

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 2 1987  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Fire Station Number 3

and/or common Monte Vista Fire Station\* \*name under which to be registered

2. Location

street & number 3201 Central Avenue, NE

N/A not for publication

city, town Albuquerque

N/A vicinity of

state New Mexico 87106

code 35

county Bernalillo

code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Earl Wittemore

street & number 327 Sandoval

city, town Los Lunas

N/A vicinity of

state New Mexico 87031

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bernalillo County Records

street & number 505 Central Avenue, NW

city, town Albuquerque

state New Mexico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Landmarks Survey  
of Albuquerque

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date May, 1981; June, 1983

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Landmarks Survey, Redevelopment Planning  
P. O. Box 1293

city, town Albuquerque

state New Mexico 87103

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## 7. Description

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

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

The Monte Vista Fire Station is located on Central Avenue (old U.S. Route 66) in a strip commercial development surrounded by residential suburbs that all date to the late 1930s and late 1940s. It is a free standing building on a corner lot, set back approximately fifteen feet from the front sidewalk and three feet from the office building to its east. The Fire Station is a two-story rectangle with a three-story hose/stair tower projecting from its southeast corner, a one-story entrance/office projecting from the southwest corner and a later, one-story addition attached to the rear. Floors and roofs are reinforced concrete, walls are hollow clay tile with a stucco finish. The building's Spanish Pueblo Revival style details include exposed lintels, projecting vigas (roof beams), ladders and rounded, projecting parapets which front flat roofs.

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The station was built of hollow block and covered with stucco. The building's massing is dominated by a large three-story tower that occupies the SE corner of the property and unifies the structure. The tower includes vertically staggered windows that follow interior stairs leading from the street level-engine room to the second-story lounge and office and finally to the third-floor level. A shaft runs from grade to the third-floor ceiling where hoses were hung to dry after being washed.

The original 14 foot multi-light station doors are unaltered and include their original overhead operating hardware. Large metal wheels allowed the doors to fold open quickly and relatively effortlessly in the event of an alarm. All the windows are original 6/6 double hung wood sash and are framed by massive lintels including in some cases tympanum and corbels. The exposed decorative vigas are all intact and combine with timber ladders on the first-and-second-story roofs and an undulating parapet on the second-story to give the station its typical Pueblo Revival effect.

Originally the Monte Vista Fire Station was designed for a pumper truck only and a complement of five men. In 1952, the building was sympathetically remodelled to accommodate a longer ladder truck and a conforming block addition was attached to the rear of the building. Also at this time, the lowest front window in the tower was converted into a door. A kitchen was built in the rear of the first floor after the station was sold and converted into an art-related business. The original 1936 dedication plaque was removed and mounted in the engine room of the University campus fire station, the Monte Vista Station's replacement.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1936 **Builder/Architect** E. H. Blumenthal

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Monte Vista Fire Station, designed by Albuquerque city architect E. H. Blumenthal, was built with Works Progress Administration Funds in 1936. It meets National Register Criterion A as a prominent reminder of the role of federal public works funding during the 1930s in providing the infrastructure and public services which allowed the development of new suburbs to the east of the established parts of Albuquerque. The Fire Station also meets Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Pueblo Revival style. The use of this distinctively New Mexican style typifies the prevailing artistic regionalism and the use of traditional styles for many federally funded projects across the country during the period.

After the First World War, Albuquerque began to spread from its historic location in the Rio Grande valley up onto the sand hills to the east, known as the Heights. Throughout the 1920s, the city and public schools struggled to provide services for the future growth of the Heights. The city water works and sewage treatment plants were expanded; sidewalks, water and sewer lines were extended to the area; arterial streets from the old downtown to the Heights were improved, and Roosevelt Park and the Heights Community Center were constructed. The Monte Vista Grade School was expanded, and Jefferson Junior High and Bandelier Grade School were built with the help of federal funds. A new state fairgrounds and city airport were also added in the Heights. When residential construction began to boom again in 1938, it was fueled largely through loans from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

The Monte Vista Fire Station was an important improvement in this campaign to prepare for future growth in the Heights. Like the other projects, the station's construction depended largely on federal funding—of the total construction cost of approximately \$24,000, \$14,300 was a grant from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Constructed in five months, from June to November, 1936, the Fire Station caused an immediate 43% reduction in residential fire insurance rates for the surrounding areas.

Across the country, federally funded building projects during the 1930s were about evenly divided between those employing traditional styles and those in modern styles. In New Mexico, however, the vast majority adopted traditional styles. (The only notable exceptions are a few Art Deco county courthouses in the southeastern part of the state which is a cultural extension of Texas). In

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Albuquerque East

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	3	3	5	3	3	4	0	3	8	8	2	9	8	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

A rectangular lot on the northeast corner of the intersection of Bryn Mawr, NE and Central Avenue, NE, roughly 105' X 53', being Lots 17 and 18, Block 7, Monte Vista Addition.

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Davis, Architectural Historian

organization Historic Landmarks Survey date 7/26/84; revised 11/11/86

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

city or town Albuquerque state New Mexico 87103

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 1-23-87

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

Beth Grosvenor date 3/19/87

for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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Albuquerque, while a few public buildings employed the Spanish Colonial Revival or the Territorial Revival (based on the state's provincial Greek Revival architecture), the majority employed the Spanish Pueblo Revival style. Three WPA projects at the University of New Mexico, designed by John Gaw Meem—a student union (1934), an administration and classroom building (1934) and a library (1937-38)—are among the finest structures ever built in this regional style. The Fire Station compares favorably to other local depression-era examples of the Spanish Pueblo style, including the state fair exhibition buildings (1936-40), the Heights Community Center (1938) and the Albuquerque Airport (1939). While these buildings are not quite on a par with Meem's University of New Mexico work, they, nevertheless, are well designed and reflect the development of a professional architectural community in Albuquerque between the World Wars. Most of the residences built in the surrounding areas during the late 1930s and some commercial buildings are more modest applications of the Spanish Pueblo Revival.

The station's architect, E. H. Blumenthal, fused two of the style's most important historic prototypes in his facade design—the terraced pueblo and the Spanish mission church. The building's irregular masses, which step up and away from the corner, clearly evoke the communal dwellings of the Pueblos while also expressing the station's several functions: the one-story entry office to the left, the two-story center section housing the apparatus room on the ground floor and living quarters above, and the three-story hose drying and stair tower to the right. Two rough-timber ladders, similar to those used at the Pueblos, accentuate these level changes. The design's debt to Spanish Mission churches is, at first, less apparent. The large double doors topped by a row of windows resemble a church entry topped by a second-story balustrade. The projecting one-story office and three-story tower suggest a two-tower church facade with one tower left unfinished, which is sometimes the case in Spanish Colonial churches. A church-like formality is re-enforced by the symmetrically placed vigas and curvilinear parapet capping the central bay. Blumenthal reworked many of these same details and compositional devices in his other important work, the 1939 Albuquerque Airport.

Blumenthal designed the fire station and the airport while he was the city architect, a position he held during the late 1930's. He had trained as a draftsman in St. Louis and first came to Albuquerque for his health in 1912; during this period he worked with the local office of Trost and Trost. He and his family later returned to St. Louis, but the onset of the Great Depression put Blumenthal out of work so he came to Albuquerque to direct construction on the federally funded El Vado Dam. After his service as city architect (terminated after a dispute with Governor Tingley) he designed and drafted for several local architects.

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As with all WPA projects the station was built with local labor and local material. The hollow tile blocks in the original structure were manufactured by Kinney Brick of Albuquerque and all the original timber was cut by local labor in the Sandia Mountains and milled in the city.

The station was originally at the city's eastern extremity. Within 15 years post World-War-II properties filled in on Central around the station and housing covered the mesa to the east. The building was extended at the rear in 1952 to house the Fire Department's longer ladder trucks, and the station's crew rose to ten men including the direct chief's office. Kept in immaculate condition over the years by the Fire Department, the station went through very few alterations. In 1972, it was put up for sale when the newer and wider trucks could no longer negotiate the Monte Vista's old doors. It has been used as an art gallery, a lithographic studio and most recently as a film production facility. It was recently (1982) pictured in The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History by Rebecca Zurier.

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Major Bibliographical References

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Biebel, Charles D. Making the Most of It: Public Works in Albuquerque During the Great Depression, 1929-1942. Albuquerque: Albuquerque; Albuquerque Museum, 1986.

Bunting, Bainbridge. John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect. Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1983.

Norton, John. Nomination form, Monte Vista Fire Station; New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties, 1981.

Short, C. W., and C. Stanley-Brown. Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years of 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration. Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1939.

Simmons, Marc. Albuquerque: A Narrative History, UNM Press 1981.

Zurier, Rebecca. The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History. Abbeyville Press, NY, 1982.



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Listed on the State Register of Cultural Properties on Dec. 18, 1981; SR# 849