 of 23. Courtyard, north elevation, photographer facing southwest. August 1, 2017.
- 13 of 23. Courtyard, north elevation, Drafting Room, photographer facing southwest. August 5, 2017.
- 14 of 23. Courtyard, south elevation, circa 1950 New Office addition, photographer facing northwest. August 1, 2017.
- 15 of 23. Courtyard, south elevation, 1996 Digital Media Lab addition, photographer facing north. August 1, 2017.
- 16 of 23. Public Office #2 photographer facing southwest.
- 17 of 23. Hall A, photographer facing south.
- 18 of 23. Meem Office #1, photographer facing northwest.
- 19 of 23. Public Office #1, photographer facing west.
- 20 of 23. Drafting Room, photographer facing northeast.
- 21 of 23. Ceramics Studio, photographer facing northwest.
- 22 of 23. Conference Room, photographer facing northeast.
- 23 of 23. Kitchen, photographer facing northeast.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Santa Fe County, New Mexico
Location Map

Approximate scale: one inch = 930 feet
National Register boundary —————

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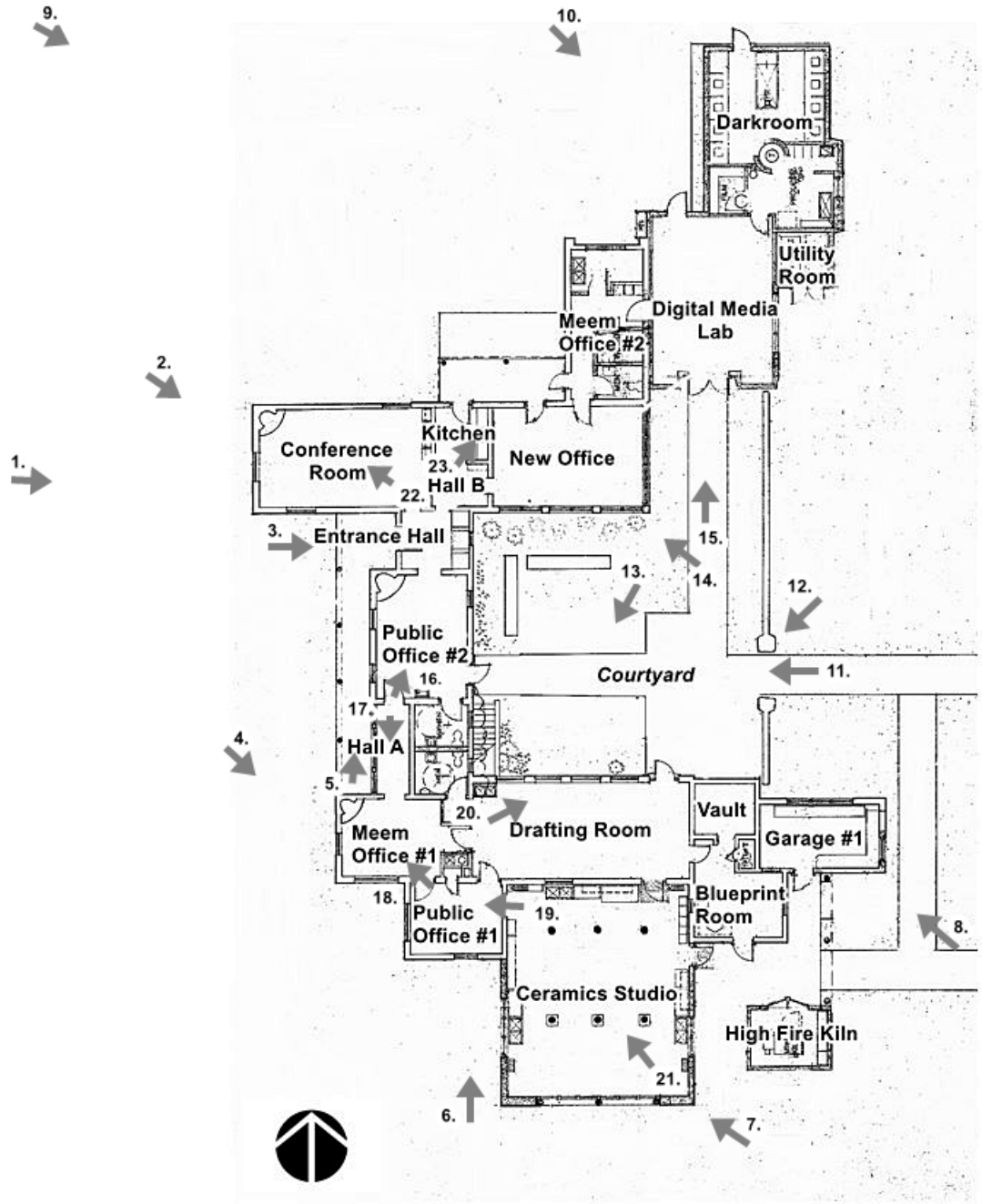
John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Santa Fe County, New Mexico
Sketch Map

Approximate scale: one inch = 35 feet
National Register boundary ▬



John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Name of Property

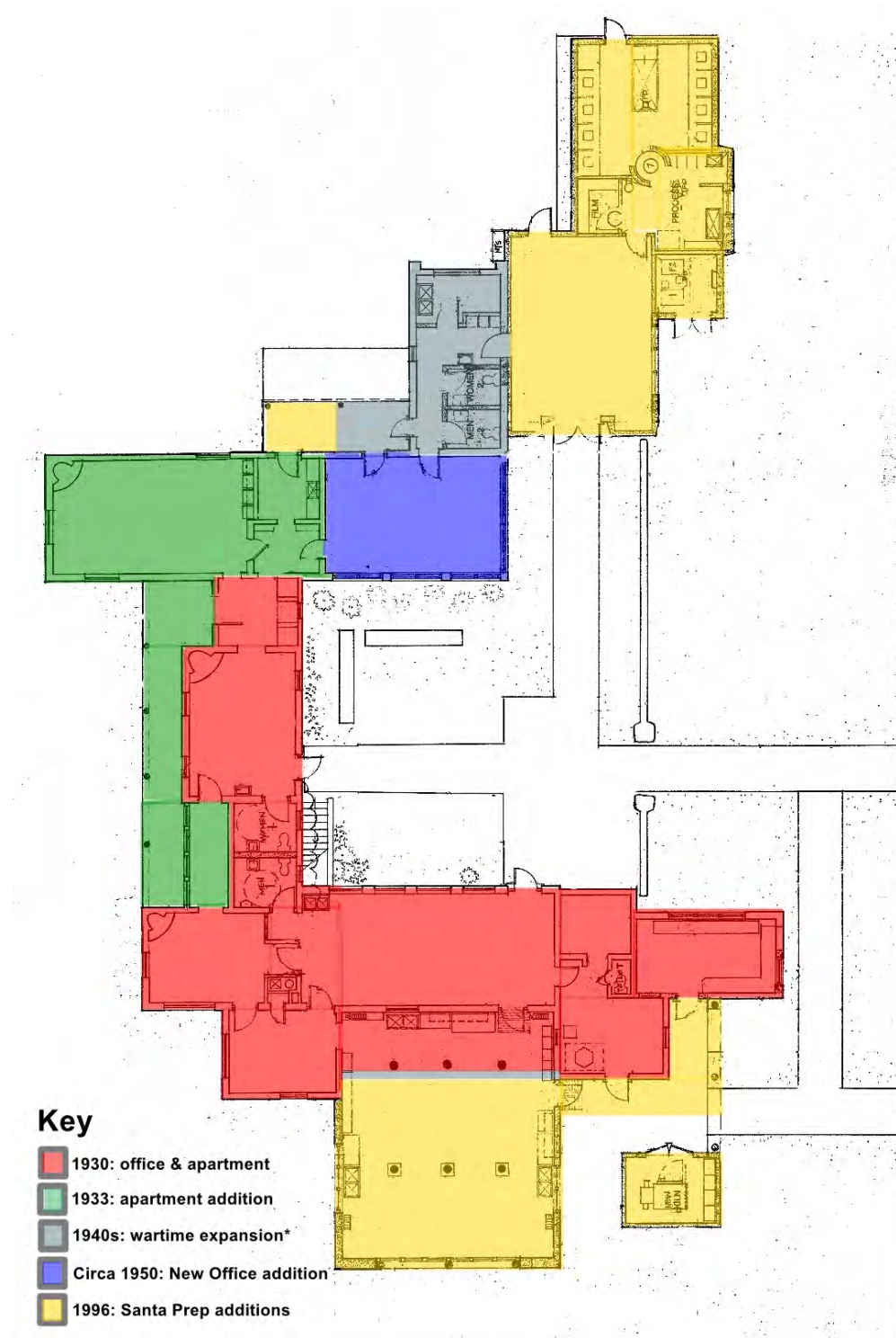
Santa Fe, New Mexico
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Floor Plan, Victor Johnson Architect, 1996; modified by John W. Murphey, 2018.
↑ Photograph number and a camera angle.

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Sequence of Additions to Meem Architects Office
Santa Fe County, New Mexico

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Igreja Episcopal do Redentor (1909), Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, undated photograph.

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John Gaw Meem III family, John Gaw Meem IV is wearing Virginia Military Institute cadet uniform, c.1910. Courtesy Virginia Military Institute Archives, Preston Library, Virginia Military Institute.

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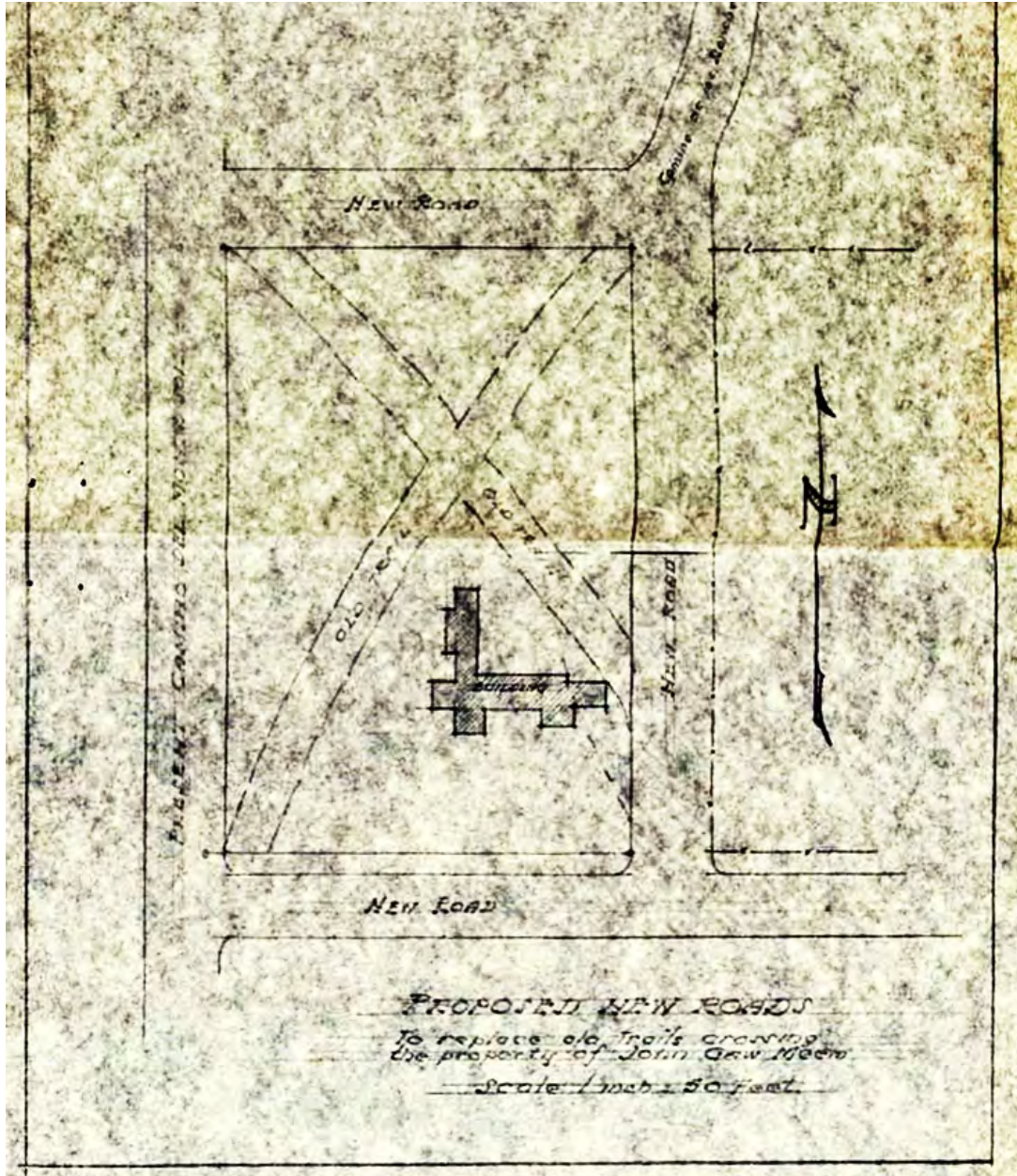
Santa Fe, New Mexico
County and State



John Gaw Meem at Sunmount Sanatorium, 1921.
Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, University of New Mexico,
Center for Southwest Research.

John Gaw Meem Architects Office
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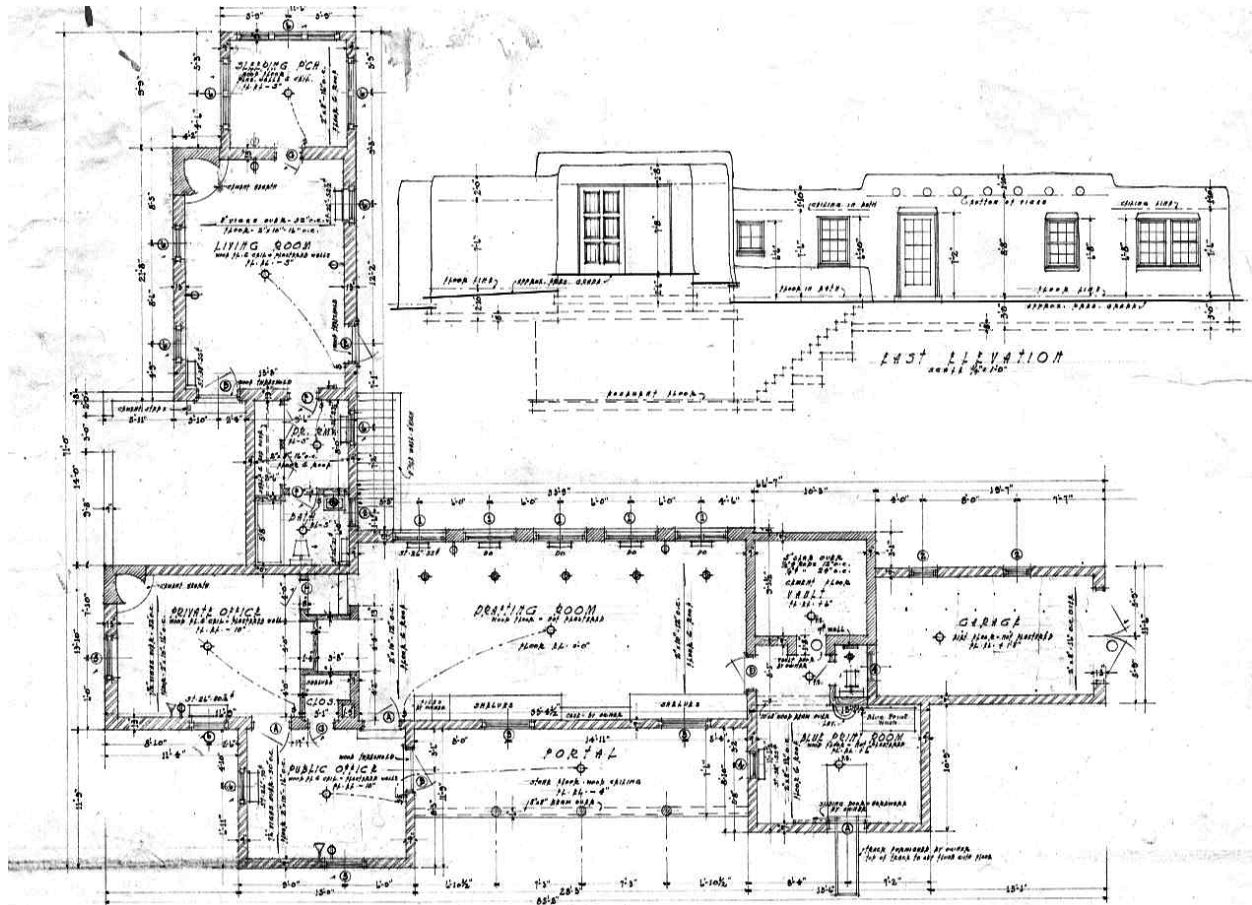
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Site plan showing original conception for building footprint.
Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, 1930. University of New Mexico,
Center for Southwest Research.

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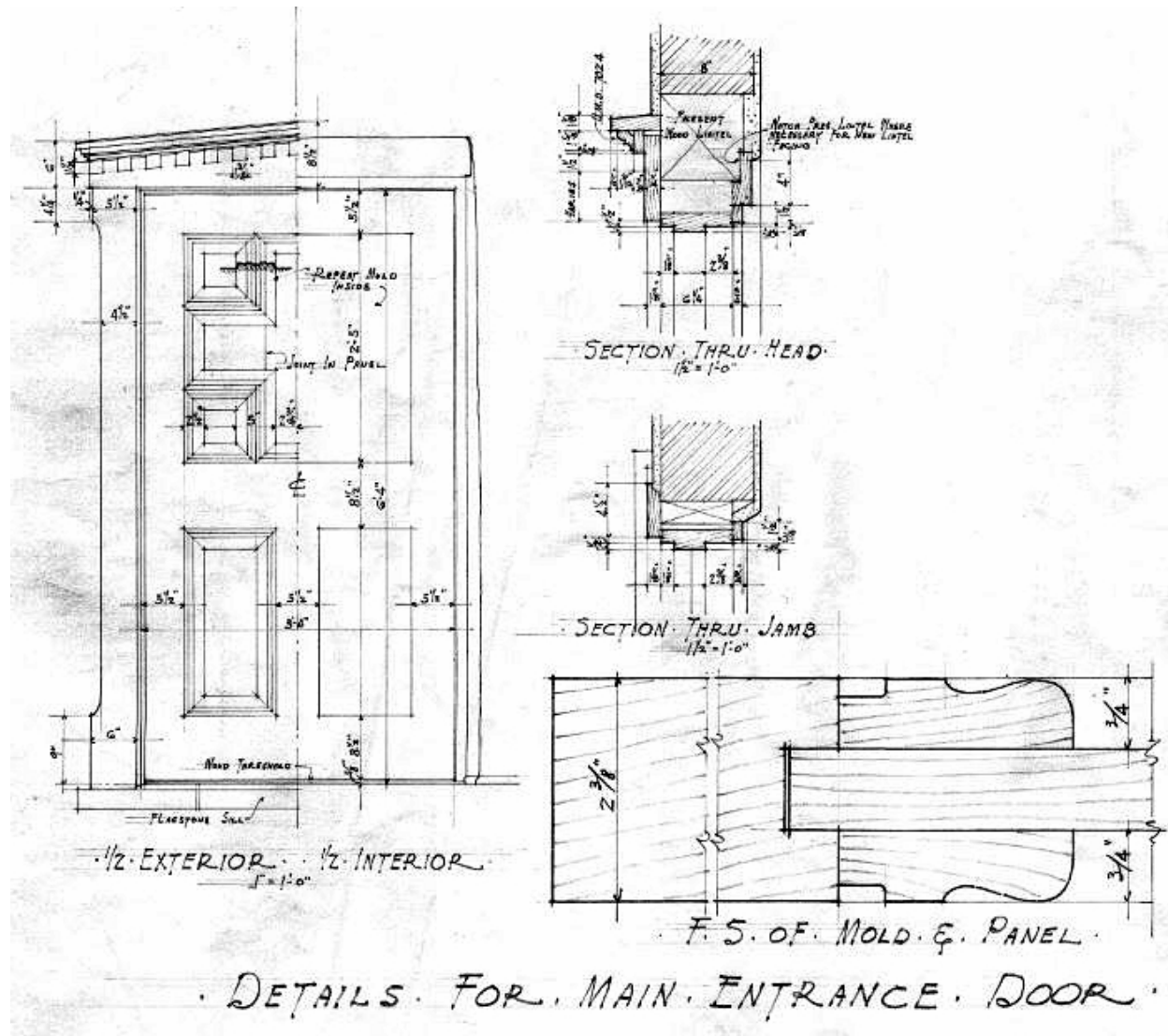
Santa Fe, New Mexico
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Floor plan and elevation drawings of office and apartment, January 1, 1930.
Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, University of New Mexico,
Center for Southwest Research.

John Gaw Meem Architects Office
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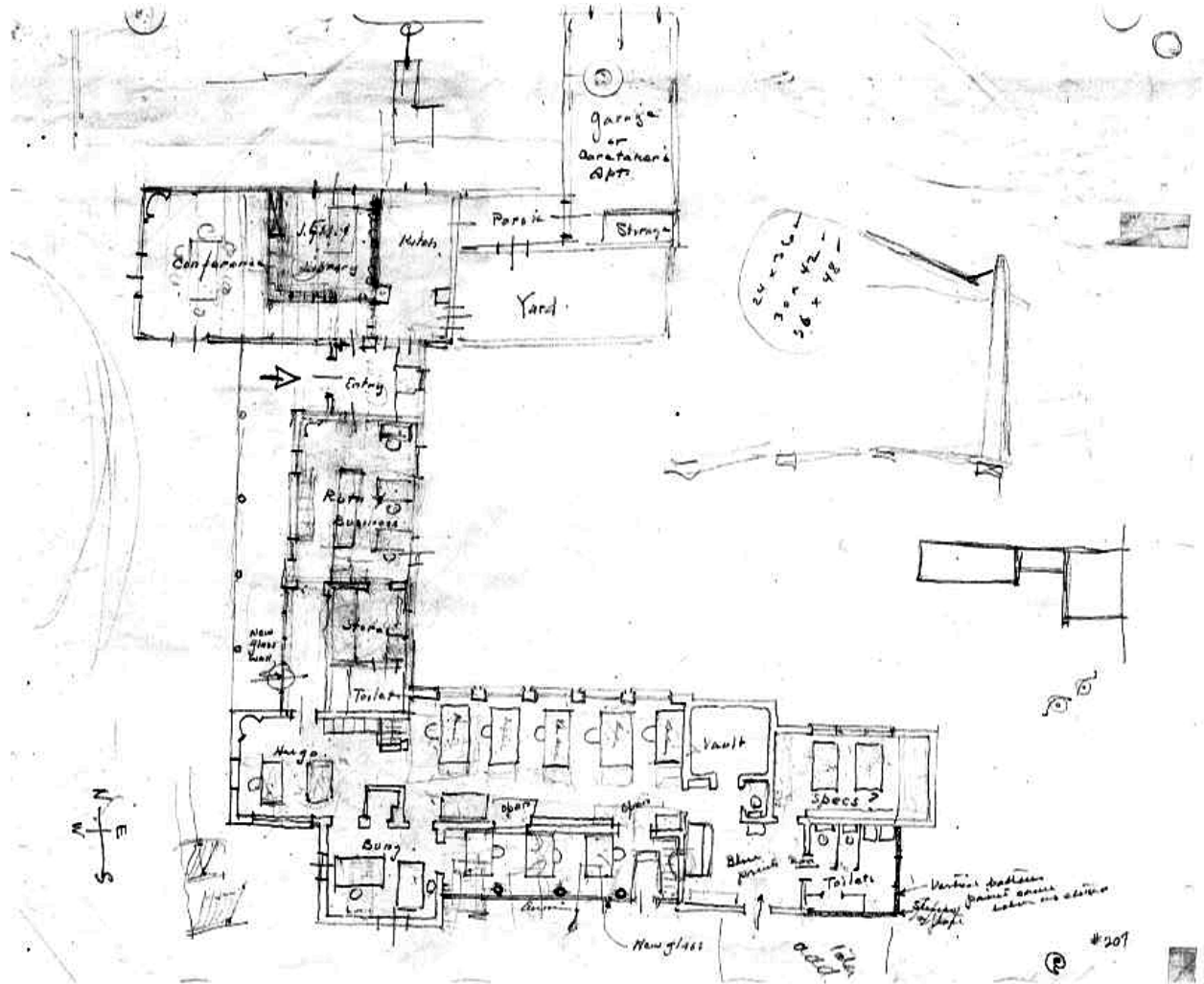
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Detail drawing of west front entry.
The door was installed as part of the reorientation of the public façade to the west elevation, August 3, 1933. Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research.

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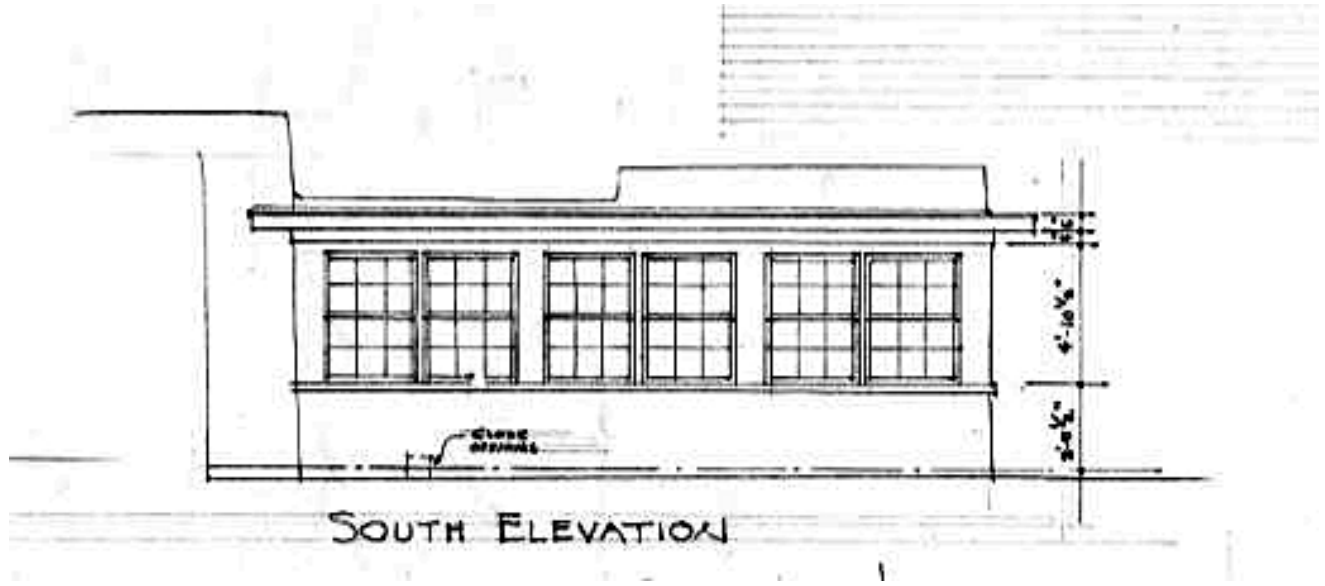
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Floor plan sketch illustrates the fluid character of space at the time due to cramped wartime conditions, c.1940s. Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research.

John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Name of Property

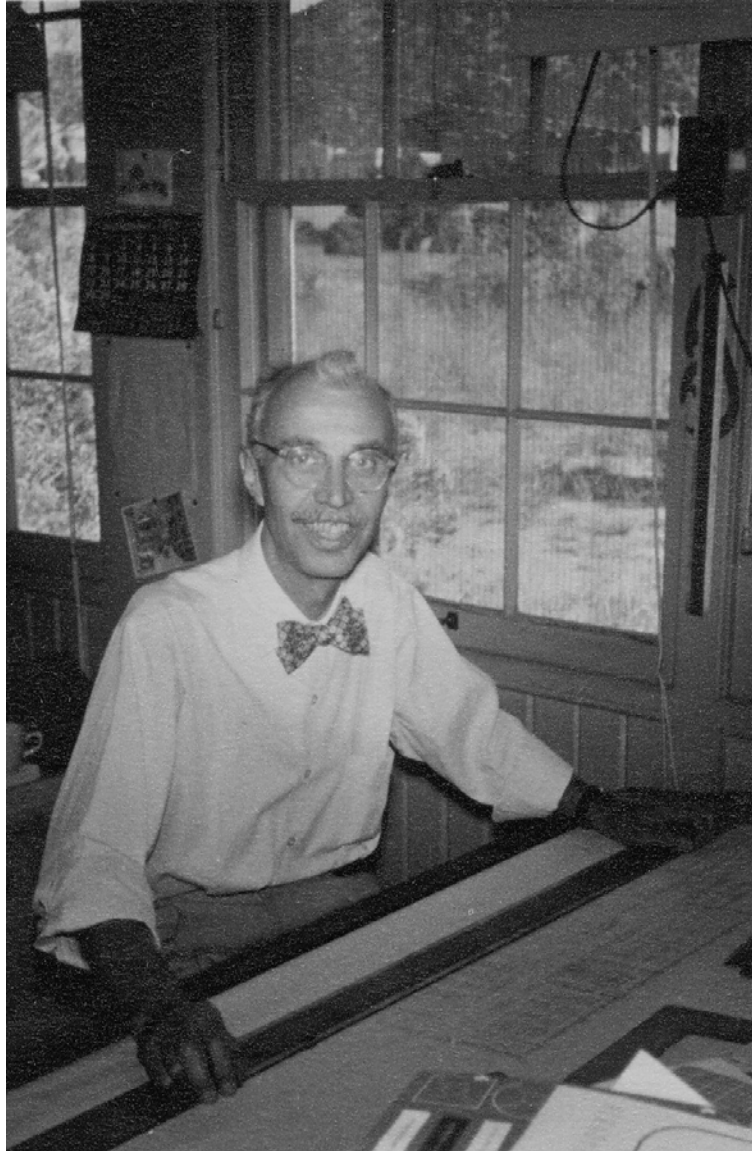
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Elevation drawings for New Office addition, c.1950.
Courtesy John Gaw Meem Collection, University of New Mexico,
Center for Southwest Research.

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Edward O. Holien, 1957. Photograph likely taken in Hall A. Courtesy Tom Holien.

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Photographs



1. Setting and west (main) facade, photographer facing east.



2. West (main) façade, photographer facing southeast.

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3. West facade, entry, photographer facing east.



4. West facade, portal, photographer facing north.

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5. West façade, south end, photographer facing southeast.



6. South elevation, west end, photographer facing north.

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7. South elevation, 1996 Ceramics Studio addition, photographer facing northwest.



8. East elevation, south end, Garage #1 at right, photographer facing northwest.

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9. North elevation, photographer facing southeast.



10. North elevation, east end, Darkroom in foreground, photographer facing southeast.

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11. Courtyard, east elevation at center, photographer facing west.



12. Courtyard, north elevation, photographer facing southwest.

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13. Courtyard, north elevation, Drafting Room, photographer facing southwest.



14. Courtyard, south elevation, circa 1950 New Office addition, photographer facing northwest.

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15. Courtyard, south elevation, 1996 Digital Media Lab addition, photographer facing north.



16. Public Office #2 photographer facing southwest.

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17. Hall A, photographer facing south.



18. Meem Office #1, photographer facing northwest.

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19. Public Office #1, photographer facing west.



20. Drafting Room, photographer facing northeast.

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21. Ceramics Studio, photographer facing northwest.



22. Conference Room photographer facing northeast.

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23. Kitchen, photographer facing northeast.







785























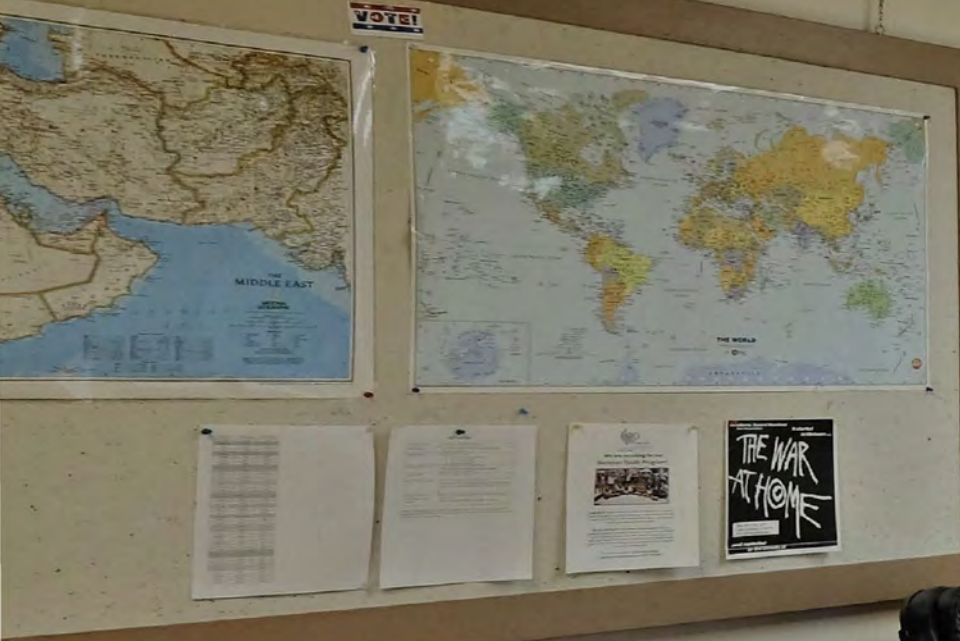












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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination
Property Name: John Gaw Meem Architects Office
Multiple Name: Buildings Designed by John Gaw Meem MPS
State & County: NEW MEXICO, Santa Fe

Date Received: 4/29/2019 Date of Pending List: 5/16/2019 Date of 16th Day: 5/31/2019 Date of 45th Day: 6/13/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: MP100004030

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 6/6/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The John Gaw Meem Architects Office is of statewide significance and meets National Register Criteria B and C in the area of Architecture. The one-story, stucco-clad building was constructed in 1930 to serve as John Gaw Meem's studio/office and apartment. Utilizing hollow-clay structural tile, the building is a fine example of Meem's early twentieth century Spanish Pueblo Revival style design aesthetic. The building's form and room arrangement changed to reflect the evolving nature of Meem's firm and is the property most directly associated with his working career as one of New Mexico's most prolific and influential twentieth century architects. The property meets the Registration Requirements of the John Gaw Meem MPS.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria B and C.

Reviewer Paul Lusignan Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229 Date 6/6/2019

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

BATAAN MEMORIAL BUILDING
407 GALISTEO STREET, SUITE 236
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501
PHONE (505) 827-6320 FAX (505) 827-6338

April 15, 2019

Keeper of the National Register
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240



To whom it may concern:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination John Gaw Meem Architects Office in in Santa Fe County, New Mexico to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- Disk with digital photo images
- Physical signature page
- Correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do do not constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations:

Sincerely,

Steven Moffson
State and National Register Coordinator
Enclosures